

GEF-8 PROJECT IDENTIFICATION FORM (PIF)

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General Project Information

Project Title

Empowering conservation action on the East Asian Australasian Flyway (EAAF) through Establishment of a Global Flyways Grant Mechanism (GFGM) for Civil Society Organizations

Region	GEF Project ID
Asia	12290
Country(ies)	Type of Project
Regional	FSP
Cambodia	
Indonesia	
Lao PDR	
Mongolia	
Papua New Guinea	
Philippines	
GEF Agency(ies):	GEF Agency ID
ADB	
Executing Partner	Executing Partner Type
Birdlife International	CSO
Conservation International (Critical Ecosystems Partnership Fund - CEFP)	GEF Agency
East Asian Australasian Flyway Partnership (EAAFP)	Others
GEF Focal Area (s)	Submission Date
Biodiversity	3/2/2026

Project Sector (CCM Only)

Taxonomy

Biodiversity, Focal Areas, Influencing models, Transform policy and regulatory environments, Strengthen institutional capacity and decision-making, Convene multi-stakeholder alliances, Demonstrate innovative approaches, Deploy innovative financial instruments, Stakeholders, Indigenous Peoples, Private Sector, Financial intermediaries and market facilitators, SMEs, Individuals/Entrepreneurs, Beneficiaries, Local Communities, Civil Society, Community Based Organization, Non-Governmental Organization, Academia, Type of Engagement, Partnership, Consultation, Participation, Information Dissemination, Communications, Education, Public Campaigns, Awareness Raising, Behavior change, Enabling Activities, Capacity Development, Learning, Knowledge Exchange, Theory of change, Adaptive management, Indicators to measure change, Innovation, Knowledge Generation, Capacity, Knowledge and Research, Gender Equality, Gender Mainstreaming, Gender results areas, Access to benefits and services, Participation and leadership, Knowledge Generation and Exchange, Access and control over natural resources, Sex-disaggregated indicators, Women groups, Gender-sensitive indicators, Food Systems, Land Use and Restoration, Integrated Programs, Sustainable Food Systems, Landscape Restoration, Integrated Landscapes, Protected Areas and Landscapes, Terrestrial Protected Areas, Coastal and Marine Protected Areas, Productive Landscapes, Productive Seascapes, Community Based Natural Resource Mngt, Mainstreaming, Tourism, Agriculture and agrobiodiversity, Certification - National Standards, Species, Illegal Wildlife Trade, Threatened Species, Wildlife for Sustainable Development, Invasive Alien Species, Biomes, Rivers, Tropical Dry Forests, Sea Grasses, Lakes, Mangroves, Tropical Rain Forests, Wetlands, Coral Reefs, Financial and Accounting, Payment for Ecosystem Services, Natural Capital Assessment and Accounting, Conservation Trust Funds, Conservation Finance, Land Degradation, Sustainable Land Management, Restoration and Rehabilitation of Degraded

Lands, Ecosystem Approach, Integrated and Cross-sectoral approach, Community-Based Natural Resource Management, Sustainable Livelihoods, Income Generating Activities, Sustainable Agriculture, Improved Soil and Water Management Techniques, Land Degradation Neutrality, Land Cover and Land cover change, Carbon stocks above or below ground, Food Security, International Waters, Coastal, Freshwater, Lake Basin, River Basin, Pollution, Plastics, Nutrient pollution from Wastewater, Nutrient pollution from all sectors except wastewater, Aquaculture, Marine Protected Area, Chemicals and Waste, Sound Management of chemicals and waste, Disposal, Pesticides, Best Available Technology / Best Environmental Practices, Climate Change, Disaster risk management, Climate Change Adaptation, Climate finance, Ecosystem-based Adaptation, Mainstreaming adaptation, Private sector, Complementarity, Community-based adaptation, Livelihoods, Climate Change Mitigation, Agriculture, Forestry, and Other Land Use, Financing

Type of Trust Fund	Project Duration (Months)
GET	72
GEF Project Grant: (a)	GEF Project Non-Grant: (b)
8,974,312.00	0.00
Agency Fee(s) Grant: (c)	Agency Fee(s) Non-Grant (d)
807,688.00	0.00
Total GEF Financing: (a+b+c+d)	Total Co-financing
9,782,000.00	107,000,000.00
PPG Amount: (e)	PPG Agency Fee(s): (f)
200,000.00	18,000.00
PPG total amount: (e+f)	Total GEF Resources: (a+b+c+d+e+f)
218,000.00	10,000,000.00

Project Tags

CBIT: No NGI: No SGP: No Innovation: No Competitive Window: No

Project Summary

Provide a brief summary description of the project, including: (i) what is the problem and issues to be addressed? (ii) what are the project objectives, and if the project is intended to be transformative, how will this be achieved? (iii), how will this be achieved (approach to deliver on objectives), and (iv) what are the GEBs and/or adaptation benefits, and other key expected results. The purpose of the summary is to provide a short, coherent summary for readers. The explanation and justification of the project should be in section B "project description". (max. 250 words, approximately 1/2 page)

Migratory birds move predictably along a defined route called a flyway. They can only be effectively conserved by countries along the flyway working together. Migratory birds and the habitats on which they depend are critical resources that, if harnessed effectively and equitably, provide multiple benefits for people, nature and climate. However, despite the valuable ecosystem services of flyway habitats such as wetlands, significant areas are lost from conversion and degradation. Compounding the problem is a rapidly changing climate. As a result, many migratory bird species are globally threatened with extinction. -

To address the enormous challenges in the conservation of migratory birds and their habitats, a strong and effective 'whole of society' partnership involving civil society, including local communities, (I)NGO, social enterprises, private sector, and academic institutions, as well as governments, multilateral development finance and the wider international community is imperative. Yet significant challenges faced by civil society in accessing funding and capacity building and engaging with other key stakeholders at a landscape scale, prevent many CSOs and Indigenous Peoples and local communities (IPLCs) from effectively participating in flyway conservation.

The proposed GFGM will establish a transformative modality to empower CSOs to participate in conservation programs on the major global flyways, including many supported by the GEF, through enabling alignment and

complementarity with financing from multilateral development banks. Initially focused through this project on wetlands along the EAAF, targeting ecologically connected sites already identified as high priority for migratory birds and wider biodiversity by the EAAF Regional Flyway Initiative (EAAF RFI), the GFGM will build on existing national and regional partnerships, and expertise on conservation of wetland habitats. This will ensure grounded, grassroots and localized and community-based contributions are enabled to complement larger investment initiatives. In future granting cycles, in the same and other flyways, conservation action catalyzed through the GFGM may focus on a variety of other habitats important for migratory birds.

This project will establish a global granting mechanism that can benefit flyway conservation across different geographies beyond the project lifetime. Within the project term, the granting mechanism will contribute to the conservation and/or restoration of 9 million hectares of critical wetlands in 6 countries along the EAAF. GHG emissions mitigated will be tracked and reported during project implementation. Socioeconomic co-benefits will be equitably shared among stakeholders, directly benefitting 330,000 people (60% women).

Indicative Project Overview

Project Objective

To establish a Global Flyways Grant Mechanism (GFGM) for civil society organisations (CSOs) that enables civil society led conservation, restoration and sustainable management of globally significant wetland sites on the East Asian Australasian Flyway (EAAF), producing benefits for biodiversity, climate and people.

Project Components

1. Global Flyways Grant Mechanism (GFGM) establishment and governance through a multi-stakeholder approach

Component Type	Trust Fund
Technical Assistance	GET
GEF Project Financing (\$)	Co-financing (\$)
600,000.00	1,250,000.00

Outcome:

1.1 GFGM established and operational with structure and policies agreed by relevant stakeholders in place

1.2 Established partnerships with **Multilateral Finance Institutions, (MFI)** multilateral and bilateral donor agencies, philanthropies and other development financiers to support GFGM thereby catalyzing increased resources

Output:

1.1.1 Formulated and adopted GFGM structures and policies that ensure good governance over financial flows to eligible CSOs in participating countries **(e.g., established governance and fiduciary systems and processes at global and regional levels)**

1.1.2 Systems, processes and procedures created and operational that reflect the multi-level geographic scope and ensure efficient and effective financial flows to eligible CSOs in participating countries **(e.g., design and establishment of granting systems and processes and capacity building program)**

1.1.3 Following and subject to agreed GFGM governance structure, GFGM Council, regional Project Steering Committee (PSC), and other or alternative operational bodies created and functioning

1.2.1 Achieved high awareness of and interest in the GFGM among key stakeholders (governments, multilateral finance institutions (MFI), CSOs, private sector/investors and philanthropists

1.2.2 Formulated guidelines on partnerships in terms of target organizations and institutions, thematic scope and other elements of a partnership agreement

1.2.3 Consummated partnership agreements with at least 2 large-scale financiers generating minimum USD 15 million effectively expanding the geographic and thematic scope of GFGM

2. Grant- Making Facility

Component Type	Trust Fund
Investment	GET
GEF Project Financing (\$)	Co-financing (\$)
5,839,999.00	88,100,000.00

Outcome:

2.1 GFGM grants and investments in CSOs supported the conservation of globally threatened migratory birds, the protection, restoration and sustainable management of priority wetlands, and the mitigation of **emissions of Greenhouse Gases** (GHGs) through these sites

Output:

2.1.1 Flyways Investment Strategy (FIS) (initially developed during **Project Preparation Grant (PPG)** phase) is further developed to guide GFGM grant-making operations and is then formally adopted through participatory processes involving governments, CSOs, relevant MFIs, private sector and other stakeholders

2.1.2 Project preparation grants mobilized for feasibility studies, ecosystem services assessments, business plan development, value chain analysis, multi-stakeholder consultations, data collection or other pre-project activities required to ensure proposals to the GFGM for Project Implementation Grants are of adequate technical quality and sustainable

2.1.3 Project implementation grants mobilize **CSO led conservation projects including nature based solutions (NbS) and sustainable finance initiatives (SFI) that deliver** conservation and protection of globally threatened migratory species; conservation, restoration and/or sustainable management of priority wetlands and emissions avoidance.

2.1.4 Project Implementation grants for priority sites resulted **in improved site protection** including through support for formal designations as Flyway Network Sites (under the **East Asian Australasian Flyway Partnership**) (EAAFP), Ramsar Sites (under Ramsar Convention), and/or as protected areas or **Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures** (OECMs)

3. Capacity Development and Support

Component Type	Trust Fund
Technical Assistance	GET
GEF Project Financing (\$)	Co-financing (\$)
1,221,716.00	4,500,000.00

Outcome:

3.1 CSOs strengthen **organizational and technical capacities and capabilities enabling delivery of GFGM grants and ability to attract future investment**

Output:

3.1.1 Institutional capacities of CSOs assessed and linked to grants/relevant training to build expertise dependent on CSO needs

3.1.2 CSOs improved capabilities and capacities through direct involvement in biophysical and socio-economic assessments (Output 2.1.2), and investment assessments and implementation of **Nature based Solutions** (NbS) and **Sustainable Finance Initiatives** (SFI) (Output 2.1.3)

3.1.3 CSOs improved organizational and technical capacities and capabilities through engagement in GFGM capacity building program

4. Research, Monitoring, Knowledge and Influence

Component Type	Trust Fund
Technical Assistance	GET
GEF Project Financing (\$)	Co-financing (\$)
666,667.00	5,900,000.00

Outcome:

4.1 GFGM results and data are used by policy and decision makers to improve policy coherence and enabling conditions for flyway-scale conservation (e.g., promoting flyway friendly development decisions or strengthening and creating policies and laws supporting flyway conservation) thus contributing to the achievement of biodiversity and climate targets at various geographic scales

4.2 Established effective and participatory monitoring of progress and impacts at the level of the project and the entire EAAF

Output:

4.1.1 GFGM project results and data have informed and influenced relevant national, regional and international frameworks and flyway-level agreements.

4.1.2 In collaboration with existing institutions, facilitated knowledge exchange between CSOs and technical partners through an effective knowledge-based platform for data and information management that allows easy and free access to stakeholders

4.2.1 GFGM and site monitoring project reports made available for each flyway site (anticipated 33 sites during project lifetime)

4.2.2 Synthesized, published and disseminated research, monitoring data and various assessments in national, regional and international platforms/forums to support proper implementation of **Multilateral Environmental Agreements** (MEAs) within countries and to provide decision makers with data on priority sites and species to make informed decisions about, conservation requirements, budget allocation and progress

M&E

Component Type	Trust Fund
Technical Assistance	GET
GEF Project Financing (\$)	Co-financing (\$)
218,930.00	1,250,000.00

Outcome:

5.1 Operationalized a functional M&E system that supports adaptive project management to achieve objectives

Output:

5.1.1 Conducted regular meetings of the regional **Project Steering Committee** (PSC) to review project progress and provide overall project direction

5.1.2 Periodic M&E reports submitted to ADB and the GEF with participation of CSOs in report preparation

5.1.3 Independent midterm review and terminal evaluation conducted

Component Balances

Project Components	GEF Project Financing (\$)	Co-financing (\$)
1. Global Flyways Grant Mechanism (GFGM) establishment and governance through a multi-stakeholder approach	600,000.00	1,250,000.00
2. Grant- Making Facility	5,839,999.00	88,100,000.00
3. Capacity Development and Support	1,221,716.00	4,500,000.00
4. Research, Monitoring, Knowledge and Influence	666,667.00	5,900,000.00
M&E	218,930.00	1,250,000.00
Subtotal	8,547,312.00	101,000,000.00
Project Management Cost	427,000.00	6,000,000.00
Total Project Cost (\$)	8,974,312.00	107,000,000.00

Please provide justification

PROJECT OUTLINE

A. PROJECT RATIONALE

Briefly describe the current situation: the global environmental problems and/or climate vulnerabilities that the project will address, the key elements of the system, and underlying drivers of environmental change in the project context, such as population growth, economic development, climate change, sociocultural and political factors, including conflicts, or technological changes. Describe the objective of the project, and the justification for it. (Approximately 3-5 pages) see guidance here

Rationale

Migratory birds, and the landscapes and seascapes on which they depend, are critical resources shared across national boundaries that, if harnessed effectively and equitably, provide an invaluable opportunity to drive progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that realizes multiple benefits for people, nature, and climate. Migratory birds move predictably along a defined route called a flyway. They can only be effectively conserved by a coordinated and

coherent response from countries along the flyway. Recognizing that no single site or country can protect all the migratory waterbirds along the flyway, international collaboration is crucial.

Birds play vital functional roles in aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems, including as predators, herbivores and vectors of seeds, invertebrates, and nutrients. They help control pests, are effective bioindicators for ecological conditions, and act as sentinels of potential disease outbreaks and climate change. As cultural and educational icons, they also inspire societal support and change. Migratory birds rely on habitats that provide enough food to breed, migrate through, or spend the northern winter. As habitats, food availability and weather all change within seasons, birds must move from one place to another to survive and thrive. Beyond their importance to birds, flyway sites hold enormous value for climate adaptation through climate-related ecosystem services, including mitigation through carbon sequestration. For example, intact, healthy, or restored coastal and inland wetlands store and sequester significant amounts of GHGs. The carbon sequestration properties of wetlands make them a valuable natural asset. Globally, coastal wetlands are estimated to sequester carbon at a rate 40 times higher than terrestrial ecosystems, and their destruction is estimated to release 450 million tons of carbon dioxide each year. Conserving, restoring and protecting these habitats so vital for the survival of migratory birds will therefore also drive significant global environmental benefits in emissions reduction. Their oxygen-deprived, waterlogged soils slow down the decomposition of organic matter, allowing for long-term carbon storage with high potential for carbon finance schemes. Moreover, flyway habitats such as wetlands and mudflats are ideally suited to the implementation of NbS to strengthen adaptation to the impacts of climate change.

The conservation and protection of flyway sites can also improve adaptive capacity of species, ecosystems, and communities and provide livelihood and subsistence benefits, increasing adaptability and resilience to economic shocks, food shortages, and water disruptions caused by climate change. For example, healthy wetlands including mangroves and salt marshes, not only sequester carbon at impressive rates but also provide ecosystem services such as prevention of storm surges, and protection against sea level rise, flooding, saltwater intrusion, and other climate impacts, and support a variety of related livelihoods in agriculture, fisheries, aquaculture and eco-tourism. Climate adaptation and disaster risk reduction services are especially relevant in the Asia and Pacific regions. Globally, coastal wetlands prevent USD \$447 billion in damages from tropical cyclones for example, and are estimated to save 4,620 lives annually. The dependencies between staple crop value chains and wetlands are significant, for example rice, which is the staple diet for nearly 50% of the world's population, and estimated up to 75% in Southeast Asia, is grown mainly in natural and humanmade wetlands. Additionally, wetlands store water resources that are needed to irrigate land under cultivation. Wetlands also impact nutrition as an important dimension of food security through their provision of protein sources. Rice paddies in the Lower Mekong Basin act as vital fish spawning grounds with over 20 species identified in Lao PDR rice fields. In Cambodia, wetlands are crucial for food security, with fisheries from the Tonle Sap Lake and its surrounding floodplains—including designated Ramsar sites—supplying 60–80% of animal protein in the diets of local communities. Increasing interest and momentum globally from public, finance and business sectors in shaping emerging nature markets presents a timely opportunity to empower development and drive global environmental benefits through realization of natural capital values in ODA countries in habitats such as those along the major global flyways. Wetlands cover approximately 6% of the earth's surface yet provide ecosystem services valued at up to \$39 trillion globally.

Wetlands in the EAAF are critical to globally threatened species. Approximately 40% of all plant and animal species live or breed in wetlands. While bird species have been used to identify globally recognized priority sites for the EAAF RFI and the GFGM, and have energized joined up action on a flyway scale, arguably wetlands are even more important for other taxa. For example, the update in early 2026 to the IUCN Red List saw five freshwater turtles in Southeast Asia newly listed as Critically Endangered with the total number of Critically Endangered tortoises and freshwater turtles in the region now at 24 species, and freshwater fishes are the largest group of threatened species in the Southeast Asia region, with 86 species now listed as Critically Endangered. Despite the enormous ecosystem goods and services of wetlands, significant areas continue to be lost along the flyway and it has been estimated that wetlands in the EAAF have decreased by about 50% in the People's Republic of China, 40% in Japan, 60% in the Republic of Korea and 70% in Singapore, while, up to 45% of inter-tidal wetlands in Southeast Asia have been lost and about 80% of its remaining

wetlands are threatened.[1]¹ Rapid urbanization, intensive agriculture and aquaculture, and intertidal reclamation to meet increasing demand for land, food, and water, along with climate change, have driven the loss of wetlands.[2]² In the process, many of the migratory waterbird species are threatened with global extinction. On the East Asian Australasian Flyway, 20% of the flyway's waterbirds, including the Black-faced Spoonbill *Platalea minor*, Chinese Egret *Egretta eulophotes*, Spoon-billed Sandpiper *Calidris pygmeus* and Saunders' Gull *Saundersilaru saundersi* are globally threatened. Compounding the problem is a rapidly changing climate and unprecedented biodiversity loss that have threatened the suitability of wetlands as habitats for migratory birds and their ability to sustain the provision of other ecosystem goods and services.

The enormity of the conservation challenges requires strong and effective whole of society partnerships to reap the equally significant benefits to both nature and people. Civil society, as shown in many conservation programs, has been a transformational partner. Civil society is uniquely placed to both understand and articulate local contexts and secure local acceptance, ownership and participation for effective on-the-ground conservation. However, its participation has been often limited, overlooked, and underfunded. Stringent donor compliance requirements and lack of civil society capacity to fulfil them can severely limit legitimate civil society involvement, particularly at community level. By building collaboration at scale, civil society can make a fundamental contribution, particularly at priority flyway sites. Further, strengthening civil society participation and engagement is critical to deliver grounded, grassroots, and localized contributions to flyway initiatives and to ensure that development finance initiatives, government-led projects and private sector investments on the major global flyways are more sustainable, equitable and inclusive through increased capacity and added value brought by civil society.

East Asian Australasian Flyway (EAAF)

This project will focus on the EAAF which is one of nine flyways globally identified[3]³. The EAAF is home to an estimated 50 million birds from 250 different populations coming from 216 waterbird species of 20 families. Sixty-one (61) of these species are listed in the IUCN Red List as threatened with extinction, including 7 Critical (CR) and another 16, endangered (EN). The conservation of these migratory birds has been extensively studied and the results were published by Wetlands International in the first Conservation Status Review for the EAAF Partnership (EAAFP) in 2022. The EAAF covers 22 countries that extend from the Arctic Circle through East and Southeast Asia to Australia and New Zealand. Of these countries, 11 are developing member countries (DMCs) of the ADB which are also beneficiaries of the GEF, and engaged in the Regional Flyway Initiative (RFI) in collaboration with BirdLife International and EAAFP. These are Bangladesh, Cambodia, PR China, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Mongolia, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam. Some species traverse the entire flyway and others stay in wetlands along the route. Figure 2 shows the distribution of 150 high-priority wetland sites[4]⁴ used by migratory waterbirds in DMCs engaged in the RFI along the EAAF. CSOs will be eligible to apply to the GFGM for grant funding to support conservation actions at any of these sites in participating countries.

