GEF-8 PROJECT IDENTIFICATION FORM (PIF)

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General Project Information

Project Title	
Restoration and sustainable management of Land for improved livelihoods in the degraded landscapes of Free State and Northwest Provinces of South Africa	
Region	GEF Project ID
South Africa	11331
Country(ies)	Type of Project
South Africa	FSP
GEF Agency(ies):	GEF Agency ID
IUCN	
Executing Partner	Executing Partner Type
FAO Relevant Universities and organisations in the provinces	GEF Agency Others
GEF Focal Area (s)	Submission Date
Multi Focal Area	10/2/2023
Project Sector (CCM Only)	
Mixed & Others	
Taxonomy	
Focal Areas, Biodiversity, Land Degradation, Climate Change, Influencing models, Transform policy and regulatory environments, Deploy innovative financial instruments, Strengthen institutional capacity and decision-making, Stakeholders, Local Communities, Civil Society, Private Sector, Gender Equality, Gender Mainstreaming, Gender results areas, Capacity, Knowledge and Research	
Type of Trust Fund	Project Duration (Months)
GET	36
GEF Project Grant: (a)	GEF Project Non-Grant: (b)
5,399,954.00	0.00
Agency Fee(s) Grant: (c)	Agency Fee(s) Non-Grant (d)
485,993.00	0.00
Total GEF Financing: (a+b+c+d)	Total Co-financing
5,885,947.00	8,686,753.00
PPG Amount: (e)	PPG Agency Fee(s): (f)
150,000.00	13,500.00
PPG total amount: (e+f)	Total GEF Resources: (a+b+c+d+e+f)
163,500.00	6,049,447.00

Project Tags

CBIT: No NGI: No SGP: No Innovation: No

Project Summary

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

The project will focus on restoration and sustainable management of land for climate resilient and improved livelihoods in the degraded landscapes of Northwest and free state provinces of South Africa. This will be achieved through interventions and measures in support of Sustainable Land Management (SLM), Biodiversity and climate change, supporting ecosystem restoration activities through implementation of transformative sustainable land management practices. This project will facilitate efforts in terms of reducing land degradation and enhance ecosystems restoration, water source areas, biodiversity stewardship, climate resilience of communities, farmers (commercial and communal), and strengthen livelihoods to achieve South Africa's land degradation neutrality (LDN) targets by 2030.

This proposed project seeks to build on the two initial projects on sustainable land management, namely (i) the **GEF 5** project focusing on securing multiple ecosystems benefit through Sustainable Land Management in the productive but degraded landscapes of South Africa as well as **GEF 7** mainstreaming Sustainable Land Management (SLM) for large-scale impact in the grazing lands of Limpopo and Northern Cape Provinces in South Africa. The overall goal of the project is to assist South Africa in achieving Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) targets by 2030, by establishing enabling conditions for scaling up good SLM practices.

The project will design and implement various SLM and Climate Smart Agriculture interventions in Xhariep and Dr Ruth Segomotsi Mompati district municipalities' degraded landscapes in the Free State (FS) and North West (NW) Provinces of South Africa. Land targeted for restoration, SLM, and CSA interventions include a mixture of state (communal), municipal (commonage, rangelands, etc.), commercial and privately-owned land, where possible. Furthermore, the project will explore and strengthen private investment to facilitate improved access to financial services and development of a stronger rural value chains, which will be designed to incentivise and support (financially, technically, and technologically) the adoption of SLM, Nature Based Solutions (NbS) and CSA practices, to strengthen local institutions for natural resource governance and livelihoods. The project includes a strong emphasis on leveraging private sector investments in SLM to scale up innovative tried and tested approaches in degraded lands within these Provinces. Various innovative activities that will be implemented throughout the course of this proposed project comprise components, outcomes, and outputs as summarised below.

Component 1: Enabling Environment – Policy, Governance, and institutions.
This component focuses on establishing the effectiveness of the enabling environment through supporting the implementation of existing SLM related policies, strategies, and tools to establish synergies, alignment, and recommendations for improvement. This component of the project will strengthen, align, and enhance policy incentives, as well as governance and institutions for SLM frameworks and practices within the FS and NW provinces.

Component 2: ***Enhancing partnerships, innovative finances, and synergies for SLM practices, ecosystems restoration and climate resilience.***
This component focuses on working with local communities, smallholder, and commercial farmers to implement transformative SLM, CSA and NbS practices to reduce land degradation, restore, rehabilitate, and restore ecosystems and biodiversity, water source areas, and build climate resilience strengthen livelihoods to achieve South Africa's Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) targets.

Component 3: Rehabilitation, restoration, and protection of degraded landscapes
This will be the main component of the project focusing on working with communities, farmers and all the relevant stakeholders to design and implement SLM, CSA and NbS practices interventions to rehabilitate, restore and protect degraded landscapes in Xhariep and Dr Ruth Segomotsi Mompati district municipalities in the FS and NW provinces.

Indicative Project Overview

Project Objective

To implement SLM practices and land rehabilitation, restoration, and protection interventions to combat land degradation, enhance biodiversity, ecosystems, water source areas, climate resilience and strengthen communities, farmers and livelihoods to support South Africa to achieve its LDN targets.

Project Components

Component 1. Enabling Environment – Policy, Governance, and Institutions

Component Type	Trust Fund
Technical Assistance	GET
GEF Project Financing ($)	Co-financing ($)
514,282.00	1,650,483.00

Outcome:

Outcome 1.1. Enhanced policy incentive frameworks for SLM

Outcome 1.2. Strengthened governance and institutions for SLM and NbS frameworks and practices.

Output:

Outputs
1.1.1 Applicable policy instruments promoted and mainstreamed into national and subnational levels.
1.1.2 Policy instruments that enable venture creation Incentives for vulnerable and disadvantaged groups including women, youth, and people with disabilities

1.1.3. Coherence of cross sectoral policies, plans, strategies, tools/instruments, and regulatory frameworks recommended and supported.

Outputs
1.2.1. Scoping and capacity assessment of multilevel governance and sectoral institutions conducted.
1.2.2 Governance and institutional arrangements of directorate/functions within the FS and NW provinces established and strengthened.
1.2.3 Capacity development programme for multilevel governance and sectoral institutions developed and strengthened.

1.2.4. Women, youth, and people with disabilities driven behaviour change programmes in SLM and NbS practices developed, promoted, supported, and implemented.

1.2.5. Gender sensitive approaches in SLM and NbS mainstreamed.

Component 2. Enhancing partnerships, innovative finances, and synergies for SLM practices, ecosystems restoration and climate resilience

Component Type	Trust Fund
Technical Assistance	GET
GEF Project Financing ($)	Co-financing ($)
1,028,563.00	1,650,483.00

Outcome:

Outcome 2.1.
Innovative finance models designed.

Outcome 2.2. Community of practice, partnerships, and networking platforms on SLM practices, ecosystems restoration and climate resilience enhanced.

Output:

Outputs
2.1.1. Multi-stakeholder dialogues on financing SLM practices convened.
2.1.2. Innovative and blended financing models designed.
2.1.3. Mobilization of additional (private sector) resources for SLM practices implementation supported.
2.1.4. Role and opportunities for partnerships with private sector (mining companies, commercial farmers) explored and strengthened.

2.1.5. Context specific and gender inclusive community starter packs /packages for incentivising SLM implementation designed and rolled out.

Outputs
2.2.1. Multi-stakeholder dialogues supported.
2.2.2. Human development and capacity building for SLM and NbS supported.
2.2.3. Transfer and use of knowledge including citizen science/indigenous knowledge supported.
2.2.4 Citizen science (indigenous knowledge) and co-creation of SLM and CSA interventions with communities facilitated.
2.2.5 Best practices, knowledge generation, advocacy, and promotion of SLM supported.

2.2.6 Assessment of opportunities for application of technologies to support monitoring of LDN (the use digital technologies such as earth observations, tools and systems to monitor land degradation, land use changes) supported.

Component 3 Rehabilitation, restoration, and protection of degraded landscapes

Component Type	Trust Fund
Technical Assistance	GET
GEF Project Financing ($)	Co-financing ($)
3,599,969.00	4,951,449.00

Outcome:

Outcome 3.1 Degraded landscapes rehabilitated, protected and restored.

Outcome 3.2 Knowledge Management & Monitoring & Evaluation

Output:

Outputs
3.1.1. Inclusive (of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups including women, youth, and people with disabilities community-led) and Community-led ecosystem restoration and NbS interventions supported.
3.1.2. SLM and CSA approaches and technologies for improved and sustainable food systems supported.
3.1.3. Inclusive (of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups including women, youth, and people with disabilities community-led) and Community-level biodiversity stewardships programmes promoted.
3.1.4 Inclusive (of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups including women, youth, and people with disabilities community-led) processes for Rehabilitation and management of strategic water source areas including wetlands supported.

3.2.1. Best practice guidelines for SLM platforms on SLM practices, ecosystems restoration and climate resilience enhanced practices scaling up and replication for small scale producers developed, pilot tested and widely disseminated.

