



Integrated water resources management in the transboundary Bermejo River Basin

Review CEO Endorsement and Make a recommendation

Basic project information

GEF ID

10995

Countries

Regional

Project Name

Integrated water resources management in the transboundary Bermejo River Basin

Agencies

CAF

Date received by PM

9/14/2023

Review completed by PM

12/19/2023

Program Manager

Taylor Henshaw

Focal Area

International Waters

Project Type

FSP

PIF
CEO Endorsement

Part I ? Project Information

Focal area elements

1. Does the project remain aligned with the relevant GEF focal area elements as presented in PIF (as indicated in table A)?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

15th October 2023 (thenshaw): Yes, please address following:

(1) The duration between Expected Start and Completion Date is 47 months. Please change these dates to reflect 48 months

(2) Please provide a matrix that explains any deviations in the project structure/design from the approved PIF.

7th of December 2023 (thenshaw):

(1) Partly addressed. Please give a few months buffer between project endorsement and start date. A March 2024 start date is suggested. Please revise duration accordingly. Please consider March 15, 2024 - March 15, 2028.

(2) Addressed.

15th of December 2023 (thenshaw): Addressed.

Agency Response

(1) Done. Corrected in the CEO. January 2024 ? January 2028.

(2) The project structure (Table B) remains within the scope of what was approved in the FIP, incorporating component 5 (M&E). The amounts have changed insignificantly in order to bring the project in line with GEFSEC requirements. The co-financing has been increased by USD 2.5 million.

| | GEF Project Financing | | Confirmed Co-financing | |
|--------------|-----------------------|---------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| C1 | 1,100,000 -> | 1,102,619 | 9,960,000 -> | 10,421,562 |
| C2 | 1,450,000 -> | 1,417,500 | 7,470,000 -> | 8,201,562 |
| C3 | 2,300,000 -> | 2,267,500 | 22,390,000 -> | 22,851,562 |
| C4 | 1,182,500 -> | 1,150,000 | 3,480,000 -> | 3,901,562 |
| C5 | 0 -> | 110,000 | 0 -> | 569,062 |
| SUB | 6,032,500 > | 6,047,619 | 43,300,000 -> | 45,945,308 |
| PMC | 317,500 -> | 302,381 (5%) | 2,400,000 -> | 2,297,265 (5%) |
| TOTAL | 6,350,000 -> | 6,350,000 | 45.700,000 -> | 48,242,573 |

14th December 2023

1. Modified. March 2024 - March 2028

Project description summary

2. Is the project structure/design appropriate to achieve the expected outcomes and outputs as in Table B and described in the project document?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

15th of October 2023 (thenshaw): No, please address the following:

(1) Please recast Output 1.1.1 to make it measurable. The 1995 "Agreement for the Multiple Use of the Resources of the Upper Bermejo River Basin and the Río Grande de Tarija" establishing COBINABE, considered to be expanded include the Lower Bermejo Basin and groundwater resources, and revamped in terms of scope and mandate."

Please also describe what is meant by "consolidation of COBINABE". What needs to be consolidated?

(2) Please recast Output 1.1.4 to include that training modules will be "developed" and "delivered to ____".

(3) Please recast Output 2.2.4 to include that training modules will be "developed" and "delivered to ____".

(4) Component 3 encompasses an updated TDA and SAP and definition of bankable projects. The total GEF grant allocation for this Component is \$2,267,500. A TDA, a SAP and defining bankable projects does not equate to \$2,267,500. Please explain what this \$2,267,500 will cover. In the submission, please detail what "definition of bankable projects" entails, including the approach and desired outcomes.

Given the large GEF grant allocation to this component, we expect to see some on the ground activities to inform the SAP update and the definition of bankable projects.

(5) Output 5.1.1 includes many activities. Please split these activities across two outputs: one output on progress reports, annual work plans etc and one on mid-term and terminal evaluations. Please remove reference to the GEF Tracking Tool.

(6) Output 5.2.1 seems better placed under Component 4. Please revise accordingly.

7th of December 2023 (thenshaw):

(1) Addressed.

(2) Please include that training modules will be "developed" and "delivered to ____" in the Table B output.

(3) Please include that training modules will be "developed" and "delivered to ____" in the Table B output.

(4) Addressed.

(5) Not addressed. Comment still stands. Output 5.1.1 includes many activities. Please split these activities across two outputs: one output on progress reports, annual work plans etc and one on mid-term and terminal evaluations. Please remove reference to the GEF Tracking Tool.

(6) Not addressed. Comment still stands. Output 5.2.1 is still in Component 5.

Please adjust budget lines accordingly.

15th of December 2023 (thenshaw):

(2) Addressed.

(3) Addressed.

(5) Addressed.

(6) Addressed.

Agency Response

15th October 2023

(1) Well noted. Table B. The description of output 1.1.1 has been slightly modified to make it clear, and hence ?measurable?, what the output consists of, that is the production of an expanded mandate of COBINABE to include the Lower Bermejo Basin and groundwater resources (which is a condition sine qua non for introducing IWRM in the basin). The need for revamping/consolidating COBINABE?s founding agreement is justified in the Baseline Scenario section (?tem 1.2): initially focused on transboundary cooperation on hydropower only, and limited to the upper section of the basin, its mandate did not enable COBINABE to respond to the challenges to sustainability of the Basin land and water resources. The countries? present willingness to resume COBINABE?s activities, interrupted since 2009, and consider defining a new mandate with expanded functions of COBINABE represents an unique opportunity to ?consolidate? transboundary cooperation, and to enable COBINABE to promote IWRM approaches and provide countries with the tools and the cooperation and coordination framework necessary for facing the present looming threats to the Basin sustainability.

(2). The description of this output, fully responding to this recommendation, is present in section 1.3.2.1 at paragraphs 64 to 68.

(3) Please see pint 1.3.2.3 ? par 93 and box added after paragraph 96. The description of this output, fully responding to this recommendation, is present in section 1.3.2.2. Please note that the \$ amount allocated to this Component is consistent with the one indicated in the approved PIF. A box with the definition of Bankable Projects has been added (item 1.3.2.3). The choice of feasibility Vs prefeasibility studies will depend on the costs involved for each specific investment. In summary, the CAF estimate of the GEF grant amount for this Component is based on a sound assessment of the cost of each activity, and has to be considered the minimum needed.

On the ground activities will be certainly necessary for the conduct of the TDA and of the feasibility studies, but not for the SAP negotiations. If the reviewer meant instead the conduct of pilot demonstrations, it has to be clarified that pilots were deliberately excluded from this

project, given the large number of them executed as part of the previous GEF intervention in the basin, with limited success (see the Baseline Scenario section, item 1.2).

(4) Done. Please see table B.

(5) Done. Removed.

14th December 2023

1. N/A

2. Modified. Output 1.1.4 now reads (Table B): ... will be developed and delivered to COBINABE, COREBE and OTNPB staff, as well as to relevant national entities.

3. Modified. Output 2.1.4: now reads (Table B): ?developed and delivered to the staff of COBINABE, COREBE and OTNPB, as well as to relevant national entities.

4. N/A

5. Modified. The output was restructured as suggested. Text of Component 5 outputs now reads: 5.1.1. Annual Work Plans, Annual Progress Reports. 5.1.2. Budgeted Monitoring & Evaluation Plan, Mid-Term Evaluation Report, Terminal Evaluation report drafted, completed according to established deadlines.

6. Modified. Output 5.2.1 was considered in component 4, output 4.1.5.

3. If this is a non-grant instrument, has a reflow calendar been presented in Annex D?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request N/A

Agency Response

Co-financing

4. Are the confirmed expected amounts, sources and types of co-financing adequately documented, with supporting evidence and a description on how the breakdown of co-financing was identified and meets the definition of investment mobilized, and a description of any major changes from PIF, consistent with the requirements of the Co-Financing Policy and Guidelines?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

15th of October 2023 (thenshaw): No, please address the following:

*Please ensure all co-financing letters are signed on official letter head and uploaded as PDFs.

(1) The CAF co-financing letter is not signed. Please upload an official/signed version to the Portal. The letter states that the \$1,700,000 is an investment "financed by CAF through Project investment loans to the Plurinational State of Bolivia and financed by CAF through Project investment loans to the Republic of Argentina." It seems the categories in the co-financing table should be "loan" and "investment mobilized". Please reconsider this categorization and revise accordingly. Please explain in the field below Table C what these loans are and how they serve as project co-financing.

(2) Please provide an official signed letter of co-financing from Argentina Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development. The Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development - Argentina letter does not detail what the in-kind recurrent expenditures are. Please explain in the field below Table C what the in-kind recurrent expenditures from the Ministry are and how they will serve as project co-financing.

(3) The Ministry of Environment and Water - Bolivia co-financing letter is not signed. Please upload a signed version on official letterhead to the portal.

(4) The co-financing amount has not increased since PIF stage. In the PIF review sheet, GEF Sec asked the proponents to explain action taken to secure private enterprise co-financing and what the prospects are for further co-financing secured during PPG. The proponents responded: "The bulk of the private sector in the basin is made of small holder farmers, with a few larger agricultural enterprises. During PPG work, efforts will be made to engage them in project execution (TDA-SAP) including through provision of co-financing." Private enterprise is missing from the co-financing table. Please explain why.

(5) As project executing entity, it is expected that COBINABE would provide some in-kind co-financing. Please explain why there is no co-financing coming from the executing entity.

7th of December 2023 (thenshaw):

(1) Partly. Loans must be investment mobilized. It is reflected as such in the CAF co-financing letter. Please revise the co-financing table.

(2) Addressed.

(3) Addressed.

(4) Addressed.

(5) Addressed.

15th of December 2023 (thenshaw): Partly Addressed. Please describe the CAF investment mobilized in the field below the co-financing table.

19th of December 2023 (thenshaw): Addressed.

Agency Response

15th October 2023

(1) Done. The signed CAF letter has been uploaded

(2) The letter from AR is official. The Government of the Argentine Republic uses the electronic management system (GDE). The letter provided has the official letterhead, the digital signature of the OFP Martin Illescas and was registered under note No. NO-2023-57490888-APN-DGPFYCI#MAD.

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Please see paragraph 2: [Detail](#) of Co-Financing - Argentina: Argentina's counterpart contribution to the project is divided into public investment, which includes projects developed in the area of intervention and related to natural resources, the environment, water management, among them: Preparation of the Master Plans of rainwater and river works (Jujuy); Works for stabilization of torrents (Salta); Channeling of the San Antonio river (Salta); Productive drainage systems (Chaco); Master Plan for rain drainage and flood control (Formosa); Hydraulic and hydrodynamic study for the protection of margins Rio Bermejo (Formosa); projects will provide existing baseline information and planned courses of action, avoiding duplication of effort. The in-kind contributions correspond to: Costs incurred, including institutional management, accompaniment, monitoring and evaluation of the project, as well as operating costs or basic services necessary to carry out the activities of the GEF Project, Equipment, Venues, Office Supplies and photocopying, Lan Internet, Rent of offices, Telephone Services, Couriers, Meetings Services, Postage. Time spent on the project, % of monthly salary of civil servants in the country: Team coordination to support project: National Coordinator, Administratives, Communications and Legal Support. Technical support team for the project: Technical team made up of professional staff from the provinces that make up the Basin and professionals from the national government: Public Works, National Water Institute, National Meteorological Service, National Hydrological Network, among others, who will do technical reviews and work in conjunction with corebe. Other: at least two vehicles available for transfers in the territory, fuel, survey and monitoring activities.