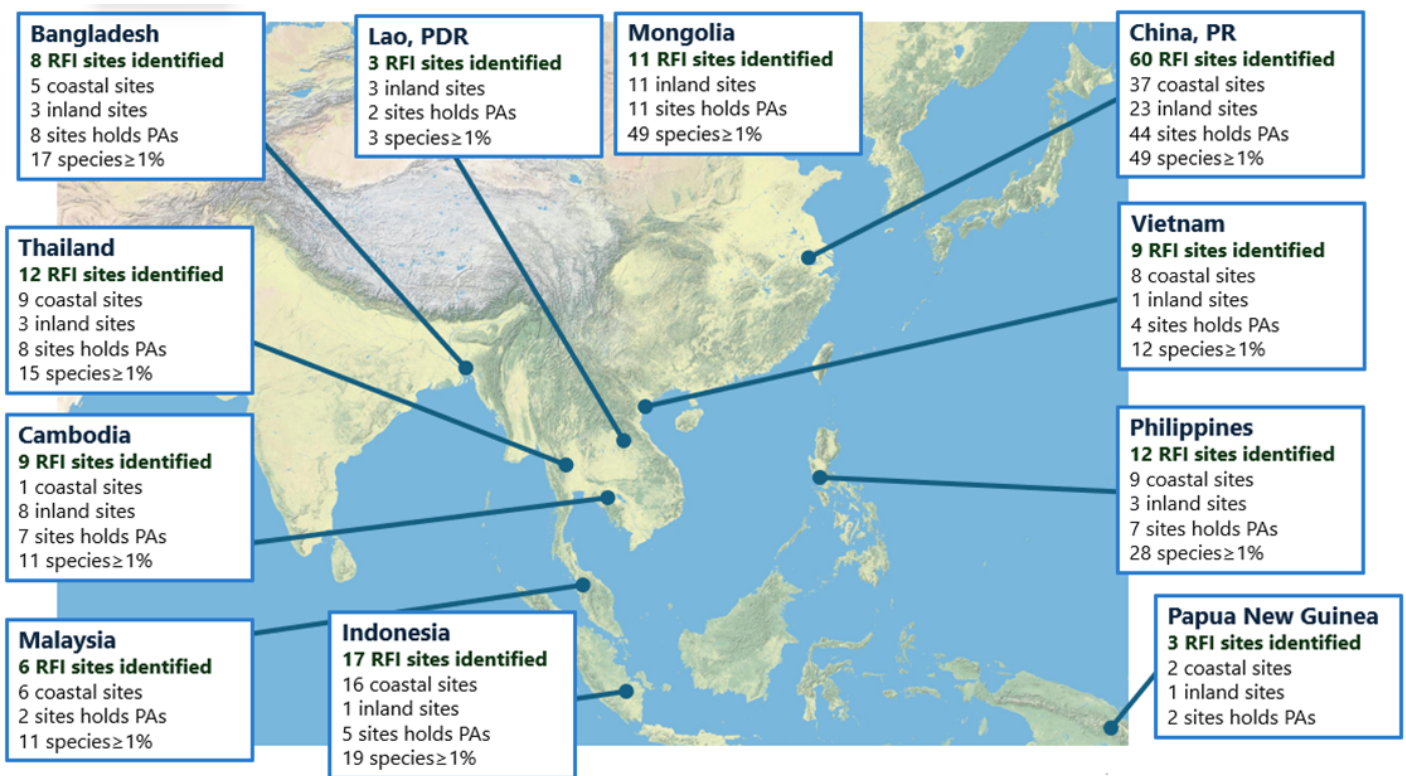


Figure 2. Key countries in the EAAF indicating number of RFI priority sites

The list of priority sites identified through the RFI in Figure 2, eligible for support via the GFGM in participating countries, comprises many protected areas as well as sites which are designated as Flyway Network Sites through the East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership underscoring their global and regional importance. These sites cover an ecologically connected network across the entire flyway from Alaska to New Zealand (see Annex H for map).

Threats and Barriers to the Conservation of Migratory Birds

Threats

Multiple threats impact negatively on migratory birds with 44% of migratory land birds and waterbirds populations in decline and many of these species listed as globally threatened on the IUCN Red List (CR, EN, VU). Indeed in 2025, 7.9% of migratory land and waterbirds were classified by BirdLife International as globally threatened on the IUCN Red List. More specifically in relation to the world's major flyways, and including waterbirds and landbirds, this includes 622 species in the Americas Flyway, 465 species in the African-Eurasian Flyway, 324 species in the Central Asian Flyway, and 523 species in the East Asian–Australasian Flyway, with some overlap as some species are using more than one of these flyways.

The EAAF overlaps with the most densely populated parts of the planet which are inhabited by over 2 billion people. Threats faced by migratory bird species in the EAAF are multiple, complex, and formidable, and some could be mutually reinforcing. Habitat loss and degradation, driven by land-use change due to agriculture and development is widely recognised as the primary threat to migratory birds in this flyway, and the situation is especially acute for species dependant on coastal wetlands. Secondary but also significant threats on this flyway are hunting and trapping, and the development of infrastructure especially for energy generation and transmission. Climate change altered rainfall patterns, raised sea level and increased temperatures, also significantly impact on wetlands along the EAAF.

1. Loss and degradation of migratory bird habitats

a) Loss and degradation of coastal wetlands

The loss and degradation of coastal wetlands is the most important cause of the rapid declines of many migratory shorebird species in the EAAF. During the past 50 years, 51% of intertidal habitat in China has been converted to urban, industrial and agricultural land, and c.35% of intertidal habitat around the Yellow Sea has been lost since the 1980s. The remaining areas are affected by numerous on-going and planned land conversion projects, but less so in recent years.

In other parts of the EAAF, especially in Southeast Asia, coastal wetlands are increasingly converted or degraded due to large scale coastal development, aquaculture and reclamation projects. Degradation and fragmentation of coastal wetlands is especially acute in mainland Southeast Asia. Threats range from mangrove planting on natural mudflats leading to habitat loss for migratory birds and other taxa, to reduced sediment deposition from major rivers due in part to dam development leading to coastal erosion.

Other threats to coastal wetlands include: pollution from agricultural chemicals, industrial waste, plastic litter and oil spills; tidal and wind energy development; overharvesting and overuse of intertidal resources, and the introduction (accidental or deliberate) of alien invasive species.

b) Loss and degradation of freshwater wetlands

The loss and degradation of freshwater wetlands is a major yet often overlooked threat to migratory birds in the EAAF. Over 50% of the region's threatened migratory waterbirds are dependent on freshwater wetlands. Much of the region's freshwater wetlands have been lost or degraded due to intensive paddy cultivation, irrigation and to a lesser extent other land-uses. Species dependent on riparian wetlands have been hit hardest, especially those wintering in freshwater wetlands on the lower Mekong River due to damming work that has disrupted hydrological processes and destroyed riverine habitat. The lower Mekong region of Cambodia, Thailand, Lao PDR and Vietnam supports some of the highest human densities and is especially important for agriculture. A similar situation can be seen in the densely populated 'Lakes region' of the lower Yangtze in China where wetlands have been converted into agricultural fields, with the result that remaining areas of natural wetlands are fragments, surrounded by a large matrix of human settlements and paddy fields.

c) Land-use change and migratory landbirds

Migratory landbirds are in decline globally. This includes many passerine birds, and raptors which tend to occur at low densities. Their declines are often linked to land-use change and degradation, such as through intensification of agriculture and deforestation. Unlike the African-Eurasian and Americas Flyways, the conservation status and long-term population trends of many landbirds in the EAAF remains poorly known.

In Asia where data is limited, some of the best evidence of declines in landbirds can be found through monitoring schemes from East Asia. In Japan where abundance and occurrence data of summer breeding songbirds are available, species wintering in South-East Asia exhibit clear declines or have even disappeared completely from sites while non-migrants are seemingly stable. In South Korea, a number of long-distance migratory landbirds have also shown declines. Many migratory landbirds depend on tropical forests as wintering habitat, and the rapid clearance and degradation of forests in Cambodia, Indonesia and the Philippines is likely to affect their populations.

2. Hunting and take of wildlife

The hunting and take of wildlife and especially birds, has emerged as a significant threat to biodiversity globally. Current (and often patchy) lines of evidence suggest that large volumes of wild birds are taken and/or traded for human consumption, especially large-bodied species (e.g., waterbirds) in the EAAF aided by the easy availability of trapping tools such as nets. Hunting of migratory birds have been documented in parts of Cambodia, China, Indonesia, (e.g., Sumatra, Java), Lao PDR, Myanmar, Vietnam and the Philippines. The published and anecdotal evidence suggests that migratory birds are hunted and taken throughout the EAAF at scales that put species and populations at risk. This is driven by a high commercial demand for certain migratory taxa for human consumption (e.g., buntings, swallows, shorebirds, rails), or the pet trade (e.g. flycatchers, raptors, thrushes, finches), combined with poverty in rural areas, and limited alternative sources of livelihoods.

In early 2024, BirdLife International published 'Bird hunting in mainland Southeast Asia' a situational analysis and recommendations for conservation action informed by market surveys, field studies and questionnaire based interviews with local people across six countries of mainland Southeast Asia (Cambodia, Thailand, Viet Nam, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Malaysia) as well as Bangladesh due to it sharing a similar biota with the region. Alongside this, reviews of national legislation relevant to species protection in all seven countries were conducted to identify legal gaps and make recommendations for improved protection measures. Bird trapping and hunting were shown to be widespread across EAAF countries, particularly so in Lao PDR, Myanmar and Viet Nam and field surveys showed that nets are the tools most frequently used to trap birds in open environments such as wetlands. In Bangladesh and Thailand, nets were observed to be used in production landscapes, primarily to exclude birds perceived as pests and some birds also trapped for food or trade. The impact of such actions is devastating to many species with several millions of birds estimated to be killed in Thai production landscapes.

Market surveys also showed severe impact on migratory species, with the species most hunted in the region being the Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* which are heavily trapped in parts of Lao PDR and Viet Nam to supply the trade in swallow meat. As many as 2.6 million individuals are trapped annually from both countries. Shorebirds, including rails such as Watercock *Gallinago cinerea*, White-breasted Waterhen *Amaurornis phoenicurus*, Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* and swamphens *Porphyrio sp.* and (migratory) snipes *Gallinago sp.* are targeted by trappers across the region, especially in paddy landscapes in Cambodia, Malaysia, Viet Nam and Thailand. Whilst bird trapping and hunting is well documented in forested landscapes, this work showed that it is possibly even more prevalent in environments such as paddy fields and coastal wetlands, affecting many migratory waterbirds to the region. In total, more than 500 species, including globally threatened migratory species such as the Black-faced Spoonbill, were found to be trapped or hunted in the last 10 years in mainland Southeast Asia, representing roughly a third of the region's avifauna.

3. Electrocution and collision with energy infrastructure

Another threat is electrocution and collision with energy and other infrastructure. Rapid economic growth in the region is driving demand for energy. The expansion of renewable energy is vital to meet this demand, whilst addressing the global issue of climate change. However, energy infrastructure development such as wind farms and transmission lines can have negative impacts on birds if facilities are not planned and implemented appropriately. For example, poorly sited wind farms have been shown to have detrimental impacts on birds, particularly migratory soaring birds. Wind energy and power transmission infrastructure can lead to impacts including collision leading to direct mortality; electrocution where pylons are poorly designed; disturbance and displacement from suitable sites; barriers to movement disrupting ecological links between feeding, wintering, breeding and molting areas; and change to or loss of habitat due to wind turbines and associated infrastructure.

Many countries in the EAAF are investing, or planning to invest heavily, in the renewable energy sector. Already, large areas of wind and solar farms have been established in parts of China and Japan, including along some of the region's most important coastlines for migratory birds. Large areas of solar and wind farms are also planned in various parts of the Flyway in Southeast Asia from Vietnam, Thailand to the Philippines.

4. Climate change

Anthropogenic climate change has led to raised temperatures, sea levels, acidity, reduced oxygen and altered rainfall patterns. Tropical cyclones and floods have become more frequent and more intense. Beaches and intertidal habitats are at risk, including many valuable agricultural and mariculture developments, villages and even coastal towns. Such climate change may also lead to seasonal mismatch between migration times and habitat productivity. Climate change and increasing extreme weather events also present new development challenges to local communities (especially in coastal areas) which impact livelihoods, food security, health and nutrition, and safety. This can include increased periods of flooding and droughts that affect agricultural cycles, storm surges that cause damage to property and infrastructure, and wildfires that destroy forests, crops and property. Likewise, loss of biodiversity impacts on the ecosystem services that people depend upon for their security, stability of local economies and livelihoods (e.g., loss of pollinators that crop farming is reliant on or threats to species that underpin attraction of tourism to an area).

Barriers

Multiple barriers affect stakeholders critical to implementation of successful flyway conservation on the EAAF.

1. Inadequate valuation, communication, education and public awareness (CEPA)

Awareness of the importance of preserving functional natural ecosystems and their natural capital values remains low within government, media, public and in affected communities. Communities are often well aware of species and have a cultural connection to them and the wetlands in which they live. However, socio-economic pressures mean that more of an extractive relationship exists with natural resources. This is often exacerbated by government policy which directly supports activities that are harmful to biodiversity such as chemical based agriculture.

Awareness based on species or habitat concerns, or appeals to conservation values alone are failing to halt governments, developers and local communities, as land conversion and intensification promises development and jobs.

There is a lack of understanding and appreciation of the natural capital values and importance of wetlands and the species they support including birds and their economic and cultural significance, as well as the ecosystem services that are provided by the sites and habitats on the flyway that are important for both birds and people. Insufficient importance is therefore attached to birds and their habitats in relation to matters of public interest.

Conservation efforts and CEPA approaches may also lack integration of behavior change strategies, resulting in missed opportunities to engage local knowledge, understand motivations for harmful behaviors and practices and co-create conservation solutions with local people that are cognizant of their needs, motivations and values and provide benefits and incentives to support desired behavior change.

CEPA provides an opportunity to build interest and support for wetland protection and sustainable management and this coupled with hard data on ecosystem services values, and methods of ecosystem service valuation that are CSO/community-led (e.g., use of the Toolkit for Ecosystem Service Site based Assessment) and foster strong local ownership, could enable change. Significant work has been done to identify actions to address challenges and the EAAFP CEPA Action Plan 2023-2028^[5] remains highly relevant and will be a key document to guide activities to be completed through this project.

Integrating behavior change strategies to conservation projects and CEPA approaches provides an opportunity to better research and respond to the motivations, actions and needs of local people, encourage participation and co-creation at project design stage and embed strong local ownership to support and sustain wetland protection and management through changed behaviors, practices and norms.

2. Lack of inclusion of civil society

Growing political momentum and emerging nature markets globally mean increasing interest from MFIs, governments and private sector in harnessing natural capital values and investing in nature-based climate solutions. But without proper involvement of civil society including NGOs, CSOs, academic institutions, small-medium enterprises (SME), and Indigenous Peoples, local communities, and women and youth groups, MFIs and governments risk failing to access requisite technical capacities and locally contextual data to develop and sustain such investments at scale. A lack of inclusion of civil society at large threatens equitable sharing of benefits and the sustainability of conservation interventions.

Nature loss globally poses grave threats to economies, as well as to security and resilience against disasters, but if addressed, mitigated and reversed nature – including ecosystems and the services they provide- presents significant opportunities for economic development in ODA eligible countries which are often rich in natural resources. Without empowering civil society, including local communities, to participate in and lead projects in emerging nature markets that attract foreign public and private investment, hard won progress towards the Global Goals for Sustainable Development (SDGs) and in upholding the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights and its associated Conventions in flyway countries could be undermined. A constrained operating environment for civil society in some political contexts affects how CSO, NGO or local communities and Indigenous Peoples can participate in governance of natural resources and subsequently in green markets. Furthermore, certain demographics within civil society may experience exclusion or marginalization depending on political, social and cultural norms and this can impact on their participation in decision making processes and roles implementation of conservation, restoration and management of productive habitats, further entrenching inequalities experienced.

Despite their best efforts, MFIs (and national governments) may lack social and relational capital to engage and consult adequately with IPLCs living in or adjacent to flyway sites. Successful working at local level and understanding of local

priorities often relies on relationships of trust built and sustained over the long term. Changes of staff due to political cycles as well as lack of capacity and resource (e.g., in technical staff such as extension officers) in sub-national government places pressure on governments to reach remote rural and coastal areas and the communities that live in these areas.

3. Dearth of available information

There is limited availability of good and trusted information on the ecology of wetlands or waterbirds. Their collection needs a scientific infrastructure, continuous funding and cohorts of dedicated researchers. Within the EAAF, the development and funding of scientific centers of excellence clearly needs attention. Lack of clear accurate, trusted and convincing information both in general terms and at specific sites weakens the potential to integrate biodiversity considerations into developers plans or ensure that local government approvals can be made with proper costing of environmental damages and losses.

Delivering development finance investment at scale with nature-based solutions (NbS) projects that reach equitable and sustainable outcomes will also rely on due consultation, involvement and benefits sharing with local people. Civil society can be empowered to lead assessments and monitoring that can provide credible, locally contextual data needed by MFIs, governments and the private sector to conceptualize and invest into projects. Lending priorities of MFIs and borrowing priorities of governments may reflect national or global interests rather than local, provincial or sub-national priorities and so local gaining locally relevant information is critical. For example with good information on historic land use, species presence and subsequent land use changes and species information, potential projects can be developed with a better understanding of potential project outcomes and benefits. As an example, subsidy impacts on farming practices compared to historic activities which could lead to consideration of repurposing or reform. In addition, with good information, rights holders such as local communities and Indigenous Peoples are in a strong position to influence the application of environmental and social safeguards and strengthen local ownership of projects, helping to break down barriers to project approval and sustainability.

4. Weak, inconsistent environmental governance

a) Inconsistent or incoherent policies, laws, regulations and protections

Weak policy, policies, laws and regulations, and their enforcement mean that migratory bird species receive inconsistent levels of legal protection across the flyway. Many species may be partly (China, Malaysia) or fully protected (Australia, Singapore) at national and sub-national level under wildlife protection or protected area legislation. Some species are internationally protected under bilateral and multilateral frameworks such as the Convention on Migratory Species, but this Convention has not been universally adopted, or its provisions have not been translated into national legislation. Furthermore, conservation agencies have low financing and limited resources, resulting in weak protection and management of existing sites. Ministries or other agencies that are responsible for the establishment of protected areas may face constraints in influencing coherence with agencies responsible for spatial planning and zoning major coastal developments. CSOs have an important role to play in strengthening the coherence and application of policies, planning and legislation. Whilst CSO influence varies considerably across the EAAF, they can support application on the ground, build relationships and take part in processes in support of the government (e.g., in Cambodia, Thailand, Philippines and Indonesia in particular). CSO have demonstrated their effectiveness in constructively highlighting weaknesses in the application of laws and regulations and applying soft pressure for positive change (e.g., in relation to the use of mist nets to illegally trap birds in China). Where governmental capacity is limited by manpower and resources, CSOs can play an invaluable complementary role to protection and management, e.g., in raising awareness, biodiversity monitoring and community engagement and indeed in actually supporting the drafting of legislation for the governments use.

Protected areas. National protected area networks have typically been designated opportunistically or driven by specific needs and political agendas, rather than being based on comprehensive systems planning. As options for conservation are narrowed by growing land pressures, there is a growing urgency to prioritize and zone areas for conservation protection and action. Conservation plans need to be integrated or mainstreamed into wider planning processes and protected areas planned from a broader landscape viewpoint. There has been a bias in establishment towards mountain reserves and inland wetlands as an example, but a significant lack of representation of lowlands, coastal and marine areas. This bias occurs as it is easier to designate large protected areas in the agriculturally less productive and more remote mountain areas which are often also less populated.

The comparative lack of protected wetlands in the EAAF means that greater emphasis is needed to pursue alternative approaches to site protection and management, including community led conservation and management which can be facilitated and supported by civil society. This can play a complementary role alongside other efforts that are being advanced. This approach can include working with local governments, the private sector, and other community stakeholders in relation to natural resource use. Additionally, if resourced adequately, CSOs are well placed to provide continuity in protection and management regardless of change brought about through political cycles that can impact government counterparts at local and national levels.

Site protection. Many important coastal wetland sites in Southeast Asia receive little or no legal protection and remain vulnerable to encroachment and conversion. There is an urgent need to strengthen site protection networks within the flyway, developing the capacity for site management and building links between individual sites and educational establishments and communities adjacent to these areas, as well as links between sites.

b) Weak impact assessment, planning and management

Most countries have legal requirements for applying Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA). However, EIAs are typically assessing impact at the project level rather than at a land/sea/river basin scale. Further, very rarely do these consider the cumulative impact in a flyway context where migratory species require a network of sites that extends beyond national boundaries, and adverse impacts at one site can have consequences for the biodiversity values at other sites. More strategic approaches such as Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEAs), Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM), and innovative approaches such as nature positive and carbon neutral initiatives, provide an opportunity for integration between different sectors at the management level. Almost all countries of the region profess to employ some forms of integrated planning and management of their coastal zones. However, awareness of the importance of biodiversity is so weak that relevant experts are rarely engaged by the integrated planning teams and if involved can generally only offer generic platitudes in the lack of hard economic data. The result is that biodiversity is rarely well presented and under-protected in resultant plans. Flyway scale financing (such as being advanced through the Regional Flyway Initiative) is setting out a new way of assessing, planning and implementation of development which offers the prospect of deeper sectoral integration and multinational alignment. The role of citizen science-based monitoring has a very important role to play in inputting to assessment, planning and post project monitoring, as well as making complementary contributions to better management. The RFI and other initiatives established to drive nature positive investment (e.g., Nature Solutions Finance Hub) demonstrate active efforts by development finance institutions to support and incentivize sovereign clients (Developing Member Countries) in transition to nature positive and carbon neutral economies, influencing upstream rather than at project level case by case.

5. Inadequate financial resource and access

CSOs are often highly under resourced and dependent on project funding cycles that restrict expenditure (i.e., non-flexible grants). Local communities including IPLCs in many DMCs of the RFI may experience poverty and inequality, hampering their financial resources, financial literacy and access to credit. Financial constraints to CSOs and IPLCs are characterized by their: a) lack of access to appropriate funding for CSOs to engage in conservation (of flyway sites); and b) lack of access to capital by IPLCs for environmentally sustainable productive activities. On the part of IPLCs, these negatively impact on their ability to invest in resilient livelihoods (e.g., climate smart and/or biodiversity friendly agriculture) and is a key driver of habitat destruction as communities have limited options to diversify or seek alternative sustainable livelihoods. On the part of local and national CSOs, these financial constraints limit their ability to lead NbS projects, and to innovate and create pipelines of bankable projects that are viable for private sector investment.

6. Lack of technical and organizational capacities in CSOs and IPLCs

CSOs and IPLCs may lack specific technical capacities which inhibits their participation and leadership of bankable projects in green markets. This can include specific technical knowledge on carbon finance, natural capital valuation, ecosystem services assessments, and biodiversity monitoring. Funders/ financiers of conservation and development often require a level of fiduciary assurance which many local and national organizations, SMEs or informal groups at community level cannot provide. Similarly, local organizations may lack appropriate governance structures to enable them to participate as partners in NbS projects. Another organizational barrier can be human resources, with many organizations facing turnover of staff and due to financial constraints an inability to recruit appropriate expertise.

7. Structural and Social Constraints Limiting Women and Indigenous Communities

Women and indigenous peoples face interconnected barriers that limit their full participation to access equal benefits in flyway conservation. Socio-cultural norms and gendered power dynamics often restrict their voice in decision-making and leadership roles. Women, especially from IPLCs are underrepresented in flyway governance platforms and they are less visible in regional policy dialogues even though they hold critical local and indigenous knowledge about wetlands and biodiversity. Gaps in capacity development and insufficient recognition of women's and indigenous peoples' ecological knowledge further constrain their ability to influence project outcomes and equitable share in conservation benefits. Conservation benefits such as paid roles, leadership opportunities, and income often favor men. Compounding these challenges, women frequently carry disproportionate domestic and caregiving workloads, limiting their availability for training and engagement. Women are more vulnerable to wetland degradation and climate change impacts due to their reliance on natural resources for livelihoods and household well-being.

Women and indigenous-led organizations also encounter systemic hurdles in accessing funding, technical support, and networks. They also face limited access to large-scale funding and lack the capacity to meet financial and reporting requirements. Hence, they are often confined to small grants or informal funding. Addressing these barriers is essential to ensure that women including those from IPLCs have equitable access to finance, decision-making, capacity, and benefits from flyway conservation.

Future Scenarios

While the following trends in the threats are expected in most countries along the EAAF, there is much latitude in their likely occurrence. To achieve durable outcomes, the project will need to anticipate and internalize these uncertain trends in project design. The project will also have to anticipate and accommodate positive trends in its design to consolidate and possibly to magnify project impacts during and beyond project duration. It is recognized that some of the threats could be mutually reinforcing while positive developments could offset the negative impacts.