3.2.2. Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation system for impact of SLM practices developed and integrated in monitoring and evaluation mechanism platforms

M&E

Component Type	Trust Fund
GEF Project Financing ($)	Co-financing ($)

Outcome:

Output:

Component Balances

Project Components	GEF Project Financing ($)	Co-financing ($)
Component 1. Enabling Environment – Policy, Governance, and Institutions	514,282.00	1,650,483.00
Component 2. Enhancing partnerships, innovative finances, and synergies for SLM practices, ecosystems restoration and climate resilience	1,028,563.00	1,650,483.00
Component 3 Rehabilitation, restoration, and protection of degraded landscapes	3,599,969.00	4,951,449.00
M&E		
Subtotal	**5,142,814.00**	**8,252,415.00**
Project Management Cost	257,140.00	434,338.00
Total Project Cost ($)	**5,399,954.00**	**8,686,753.00**

Please provide justification

A. PROJECT RATIONALE

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

Land degradation: A global multi-sectoral issue

Land degradation and desertification are among the critical issues impacting biodiversity and livelihoods with profound impacts on resource-based livelihoods globally. As such, it impedes progress towards Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and overcoming climate-related poverty. Land degradation and desertification have increased, with land degradation hotspots covering approximately 29 per cent of global land, where some 3.2 billion people reside. From a global perspective, the drivers of land degradation include a various integrated factors such as biophysical, institutional, and socio-economic[1][1]. Inability of degraded land to provide important ecosystem services, such as water, food and timber supply, and carbon sequestration may exacerbate environmental degradation, resulting in poverty[2][2]. Land degradation mainly affects drylands, which account for 41% of the global land area and support about 50% of global livestock and 38% of the global human population. Southern Africa as a continent is not spared in such, land degradation threatens ecosystems ultimately socio-economic development. These global environmental problems and/or climate vulnerabilities are evident in the South African context, where historical inequity in access to land and natural resources is pronounced[3][3].

Key elements of the system

South Africa is a semi-arid, water scarce country. Rainfall levels average 450mm per year compared to the world average of 860mm per year. Rainfall patterns also differ between the western and eastern parts of the country, with rainfall levels as low as 100mm per year in the west and as high as 1 500mm per year in the east. This means that water availability varies greatly. While the total annual surface run-off is estimated to be 49 000 million cubic metres, only 14 200 million cubic metres per year or 29% of the total surface run-off is available as a reliable yield. Ground water resources are also not abundant, as most of South Africa is made up of hard rock formations that do not contain major ground aquifers that can be used on a national scale. It is estimated that only 20 per cent of South Africa's ground water can be utilized[4][4].

South Africa ranks as the third most biodiverse country in the world. It is recognized for high levels of endemism and is home to over 95,000 known species. The country also has a diverse range of biomes, from forests to deserts, estuaries, and marine systems. South Africa has nine biomes, or broad groupings of vegetation types that share similar ecological characteristics. Each biome has a characteristic climate envelope, or a range and pattern of temperature and rainfall values, within which it occurs[5][5]. Biodiversity hotspots are the world's most biodiverse and threatened terrestrial regions. The North West Biodiversity Sector Plan identifies a network of Critical Biodiversity Areas (CBAs) and Ecological Support Areas (ESAs) in the province based on a systematic

biodiversity plan[6][6]. Collectively, the CBAs and ESAs cover 57% of the province. In the Free State Province, grasslands have been widely recognized as important for both biodiversity and economic development. The loss of biodiversity in South Africa is being driven by many causes, some of which are direct and dynamic while others are indirect.

Land degradation: South African context

According to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) report, approximately 91% of South Africa's landscape is drylands and prone to desertification. Furthermore, nearly 60 % of the land is degraded. In addition, 80% of the land in South Africa is used for agriculture and subsistence livelihoods; 11% of this land (12.76 million ha) has arable potential, whilst 82%of this is under commercial agriculture with the majority (69%) being used for grazing. Soil degradation is severe and increasing in most communal cropland and grazing lands while sheet and gully erosion cover about 0.72 million ha of the country and is increasing[7][7]

Water erosion is the most widespread problem affecting over 70% of the country. This proportion has more than doubled due to the dry period leading up to 2013-2015. Areas particularly prone to wind erosion include the western half of croplands in western Free State and the greater part of the Northwest and the Northern Cape provinces (DEA, 2016a). Soils in South Africa are generally sensitive, fragile, climatologically, and topographically subject to land degradation through erosion. Over 70% of the South African land surface has been intensely affected by a variety of erosion types. Poor agricultural methods and land husbandry by both commercial and subsistence farming is still the most influential factor in land degradation Several natural events such as running water or blowing winds also trigger erosion processes[8][8].

Wind erosion is prominent particularly in the Northern Cape, Free State, North West, and greater parts of the Eastern Cape, and is identified as one of the most problematic environmental and social-economic problems in these provinces. Acidic soils are prevalent in the KwaZulu-Natal, Eastern Cape, Western Cape, Mpumalanga, Limpopo, Free State, Gauteng, and North West provinces. Bush encroachment is severe in the western parts of North West and the southwestern Free State. The figures 1 and 2 below summarizes South Africa's land degradation status[9][9].

Land Degradation in Free State Province

The Free State (FS) is located in the geographical center of South Africa, bordered by Northern Cape, Eastern Cape, Northwest, Mpumalanga, KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng provinces, as well as Lesotho. It covers an area of 129 825km² and has a population of 2 745 590 – 5.3% of the national population. FS has a generally hot, arid climate with the strongest warming for South Africa being projected in the Free State and other inland

provinces[10][10]. This proposed project will be implemented in Xhariep district municipality. Degradation in the province is largely characterized by[11][11]:

- ***Soil erosion challenges:*** Free State is susceptible to erosion with an estimated 64 674 ha being threatened. Erosion has been accelerated by human activities, for example clearing of vegetation, alien species invasion, soil tillage and overgrazing, poor farming practices as well as an increasing trend in agriculture intensification have also been considered as major causes of erosion.

- ***Woody plant encroachment and biodiversity losses:*** Bush encroachment linked to climate change and overgrazing and unsustainable land management practices arising from a high population to land ratio, and complicated land tenure systems stemming from the apartheid era[12][12][13][13][14][14]. In Free State, continuing encroachment is therefore causing significant negative impacts on biodiversity, livelihoods and the overall supply and value of ecosystem services, reducing the ability of rangelands to regulate water.

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[1] UNCCD, 2019. Progress made in setting voluntary national targets in support of land degradation neutrality implementation. United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. ICCD/CRIC(17)/3; https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/sessions/documents/2018-12/ICCD_CRIC%2817%29_3-1818798E.pdf

[2] 2016. The ecological economics of land degradation: impacts on ecosystem service values. ecological economics 129:182-192. DOI:10.1016/j.ecolecon.2016.06.016

[3] Agricultural Research Council (ARC), 2022. DFFE Report: National Assessment Report on Migration Linkages to Desertification, Land Degradation and Drought, Climate Change and other Environmental Factors.

[4] Ingrid Dennis; Rainier Dennis, 2012. Climate change vulnerability index for South African aquifers. Water SA, Volume 38, No.3.

[5] https://www.dffe.gov.za/sites/default/files/reports/environmentoutlook_chapter6.pdf, accessed 04 August 2023.

[6] North West Provincial Department: Department, Rural, Environment and Agricultural Development (NW READ), 2015. https://cer.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2010/03/North-West-Environmental-Implementation-Plan.pdf, accessed 02 August 2023.

[7] Le Roux, J.J., Newby, T.S., and Sumner, P.D., 2007. Monitoring soil erosion in South Africa at a regional scale: review and recommendations: SAEON review. South African Journal of Science, 103(7): 329-335.

9 Agricultural Research Council (ARC), 2022. National Assessment Report on Migration Linkages to Desertification, Land Degradation and Drought, Climate Change and other Environmental Factors.

Agricultural Research Council (ARC), 2022. National Assessment Report on Migration Linkages to Desertification, Land Degradation and Drought, Climate Change and other Environmental Factors.

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[10] https://www.britannica.com/place/Free-State

[11] Agricultural Research Council (ARC), 2022. National Assessment Report on Migration Linkages to Desertification, Land Degradation and Drought, Climate Change and other Environmental Factors.

[12] Fox, R.C., and Rowntree, K.M., 2001. Redistribution, Restitution and Reform: Prospects for the Land in the Eastern Cape Province, South Africa. In: A.J. Conacher (ed.), Land Degradation. The GeoJournal Library, vol 58. Springer, Dordrecht. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-017-2033-5_11.

[13] Bai, Z.G., and Dent, D.L., 2007. Land degradation and improvement in South Africa. 1. Identification by remote sensing. Report 2007/03, ISRIC – World Soil Information, Wageningen.

[14] Shackleton, C.M., Shackleton, S.E., and Cousins, B., 2001. The role of land-based strategies in rural livelihoods: the contribution of arable production, animal husbandry and natural resource harvesting in communal areas in South Africa. Development South Africa, 18(5): 581-604.

(Please see Figure 1 uploaded in the Road Map)

Figure 1: Degradation status of South Africa as defined by the degradation index[1].

(Please see Figure 2 uploaded in the Road Map)

Figure 2: South Africa's Land degradation index map[1].

