



Inclusive Conservation, Restoration, and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity in Priority Ecoregions

Review PIF and Make a recommendation

Basic project information

GEF ID

11394

Countries

Argentina

Project Name

Inclusive Conservation, Restoration, and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity in Priority
Ecoregions

Agencies

UNDP

Date received by PM

10/19/2023

Review completed by PM

10/23/2023

Program Manager

Mark Zimsky

Focal Area

Biodiversity

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

Yes, cleared.

Agency's Comments

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

a) Yes, cleared.

b) Here and elsewhere in the text it is unclear why so many project sites have been identified for such a small budget and then why the actual measurable impact in hectares covered by the project is so modest. The project design and approach which plans to work in multiple sites with a wide geographic range would be better justified if a larger budget was allocated to the project's implementation. If this is not possible, please provide a better justification on the geographic breadth of the project, which at present is not well justified or, conversely, limit the geographic scope of the project to focus on fewer sites, have higher investment per site with a greater return on investment per dollar.

11/24/2023

Cleared at PIF stage.

The overall footprint of the project in terms of its impact should be larger as the GEF have moved beyond supporting pilot investments but is seeking to have impact at scale. There is sufficient experience on restoration that the project could draw on to help with the design of the intervention strategies thus obviating the need for pilots and investing GEF resources to achieve restoration at scale. During the project design phase, please consider elevating the scale of the project's impact as measured by its hectare footprint.

Agency's Comments

UNDP response 11/24/2023:

Argentina is one of the countries with the largest number of ecoregions in the world (Lean et al. 1990) due to its great ecogeographic diversity, both latitudinal and altitudinal (Morello et al. 2012). The country has significant geographic and environmental complexity and, as a result, significant diversity in landscapes, climates, ecosystems, and biodiversity. The geographical breadth of the Project's selection is based on the variability of ecoregions present in Argentina and the need to test restoration techniques in different ecosystems to transform those results into a comprehensive National Restoration Plan for Biodiversity. The selection process for this project significantly reduced potential intervention sites while maintaining ecoregion variability; seven of the 18 ecoregions have been classified as having the highest priorities for conservation (Dinerstein et al. 1995). Furthermore, in recognition of the level of responsibility assigned to provinces to manage biodiversity, 5 provinces were selected based on their technical and institutional capacity to address restoration, conservation, and sustainable use of biodiversity covering 19,832 hectares to be restored and 38,080 hectares under improved practices.

Previously, there was overlap between the 5 provinces that were going to work in the 7 ecoregions. Several of the provinces included the same ecoregions within their proposed areas of intervention, so 2 or 3 provinces were planning to work in the same ecoregion (the ecoregions spread across provincial borders). Given the above and in response to the concern regarding the number of intervention sites and budgetary limitations, the areas of intervention have been adjusted to maintain the 7 priority ecoregions, but with only 1 province per ecoregion, thereby eliminating duplication between provinces. A couple of

the provinces will work in 2 ecoregions, but they are all different ecoregions so there is no overlap/duplication of efforts. The precise number of intervention sites will be defined during the PPG. As such, each province will focus on developing expertise in 1 or 2 ecoregions. This will make monitoring and reporting more efficient as only one province will be assigned to work in each ecoregion. The project will work with provincial and local authorities to design, implement and monitor restoration, conservation and sustainable use models tailored to each ecoregion. As such, the project will build upon and strengthen provincial programmes that focus on restoration, conservation, and sustainable use of biodiversity within their ecoregions. Later on, the project will develop a community of practice to foster the exchange of experiences and lessons learned between technicians and producers in these provinces with shared ecoregions, which will provide an important base from which to replicate these techniques and practices in other provinces and eventually nation-wide. It is expected that the lessons learned from the development and implementation of these practices would inform the development of similar models for the remaining ecoregions around the country and ultimately a comprehensive National Restoration Plan for Biodiversity.

With regards to the total area to be restored and brought under improved practices, the project recognizes that ecological restoration techniques are intensive and require a small area to be piloted. By testing different models in priority ecoregions, the project will address important information gaps and ultimately contribute to the development of national regulations.

All of this will be confirmed during the PPG based on in-depth consultations with the project partners at the federal, provincial and local levels.

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, for the most part but please include women in Output 2.1.2.

11/24/2023

Cleared.

Agency's Comments

UNDP response 11/24/2023:

This output has been adjusted to: 2.1.2 Technical support for indigenous peoples and local communities, **including women**, on the sustainable use of biodiversity for BD-based productive activities, including compliance with certification schemes.

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

Yes, cleared.

With regards to funding of components, please see comments on the project's site selection and geographic scope and reconsider the overall budget and the geographic scope of the project.

11/24/2023

Cleared.

Agency's Comments

UNDP response 11/24/2023:

The PIF has been adjusted, as described above.

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

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

For a) please provide clarity on the approach in terms of the project budget and the geographic scope of the project and the multiple site strategy.

For the rest, cleared.

11/24/2023

Cleared.