1. Worsening climate change.

The key driver going forward in the abundance and decline in migratory birds worldwide is climate change (Jie, L. *et al.* 2021) through its impact on the environment and availability of food. Climate change will make environmental conditions for certain species unsuitable, resulting in the reduction of suitable habitat areas for migratory birds. Sea-level rise, flooding, and increase in desiccation and desertification are expected to further contribute to the loss of habitats. The referenced study which focused on China predicts that habitat area will decline considerably in the Yangtze River and Pearl River basins which will lead to greater pressure in a reduced area of floodplain and coastal habitat. The same scenario is likely to be observed in other countries along the EAAF and is expected to worsen as predicted in IPCC assessment reports. The direction of impacts appears to be certain, however, the magnitude may not be. Thus, consideration of climate-proofing project investments is necessary in project design. Research published in October 2025 (<https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-025-11517-6>) shows that coastal flooding is already responsible for US\$29.6 billion of damage a year across 29 countries in Asia and the Pacific, and projected to rise to US\$518 billion by 2100 if a 'business as usual' approach is taken concerning current policies.

2. Increasing economic and demographic pressures.

Habitat loss and degradation will be further driven, aside from climate change, by economic growth and the increasing need for food and settlements of a rapidly growing human population. Whilst East and Southeast Asia are experiencing diverse population trends, with a slowdown in China and continued growth in Southeast Asia, coastal areas (e.g., in China, Indonesia and the Philippines) are registering rapid population increases. This will lead to increased demand for land, resources and infrastructure which will lead to further encroachment into critical wetland habitats for migratory birds such as tidal flats and salt marshes. The intensification of agriculture and aquaculture in pursuit of maximizing yield and efficiency to meet increasing demand for food will further lead to the intensive use of synthetic fertilizers and pesticides which will pollute farmland and coastal areas used by migratory birds. In terms of economic growth, the region is expected to maintain robust growth, driven by strong domestic demand and tourism. It is projected to decelerate due to global uncertainties but will remain one of the fastest-growing globally. Thus, the upward trends in

both economic and population growth are expected to result in further loss and degradation of migratory bird habitats, particularly in sites where legal protection is weak.

3. Limited progress in conservation efforts.

Most, if not all, ASEAN Member States (AMS) have made strides in achieving Aichi Biodiversity Target 11 – protecting 17% of terrestrial and 10% of marine areas. As of [2021](#), the AMS have collectively established protection for 15.57 per cent of terrestrial and 4 per cent of coastal and marine areas. China, meanwhile, registered 18% terrestrial coverage in [2020](#), exceeding the Aichi target but fell short in marine coverage at 3.5%. There has been significant progress in conserving biodiversity in terrestrial ecosystems but not in coastal/marine areas. The road to achieving the more ambitious KM-GBF targets (e.g., KM-GBF: Target 3) could be arduous. There are challenges and opportunities along the way. As described in an ADB report, the significant progress in China was due to the integration of ecological management into the country's legal and policy regime to provide a platform for biodiversity conservation. China has emphasized the benefits of biodiversity conservation to local communities through biodiversity-friendly alternative livelihoods. Many Southeast Asian countries have also made significant progress. There are positive trends, including reduced deforestation due to increased sustainable practices and voluntary certification schemes. Landscape approaches and community-based programs are being scaled up. The integration of biodiversity considerations into development planning is proceeding in most countries although full integration has yet to happen.

The policy environment in many countries, however, is highly political particularly at the site level whereby local government officials can repeal regulations which were the basis for project design or pass new ones. Moreover, local officials could delay or hamper national conservation laws which contravene local development agenda.

4. Increasing momentum and interest in nature markets

A recent surge in attendance at MEA Convention meetings from business and finance sectors, the world's largest asset manager BlackRock USA Fund confirming their official recognition of nature as an asset class (January 2025), and Goldman Sachs announcing creation of a biodiversity bond (March 2025) are signals of a growing momentum among investors and financiers to shape and invest into nature positive markets. This is likely to increase over the project term. Increasingly, economic dependency on nature is acknowledged, with the World Economic Forum stating that 'approximately USD \$44 trillion of economic value generation is moderately or highly dependent on nature' (WEF Nature Risk Rising, 2020) and a more recent assertion from PWC estimating that 'USD \$58 trillion or 55.5% of the global GDP is highly or moderately dependent on nature' (PWC, Managing Nature Risks, 2023). This indicates that by establishing investment strategies across flyways that offer sufficient scale to elicit investor interest and mobilizing a whole of society approach inclusive of civil society towards design and delivery of bankable projects, RFIs catalyzed with development finance will be well positioned to access markets to sustain conservation solutions and leverage significant financial flows from the private sector to address the biodiversity funding gap.

Regional and National Initiatives Addressing Threats and Barriers

Regional Flyways Initiative (RFI)

Launched in October 2021, in partnership with Birdlife International and EAAFP, the RFI is being funded by a \$1.7 million ADB technical assistance grant program for the development phase. As part of ADB's efforts to scale up Nature-Positive Investments, the RFI is playing a role in expanding financing for biodiversity and providing DMCs with targeted support for programs that address ecological priorities in Asia and the Pacific.[\[6\]](#)⁶ By early 2024, the TA identified 150 high priority wetland sites of international importance in consultation with governments, the East Asian Australasian Flyway Partnership and civil society stakeholders. The GFGM, in its first iteration of granting in Asia-Pacific region mobilized by this proposed GEF project, will focus exclusively on these selected priority sites, drawing on the extensive multistakeholder consultation, early ecosystem services analysis and use of global datasets on migratory birds (e.g., IUCN Red List) and areas of globally significant biodiversity (e.g., KBA database, Ramsar

Convention on Wetlands) that contributed to the RFI site selection methodology. Annex J shows the full list of sites across the EAAF for which, participating country CSOs will be eligible to drive conservation action using grants disbursed through the GFGM. GEF resources cannot be used to co-finance existing GEF investments and as such three sites (Candaba, Sibugay Wetlands, and Lake Mainit) in Philippines where an RFI project is already funded by the GEF (11578) will not be eligible for support via the GFGM using GEF funds without prior justification, review and GEFSEC approval. Consultation and capacity building workshops targeted at national stakeholders have since been organized in the Philippines (2023), Cambodia (2023), Thailand (2023), Bangladesh (2024), China (2024) and Mongolia (2024). Consultation meetings have also been held with the governments of Malaysia, Indonesia, PNG, Lao PDR and Vietnam and from 2023 to 2025. At these national workshops, stakeholders discussed ecosystem services provided by prioritized RFI sites, including targeted training on the means and approaches to estimate the value from provisioning services, carbon and coastal protection. Stakeholders at the workshop also identified and agreed on site boundaries and capacity gaps that need to be met to protect these sites better, while undertaking field visits to consult local communities at selected RFI wetlands such as Boeung Prek Lapouv (in Cambodia), Hail Haor (in Bangladesh) and Pak Thale (in Thailand).^{[7]⁷} Multi-country training workshops on wetland ecosystem services and the RFI was organized at the EAAFP MOP in 2023 at Brisbane, bringing together representatives from all participating countries.

Meanwhile, ADB, BirdLife and EAAFP have been consulting with governments, partners, and stakeholders to produce a final list of 150 priority sites for concept development. By mid-2025, project concepts to guide project development have been prepared for about 40 RFI sites. A RFI wetland project for three prioritized sites (Candaba, Sibugay Wetlands, and Lake Mainit) is now in the process of being developed, with GEF funding for the Philippines secured, and with leadership from the Philippine government. By mid-2025, ADB has confirmed the development of two further RFI wetland projects, this time with loan financing from the ADB and for the Hunan province project co-finance provided by the French AFD, for priority wetlands in China, focusing on Dongting Lake in Hunan^{[8]⁸} and coastal sites in Fujian Province.^{[9]⁹} The proposed Global Flyways Granting Mechanism will run in parallel to these investments, ensuring that key CSO capacity issues are addressed, and site maintenance and monitoring continues.

East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership (EAAFP)

Out of nine major flyways worldwide, the EAAF has made remarkable progress in international cooperation by establishing a coordinated, flyway-wide framework. In 2002, the East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership (EAAFP) was adopted in the list of the World Summit on Sustainable Development as a Type II initiative, which is informal and voluntary. In 2006, the Partnership was officially launched aiming to conserve migratory waterbirds, their habitats and the livelihoods of people who depend on them. Since then, the EAAFP has grown into a unique and inclusive platform of 42 Partners including national governments and intergovernmental bodies, NGOs, and civil society. 156 internationally important sites have been designated as EAAFP Flyway Network by 19 national governments (see Annex H). These EAAFP sites overlap with many of the 150 sites that are identified through the RFI and are eligible across for GFGM support. Indeed, alignment with existing EAAFP sites, or actions to progress formal designation of RFI sites as EAAFP, will be a key criteria in assessment of applications, ensuring that the GFGM is demand driven and maximizing impacts of conservation actions propelled by GFGM support through interaction with the EAAFP. CSOs have played a vital role in identifying Flyway Network Sites and supporting governments in their effective management.

The EAAFP serves as the central platform for international collaboration along the Flyway, bringing together governments, intergovernmental bodies, NGOs, and other stakeholders to protect migratory waterbirds, their habitats, and the livelihoods of people who depend on them. Established in 2006 in Bogor, Indonesia, when nine national governments and six international NGOs—including BirdLife International—formally committed to cooperate, the

Partnership has since grown into a broad and influential coalition. Today, its membership includes 42 Partners: 18 national governments, six intergovernmental organizations, 16 international NGOs, one International Organization, and one corporate partner. This diversity of membership makes the EAAFP unique among global flyway frameworks, as it provides not only a mechanism for policy coordination and conservation action but also a trusted platform for linking governments with civil society and local communities across the region.

The Partnership Document recognizes that building and promoting the site network for migratory waterbirds, and delivering capacity building at a local level to ensure sustainable delivery of ecosystem services will enhance the conservation status of migratory waterbirds. The Partnership also recognizes that a flyway-wide approach to the conservation of migratory waterbirds is the most effective way to enhance their conservation status. The Partnership contributes to the implementation of a number of Inter-Governmental agreements and other international frameworks, including the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar), the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), among others.

The EAAFP through its Secretariat operates two Small Grant Fund windows. The first provides financial support to its partners and collaborators for organizing public events and/or conservation workshops through participating in the World Migratory Bird Day. The second window is for EAAFP Working Groups and Task Forces for projects (e.g., research, monitoring site management, training, CEPA events/materials) of up to \$5,000 that advance migratory waterbird conservation. Total annual fund allocation for all its Small Grant Fund is \$60,000.

ASEAN Center for Biodiversity (ACB) Improving Biodiversity Conservation of Wetlands and Migratory Waterbirds in the ASEAN Region

ACB implemented the above project which is currently in its second phase. The first phase project which ran from 2017 to 2020 sought the following: a well functioning ASEAN Flyway Network (AFN) and improved knowledge of wetlands and migratory waterbirds in ASEAN. It established a regional network to strengthen the conservation of wetland habitats and migratory waterbirds in ASEAN and implemented a baseline and biodiversity monitoring surveys of existing and potential flyway sites and priority coastal areas. The second phase project which is currently ongoing (September 2023 to June 2025) builds on the first phase by focusing on sustaining the AFN as well as enhancing capacities for waterbird and wetland monitoring at both regional and national levels.

Initiatives Supported by the GEF

In addition to the above regional initiatives, several countries in the EAAF including PR China and the Philippines are or will be implementing national-level projects focused on migratory birds which are supported by the GEF. The list below also includes migratory bird conservation projects in other flyways. These projects are further discussed in the succeeding section on *Coordination and Cooperation with Ongoing Initiatives and Project* of this PIF.

- PR China: Strengthening the protected area network for migratory bird conservation along the East Asian-Australasian Flyway (EAAF) in China. This project is ongoing and expected to end in 2026.
- Philippines: Scaling-up conservation and sustainable management of priority wetlands of the East-Asian Australasian Flyway in the Philippines. This project is in the final stages of preparation. Implementation is expected to commence in late 2025 or early 2026.
- India: CoHABITAT - Conservation and sustainable management of wetlands, forests and grasslands to conserve the population of migratory bird species along the Central Asian Flyway in India. Concept was approved and currently in design phase.
- Regional, Africa: Mainstreaming conservation of migratory soaring birds into key productive sectors along the Rift Valley/Red Sea Flyway. This project, which was delivered over two phases between 2008 to 2023, promoted flyway

conservation mainstreaming into the agriculture, hunting, waste management, energy and tourism sectors to encourage flyway-friendly practices in 11 countries: Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Jordan, Lebanon, the Palestinian Authority, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen.

Whilst the initiatives above have already achieved great results for flyway conservation, that demonstrate the momentum amongst governments, MFIs, civil society, regional initiatives and from the GEF, it is notable that they target investments at national and regional rather than global levels. The GFGM will be established through this project, as a mechanism that focuses its granting initially at a regional level in the Asia and Pacific regions to align with the RFI, however efforts undertaken in this project will establish the governance structures, partnerships, systems and processes required to roll out iterative post-project granting cycles addressing different major flyways globally. Regional Flyway Initiatives established in partnership between BirdLife International and MFIs now include the Development Bank for Latin America and the Caribbean (CAF) for the Americas Flyway (announced 2022), and the World Bank for the African Eurasian Flyway (announced 2025). These partnerships form the building blocks for global roll out of the GFGM, with future cycles of granting envisaged to align with the different Regional Flyway Initiatives, ensuring that CSO and the communities they serve are empowered to participate in, lead and benefit from flyway conservation and a whole of society, whole of flyway approach is fostered to tackle the intractable problem of conservation of migratory species.

With nine major flyways globally, there is scope for maximizing and scaling impact of regional and national initiatives if a global mechanism existed. Additionally, though many of these initiatives involve civil society as downstream partners, they do not explicitly focus on addressing the capacity gaps that prevent civil society from participating in, leading and benefitting from flyway conservation efforts. This limited focused attention on civil society risks undermining equitable benefits that can be derived from sufficient inclusion of civil society, and reducing the effectiveness of the actions of other stakeholders such as MFI, regional initiatives or national governments through failure to engage locally contextual, locally verified data and strengthening the ability of CSO and IPLC to sustain flyway conservation efforts. Unlike national governments, civil society organizations are not subject to turnover due to political changes and therefore represent a valuable resource that can be applied over the long term to conservation efforts. Likewise, civil society organizations tend to hold longstanding and trusted relationships with the communities they represent and serve, this relational capital could be unlocked to the benefit of the initiatives if civil society were supported more effectively. Critically, support to civil society must be ongoing and sustained rather than on a project-by-project basis if it is to be transformative in empowering CSOs and IPLCs as key stakeholders to flyway conservation and shifting relational dynamics between civil society and other powerful stakeholders such as MFI, intergovernmental organizations and governments.

[1] A.C. Hughes. 2017. Understanding the drivers of Southeast Asian biodiversity loss. *Ecosphere*. 8 (1). p 13.

[2] Murray, N. J. (2023). *The extent and drivers of global wetland loss*. Nature, News & Views. <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-023-00268-x>

[3] There is no single person who identified the nine global flyways; rather, they are a widely accepted concept developed through decades of observation and research by multiple international ornithologists and conservation groups, including but not limited to BirdLife International, Wetlands International, Convention on Migratory Species, and International Wader Study Group. The current framework is the result of continuous refinement and international collaboration.

[4] Some of the RFI sites are also part of the EAAFP Network. Inclusion requires meeting a set of criteria which are based on the Ramsar Convention for internationally important wetlands. Annex H shows the map for network sites encompassing all countries in the entire EAAF.

[5] <https://eaaflyway.net/cepa-strategy/>

[6] <https://events.development.asia/learning-events/adb-data-room-regional-flyway-initiative> [See tab RFI Priority Sites Tab]

[7] <https://events.development.asia/learning-events/adb-data-room-regional-flyway-initiative> [See tab RFI Events and Workshops]

[8] <https://www.adb.org/news/adb-support-south-dongting-lake-restoration-hunan-prc>

[9] <https://www.adb.org/news/adb-approves-142-million-loan-boost-resilience-protect-biodiversity-coastal-cities-fujian-prc>

B. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Project description

This section asks for a theory of change as part of a joined-up description of the project as a whole. The project description is expected to cover the key elements of good project design in an integrated way. It is also expected to meet the GEF's policy requirements on gender, stakeholders, private sector, and knowledge management and learning (see section D). This section should be a narrative that reads like a joined-up story and not independent elements that answer the guiding questions contained in the PIF guidance document. (Approximately 3-5 pages) see guidance here

An analysis of threats and barriers in the conservation of migratory birds and their habitats points to two major considerations that past and ongoing initiatives have not fully addressed – the lack of inclusion of civil society and inadequate financial resources specifically to enable civil society participation and generally to support on-the-ground conservation activities. The other identified barriers are equally important and would need to be addressed to achieve an effective migratory bird conservation in the EAAF. The proposed project is described below.

Proposed Alternative Scenario: The Global Flyways Grant Mechanism (GFGM)

GFGM will be a granting mechanism to further empower civil society-led conservation efforts on flyways globally, starting with the EAAF and will build on initiatives described above, including in this GEF project by directly linking to the EAAF RFI. As part of the RFI's development phase, 150 ecologically connected priority sites of global importance for migratory birds were identified along the flyway (see Annex J for map and Annex I for a full detailed site list). Under the GFGM, CSOs in participating countries will be eligible to apply for support to deliver conservation action at any of these sites in their country. In parallel, ADB is mobilizing loan and grant finance to the 11 DMCs engaged in the RFI, to fund government-led, large scale projects that address conservation needs at any of these high priority sites. Considering the ecological connectivity of these sites, the multiple threats and barriers affecting flyway conservation and the biodiversity finance gap globally, it is key that a whole of society approach is adopted that involves development finance partners, governments and civil society. Grants disbursed through the GFGM will empower CSOs to deliver conservation actions that either complement or contribute directly to the government-led projects mobilized through bilateral agreements between ADB and RFI governments. CSO led conservation projects may contribute to existing RFI projects approved or in ADB's pipeline (e.g., biodiversity monitoring; community engagement; or addressing specific technical capacity and capability gaps experienced by government) or alternatively play an important role 'pre-project' (e.g., provision of biodiversity and other environmental assessments; ecosystem services assessments; community consultations) that provide ADB and governments with the locally contextual data and proof of concept required to design and mobilize RFI projects that can scale conservation action. It is key that civil society are empowered to play these roles (e.g., as opposed to consultants) if the RFI is ultimately to benefit local people as well as the global environmental benefits derived through its protection, conservation and improved management of wetlands that sequester carbon and/or contribute beyond their site level geographies to biodiversity conservation, in particular via the ecological connectivity demonstrated by the migration of birds and other migratory species depending on these sites. The GFGM will complement and maximize the impacts of loan finance to flyway countries enabled by Multilateral Finance Institutions (MFIs) through RFI partnerships similar to the one developed by ADB, EAAFP, BirdLife International and other key stakeholders, which galvanized and enabled civil society and academia to contribution to the RFI. The GFGM will enable civil society, including CSOs, IPLCs, women and youth groups, academic institutions and social enterprises (SME), to participate in and lead complementary conservation and

restoration decisions and actions and drive social and economic co-benefits through NbS, including climate solutions and sustainable finance initiatives (SFI).

Existing projects in RFI countries demonstrate the potential for producing multiple benefits through loan- and grant-financed conservation of flyway sites. Mangrove restoration, for example, can help ensure food security, eco-tourism and other income-generating opportunities, if positioned well to avoid damage to sites in habitats (e.g., mudflats) that are critical for migratory birds. As a cost-effective intervention on ecosystems management for climate adaptation and mitigation, it can deliver nature-based coastal protection. In Viet Nam, a community-based mangrove restoration and management project focused on 200 hectares has provided livelihood benefits for 1,000 households through fishing for crabs, mollusks and fish, and improved rice yields by up to 400%. Protecting nature in wetlands to enhance eco-tourism for birdwatching and other activities is also a viable route to sustainable development. Such interventions can combine conservation, tourism and education functions, delivering direct jobs, economic opportunities and long-term livelihood benefits. In Indonesia, a marine and wetland conservation project has benefitted over 40,000 people through increased tourism generating \$1 million in revenues and providing 160 local staff with jobs with a total annual income of \$10,865.

The role of blended finance

Investment required to halt and reverse biodiversity loss in flyways as a strategy for climate action cannot rely on public funding alone. ADB is recognized as the climate bank of Asia-Pacific and a global leader as such, being the first MFI to set clear climate investment targets for 2030. A renewed effort from MFIs expressed in joint commitments made at UNFCCC COP26 and subsequent climate COPs to boost adaptation finance, increased concessional finance, support efforts for nature, scale up private sector mobilization and mainstream a Just Transition, present a key opportunity to leverage more effective blended approaches for financing. This approach is cognizant of the Bridgetown Initiative agenda, ensuring climate finance from MFIs is expanded rapidly and at scale, and that provisions are made to ensure concessional finance is accessible to developing countries.

Blended finance has the potential to include contributions from a growing portfolio of public and private sources, catalyzing an array of carefully connected interventions on the ground that can benefit a diverse range of stakeholders living along each flyway. A blended finance approach that mobilizes both loan and grant funding would largely focus on MFI led projects, these could however utilize the expertise of CSOs for project design, implementation and monitoring.

It is expected the GFGM would run in parallel to the MFI-led projects with significant complementarity around the collective goal of flyway conservation. Furthermore, it is envisioned that additional grant resources such as those from the GCF and private philanthropists will be applied for in coming years and will be linked into projects attached to the RFI. Projects enabled by GFGM grants, utilizing GEF resources, will include sustainable finance initiatives that will attract private and financial sector investors, ultimately utilizing public funds as patient capital that sustains project development to the point that private finance can be secured to sustain conservation projects into permanence.

Blended finance initiatives can empower CSOs as agents of change, and offer to ‘unlock’ the unique expertise, knowledge and relational capital that civil society holds. These complement, add value to and derisk loan-financed projects. For rapid upscaling of investments to be implemented equitably and sustainably, civil society alongside private sector and governments must be mobilized and capacitated as vital and contributory stakeholders, to ensure that conservation and restoration efforts realize tangible benefits for, and are led by and sustained by IPLCs and that foreign investments and large-scale developments are legitimate and credible in their intention to produce benefits for people, nature and the climate at local as well as global levels.

Why civil society

Strengthening civil society participation and engagement is critical to ensure grounded, grassroots, and localized contributions to flyway initiatives and produce effective results that complement larger government and MFI-led interventions. Civil society is uniquely placed to both understand and articulate local contexts and secure local acceptance, ownership and participation for effective on-the-ground conservation. By enabling flexible granting

mechanisms for civil society as part of a wider commitment to blended finance, the distribution of scaled support at local level can ensure effective, sustainable, and locally contextualized capacity that complements larger interventions.