Climate Change Impacts in Free State Province and Xhariep District Municipality

In FS, the Xhariep District Municipality is projected to be vulnerable to the impacts of climate variabilities and the long-term climate change. The total potentially arable area of the Free State is 3.82 million hectares. In spite of a detailed understanding of the Free State's soils, degradation continues to occur, especially on cultivated land, where the most serious forms are erosion, acidification and organic matter decline. By 2050, the FS province is projected to be affected by higher annual average temperatures, which will adversely affect water and food security because of increased evaporation rates causing a reduction in agricultural outputs. Xhariep district municipality is projected to experience changes in annual average temperatures of between 3 and 3.5^{o}C. With climate change, the rainy season is likely to shift, starting later and characterized by a shorter rainy season with the duration of the dry spell likely to increase, resulting in drought and negative implications for agriculture and the water sector. At the same time, intensified rainfall is projected to increase, with the likelihood of heavy downpours punctuated by longer dry spells. Furthermore, the FS province is also projected to experience increases in annual average number of extreme rainfall days that are likely going to result in an increase in intense storms, flash flooding and land degradation across the province. The Free State Province is included in the areas where strongest warming is projected over inland areas also these areas are also projected to become drier. Variability in climatic conditions is already being observed (e.g., recent heat waves, drought, and severe floods in some parts of the province) and is likely to continue along with wide ranging impacts. The changing parameters, whether extreme temperature, rainfall, or climatic events, will impact on wide ranging sectors, and across the spectrum from social to biophysical. The current delineation of biomes is predicted to change with shifts and replacement of the grassland (*used for livestock grazing*) by the savanna biome under high climate risk scenario resulting in impacts on the agricultural and biodiversity (ecosystems and species habitat losses) sectors[1]. This will be further exacerbated by issues such as the fragmentation of natural areas and unsustainable water usage rates[2].

Land degradation in North West Province

The North West Province of South Africa is bounded on the north by Botswana, on the south by the provinces of Free State and the Northern Cape, and on the northeast and east by the Limpopo Province and Gauteng. Covering 118,797 sq km, with a population of more than 3,35 million people living in the North West, the population density in most districts is about 5–25 people/km^2. The natural vegetation of the North West is mainly savanna, and much of the province consists of flat areas of scattered trees and grassland biome. This proposed project will be implemented in Dr Ruth Segomotsi Mompati District Municipality.

Land degradation in the province and Dr Ruth Segomotsi Mompati District Municipality is characterized by:

- **Soil degradation and desertification:** The North West has a fairly high provincial soil degradation index and the most affected areas are Lehurutshe and Mankwe. Both croplands and grazing lands are affected by wind and water erosion. The Vryburg district has a problem of farmland being covered by wind-blown sand. Excessively high soil erosion rates normally occur under aggressive tillage-based cultivation practices, especially on erodible soils during peak events (heavy thunderstorms) and on steeper, longer slopes. According to the ARC Report[3], 10 782 ha are severely affected by gully erosion in the North West, whilst 1 485 263 km^2 are affected by sheet rill erosion.

- **Bush encroachment and biodiversity loss:** Most farmers in the North West province is battling with land degradation, which is thought to be mainly characterized by the invasion of Vachellia, Senegalia and Dichrostachys cinerea woody species. The North West province has also been struggling with issues such as an increase in genetically modified crops, coupled with harvesting, poaching, and trade in indigenous species that exert considerable stresses on biodiversity in the province[4]. Environmental degradation due to alien invasive species encroachment, bush encroachment (bush thickening and associated chemical control), genetically modified crops; and harvesting, poaching, and trading in indigenous species also place significant pressures on biodiversity in the North West[5].

Climate Change Impacts in North West Province and Dr Ruth Segomotsi Mompati District Municipality

The NW province is dominated by a flat savanna and grassland biomes landscape, which is home to rich biodiversity with hills and ridges dividing up this landscape, coupled with high agricultural potential[6]. The NW Province and Dr Ruth Segomotsi Mompati District Municipality are projected to be vulnerable to the impacts of climate variabilities and the long-term climate change. Like the FS, the NW province is projected to be affected by higher annual average temperatures of between 3 and 3.5^{o}C, which will adversely affect water and food security because of increased evaporation rates causing a reduction in agricultural outputs, by the year 2050.

The NW province climate varies considerably with the areas in the eastern side of the province being much wetter than those in the western side. Annual average rainfall amounts vary across the province. Increases in the number of rainfall days are likely to result in an increase in intense storms, and flooding events across the province. In addition, the province is also projected to experience high environmental vulnerability - the vulnerability and risk to the natural environment and the impacts on the ecological infrastructure of which

surrounding settlements are dependent on. The environmental risks will include impacts on ecosystems, habitats, physical and biological processes (reproduction, diversity, energy flows, etc.)[7].

Underlying and Systemic Drivers of land degradation in South Africa

According to World Meteorological Organization (2005)[8],[9],[10] drivers of land degradation applicable to the South African context are as follows:

- **Increasing population pressure**. Increasing in population leads to increased demand for food, which in turn leads to intensified crop production and expansion. Land degradation neutrality (LDN) perspective is that a balance between sustainable intensified crop production and crop expansion is needed to meet these increasing needs while still conserving natural resources. If crop expansion is inevitable, it should not only focus on expanding into previously uncultivated areas but also include the restoration of suitable degraded areas.

- **Poor land management**. Poor, unsustainable land management practices are prevalent on most farms, especially in small-scale rain-fed production systems. The main reason for poor land management decisions and implementation is farmers' lack of knowledge about and experience with alternative sustainable practices and technologies.

- **Insecure land tenure**. Insecure land tenure occurs under both statutory and customary land tenure systems. Especially under customary systems, tenure may be loosely defined, often to the disadvantage of women who play a major role in farming. Furthermore, generally unclear tenure terms, small and fragmented landholdings, and a limited ability to mortgage or transfer land may disincentivize farmers from investing in improved and sustainable agricultural practices and technologies due to the risk of limited or no return.

- **Poor access to markets and services**. Farmers need markets as an incentive to produce excess goods to sell for economic benefit, which increases the resources they have available to improve land management. When markets are poorly developed, missing, or too far away from production sites, farmers are more likely to make subsistence-based management decisions and are less able to generate economic benefits from the land. Hence, fewer resources are available to improve land management practices and prevent degradation.

- **Climate change.** Climate change directly affects vegetation production, especially in dryland areas, which in turn affects the availability of organic matter and cover to protect the soil surface. In this way, it influences various soil properties and LDN. Rainfall is the most important factor affecting land degradation vulnerability, followed by temperature and wind[11]

In the context of these systemic drivers, stakeholder consultations done during the development of the PIF have identified the following barriers which justify and shape the project's intervention framework:

- **Challenges with financing of SLM:** Financial investments in SLM are insufficient to meet the challenge of transformation; typically, dispersed, and inconsistent in nature; and in many cases inadequately targeted, often acting as "perverse incentives" for unsustainable options. Financial institutions (public and private) and other private investors are in many cases not providing adequate and sufficient financial services to SLM actors. This is due to the lack of an adequate enabling environment; the insufficient capacity of many financial institutions/investors to accurately assess and manage risks, which leads to the perception of being a high-risk and low return sector; and the high transaction costs to reach small-scale producers.

- **Weak sectoral coordination in implementation of policy instruments:** Sustainable land management safeguards a range of ecosystem services and functions, including food production, water supply, biodiversity conservation and carbon sequestration. This confronts public institutions with a range of policy coordination challenges, since their mandates often align with only one or other of these services. In South Africa, there are good policies, but they don't enable equitable outcomes. South Africa has few functioning cross-sectoral mechanisms to facilitate integrated ecosystem management, particularly for adopting common goals between ministries. Mechanisms may be found at the local level, but these may lack capabilities for integrated land management. There are still major disconnections among the interests and policy directions on SLM, despite major advances and the existence of multiple global and local platforms. National and international policy, planning and institutional frameworks are characterized by silos with little coordination among production (agriculture), environment, trade, investment, and the inadequate or partial nature of the information available to decision makers when formulating policies, legislation, strategies, and plans, on their potential, and the range of alternatives available.

- **Challenges with community governance of land and resources:** Traditional governance of natural resources in South Africa has come under severe strain and is weak or scarcely existing in many areas. On communal lands, such systems of governance are the key to sustainable land management and innovation is needed to establish functioning mechanisms for coordinating natural resource management and use. These mechanisms need to be respected by, and acceptable to, state institutions as well as the communities they represent.

- **Lack of data or limited access to data in some context:** Monitoring of interventions should combine assessment of land health with ecological and socioeconomic impacts, for example on land productivity, vegetation cover, or hydrological cycles. More participatory monitoring is required to both improve the use of data by communities, and to ensure assessments are guided by the land management objectives of the users. Lack of data, or poor access to data, limits the effective targeting of land degradation interventions and monitoring of the impact of policies and investments. Considerable research and data are available in South Africa, including through the GEF-supported Land Degradation Assessment (LADA) () project, which guides macro decision-making. However, at the local level more detailed information is often required to shape appropriate investment.

- **Low capacities, resources, and awareness for SLM:** Local actors often lack the required capacities for SLM, and extension agents are often ill-equipped with the required skills for effective extension, including participatory and negotiating skills. Training to farmers can be highly prescriptive and seldom builds on farmers' perceptions of their problems and opportunities. There is a tendency to look for costly material solutions rather than exploring softer options, such as changes in cropping patterns and livestock management. In rural areas, there can be challenges of insufficient education, which can limit the capacity for innovation and may affect the trust between farmers and extension agents. This barrier can be addressed through stronger emphasis on participation to foster a culture of trust and collaboration and to encourage innovation through participatory research and action.

- **Land Tenure and Land Management Roles, Rights and Responsibilities:** Land tenure is complex and evolving in South Africa and at least two forms of communal land management can be identified: commonage, which has relatively undefined use rights, and Land Reform, where rights are assigned to small groups of users. These combined with significant areas of private land create a mosaic of land tenure types. Commonage is important for the livelihoods of many communities in South Africa, but these areas are often poorly managed due to lack of democratically elected leaders and institution with focal legitimacy. Commonage areas also lack rules or procedures to enforce collective grazing and land management, and they often lack accountability and ownership over land and natural resources. Many commonage areas are unfenced and do not have grazing management plans. As a result, they are frequently overstocked (according to Department of Agriculture recommendations) and subject to degradation.

