



# Restoring Ecosystem Connectivity for Biodiversity and Sustainable Livelihoods in the Litani Watershed Project (ECONNECT)

Review PIF and Make a recommendation

## Basic project information

**GEF ID**

11348

**Countries**

Lebanon

**Project Name**

Restoring Ecosystem Connectivity for Biodiversity and Sustainable Livelihoods in the Litani Watershed Project (ECONNECT)

**Agencies**

IFAD

**Date received by PM**

10/16/2023

**Review completed by PM**

10/23/2023

**Program Manager**

Ulrich Apel

**Focal Area**

Land Degradation

**Project Type**

FSP

## **GEF-8 PROJECT IDENTIFICATION FORM (PIF) REVIEW SHEET**

### **1. General Project Information / Eligibility**

**a) Does the project meet the criteria for eligibility for GEF funding?**

**b) Is the General Project Information table correctly populated?**

#### Secretariat's Comments

10/23/2023:

a) The project meets general eligibility criteria for funding, however, it is misaligned with the BD and CC-M focal area strategies. While the proposal seeks to link the project intervention with the BDFA strategy, it fails to identify the global biodiversity benefits that will accrue from the project investment. The core indicators identified are related to the LD FA strategy. Potential benefits from improved management of the Core Area of the Biosphere Reserve, which for Biosphere Reserves are the habitat that is the most important for biodiversity are not presented. Further, the project as designed is not aligned with the CC-M focal area strategy, neither in the intended outcomes/outputs nor in the targets.

Therefore, please remove links to the BD And CC-M focal area strategies and objectives as this proposal is solely aligned with the LD FA strategy. (Please also refer to comments under 6.1 and throughout the review sheet on this issue).

b) The project is designed as a LD focal area project, therefore it is not a "MFA". Please correct that entry and all entries in the financing tables accordingly.

11/20/2023: Not fully addressed.

b) The project is designed as a LD focal area project, therefore it is not a "MFA". Please correct that entry in part 1 of the portal information.

11/27/2023: Addressed.

Cleared

### Agency's Comments

07/11/2023

a) All linkages to BD and CC-M focal areas strategies have been removed. The CC-M focal area was always meant to be included only in the Source of Funding (with application of STAR flexibility) and not in the Programming tables. Reason why the alignment to the CCM focal area was not provided in the PIF. While linkages to the BD have been reconsidered and have now been eliminated, contributions to biodiversity conservation has been retained, as a co-benefit of LD activities.

b) Project now appears as LD only.

21/11/2023

?MFA? corrected to Land Degradation focal area in the portal

### 2. Project Summary

**Does the project summary concisely describe the problem to be addressed, the project objective and the strategies to deliver the GEBs or adaptation benefits and other key expected results?**

### Secretariat's Comments

10/23/2023: Yes.

Cleared

### Agency's Comments

#### 3 Indicative Project Overview

**3.1 a) Is the project objective presented as a concise statement and clear?**

**b) Are the components, outcomes and outputs sound, appropriate and sufficiently clear to achieve the project objective and the core indicators per the stated Theory of Change?**

### Secretariat's Comments

10/23/2023: Not fully.

a) "Restore ecological connectivity and improve ecosystem services for biodiversity conservation and sustainable livelihoods in the Upper Litani Basin through mosaic-landscape restoration and sustainable agriculture and aquaculture". Please remove "for biodiversity conservation", the project is not focused on biodiversity conservation.

b) Please include gender dimensions, in particular Outputs 2.1.1, 2.1.3, 2.2.1, 2.2.2, 3.1.3, 3.1.2

11/20/2023: Addressed.

#### Agency's Comments

07/11/2023

a) Objective amended as suggested within the Project Summary and Project Overview. Reference to increased biodiversity connectivity removed whenever relevant.

b) Gender dimensions included in the suggested outputs. Output 3.1.3 does not exist.

**3.2 Are gender dimensions, knowledge management, and monitoring and evaluation included within the project components and appropriately funded?**

#### Secretariat's Comments

10/23/2023: Yes.

Cleared

#### Agency's Comments

**3.3 a) Are the components adequately funded?**

**b) Are the GEF Project Financing and Co-Financing contributions to PMC proportional?**

**c) Is the PMC equal to or below 5% of the total GEF grant for FSPs or 10% for MSPs? If the requested PMC is above the caps, has an exception (e.g. for regional projects) been sufficiently substantiated?**

#### Secretariat's Comments

10/23/2023: Not fully.

a) Yes.

b) No, the contributions to PMC are not proportional. Please adjust. (Please be reminded that the costs associated with the project management must be covered by the GEF portion and the co-financing portion allocated to the PMC, the GEF contribution and the co-

financing contribution must be proportional, which means that the GEF contribution to PMC might be decreased and the co-financing contribution to PMC might be increased to reach a similar level.)

c) Yes.