Civil society contributions will be instrumental to implementing NDC commitments and the GBF effectively, but civil society participation is often limited, overlooked, and underfunded. Stringent donor compliance requirements and lack of civil society capacity to fulfil them can severely limit legitimate civil society involvement, particularly at community level. By building collaboration at scale, civil society can make a fundamental contribution, particularly at priority flyway sites. Without ensuring benefits to local people, climate finance investments risk becoming unequitable and unsustainable and undermining long-term conservation and restoration goals and progress towards the SDGs. An effective GFGM targeted towards inclusion of civil society will mitigate these concerns.

How GFGM would work

The GFGM will be delivered via the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF). This grant making platform which has been operational since 2000 provides the ideal mechanism for deploying grants across multiple countries to CSOs, NGOs, academia and IPLCs. Learning lessons from and building on existing civil society granting mechanisms, albeit not focused exclusively on flyway conservation, e.g., the CEPF, the specifics of GFGM will be determined by consultative processes that will start in the PPG phase of the project and will continue and concluded during the first year of project implementation under the proposed Component 1: Multi-Stakeholder GFGM Governance in the Indicative Project Overview matrix. There are several conservation-focused CSO grant mechanisms and ADB will ensure the GFGM will build on existing mechanism and avoid fragmentation of efforts. How the GFGM might work is described indicatively in Output 2.1.1 in Component 2.

Theory of Change

The project TOC is illustrated in Figure 2 below. As set out above wetlands along the EAAF continue to be degraded with species numbers also continuing to decline^{[1]¹⁰} due to: (i) conflicting government agendas for wetlands resulting in conversion and direct loss; (ii) over exploitations; (iii) intensification of land use within wetland ecosystems leading to pollution and human wildlife conflict; (iv) invasive species; and (iv) climate change resulting in temporal or permanent loss of wetland sites. While many measures are already being taken to try and address and reverse these drivers, civil society is not yet able to play as active a role as possible in tackling these challenges. Barriers exist which are

- a) institutional and financial: lack of structured accessible funding modalities and accessible funding streams specifically targeted at supporting civil society led conservation action on flyways; lack of long-term financial viability for conservation projects and weak linkages to the broader development agenda and lack of investment in areas of high biodiversity value that are not formally designated
- b) capacity driven: limited government capacity and resources to address all activities required for protection and monitoring; limited CSO organizational and technical capacities and capabilities including ability to develop project proposals and deliver outcome metrics to attract further investment; and
- c) data driven: limited data available to make a clear rationale to stakeholders to protect and restore wetlands and for governments, developers, decision makers and communities to integrate to development plans and investment decisions; limited collation and dissemination of data to report biodiversity values in order that decision makers can prioritize actions effectively.

For this project to address these, four key pathways covering four interrelated sets of outcomes have been developed to focus activities and address challenges. Collectively, these will contribute to the project objective that a Global Flyway Grant Mechanism for CSOs will be established that enables civil society led conservation action on globally significant

wetland sites on the East Asian Australasian Flyway and produces benefits for biodiversity, climate and people. The project framework - components, outcomes and outputs and indicative activities (described in the succeeding section) will directly address the threats and barriers in the achievement of the project objective. The identified four causal pathways are described below.

- 1) IF a multistakeholder approach is taken towards establishing appropriate governance, management structures and fiduciary arrangements for the grant mechanism (Output 1.1.1) and systems and processes to operationalize granting (Output 1.1.2) and relevant bodies are established to guide and implement the project (Output 1.1.3) then the Global Flyways Grant Mechanism will be established and operational (Outcome 1.1). If awareness is raised among MFIs, funders and philanthropies (Output 1.2.1), and partnership agreements formulated (Output 1.2.2) and negotiated (Output 1.2.3) then the Global Flyways Grant Mechanism will have partnerships secured to catalyze future resources and iterative rounds of granting (Outcome 1.2).
- 2) IF a Flyways Investment Strategy is developed to align with relevant initiatives and frameworks (e.g., ADB EAAF RFI, EAAFP Strategy, Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, NBSAPs), to address investment gaps, to incorporate assessment of conservation threats at flyway network and site level, to define priority eligible species, sites, objectives and activities including NbS, and refined through multistakeholder consultation during project implementation (Output 2.1.1), then grants mobilized through the GFGM will be targeted towards globally significant species and sites and directed towards conservation activities where civil society can make most impact. If different types of grants are mobilized through the GFGM (Outputs 2.1.2, 2.1.3 and 2.1.4), then funded project preparation and implementation activities will ensure that technically sound, feasible projects are delivered by CSOs including nature based solutions, sustainable finance initiatives and advancing protection measures. If CSOs are supported by the GFGM to deliver flyway conservation projects in eligible sites then conservation of migratory species and conservation, restoration and sustainable management of priority EAAF wetlands will be improved and mitigation of emissions due to the carbon values of these sites will be achieved. (Outcome 2.1).
- 3) IF CSOs' institutional capacities (e.g., governance, financial management, specific technical or operational capacities) are assessed and understood and they are linked to relevant training opportunities or grants to address gaps, (Output 3.1.1.) opportunities to 'learn by doing' during project preparation and implementation activities (Output 3.1.2) and participation in the capacity building program provided by the project in parallel to granting (Output 3.1.3), then the organizational and technical capacities of CSOs will be strengthened, leading to an active pipeline of proposals to the GFGM, delivery of GFGM grants and improved ability of CSOs to attract future investment to conservation projects. (Outcome 3.1).
- 4) IF GFGM results and project data are managed effectively (Output 4.1.1), and knowledge exchange is facilitated between CSOs, technical partners and decision makers, including provision of data to governments and developers to show the value of investing in wetlands and species, (Output 4.1.2) then science-based management conservation decisions will be influenced strengthening policy coherence and enabling conditions for flyway conservation. (Outcome 4.1). And if GFGM and project site monitoring reports are completed (Output 4.2.1) and research, assessment results and monitoring data is synthesized, published and disseminated through existing platforms and fora at different scales to support proper implementation of multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs), then effective and participatory monitoring systems for tracking and reporting project and flyway level progress and impacts will be established. (Outcome 4.2)

IF all five project outcomes are achieved: i.e., governance is established through a multistakeholder approach (Outcome 1.1), effective partnerships are secured to mobilize future iterations of granting (Outcome 1.2); a grant making facility is operationalized to deliver CSO led projects targeting conservation, restoration and sustainable management of globally significant sites on the EAAF (Outcome 2.1); CSOs strengthen their organizational and technical capacities and capabilities to the extent they can deliver GFGM projects and attract future funding and investment (Outcome 3.1); project data is managed effectively for knowledge exchange and influencing policy improvements (Outcome 4.1) and to establish monitoring systems for project and flyway reporting (Outcome 4.2) and the project M&E framework tracks

progress and enables adaptive management (Outcome 5.1), THEN a Global Flyway Grant Mechanism for CSOs will be established that enables civil society led conservation action on globally significant wetland sites on the East Asian Australasian Flyway and produces benefits for biodiversity, climate and people. (Project Objective).

If the Project Objective is achieved the expected Project Impact is to ‘Contribute to the creation of or improved management of terrestrial and marine protected areas of 5,881,681 hectares and a further 723,899 hectares (terrestrial) and 2,443,160 hectares (marine) of priority wetland habitat under improved practices, which will mitigate CO2 emissions (metric tons to be reported during implementation) and directly benefit 330,000 (60% women) and indirectly benefit 1,650,000 household members (50% women and girls)’.

The project specifically links to the ADB Regional Flyway Initiative (RFI), targeted to leverage \$3billion investment into identified priority wetlands across the East Asian Australasian Flyway. By targeting the same network of priority sites identified by the RFI, the Global Flyway Grant Mechanism will support CSOs to contribute to and complement large scale, loan based, government led projects, either directly or by working on ecologically connected sites in the same network. In this way the GFGM will maximise opportunities for participating countries to benefit from the RFI and address gaps that RFI projects may face at local and site levels.

IF a Global Flyways Grant Mechanism for CSOs is established to attract investment and extend future iterations of granting through the mechanism involving other countries of the EAAF and other global flyways, THEN the lack of reliable funding and opportunities for capacity building for civil society to engage in flyway conservation will be redressed and the complementarity and contribution of CSO led conservation action towards existing large scale flyway conservation initiatives will be maximized, leading to a whole of society, whole of flyway approach that leverages finance and conservation action at scale.

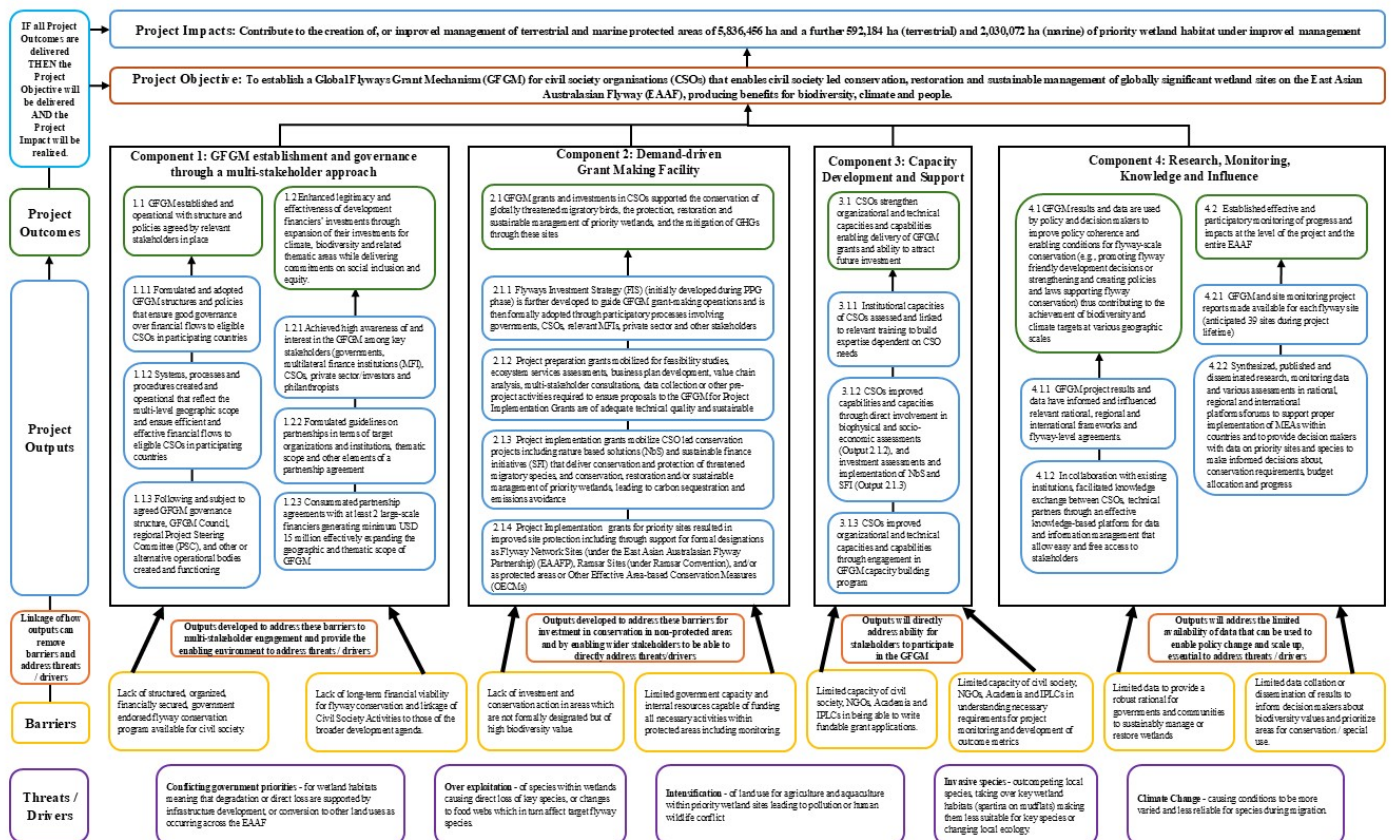
The realization of the above causal pathways will depend on the following assumptions.

- Stakeholders at international, regional, national and local levels will have interest and influence over the project and engage in their proposed roles in governance and implementation of the GFGM.
- Within a highly competitive and pressured funding environment currently, MFIs, bilateral and multilateral donor agencies and /or philanthropies will commit to a minimum of \$15m investment into the GFGM to secure future cycles of granting globally.
- Sufficient interest and readiness from CSOs (including NGOs, academic institutions, social enterprises) in applying for grants, engaging with capacity building opportunities and delivering projects in wetland sites identified as high priority by the ADB Regional Flyway Initiative (RFI).
- CSO led projects funded by the GFGM will produce conservation outcomes for migratory species and globally significant wetland sites on the EAAF, and realize co-benefits in climate mitigation, adaption and resilience as well as economic and livelihood benefits for local people.
- That sites targeted hold viable opportunities for sustainable economic development including through benefitting local livelihoods and food security.
- Adopting a gender-inclusive approach that addresses systemic barriers faced by women and IPLCs in accessing conservation finance, strengthening leadership, and ensuring equitable benefit-sharing.
- The project will apply gender-inclusive criteria in financing, governance, and monitoring systems to enhance the effectiveness of flyway conservation towards inclusive and sustainable development outcomes across participating countries.
- That climate change impacts or adverse weather events during the project lifetime do not affect sites to the extent that proposed project interventions become untenable.

- That capacity building program and training opportunities presented by the project to CSOs meet their needs, and they are able to strengthen organizational and technical capacities as a result of participation

Further, these CSOs are willing to take on expanded roles in conservation with no conflict of interest that could undermine their role as agents of change.

- Government buy in will exist at both at the local and provincial levels, as it is crucial to the success of interventions both in terms of enacting local ordinances and in mobilizing financial support for NbS and other on-the-ground activities.
- Government buy-in exists at the national level, particularly in the planning and environment departments as a crucial driver in the formulation of national policies that are scaled up from project results at the local level.
- Development finance partners show willingness in collaborating with the project from the perspective of shared responsibility in conserving ‘transboundary’ resources through the provision of financing support, both grants and non-grant instruments, will be crucial in narrowing the financing gap in the conservation migratory birds and their habitats.
- Dissemination of data and project results, in addition to projects that include policy advocacy components, influences legislation, policies and development decisions to benefit flyway conservation.
- Platforms and forums exist at international, regional and flyway levels that can disseminate project results and data effectively to stakeholders.



Theory of Change

Project Objectives, Components, Outcomes, and Outputs

Objective

To establish a Global Flyways Grant Mechanism (GFGM) for civil society organisations (CSOs) that enables civil society led conservation, restoration and sustainable management of globally significant wetland sites on the East Asian Australasian Flyway (EAAF), producing benefits for biodiversity, climate and people.

While the geographic focus of this proposal is the East Asian Australasian Flyway (EAAF), its long-term vision is for a global grant mechanism to further strengthen the engagement of civil society in the conservation and restoration of bird migration flyways, which will cater to the other eight flyways globally. This project may be considered a ‘first phase’ with the iterative and subsequent phase/s contingent on the results of this proposed project and on the resources and priorities of the GEF and other development finance institutions, philanthropies, donor government agencies and global funds that the GFGM hopes to mobilize across shared priorities. In this context, the description of the components, outcomes and outputs are, by design, geared towards a global mechanism with an initial focus on the EAAF.

The modalities for the engagement of civil society in this proposal will build on the lessons learned in GEF extensive partnerships with civil society such as in the Small Grants Program (SGP) and the whole-of-society approach.. It will also build on ADB’s rich engagement with CSOs for which it has created a dedicated NGO and Civil Society Center (NGOC) that was based on the [1998 Policy on Cooperation between ADB and Non-Government Organizations](#) and now has a recently approved operational approach which is aligned with this project.^{[2]¹¹} Specific experience and expertise of granting and delivering capacity building programs with civil society organizations in a diverse range of countries and biodiversity hotspots globally, brought by proposed the project Executing Agencies CEPF (CI) and BirdLife International, will ensure relationships and networks with relevant stakeholders in partner countries, as well as a range of conservation science and policy expertise. This will ensure the granting mechanism is backed by the technical and operational expertise that is responsive to need and is an effective tool to empower civil society as a vital contributor to conservation of migratory birds and the ecologically connected habitats across flyway on which they depend.

Component 1: Global Flyway Grant Mechanism (GFGM) establishment and governance through a multi-stakeholder approach

GFGM governance covering policies, administrative systems and processes will be established. These will enable flows through the granting mechanism, and transparent and accessible application and assessment processes for eligible CSOs who are committed to work at flyway sites or to advance other linked flyway work in participating countries. The governance structure will be formulated following participatory processes during the PPG phase that will involve the project proponents (ADB, BirdLife International and Conservation International), the participating Developing Member Countries (DMCs), East Asian Australasian Flyway Partnership (EAAFP), CSOs, IPLCs, SMEs, academic institutions and other stakeholders. Non DMCs (e.g., Japan, Australia, New Zealand and Korea) along the EAAF may be invited to participate in the project in a self-financing modality to allow EAAF-wide migratory bird conservation or as future contributors to successive cycles of granting. A GFGM Council including representatives from multiple MFIs engaged in flyway conservation globally, will be established to secure GFGM’s global scope and long-term future, to establish governance arrangements and to mobilize international finance to resource future-granting cycles. Other MFIs, including those already engaged in other global flyway partnerships with BirdLife International (i.e. Development Bank of Latin America and the Caribbean (CAF), the World Bank) as well as others

keen to engage other global flyways (e.g. AIIB and Islamic Development Bank) have been updated on plans to establish the GFGM, however closer consultation and engagement will be progressed by this project, in particular during the PPG phase. Multilateral Finance Institutions (MFIs) engaged in flyway initiatives are informed and broadly supportive of the idea of a mechanism that can empower CSOs and wider civil society as key contributors towards flyway conservation, as they recognize the unique role that civil society can play, and the additional credibility and legitimacy that proper involvement of civil society lends to their operations. In addition to the GFGM Council, a Project Steering Committee (PSC) will be established to provide overall strategic direction to the project, engaging key stakeholders in the region of focus for the GFGM's first round of granting which will be focused exclusively on the EAAF.

Outcome 1.1 GFGM established and operational with structure and policies agreed by relevant stakeholders in place

The GFGM will embed governance structures and systems to establish a transparent, equitable and accessible and globally focused granting mechanism that can channel funds from a variety of donors in future granting cycles as well as capacity building support to a diverse range of civil society organizations in ODA-eligible countries across the major global flyways (e.g., East Asia-Australasia, Americas, Central Asia, Africa Eurasia). This approach will enable conservation action by civil society that directly contributes to or complements large scale investments of blended finance towards NbS through MFI led flyway initiatives, the GFGM therefore acting to stimulate and leverage large scale pipelines building on successful practices demonstrated by CSOs and local communities. The exact nature of how the GFGM funds will be processed through ADB is still to be determined. However, at this early stage, options to create a new dedicated trust fund are being examined as well as also considering whether any existing multi-donor trust funds could accommodate the GEF resources. From ADB, funds would flow on an annual or biannual to CEPF and BirdLife International and this would align with the programming structure set up for the GFGM so that an organized, cost effective and efficient flow of funds would be delivered. Following the establishment of the ADB trust fund (in whatever format) it will be key to consider how to future proof the fund to allow potential additional funds to be added, noting that ADB will only be able to administer funds linked to member countries.

Output 1.1.1 Formulated and adopted GFGM structures and policies that ensure good governance over financial flows to eligible CSOs in participating countries (e.g. established governance and fiduciary systems and processes at global and regional levels)

Governance structures and policies will be established that enable good governance, accountability and complementarity with other relevant initiatives. Critically, governance structures will engage key stakeholders such as MFIs, donors and relevant MEAs, to ensure that results driven by the GFGM contribute to and align with international frameworks, plans, targets and goals for nature, climate and development and to build transformative linkages between civil society and public, private and philanthropic investors, funders and strategic partners. There are two distinct governance bodies, namely the GFGM Council which will have a global focus that goes beyond any specific flyway, and the regional PSC which pertains to this first phase project on the EAAF. However, it is envisioned that a key objective of the GFGM Council will be to leverage and sustain future granting cycles of the GFGM, through joint fundraising and partnership development. The regional PSC will agree and oversee all structures and policies relevant to delivery of the project in EAAF countries. Necessary fiduciary systems and processes to enable global granting in a diverse range of ODA-eligible countries and their varying legal contexts will be put in place alongside financial guidelines for granting and reporting of funds. Terms of reference, policies and procedures to direct roles and responsibilities, complaints mechanisms or other systems of redress and ensure social and environmental safeguards will be formulated and agreed.

Output 1.1.2 Systems, processes and procedures created and operational that reflect the multi-level geographic scope and ensure efficient and effective financial flows to eligible CSOs in participating countries. (e.g., design and establishment of granting systems and processes and capacity building program)

Systems, processes, and procedures including accompanying documentation, materials and guidelines to facilitate granting cycles through the GFGM will be created and operationalized. Using learning from the CEPF (including

BirdLife's track record as a Regional Implementation Team in multiple hotspots over 15 years) and GEF Small Grants Programme (SGP), granting to civil society will be supported by: award of grants for different purposes (e.g., Preparatory Grants, Enabling Grants; Early Stage Implementation Grants, Implementation Grants); clear communications materials, guidelines, templates and instructions accessible in different languages; a transparent and predictable process for announcement and assessment of calls for proposals including explanation of criteria and process for assessment and award making; financial reporting systems established and clear financial guidelines developed; face to face and online workshops and webinars for prospective and current grantees to support proposal development and project reporting; active support and technical capacity building to prospective and current grantees for development of proposals and projects; an overarching monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) mechanism designed to track results across the GFGM, and standardized indicators to be adopted by grantees to achieve this.

Output 1.1.3 Following and subject to agreed GFGM governance structure, GFGM Council, regional Project Steering Committee (PSC), and other or alternative operational bodies created and functioning

The GFGM Council will be globally focused and key to driving future cycles of granting through engagement of funders and alignment with MFI-led and other initiatives for flyway conservation. The Council would therefore aim to include representatives from MFI – many of them also GEF Agencies - e.g., Asian Development Bank, Inter-American Development; World Bank, Islamic Development Bank, African Development Bank and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. Representatives may connect to specific sectors, programs or partnerships within the MFI that target nature markets, nature positive investment, NbS and/or accelerating climate and biodiversity finance flows. The GFGM Council will also feature representation from project proponents, Executing Partners (CEPF, BirdLife International) and Implementing Agency (ADB) and will also aim to engage relevant international organizations (e.g., Convention for Migratory Species, Ramsar Convention for Conservation of Wetlands), and representatives from public, private and philanthropic donors, funding agencies and companies with an interest in flyway conservation.