  The term land manager is commonly used to describe farmers and livestock herders who manage land, but on common land the term can become ambiguous as the rights to either use or to manage land are frequently unclear and are contested. In some cases, everyone {i.e., not only local residents) has the right to use land, while no one officially has responsibility to manage the land or the right to exclude others, even temporarily. In other cases, local users do not have the right, or explicit permission, to actively manage the land - for example to close an area to other users in order to allow regeneration. Land managers may also claim land that falls into different tenure categories, which may give them different levels of responsibility over the management of communal areas. Overall, this means that different types of users may have different management objectives, presenting a challenge to developing suitable management plans.

- **Low Access to Finance and Markets:** Agricultural land is mostly degraded in communally owned areas, which are predominantly under subsistence or small-scale farming. In the absence of sustainable land management practices in place and with the challenge of climate change, degradation of these areas will continue unabated. The farmers in these areas largely lack technical expertise and resources to build climate resilience. Because of degradation, productivity of agricultural land, both under crop and livestock farming continues to decline, with increasing economic insecurity for households that depend on livestock and agriculture. Access to the market is another challenge given the subsistence nature of production. In the Eastern Cape, a relatively dry province where livestock farming is predominantly practiced, rangelands are severely degraded with massive loss of biodiversity and ecosystems services critical for sustaining the rangelands and hence livestock production. Exclusion of small scare farmers in communally owned areas compounds the farming problem. While agricultural finance (from both commercial and development finance institutions) is available in South Africa, it is not extended to areas with structural/institutional challenges where farmers are not fully connected to urban space. In particular, financial services and markets generally have poor penetration into dryland regions, and they are poorly adapted to dryland challenges such as high levels of Inter-annual variability and risk. Value chains for the major outputs of sustainably managed drylands are typically weak, often with critical challenges around the quality and predictability of supply. As a result, natural resource managers face challenges in investing in sustainable land management practices and in attaining basic livelihood goals related to income and asset growth or food security.

Baseline scenario and any associated baseline projects,

South Africa has established the national voluntary targets for LDN to be achieved by 2030. The national LDN targets were developed in accordance with SA's specific national circumstances and development priorities, considering the list of options for operationalizing LDN at the national level. In addition, a summary of practices aimed at reducing land degradation in South Africa (e.g. conservation agriculture, terracing, vegetation strips and gully control) have been developed and are being used to promote and improve sustainable land management as part of the World Overview of Conservation Approaches and Technologies project and the Land Degradation Assessment in Drylands (LADA) project; these efforts will help to guide the activities of this proposed project.

South Africa makes significant baseline investments in the agricultural sector and there is scope to integrate sustainable land management practices into these investments. For example, the Land Care Program is a national community-based program with the goal of optimizing agricultural productivity and the sustainability of natural resource management. Launched in 1997, the program is housed in the Department of Agriculture and promotes agricultural extension through community-based approaches, with a priority on support for poor and emerging farmers to implement practices like erosion control, soil conservation, water management and invasive species control. This 'grassroots' programme is supported by the Government, as well as the public and private sectors through networking partnerships, the most important of which are at the local level. The initiative's flagship program is the Area-Wide Planning (AWP) approach (and strategies), which supports community level work on land rehabilitation, erosion control, water management and control of invasive alien plants, based on principles of Sustainable Land Management (SLM) and Community Based Natural Resources Management (CBNRM), including promoting partnerships among communities, the private sector and the Government for the management of natural resources.

Following many years of successful implementation, the LandCare program has now established sub-programs on WaterCare, VeldCare and SoilCare. The SoilCare sub-program encourages rural farmers to adopt the concept of Conservation Agriculture and to build innovative structures to combat soil erosion. In Northern Cape Province, on going Land Care projects have a total budget of approximately US$365,000 in 2016-2017, and include activities such as: the Z F Mgcawu project focusing on controlling 1,000 ha of invasive Rhigozum trichotomum in rangeland areas; the Pixley Ka Seme Soilcare project to carry out soil rehabilitation on 600 ha of degraded land using bioengineering techniques; the John Taolo Gaetswewe Veldcare project to control 1,000 ha of Acacia mellifera, re-vegetate 500 ha of denuded rangeland with natural grass seeds, and control of Gnindia burchelli on 500 ha to improve the rangeland; and the Frances Baard Veldcare project for the eradication of Arcacia malifera on 1,000 ha. In Limpopo Province, on-going Land Care projects have a total budget of approximately US$683,000 in 2016-2017, including projects for: fencing projects for the Seleka Area Wide Plan Project in Lephalale, the Niani soil conservation project in Mutale, the Dimani conservation agriculture project in Thulamela, and the Khomanani project in Thulamela; capacity building for the Bungeni soil conservation project in Makhado; eradication of alien plants in the Modimolle Land Care Committee Project; construction of 20 gabion structures in the Siloam soil conservation project in Makhado; and an awareness and capacity building project for the whole of Limpopo Province.

In Free State Province, ongoing Land Care projects have a total budget of approximately US$500,000 from 2020. The North West Province work within the theme of Veldcare. Government has invested a total budget of approximately US$450,000 since 2020. This will include the reduction in ground cover of grazing lands, exposing soil to erosion, and deteriorating the species composition relative to the nutritional requirements of the grazing animals. Widespread bush encroachment has reduced the livestock productivity of the veld and this theme should concentrate on addressing these broader degradation issues.

In addition, government has initiated the Juniorcare programme, where our children will reap the benefits of our Landcare efforts. Their involvement is an investment that will deliver future benefits. The objectives of Juniorcare are to empower previously disadvantaged young people with regard to training in facilitation and leadership skills. This includes the promotion of food security at home and at schools, awareness in sustainable agriculture, stimulating the formation of youth clubs, and small projects that aim to promote other components of Landcare. Juniorcare addresses the needs of young people, in an integrated way that involves interdisciplinary approaches.

As part of the improving socio-economic factors, government has initiated the Small Community Grants, which aims to improve the ability of resource-poor communities to manage land, water and vegetation in a sustainable and self-reliant manner, through an incentives programme. It includes elements from all other themes already mentioned. Within the specified theme, each proposal must include a component of the following:

- Improving the ability of land users to manage their natural resources in a sustainable and self-reliant manner;
- Addressing the causes of environmental and resource degradation, rather than the symptoms;
- Promoting long term integrated approaches to local catchment and regional planning;
- Demonstrating innovative approaches to natural resource management;
- Encouraging the sustainable use of natural resources;
- Addressing the needs of former disadvantaged groups
- Fostering partnerships amongst different sectors of the rural community including government;
- Developing relevant experience, knowledge and skills in the community;
- Encouraging socio-economic or business enterprise development that must link to sustainable resource use and environmental repair;
- Communicating results to other interested individuals and organisations.

The Provincial Programme Proposal must contribute to the national objectives of sustainable resource management (please refer to the National policy on Agricultural Land and Resource Management, chapter 4 of the national agriculture policy for further information). These investments and incentives are not intended to substitute for the resource management responsibilities, including research activities, of other levels of government or individuals, but they are intended to catalyse action and on-going commitment to natural resource management.

Funding will not be recommended where proposals unnecessarily duplicate work, which is being undertaken elsewhere, or which would be more appropriately funded through other programs. The participation of

communities (Non-Government Organisations (NGOs), Community Based Organisations (CBOs), Local Governments, farmer groups), public agencies and interest groups is essential in developing, assessing and implementing this proposal.

Under the framework of the broader Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP), the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and Environment (DFFE) is engaged in the implementation of the Environmental Protection and Infrastructure Programmes (EPIP), which is aimed at conserving natural assets and protecting the environment while also supporting job creation. The EPIP includes a number of targeted programmes, with a total budget in 2014-15 of approximately US$63 million for all of South Africa. The main goal of the programme is to alleviate poverty through a number of interventions that use labour intensive methods targeting the unemployed, youth, women, people with disabilities, and Small, Medium and Micro Enterprises (SMMEs) and are implemented in communities to uplift households while empowering beneficiaries to participate in the mainstream economy in a manner that addresses the environmental management challenges facing the country. Several programs under the EPIP are directly relevant to the goals of this proposed project.

The Working for Water Programme is recognised as one of the most outstanding initiatives on the African Continent. The programme has been implemented for the past two decades, with the main focus on invasive species clearing, environmental conservation, water security and job creation. The working for water programme considers the development of people as an essential element of environmental conservation. Since its inception in 1995, the programme has cleared more than two million hectares of invasive alien plants species, providing jobs and training for about 26,000 people per year, from amongst the most marginalised sectors of society, of which 56% are 1M>men. It currently runs over 300 projects in all nine of South Africa's Provinces.

The Working for Land Programme aims to restore the composition, structure, and function of degraded lands {ecosystems) through carbon sequestration, water regulation and purification. These programs are designed to improve the sustainability of livelihoods and the productive potential of land, promote economic empowerment in rural areas, improve natural species diversity, landscape and catchment stability and resilience, and promote development of a market for ecosystems.