Please see paragraph 2: [Detail](#)^[a2] of Co-Financing ? Bolivia: Bolivia's counterpart contribution to the Project is divided into public investment, which includes projects developed in the intervention area and related to natural resource, environmental, water management, among them, Integrated management plans of 26 micro-basins tributaries of the Bermejo River; Plurinational Water Resources Plan (PPRH); Implementation of surface water monitoring networks.etc. The projects will provide existing baseline information and planned courses of action, avoiding duplication of effort. The monetization of the expenditures made, which include institutional management, accompaniment, monitoring and evaluation of the project, as well as the operating expenses or basic services necessary to carry out the activities of the GEF Project, according to the following:

- Time dedicated to the project, % of the monthly salary of officials and/or administrative or support personnel according to the time dedicated to the project (inspections, preparation of reports, notes, participation in activities related to the project e.g. workshops, meetings, work meetings, etc.).
- Payment of basic services (electricity, water, internet, etc.), stationery.
- Other expenses, rental of equipment, space for events (workshops, courses, seminars).

(3) The signed Bolivia co-financing letter has been uploaded.

(4) Please see table C, the total co-financing was increased by approximately US\$2.5 million compared to the PIF phase. Please see appendix 6. Following the successful stakeholder engagement practices applied during PIF preparation, during PPG several consultation meetings were held with stakeholders including representatives of the private sector (farmers). While in principle support for the project was confirmed, and private sector participation to activities of all project Components was assured, this commitment was not translated into a measurable financial contribution.

(5) COBINABE is entirely funded by the governments of Argentina and Bolivia, that contribute substantially to the project co-financing.

[a1]

[a2]

1. The table has been updated.

2. N/A

3.N/A

4. N/A

5.N/A

GEF Resource Availability

5. Is the financing presented in Table D adequate and does the project demonstrate a cost-effective approach to meet the project objectives?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

15th of October 2023 (thenshaw): Partly, please address the following:

(1) Per comment above, Component 3 encompasses an updated TDA and SAP and definition of bankable projects. The total GEF grant allocation for this Component is \$2,267,500. A TDA, a SAP and defining bankable projects does not equate to \$2,267,500. Please explain what this \$2,267,500 will cover. In the submission, please detail what "definition of bankable projects" entails, including the approach and desired outcomes.

Given the large GEF grant allocation to this component, we expect to see some on the ground activities to inform the SAP update and the definition of bankable projects.

(2) Please explain what the project exit strategy is in terms of financing. How can the updated SAP be implemented without a future GEF project intervention?

7th of December 2023 (thenshaw):

(1) Addressed.

(2) Addressed.

Agency Response

15th October 2023

(1) Please see point 1.3.2.3, paragraph 93. Please note that the \$ amount allocated to this Component is consistent with the one indicated in the approved PIF. The costs inherent in

carrying out the three main activities that are part of this Component, are described in detail in section 1.3.2.3: (i) The update of the TDA, now over 20 years old, and its expansion to include consideration of groundwater resources, climate change present impacts and future scenarios, and other emerging issues such as gender equality and focus on vulnerable populations; (ii) The implementation of the negotiation process needed to reach agreement on a new SAP; (iii) the conduct of feasibility/prefeasibility studies of a selected number of SAP investments to bring them to the level of 'Bankable Projects'. A box with the definition of Bankable Projects has been added (item 1.3.2.3). The choice of feasibility Vs prefeasibility studies will depend on the costs involved for each specific investment. In summary, the CAF estimate of the GEF grant amount for this Component is based on a sound assessment of the cost of each activity, and has to be considered the minimum needed.

On the ground activities will be certainly necessary for the conduct of the TDA and of the feasibility studies, but not for the SAP negotiations. If the reviewer meant instead the conduct of pilot demonstrations, it has to be clarified that pilots were deliberately excluded from this project, given the large number of them executed as part of the previous GEF intervention in the basin, with limited success (see the Baseline Scenario section, item 1.2).

(2) Please see point 1.3.2.3, paragraph 96 and box added. The *raison d'être* of the identification and preparation of 'bankable projects', identifying financial mechanisms, is to represent the project's exit strategy facilitating SAP investments implementation without necessarily including GEF funding. Wording (*italics*) to this effect has been added at item 1.3.2.3.

14th December 2023

1. N/A

2. N/A

Project Preparation Grant

6. Is the status and utilization of the PPG reported in Annex C in the document?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

15th of October 2023 (thenshaw): Partly, please address the following:

(1) The amount committed total is incorrect. Please change total from \$67,250 to \$65,250.

*There is a small mistake in the total amounts as $\$134,750 + \$67,250 = \$202,000$. Please correct.

(2) Please better explain how \$74,750 was spent, with a commitment of an additional \$40,250, on consultants to develop the project materials. This seems like a very high figure to develop a CER package, generally, and is less justified in only a two-country project.

(3) Please remove duplicated text.

7th of December 2023 (thenshaw):

(1) Addressed.

(2) Addressed.

(3) Addressed.

Agency Response

15th October 2023

(1) Done. Please see Table PPG. The error was in the sum of the Amount Committed= 65,250 column.

(2) Done. Please see paragraphs 244 to 248.

(3) Corrected. Duplicate paragraph has been removed.

14th December 2023

1. N/A

2. N/A

3. N/A

Core indicators

7. Are there changes/adjustments made in the core indicator targets indicated in Table E? Do they remain realistic?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

15th of October 2023 (thenshaw): No, please address the following:

(1) Core Indicator 11: 1,300,000 direct beneficiaries is far too high for this investment. Please revise this target to direct beneficiaries only, not the entire basin population. Pages 24-25 of the GEF-8 Results Measurement Framework Guidelines (GEF/C.62/Inf.12/Rev.01) provide examples of what might be counted as direct beneficiary.

(2) Please explain why the rating for Indicator 7.1 has changed from "2" to "1". This project is updating a TDA and SAP, so at minimum the rating should be "2". Perhaps the thinking here is that updating the TDA/SAP equates to no TDA/SAP in the basin, and that updating the TDA is "2" and reaching ministerial endorsement is a "3"?

(3) Please explain why the rating for Indicator 7.2 has changed from "3" to "2". Should this not be at least a "3"? 3 = Regional legal agreement signed and RMI in place; 4 = Regional legal agreement ratified and RMI functional

7th of December 2023 (thenshaw):

(1) No, 1,300,000 direct beneficiaries is not an acceptable target for CI11. Please revise significantly downward. The recent La Plata Basin PIF, for example, aims to directly benefit 200,000 people.

(2) Addressed.

(3) Addressed.

Please explain these calculations in the field below the Core Indicator table.

15th of December 2023 (thenshaw):

(1) Partly addressed. Please consult with GEFSec.

19th of December 2023 (thenshaw): Addressed.

Agency Response

15th October 2023

(1) Please see paragraph 4. Direct project beneficiaries (high intensity) as defined in the GEF8 guidelines for IW projects, would be limited to the staff of COBINABE (COREBE and OTNPB). CAF has preferred to provide an estimate of the low intensity beneficiaries, defined by the guidelines as "People living within a river basin subject to a water resources management plan". The text has been modified to explain the rationale of the choice (paragraph 4).

(2) Yes, the thinking is exactly the one described.

(3) The legal agreement establishing COBINABE exists, but COBINABE has been "dormant" for the last 15 years. The project aims at revisiting its mandate, expand its functions and set it in motion. Hence CAF feels that the rating 2 at CEO endorsement better describes the present situation.

14th December 2023

1. Modified as suggested. New number of direct beneficiaries and explanatory text added: The number of low-intensity beneficiaries coincides with the total number of the basin's inhabitants (1.330 million people) of which approximately 50% are women. The figure shown in the table (15,000 people) refers to direct high intensity beneficiaries, that is local communities in the upper basin. Paragraph 4.

2. N/A

3. Explanatory text added as footnote: The legal agreement establishing COBINABE exists, but COBINABE has been "dormant" for the last 15 years. The project aims at revisiting its mandate, expand its functions and set it in motion. Hence CAF feels that the rating 2 at CEO endorsement better describes the present situation. Table Project Core Indicators.

Part II ? Project Justification

1. Is there a sufficient elaboration on how the global environmental/adaptation problems, including the root causes and barriers, are going to be addressed?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

15th of October 2023 (thenshaw): Yes, but please address the following:

(1) The project description states that "A basin of the scale and complexity of the Bermejo River will suffer from many environmental problems..." For clarity, please correct this to "suffers", as this is not meant to be a forward looking statement, correct?

7th of December 2023 (thenshaw): Addressed.

Agency Response

15th October 2023

(1) Done. Please see paragraph 7

14th December 2023

1. N/A

2. Is there an elaboration on how the baseline scenario or any associated baseline projects were derived?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

15th of October 2023 (thenshaw): Yes

Agency Response

3. Is the proposed alternative scenario as described in PIF/PFD sound and adequate? Is there sufficient clarity on the expected outcomes and components of the project and a description on the project is aiming to achieve them?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

15th of October 2023 (thenshaw): Partly, please address the following:

(1) Output 1.1. Please confirm that GEF funds will not be utilized to pay salaries of the BMTWT, which will be established through the project.

(2) Output 1.3. Please explain what the "situational room with equipment" is. The GEF does not fund new buildings.

(3) Output 1.4. Please clarify who will be the beneficiaries of the specific training modules in IWRM, GIS DSS, OMS and monitoring networks. The description is "municipal/provincial technicians and institutional staff". This description is too vague. There should be much more specificity at this stage of the project design. Please name specific agencies/organizations.

(4) Please elaborate in the submission on who specifically will be using these new tools under Component 1.

(5) Output 2.4. Please clarify who will be the beneficiaries of the specific training modules ("Diploma") in conjunctive management and how those ultimately trained will contribute to the project objective. Please name specific agencies/organizations.

(6) Council Comment: Germany acknowledges the effort in data acquisition to define conceptual groundwater models and to identify recharge and discharge areas of aquifers. Such data generally serves as baseline data for numerical groundwater models that allow predictive modelling of different groundwater scenarios. To make further use of this data, Germany suggests preparing steps to create a numerical groundwater model, by building further partnerships.

(7) Component 3. As noted above, please partly reimagine this component to include on-the-ground activities that have direct beneficiaries and directly benefit women, youth and indigenous peoples.

(8) Component 3. Please describe in the submission the specific plan to update the SAP, including activities, planned consultations, who will be engaged, etc.

(9) Output 4.1. Please provide an indicative quantification of workshops, training sessions, dialogues and exchanges under the citizen participation and environmental education program. How many direct beneficiaries will this program target?

(10) Output 4.2 is vague. Please elaborate on what "create spaces for the exchange of experiences among CSOs... " means. What will these exchanges lead to? New policies? Uptake of tools? What does "Strengthen the institutional framework of COBINABE by involving a platform of key actors of the basin in both countries in its decision making processes and activities" mean? What is the specific activity here? How is it measured?

(11) Output 4.3. Please explain why this activity, which promotes the involvement of the private sector in the TDA-SAP process, is not built into the TDA-SAP update activities under Component 2 instead? It is suggested to include these roundtables as a means to scope the bankable project list and prioritization and to engage the productive sector in a new output under Component 3 that carries out on-the-ground work.

(12) The specific knowledge management/communication products should be outlined here. Please revise accordingly.

(13) Please briefly describe the new Component 5 in this section.