For its first phase of grant making delivered by this project, to countries on the EAAF, a regionally focused Project Steering Committee will be identified to engage key stakeholders such as the EAAF Partnership, ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity, relevant CEPF Regional Implementation Team or other such entities to provide a targeted advisory role and ensure the strategic positioning, complementarity and additionality of the GFGM. Participating national governments, through their EAAFP national focal points, will be enabled to contribute to the GFGM's direction via their representing body for flyways conservation (the EAAFP). Alignment to national development goals, NBSAPs and NDCs will be achieved through inviting national governments' contribution and input to development of the Flyways Investment Strategy (FIS) that is described below. For each participating country, a National Technical Working Group (NTWG) may be constituted as a consultative body providing inputs in key aspects of the project including in the formulation of the FIS, the GFGM and in monitoring and evaluation. Consultation with IPLCs, civil society organizations, academic institutions, SMEs or other relevant national and sub-national stakeholders will be achieved through their participation in development of the FIS, ensuring that the GFGM is responsive to need and demand driven.

<https://www.adb.org/news/adb-multilateral-banks-commit-mainstreaming-nature-cop26>

Outcome 1.2 Established partnerships with MFIs, multilateral and bilateral donor agencies, philanthropies and other development financiers to support GFGM thereby catalyzing increased resources.

Governance structures, as well as the communications strategy adopted by the GFGM will be instrumental in establishing partnerships with MFIs, multilateral and bilateral donor agencies, philanthropic and corporate funders and other development financiers. Proactive joint fundraising efforts will be undertaken by project proponents throughout the five years to develop a funding strategy, approach and engage relevant donors and private sector financiers to leverage partnerships that generate income to support future granting phases through the GFGM. This will catalyze initial resources invested to the GFGM by leveraging additional resources including strategic or

technical inputs as well as monetary support. There is increasing recognition by many funders in the significance of ecological connectivity and supporting transboundary conservation efforts to provide a coherent and coordinated response to conservation of migratory species and the habitats they rely upon. Regional Flyway Initiatives are highly relevant to the Convention for Biological Diversity (CBD) and achievement of the Global Biodiversity Framework as well as complementary MEAs such as the Convention for Conservation of Migratory Species and associated Agreements and Action Plans, the Ramsar Convention for Conservation of Wetlands, and the Framework Convention for Climate Change and Paris Agreement.

The GFGM will provide a mechanism by which countries can escalate and fulfil commitments to multiple MEAs by inclusion of civil society at large, including NGOs, CSOs, IPLCs and IPLC-led organizations, academic institutions, social enterprises and SMEs to provide specific technical roles and capacities in implementation of NbS solutions and biodiversity friendly infrastructure. Moreover, it is internationally recognized that limited flows of climate and biodiversity finance end up reaching IPLCs, civil society and grassroots organizations despite these entities being acutely important for implementing and sustaining NbS. Funders and private sector financiers often express preference for supporting local and national civil society organizations and IPLCs, yet face barriers in granting directly if these stakeholders cannot meet their financial, reporting or governance requirements. The GFGM will provide a 'off-the-shelf' mechanism to direct funding and financial flows to civil society and flyway conservation.

Output 1.2.1 Achieved high awareness of and interest in the GFGM among key stakeholders (governments, multilateral finance institutions (MFI), CSOs, private sector/ investors and philanthropists.

Establishing the GFGM as a global mechanism that can garner interest from MFIs or other large scale financiers of NbS and flyway conservation, attract a range of civil society applicants and secure resources from multilateral, bilateral, corporate or philanthropic donors for future granting cycles, will rely on a significant effort to launch and raise the profile of the GFGM to relevant audiences and stakeholders. Awareness raising will consider the need to drive readiness among civil society organizations to produce a pipeline of proposals to the GFGM, and the need for close collaboration at national level to ensure granting guidelines and processes respect national laws and norms. Awareness raising will also accompany development of funding partnerships to support future granting cycles, with the GFGM promoted and aligned with major global and regional environmental funds (e.g., GEF, GCF, Adaptation Fund), Regional Flyway Initiatives and regional initiatives and strategies (e.g., Middle East Green Initiative, or ASEAN Biodiversity Strategy). International Conventions and meetings, and relevant regional events will be used by Implementing and Executing Agencies to demonstrate and promote the GFGM in its first phase, and drive awareness to other regions and globally for future granting cycles of the GFGM.

This project will focus the GFGM's first phase of granting to DMCs engaged in the RFI along the EAAF. Due to this initiative being launched in 2021, significant interaction with EAAF countries and their involvement in Technical Assistance to establish the initiative and select priority sites, and the work preceding this and on an ongoing basis by the EAAFP, there has been considerable progress in awareness raising on the need for and opportunities available from flyway conservation among key stakeholders in this region. However, more needs to be done to target specific agencies, departments and individuals that can maximize the impact of GFGM projects and ensure alignment with national and international plans and targets. Higher levels of awareness exist particularly in five of the participating countries where five-day multi-stakeholder workshops have been held to inform investment strategies for the RFI and develop project concepts as summarized in the paper presented at the 12th Meeting of the Partners for the EAAFP.^{[3]¹²} The GFGM will build on this existing awareness through an established communication strategy implemented to ensure good alignment, through linkages and communications between governments, MFIs and other key stakeholders.

Output 1.2.2 Formulated guidelines on partnerships in terms of target organizations and institutions, thematic scope and other elements of a partnership agreement

Guidelines will be formulated outlining suggested terms of reference, scope, objectives, roles and responsibilities and expected results of GFGM partnerships. A stakeholder analysis will be undertaken to define partnerships and funding strategy to identify and engage target organizations and institutions whose strategic priorities align with the GFGM and who are likely to have a strong interest in supporting future cycles of granting through the mechanism.

Output 1.2.3 Consummated partnership agreements with at least 2 large-scale financiers generating minimum USD 15 million effectively expanding the geographic and thematic scope of GFGM in the participating countries

Partnerships agreements will be negotiated, drawn up to reflect the contractual requirements of all parties, and signed by relevant parties with formal announcement of these partnerships either undertaken or planned to benefit further awareness of the GFGM globally. Contribution of grant funding from these partnerships will be provided and income flowing to the GFGM will be enabled by the fourth year of the project.

Gender and Social Inclusion Indicators:

- GFGM governance and operational frameworks incorporate gender equality and social inclusion principles.
- Granting systems and criteria include provisions to facilitate access by women-led CSOs and IPLCs.
- Capacity-building and operational systems include women and marginalized groups.
- Mechanisms established to ensure participation of women and IPLCs in governance and decision-making bodies.

Component 2: Grant-Making Facility

The GFGM will disburse and monitor a range of grants to enable CSOs and IPLCs working on the EAAF to progress conservation and restoration initiatives. These could include preparatory grants, early-stage grants and implementation grants. Preparatory and early-stage grants will facilitate project planning and readiness. Crucially, this will allow for flexibility for varied levels of civil society capacity, make sure that strong linkages can be built between grant-funded projects and loan-financed projects, to ensure projects are responsive to identified gaps, and to promote a high degree of regional connectivity across the flyway. GFGM grants will enable delivery of conservation and restoration initiatives by supporting project objectives and activities which will aim to improve protection, sustainable management and restoration of land and water ecosystems, support direct conservation of globally threatened species, contribute to climate mitigation, adaptation and resilience, and produce economic and other benefits for people. This work will build from existing work completed through the RFI and support the development of the dedicated Flyways Investment Strategy (FIS) which will further enhance understanding of sites and bring together coherently. Good practice on project development will be followed including a recently released MDB guidance on development of projects focused to nature provides a helpful way for projects to be developed whereby the pressure state response model is used and processes by which metrics and targets can be selected is explained.[\[4\]¹³](#)

Where projects aim at sustainable finance, efforts made at implementation stage will create bankable projects (such as on ecotourism or sustainable rice[\[5\]¹⁴](#)) and assist CSOs to leverage GFGM grants to secure future finance from investors and funders. The strategic framing will initially be set by the Flyway Investment Strategy (FIS) and subsequently a tighter focus will be provided through the periodic calls for proposals which will be able to take account of the emerging portfolio of work that is being supported by the GFGM.

Building on CEPF's decades of experience and proven track record of project and portfolio monitoring and evaluation, the GFGM will essentially operate as a new granting window within the CEPF ecosystem. This will deliver huge efficiencies in terms of grant making but also by doing this it will ensure embedded CEPF reporting structures against GBF and climate mitigation adaptation and resilience targets, and measurable livelihood benefits for people are used.

Further, in case of any additional data as necessary to report back against GEF, specific targets beyond those already within CEPF can be put in place. These structures will be carefully developed during the PPG phase.

While the details of the GFGM will be further developed during the PPG phase with partners, below description of project outcomes provide indicative ideas on how the mechanism may function and be managed. The indicative GFGM grant-making process is depicted in Figure 3. All of these will be refined during the PPG phase and finalized during project implementation.

Outcome 2.1 GFGM grants and investments in CSOs improved the conservation of globally threatened migratory birds and the mitigation of GHG through the protection, restoration and/or improved management of priority wetland sites

Output 2.1.1 Flyways Investment Strategy (FIS) developed during the PPG Phase to guide GFGM grant-making operations is refined and formally adopted through participatory processes involving governments, CSOs, MFIs, private sector and other stakeholders

An outline FIS will be developed during the project preparation phase which will be modelled on the CEPF 'ecosystem profile' format (of which BirdLife has led the preparation in five biodiversity hotspots). The FIS will benefit from work already completed through the RFI which identified priority species for each of the 150 sites,^{[6]¹⁵} additionally, for 50 of these sites detailed site studies^{[7]¹⁶} have been completed which have already identified key biodiversity interests (not only birds), key threats and drivers of change and potential activities to address these drivers. Learning from this information and with experience in the preparation and use of these profiles, the FIS will aim to streamline the context analysis and focus more on an assessment of threats, conservation opportunities in accordance with NBSAPs and other investments in the flyway, the niche for civil society, and the prioritization of species (based on the IUCN Red List, and the EAAFP^{[8]¹⁷}) and sites (through the priority sites^{[9]¹⁸} identified through the RFI as well as by application of Key Biodiversity Area criteria). This will ensure that prioritization is based on an overall consideration of biodiversity values as well as those core values on priority wetlands and migratory waterbirds around which the RFI has been built. This strategy will be developed using the project preparation grant.

The FIS will be formulated in consultation with key international and regional stakeholders, including MFIs and the EAAFP, and through in-country consultations with relevant government agencies and representatives of civil society (including academia and the private sector). It will describe the GFGM investment strategy in the EAAF and will identify 'strategic directions' to focus the grantmaking. This FIS will not recommend specific project concepts but will provide CSOs with guidance to develop these projects themselves. Selected projects will be required to meet at least one of the strategic directions set out in the FIS, thus ensuring that funding is going to areas of the flyway that need it most. The outline FIS will take full consideration *inter alia* of the investment strategies of ADB and other MFIs, the EAAFP Strategic Plan, NBSAPs and national Climate Adaptation Plans of participating countries.

During the development of the FIS – detailed consultation with governments, CSOs, IPLCs and other key actors will be undertaken. Through this process the specific needs for each country will be established and the role of government particularly will be carefully examined, such as in the selection of projects. This may lead to the development of a national steering committee for example. As CEPF has developed many similar such windows

across multiple countries, the GFGM will build off their considerable experience to ensure the platform meets country needs and delivers for target organizations and conservation goals.

The main purpose of the FIS will be to ensure that CSO-led conservation actions on the flyway contribute to and complement government-led conservation projects and are in sync with government priorities. It will aim to set out an overall coherent response to how civil society can contribute to addressing the barriers to conservation of the EAAF. It will describe the GFGM investment strategy in the EAAF and identify "strategic directions" and "investment priorities" to provide a geographic and thematic focus for the grant-making, and set out at a high level the types of activities that will be supported and the wider complementary flyway actions that will also be eligible. These wider flyway actions might include contributions to delivering international species action plans, addressing direct threats (such as the illegal killing and taking of birds), and flyway-scale monitoring and communications. The project is well-placed to put the outline FIS in place during project preparation grant phase given the five years of investment by ADB in the EAAF RFI. Under the guidance of the regional Project Steering Committee, this Strategy will be reviewed and refined around the mid-point of the project, and a revised Strategy will then provide the framework for subsequent grant making to ensure it is fit for purpose.

It is envisioned that the FIS will not only serve as a guidance document to GFGM but also to MFIs in their operations and in expanding investments for climate and biodiversity particularly as these related to flyways management.

Output 2.1.2 Project preparation grants mobilized feasibility studies, ecosystem service assessments, business plan development, value chain analysis, multi-stakeholder consultations and data collection or other pre-project activities to ensure proposals to the GFGM for Project Implementation grants are demand driven and sustainable.

With the FIS in place, one or more calls for proposals will be issued during the first three years of the project to enable CSOs to apply for project preparation grants that will provide an opportunity for them to implement feasibility, planning and preparation activities. These grants could have a maximum budget of \$50,000 and may focus on preparing socio-economic and biodiversity baselines, assessing threats and opportunities, developing alliances and collaboration with other key stakeholders, ensuring necessary approvals and collaboration with local government agencies are in place, and ensuring that there is clear alignment and complementarity with the wider development agenda for the region, EAAFP strategic goals and with ADB's investment pipeline. CSOs will be encouraged to develop projects that play to their strengths and the complementary role that they can have and demonstrate that they have a feasible plan to make a defined and value-added contribution. The project preparation grants are expected to result in a proposal for an implementation grant (Output 2.1.3) which will be evaluated against the FIS.

The grantmaking process will be managed by CEPF and BirdLife International following standards and best practices tried and tested over the past 25 years. These include: (1) clearly defined calls for proposals; (2) transparent application review, shortlisting and decision-making processes; (3) robust due diligence and compliance checks of applicants; (4) an established on-line CRM system such as the CI/CEPF 'Conservation Grants' portal (based on Salesforce); (5) high quality project / financial management and Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) tools including site visits; and (6) a clear focus on achieving impacts. Significant emphasis on capacity development, organizational strengthening, gender equity, and the application of social and environmental safeguards is mainstreamed throughout every grant-making cycle.

The call for proposals will provide clear objectives and expectations for these PPGs, as part of the guidelines for applicants (in line with the FIS). The FIS and the calls for proposal will include a Results Framework outlining indicators of success. All applications will be subject to three rounds of reviews/evaluation:

Internal review/evaluation: including eligibility check, quality check and evaluation of alignment with objectives and expected results as defined by the call for proposals.

External review/evaluation*: all applications that passed the internal review will be sent to at least two independent, external advisors to seek inputs on: suitability of applicant organization; assessment of whether the work is a priority for

the site, species or country; complementarity with other (past or ongoing) efforts and feasibility of technical approach within project timeline and budget.

Third and final review/evaluation: the final shortlist of projects that are deemed fundable will be presented to the regional Project Steering Committee for final evaluation and approval.

*External reviews will be endeavored to be obtained for each shortlisted application to secure advice from reviewers with specific local and/or thematic expertise for quality assurance and provision of objectivity and transparency of the selection process. External reviewers will provide their experience on a voluntary basis and their feedback is confidential and anonymous. Strict guidelines will determine who can be an external reviewer and reviewers will need to declare that there is no conflict of interest with regards to their reviews.

2.1.3 Project implementation grants to CSOs mobilize CSO led conservation projects including nature based solutions (Nbs) and sustainable finance initiatives (SFI) that deliver conservation and protection of globally threatened migratory species; conservation, restoration and/or sustainable management of priority wetlands and emissions avoidance.

With the FIS in place, and in addition to the calls for project preparation grants, one or more calls for proposals will also be issued to enable CSOs to apply for project implementation grants. These grants will have a maximum budget of \$250,000 and can be used (1) for projects that are based on a project preparation grant as elaborated under Output 2.1.2, or (2) for projects where the necessary feasibility, planning and preparation activities have already been undertaken by other means, and where the applicant CSO considers that it is ready to proceed with immediate project implementation.

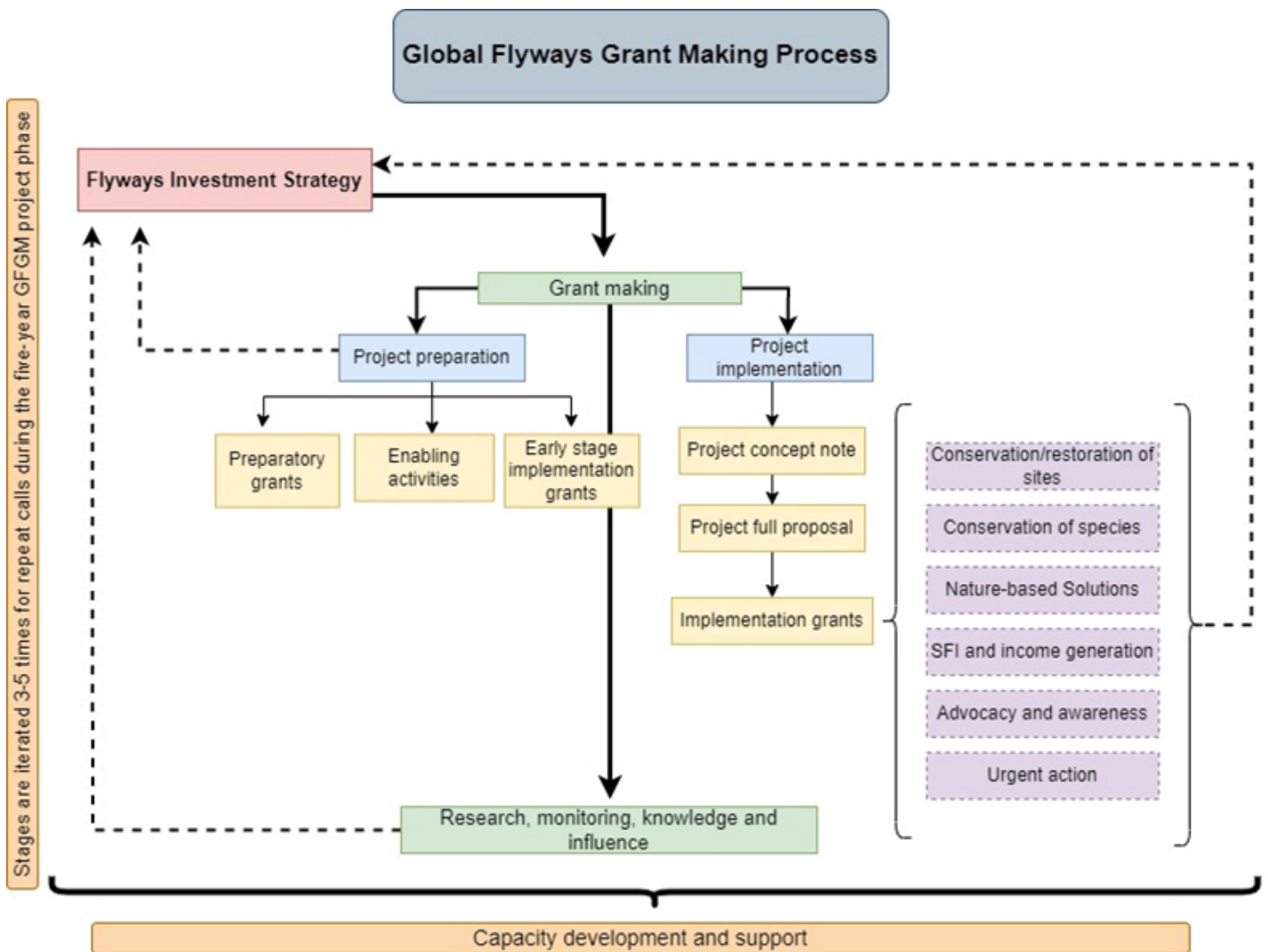


Figure 3. Indicative GFGM grant making process

The FIS will have identified the threatened migratory species and sites that are a priority in the flyway and projects will be assessed for funding considering their potential to deliver result to conserve focus species and sites. As noted above, sites will be chosen from the pre-existing list of sites across the EAAF already selected as high priority through the RFI. These sites were prioritized by taking into account their overall qualification as Key Biodiversity Areas (thus their biodiversity value wider than migratory birds) and taking into account national commitments (e.g. to Ramsar and through EAAFP membership).^{[10]¹⁹} Progress with conservation, restoration and improved management of these sites will be assessed during monitoring and evaluation with an assessment of the area that has benefited from the project made. Particular consideration will be given to the potential for a project to leverage wider actions for priority sites by other stakeholders and the alignment and complementarity of these projects to the development agenda of national governments and ADB. Remote sensing technology will be used to establish baselines and where relevant make preliminary assessments of the carbon sequestration and emissions avoidance contribution these site-based interventions have made.

The granting mechanism will aim to create alignment across projects in the implementation of conservation measures for priority species over multiple sites and countries, in recognition of the importance of an interconnected approach to species conservation along the flyway. Funded projects will be continuously monitored and evaluated against both project-level and flyway-level impacts to ensure they are on track.

In addition, by involving participating governments in the development of the FIS and then to have some role in the FGFM (to be determined during PPG stage) this will ensure that national priorities can be delivered.

Whilst the FIS will provide the strategic framework for the types of projects that will be supported, fig. 3 provides an indication of the focus for grant making. (1) Site conservation and restoration projects are expected to be the main priority for grant making. Project selection will likely give particular attention to situations where civil society is able to add significant value in undertaking habitat management on the ground by working alongside other key stakeholders (particularly protected area managers). This might include interventions that are targeted to address specific threats at sites, or proactive measures to improve habitat extent and quality, in alignment with site management plans where these are in place. Where sites are currently unprotected, targeted actions to help strengthen the case for protected area designation including the designation of Flyway Network Sites under the EAAFP, as a basis for advocacy (see below), will be prioritized. (2) There is expected to be a window of opportunity for species conservation projects, targeting migratory species that are classified as Globally Threatened in the IUCN Red List. Actions that might be supported include addressing direct threats to these species (such as illegal trapping and trade), bespoke actions to protect sensitive nesting and roosting sites (e.g. from predation, disturbance, coastal erosion and severe weather events), and coordinated population and threat monitoring activities. (3) Initiatives that strengthen the argument and where possible demonstrate that nature-based solutions represent a meaningful contribution to climate change and in appropriate locations are an alternative to grey infrastructure are expected to be a specific grant making priority. Such projects might include the restoration of stretches of intertidal habitat in locations where residential areas or areas under agriculture or aquaculture are at particular risk from sea level rise or extreme weather events. In such situations, it is likely that CSOs will need to be working as part of wider stakeholder initiatives and will need to demonstrate their added value. (4) During the development of the FIS, there will be a quick review of where there has been success in the development of sustainable financing initiatives (SFIs) and the types of initiatives that deserve support through grant making. It is recognized that whilst carbon credit initiatives (e.g. from grassland, peatland and salt marsh protection and restoration) provide a particular opportunity, they are also technically and financially challenging and require actions at scale to be viable. As part of the ADB-led RFI, as well as work by BirdLife (e.g. in Mongolia), preliminary carbon and pre-feasibility assessments have been undertaken, and it is envisaged that grants will be issued to build off this work. (5) Projects that advance advocacy and awareness will also be supported, but applicants will need to articulate how these are expected to deliver policy or legislative change (including at local level) or behavior change by relevant stakeholders. (6) Lastly, there is expected to be a window of opportunity to support urgent actions to respond to emerging (particularly unforeseen) threats as well as opportunities. This might include threats/opportunities arising from proposed infrastructure or development projects where civil society can add value in ensuring appropriate avoidance, mitigation, restoration and offsetting actions are taken/proposed. Civil society organisations are particularly well-placed to respond in a quick and agile way to such emerging issues and to link together key stakeholders. Underlying all the above, to the extent appropriate, will be the need to demonstrate alignment and complementarity to development finance including projects being advanced by ADB.