The Working for Ecosystems Programme encourages and supports sustainable land use practices, raises awareness, and promotes resource conservation ethics. The programme aims to: improve watershed services through the restoration of riparian zones and wetlands; contribute to climate change mitigation through the sequestration of carbon in the form of re-vegetating denuded landscapes; contribute to climate change adaptation and improving livelihoods security by reducing the risk of natural disasters through restoration of degraded habitats; unlock investments and operational resources for the improvement of the quantity and quality of ecosystem services; and promote pro-poor economic development in rural areas. One of the most successful projects under this programme is the subtropical thicket restoration project a partnership between farmers, communities, government, conservationists, scientists, and economists whose aim is to restore large tracts of degraded veld which, prior to overgrazing by livestock, were covered with Spekboom {Portulacaria afra} thickets. To date, over 3,000 hectares of degraded veld have been replanted. The project has been validated and registered through the verified Carbon Standard and the Climate Community and Biodiversity Standard, making it a blue-chip carbon market credit. Other relevant programmes include Working for Fire, Working for Wetlands and Working for Forests.

Several other projects are implementing activities relevant to the proposed project. Resilience in the Limpopo Basin focusing on Olifants is a five-year, USD 10.7 million program implemented by the Association for Water and Rural Development (AWARD) to support a more resilient Olifants Catchment in South Africa and Mozambique. Initiated in 2012, the program reduces the vulnerability of people and ecosystems through improved transboundary governance and management of natural resources. The program is grounded in a grassroots approach to understanding the systemic causes of vulnerability, including climate vulnerability, and a promoting new way of thinking and acting to promote integrated water and biodiversity management. The Resilience in the Limpopo Basin Program (RESILIM) covering the whole Limpopo basin in all the 4 basin countries is a five-year USO 14.0 million program that supports the riparian countries of the Limpopo basin in their efforts to improve shared management of water resources and equitably address the economic, environmental, and social needs of each country, thereby enhancing the resilience of the ecosystem and the people. The program reduces climate vulnerability by promoting adaptation strategies for integrated, trans-boundary water resource management by building the capacity of local river basin organizations and communities to sustainably manage natural resources, high priority ecosystems will be preserved and resistant to climate-induced pressure.

Private sector and civil society organizations working on sustainable land management in the Northern Cape are few and far between on the ground. The Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund {CEPF) funded Succulent Karoo Ecosystem Programme (SKEP) was a long term, multi-stakeholder bioregional conservation and development programme started as a bi national initiative between Namibia and South Africa, with the aim of developing the concept of conservation as a land-use, rather than being a replacement for land-use. However, few projects arose from this Programme that defined sustainable grazing management principles or considered community-based implementation. SKEP itself no longer has CEPF funding to initiate new projects and Conservation South Africa {CSA) is currently involved with sustainable communal grazing management and thus provides baseline information on working with biodiversity stewardship in communal land practices.

Despite strong initiatives, communal lands remain marginalized, South Africa has several strong initiatives, offering a wealth of experience, capacity and good practices that can be made available to communal lands and other marginal areas. Adoption of SLM good practices on communal lands has been hampered by the challenges over tenure security, local governance, and capacity among land managers. Good practices in SLM have been successfully tested, but they have not been sufficiently adapted to the unique conditions of communal lands. The policy environment is supportive of improved SLM in these lands, but there are many social challenges that impede progress. Localized initiatives have attempted to strengthen community level planning and coordination, but they remain scattered and have not been scaled up.

On-going discussions over land reform and redistribution in South Africa indicate that the challenges of communal land may get worse in the future, and a strategy is needed to systematically transfer effective governance and land management capacities to communal land managers. Stronger governance and land management capacity goes hand in hand with access to finance. Finance is available in South Africa, but under currently conditions communal lands do not present an attractive investment prospect. Financial services are important to enable scaling up of SLM and to strengthen value chains and incomes from natural resource management. Additionally, access to these services can be an important incentive for mobilizing communities to strengthen local governance institutions, which can act as an intermediary for accessing financial services and strengthening value chains.

Proposed alternative scenario with a brief description of expected outcomes and components of the project; In the business as usual scenario, land degradation trends will continue due to ongoing challenges of: i) weak community governance and tenure; ii) poor institutional coordination; iii) low capacities, resources and awareness for SLM; iv) inadequate policies v) weak penetration of financial services; vi) under-developed value chains for multiple ecosystem goods and services and vi) insufficient data and access to data. Under these conditions, it will be a challenge for South Africa to meet its LDN targets and instead will see continuing land degradation, contributing to biodiversity loss, loss of ecosystem functionality and climate change through the release of greenhouse gasses.

The proposed alternative scenario will see an improvement in the enabling conditions in communal lands that support adoption of sustainable land management. This includes better-informed decision making based on simple but reliable data on land health as well as improved decision-making structures to coordinate planning and management across ecosystem and landscapes. There will be particular emphasis on coordinating the management of land and water resources, based on improved inter-sectoral collaboration at local and national level. Stronger governance arrangements and more secure tenure will provide a more stable platform for investment and for developing local rules and regulations for land management, particularly to support natural and assisted regeneration of pasturelands. The project will strengthen capacities to engage communities in sustainable land management and restoration practices and will engage with policy makers to ensure that policies are supportive of identified SLM approaches.

The project will strengthen restoration of degraded ecosystems, improve sustainable management for improved livelihoods in the degraded landscapes of Free State and Northwest Provinces of South Africa, through reinforcing local institutions for natural resource governance, and nature-based solutions. The project will deliver this through three interrelated components. The project will design and implement various SLM and Climate Smart Agriculture interventions in Xhariep and Dr Ruth Segomotsi Mompati district municipalities' degraded landscapes in the Free State (FS) and North West (NW) Provinces of South Africa. Land targeted for restoration, SLM, and CSA interventions include a mixture of state (communal), municipal (commonage, rangelands, etc.), commercial and privately-owned land, where possible. Furthermore, the project will explore and strengthen private investment to facilitate improved access to financial services and development of a stronger rural value chains, which will be designed to incentivise and support (financially, technically, and technologically) the adoption of SLM, Nature Based Solutions (NbS) and CSA practices, to strengthen local institutions for natural resource governance and livelihoods. The project includes a strong emphasis on leveraging private sector investments in SLM to scale up innovative tried and tested approaches in degraded lands within these Provinces. Various innovative activities that will be implemented throughout the course of this proposed project comprise components, outcomes, and outputs.

Focus of GEF 8 SLM project: Given the background on land degradation challenges and the barriers to achievement of interventions outlined in the preceding sections, this project focuses on restoration, rehabilitation and sustainable management of land for climate resilient and improved livelihoods in the degraded landscapes of North West and Free State provinces of South Africa. This is achieved through a combination of interventions that will include addressing the enabling environment – policy, governance, and institutions for SLM, biodiversity and climate change, supporting ecosystems restoration and rehabilitation activities working with local communities, smallholder farmers and commercial farmers through the implementation of transformative sustainable land management practices. These will reduce land degradation and enhance

ecosystems, water source areas, biodiversity, and build climate resilience of communities, farmers (both commercial and communal), and strengthen livelihoods to achieve South Africa's LDN targets by 2030.

With and without GEF 8 Project Scenarios:

Land degradation processes will continue to affect communal lands and may accelerate if the sizes of communal and commercial lands expands in future, where weak governance and local institutional arrangements will continue to drive mismanagement of land, leading to reduced soil fertility and physical soil erosion. Soil degradation coupled with drought will contribute to food and water insecurity, loss of biodiversity and an increase in greenhouse gases emissions. This will impact negatively on livelihoods (particularly rural and semi-urban), economic development, the wider society as well as the global environmental benefits that have been achieved to date.

Scenario 1: Without the GEF8 project investments foreseen through the proposed interventions, the factors presented above will persist and even worsen resulting in global land degradation on a path towards increasingly critical levels of ecosystem disruptions, that undermines land restoration efforts and exacerbates climate change. In turn this path will continue to undermine the natural resources that livelihoods depends on. This will also contribute towards the global climate change phenomena that affect the ecosystems functioning; while land productivity failures combined with unmeetable levels of demands will lead to (climate change) maladaptive responses including disorganized migration, expansion into new areas and ecosystems, and environmentally damaging forms of intensification.

From the baseline, models for communal land management are problematic and are not well adapted. This presents a growing challenge, particularly in the context of South Africa's land reform. The GEF incremental financing will strengthen the capacity of local, provincial and national institutions (including government and customary institutions) to equitably coordinate natural resource management and improve response to drought emergencies.

In the absence of effective institutions and participation for SLM and landscape planning, there is a risk that investments will contribute to further land degradation and associated costs, with ecosystems risks being fragmented by poorly coordinated actions across sectors, with an overall cost to ecosystem integrity and functionality. In the absence of adequate data to guide planning, decision making cannot achieve optimal outcomes. High priority restoration opportunities will be overlooked, and the principles of Land Degradation Neutrality-including balancing like-for-like, following the response hierarchy, and ensure restoration is adhered to. In the absence of effective coordination, public investments will address sectoral priorities and will overlook cross sectoral actions that respond to the complexity of the rangelands.

Scenario 2: With the GEF8 project investment, sustainable land management will be adopted more widely on communal and commercial lands, with capacities and institutions put in place to ensure SLM is extended to current and future communal and commercial landscapes within the 2 targeted provinces. SLM extension in these degraded landscapes (especially communal lands) will be supported through improving monitoring of land degradation processes and their impact on sustainable development goals. This will include, among others, improved validation of SLM approaches that are adapted to the communal land context. Land managers and their supporters (e.g., agricultural extension officers) will have stronger capacity to implement sustainable land management and landscape management practices based on access to suitable tools, guidelines, and other training materials as well as sustainable financial resources. Communities will implement restoration, rehabilitation and SLM actions to localize existing good practices and develop experience through exposure and learning by doing.