(14) Council Comment: The project includes only actions at the regional level and thus considers the total of the population as beneficiaries. Germany suggests identifying how project activities will address specific population groups like most vulnerable population in

terms of poverty and climate change vulnerability. More specific gender indicators are also suggested.

(15) Council Comment: The global environmental problem identified is accelerated erosion. Germany suggests specifying the specific project interventions that will address this problem. Links to land restoration global benefits (such as carbon capture) could also be added.

(16) Council Comment: For component 1, Germany suggests that synergies with the new Geographic Information System of the State Government of Tarija should be considered.

(17) Council Comment: Component 3 mentions legal, institutional, and legislative reforms. Germany suggests specifying the process of formulation, harmonization, and approval of the reforms in both countries. Also, adding an item to the Risks table where mitigation measures are given in case there are difficulties during the reform process.

(18) Council Comment: For component 4 (and PPG), Germany suggests taking as a model the Interinstitutional Platform of the Guadalquivir Basin, as well as the technical and social councils that have been established in the context of the Basin Management Plan of the Guadalquivir River. The model could also be adapted to the specific situation of the other Bermejo sub-basins.

(19) STAP Comment: The theory of change seems to miss the linkage that explains how the TDA/SAP will 1) address the main drivers of degradation related to poor land use practices; and 2) attract bankable projects. Instead, much of the focus is on the data management, capacity building, tools, etc. all of which are helpful but the connection to these core issues is not explicit. Incentives for investment in sediment control, improved land use, etc. are not clear; presumably the TDA will help to elucidate.

Please respond to Germany and STAP comments.

7th of December 2023 (thenshaw):

(1) Addressed.

(2) Addressed.

(3) Addressed.

(4) Addressed.

(5) Addressed.

(6) Addressed.

(7) Addressed.

(8) Addressed.

(9) Addressed.

(10) Addressed.

(11) Addressed.

(12) Addressed.

(13) Addressed, but please see above comment regarding separating out output 5.1.1 and moving output 5.2.1 to Component 4.

(14) Not addressed. Please see Germany comment and note that 1.3M direct beneficiaries is not an acceptable target.

(15) The response is not convincing. Please strengthen. The global environmental problem identified is accelerated erosion. Germany suggests specifying the specific project interventions that will address this problem.

(16) Not fully addressed. Germany comment is suggesting synergies, not building on Tarija experience. Please revise.

(17) Addressed.

(18) Please better explained how this comment has been incorporated.

(19) Addressed.

15th of December 2023 (thenshaw):

(14) Addressed.

(15) Addressed.

(16) Addressed.

(18) Addressed.

Agency Response

15th October 2023

(1) The BMTWT is a technical body made up of technicians from the two countries accredited to COBINABE, the GEF will not pay salaries to these experts.

(2) Infrastructure for buildings will not be funded; the situational room is a space to be provided by the participating parties in COBINABE. The project, with funding from the GEF, will complement the capabilities and equipment so that this room can operate the DSS and make decisions. Even linking with the SSTD Cuenca del Plata.

(3) Please see Item 1.3.2.1 ? Component 1 - Output 1.1.4. The beneficiaries of the training in IWRM (Integrated Water Resources Management), GIS (Geographic Information Systems), DSS (Decision Support Systems), OMS (Operation and Maintenance Systems), and Monitoring Networks will be municipal technicians in Bolivia who belong to the following departments: environment, irrigation, social development, economic and productive development, basic sanitation and drinking water, technical planning, and infrastructure. In Argentina, the counterparts will come from provinces and the nation related to technical units involved in Water Resources, Territorial Planning, Economic and Productive Development, and Hydraulic Infrastructure. It is also considered to invite departmental technicians from the corresponding units related to the specific themes of the Bermejo Transboundary Basin, and technicians designated by COREBE and OTNPB will also participate for ministerial-level coordination.

(4) Please see Item 1.3.2.1 ? Component 1 ? paragraph 67. These tools will be adopted and used by the multidisciplinary technicians of COBINABE in coordination with the technicians of COREBE and OTNPB, who collaborate with ministerial authorities to provide technical support for prioritized actions and measures to be implemented by COBINABE in the Transboundary Bermejo River Basin.

(5) The direct beneficiaries of the modules in the "tailor-made" diploma course will primarily be the gender-balanced Binational Multidisciplinary Technical Working Team (BMTWT), along with technicians designated by COREBE and OTNPB. Their contribution will be through new and strengthened capacities and knowledge on IWRM, basin and tools that will facilitate the implementation of measures defined in the SAP for water security with a transboundary approach.

(6) CAF appreciates Germany's support for the groundwater component of the project. On the specifics of groundwater mathematical modelling, it has to be clarified that translating an aquifer ?conceptual model? into a ?numerical model? (that is ?a combination of a large number of mathematical equations that depends upon computers to find an approximate solution to the underlying physical problem?) would be feasible at a basin level only where exhaustive quantitative physical and chemical information is available if not for all at least for some of the aquifers present in the basin's subsurface, which is clearly not the case of the Bermejo Basin, being the project the first attempt to assess the groundwater potential of the basin. More in depth evaluations of the Basin aquifers might be part of the SAP, should the countries so decide.

(7) Please see Item 1.3.2.1 ? Component 1 - Output 1.1.4.

The beneficiaries of the training in IWRM (Integrated Water Resources Management), GIS (Geographic Information Systems), DSS (Decision Support Systems), OMS (Operation and Maintenance Systems), and Monitoring Networks will be municipal technicians in Bolivia who

belong to the following departments: environment, irrigation, social development, economic and productive development, basic sanitation and drinking water, technical planning, and infrastructure. In Argentina, the counterparts will come from provinces and the nation related to technical units involved in Water Resources, Territorial Planning, Economic and Productive Development, and Hydraulic Infrastructure. It is also considered to invite departmental technicians from the corresponding units related to the specific themes of the Bermejo Transboundary Basin, and technicians designated by COREBE and OTNPB will also participate for ministerial-level coordination.

Please see item 1.3.2.1 ? Component 1 ? paragraph 67.

These tools will be adopted and used by the multidisciplinary technicians of COBINABE in coordination with the technicians of COREBE and OTNPB, who collaborate with ministerial authorities to provide technical support for prioritized actions and measures to be implemented by COBINABE in the Transboundary Bermejo River Basin.

(8) Please see description of output 3.2, from paragraphs 93 to 96.

A detailed description of output 3.2 (updated SAP), fully responding to this request, can be found at section 1.3.2.3.

(9) Please see paragraph 101. Within the framework of citizen participation and environmental education, due to the territorial extension of the four provinces in Argentina and the presence of vulnerable populations and indigenous peoples, it is estimated that the project will reach more than 2000 families trained/consulted. In Bolivian territory, the territorial extension is smaller, however, grassroots organizations and peasant and producer associations are very well structured with representation at the level of the nine municipalities of the department of Tarija and the project aims to reach at least 1500 beneficiary families with training in environmental education and citizen participation in decision-making. This means that the project in the Bermejo River Basin will have a minimum interaction with 3,500 beneficiary families.

(10) Item 1.3.2.4 ? Component 4 - in paragraphs 99 and 100, it is detailed how the CSOs will interact among themselves, including both men and women, in the Basin to participate and influence the process of updating the SAP and the development of the project portfolio. In this way, they will have an impact on the decision-making within COBINABE, including the application of current policies and the participatory design of emerging ones.

(11) The primary aspect of this output (private sector roundtable aimed at periodically engage representatives of the productive sector in the TDA-SAP update process) has been considered by CAF to be: ?stakeholders? engagement and awareness raising? and as such has been included in Component 4, which consists of cross cutting activities in support of all the project Components, and revolves around stakeholder?s engagement. Private sector participation to the TDA-SAP process is also mentioned in the description of output 3.2 (paragraph 93.II)

(12) Please see paragraph 100. Printed and digital educational materials for dissemination such as: Brochures, training guides, manuals and booklets containing relevant information on sustainable practices, environmental conservation and management of natural resources in the Bermejo basin.

(13) Please see the detailed description in Section 9, Monitoring and Evaluation. From paragraph 215.

(14) Direct project beneficiaries (high intensity) as defined in the GEF8 guidelines for IW projects, would be limited to the staff of COBINABE (COREBE and OTNPB). CAF has preferred to provide an estimate of the low intensity beneficiaries, defined by the guidelines as "People living within a river basin subject to a water resources management plan?". The TDA-SAP process will place particular emphasis on more vulnerable communities and women: this however cannot at this stage be measured in terms of direct beneficiaries' numbers.

The indicators were included in the Gender and Indigenous Peoples action plan (item 3.5), by component and appendix 6.

(15) Please see paragraph 94 and 95. The Project Document responds to Germany's recommendation in component 3 - reforms and investments-, where suggestions as to what might help reversing degradation trends of water and land in the Bermejo Basin are briefly described. The TDA will provide a science-based update of the situation regarding accelerated erosion patterns due to the geologic nature of the Upper Basin exacerbated by land use practices, and the SAP will indicate which are the remedial actions that countries are willing to undertake at the national and transboundary levels. This could be linked to the overall benefits in soil restoration, sustainable development, among others, that the identified measures could generate.

(16) Text to this effect has been added at section 1.3.2.1. Output 1.1.2.

(17) The project aims at gathering the countries' commitment to introduce those legal, legislative and policy reforms found through the TDA ? SAP process as necessary to reverse degradation trends and improve water security in the basin. The reform process itself is not part of the project.

(18) Done. Text has been added at section 1.3.2.1. Output 1.1.2

(19) The responses to the STAP comments made at the PIF level are contained in Annex B to the CEO Endorsement request Document.

14th December 2023

1.N/A

2.N/A

3.N/A

4.N/A

5.N/A

6.N/A

7.N/A

8.N/A

9.N/A

10.N/A

11.N/A

12.N/A

13. Modified. Output 5.1.1 was restructured as suggested and output 5.2.1 was considered in component 4, output 4.1.5.

14. Modified as suggested. New number of direct beneficiaries and explanatory text added: The number of low-intensity beneficiaries coincides with the total number of the basin's inhabitants (1.330 million people) of which approximately 50% are women. The figure shown in the table (15,000 people) refers to direct high intensity beneficiaries, that is local communities in the upper basin.). Paragraph 4.

15. The problem of erosion, largely due to the geologic nature of the basin upper reaches, will be addressed under Component 2 (monitoring, output 2.1.3), and component 3 (Sand dams, output 3.1.2).

16. Modified ad suggested. New text of section 1.3.2.1, table output 1.1.2: Synergies with the Geographic Information System of the State Government of Tarija will be fostered as part of the establishment of a GIS platform and satellite analysis for the Bermejo Basin hosted in COBINABE database, operating within the Bermejo Basin.

17.N/A

18. New text of section 1.3.2.4 output 4.1.1: To do so, the project will consider amongst others replicating experiences and models tested as part of the Interinstitutional Platform of the Guadalquivir Basin.

19.N/A

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

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

15th of October 2023 (thenshaw): Yes

Agency Response

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

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

15th of October 2023 (thenshaw): Partly, please address the following:

(1) Please describe how the GEF increment is mobilizing co-financing to deliver this project.

(2) Please describe what will likely happen without the GEF increment.

* The incremental costs section should summarize the "business as usual" scenario that would take place without the GEF intervention; the "GEF Alternative" (project interventions) that explains how the project will address key barriers and build on the baseline; and what global environmental benefits will be derived as a result of the GEF funding and project interventions.