2.1.4 Project Implementation grants for priority sites resulted in improved site protection including through formal designations as Flyway Network Sites (under the East Asian Australasian Flyway Partnership (EAAFP), Ramsar Sites (under the Ramsar Convention), and/or as other protected areas or Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures (OECMs).

As noted above (Output 2.1.1), the outline and final FIS will take full account of national strategies and plans, including to establish and expand protected areas and OECMs, including commitments set out in NBSAPs and to the

Global Biodiversity Framework with regard to achieving 30 percent protection of land and sea by 2030 (KMGBF/Target 3). Applications for project preparation and project implementation grants will be assessed and prioritized against their potential to deliver against KMGBF/Target 3. Alongside this, grant making will be cognizant of complementary MEAs and commitments made by national governments to the EAAFP particularly with regard to the designation of Flyway Network Sites, establishment of National and Site Partnership adopted by the EAAFP Partners at MOP11 in 2023, and to Ramsar in relation to its most recent Strategic Plan adopted by Contracting Parties at the July 2025 Conference of the Parties in Zimbabwe). Applications for project preparation and project implementation grants will be assessed and prioritized against their potential to deliver against these national and international commitments to advance site-based designations, and progress will subsequently be assessed during project monitoring and evaluation.

Gender and Social Inclusion Indicators:

- Number of projects with gender analysis and gender action plans with clear provisions of meaningful consultations with women, indigenous peoples and local communities.
- Funding allocated to gender-responsive and socially inclusive enterprises
- Number of women in leadership roles in conservation governance to ensure that gender actions in the management plans are implemented.

Component 3: Capacity Development and Support

Capacity development is a cross-cutting project component and a core approach of the GFGM. CSOs participating in the GFGM will be supported to develop technical and institutional capacities to enable improved and continued contribution to flyway conservation. CSOs will be supported to develop high quality proposals to the GFGM, to implement and monitor impactful projects, and to improve or develop organizational capacities (e.g., on financial management, governance and organizational policies) that will increase their ability to access future funds, finance and investment. Capacity development through the GFGM will contribute to an ‘unlocking’ of CSO expertise, on-the-ground experience and local knowledge that support achievement of climate and biodiversity goals and targets at different scales.

Outcome 3.1 CSOs strengthen organizational and technical capacities and capabilities enabling delivery of GFGM grants and ability to attract future investment

Output 3.1.1 Institutional capacities of CSOs assessed and linked to grants/relevant training to build expertise dependent on CSO needs

The FIS will include an overall assessment of the capacity of CSOs in the EAAF and will identify high-level training needs, including both operational (finance, administration, HR, project management etc.) and programmatic or technical capacity gaps. The FIS will build off the considerable experience of CEPF in granting to civil society in East and South-east Asia over the past 20 years which combines targeted grant-making with effective CSO capacity development, using pre- and post-grant self-assessments to measure the impacts of each grant on the CSO’s capacities through a ‘Civil Society Tracking Tool (CSTT)’. Once project preparation and project implementation grants have been awarded, all successful CSOs will have to undertake a baseline CSTT which will be used to identify specific training needs. Specific training in good project design, focused on achieving impacts, will be delivered to CSOs awarded project preparation grants to ensure a pipeline of high quality applications to the GFGM. CEPF designed a “Master Class” training program (co-developed with BirdLife) that covers topics such as stakeholder engagement and inclusion (including Free and Prior Informed Consent), intervention strategies that will achieve impacts (logical frameworks, Theory of Change, outcome pathways), budgeting and financial management (including ethics), among

others. This Master Class will be rolled out to all successful project preparation grantees. For project implementation grants, a particular focus of capacity development will be to enable and empower CSOs to access and leverage sustainable biodiversity and climate finance.

Output 3.1.2 CSOs improved capabilities and capacity through direct involvement in biophysical and socio-economic assessments (Output 2.1.2) and investment assessments and implementation of NbS and Sustainable Finance Initiatives (SFIs) (Output 2.1.3)

Project preparation grants (Output 2.1.2) will provide an opportunity and resources for CSOs to undertake social, economic and biodiversity assessments, and both project preparation and project implementation grants (Output 2.1.3) will provide an opportunity and resources to consider the pre-feasibility and full feasibility of initiatives that might attract further grant and investment financing from the private sector. Opportunities are likely to be in relation to carbon and wider ecosystem service values and be attractive to outside financing interest if representing an NbS approach to climate mitigation and adaptation. CSOs will be provided with technical support to undertake these assessments and to develop the investment proposals and show-casing opportunities to attract outside financial interest from development partners.

Output 3.1.3 CSOs improved organizational and technical capacities and capabilities through engagement in GFGM Capacity Building program.

A capacity development program for CSOs applying to and awarded by the GFGM will be a fundamental element of this project. Research conducted by BirdLife International as part of the TA facilitating the Development Phase of the EAAF RFI highlighted that national and local CSO face barriers in both organizational and technical capacity that often prevent their active participation in developing NbS projects, sustainable finance initiatives and/or other conservation initiatives to benefit migratory birds and their habitats. CSOs are often funded primarily by project-based grant funding with highly restricted purposes and little flexibility to invest or innovate in organizational capacity and/or specific technical expertise. Moreover, organizational capacity limitations place barriers on many CSO from attracting and accessing international funding to sustain their operations and conservation activities due to stringent due diligence and reporting requirements from many funders or investors. Gaps in organizational capacity often include appropriate or internationally recognized financial management systems, policies or governance arrangements, as well as limited human resources especially among leadership, administrative, development, communications and other operational roles. With limited or unrealistic overheads contributions permitted by the vast majority of international funders, CSO are bound to apply for restricted funding that is limited to project cycles and does not cover their full operational costs which poses risks to financial sustainability and the ability of organizations to retain staff over the long term or to invest and innovate. Gaps in technical capacity commonly include lack of technical expertise and skills in carbon projects, nature capital valuation, ecosystem services assessments, monitoring and evaluation, and finance which could aid CSOs to advance longer term conservation financing models.

Many accelerator models, backed by investment finance, and designed to offer start-up support and seed funding to NbS and sustainable finance initiatives, demand an entry point that is unavailable to the majority of CSOs (e.g., requiring developed business plans, feasibility studies completed, proof of concept). Capacity development delivered under the GFGM will address these gaps through a range of supports including technical assistance to and training of CSOs to enable a pipeline of high quality applications to the GFGM; grants to develop conservation funding strategies, business plans, feasibility studies, research and pilots; connections to and training by technical partners (e.g., carbon specialists, compliance experts or human resources specialists); grants to support recruitment or retention of key staff appointments; grants and training to support improved financial management and governance arrangements.

Gender and Social Inclusion Indicators:

- CSO capacity assessments integrate gender analysis with identified gender gaps and corresponding action plans.
- Evidence of CSOs integrating gender considerations into NbS and SFI design and implementation
- CSOs delivering capacity-building modules that include gender equality content

Component 4: Research, Monitoring, Knowledge and Influence

This is also a cross-cutting project component that will result in robust indicators being created to ensure GFGM resources are directed towards high integrity, credible and impactful projects. Additionally, it will ensure routes for the integration of the knowledge and experience of local stakeholders at different policy scales improving the enabling conditions for effective flyways conservation action. Civil-society led monitoring, citizen science and policy advocacy are key and preparatory, early stage and implementation grants disbursed through the GFGM can support activities in these areas. Robust monitoring of the GFGM itself, and CSO-led projects it supports, and the impacts with respect to ecosystem health of project sites and migratory bird population, will also enable MFIs, governments and decision makers to recognize civil society action in achievement of national and international climate and biodiversity policy commitments and targets, demonstrating added value civil society can contribute. Learning captured via GFGM monitoring will also be used to develop and promote iterative cycles of the GFGM. In this first phase project, this component will build on existing platforms, including those of the EAAFP working groups and task forces as well as of the executing partners (BLI and CI) and other relevant organizations.

Outcome 4.1 GFGM results and data are used by policy and decision makers to improve policy coherence and enabling conditions for flyway-scale conservation (e.g., promoting flyway friendly development decisions and strengthening policies and laws that support flyway conservation) thus contributing to the achievement of biodiversity and climate targets at various geographic scales

Output 4.1.1 GFGM project results and data have informed and influenced relevant national, regional and international frameworks and flyway-level targets

As noted above (Output 2.1.1), the FIS will provide the grant-making strategy which will ensure GFGM project results contribute to the implementation of national, regional and international commitments. These include, among others, NBSAPs to escalate implementation of the Global Biodiversity Framework, Climate Adaption Plans, the next Ramsar Strategic Plan, the EAAFP Strategic Plan, and more specifically the relevant Species (and Multi-Species) Action Plans adopted under EAAFP and the Convention for Migratory Species (e.g. on Black-faced Spoonbill, Spoon-billed Sandpiper, Chinese Crested Tern amongst others. Whilst it is recognized that GEF funds cannot be used to support participation in MEA COPs it is envisaged that CSOs will be supported through co-financing to participate in these national, regional and international frameworks so that project results can be shared and can contribute towards policy coherence across conventions which will strengthen enabling conditions for flyway-scale conservation. GEF funds will support other activities by CSOs contributing to this output such as: data analysis; production of policy guidelines and recommendations relevant to wetland conservation and use of data to (i) inform collaborative efforts by governments and CSOs to strengthen site protection and enforcement; (ii) develop capacity building programs to upskill local communities in site protections efforts; (iii) develop site level management plans; and (iv) to inform wetland restoration plans for NbS.

Gender and Social Inclusion Indicators:

- Number of policy-relevant outputs integrating gender analysis and recommended actions
- Number of women and marginalized group representatives participating in policy dialogues and knowledge exchanges
- Number of gender-inclusive case studies and knowledge products published to inform policies
- Evidence of stakeholders using gender data for planning and advocacy

Output 4.1.2 In collaboration with existing institutions, facilitated knowledge exchange between CSOs, technical partners through an effective knowledge-based platform for data and information management that allow easy and free access to stakeholders

The project will contribute to and promote a number of existing knowledge-based platforms for data and information management that allow easy and free access to stakeholders. These include (i) the Data Zone of BirdLife International which holds and makes freely available data on threatened species, on important sites (Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas – IBAs - and Key Biodiversity Areas - KBAs), and on flyways; (ii) eBird run by Cornell University which has become the premier site for holding and collating species and site records, allowing public

access and the use of data for analysis and research; (iii) the annual International Waterbird Census organized by Wetlands International and (iv) EAAFP data sharing platform. The project will look to support, and where appropriate help to strengthen, these platforms, and encourage their use through grant making, to monitor and advance knowledge on key species and sites.

The project will also ensure mechanisms are in place to facilitate knowledge exchange between CSOs and between CSOs and technical partners on key subject areas of importance to the conservation of the flyway. This includes technical skills (e.g. species and site monitoring, stakeholder engagement and outreach, carbon and ecosystem-service assessments etc.). Technical partners, with leading capabilities in key areas, will be engaged to provide bespoke input and training.

Outcome 4.2 Established effective and participatory monitoring of progress and impacts at the level of the project and the entire EAAF

Output 4.2.1 GFGM and site monitoring project reports made available for each flyway site

The FIS will ensure that there is a high-level profile of each of the priority flyway sites building off the data that have been compiled over the past five years under the EAAF RFI as well as other regional and international mechanisms such as the EAAFP and Ramsar. These will serve as the baseline against which the GFGM and individual projects will be referenced against. A site monitoring framework will be put in place to ensure that projects compile, and report using a standard format, data on ‘pressure’, ‘state’ and ‘response’ in relation to key sites (using the BirdLife IBA/KBA monitoring framework) while employing citizen science. These reports will be publicly available including as appropriate via the BirdLife Data Zone.

Grant making will support the gathering of data and the monitoring of key sites where there are key gaps in knowledge compared with the flyway as a whole. It will also support as appropriate flyway-scale monitoring where this is in alignment with relevant national, regional and international commitments and is complementary to site based projects and overall investment in the flyway, and ensure that these monitoring data and reports are openly available.

Output 4.2.2 Synthesized, published and disseminated research, monitoring data and various assessments in national, regional and international platforms/forums

Grantees will be encouraged and supported to publish and disseminate the result of research undertaken by projects, where appropriate using peer-reviewed online and print copy publications, such as the Journal for Oriental Ornithology (published by the Oriental Bird Club). Monitoring data will be shared via on-line platforms such as eBird and through the International Waterbird Census (see Output 4.1.2).

Gender and Social Inclusion Indicators:

- CSOs and site managers trained on gender-inclusive monitoring and evaluation
- Evidence of gender-differentiated results in site reports
- Evidence of gender data used in MEA reporting and decision-making
- Publications highlighting gender-responsive findings

Component 5: Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)

For the GFGM to sustain in the long term, and to expand in thematic and geographic scope beyond the GEF-8 supported project as a global mechanism, it will be essential to capture project learning to inform future cycles and demonstrate success, challenges and learning to the GEF, and other institutions with an interest in partnership with the GFGM. This component complements Outcome 4.2 by focusing specifically on the project itself.

Outcome 5.1 Operationalized a functional M&E system that supports adaptive project management to achieve objectives

A robust monitoring and evaluation framework will be developed for the GFGM that enables project and program level reporting and clearly specifies roles and responsibilities for gathering, analyzing, documenting and reporting data. Systems and processes for Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) will be developed that enable communication and dissemination of results externally and for internal accountability and learning that can be integrated into future cycles of granting via the GFGM. Technologies to foster knowledge exchange and ensure documentation of project progress, results and lessons learned will be identified. Methodologies to drive quantitative and qualitative data collection will be identified and agreed. Critically, structural opportunities will be planned for integrating learning into the project to inform adaptive management. This will include mid-term review and end line evaluations undertaken by independent third parties, that will seek feedback from a range of project stakeholders including civil society grantees, national and sub-national governments, private sector partners where relevant and all project proponents (ADB, BirdLife International, EAAFP and CI/ CEPF). Regular opportunities to review project progress against identified milestones, as well as expenditure of the project budget will be embedded in the operational management and governance of the GFGM. Depending on the structural set up for the GFGM for each country, such as setting up a national steering committees, monitoring and evaluation systems and processes for stakeholder feedback will be developed and integrated with operational management plans.

Output 5.1.1 Conducted regular meetings of the regional PSC to review project progress and provide overall project direction

The regional PSC will undertake regular meetings to review project progress and provide direction to the ongoing project throughout its life cycle to ensure accountability of the project and that it is achieving its objectives, is strategically positioned among other stakeholders and initiatives to maximize impact, that the project is responsive to changing external environment and that stakeholders such as national governments are well represented and informed (e.g., through the EAAFP or other regional bodies representing their interests). The NTWG mentioned in Output 1.1.3 may be called upon to provide national perspectives about the progress and direction of the project.

Output 5.1.2 Periodic M&E reports submitted to ADB and the GEF with active participation of CSOs in report preparation

Narrative and financial reports at mid- and end-of-year points throughout the project as per GEF reporting cycles will support best practice monitoring and evaluation and accountability of GEF-8 funds and recognize successes and challenges that can inform adaptive management of the project and iterative granting cycles. Reporting requirements of participating CSO regarding grants obtained via the GFGM will be identified and data from these will be integrated into GEF reporting.

Output 5.1.3 Independent midterm review and terminal evaluation conducted

Independent consultants will be identified to conduct midterm review and terminal evaluation of the project seeking input from project stakeholders such as participating CSO, IPLCs, national and sub-national governments, private sector. Review reports will be disseminated appropriately and within the GFGM governance structure to ensure integration of project learning into future cycles of granting through the GFGM.

Gender and Social Inclusion Indicators:

- At least 30% of PSC members are women and from IPLCs, can influence on the overall project direction
- Evidence of active participation in report preparation of CSOs including women and IPLC-led organizations
- Evidence of gender-responsive recommendations adopted

Incremental Reasoning (for GEF support)

The proposed GFGM will further strengthen the contributions of CSOs in nature conservation. CSOs are uniquely placed as they directly collaborate with IPLCs and local governments, the work in priority sites will essentially be driven by the local stakeholders themselves. This will engender a strong sense of ownership to ensure implementation and sustainability of project interventions and the benefits derived locally. The project will build on the lessons of the GEF-SGP, CEPF, ADB engagement with CSOs which have demonstrated the transformative role of CSOs in environmental protection, rehabilitation and overall sustainable development. GEF support will further expand and strengthen the implementation of GEF's commitment to civil society as crucial partners in nature conservation to generate global environmental benefits.

To become effective partners, this GEF project will support a financial and capacity building program that will build/enhance internal capacities of CSOs. This will enable them to take primary responsibility in the design and implementation of conservation projects which ensure civil society perspectives in GEF programming, project execution, policy formulation, monitoring and advocating for environmental, social and political issues. The Capacity Development and Support component of the project, in recognition of the varying capacity challenges of CSOs in-country and across countries, will employ a differentiated approach that will focus on a diverse range of CSOs with varied needs. An adaptation of the South-South cooperation model among countries to the level of CSOs will be implemented to facilitate the exchange of resources, internal governance experiences and knowledge as a way for CSOs to support each other to address common challenges and share experiences, expertise and networks.

CSOs have had a long history of collaboration with governments, private sector, international organizations, bilateral and multilateral agencies in the broad sphere on nature conservation. However, their focus is often localized. This project will not only enable CSOs to do site-based work in priority wetlands in participating countries but will allow them a larger geographic conservation perspective, to understand and strengthen the connectivity of the Flyway Network Sites and access to other conservation stakeholders and networks across the entire EAAF. The impacts of site-level work by CSOs will directly contribute to incremental objectives at the flyway level and as these sites work as a network used by migratory species throughout the year, contributions in one site in one country, can benefit multiple sites in multiple countries. Migratory waterbirds also serve as a good proxy for many other wetland species and so by focusing on these wetlands many other priority species will benefit. Impact will not only be measured by site-based indicators but by flyway-wide indicators such as the trends in migratory bird populations and impact across an initial 33 sites (see Core Indicators) selected as a prioritized subset of critical wetlands sites identified across the EAAF. The adaptation of 'south-south cooperation' mentioned above will also link CSOs across the entire flyway and the EAAFP site twinning program will be a useful platform to learn from. In designing this project including the overall GFGM mechanism, all efforts will be taken to move quickly beyond strategy and prioritization, and building on the data and monitoring results that are already available through the RFI, rather than re-inventing and reworking this, such that the focus and resources are targeted as enabling and empowering civil society to make a step-change difference for flyway scale conservation.

Through this project, the GEF will expand its portfolio of projects for migratory birds which are in various stages of development and implementation. These include, among others, national initiatives in China, India, Jordan, Philippines and regional initiatives in Eurasian Flyway, Red Sea Flyway and species-oriented work on Siberian crane. This project will be the first for the entire EAAF, or towards any one global flyway. GEF financial support for this project will be crucial, not only in supporting CSOs, but also in complementing and 'tying-together' national EAAF-related initiatives in China and the Philippines. Further, the project will serve to demonstrate the role of a global mechanism that is the GFGM to mobilize multistakeholder support towards a flyway-wide conservation of migratory birds, with high potential to support across the GEF programs, including to any dedicated programming approach towards flyways under the Biodiversity focal area in future cycles. The GFGM will also provide a critical new source of funds focused to wetlands which are relatively under resourced, particularly in the Asia where high biodiversity values across many different ecosystems mean that national allocations are highly competitive.

GENDER EQUALITY

The project adopts a gender-responsive and socially inclusive approach consistent with the GEF Gender Equality Policy. Women and men play distinct roles in the use and management of wetland ecosystems. Women are often engaged in small-scale fisheries, wetland resource harvesting, and informal value chains that are highly dependent on ecosystem services. However, they remain underrepresented in formal decision-making processes, conservation

governance, and access to financial resources. Men tend to dominate leadership positions within community institutions, government structures, and CSOs as well as engagement with external financing mechanisms.

Key gender gaps relevant to the project include:

- **Limited access to finance**
Women-led CSOs and IPLCs face structural barriers in accessing large-scale conservation financing particularly where financial and administrative requirements are high.
- **Lack of representation in conservation governance**
Women and IPLCs are insufficiently represented in decision-making bodies and flyway-level coordination platforms.
- **Capacity constraints**
Women and IPLCs have limited access to technical, financial, and institutional capacity development opportunities.
- **Unequal benefit-sharing**
Socioeconomic benefits from conservation initiatives are often unequally distributed with women receiving fewer opportunities.
- **Disproportionate vulnerability**
Wetland degradation and climate change disproportionately impact women especially in IPLCs as they are often primary managers of natural resources that support their families' livelihoods and well-being.

Without targeted interventions, there is a risk that scaling up conservation financing may reinforce existing inequalities experienced by women and IPLCs. As a response, the project will implement a Gender and Social Inclusion Action Plan (GESIAP) to ensure that women including those from IPLCs have equitable access to resources, decision-making processes, capacity development, and benefits derived from flyway conservation. During the project implementation, the implementing team will ensure that the following risks such as: (i) exclusion of women and IPLC-led CSOs from funding opportunities; (ii) tokenistic participation of women in governance structures; (iii) increased unpaid labor burden on women. The project will develop mitigation measures including transparent and gender-responsive selection criteria, representation targets, gender sensitive safeguards, and developing accountability mechanisms.

The GFGM Secretariat will be responsible for overseeing implementation of the GESIAP with support from regional partners and technical specialists. Gender considerations will be integrated into: (i) grant design, appraisal, and approval processes; (ii) capacity-building and technical assistance activities; (iii) monitoring, evaluation, and reporting systems. The project will engage gender expertise to ensure gender outcomes and impacts are implemented, measured, and assessment findings will serve as input to improve program implementation. Adequate financial resources will be allocated within the project budget to support implementation of the GESIAP including capacity-building, monitoring and evaluation, and knowledge management activities.

[1] <https://eaaflyway.net/csr-1-launch/>

[2] <https://www.adb.org/documents/adb-civil-society-approach-2025-2030>

[3] https://eaaflyway.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/Doc.13_Key_Findings_of_the_Stakeholder_and_Capacity_Needs_Assessment_of_the_RFI.pdf

[4] <https://publications.iadb.org/en/financing-nature-practitioners-guide-results-metrics-selection>

[5] <https://ibisrice.com/>

[6] <https://events.development.asia/learning-events/adb-data-room-regional-flyway-initiative> [See tab RFI Priority Sites]

[7] <https://events.development.asia/learning-events/adb-data-room-regional-flyway-initiative> [See tab RFI Site Studies]

[8] <https://eaaflyway.net/key-species-of-eaafp/>

[9] <https://events.development.asia/learning-events/adb-data-room-regional-flyway-initiative> [See tab RFI Priority Sites]

[10] <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-025-31727-2>

Coordination and Cooperation with Ongoing Initiatives and Project.