11/27/2023: Addressed.

Cleared

11/20/2023: Addressed - however, please increased slightly so that PMC co-financing is exactly proportional.

## Agency's Comments

07/11/2023

b) The budget has been reviewed and contributions to PMC are now proportional, as shown in the Indicative Project Overview. The co-financing has been reduced, as the Lake Qaraoun Pollution Prevention Project (LQPPP) will complete before the start of the project.

21/11/2023

Done

## 4 Project Outline

### A. Project Rationale

#### 4.1 SITUATION ANALYSIS

**a) is the current situation (including global environmental problems, key contextual drivers of environmental degradation, climate vulnerability) clearly and adequately described from a systems perspective?**

**b) Are the key barriers and enablers identified?**

Secretariat's Comments

10/23/2023:

a) Yes

b) Yes

Cleared

Agency's Comments

**4.2 JUSTIFICATION FOR PROJECT**

**a) Is there an indication of why the project approach has been selected over other potential options?**

**b) Does it ensure resilience to future changes in the drivers?**

**c) Is there a description of how the GEF alternative will build on ongoing/previous investments (GEF and non-GEF), lessons and experiences in the country/region?**

**d) are the relevant stakeholders and their roles adequately described?**

Secretariat's Comments

10/23/2023: Not fully adequate.

a) Yes

b) Please elaborate on future resilience in context of the explanation of the Theory of Change.

c) No. The section: "Coordination and Cooperation with Ongoing Initiatives and Projects" has been left blank.

d) Yes

11/20/2023: Addressed.

Cleared

Agency's Comments

07/11/2023

b) The Theory of Change section has been updated with a focus on future resilience scenarios.

c) This section has been added after the Implementation Arrangement section, detailing coordination with ongoing projects.

## **5 B. Project Description**

### **5.1 THEORY OF CHANGE**

**a) Is there a concise theory of change that describes the project logic, including how the project design elements will contribute to the objective, the expected causal pathways, and the key assumptions underlying these?**

**b) Are the key outputs of each component defined (where possible)?**

Secretariat's Comments

10/23/2023:

a) Yes.

b) Yes.

Cleared

Agency's Comments

### **5.2 INCREMENTAL/ADDITIONAL COST REASONING**

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

Secretariat's Comments

10/23/2023: Yes.

Cleared

Agency's Comments

### **5.3 IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK**

**a) Is the institutional setting, including potential executing partners, outlined and a rationale provided?**

**b) Comments to proposed agency execution support (if agency expects to request exception).**

**c) is there a description of potential coordination and cooperation with ongoing GEF-financed projects/programs and other bilateral/multilateral initiatives in the project area**

**d) are the proposed elements to capture and disseminate knowledge and learning outputs and strategic communication adequately described?**

**Secretariat's Comments**

10/23/2023: Yes.

Cleared

**Agency's Comments**

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

**b) Are the project's indicative targeted contributions to GEBs (measured through core indicators)/adaptation benefits reasonable and achievable?**

**Secretariat's Comments**

10/23/2023: Not fully.

a) CC-M benefits are not estimated. Please clarify if the restoration and SLM activities results in GHG benefits?

b) The targets are extremely low, even when considering the difficult context. Please clarify how the targets have been derived at and whether \$60 million of co-financing has been considered to contribute to the targets?

11/20/2023: Addressed.

Cleared

**Agency's Comments**

07/11/2023

a) The restoration and SLM activities will result in a reduction in the emission of GHG. The exact amount will be determined at design stage.

b) Targets have been increased in line with co-financing. Both the ToC and core indicators sections have been updated accordingly.

**5.5 NGI Only: Is there a justification of financial structure and use of financial instrument with concessionality levels?**



Secretariat's Comments n/a

Agency's Comments

#### 5.6 RISKS

**a) Are climate risks and other main risks relevant to the project described and addressed within the project concept design?**

**b) Are the key risks that might affect the project preparation and implementation phases identified and adequately rated?**

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

Secretariat's Comments

10/23/2023: yes

Cleared

Agency's Comments

#### 5.7 Qualitative assessment

**a) Does the project intend to be well integrated, durable, and transformative?**

**b) Is there potential for innovation and scaling-up?**

**c) Will the project contribute to an improved alignment of national policies (policy coherence)?**

Secretariat's Comments

10/23/2023:

Yes, this is adequate in the given context.

The matching grants scheme of the project, inspired by the existing [Al-Shouf Cedar Society \(ACS\) small loan programme](#) is considered innovative and an important element of the project.