7th of December 2023 (thenshaw):

(1) Correct, but please in this section describe how the GEF increment is mobilizing co-financing to deliver this project. In other words, the GEF increment is able to leverage the project into 7 dollars of co-financing for every dollar invested.

(2) Please make explicit in this section.

15th of December 2023 (thenshaw):

(1) Addressed

(2) Addressed

Agency Response

15th October 2023

(1) The co-financing rate for this project is approximately 1:7.

(2) This is clearly implicit in the project justification, that without GEF support countries will not strengthen transboundary cooperation through a restructured COBINABE, nor go through the TDA-SAP update process. The global environmental benefits that the project will accrue are described in section 1.f) of the Project Document. Paragraphs 110 to 116.

14th of December 2023

1. The following text was added to section e) Incremental cost reasoning: Paragraph 109- which leveraged co-financing with a 1:7 ratio -.

The following text was added at paragraph 109: Nothing of all this will happen without the GEF intervention.

6. Is there further and better elaboration on the project's expected contribution to global environmental benefits or adaptation benefits?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

15th of October 2023 (thenshaw): Partly, please address the following:

(1) Please better articulate the Core Indicator 11 target in the GEBs section.

(2) STAP PIF comment, which still has relevance. "Information provided makes this difficult to assess ? particularly with regards to climate change adaptation. The PIF states that ?the strengthened transboundary cooperation mechanism ? will promote appropriate allocations among competing uses, equitable distribution of benefits and burdens and community participation?gender equity?? which is welcome though it is not entirely clear what the mechanisms and/or incentives are that will accomplish this beyond the future framework.Finally, the PIF indicates that 1,330,000 people (split evenly between female and male) will benefit from the project. This assumes that everyone in the basin will benefit from ?increased water security 4 and climate resilience,? which seems optimistic without more detailed explanation."

Please address the STAP comment accordingly. Please see Core Indicator 11 comment earlier and lower the target significantly so that only direct beneficiaries are targeted.

7th of December 2023 (thenshaw):

(1) Please see comments above. The target for CI11 is not acceptable. Please revise.

(2) Please see comments above. The target for CI11 is not acceptable. Please revise.

15th of December 2023 (thenshaw): Addressed.

Agency Response

15th October 2023

(1) Please see paragraph 116.

(2) The responses to the STAP PIF comments are presented in Annex B, and have informed the texts on project justification and project description. The reasoning behind Core 11 values is presented in a previous response: *Direct project beneficiaries (high intensity) as defined in the GEF8 guidelines for IW projects, would be limited to the staff of COBINABE (COREBE and OTNPB). CAF has preferred to provide an estimate of the low intensity beneficiaries, defined by the guidelines as People living within a river basin subject to a water resources management plan. The text has been modified to explain the rationale of the choice (paragraph 4).*

14th of December 2023

1. The following text was added at paragraph 116: Direct or high intensity beneficiaries, that is the indigenous communities of the Upper basin, have been estimated in 15.000 people.

2. Target has been revised and modified as suggested.

7. Is there further and better elaboration to show that the project is innovative and sustainable including the potential for scaling up?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

15th of October 2023 (thenshaw): Partly, please address the following:

(1) Innovation. STAP comment, which still has relevance: "The innovation statement is unconvincing. The proposed project follows a typical TDA/SAP process. The PIF fails to explain how a revised cooperative framework will lead to ?bankable projects? and what will be the financial or other incentives for companies/organizations to invest in infrastructure, land restoration, or other identified measures."

(2) Sustainability: As noted above, please explain what the project exit strategy is in terms of financing. How can the updated SAP be implemented without a future GEF project intervention? How will the "bankable projects" move forward. What about inter-ministerial committees?

(3) Scaling Up: The evidence and pathway to scaling is not convincing, especially given past project shortcomings. How could this work be scaled up under a potential La Plata Basin SAP implementation project and be useful for future GEF IW projects globally?

7th of December 2023 (thenshaw):

(1) Addressed.

(2) Not addressed. The document must expand on the indicative PIF text. Please elaborate in this section how the project will be sustainable.

(3) Not addressed. The document must expand on the indicative PIF text. Please elaborate in this section how the project will scale up.

15th of December 2023 (thenshaw):

(2) Addressed.

(3) Addressed.

Agency Response

(1) As clearly explained in point 1 Project Description, section g) the project is innovative in as much as it adopts approaches novel to the region (e.g.: conjunctive surface and groundwater management), and includes the conduct of feasibility/pre-feasibility studies of priority investments - including the identification of financial mechanisms for their implementation - which will allow for the first time to i structure bankable projects as part of a GEF IW SAP. Without a strengthened transboundary cooperative framework (COBINABE) nothing of this would happen.

(2) Sustainability: Please note that the relevant text is consistent with what stated in the approved PIF. The exit strategy relies on the conduct of technical-economic pre-feasibility / feasibility studies, that will include the identification of financing mechanisms other than GEF and of possible public and private financing sources.

(3) Please note that the relevant text is consistent with the one in the approved PIF. The present project is part of the CdP SAP implementation since it addresses one of the major issues of transboundary concern of the CdP: excess sediment loads interfering with river navigation, and impacting the Rio de La Plata ecosystems. Note also that, should the project be successful, it might trigger the broader adoption of the Inclusion of fully prepared bankable projects in SAPs. It could also provide relevant information for monitoring the watershed in its upstream/downstream linkage.

14th of December 2023

1.N/A

2. The following text was added at the Sustainability section ? paragraph 120: Key for the future sustainability of the Basin water resources will be (i) the success of the project in facilitating the expansion and consolidation of the mandate of COBINABE, providing it with the technical tools necessary for implementing IWRM and coping with climate change related water hazards, and (ii) The success of the technical-economic pre-feasibility / feasibility studies of major SAP investments, that will include the identification of financing mechanisms other than GEF and of possible public and private financing sources.

3. The following text was added at the section 121: The project outcomes have the potential to be scaled up in three ways: 1) the updated Bermejo SAP will be a component of the broader La Plata basin SAP and if implemented, will reflect its impacts on the overall health and sustainability of the La Plata basin and its ecosystems. 2) The application of conjunctive surface and groundwater management in the Bermejo Basin, will be a first step towards its full application to the entire la Plata basin. 3)The project aims to facilitate and accelerate SAP implementation by producing prefeasibility studies and identifying potential funding sources for main investments foreseen in the SAP. This innovative feature, that will be tested for the first time in the proposed project, might be replicable in the context of the Plata Basin SAP implementation, and beyond, in other IW projects globally

Project Map and Coordinates

Is there an accurate and confirmed geo-referenced information where the project intervention will take place?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

15th of October 2023 (thenshaw): Yes

Agency Response

Child Project

If this is a child project, is there an adequate reflection of how it contributes to the overall program impact?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

N/A

Agency Response

Stakeholders

Does the project include detailed report on stakeholders engaged during the design phase? Is there an adequate stakeholder engagement plan or equivalent documentation for the implementation phase, with information on Stakeholders who will be engaged, the means of engagement, and dissemination of information?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

15th of October 2023 (thenshaw): No, please address the following:

(1) Please provide additional details on the specific stakeholders that were consulted during the project development. How were these stakeholders consulted?

(2) Under the corresponding sub-section, please provide a summary on how stakeholders will be consulted in project execution, the means and timing of engagement, how information will be disseminated, and an explanation of any resource requirements throughout the project/program cycle to ensure proper and meaningful stakeholder engagement

7th of December 2023 (thenshaw):

(1) Please summarize this information in the stakeholder section of the submission.

(2) The field in the submission "In addition, provide a summary of how stakeholders will be consulted..." is empty. Please populate with information from appendixes as indicated.

15th of December 2023 (thenshaw):

(1) Addressed.

(2) Addressed.

Agency Response

15th October 2023

(1) Please see appendix_Analyses, Consults and Gender Plan, Indigenous People and Vulnerable Groups. In Argentina, due to the process of national elections, consultations and meetings with stakeholders were held in the provinces of Salta and Jujuy in person, and in Chaco and Formosa virtually. In Bolivia, a large workshop was held with representatives of public and private institutions, municipalities and rural population associations involved in the area of intervention. Both in meetings and consultations as well as in the multi-stakeholder workshop, there is evidence of a great expectation and motivation to be an active part of the project. In, Appendix 6 of Analysis, Consultation and Gender Plan, Indigenous Peoples and Vulnerable Populations was presented, where the different meetings, consultations and multi-stakeholder workshop held in the PRODOC phase are reflected with photographs and lists of participants.

(2) Stakeholders will be convened throughout the Project process. Once the work plan is adjusted, the process of dissemination and consultation for the implementation of the project begins at the level of organization of articulation and management of information with contact lists and management of horizontal lines of communication with COBINABE. As presented in Appendix 6, workshops and the formation of working groups with interested parties are scheduled. They will also be convened during the TDA/SAP information gathering for data collection processes and information validation processes.

14th of December 2023

1. The following text was added at paragraph 122. Stakeholder engagements and consultations took place in various provinces of Argentina, including in-person meetings in Salta and Jujuy,

and virtual sessions in Chaco and Formosa, as part of the national election process. In Bolivia, a significant workshop occurred involving representatives from public and private institutions, municipalities, and rural population associations within the project's scope. The events revealed a high level of anticipation and motivation among participants to actively contribute to the project. See Stakeholders Engagement Plan. In, Appendix 6 of Analysis, Consultation and Gender Plan, Indigenous Peoples and Vulnerable Populations was presented, where the different meetings, consultations and multi-stakeholder workshop held in the PRODOC phase are reflected with photographs and lists of participants. A table of the consulted parties is also included.

2. The following text was added at paragraph 133. In the implementation of the project, the stakeholders will be convened throughout the implementation process according to the stakeholder's engagement plan. Once the operational work plan of the project has been adjusted, the process of dissemination and consultation for the implementation of the project will start initially at the level of organization, articulation and management of information with contact lists and management of horizontal lines of communication with COBINABE. Consultation and participation are planned to be carried out through:

- Citizen participation and environmental education programme involving all key stakeholders in the basin, with gender balance and including indigenous communities.
- Mechanisms and procedures for the participation of civil society organizations in the supervision of environmental management together with the Basin's governmental bodies.
- Mechanisms and procedures for the participation of civil society organizations in the monitoring of environmental management together with Basin government agencies.
- Annual stocktaking meetings, with broad participation of stakeholders, media, academia, donors and financial institutions, to disseminate and exchange project progress and impacts, to coordinate with other relevant initiatives and to present the final agreed SAP.
- Creation of the project website and online communication platform, and active participation in IW: LEARN activities and events (1% of the total GEF grant). This is part of the outputs of component 4.

Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

Has the gender analysis been completed? Did the gender analysis identify any gender differences, gaps or opportunities linked to project/program objectives and activities? If so, does the

project/program include gender-responsive activities, gender-sensitive indicators and expected results?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

15th of October 2023 (thenshaw): Partly, please address the following:

- (1) The gender analysis is quite generic in the portal submission. Please upload an English version of Appendix 6 so this assessment can be further carried out.
- (2) The indicators in the Gender Action Plan should be incorporated into the overall Project Results Framework
- (3) The indicators point to balanced participation, but there are no activities that are truly gender-responsive. Please explain.
- (4) While it is appreciated that the Gender Action Plan provided specifics on how gender equality will be considered in each of the project's components and outputs, please reflect gender perspectives in the section on Project Description/Project Components, in line with good gender mainstreaming practice. What are the actual activities to close gender gaps in access to and control over natural resources; improving women's participation and decision making; and generating socioeconomic benefits or services for women. The submission includes "Yes" by these three elements, yet the submission does not follow through on designing activities to impact gender equality and women empowerment.