Governance mechanisms will be strengthened at different levels. At municipality and province level, mechanisms will be established and strengthened for landscape planning, while embedding participatory approaches into planning to improve the prioritization of actions. National LDN targets and priorities will be

validated locally to align with community priorities and aspirations (i.e., bottom-up approach). At community level, the capacity for natural resource governance will be strengthened through providing organizational support to land management and stewardship groups and appropriate governance tools, such as community resource agreements and by-laws.

Lessons from strengthening land users rights in target areas through application of appropriate governance mechanisms (including bylaws, natural resource conventions, communal land use certificates etc. - depending on legally acceptable opportunities), will be shared at regional and local forums, and related regional policy events. These interventions will facilitate knowledge and lessons learned sharing and exchanges of transferable lessons for effective governance of common areas in a way that promote effective and equitable benefit from ecosystem services for multiple land-users. This proposed project interventions will also result in increased recognition of the Importance of sub-national planning for land and water resource management which draws important lessons for improved coordination of land and water management which are crucial in drylands, especially in the context of rising threats of recurrent droughts.

GEF incremental funding will allow the development and testing of innovative funding options including community SLM funds, microfinance, and land restoration trust funds which will be developed to advance multifunctional land use. This will include different approaches to financing local action, both by individuals and communities. The project will also build investment partnerships between small and medium enterprises, national finance institutions and local land users, and business plans will be developed to take innovative approaches to scale. To support the extension of financial services as well as strengthening of livelihood resilience, the project will strengthen priority value chains, increasing incomes for primary goods (e.g., livestock) as well as to incentivize secondary goods and environmental services (e.g. medicinal plants, protection of water cycles).

Farmers in the project areas have depressed agricultural productivity, limited access to markets and agricultural finance. Component 3 of the project will focus on (linking farmers to markets through development of clear value chains and will identify and link farmers to innovative funding solutions to scale up validated SLM practices and invest in priority value chains to increase opportunities for livelihood adaptations in drylands. GEF incremental funding will allow this project to develop and test the following:

- Agricultural production under sustainable agricultural practices and development of value chains (including certification process of the produce and identifying and linking farmers to the right markets); and

- innovative funding options including community SLM funds, microfinance and land restoration trust funds which are developed to advance multifunctional land use. It will also build investment partnerships between small and medium enterprises, national finance institutions and local land users.

Lessons from successful implementation of these activities will feed into the local, national and regional decision-making processes. At the local level, the result from innovative funding of priority value chains will provide lessons that aligns different funding options in a complementary fashion.

At the regional level, through this GEF incremental funding, the result from innovative funding on the ground will be fed into other regional initiatives and inform other financing mechanisms such as at Southern African Development Community (SADC). There is already financing of programs and activities in the implementation of Sub-Regional Action Program to Combat Desertification in Southern Africa (SRAP) which will hugely benefit from lessons of the innovative financing mechanisms.

In the baseline situation, several policies already exist to promote sustainable land management in South Africa, but they don't enable equitable outcomes. The GEF incremental financing will address these current gap through mainstreaming SLM at regional level based on validated national policies and practices that support attainment

of LDN. GEF funding will allow this proposed project to build upon existing policies, considering their opportunities and challenges. The nationally validated policies and practices will be documented, and policy discourse undertaken at different levels. GEF funding will also foster scaling up of good practices in sustainable land management and effective management of dryland ecosystems at the suitable geographical scale.

GEF incremental funding will see that proven approaches that deliver LON in communal areas are supported in policy and public investment Policy dialogue will be better-informed of the realities of land management in communal areas because of improved participation of land users in shaping policy discourse. Experiences will be capture and documented, and actively promoted as a means of driving national level scaling up of SLM good practices in communal areas.

The primary objective of this project is to assist South Africa to achieve Land Degradation Neutrality by 2030, by establishing enabling conditions for scaling up good and proven SLM practices. South Africa has a specific target of rehabilitating and sustainably managing 2,436,170 hectares of the grassland biome by 2030. This project will contribute to restoring land and ecosystem functionality, rehabilitating hydrological cycles, generating benefits to local livelihoods, and strengthening community resilience to droughts and flooding. The project will target 150,000 hectares of landscapes (in the Free State and North West Provinces) under improved governance and other enabling conditions for restoration and SLM, with a significant benefits on the wider ecosystem and the services they provide.

Interventions will include community rangelands management, natural and assisted regeneration of pasture, control of invasive species, water stewardships, and introduction of agroecology approaches, including conservation agriculture, agroforestry, small scale irrigation, and appropriate water harvesting and water-saving techniques and interventions. The main outcomes will be improved land productivity due to increase soil organic carbon and soil moisture, which will translate into increased agricultural production, coupled with rehabilitated ecosystems and degraded landscapes. Improved soil moisture and infiltration rates will increase drought resilience and contribute to climate change adaptation while increased soil organic carbon will contribute to climate change mitigation.

Important co-benefits of the project Include conservation of biodiversity climate change mitigation adaptation. Biodiversity will be conserved and restored as part of landscape restoration activities, including rehabilitation of grasslands and woodlands/forest lands. Agro-ecology approaches will contribute to increases in habitat and increased soil biodiversity. Soil biodiversity is measured through the proxy of Soil Organic Carbon (SOC), which largely determines both soil fertility and soil moisture content, and thereby determines land productivity.

Increased soil biodiversity and above ground biodiversity contributes to improved infiltration of water, particularly on heavily degraded lands where a high proportion of water is lost through run off. Increasing vegetation cover is essential for ecological restoration and rehabilitation of hydrological cycles. Arresting soil erosion and siltation will reduce the risk of sedimentation in aquatic systems. Additionally, this project will also contribute to Sub-Regional Action Programme to Combat Desertification (2015-2025), to support a coordinated approach towards the implementation of the convention by facilitating joint actions at the sub regional level. Specifically, this project interventions will contribute to the reporting on the detailed commitments, strategies, and measures for the implementation of the convention along the indicators contained in the UNCCD Regional Implementation Annex for Africa.

Innovation, sustainability, and potential for scaling up.

Communal lands are relatively neglected in South Africa and are areas of significant land degradation. This project will scale up approaches that address the underlying local governance challenges that farmers on communal lands face, including coordination of grazing management, control of bush encroachment and invasive species removal, as well as reduction of other forms of land degradation. The project will deploy innovative community-based approaches to strengthen participation of local communities in public decision-making as well as collective action for sustainable management and restoration of communal land and other resources. Project sustainability will be achieved by institutionalizing and co-designing (*project interventions in collaboration with project beneficiaries and target local communities)* community based and participatory approaches for local planning, and establishing community-based management of communal resources, which will be enhanced through capacity building of extension agents/officers and community members.

The project will introduce a unique approach to assessment for target setting and evaluation of actions that will combine cutting edge scientific methods and established data sets with participatory monitoring and analysis. Community participation in assessment will ensure better selection of indicators that are context specific as well as improved understanding of local management objectives to inform monitoring and baseline assessment.

The project will provide innovative solutions in financing the scaling up of SLM, including community savings and credit facilities and connecting SLM initiatives with potential financers. The project will evaluate the bankability of SLM interventions and will partner with private investors and financial service providers to mobilize further investments and to identify and tackle potential barriers to investment. Continued scale-up of approaches beyond the project will be enabled through training of local and national experts, and through publication of good practices, focusing on process-oriented interventions that support sustainable land management. The project also will convene public fora to communicate project lessons and recommendations, as well as specific expert studies on policy and investment decisions, opportunities for implementing established policy, and gaps in public support for policy implementation.

By contrast, the proposed alternative GEF scenario will be characterized by a global transformation towards a dominant model of sustainable and regenerative ecosystems that are nature-positive, nature-based, resilient, and pollution-free, delivering major global environmental benefits (GEBs) especially in the areas of land degradation neutrality, biodiversity and climate change, through approaches which ensure the reliable and affordable supply of food for the growing population and at the same time contribute to livelihood resilience and sociocultural conditions (especially of the poor, and including women, indigenous peoples and other traditionally marginalized sectors of society).

The most direct and concrete benefits of the PIF will be anchored on SLM within the context of land restoration and climate change mitigation and adaptation particularly on maize production, grasslands management and livestock production prioritized by GEF for attention, due to their association with the most pressing environmental issues. However, by putting sustainability issues more firmly on the agendas of public and private food system actors, and by supporting the development for these “entry points” of policies, systems and models that have broader applicability, the project will have much wider transformational impacts, for other crops and commodities, for food systems, and for other related sectors.

Effective implementation of SLM policy instruments, and coherent collective action at scale among actors at national and global levels, based on evidence-based conviction of the need for transformation in order to ensure that livelihoods are improved, growing and changing food needs can be met without further undermining the environment, and the importance of and opportunities offered by working with nature to meet LDN targets, including development, food security targets. Integrated multi-sector approaches in SLM policy and institutional frameworks, not only recognising the interactions between agricultural and environment issues in relation to SLM but viewing SLM as a central pillar of national and global development, which both determines and is dependent on developments in other core sectors including trade, industry, finance, energy, infrastructure, culture, and social wellbeing and stability.