Cleared

Agency's Comments

#### 6 C. Alignment with GEF-8 Programming Strategies and Country/Regional Priorities

**6.1 Is the project adequately aligned with focal area and integrated program strategies and objectives, and/or adaptation priorities?**

Secretariat's Comments

10/23/2023: No.

The project is misaligned with the BD and CC-M focal area strategies. While the proposal seeks to link the project intervention with the BDFa strategy, it fails to identify the global biodiversity benefits that will accrue from the project investment. The core indicators identified are related to the LD FA strategy. Potential benefits from improved management of the Core Area of the Biosphere Reserve, which for Biosphere Reserves are the habitat that is the most important for biodiversity are not presented. Further, the project as designed is not aligned with the CC-M focal area strategy, neither in the intended outcomes/outputs nor in the targets.

Therefore, please delete links to the BD And CC-M focal area strategies and objectives as this proposal is solely aligned with the LD FA strategy.

11/20/2023: Addressed.

Cleared

Agency's Comments

07/11/2023

Any reference to BD and CC-M FA strategies have been removed. CC-M and BD only appear as co-benefits of the selected activities.

**6.2 Is the project alignment/coherent with country and regional priorities, policies, strategies and plans (including those related to the MEAs and to relevant sectors)**

Secretariat's Comments

10/23/2023: Not fully.

Missing in this section is the alignment with voluntary LDN targets under the UNCCD, as appropriate.

11/20/2023: Addressed.

Cleared

Agency's Comments

07/11/2023

Reference to LDN targets has been inserted in the relevant section.

**6.3 For projects aiming to generate biodiversity benefits (regardless of what the source of the resources is - i.e. BD, CC or LD), does the project clearly identify which of the 23 targets of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework the project contributes to and how it contributes to the identified target(s)?**

Secretariat's Comments

10/23/2023: Yes

Cleared

Agency's Comments

#### **7 D. Policy Requirements**

**7.1 Is the Policy Requirements section completed?**

Secretariat's Comments

10/23/2023: Yes

Cleared

Agency's Comments

**7.2 Is a list of stakeholders consulted during PIF development, including dates of these consultations, provided?**

Secretariat's Comments

10/23/2023: Yes

Cleared

Agency's Comments

#### **8 Annexes**

**Annex A: Financing Tables**

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

**STAR allocation?**

Secretariat's Comments

10/23/2023: Not fully

Resources are available. However, the programming of funds has not been correctly entered into the tables. The programming of funds should only be aligned with LDFA objectives, the PIF as designed doesn't reflect any other focal area programming.

Note: In GEF-8 all STAR is fully flexible. The Source of Funding may be different from the Programming of Funds and is covered by the flexibility provisions. The Source of Funding table must reflect the LoE (which is what the OFP provides as a source for the project). The three Programming tables should indicate towards which objectives the funding goes, which needs to be in line with all the project design elements.

11/20/2023: Addressed.

Cleared

Agency's Comments

07/11/2023

Financing tables in Annex A have been updated reflecting a single focal area.

**Focal Area allocation?**

Secretariat's Comments

Resources are available.

cleared

Agency's Comments

**LDCF under the principle of equitable access?**

Secretariat's Comments n/a

Agency's Comments

**SCCF A (SIDS)?**

Secretariat's Comments n/a

Agency's Comments

**SCCF B (Tech Transfer, Innovation, Private Sector)?**

Secretariat's Comments n/a

Agency's Comments

**Focal Area Set Aside?**

Secretariat's Comments n/a

Agency's Comments

**8.2 Is the PPG requested within the allowable cap (per size of project)? If requested, has an exception (e.g. for regional projects) been sufficiently substantiated?**

Secretariat's Comments

10/23/2023: The PPG is above the allowable cap. The justification for the increased amount is not considered adequate by the Program Manager for the following reasons:

(i) having the GEF financing close to the upper limit of the threshold can't be accepted as a reason to increase the cap ? precisely a threshold was defined to impose a cap; (ii) the need of obtaining the baseline through the PPG is a challenge that many GEF projects face, but should be covered with available PPG resources and/or co-financing resources; (iii) the point that with additional PPG funds will enable proper fiduciary and technical assessment is mute in this case as the executing agency has not even been defined.

Please note: The OFP may wish to consider moving \$50,000 PPG funding towards the project grant. However, in this case a new LoE is required.

11/20/2023: Addressed.

Agency's Comments

07/11/2023

\$50,000 PPG funding have been moved towards the project grant and this is now reflected in the updated LoE and financing tables in Annex A.