7th of December 2023 (thenshaw):

- (1) Addressed.
- (2) Addressed.
- (3) Addressed.
- (4) Addressed.

Agency Response

15th October 2023

(1) Done. Including the English version of Appendix 6.

(2) Included in point 3.5. Gender Plan indicators linked by project component.

(3) As it is a project aimed at strengthening COBINABE, the inclusion of gender in decision-making mechanisms is proposed in Component 1. The agreements to be established should promote economic equal opportunities between men and women in the access to water for their equal use. The development of women's capacities in various IWRM topics and their inclusion in governance, the use of information, and participation in decision-making regarding projects that include women's empowerment will be part of Component 2.

(3) Included in item 1.3.2 - Brief description of the expected results and project components. Please see box at the end of point c.

14th of December 2023

1.N/A

2.N/A

3.N/A

4.N/A

Private Sector Engagement

If there is a private sector engagement, is there an elaboration of its role as a financier and/or as a stakeholder?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

15th of October 2023 (thenshaw): Partly, please address the following:

(1) Please explain why the private sector can be a driver for change in the basin. How can the private sector support the development of "bankable projects" and be part of the project sustainability strategy for these bankable projects?

(2) Is there a strategy to secure project co-financing from the private sector during the inception phase. It is notable that no private sector co-financing has been secured as of the submission date.

7th of December 2023 (thenshaw):

(1) Addressed.

(2) Addressed.

Agency Response

15th October 2023

(1) In the case of the Bermejo Basin, the private sector will not be a driver of change, but a major actor in enhancing water security and sustainability in the Basin. This will occur as long as the private sector will be fully involved in the processes leading to COBINABE's reform, and to the agreements on a transboundary diagnostic and a Strategic Action Program inclusive of selected priority bankable projects. As described at point 4 of the CEO Endorsement request, the project will assure this level of private sector engagement.

(2) Private sector co-financing: see response above *?Following the successful stakeholder engagement practices applied during PIF preparation, during PPG several consultation meetings were held with stakeholders including representatives of the private sector (farmers). While in principle support for the project was confirmed, and private sector participation to activities of all project Components was assured, this commitment was not translated into a measurable financial contribution? . Please consider that the large majority of the private sector in the Basin consists of small holder farmers.*

14th of December 2023

1.N/A

2.N/A

Risks to Achieving Project Objectives

Has the project elaborated on indicated risks, including climate change, potential social and environmental risks that might prevent the project objectives from being achieved? Were there proposed measures that address these risks at the time of project implementation?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

15th of October 2023 (thenshaw): Yes

Agency Response

Coordination

Is the institutional arrangement for project implementation fully described? Is there an elaboration on possible coordination with relevant GEF-financed projects and other bilateral/multilateral initiatives in the project area?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

15th of October 2023 (thenshaw): No, please address the following:

(1) The description includes "The proposed project will be implemented by CAF, and executed by a fiduciary Executing Agency that, in partnership with COBINABE, will be responsible for the execution of all project activities". COBINABE is listed as the Executing Agency. Please explain what this fiduciary Executing Agency is. The Executing Agency is also listed as TBD in the text following the organogram. The Executing Agency has been identified as COBINABE at PIF stage and is listed as such in the front matter of the CEO Endorsement Document. Please clarify the Executing Agency.

(2) Please briefly summarize the role of the technical officers, admin assistant and communications officer. The Terms of Reference annex includes TORs for several other positions: Project Coordinator (reporting to a Project Director), a Technical Assistant, a Training Specialist, an Indigenous Liaison, a Conflict Resolution Specialist, a Financial Specialist, a Systemization Specialist, and a Communications Specialist. Please clarify the PCU and update the TORs accordingly. There are too many positions for the size of this project and this arrangement is not an effective use of GEF resources.

(3) The section includes planned coordination with a number of GEF initiatives, however some of these are already completed. Please clarify/remove these references. For those projects that are ongoing, please explain how the projects will coordinate.

(4) As this project covers groundwater, please explain how the project will coordinate with the Guarani aquifer project and a new Amazon Aquifer project (in PPG). How would this project coordinate with a future La Plata Basin SAP Implementation project?

(5) Please explain what specific non-GEF initiatives the project will coordinate with and how the project and the initiative will coordinate.

7th of December 2023 (thenshaw):

(1) Any entity that will be handling project finances must be identified at CEO Endorsement stage. Please identify.

(2) Addressed.

(3) Partly Addressed. There are still listed projects that completed. Please revise.

(4) While not physically connected, there is still potential for knowledge/experience sharing with the AAS and Guarani. Could these elements be included in the coordination aspect?

(5) Addressed.

15th of December 2023 (thenshaw):

(1) Please note that any new executing entity, after endorsement, will trigger a major amendment that will require project circulation to Council.

(3) Addressed.

(4) Addressed.

Agency Response

(1) Point 6 CEO Endorsement request. The project will be implemented through a fiduciary agency (TBD) together with a technical agency (COBINABE). The fiduciary agency will assume an administrative-financial role of full responsibility and accountability for the effective use of CAF resources and the delivery of the results set out in this document. While the technical agency (COBINABE) will be responsible for leading and ensuring the proper technical execution of key project activities. As indicated in point 6, CAF with the support of COBINABE has initiated a fiduciary agency selection process. It is consisting of a call for proposals under terms of reference that respond mainly to a list of eligibility criteria that meet CAF's fiduciary standards, experience in GEF project implementation and COBINABE's operational execution requirements.

(2) Please see paragraph 184. Point 6.1 Institutional arrangements. The project staff consists of the Project Director, Administrative Assistant, one Technical Officer per country, a Gender and Indigenous Peoples Officer, and a Communications Officer. There are no other positions as indicated. Please see paragraphs 179 to 181.

(3) Text has been added in section 6.2 to explain the rationale for involving beneficiaries of completed projects (e.g.: CIC) in the coordination mechanism (the Annual Stocktaking Meetings).

(4) Please note that: (i) the Amazon Aquifer System is a separate extremely complex aquifer with no linkages whatsoever to the groundwater resources of the Bermejo Basin; (ii) the Guarani Aquifer is a very deep confined aquifer whose presence in the Bermejo Basin subsurface has not been demonstrated. In any case it would have no relations with the overlying shallower confined and unconfined aquifers present in the Basin. There is hence no justification or need for coordination with these two projects. Coordination with the La Plata Basin SAP implementation: the project contributes to the implementation of the La Plata SAP and will maintain close coordination with CIC and any future related project (see also the response to the previous point *?Text has been added in section 6.2 to explain the rationale for involving beneficiaries of completed projects (e.g.: CIC) in the coordination mechanism (the Annual Stocktaking Meetings)?*).

(5) See point 6.2 Coordination with other relevant GEF-financed projects and other initiatives, point 4 non-GEF initiatives, CEO. Close coordination will be established with the IDB funded project introducing the HydroBID model suite as a tool for water resources management in the Bermejo Basin.

14th of December 2023

1. The project will be executed by COBINABE as the technical executing agency fully accepted by the countries, who will be responsible for leading and ensuring the adequate technical execution of the key activities of the project, including strengthening its institutional framework as an international basin organization.

A fiduciary executing agency will be included to assume the accounting-administrative role in the execution of the project, with full responsibility and accountability for the effective use of CAF resources and the delivery of the results set out in this document, which will be convened as soon as the CEO Endorsement is received through an open and transparent call for proposals.

The formal selection process has been expressly requested by the beneficiaries, however, and as is public knowledge, this decision has had to be accommodated to the processes of change of government in one of the countries. The planning period for their recruitment will be a maximum of 90 days from the call for applications to the signing of the agreement.

2. N/A

3. Text revised of section 1.3.2.4, output 4.1.4 and was modified Table in section 6.2.

4. The following text was added at section 6.2, point 3): Component 2 of the project is focused on groundwater resources of the Basin. As such it will benefit from exchanges with two GEF funded projects presently ongoing dealing with two major aquifer systems: the Amazon aquifer system, and the Guarani Aquifer system. These projects *? albeit dealing with groundwater physically unrelated to the project area ?* might provide useful insights and approaches.

5.N/A

Consistency with National Priorities

Has the project described the alignment of the project with identified national strategies and plans or reports and assessments under the relevant conventions?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

15th of October 2023 (thenshaw): Yes

Agency Response

Knowledge Management

Is the proposed ?Knowledge Management Approach? for the project adequately elaborated with a timeline and a set of deliverables?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

15th of October 2023 (thenshaw): No, please address the following:

- (1) Please provide a timeline for implementing listed knowledge management and communication activities/products.
- (2) Please also clarify the budget allocated to KM and communications products/activities (separately from project M&E), by including a simple budget table in the KM section.
- (3) Please also describe how the project will be learning from and building on relevant previous/on-going initiatives in the region and globally; and indicate how many people (disaggregated by gender) are expected to benefit from all proposed training and dissemination activities.

7th of December 2023 (thenshaw):

- (1) Addressed.
- (2) Addressed.
- (3) Partly addressed. Please include in this section those KM lessons from the previous project that the project will learn from and build off of.

15th of December 2023 (thenshaw): Addressed.

Agency Response

15th October 2023

(1) Please, see table in paragraph 218.

(2) Please see table in paragraph 218

(3) Please see table in paragraph 218

14th of December 2023

1.N/A

2.N/A

3. The following text was added at paragraph 217: Some KM lessons from previous project are:
a) Collaboration and Cooperation: critical for successful management and sustainable development in Transboundary basin. b) Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM): Implementing IWRM principles helps balance the competing demands on water resources while considering social, economic, and environmental aspects. c) Information Sharing and Communication: Open and transparent communication, along with the sharing of relevant data and information. Establishing mechanisms for timely sharing of hydrological, meteorological, and environmental data can contribute to informed decision-making. d) Legal and Institutional Frameworks: Clearly defined legal and institutional between countries for effective governance. Agreements and institutions that address water allocation, usage, and dispute resolution. e) Community Engagement: Involving local communities and stakeholders in decision-making processes fosters a sense of ownership and ensures that the perspectives of those directly affected are considered. f) Adaptation to Climate Change: Climate change poses challenges to water availability and quality. Developing adaptive strategies is essential to address the impacts of climate change. g) Ecosystem Protection: Recognizing the importance of maintaining healthy ecosystems within the basin. Sustainable development should consider the ecological integrity of the basin and the services it provides.

Environmental and Social Safeguard (ESS)

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

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

15th of October 2023 (thenshaw): Partly,

(1) The project overall ESS risk is classified as low, and CAF attached the CAF-GEF projects- project concept and safeguard triggering preliminary questionnaire. It said that ESA and ESMP have been developed (page 9). Please provide the EIA and ESMP.

7th of December 2023 (thenshaw): Addressed.

Agency Response

15th October 2023

(1) The preliminary environmental, social and climate assessment conducted by CAF's team of specialists classified the project during the FIP phase as 1C, "Low environmental and social risk". However, the project triggers CAF safeguard S06 - Ethnic groups and cultural diversity. No substantial changes have been made during the project design stage that would change the classification made.