Does the GEF Agency expect to play an execution role on this project?

If so, please describe that role here. Also, please add a short explanation to describe cooperation with ongoing initiatives and projects, including potential for co-location and/or sharing of expertise/staffing

Based on current understanding, ADB will process the funds via the CEPF but will not act as the executing agency. Further details of ongoing collaboration with other related initiatives and organizations and how they relate to the project are provided in the table below. It should be noted that as this project is focused towards Civil Society, IPLCs and Academia execution will not be delegated to governments.

Ongoing Initiatives and Projects	Nature of Cooperation
Regional Flyways Initiative	RFI aims to mobilize \$3 billion towards conservation, restoration and improved management of wetlands sites in 11 developing countries eligible for ADB finance in the East Asian Australasian Flyway. The GFGM will directly align with this initiative during its first phase under this proposed project. The GFGM will enable civil society to deliver conservation action that directly contributes to or complements loan financed projects across the EAAF. This may be within loan projects themselves or as contributions to key sites in the wider network, thus delivering a coherent approach to flyway conservation and sustainable management.
EAAF Partnership	The East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership (EAAFP), comprising 42 Partners including 18 national governments, 6 intergovernmental organizations, 16 international NGOs, 1 international organization and 1 international private enterprise aims to protect migratory waterbirds, their habitats and the livelihoods of people dependent upon them. Through its provision of a flyway wide framework the EAAFP provides the ideal platform for reviewing project progress in a multistakeholder setting, defining and monitoring progress on flyway wide indicators and disseminating project results and learning through supporting the project's CEPA related outputs.
ASEAN Center for Biodiversity (ACB)	The Asean Center for Biodiversity as an intergovernmental organization that facilitates cooperation and coordination on conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity among the ten ASEAN Member States (AMS) and regional and international organizations, will be a valuable strategic and advisory partner and key to engaging governmental support and relationships in AMS countries involved in this project. The ACB's strategic interests in capacity building, fair sharing of benefits and powerful convening capacity will benefit this project, while project results can usefully contribute to ACB's strategy and advocacy regionally.

Philippines Flyway Project (11578)	This ADB-GEF project covers 3 wetland sites which are all part of the RFI. These are Lake Mainit, Sibugay Wetlands, and Candaba Wetlands. This project will run complementarily and in parallel to activities within the GFGM. During GFGM project design, any potential modalities for cooperation will be ascertained in alignment with GEF requirements and subject to GEF approval. It could cover joint conduct of annual waterbird census, sharing of data on interventions, knowledge and lessons learned. Both projects will engage CSOs and IPLCs hence there is scope for drawing from the experiences of the national projects. Further, both projects are likely to involve the same Philippine government agency, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, in implementing the national component of GFGM, making concrete cooperation feasible.
China Flyway Project (10073)	The UNDP-GEF China Flyway project covers the period 2021-2027. It covers 4 demonstration sites: Liaohekou National Nature Reserve; Yellow River Delta National Nature Reserve; Chongming Dongtan National Nature Reserve; Dashanbao Black-necked Crane National Nature Reserve. With the exception of Dashanbao, the other three sites appear to be part of EAAF RFI. As the GFGM will likely only start activities in 2028 and will not be actively working in the PRC this project will be complimentary to the GFGM.
India Flyway Project (11478)	The UNDP-GEF India project, located in the Central Asian Flyway, was approved for implementation in November 2025. While there is no geographic overlap with the EAAF, the global vision of GFGM provides scope for collaboration. During the PPG of GFGM which is expected to overlap with the start of implementation of the India Flyway Project, the mechanisms of cooperation will be discussed with the India team. These will be complimentary for both but will avoid overlapping and overlap of GEF resource uses.
Americas Flyway Initiative (AFI)	Regional Flyway Initiative led by the Development Bank for Latin America and the Caribbean (CAF) in partnership with the Audubon Society and BirdLife International. This RFI aims to leverage \$3bn in development finance investment towards NbS and biodiversity friendly infrastructure in priority sites in north, central and south Americas on the Americas flyways. This RFI could benefit from future phases of granting through the GFGM following its establishment as a global mechanism under GEF-8.
African Eurasian Flyway Initiative (AEFI)	There is emerging interest in a third Regional Flyway Initiative led by the World Bank for the African Eurasian Flyway, focused on leveraging development finance to NbS and biodiversity friendly infrastructure in priority sites in Europe and Central Asia, Middle East and North Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa on the African Eurasian Flyway.
Central Asian Flyway Initiative (CAFI) Others, including relevant business sector initiatives	ADB are forwarding conversations with relevant stakeholders to expand ongoing flyway conservation efforts for the East Asian Australasian to the Central Asian Flyway. This will provide another regional focus for the GFGM in its future phases, to enable civil society conservation action that contributes to and complements ADB lending agreements in Central, West and South Asian countries on the Central Asian Flyway.

Core Indicators

Indicator 1 Terrestrial protected areas created or under improved management

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
3619496	0	0	0

Indicator 1.1 Terrestrial Protected Areas Newly created

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
0	0	0	0

Name of the Protected Area	WDPA ID	IUCN Category	Total Ha (Expected at PIF)	Total Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Total Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Total Ha (Achieved at TE)
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Indicator 1.2 Terrestrial Protected Areas Under improved Management effectiveness

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Total Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Total Ha (Achieved at TE)
3619496	0	0	0

Name of the Protected Area	WDPA ID	IUCN Category	Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Total Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Total Ha (Achieved at TE)	METT score (Baseline at CEO Endorsement)	METT score (Achieved at MTR)	METT score (Achieved at TE)
			3,619,496.00						

Indicator 2 Marine protected areas created or under improved management

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
2262185	0	0	0

Indicator 2.1 Marine Protected Areas Newly created

Total Ha (Expected at PIF)	Total Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Total Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Total Ha (Achieved at TE)
0	0	0	0

Name of the Protected Area	WDPA ID	IUCN Category	Total Ha (Expected at PIF)	Total Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Total Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Total Ha (Achieved at TE)
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Indicator 2.2 Marine Protected Areas Under improved management effectiveness

Total Ha (Expected at PIF)	Total Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Total Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Total Ha (Achieved at TE)
2262185	0	0	0

Name of the Protected Area	WDPA ID	IUCN Category	Total Ha (Expected at PIF)	Total Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Total Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Total Ha (Achieved at TE)	METT score (Baseline at CEO Endorsement)	METT score (Achieved at MTR)	METT score (Achieved at TE)
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		2,262,185.00						
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Indicator 4 Area of landscapes under improved practices (hectares; excluding protected areas)

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
723899	0	0	0

Indicator 4.1 Area of landscapes under improved management to benefit biodiversity (hectares, qualitative assessment, non-certified)

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
723,899.00			

Indicator 4.2 Area of landscapes under third-party certification incorporating biodiversity considerations

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)

Type/Name of Third Party Certification

Indicator 4.3 Area of landscapes under sustainable land management in production systems

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)

Indicator 4.4 Area of High Conservation Value or other forest loss avoided

Disaggregation Type	Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)

Indicator 4.5 Terrestrial OECMs supported

Name of the OECMs	WDPA-ID	Total Ha (Expected at PIF)	Total Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Total Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Total Ha (Achieved at TE)

Documents (Document(s) that justifies the HCVF)

Title

Indicator 5 Area of marine habitat under improved practices to benefit biodiversity (excluding protected areas)

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
2,443,160.00			

Indicator 5.1 Fisheries under third-party certification incorporating biodiversity considerations

Number (Expected at PIF)	Number (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Number (Achieved at MTR)	Number (Achieved at TE)

Type/name of the third-party certification

Indicator 5.2 Large Marine Ecosystems with reduced pollution and hypoxia

Number (Expected at PIF)	Number (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Number (Achieved at MTR)	Number (Achieved at TE)
LME at PIF	LME at CEO Endorsement	LME at MTR	LME at TE

Indicator 5.3 Marine OECMs supported

Name of the OECMs	WDPA-ID	Total Ha (Expected at PIF)	Total Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Total Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Total Ha (Achieved at TE)
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Indicator 6 Greenhouse Gas Emissions Mitigated

Total Target Benefit	(At PIF)	(At CEO Endorsement)	(Achieved at MTR)	(Achieved at TE)
Expected metric tons of CO₂e (direct)	0	0	0	0
Expected metric tons of CO₂e (indirect)	0	0	0	0

Indicator 6.1 Carbon Sequestered or Emissions Avoided in the AFOLU (Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use) sector

Total Target Benefit	(At PIF)	(At CEO Endorsement)	(Achieved at MTR)	(Achieved at TE)
Expected metric tons of CO₂e (direct)				
Expected metric tons of CO₂e (indirect)				
Anticipated start year of accounting				
Duration of accounting				

Indicator 6.2 Emissions Avoided Outside AFOLU (Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use) Sector

Total Target Benefit	(At PIF)	(At CEO Endorsement)	(Achieved at MTR)	(Achieved at TE)
Expected metric tons of CO₂e (direct)				
Expected metric tons of CO₂e (indirect)				
Anticipated start year of accounting				
Duration of accounting				

Indicator 6.3 Energy Saved (Use this sub-indicator in addition to the sub-indicator 6.2 if applicable)

Total Target Benefit	Energy (MJ) (At PIF)	Energy (MJ) (At CEO Endorsement)	Energy (MJ) (Achieved at MTR)	Energy (MJ) (Achieved at TE)
Target Energy Saved (MJ)				

Indicator 6.4 Increase in Installed Renewable Energy Capacity per Technology (Use this sub-indicator in addition to the sub-indicator 6.2 if applicable)

Technology	Capacity (MW) (Expected at PIF)	Capacity (MW) (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Capacity (MW) (Achieved at MTR)	Capacity (MW) (Achieved at TE)
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Indicator 11 People benefiting from GEF-financed investments

	Number (Expected at PIF)	Number (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Number (Achieved at MTR)	Number (Achieved at TE)
Female	198,000			
Male	132,000			
Total	330,000	0	0	0

Explain the methodological approach and underlying logic to justify target levels for Core and Sub-Indicators (max. 250 words, approximately 1/2 page)

There are 150 wetlands sites identified as priority across the EAAF by the RFI with 55 of these in countries proposed to participating in this project (Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Mongolia, Papua New Guinea and Philippines). It is expected that the GFGM would target approximately 60% of these (33 sites) during the project lifetime. Using existing data on a subset of these 55 sites (44 sites), the average hectarage of a site is 274,204. Multiplying average site hectarage by number of sites targeted gives a total hectarage figure of 9,048,740 . It is therefore assumed at PIF stage that the grants disbursed through the GFGM in this project will contribute to conservation outcomes in 9m hectares. Notably hectarage figures for core indicator targets when calculated specifically for the six participating countries in this project increase considerably due to large site sizes in countries such as Mongolia and Papua New Guinea. When calculated across the full 150 sites in 11 countries targeted by the RFI, average hectarage per site is smaller. An estimate of the amount of these sites that are already protected areas using existing data lists shows that of the 9m hectares targeted by the project, 65% of these will be in protected areas (40% inland and 25% coastal/marine). A further 35% of the sites will be in areas that are not formally protected (8% inland and 27% coastal/marine). Figures assigned to indicators tracking terrestrial and marine protected areas created or under improved management, and areas of landscapes or marine habitat under improved practices (excluding protected areas) reflect these percentages. E.g., project preparation and project implementation grants disbursed by the GFGM (Outputs 2.1.2, 2.1.3, and 2.1.4) will impact conservation, restoration or improved management on areas that are already protected and those that are not. Output 2.1.4 specifically tracks actions to address progress towards KM-GBF: Target 3 (efforts to create or strengthen protection), however grants disbursed under 2.1.2 and 2.1.3 may also impact on these same areas (e.g., with activities towards conservation, restoration or improved management in areas that are not already protected). The large difference between Core Indicators 4 and 5 (4: Areas of landscapes under improved practices vs 5: Areas of marine habitat under improved practices) reflects the split between inland (terrestrial) and coastal (marine) wetland targeted by the project.

For GHG emissions (CI6) reporting against this indicator and submission of ExACT GHG calculations will take place during implementation when site specific characteristics and strategies are known.

All core indicator numbers input in this draft PIF are tentative and based on best available data for eligible sites in participating countries at time of PIF submission. Further refinement will occur through the project preparation phase. We do not expect these indicators to alter dramatically (i.e. any variation should be within 10% of figures submitted at PIF stage). Core indicator figures for area of land/ ecosystem under restoration is not possible to add at PIF stage due to data constraints, and therefore while the total hectarage coverage figure (9m) is unlikely to change, the split between Indicators 1-5 may be altered to ensure avoidance of double counting. Core indicator 11 (Number of people benefiting from GEF investment) is challenging to estimate at PIF stage considering the nature of this project, and that CSO-led projects supported by the GFGM will be selected during project implementation and will enable varied actions benefiting as yet unknown numbers of people. We have therefore estimated conservatively that 10,000 direct beneficiaries per site (10,000 x 33 sites) giving a total of 330,000 direct beneficiaries, with

intention to promote women’s involvement in economic and governance activities at sites through quotas of 60% women: 40% men. A further estimate of five indirect beneficiaries (average household size) per direct beneficiary is proposed giving 1,650,000 indirect beneficiaries.

Key Risks

	Rating	Explanation of risk and mitigation measures
CONTEXT		
Climate	Low	It is expected that more intense rainfall, flooding, storm surges, typhoons and other extreme climate events attributed to anthropogenic climate change will affect activities during project preparation and implementation. Access to project sites could be limited resulting in delays. The impacts of on-the-ground interventions may not be fully realized as these may not be implemented at the right time and as these may be vulnerable to climate elements. The project will anticipate the impacts and will employ adaptive management while employing indigenous knowledge of local communities. During the PPG Phase the project team will further look at climate risks and will particularly look to consider potential project interventions, both in terms of how they can address climate risks, but also how climate risks may impact the investment. The recently released ADB Resilience Explorer Tool will be used particularly to help with this process.
Environmental and Social	Moderate	The project has been discussed extensively with countries individually and collectively through the RFI and EAAFP and all have expressed support. Consultations will continue as part of the PPG process to secure support from CSOs. During implementation, it is expected that CSOs will undertake thorough consultations with IPLCs and other stakeholders to further strengthen the local foundations of the project. During the PPG phase the environmental and social safeguards will be considered in further detail and a framework will be put in place to ensure compliance with both GEF and ADB safeguards is in place. This project will be subject to ADB’s ESF and as such the PPG phase will have to ensure that all necessary steps have been completed to ensure that obligations are in place.
Political and Governance	Moderate	As indicated above, countries have already indicated support through the ADB RFI and EAAFP. With respect to the GFGM which is a global mechanism, engaging stakeholders in different flyway regions from the outset of the project and embedding their roles in governance structures will secure accountability and sustainability of the granting mechanism among the international community, alignment with strategies of development finance partners and mitigate risk of lack of political support. At the regional and national levels, the structure of the regional PSC and consultative mechanisms at the national level will constitute the mitigation measure.
INNOVATION		
Institutional and Policy	Low	The GFGM is not entirely new as GEF has its long-running successful SGP. The CEPF has also demonstrated impactful interventions since its

		establishment in 2000. The formulation of the FIS upon which is one of the pillars of the project through extensive consultations will guide the institutional set up of the project. The FIS will be aligned with the national policies of participating governments and also with MFIs with which the project will establish partnerships with.
Technological	Moderate	As the project aims for a science-based design and implementation, the paucity of data and the potentially prohibitive cost of collecting primary data could hinder this approach. The project will make use of available data supplemented by indigenous and traditional knowledge and prioritize primary data collection to address the most significant gaps. The technological approaches in conservation will build on the relevant lessons learned from the GEF and ADB portfolio and those of BirdLife and CEPF.
Financial and Business Model	Low	CSOs as both beneficiaries and as direct partners in conservation projects taking financial responsibilities is not entirely new although there could be risks with CSOs which are under capacitated. The capacity development and support component of the project will strengthen financial management capacities of CSOs. The financial and business model of the project that will be embodied in the FIS will take that into consideration. Further, the FIS will be based on the CEPF and other relevant models.
EXECUTION		
Capacity	Low	The anticipated executing entities, BLI and CI/CEPF both have extensive capacities both at their respective central offices and field offices in Asia. BirdLife International – Project oversight and risk management capacity: BirdLife has adopted a Risk Management Policy, which follows the UK Charity Commission’s guidance CC26. Risks are identified and assessed periodically, with the results recoded in a Risk Register maintained by the Legal & Risk Manager. The Register is updated periodically. On the other hand, CI/CEPF both have demonstrated strong leadership and capacity for project implementation. At the project level, a Project Lead and Technical staff are assigned to oversee, coordinate and input to project implementation and M&E according to the project delivery structure and reporting requirements.
Fiduciary	Low	Financial Management and Procurement Executing Agencies BirdLife International and CI/CEPF have robust and accountable financial management systems including for sub-granting to downstream partners in different locations around the world. Mitigating measures will include modelling financial systems and processes for the GFGM on those used by the CEPF for Biodiversity Hotspots and delivery of Large and Small Grants Programs and using learning from a multitude of other initiatives delivered by CI and BirdLife International that involve capacity building and sub-granting to CSO.
Stakeholder	Moderate	By design, CSOs and local stakeholders will be actively engaged during project design and during project implementation will take a leading role in some activities. At both the national and regional levels, stakeholder consultations and modalities for engagement will continue and agreed during project design then be carried on during implementation. Consultations and

		engagements at all levels – local, national, regional – will be an iterative process to ensure cooperation by all.
Other	Moderate	The Safeguards Rating is considered to be Moderate at the moment and the initial screening is provided in Annex D. The project has a significant geographical scope and as the focus of the project will be to towards working with CSOs and IPLCs there will undoubtedly be some risks associated with the work such as ensuring FPIC is secured when working with IPs in particular locations. During the PPG stage there will be specific focus on addressing such risks and careful stakeholder engagement will be a primary mechanism for making that happen. The CEPF platform is well set up to ensure safeguard requirements are met, working already with the GEF and the World Bank Group for example. The GFGM as a new window under the CEPF would have existing structures in place, however if additional country specific requirements were also needed, these could also be developed.
Overall Risk Rating	Moderate	Based on the information currently available at the PIF stage, which as listed above is a mix of low and moderate risk, the overall risk is conservatively rated as moderate. The project as noted as innovative and is developing a new platform focused only on CSOs and IPLCs etc. This is the first such platform to be created by ADB with the GEF and as such it has more risk associated with it than a traditional GEF project. Risks are mitigated by working through CEPF and through strong development during the PPG phase, where potential risks linking to government priorities and engagement can be further reduced.

C. ALIGNMENT WITH GEF-8 PROGRAMMING STRATEGIES AND COUNTRY/REGIONAL PRIORITIES

Describe how the proposed interventions are aligned with GEF- 8 programming strategies and country and regional priorities, including how these country strategies and plans relate to the multilateral environmental agreements.

Confirm if any country policies that might contradict with intended outcomes of the project have been identified, and how the project will address this.

For projects aiming to generate biodiversity benefits (regardless of what the source of the resources is - i.e., BD, CC or LD), please identify which of the 23 targets of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework the project contributes to and explain how. (max. 500 words, approximately 1 page)

The GFGM is aligned with two objectives of the biodiversity focal area, namely: Biodiversity Focal Area Objective 1: To improve conservation, sustainable use, and restoration of natural ecosystems, which supports Goals A and B of the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) and Biodiversity Focal Area Objective 3: To increase mobilization of domestic resources for biodiversity (contribution to Goal D of the KM-GBF).

The focus in the GFGM’s first phase of granting on wetland habitats of migratory waterbirds representing different types of ecosystems – coastal, freshwater and their associated watersheds – constitutes an area-based approach that employs an integrated landscape-seascape conservation approach in mixed use settings that may include agriculture and other economic activities. Such an integrated approach is deemed more effective in addressing threats and drivers of wetland loss and degradation. Biodiversity conservation will be mainstreamed into local development plans as well as sectoral plans, e.g., agriculture, aquaculture, water, fisheries, forests, among others.

The priority sites constitute both protected areas and Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures (OECMs). By supporting financial sustainability, effective management and wider ecosystem coverage, GFGM will help countries achieve the 2030 GBF target of 30% protection of land and sea areas of particular importance to biodiversity. Further, as part of an integrated approach, this project will support the sustainable use of wild and native species, conservation of agrobiodiversity by the local communities and by IPLCs. As mentioned in the preceding paragraph, biodiversity will be mainstreamed in production sectors and in local development plans.

GFGM will maximize the contributions of civil society to support the ambitions of GEF-8 and beyond. As indicated in the GEF-8 programming directions, *empowered civil society groups play important roles influencing and setting national and global agendas, delivering conservative outcomes, as well as supporting domestic policy coherence and sustainability*. GFGM will complement the GEF Small Grants Program (SGP) while providing focus on the protection and conservation of migratory species and wetland priority sites in the GEF beneficiary countries along the EAAF.

The project is consistent with the EAAFP Strategic Plan 2019-2028, which having been endorsed by the participating countries, reflects national priorities. The plan emphasizes international collaboration and technical support for national level actions. It recognizes the importance of capacity building at the local level to ensure sustainable ecosystem services and to enhance the conservation of migratory waterbirds. It aims to enhance CEPA of the value of migratory waterbirds and their habitats and improve flyway research and monitoring activities. Moreover, it recognizes that CSOs are crucial partners in implementing the Plan, particularly at the national and site levels, working alongside governments and other stakeholders.

The project will support BD focal area Objective 3 by forging partnerships with MFIs, multilateral and bilateral donor agencies and various potential sources of financing to catalyze GEF resources (Outcome 1.3). It specifically aims to generate a minimum of USD 15 million to expand the geographic and thematic scope of the Granting Mechanism in the long term. Not only are resources lacking to support conservation at the flyway-level but also for the implementation of the EAAF Strategic Plan itself, the effective implementation of which is necessary towards a coherent flyway-wide conservation. The GFGM will mobilize increased availability of resources for biodiversity conservation within the project lifetime, through disbursement of grants (GEF funds) to a highly under resourced sector, civil society, which has a unique and important contribution to make to flyway conservation. The conservation action delivered by CSOs empowered by the GFGM will interact with and support blended finance investments via the RFI, both at pre-project and implementation stages of the project cycle. Furthermore, NbS projects implemented by CSOs who have successfully applied to the GFGM will include sustainable finance initiatives (SFI) which will ultimately leverage private and finance sector investment to conservation initiatives. Investment of GEF resources to this project will therefore catalyze a multiplier effect, mobilizing increased resources and sustaining conservation efforts beyond cyclical grant funding into permanence.