Linkages and alignment within the current landscape of investments: This project will build on the GEF 7 Programme that is currently implemented in Limpopo and Northern Cape provinces, through upscaling community level restoration and rehabilitation interventions. Additionally, the project is anchored with the LandCare Programme under National Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD) which includes WaterCare, VeldCare, Conservation Agriculture, JuniorCare and SoilCare. It also builds on Area-Wide Planning alien plants, based on principles of SLM and Community Based Natural Resources Management (CBNRM), including promoting partnerships among communities, the private sector, and the Government for the management of natural resources. The SoilCare sub-program encourages rural farmers to adopt the concept of Conservation Agriculture to build innovative structures to combat soil erosion. It also leverages the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP), the Department of Forestry, Fisheries, and the Environment (DFFE) is engaged in the implementation of the Environmental Protection and Infrastructure Programmes (EPIP). Other programmes with which synergies will be established include the Working for Land Programme, Working for Water Programme, Working for Ecosystems Programme.

Given the above rationale and justification, the overall objective of this project is to implement SLM practices and land rehabilitation, restoration, and protection interventions to combat land degradation, enhance biodiversity, ecosystems, water source areas, and build climate resilience to strengthen communities, farmers, and livelihoods in the Free State and North West provinces of South Africa. This project also intends to support South Africa to achieve its LDN targets.

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B. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Project description

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

Land degradation, desertification, and drought studies found that 91% of South Africa land falls within the category of drylands, resulting in it being susceptible to desertification. Areas of severe degradation and desertification correspond closely with the distribution of communal rangelands, specifically in the steeply sloping environments adjacent to the escarpment. The arid zones prevalent in the Northern Cape, North West and Free State are predominantly semi-arid[1][15].

Land degradation results in reduced land productivity and presents appropriate conditions for desertification. In South Africa, the main forms of land degradation are prevalent in rural areas and are mainly in the form of loss of vegetation cover and change in species composition. Land degradation undermines the productive potential of land and water resources, causes extensive alien plant invasion and biodiversity loss, and affects human welfare. Studies show that 80% of South Africa's land surface area is used for subsistence agricultural farming, with only 11% of this land suitable for cultivation. About 85% of the land cover (10.83 million ha) relies on rain-fed agriculture[2][16],[3][17]. The cultivated areas cover about 12.76 million ha, 82% of which (roughly 10.45 million ha) is permanently under cultivation. More than 0.7 million ha of land are degraded by soil erosion and 0.19 million ha are degraded by waste rock dumps and mining (DFFE, 2008). About 9% of the degraded area is cropland, 33% is forest and 37% is rangeland[4][18],[5][19].

The impacts of land degradation are huge on food and water security, economic development, and natural resources, resulting in huge loss in ecosystem functioning and productivity in the country. The net primary productivity in South Africa decreased by an average of 29 kg C/ha/year over the period 1981-2003[6][20]. It has also contributed to migration of rural population to the cities, resulting in overcrowding, unemployment, and

poorer living conditions[7][21]. The economy suffers due to Desertification, Land Degradation and Drought (DLDD) as the country pays about R2 billion (US$280 million) annually for dam maintenance and water treatment due to serious soil degradation[8][22]. Land degradation neutrality (LDN) is defined as 'a state whereby the amount and quality of land resources, necessary to support ecosystem functions and services and enhance food security, remains stable or increases within specified temporal and spatial scales and ecosystems[9][23],[10][24].

This with the restoration of degraded areas by developing conservation measures and sustainable land management practices Drylands are inherently susceptible to degradation, given their low levels of annual precipitation and high degree of seasonality in precipitation patterns. In South Africa the largest dryland areas are in the Northern Cape, North West and Free State provinces[11][25],[12][26].

This proposed project seeks to build on the two initial projects on Sustainable Land Management (SLM) namely (i) the **GEF 5** project focusing on securing multiple ecosystems benefit through SLM in the productive but degraded landscapes of South Africa. The project provides incentives (capacity, financial, governance, etc.,) for the adoption of knowledge based SLM models for land management and land/ecosystem rehabilitation in support of the green economy and resilient livelihoods in the Karoo, Olifants and Eastern Cape. This project contributed to the reduction of land degradation and improve ecosystem services in the Karoo, Eastern Cape and the Olifants landscapes; (ii) **GEF 7** mainstreaming SLM) for large-scale impact in the grazing lands of Limpopo and Northern Cape Provinces in South Africa. The overall goal of the project was to assist South Africa in achieving Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) targets by 2030 through the establishment of enabling conditions for scaling up good SLM practices.

The South African Government's National Development Plan (NDP)[13][27], Vision 2030, adopted by Cabinet in 2012, seeks to eliminate poverty and reduce inequality by 2030, through implementing the following five key elements: i) inclusive social and economic development; ii) sustainable investment and growth; iii) decent jobs and sustainable livelihoods; iv) a capable development state; and v) expanding opportunities. Priorities of 2023 restore energy security, growing the economy and jobs building better lives fighting corruption making communities safer and government work. Chapter 5 of the NDP recognises biodiversity and ecosystems in conservation areas as national assets. The long-term planning to promote biodiversity and the conservation and rehabilitation of natural assets is critical. It specifically emphasizes the importance of maintaining them to enhance ecosystem services that provide food, water, regulate climate, diseases, etc. as fundamental towards achieving South Africa's social and economic development objectives.

This proposed GEF 8 project focuses on SLM, under the GEF 8 ecosystems restoration focal area and South Africa's National Action Programme (SANAP) to Combat Desertification, Land Degradation and the effects of Drought (2018-2030)[14][28] The SANAP seeks to identify factors contributing to desertification, land degradation and drought as well as to implement practical measures necessary to combat desertification and to mitigate the effects of drought; as well as achieving national priorities focusing on LND of rehabilitating and sustainably managing 2 436 170 ha of grassland and 2 646 069 ha of savanna biomes (< 5m) by 2030, in Free state and North West provinces.

The restoration, rehabilitation and protection of South Africa's ecosystems is linked to the United Nations SDGs [15][29] . The following SDGs are relevant in this regard namely: i) SDG 2: Zero Hunger, ii) SDG 5: Gender Equality, iii) SDG 8: Descent work and economic growth, iv) SDG 11: Sustainable cities and communities, v) SDG 13: Climate Action, vi) SDG 15: Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and biodiversity loss; vii) SDG 17: Partnerships for goals.

Furthermore, this project is aligned to the 2022 adopted **Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework's** Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). The CBD seeks to ensure that at least 30 per cent of areas of degraded terrestrial, inland water, and coastal and marine ecosystems are under effective restoration (*Target 2*); that at least 30 per cent of terrestrial, inland water, and of coastal and marine areas are effectively conserved and managed (*Target 3*); reduces the rates of introduction and establishment of other known or potential invasive alien species by at least 50 per cent, by 2030 (*Target 6*); reduces pollution risks and impacts of pollution from all sources to prevent harmful impacts on biodiversity (*Target 7*); and minimizes the impact of climate change and ocean acidification on biodiversity (*Target 8*).

This proposed project seeks to build on the two initial projects on sustainable land management, namely (i) the **GEF 5** project focusing on securing multiple ecosystems benefit through Sustainable Land Management in the productive but degraded landscapes of South Africa. The project provides incentives (capacity, financial, governance) for the adoption of knowledge based Sustainable Land Management (SLM) models for land management and land/ecosystem rehabilitation in support of the green economy and resilient livelihoods in the Karoo, Olifants and Eastern Cape. This project contributed to the reduction of land degradation and improve ecosystem services in the Karoo, Eastern Cape and the Olifants landscapes; (ii) GEF **7** mainstreaming Sustainable Land Management (SLM) for large-scale impact in the grazing lands of Limpopo and Northern Cape Provinces in South Africa. The overall goal of the project is to assist South Africa in achieving Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) targets by 2030, by establishing enabling conditions for scaling up good SLM practices. The LDN targets respond to the immediate challenge of how South Africa can sustainably intensify production of food, fuel, and fibre to meet future demand without further degradation of the country's finite land resource base. SLM, NbS and CSA enhance the resilience of land resources and communities that are directly dependent thereon while avoiding further degradation.

The overall objective of this project is to implement SLM practices and land rehabilitation, restoration, and protection interventions to combat land degradation, enhance biodiversity, ecosystems, water source areas, and climate resilience to strengthen communities, farmers, and livelihoods in the Free State and North West provinces of South Africa. The project also intends to support South Africa to achieve its LDN targets.

To achieve these objectives, this project will co-design (*in collaboration with beneficiaries and the relevant stakeholders*) and implement various land restoration, SLM, NbS and CSA interventions in Xhariep and Dr Ruth Segomotsi Mompati District municipalities' degraded landscapes in the Free State and North West Provinces of South Africa. Land targeted for restoration, SLM, NbS and CSA interventions include a mixture of state (communal), municipal (commonage, rangelands, etc.), commercial as well as privately-owned land, where possible. Furthermore, the project will explore and strengthen private investment to facilitate improved access to financial services and development of stronger rural value chains, which will be designed to incentivise and support (financially, technically, and technologically) adoption of SLM, NbS and CSA practices, to strengthen local institutions for natural resource governance and livelihoods. The project includes a strong emphasis on leveraging private sector investments, partnerships, and participation in land restoration, SLM, NbS and CSA interventions to scale up innovative tried and tested approaches in degraded land restoration within the Free State and North West Provinces.

Component 1: Enabling Environment – Policy, Governance, and institutions.
This component focuses on mainstreaming and implementing existing SLM related policies, strategies, and tools to establish synergies, alignment, and provide recommendations for improvement. This component will strengthen, align, and enhance policy incentives, as well as governance and institutions for SLM frameworks and practices within the FS and NW provinces.