During this phase (PPG) the project has comprehensively addressed safeguard S06, prioritized by the Agency and the GEF, through: i) a gender analysis, indigenous peoples and vulnerable communities in the basin and ii) a gender, indigenous peoples and vulnerable communities action plan, prepared to provide a clear vision of how the project will address land and water issues related to gender equality and indigenous and vulnerable peoples, including indicators and means of verification and how they will contribute to project benefits and iii) stakeholder participation plan. Likewise, the project proposes through its four components to strengthen water security in the basin, contemplating the participation of IPGs and VCs in the updating of the TDA/SAP and strengthening their capacities from the role they have in the management of the resource and therefore increasing their resilience. Likewise, the project proposes through its

four components to strengthen water security in the basin, contemplating the participation of IPM and VC in the updating of the TDA/EAP and strengthening their capacities from the role they have in the management of the resource and therefore increasing their resilience. Likewise, the TDA and SAP will provide updated information for the assessment of the basin's systemic vulnerability to potential emerging threats, facilitating an analysis of potential risks and the design of measures, if necessary.

14th of December 2023

1.N/A

Monitoring and Evaluation

Does the project include a budgeted M&E Plan that monitors and measures results with indicators and targets?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

15th of October 2023 (thenshaw): Partly, please address the following:

(1) \$100,000 for a MTR and TE is not a good use of GEF resources. Please lower these amounts

7th of December 2023 (thenshaw): Addressed.

Agency Response

15th October 2023

(1) Done. Please see point 9. The total amount was reduced to 110,000, allocating 40,000 for each item mentioned.

14th of December 2023

1.N/A

Benefits

Are the socioeconomic benefits at the national and local levels sufficiently described resulting from the project? Is there an elaboration on how these benefits translate in supporting the achievement of GEBs or adaptation benefits?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

15th of October 2023 (thenshaw): Partly, please address the following:

(1) Please consult the new STAP document, INCORPORATING CO-BENEFITS IN THE DESIGN OF GEF PROJECTS. https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/documents/2023-06/EN_GEF.C.64.STAP_Inf_03_Incorporating_cobenefits_in_the_design_of_GEF_projects.pdf

Please recast this section and identify the "prerequisite co-benefits" and the "incidental co-benefits".

Co-benefits are ?positive effects of GEF investments that are not included in its formal set of global environmental benefits (GEBs).? Co-benefits are categorized into prerequisite or incidental cobenefits.

? Prerequisite co-benefits are local benefits that must be achieved to realize the mandated GEF GEBs and ensure their durability. Examples include livelihood benefits that engage local communities in biodiversity conservation, or enhanced skills and education that create job opportunities and strengthen the ability of beneficiaries to implement solutions that generate desired GEBs.

? Incidental co-benefits are environmental and socio-economic benefits outside of GEF?s mandate. They are not critical to achieving GEBs but could help increase the overall impact of GEF investment. Examples include reduced freshwater pollution and the consequent human health benefits from reduced use of harmful chemicals in agriculture, and improved air quality and associated health benefits arising from transitioning to renewable energy or avoiding bad practices (e.g., open burning) in agriculture or waste management.

7th of December 2023 (thenshaw): Addressed.

Agency Response

15th October 2023

(1) Done. See added text at item f) global environmental benefits.

14th of December 2023

1.N/A

Annexes

Are all the required annexes attached and adequately responded to?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

15th of October 2023 (thenshaw): No, please address the following

(1) Budget: The Budget provided in Annex E is too small and cannot be reviewed. Please remove the expenditure scheduling and change the format. Only when resubmitted will GEF Sec be in a position to review the budget.

Some preliminary comments upon reviewing the version uploaded to the Documents tab:

(a) Using the associated TOR, please justify why the Project Manager is mapped to both technical components and PMC.

(b) Similarly, please justify why the two Technical Officers and the Indigenous Peoples and Gender Officer are budgeted to the technical components. What will these staff technically deliver?

There are more staff positions listed in the annexed TORs than in the budget table. Please correct.

(c) The national consultants costs for each of socioeconomic, environmental, climate change and IWRM aspects are generic across aspects and components (below table). On its face, this seems to indicate that consultant outputs are not fully considered at this stage. Please explain why a more detailed accounting has not been carried out.

| | | | | | | | | | |
|------------------|--|----|------|---------|------------------|------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| 2.2. | National consultants / Argentina o Bolivia | | | | | | | | |
| 2.2.1. | Legal, institutional and regulatory aspects (C1.1., C1.3., C2.1) | MM | 24.0 | 2,500.0 | 60,000.0 | 40,000.0 | 20,000.0 | | |
| 2.2.2. | Social and economic aspects (C1,C2, C3, C4) | MM | 24.0 | 2,500.0 | 60,000.0 | 15,000.0 | 15,000.0 | 15,000.0 | 15,000.0 |
| 2.2.3. | Environmental aspects (C1,C2, C3, C4) | MM | 24.0 | 2,500.0 | 60,000.0 | 15,000.0 | 15,000.0 | 15,000.0 | 15,000.0 |
| 2.2.4. | Climate change (C1,C2, C3, C4) | MM | 24.0 | 2,500.0 | 60,000.0 | 15,000.0 | 15,000.0 | 15,000.0 | 15,000.0 |
| 2.2.5. | IWRM aspects (C1,C2, C3, C4) | MM | 24.0 | 2,500.0 | 60,000.0 | 15,000.0 | 15,000.0 | 15,000.0 | 15,000.0 |
| Sub-total | | | | | 300,000.0 | 100,000.0 | 80,000.0 | 60,000.0 | 60,000.0 |

(d) Please explain what the National Focal Point costs are (\$144,000) [Bolivia COBINABE and Argentina COBINABE). COBINABE staff costs should be covered by co-financing.

(e) \$285,000 is allocated to sub-contracts for local activities on gender, indigenous peoples and vulnerable groups. Yet these activities are not specifically documented in the submission. Please document these activities to justify the expenses.

(f) Roundtables aimed at periodically engaging representatives of the productive sector is reflected in two line items in the budget table. Please explain/revise accordingly.

(g) Please explain what the hardware and software is for PCU, COBINABE and PAISES.

(h) Please add additional resources to [IW:LEARN](#). The requirement is 1% of total project resources dedicated to [IW:LEARN](#) activities. The budget for such activities should be about \$63,000, not \$48,000.

(i) As stated above, \$100,000 for an MTR and a TE is not commensurate with the complexity of this project. Please scale down these amounts.

(j) Office operating costs should be covered through co-financing by the executing entity. Please explore this arrangement.

7th of December 2023 (thenshaw):

(1) Budget is now large enough and subsequent review will be carried out on resubmission.

(a) Not addressed. Using the associated TOR, please justify why the Project Manager is mapped to both technical components and PMC.

(b) Will be considered on subsequent review

(c) Will be considered on subsequent review

(d) Will be considered on subsequent review

(e) Will be considered on subsequent review

(f) Will be considered on subsequent review

(g) Will be considered on subsequent review

(h) Will be considered on subsequent review

(i) Will be considered on subsequent review

(j) Will be considered on subsequent review

15th of December 2023 (thenshaw):

(a) Addressed.

(b) Addressed.

(c) Addressed.

(d) Addressed.

(e) Addressed.

(f) Addressed.

(g) Addressed.

(h) Addressed.

(i) Addressed.

(j) Addressed.

There is now a discrepancy between the budget allocated to PMC in Table B (\$302,381) and the budget table (\$302,400). Please revise.

There are discrepancies between the Component budgets in Table B and the budget table. Please revise.

19th of December 2023 (thenshaw): Addressed.

20th of December 2023 (thenshaw): Please include audit costs and office supplies under PMC instead of project components:

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------|---|----------|----|--------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------------------------|------------------|
| 13. | Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) | | | 3 | 100,000 | 5,000 | 5,000 | 5,000 | 5,000 | 80,000 | | COBINABE, Executing Fiduciar, CAF | 100,000 |
| 13.1. | Independent Mid-term Review (MTR) and management response | Mission | 1 | 40,000 | 40,000 | | | | | 40,000 | | COBINABE, Executing Fiduciar, CAF | 40,000 |
| 13.2. | Independent Terminal Evaluation (TE) | Mission | 1 | 40,000 | 40,000 | | | | | 40,000 | | COBINABE, Executing Fiduciar, CAF | 40,000 |
| 13.3. | Yearly external audit of the project | Mission | 4 | 5,000 | 20,000 | 5,000 | 5,000 | 5,000 | 5,000 | | | COBINABE, Executing Fiduciar, CAF | 20,000 |
| 16. | Varios | | | | 147,200 | 37,420 | 38,933 | 38,789 | 32,077 | | | COBINABE, Executing Fiduciar, CAF | 147,200 |
| 16.1. | Operating costs: Internet, telephone, office supplies | lump sum | 46 | 800 | 36,800 | 9,820 | 11,333 | 8,839 | 6,827 | | | COBINABE, Executing Fiduciar, CAF | 36,800 |
| 16.2. | Office Supplies (Countries) | lump sum | 46 | 800 | 36,800 | 9,200 | 9,200 | 9,200 | 9,200 | | | COBINABE, Executing Fiduciar, CAF | 36,800 |
| 16.3. | Office Supplies (Project Coordination) | lump sum | 46 | 800 | 36,800 | 9,200 | 9,200 | 9,200 | 9,200 | | | COBINABE, Executing Fiduciar, CAF | 36,800 |
| 16.4. | Accountant (part-time) | M/M | 46 | 800 | 36,800 | 9,200 | 9,200 | 11,550 | 6,850 | | | COBINABE, Executing Fiduciar, CAF | 36,800 |
| GRAND TOTAL | | | | | 6,350,000 | 1,102,619 | 1,417,500 | 2,267,500 | 1,150,000 | 110,000 | 302,381 | | 6,350,000 |

20th of December 2023 (thenshaw): Addressed. Admin Officer costs will be fully covered by project co-financing.

Agency Response

15th October 2023

- (a) The percentages are established by GEF, with 54% for administrative and management tasks.
- b) They work cross-functionally across the four components. Technical officers ensure that COBINABE and National Coordinators' decisions are operationalized with stakeholders in both countries. The Gender and Indigenous Peoples Officer ensures the focus is on the products of the four components. No additional staff beyond the budgeted positions in the project staff.
- c) It is clear that specializations will be required for all four components. However, the specific details and profiles are not yet definable and will emerge during the implementation process of the components. This is why there is a 24-month pool of specializations over the four years. The programming and profiles will be developed, with the first part in the initial phase and the other when the Terms of Reference (TDRs) for the component products are available, associating each profile with its time allocation.
- d) The countries have requested liaisons or focal points to support day-to-day operational and coordination work between the Project team and National Coordinators to ensure technical continuity in each country. COBINABE contributes to the payment of the salaries of the national coordinators and technical teams in each country.
- e) This budget is for the implementation of the Gender, Indigenous Peoples, and Vulnerable Groups Plan, under the supervision of the Gender Responsible. The expenses are justified by the execution of the gender plan activities.
- f) Item 9.5. There are 12 national-level roundtables according to COBINABE agreements, one in each country. Item 10.5. There are 4 roundtables, one per year, involving representatives from both countries. One is for national roundtables, and the other is a regional roundtable.
- g) The setup of the early warning and information system will require both software and hardware. For software, a license must be purchased according to the subcontractor's specifications. For hardware, equipment upgrades are needed to support system management. In the current situation, it is not possible to operate optimally and efficiently with connected operators.
- h) Corrected in the new budget without the schedule columns.
- i) Done. Corrected.
- j) These costs are the most basic, such as internet expenses, to ensure minimum connectivity and operability. The higher costs, such as facilities, general expenses, and administrative costs, are contributed by the executing entity in both countries.