**8.3 Are the indicative expected amounts, sources and types of co-financing adequately documented and consistent with the requirements of the Co-Financing Policy and Guidelines?**

Secretariat's Comments

10/23/2023: Yes

Cleared

Agency's Comments

**Annex B: Endorsements**

**8.4 Has the project been endorsed by the country?s(ies) GEF OFP and has the OFP at the time of PIF submission name and position been checked against the GEF database?**

Secretariat's Comments 10/23/2023: Yes

Agency's Comments

**Are the OFP endorsement letters uploaded to the GEF Portal (compiled as a single document, if applicable)?**

Secretariat's Comments 10/23/2023: Yes

Agency's Comments

**Do the letters follow the correct format and are the endorsed amounts consistent with the amounts included in the Portal?**

Secretariat's Comments

10/23/2023: No.

The LoE template utilized for this project removed the footnote that conditions the selection of the executing partner to the following: "Subject to the capacity assessment carried out by the GEF Implementing Agency, as appropriate".

As we have informed agencies consistently, LoEs with modifications cannot be accepted. While the removal of the footnote seems to be trivial, it is not: this footnote reduces the chances of having an executing partner that does not meet the fiduciary and procurement standards required to safely execute the project. As a compromise, please get an email from the OFP accepting this footnote to be part of the LoE. However, in view of the comments on the PPG funding level, should the OFP consider adding \$50,000 of endorsed PPG funding to the project grant, a new LoE would be required, in which case the proper template should be used.

11/20/2023: Addressed. New LoE provided.

Agency's Comments  
07/11/2023

The new LoE includes footnote 1. Its relevance is well noted.

A new LoE has been prepared and shared with the OFP. It will be shared once signed.

**8.5 For NGI projects (which may not require LoEs), has the Agency informed the OFP(s) of the project to be submitted?**

Secretariat's Comments n/a

Agency's Comments  
**Annex C: Project Location**

**8.6 Is there preliminary georeferenced information and a map of the project's intended location?**

Secretariat's Comments  
10/23/2023: Yes

Cleared

## Agency's Comments

### **Annex D: Safeguards Screen and Rating**

**8.7 If there are safeguard screening documents or other ESS documents prepared, have these been uploaded to the GEF Portal?**

## Secretariat's Comments

10/23/2023: Clarification required:

The project overall ESS risk is classified as moderate, and the Environmental and Social Safeguard Screen Checklist is uploaded. However, it is not clear what is a plan during the PPG to address moderate environmental and social risks at the screening stage. Please provide a plan for any further environmental and social assessment during the PPG and development of environmental and social risk management and monitoring plan as a next step.

11/20/2023: Addressed.

## Agency's Comments

07/11/2023

Additional studies and measures to ensure that risks are managed and monitored have been clarified in Annex D.

### **Annex E: Rio Markers**

**8.8 Are the Rio Markers for CCM, CCA, BD and LD correctly selected, if applicable?**

## Secretariat's Comments

10/23/2023: Not fully.

The Program Manager is of the view that Biodiversity is not a principal objective of this project. Please revise to "1".

11/20/2023: Addressed.



Cleared

Agency's Comments  
07/11/2023

The value of the relevant Rio Markers has been adjusted accordingly.

**Annex F: Taxonomy Worksheet**

**8.9 Is the project properly tagged with the appropriate keywords?**

Secretariat's Comments  
10/23/2023: Yes

Cleared

Agency's Comments

**Annex G: NGI Relevant Annexes**

**8.10 Does the project provide sufficient detail (indicative term sheet) to take a decision on the following selection criteria: co-financing ratios, financial terms and conditions, and financial additionality? If not, please provide comments. Does the project provide a detailed reflow table to assess the project capacity of generating reflows? If not, please provide comments. Is the Partner Agency eligible to administer concessional finance? If not, please provide comments.**

Secretariat's Comments n/a

Agency's Comments

**9 GEFSEC Decision**

**9.1 Is the PIF and PPG (if requested) recommended for technical clearance?**

Secretariat's Comments

10/23/2023: No. Please address comments made in this review.

11/20/2023: No. Please address outstanding comments.

11/27/2023: Yes. Program Manager recommends CEO clearance.

Agency's Comments

**9.2 Additional Comments to be considered by the Agency at the time of CEO Endorsement/ Approval**

Secretariat's Comments

Agency's Comments

**Review Dates**

	<b>PIF Review</b>	<b>Agency Response</b>
<b>First Review</b>	<b>10/23/2023</b>	<b>11/7/2023</b>
<b>Additional Review (as necessary)</b>	<b>11/20/2023</b>	<b>11/21/2023</b>
<b>Additional Review (as necessary)</b>	<b>11/27/2023</b>	
<b>Additional Review (as necessary)</b>		
<b>Additional Review (as necessary)</b>		