Agency's Comments

UNDP response 11/24/2023:

As a federal country, aspects related to biodiversity in Argentina are the responsibility of the provinces. Therefore, the project's governance strategy is designed to engage 5 provinces in the implementation of the project's plans and intervention strategies to facilitate their institutionalization, contribute to the development of the comprehensive National Restoration Plan for Biodiversity, and enable replication across the ecoregions at a national scale. The project will build upon existing baseline programs and research on passive or active ecological restoration to inform the development of project interventions in the priority ecoregions. In particular, the project interventions will focus on cost-effective mechanisms that favor the recovery of disturbed areas and the most effective guidelines for the restoration, conservation, and sustainable management of biodiversity. The project design has been adjusted to have only one province per ecoregion, rather than duplicate efforts between provinces that share ecoregions. This is more cost-effective and will allow the project budget to cover the proposed geographic scope of the 7 priority ecoregions.

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

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

a) The project impact in terms of hectares is modest, perhaps due to the investment being spread over so many sites. Please clarify.

b) yes, but please see comment a above and clarify.

11/24/2023

Please include an estimate for CI 6 now that the hectare estimation is complete.

There is sufficient knowledge to implement restoration at scale now, without going through a pilot phase. We encourage the project designers to elaborate a more ambitious strategy during the project design phase including securing additional resources to increase the area that will be restored.

Agency's Comments

UNDP response 11/24/2023:

Agreed, the number of hectares is modest due to the investment being spread over various sites. With regards to the total area to be restored (19,832 ha.) and brought under improved practices (38,080 ha.), the project recognizes that ecological restoration techniques are intensive and require a small area to be piloted. By testing different models for 7 priority ecoregions in 5 provinces that have a strong programmatic, technical, and institutional baseline, the project will develop cost-effective models for restoration, conservation, and sustainable use of biodiversity, laying the groundwork for replication in other provinces with shared ecoregions and ultimately contributing to the development of a comprehensive National Restoration Programme for Biodiversity.

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

Secretariat's Comments

10/23/2023

NA

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, 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

Yes, cleared.

Agency's Comments

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

Yes, cleared.

Agency's Comments

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

Yes, cleared.

Agency's Comments

Focal Area allocation?

Secretariat's Comments

10/23/2023

Yes, cleared.

Agency's Comments

LDCF under the principle of equitable access?

Secretariat's Comments

10/23/2023

NA

Agency's Comments

SCCF A (SIDS)?

Secretariat's Comments

10/23/2023

NA

Agency's Comments
SCCF B (Tech Transfer, Innovation, Private Sector)?

Secretariat's Comments
10/23/2023

NA

Agency's Comments
Focal Area Set Aside?

Secretariat's Comments
10/23/2023

NA

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

Yes, cleared.

Agency's Comments
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

? Public investment is investment mobilized normally. Please revise the ?recurrent expenditures? to ?investment mobilized? where ?type of co-financing? is indicated as ?public investment?.

? ?In-kind? is ?recurrent expenditures? normally. Please revise the ?investment mobilized? to ?recurrent expenditures? where ?type of co-financing? is indicated as ?in-kind?.

? Please provide the name of co-financier for private sector amount of \$2,000,000. Also, include the type of co-financing for this amount.

11/24/2023

Please delete the private sector cofinancing since the name of the cofinancier is not yet known.

Agency's Comments

UNDP response 11/24/2023:

The Co-financing table has been adjusted per the above comments.

With regards to the private sector, the project is in preliminary discussions with potential private sector co-financiers and will provide specific names during the PPG. The project will consider the potential to work with the private sector facilities of IDB and CAF (with which the government has previous experience), as well as private banks, insurance companies, de-risking facilities, voluntary carbon markets, etc. to increase the scale of impact. While there are entities that are known to partner with local producers, the full identification and confirmation of specific private sector partners will begin during the PPG.

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, cleared.

Agency's Comments

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

Secretariat's Comments

1. 10/26/2023 Letter of Endorsement: the 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".
2. Also, the breakdown of the Agency fee does not differentiate among the fee for the GEF financing vis-à-vis the fee for PPG, so we cannot guess how much goes to each part.

Agencies were informed in March 2023 that LoEs "with modifications cannot be accepted and will be returned". 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. Please provide a new LoE using the LoE template accessible on the GEF website (we will review the financial information again whenever we get the updated LoE).

Finally, I consent to the utilization of Argentina's allocations in GEF-8 as defined in the System for Allocation of Resources (STAR).

Source of Fund	GEG Agency	Focal Área	Amounts (in USD)			
			Project Preparation	Project	Fee	Total
GEFTF	UNDP	BIODIVERSITY	200.000	5.279.452	520.548	6.000.000
Total GEF Resources			200.000	5.279.452	520.548	6.000.000

Agency's Comments

UNDP response 11/24/2023:

A revised Letter of Endorsement has been provided as well as the fee breakdown, per the comments. Updated LoE has been uploaded to GEF Portal through PIF and Roadmap sections.

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, please see above.

Agency's Comments

UNDP response 11/24/2023:

A revised Letter of Endorsement has been provided. Updated LoE has been uploaded to GEF Portal through PIF and Roadmap sections.

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

10/23/2023

NA

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

Yes, cleared.

Agency's Comments

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

Yes, cleared.

Agency's Comments

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

10/23/2023

NA

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 revise per comments above and resubmit.

In addition, please include the UNDP checklist in the documents? section.

11/24/2023

No, please address remaining issues and resubmit.

Agency's Comments

UNDP response 11/24/2023:

Thank you for your comment, the UNDP Checklist has been included in the Portal's document section.

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

	PIF Review	Agency Response
First Review	10/26/2023	11/14/2023
Additional Review (as necessary)	11/24/2023	
Additional Review (as necessary)		
Additional Review (as necessary)		
Additional Review (as necessary)		