14th of December 2023

1.N/A

a. Resolved. The project manager is only contemplated in the PMC.

Project Results Framework

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

15th of October 2023 (thenshaw): No, please address the following:

(1) Please ensure the GEF Core Indicator targets are reflected in the Project Results Framework. This is mandatory at CEO endorsement.

(2) The Results Framework must include granular detail of measurable outputs: i.e., number of reports, number of consultations, number of direct beneficiaries, number of knowledge products, number of participation in international events, number of pilot projects etc... Please revise accordingly.

(3) Please include Component 5 in the Results Framework

(4) Please include gender-specific targets/indicators in the Results Framework

7th of December 2023 (thenshaw):

(1) CI 11 is not included in the Results Framework. Please include revised target.

(2) What about # of knowledge projects, # of training modules, # of bankable projects, # of roundtables etc. There are many quantifiable elements to the project and they need to be captured in the Results Framework.

(3) Addressed.

(4) Addressed.

15th of December 2023 (thenshaw):

(1) Partly. This direct beneficiary number now seems too low. Please consult GEFSec.

(2) Addressed.

19th of December 2023 (thenshaw): Addressed.

Agency Response

15th October 2023

(1) Done, please annex A.

(2) These types of outcome indicators linked to 'numbers of' are not applicable in this case. Adopted indicators refer to substantive achievements such as TDA and SAP adopted by countries, Groundwater assessment done and approved, etc.

(3) Including component 5.

(4) Please see Appendix 6. Please also refer to the Gender Action Plan reporting mechanisms.

14th of December 2023

1. The following text was added to the Results Framework, Component 2: The direct beneficiaries of this Component have been estimated in 15,000 indigenous people in the Upper Basin (CI 11 target).

2. There will be at least 6 knowledge projects, 8 training modules, 8 fundable projects, 12 round tables. These were incorporated in the Framework (annex A).

3.N/A

4.N/A

GEF Secretariat comments

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

(1) Please note that any new executing entity, after endorsement, will trigger a major amendment that will require project circulation to Council.

Agency Response

Council comments

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

15th October 2023 (thenshaw): No, please address the following:

(1) Comments from Germany have not been addressed. Please address comments/incorporate suggestions accordingly. Please include detailed responses in the Annex B matrix.

Germany welcomes this proposal, which will update the basin's TDA and SAP processes and will foster strengthened cooperation between Argentina and Bolivia for water resources management. Germany highly welcomes the proposed approach to include groundwater dimensions into the river management plans and activities, as this promises an integrated and conjunctive management of water that is essential to meet future challenge of the region. At the same time, Germany has the following comments that it suggests being addressed in the next phase of finalizing the project proposal.

(a) Germany acknowledges the effort in data acquisition to define conceptual groundwater models and to identify recharge and discharge areas of aquifers. Such data generally serves as baseline data for numerical groundwater models that allow predictive modelling of different groundwater scenarios. To make further use of this data, Germany suggests preparing steps to create a numerical groundwater model, by building further partnerships.

(b) Given the transboundary nature of the project and the different activities proposed, it is suggested to identify executing partners early on, so that they can participate in the PPG phase.

*Please explain whether this was done and how executing partners participated in the PPG phase

(c) The project includes only actions at the regional level and thus considers the total of the population as beneficiaries. Germany suggests identifying how project activities will address specific population groups like most vulnerable population in terms of poverty and climate change vulnerability. More specific gender indicators are also suggested.

(d) The global environmental problem identified is accelerated erosion. Germany suggests specifying the specific project interventions that will address this problem. Links to land restoration global benefits (such as carbon capture) could also be added.

(e) While the proposal mentions Bolivia's Multiannual Program for Integrated Management of Water Resources and Integrated Management of Watersheds, 2017-2020, it doesn't describe the governance mechanisms, civil society platforms and planning tools that it has established for strategic basins ? notably for the Guadalquivir sub-basin, which can serve as a basis/model for the project's interventions.

(f) Germany considers that the Basin Management Plan of the Guadalquivir River is a key input for the new SAP

(g) For component 1, Germany suggests that synergies with the new Geographic Information System of the State Government of Tarija should be considered.

(h) Component 3 mentions legal, institutional, and legislative reforms. Germany suggests specifying the process of formulation, harmonization, and approval of the reforms in both countries. Also, adding an item to the Risks table where mitigation measures are given in case there are difficulties during the reform process.

(i) For component 4 (and PPG), Germany suggests taking as a model the Interinstitutional Platform of the Guadalquivir Basin, as well as the technical and social councils that have been established in the context of the Basin Management Plan of the Guadalquivir River. The model could also be adapted to the specific situation of the other Bermejo sub-basins.

7th of December 2023 (thenshaw):

Please provide detailed responses in comment matrix. Some responses say "Done. Text has been added at section...". This is not a sufficient elaboration in the review sheet.

15th of December 2023 (thenshaw): Addressed.

Agency Response

15th October 2023

a) CAF appreciates Germany's support for the groundwater component of the project. On the specifics of groundwater mathematical modelling, it has to be clarified that translating an aquifer "conceptual model" into a "numerical model" (that is "a combination of a large number of mathematical equations that depends upon computers to find an approximate solution to the underlying physical problem") would be feasible at a basin level only where exhaustive quantitative physical and chemical information is available if not for all at least for some of the aquifers present in the basin's subsurface, which is clearly not the case of the Bermejo Basin, being the project the first attempt to assess the groundwater potential of the basin.

More in depth evaluations of the Basin aquifers might be part of the SAP, should the countries so decide.

b) Component 3. Please see paragraph 94 and 95. The Project Document responds to Germany's recommendation in component 3 - reforms and investments-, where suggestions as to what might help reversing degradation trends of water and land in the Bermejo Basin are briefly described. The TDA will provide a science-based update of the situation regarding accelerated erosion patterns due to the geologic nature of the Upper Basin exacerbated by land use practices, and the SAP will indicate which are the remedial actions that countries are willing to undertake at the national and transboundary levels. This could be linked to the overall benefits in soil restoration, sustainable development, among others, that the identified measures could generate.

c) Please see comment above *1) Paragraph 101. Within the framework of citizen participation and environmental education, due to the territorial extension of the four provinces in Argentina and the presence of vulnerable populations and indigenous peoples, it is estimated that the project will reach more than 2000 families trained/consulted. In Bolivian territory, the territorial extension is smaller, however, grassroots organizations and peasant and producer associations are very well structured with representation at the level of the nine municipalities of the department of Tarija and the project aims to reach at least 130000 beneficiary families with training in environmental education and citizen participation in decision-making. This means that the project in the Bermejo River Basin will have a minimum interaction with 3,500 beneficiary families. ii) Direct project beneficiaries (high intensity) as defined in the GEF8 guidelines for IW projects, would be limited to the staff of COBINABE (COREBE and OTNPB). CAF has preferred to provide an estimate of the low intensity beneficiaries, defined by the guidelines as "People living within a river basin subject to a water resources management plan?". The TDA-SAP process will place particular emphasis on more vulnerable communities*

and women: this however cannot at this stage be measured in terms of direct beneficiaries? numbers. Were included in the Gender and Indigenous Peoples action plan (item 3.5), by component. Iii) Included in point 3.5. Gender Plan indicators linked by project component. Appendix 6 of Analysis, Consultation and Gender Plan, Indigenous Peoples and Vulnerable Populations.

d) Component 3. Please see paragraph 94 and 95. The Project Document responds to Germany's recommendation in component 3 - reforms and investments-, where suggestions as to what might help reversing degradation trends of water and land in the Bermejo Basin are briefly described. The TDA will provide a science-based update of the situation regarding accelerated erosion patterns due to the geologic nature of the Upper Basin exacerbated by land use practices, and the SAP will indicate which are the remedial actions that countries are willing to undertake at the national and transboundary levels. This could be linked to the overall benefits in soil restoration, sustainable development, among others, that the identified measures could generate.

e) Done. Text has been added at section 1.3.2.1. Output 1.1.2.

f) Done. Text has been added at section 1.3.2.1. Output 1.1.2

g) Done. Text has been added at section 1.3.2.1. Output 1.1.2

h) The project aims at gathering the countries' commitment to introduce those legal, legislative and policy reforms found through the TDA ? SAP process as necessary to reverse degradation trends and improve water security in the basin. The reform process itself is not part of the project.

i) Done. Text has been added at section 1.3.2.1. Output 1.1.2

14th of December 2023

1. The following comments have been included in the table in Annex B

a. Addressed

b. was supplemented by the following text: During the PPG phase, COBINABE, in its role as technical executing agency, participated throughout the process and led the internal participation in each country through the technical representations to COREBE and OTNPB. It carried out the revisions of the CEO Endorsement and formally approved the first version uploaded on the GEF portal. The fiduciary agency will be convened as soon as the CEO Endorsement is received through an open and transparent call. The formal selection process has been expressly requested by the beneficiaries, however, and as is public knowledge, this

decision has had to be accommodated to the processes of change of government in one of the countries. The planning period for their recruitment will be a maximum of 90 days from the call for applications to the signing of the agreement.

c. Direct project beneficiaries (high intensity) as defined in the GEF8 guidelines for IW projects, are limited to the rural and indigenous communities in the upper reaches of the Basin. The number of people involved has been estimated in 130000, half of which women. CAF has preferred to provide also an estimate of the low intensity beneficiaries, defined by the guidelines as "People living within a river basin subject to a water resources management plan?", whose number would be 1,330,000 people.

d. The problem of erosion, largely due to the geologic nature of the basin upper reaches, will be addressed under Component 2 (monitoring, output 2.1.3), and component 3 (Sand dams, output 3.1.2).

e. The following text was added of section 1.3.2.4 output 4.1.1: To do so, the project will consider amongst others replicating experiences and models tested as part of the Interinstitutional Platform of the Guadalquivir Basin.

f. The following footnote was added at paragraph 94: The Basin Management Plan of the Guadalquivir River will represent a replicable model.

g. The following text was added at section 1.3.2.4 output 4.1.1: To do so, the project will consider amongst others replicating experiences and models tested as part of the Interinstitutional Platform of the Guadalquivir Basin.

h. Addressed

i. The following text was added at section 1.3.2.4 output 4.1.1: To do so, the project will consider amongst others replicating experiences and models tested as part of the Interinstitutional Platform of the Guadalquivir Basin

STAP comments

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

15th of October 2023 (thenshaw): No, please address the following:

(1) The proponents have attempted to respond to the STAP summary, but not to the comments in the detailed STAP Screen document. Please address the following and provide detailed responses in the Annex B response matrix.

(a) The stated project objective is "To reverse present land and water degradation trends in the binational Bermejo Basin by introducing integrated water resources management approaches including to groundwater resources, revamping and consolidating existing transboundary cooperation mechanisms, and accelerating priority reforms and investments." The major problem described is poor land use practices upstream, including deforestation, which leads to erosion and high sediment loadings (exacerbated by flash flooding made more common by climate change). The main barriers to positive change are identified as lack of understanding, cooperation, and monitoring. This makes sense; however, poor living conditions are later listed as a "major environmental problem" whereas this might be better placed in the category of "root cause" where there is no discussion of why there are poor living conditions that may be contributing to environmental damage (or is environmental damage partly responsible for poor living conditions?) Acknowledging these issues is important to frame the relevance of proposed monitoring, capacity building and national level cooperation.