A brief overview is provided below of how the project is expected to contribute to the 23 targets of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

Target	Project contribution	How project will contribute
TARGET 1: Plan and Manage all Areas To Reduce Biodiversity Loss	Yes	Project will provide grants to civil society so that they can contribute towards ensuring priority areas on the flyway are under participatory, integrated and

		biodiversity inclusive spatial planning and/or effective management
TARGET 2: Restore 30% of all Degraded Ecosystems	Yes	Project will provide grants to civil society that will enable ecosystem restoration
TARGET 3: Conserve 30% of Land, Waters and Seas	Yes	Grants will be particularly focused on ensuring that civil society can contribute towards achieving the 30x30 agenda, working alongside other stakeholders primarily in relation to inland waters and coastal areas.
TARGET 4: Halt Species Extinction, Protect Genetic Diversity, and Manage Human-Wildlife Conflicts	Yes	Priority sites for grant making and the actions supported at these sites will give particular attention to reducing extinction risk and aiding species recovery.
TARGET 5: Ensure Sustainable, Safe and Legal Harvesting and Trade of Wild Species	To be determined	Not considered to be a high priority for grant making, but further consideration will be given to this target during project development.
TARGET 6: Reduce the Introduction of Invasive Alien Species by 50% and Minimize Their Impact	Yes	Subject to the flyway investment strategy, interventions to remove, minimize, reduce and or mitigate the impacts of invasive alien species is likely to be a priority for grant making given the threat invasive species represent on the flyway
TARGET 7: Reduce Pollution to Levels That Are Not Harmful to Biodiversity	To be determined	The extent to which grants addressing this target will be a priority for funding will be determined during project development. Due consideration will need to be given to the role that civil society can meaningfully play in delivering this target.
TARGET 8: Minimize the Impacts of Climate Change on Biodiversity and Build Resilience	Yes	Grants to civil society are expected to contribute towards climate change mitigation, adaptation, and disaster risk reduction actions, through nature-based solutions and/or ecosystem-based approaches.
TARGET 9: Manage Wild Species Sustainably To Benefit People	Yes	Grants will support sustainable biodiversity-based activities that enhance biodiversity and protect and encourage sustainable use by indigenous peoples and local communities.
TARGET 10: Enhance Biodiversity and Sustainability in Agriculture, Aquaculture, Fisheries, and Forestry	Yes	Grants will support civil society to advance biodiversity friendly practices in relation to wetland areas under agriculture, aquaculture and fisheries.
TARGET 11: Restore, Maintain and Enhance Nature's Contributions to People	Yes	Overall, the grant portfolio is expected to contribute towards the enhancement of ecosystem functions and services provided by wetlands.
TARGET 12: Enhance Green Spaces and Urban Planning for	Yes	This is likely to be a high priority for grant making given the proximity of many priority wetlands to urban and densely populated areas.

Human Well-Being and Biodiversity		
TARGET 13: Increase the Sharing of Benefits From Genetic Resources, Digital Sequence Information and Traditional Knowledge	To be determined	Not considered to be a high priority for grant making, but further consideration will be given to this target during project development.
TARGET 14: Integrate Biodiversity in Decision-Making at Every Level	Yes	The project aims to strengthen the involvement of civil society in decision-making, and to support civil society to gather and make available biodiversity information for better informed decision-making
TARGET 15: Businesses Assess, Disclose and Reduce Biodiversity-Related Risks and Negative Impacts	To be determined	The extent to which grants addressing this target will be a priority for funding will be determined during project development. Due consideration will need to be given to the role that civil society can meaningfully play in delivering this target.
TARGET 16: Enable Sustainable Consumption Choices To Reduce Waste and Overconsumption	No	To be considered further during project preparation, but this is unlikely to be a priority for grant making
TARGET 17: Strengthen Biosafety and Distribute the Benefits of Biotechnology	No	To be considered further during project preparation, but this is unlikely to be a priority for grant making
TARGET 18: Reduce Harmful Incentives by at Least \$500 Billion per Year, and Scale Up Positive Incentives for Biodiversity	No	To be considered further during project preparation, but this is unlikely to be a priority for grant making given the capacity of civil society in the flyway
TARGET 20: Strengthen Capacity-Building, Technology Transfer, and Scientific and Technical Cooperation for Biodiversity	Yes	This is likely to be a strong focus for the flyway investment strategy and grant making to civil society
TARGET 21: Ensure That Knowledge Is Available and Accessible To Guide Biodiversity Action	Yes	The project aims to support civil society to gather and make available biodiversity information for better informed decision-making
TARGET 22: Ensure Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice and Information Related to Biodiversity for all	Yes	This will be an underlying principle guiding the project and grant making to civil society
TARGET 23: Ensure Gender Equality and a Gender-Responsive Approach for Biodiversity Action	Yes	This will be an underlying principle guiding the project and grant making to civil society

D. POLICY REQUIREMENTS

Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment:

We confirm that gender dimensions relevant to the project have been addressed as per GEF Policy and are clearly articulated in the Project Description (Section B).

Yes

Stakeholder Engagement

We confirm that key stakeholders were consulted during PIF development as required per GEF policy, their relevant roles to project outcomes and plan to develop a Stakeholder Engagement Plan before CEO endorsement has been clearly articulated in the Project Description (Section B).

Yes

Were the following stakeholders consulted during project identification phase:

Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities: Yes

Civil Society Organizations: Yes

Private Sector: Yes

Provide a brief summary and list of names and dates of consultations

Consultation was undertaken as part of the Regional Flyway Initiative linked to project covering all listed groups. Further disaggregation of the information will be provided prior to full submission and additional consultation may be conducted as necessary. Details of some of the workshops are available on the RFI Data Room.[\[1\]](#)²⁰

Additional engagement and presentation to EAAF stakeholders on behalf of the GFGM specifically included bilateral meetings with the governments during EAAFP MOP12 from 14 – 18 November 2025 Lao PDR, Philippines, Mongolia, Cambodia, Bangladesh, Malaysia, PNG and subsequent bilateral meetings in February / March 2026 with Viet Nam, Thailand, Indonesia and the PRC. A presentation on the GFGM as also provided during EAAFP MOP12 to potential stakeholders as well as to the Ramsar Asia Oceania Standing Committee Meeting on 4 March 2026. The EAAFP on behalf of the GFGM has also written to each government about the opportunity.

[1] <https://events.development.asia/learning-events/adb-data-room-regional-flyway-initiative> [see tab RFI Events and Workshops]

(Please upload to the portal documents tab any stakeholder engagement plan or assessments that have been done during the PIF development phase.)

Private Sector

Will there be private sector engagement in the project?

Yes

And if so, has its role been described and justified in the section B project description?

Yes

Environmental and Social Safeguard (ESS) Risks

We confirm that we have provided indicative information regarding Environmental and Social risks associated with the proposed project or program and any measures to address such risks and impacts (this information should be presented in Annex D).

No

Ultimately when a new window is created in the CEPF proponents have to very carefully ensure all the safeguards work is done at that time, each one usually has a Grievance Response Mechanism (GRM) and other standard requirements. The CEPF has most of this already embedded in their system, but given we are not entirely sure which countries are joining it is hard to say that everything is or will be, fully screened. These measures are in place at ADB, however, and CEPF has them in place to manage the risks. The full ESS will be developed during the PPG stage.

Overall Project/Program Risk Classification

PIF	CEO Endorsement/Approval	MTR	TE
Medium/Moderate			

E. OTHER REQUIREMENTS

Knowledge management

We confirm that an approach to Knowledge Management and Learning has been clearly described in the Project Description (Section B)

Yes

ANNEX A: FINANCING TABLES

GEF Financing Table

Indicative Trust Fund Resources Requested by Agency(ies), Country(ies), Focal Area and the Programming of Funds

GEF Agency	Trust Fund	Country/ Regional/ Global	Focal Area	Programming of Funds	Grant / Non- Grant	GEF Project Grant(\$)	Agency Fee(\$)	Total GEF Financing (\$)
ADB	GET	Regional	Biodiversity	BD Global/Regional Set-Aside	Grant	8,974,312.00	807,688.00	9,782,000.00
Total GEF Resources (\$)						8,974,312.00	807,688.00	9,782,000.00

Project Preparation Grant (PPG)

Is Project Preparation Grant requested?

true

PPG Amount (\$)

200000

PPG Agency Fee (\$)

18000

GEF Agency	Trust Fund	Country/ Regional/ Global	Focal Area	Programming of Funds	Grant / Non- Grant	PPG(\$)	Agency Fee(\$)	Total PPG Funding(\$)
ADB	GET	Regional	Biodiversity	BD Global/Regional Set-Aside	Grant	200,000.00	18,000.00	218,000.00
Total PPG Amount (\$)						200,000.00	18,000.00	218,000.00

Please provide justification

Sources of Funds for Country Star Allocation

GEF Agency	Trust Fund	Country/ Regional/ Global	Focal Area	Sources of Funds	Total(\$)
Total GEF Resources					0.00

Indicative Focal Area Elements

Programming Directions	Trust Fund	GEF Project Financing(\$)	Co-financing(\$)
BD-1-1	GET	1,495,720.00	17833334

BD-1-5	GET	4,487,156.00	53500000
BD-2-1	GET	1,495,718.00	17833333
BD-2-2	GET	1,495,718.00	17833333
Total Project Cost		8,974,312.00	107,000,000.00

Indicative Co-financing

Sources of Co-financing	Name of Co-financier	Type of Co-financing	Investment Mobilized	Amount(\$)
GEF Agency	Asian Development Bank	Loans	Investment mobilized	103566930
Civil Society Organization	BirdLife International	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	2000000
Others	EAAF Partnership	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	1433070
Total Co-financing				107,000,000.00

Describe how any "Investment Mobilized" was identified

The investment mobilized by the project will come from ADB's pipeline of development assistance in the environment and natural resource sector in the following countries (with indicative amounts): Philippines (\$150 million); Bangladesh (\$50 million); China (\$150 million) for a total of \$350 million. It is estimated that 30% (\$103,566,930) of the total amount will contribute to the objectives of this proposed project. These figures will be finalized during the PPG phase. It should be noted that while not all listed countries are currently participating in the GFGM directly, ADB investments in these countries will contribute to the broader goals of the RFI, facilitating a coherent approach to the protection and sustainable management of priority sites along the flyway. EAAF co-financing expenditure will also be in parallel and is based on estimated annual expenditure of \$286,614 over five years.

ANNEX B: ENDORSEMENTS

GEF Agency(ies) Certification

GEF Agency Type	Name	Date	Project Contact Person	Phone	Email
GEF Agency Coordinator	Yoko Watanabe	3/2/2026	Duncan Lang		dlang@adb.org

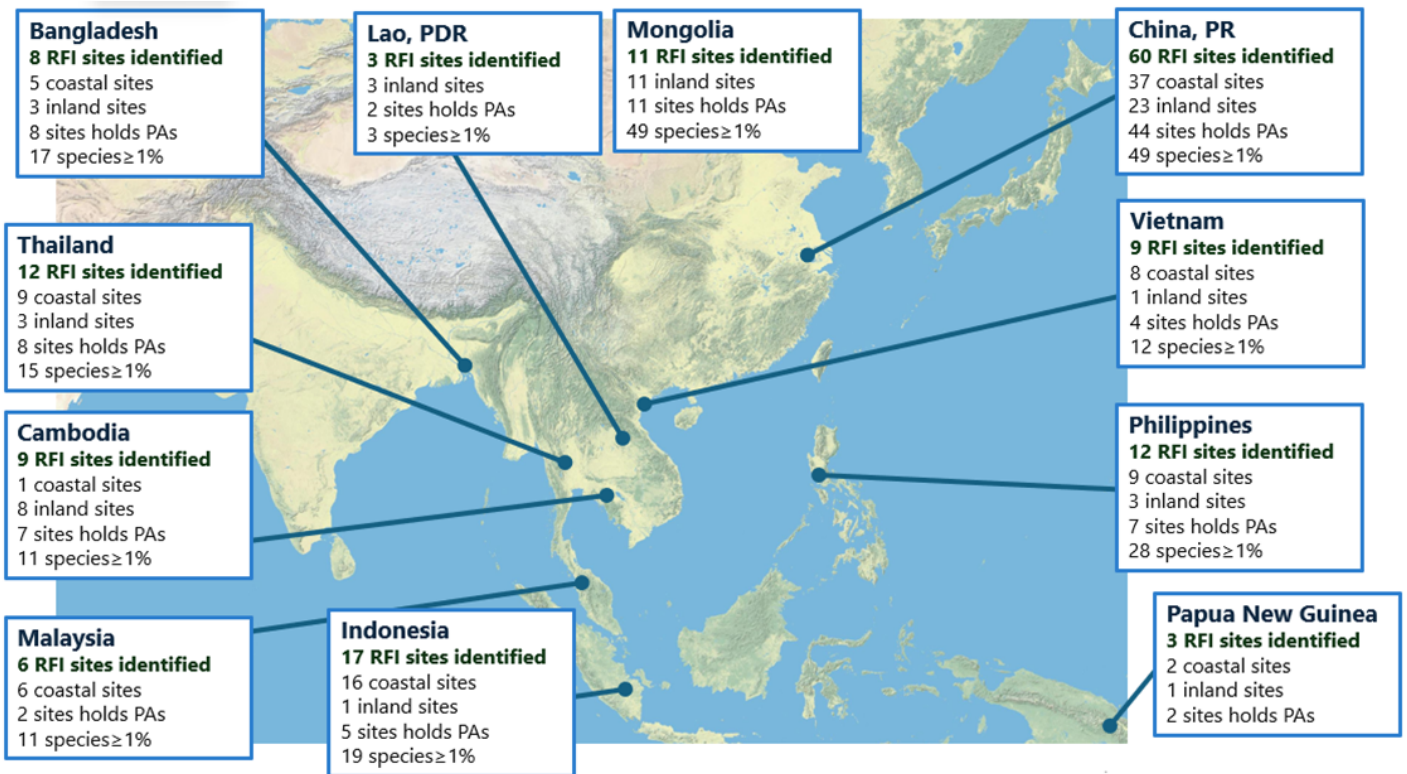
Record of Endorsement of GEF Operational Focal Point (s) on Behalf of the Government(s):

Name	Position	Ministry	Date (MM/DD/YYYY)
H.E. San Vanty	Secretary of State	Ministry of Environment	

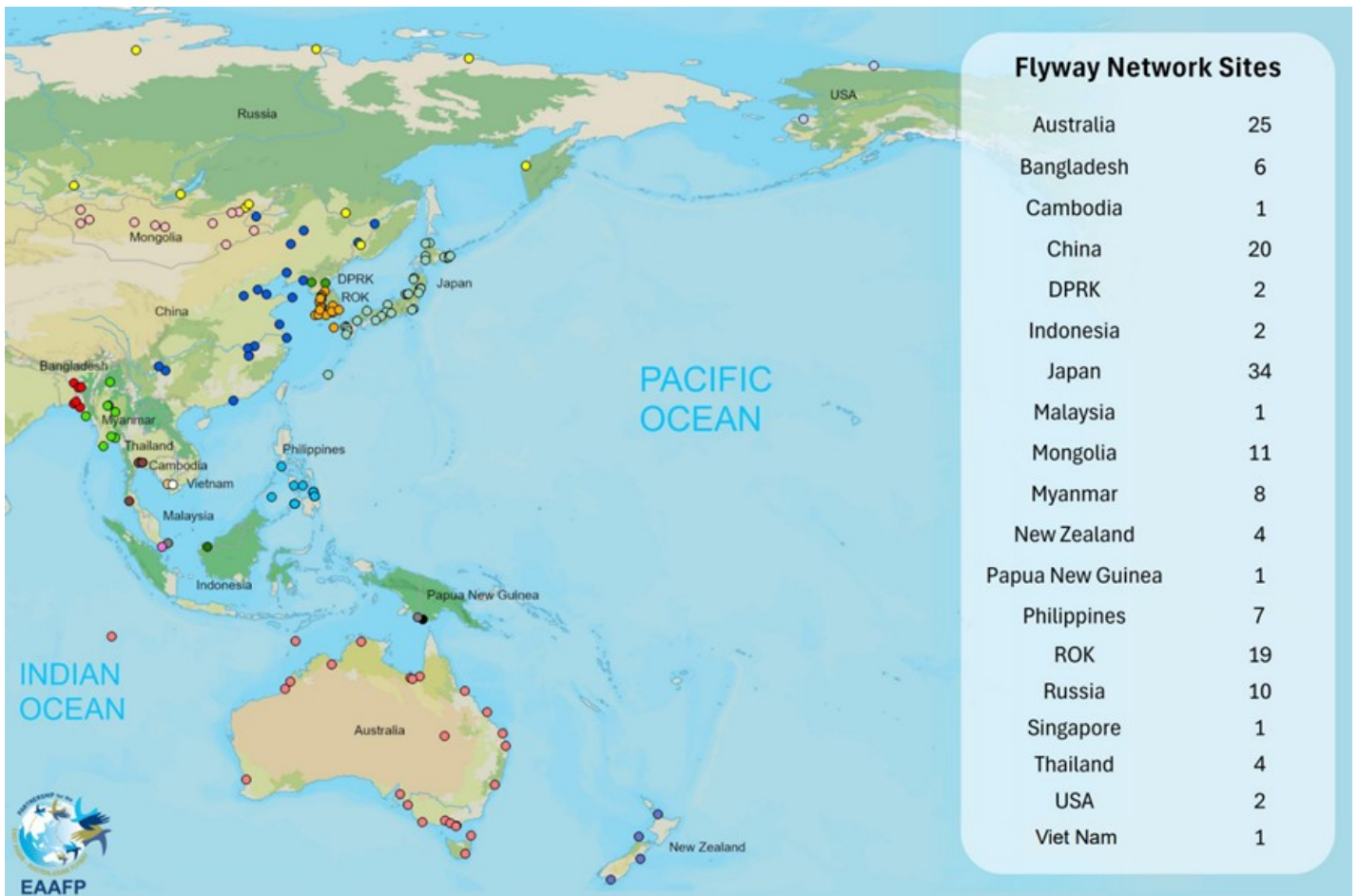
Mr. Erik Teguh Primiantoro	Senior Advisor for International Cooperation and Environmental Diplomacy	Ministry of Environment	2/27/2026
Dr. Southavilay Boundeth	Director General	Department of Planning and Finance, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment	3/20/2026
Mr. Bat-Ulzii Batchuluun	Head of Policy and Planning Department	Ministry of Environment and Climate Change	2/2/2026
Mr. Jude Tukuliya	Managing Director	Conservation and Environment Protection Agency	2/17/2026
Atty. Analiza Rebueta-Teh	Undersecretary	Department of Environment and Natural Resources	2/18/2026
Ariuntuya Dorjsuren	Head of the International Cooperation Division of MECC	Ministry of Environment and Climate Change	4/8/2026

ANNEX C: PROJECT LOCATION

Please provide geo-referenced information and map where the project interventions will take place



MAP OF 159 EAAFP FLYWAY NETWORK SITES The maps is as of December 2025



ANNEX D: ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL SAFEGUARDS SCREEN AND RATING

(PIF level) Attach agency safeguard screen form including rating of risk types and overall risk rating.

Title

2026-03-27 ANNEX D Envi and Social Safeguards Screen and Rating

ANNEX E: RIO MARKERS

Climate Change Mitigation	Climate Change Adaptation	Biodiversity	Land Degradation
Significant Objective 1	Significant Objective 1	Principal Objective 2	No Contribution 0

ANNEX F: TAXONOMY WORKSHEET

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Influencing models	Transform policy and regulatory environments Strengthen institutional capacity and decision-making		

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
	<p>Convene multi-stakeholder alliances</p> <p>Demonstrate innovative approaches</p> <p>Deploy innovative financial instruments</p>		
Stakeholders	<p>Indigenous Peoples</p> <p>Private Sector</p>	<p>Financial intermediaries and market facilitators</p> <p>SMEs</p> <p>Individuals/Entrepreneurs</p>	
	<p>Beneficiaries</p> <p>Local Communities</p> <p>Civil Society</p>	<p>Community Based Organization</p> <p>Non-Governmental Organization</p> <p>Academia</p>	
	Type of Engagement	<p>Information Dissemination</p> <p>Partnership</p> <p>Consultation</p> <p>Participation</p>	
	Communications	<p>Awareness Raising</p> <p>Education</p> <p>Public Campaigns</p> <p>Behavior Change</p>	
Capacity, Knowledge and Research	<p>Enabling Activities</p> <p>Capacity Development</p> <p>Knowledge Generation and Exchange</p> <p>Learning</p>	<p>Theory of Change</p> <p>Adaptive Management</p> <p>Indicators to Measure Change</p>	
	<p>Innovation</p> <p>Knowledge and Learning</p>	<p>Knowledge Management</p> <p>Innovation</p> <p>Capacity Development</p> <p>Learning</p>	
	Stakeholder Engagement Plan		
Gender Equality	Gender Mainstreaming	<p>Beneficiaries</p> <p>Women groups</p> <p>Sex-disaggregated indicators</p> <p>Gender-sensitive indicators</p>	
	Gender results areas	<p>Access and control over natural resources</p> <p>Participation and leadership</p>	

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	
Focal Areas/Theme	Integrated Programs	Access to benefits and services Capacity development Awareness raising Knowledge generation		
		Food Systems, Land Use and Restoration	Sustainable Food Systems Landscape Restoration Integrated Landscapes	
	Biodiversity	Protected Areas and Landscapes	Terrestrial Protected Areas Coastal and Marine Protected Areas Productive Landscapes Productive Seascapes Community Based Natural Resource Management	
		Mainstreaming	Tourism Agriculture & agrobiodiversity Fisheries Infrastructure Certification (National Standards) Certification (International Standards)	
		Species	Threatened Species Wildlife for Sustainable Development Invasive Alien Species (IAS)	
		Biomes	Mangroves Coral Reefs Sea Grasses Wetlands Rivers Lakes Tropical Rain Forests Tropical Dry Forests	
		Financial and Accounting	Payment for Ecosystem Services Natural Capital Assessment and Accounting Conservation Finance	
		Land Degradation	Sustainable Land Management	Restoration and Rehabilitation of Degraded Lands Ecosystem Approach

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
			Integrated and Cross-sectoral approach Community-Based NRM Sustainable Livelihoods Income Generating Activities Sustainable Agriculture Improved Soil and Water Management Techniques
		Land Degradation Neutrality	Land Cover and Land cover change Carbon stocks above or below ground
	International Waters	Food Security Coastal Freshwater	River Basin Lake Basin
		Pollution	Plastics Nutrient pollution from all sectors except wastewater Nutrient pollution from Wastewater
		Aquaculture Marine Protected Area Biomes	Mangrove Coral Reefs Seagrasses Constructed Wetlands
	Chemicals and Waste	Sound Management of chemicals and Waste Disposal Plastics Pesticides Best Available Technology / Best Environmental Practices	
	Climate Change	Climate Change Adaptation	Climate Finance Disaster Risk Management Sea-level rise Ecosystem-based Adaptation Mainstreaming Adaptation Private Sector Innovation Complementarity Community-based Adaptation Livelihoods
		Climate Change Mitigation	Agriculture, Forestry, and other Land Use Financing