(b) Planned activities can be summarized as 1) updating the prior transboundary framework with new data plus training and tools; 2) assessment of groundwater resources, including training and tools; 3) defining bankable projects following update of TDA/SAP; 4) multi-stakeholder engagement. These combined activities have the potential to support the overall objective through a revised framework, data, tools, etc. but none of the proposed components appear to tackle the main problem of destructive land use patterns upstream which are the primary culprits behind erosion and poor water quality. If the assumption is that this will be encapsulated within the updated TDA/SAP, then it would be helpful to make this explicit.

(c) The project has the potential to support adaptation to climate change; however, insufficient evidence is provided. STAP recommends using the decision tree for adaptation rationale to ensure that the project will encompass adaptation benefits. <https://www.stapgef.org/resources/advisory-documents/decision-tree-adaptation-rationale>

(d) Regarding Global Environmental Benefits: Information provided makes this difficult to assess particularly with regards to climate change adaptation. The PIF states that "the strengthened transboundary cooperation mechanism" will promote appropriate allocations among competing uses, equitable distribution of benefits and burdens and community participation/gender equity?? which is welcome though it is not entirely clear what the mechanisms and/or incentives are that will accomplish this beyond the future framework. Finally, the PIF indicates that 1,330,000 people (split evenly between female and male) will benefit from the project. This assumes that everyone in the basin will benefit from "increased water security 4 and climate resilience,?" which seems optimistic without more detailed explanation.

(e) The global environmental problem is said to be "accelerated erosion" but that seems more like a consequence of poor land use practices, which are listed as root causes. But what are the reasons behind poor land use and deforestation? The logic could be strengthened for improved clarity.

(f) The barriers are mainly focused on lack of understanding, monitoring and poor cross-border cooperation, which do not encompass whatever barriers may exist to mitigating the poor land use activities responsible for increased sedimentation.

(g) The theory of change seems to miss the linkage that explains how the TDA/SAP will 1) address the main drivers of degradation related to poor land use practices; and 2) attract ?bankable projects.? Instead, much of the focus is on the data management, capacity building, tools, etc. ? all of which are helpful but the connection to these core issues is not explicit. Incentives for investment in sediment control, improved land use, etc. are not clear; presumably the TDA will help to elucidate.

(h) The entire project has as a goal to increase resilience to climate change ? assuming this means resilience of the people living in the basin. Not enough climate data is provided to helpfully explain how climate change is expected to impact the area and how the project objectives may be affected. However, one of the aims of the revised TDA is to incorporate climate change data, which will presumably help to address this question.

(i) Is the project innovative? No, the innovation statement is unconvincing. The proposed project follows a typical TDA/SAP process. The PIF fails to explain how a revised cooperative framework will lead to ?bankable projects? and what will be the financial or other incentives for companies/organizations to invest in infrastructure, land restoration, or other identified measures.

(j) Is there a clearly-articulated vision of how the innovation will be scaled-up, for example, over time, across geographies, among institutional actors? No. There is reference to scaling but the evidence and pathway is not convincing, especially given past project shortcomings.

(k) The main stakeholders in developing the TDA/SAP are national institutions. However, the project also includes academia (to form the Science Panel) and several NGOs that include farmers and others who may be impacted and presumably are also essential to the solution. A useful STAP reference for multi-stakeholder dialogue can be found here. This could be helpful to reference with attention to engaging private sector actors in particular. <https://www.stagef.org/resources/advisory-documents/multi-stakeholder-dialogue-transformational-change>

(l) Information on gender is focused primarily on national policies and not directly related to this project. It is assumed that half of the beneficiaries will be female; however, this rationale is not well supported.

(m) Regarding adequate mechanism to feed the lessons learned from earlier projects into this project, and to share lessons learned from it into future projects. It would be helpful to have further detail on how past mistakes can be avoided.

7th of December 2023 (thenshaw):

Please elaborate in the matrix on comments c, f, g, k.

15th of December 2023 (thenshaw): Addressed.

Agency Response

15th October 2023

a) and b) Component 3. Please see paragraph 94 and 95. The Project Document responds to Germany's recommendation in component 3 - reforms and investments-, where suggestions as to what might help reversing degradation trends of water and land in the Bermejo Basin are briefly described. The TDA will provide a science-based update of the situation regarding accelerated erosion patterns due to the geologic nature of the Upper Basin exacerbated by land use practices, and the SAP will indicate which are the remedial actions that countries are willing to undertake at the national and transboundary levels. This could be linked to the overall benefits in soil restoration, sustainable development, among others, that the identified measures could generate.

c) Please see text modified at section f: Global Environmental Benefits.

d) Please see text modified at section f: Global Environmental Benefits. Direct project beneficiaries (high intensity) as defined in the GEF8 guidelines for IW projects, would be limited to the staff of COBINABE (COREBE and OTNPB). CAF has preferred to provide an estimate of the low intensity beneficiaries, defined by the guidelines as "People living within a river basin subject to a water resources management plan?". The text has been modified to explain the rationale of the choice (paragraph 4).

e) Please see paragraph 94 and 95. The Project Document responds to Germany's recommendation in component 3 - reforms and investments-, where suggestions as to what might help reversing degradation trends of water and land in the Bermejo Basin are briefly described. The TDA will provide a science-based update of the situation regarding accelerated erosion patterns due to the geologic nature of the Upper Basin exacerbated by land use practices, and the SAP will indicate which are the remedial actions that countries are willing to undertake at the national and transboundary levels. This could be linked to the overall benefits in soil restoration, sustainable development, among others, that the identified measures could generate.

f) Same as above. Please also see the ToC diagram.

g) Please see paragraphs 93 to 96, point 1.3.1.

h) One of the main purposes of updating the TDA is in fact to assess the impacts of climate change under future scenarios.

i) As clearly explained in point 1 Project Description, section g) the project is innovative in as much as it adopts approaches novel to the region (e.g.: conjunctive surface and groundwater management), and includes the conduct of feasibility/pre-feasibility studies of priority investments - including the identification of financial mechanisms for their implementation - which will allow for the first time to i structure bankable projects as part of a GEF IW SAP. Without a strengthened transboundary cooperative framework (COBINABE) nothing of this would happen.

j) Please note that the relevant text is consistent with the one in the approved PIF. The present project is part of the CdP SAP implementation since it addresses one of the major issues of transboundary concern of the CdP: excess sediment loads interfering with river navigation, and impacting the Rio de La Plata ecosystems. Note also that, should the project be successful, it might trigger the broader adoption of the Inclusion of fully prepared bankable projects in SAPs. It could also provide relevant information for monitoring the watershed in its.

k) Please see text added to paragraph 93.II, item 1.3.2.3.

l) The complete gender analysis document in English ? appendix 6 - supports that in addition to existing policies, there are gender gaps to be addressed in order to focus the gender plan from the perspective of a project aimed at strengthening COBINABE.

m) Item 1.2.2 describes the lessons learned from previous that have informed project design.

It is part of the functions of the Project Steering Committee to implement review actions and/or adjustments during the implementation of the project. Resources such as regional round tables will be available for exchange with other regional actors, e.g. CIC Plata, participation of specialists, scientific panel. Under the item Monitoring and evaluation - Lessons learned and knowledge generation - there will be a continuous exchange of information between this project and other projects of similar focus in the same country, region and worldwide.

14th of December 2023

1.The following comments have been included in the table in Annex B

c. Section f: Global Environmental Benefits: The project aims to produce global environmental benefits that fall into the category of adaptation to climate variability and change. These benefits will be accrued through the increased availability of good quality and climate independent freshwater that the integration of groundwater resources into the Basin water resources

management and the adoption of conjunctive surface and groundwater management practices will produce.

f. In Section 1.1, from paragraph 9 to 25, an extensive description of environmental problems and an analysis of causes, discriminating natural and anthropogenic, has been added.

g. Point 1.3.1 The chain ?activities ? outputs ? outcomes? has been conceived with the objective to remove the barriers that presently hinder corrective actions aimed at reverse soil and water degradation trends in the basin, identified as: The limited scope (upper basin only) and operational capacity of existing transboundary cooperation frameworks (COBINABE)

The lack of knowledge, consideration and governance of the groundwater resources of the basin, The lack of agreed upon strategic priority reforms and investments aimed at addressing the major causes of degradation, both natural and anthropogenic. The absence of systematic mechanisms for broad stakeholders? engagement at the transboundary and national levels.

k. Through the implementation of a Multi Stakeholder Dialogues that will foster regional transformational change, and will strengthen the engagement of private sector actors, from small-holder farmers to private financial institutions

Convention Secretariat comments

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request None

Agency Response

Other Agencies comments

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request None

Agency Response

CSOs comments

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request None

Agency Response

Status of PPG utilization

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

15th of October 2023 (thenshaw): Partly, please address the following:

(1) The amount committed total is incorrect. Please change total from \$67,250 to \$65,250.

(2) Please better explain how \$74,750 was spent, with a commitment of an additional \$40,250, on consultants to develop the project materials. This seems like a very high figure to develop a CER package, generally, and is less justified in only a two-country project.

(3) Please remove duplicated text.

7th of December 2023 (thenshaw):

(1) Addressed.

(2) Addressed.

(3) Addressed.

Agency Response

15th October 2023

(1) Done. corrected in the annex C

(2) Please see paragraphs 245 to 249.

(3) Done, removed.

14th of December 2023

1.N/A

2.N/A

3.N/A

Project maps and coordinates

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

15th of October 2023 (thenshaw): Partly,

(1) Please correct the geographic location of the sites. The Latitude and Longitude must be in decimal degree format.

7th of December 2023 (thenshaw): Addressed.

Agency Response
15th October 2023

(1). Done: Annex E.

| | |
|--------------|--------------|
| -21.82158572 | -64.99727757 |
| -23.82530965 | -65.38557338 |
| -26.17445026 | -58.17521887 |
| -23.844177 | -61.941305 |
| -25.571192 | -60.758285 |

14th of December 2023

1.N/A

Does the termsheet in Annex F provide finalized financial terms and conditions? Does the termsheet and financial structure address concerns raised at PIF stage and that were pending to be resolved ahead of CEO endorsement? (For NGI Only)

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

N/A

Agency Response

Do the Reflow Table Annex G and the Trustee Excel Sheet for reflows provide accurate reflow expectations of the project submitted? Assumptions for Reflows can be submitted to explain expected reflows. (For NGI Only)

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request N/A

Agency Response

Did the agency Annex H provided with information to assess the Agency Capacity to generate and manage reflows? (For NGI Only)

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request N/A

Agency Response

GEFSEC DECISION

RECOMMENDATION

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

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

15th of October 2023 (thenshaw): No, please address above comments and resubmit. Thank you.

7th of December 2023 (thenshaw): No, please address above comments and resubmit. Thank you.

15th of December 2023 (thenshaw): No, please address above comments and resubmit. Thank you.

20th of December 2023 (thenshaw): No, please address above comment and resubmit. Thank you.

20th of December 2023 (thenshaw): Yes

Review Dates

| | Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement | Response to Secretariat comments |
|---|---|---|
| First Review | 10/15/2023 | 10/15/2023 |
| Additional Review (as necessary) | 12/7/2023 | 12/14/2023 |
| Additional Review (as necessary) | 12/15/2023 | |

**Secretariat Comment at
CEO Endorsement**

**Response to
Secretariat comments**

| | |
|---|-------------------|
| Additional Review (as necessary) | 12/19/2023 |
| Additional Review (as necessary) | 12/20/2023 |

CEO Recommendation

Brief reasoning for CEO Recommendations