Component 2: Enhancing partnerships, innovative finances, and synergies for SLM practices, ecosystems restoration and climate resilience.
This component focuses on working with local communities, smallholder, and commercial farmers to implement transformative SLM, CSA and NbS practices and interventions to reduce land degradation, restore, rehabilitate, and restore ecosystems and biodiversity, strengthen water source areas, climate resilience and livelihoods, to achieve South Africa's LDN targets by 2030. Access to finance is a key constraint for the development of sustainable and rural communities. Outcome 2.1. outlines innovative finance models/instruments for SLM that will be designed, approved, and deployed (where applicable) by the relevant beneficiaries and key stakeholders.

Component 3: Rehabilitation, restoration, and protection of degraded landscapes.
This is the main component focusing on working with communities, farmers and all the relevant stakeholders to design and implement SLM, CSA and NbS practices interventions to rehabilitate, restore and protect degraded landscaped in Xhariep and Dr Ruth Segomotsi Mompati District municipalities in Free State and North West Provinces. A suite of innovative and tangible community-led and tailor-made interventions within these provinces. Furthermore, a community of practice and networking platform will be established to encourage sharing of lessons learned and networking amongst the project beneficiaries and stakeholders. Outcome 2.2 will focus on the implementation of SLM practices within Free State and North West provinces to restore, rehabilitate and protect degraded landscapes ecosystems, initiate, and implement biodiversity stewardship programmes with communities, communal and commercial beneficiaries that secure water sources, enhance climate resilience and strengthen community livelihoods.

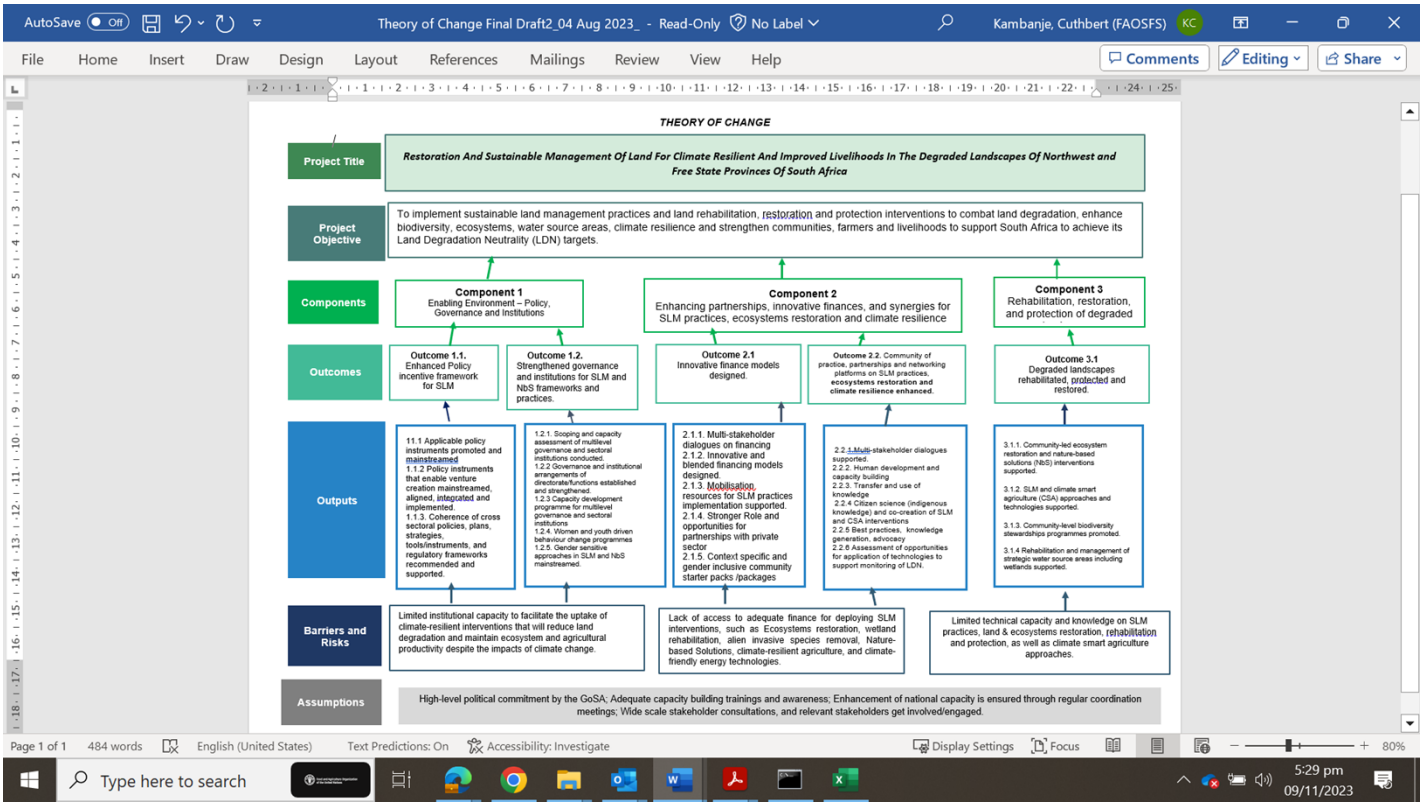
Furthermore, this project will also generate and disseminate knowledge (both scientific and indigenous) in a variety of ways, including through facilitating trainings, dialogues, and setting up capacity building programmes to empower and skill relevant beneficiaries and stakeholders (such as landowners, land managers, professionals/extension officers, etc.). Furthermore, the establishment of SLM knowledge sharing and learning platforms through public dialogues, publicly disseminated studies, and organisation of public fora to present lessons and advice to government policy and decision-makers, community leaders, civil society groups and other relevant stakeholders.

As part of component 3 of this project, a learning and **knowledge management system** will be developed to capture, organize, and analyse information generated from all the interventions that will be undertaken in this

project, to facilitate lessons sharing, improvement and collaboration with various stakeholders doing similar work. This will enhance decision making, communication, innovation, and time management among the FS and NW provincial, district and local municipality officials, project beneficiaries, implementors and stakeholders. Information captured in this system will include, amongst others project documents; case studies, and best practices on SLM and degraded landscapes restoration, rehabilitation, and protection.

In addition to the above components, this project will also incorporate the development of a standard monitoring, evaluation system for monitoring progress on achieving South Africa's LDN targets, as well as the overall project progress monitoring and evaluation, to explore and implement project performance enhancement interventions. For each component of this project, detailed outcomes and outputs will be undertaken to realise the objectives of this project, as outlined in the Theory of Change presented in Figure 3 below.

A **Project communication plan** will be developed for the project for purposes of outreach, awareness raising and dissemination of outputs/results/lessons. The communication plan will define main elements including objectives/purpose, situational Analysis, Audience Personas, Messaging, Channels, Communications Matrix, Goals, Strategies & Tactics.



[1] DEA, 2016b. 2nd South Africa Environment Outlook, Executive Summary Report on the State of the Environment. Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, Pretoria.

[2] DFFE, 2008. A report on the State of the Environment Outlook, South Africa. Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, Pretoria. http://soer.deat.gov.za/22.html

[3] Agricultural Research Council (ARC), 2022. National Assessment Report on Migration Linkages to Desertification, Land Degradation and Drought, Climate Change and other Environmental Factors.

[4] Bai, Z.G., and Dent, D.L., 2006. Global assessment of land degradation and improvement: pilot study in Kenya. ISRIC Report 2006/01, Wageningen.

[5] Agricultural Research Council (ARC), 2022. National Assessment Report on Migration Linkages to Desertification, Land Degradation and Drought, Climate Change and other Environmental Factors.

[6] Bai, Z.G., and Dent, D.L., 2006. Global assessment of land degradation and improvement: pilot study in Kenya. ISRIC Report 2006/01, Wageningen.

[7] Eriksen, S.E.H., and Watson, H.K., 2009. The dynamic context of southern African savannas: investigating emerging threats and opportunities to sustainability, Environmental Science & Policy, 12(1).

[8] DEAT, 2009. South Africa Environment Outlook. A Report on the State of Environment. Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, Pretoria.

[9] Chasek, P., Akhtar-Schuster, M., Orr, B.J., Luise, A., Ratsimba, H.R., and Safriel, U., 2019. Land degradation neutrality: The science-policy interface from the UNCCD to national implementation. Environmental Science & Policy, 92: 182-190.

[10] Cowie, A.L., Barron, J.O., Castillo Sanchez, V.M., Chasek, P., Crossman, N.D, Erlewein, A., Louwagie, G., Maron, M., Metternicht, G.I., Minelli, S., Tengberg, A.E, Walter, S., and Welton, S., 2018. Land in balance: the scientific conceptual framework for land degradation neutrality. Environmental Science & Policy, 79: 25-35.

[11] Gilbey, B., Davies, J., Metternicht, G., and Magero, C., 2019. Taking land degradation neutrality from concept to practice: Early reflections on LDN target setting and planning. Environmental Science & Policy, 100: 230-237.

[12] Agricultural Research Council (ARC), 2022. National Assessment Report on Migration Linkages to Desertification, Land Degradation and Drought, Climate Change and other Environmental Factors.

[13] National Development Plan 2030. Our Future-make it work. https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/201409/ndp-2030-our-future-make-it-workr.pdf. ISBN: 978-0-621-41180-5, accessed 03 August 2023.

[14] South Africa's National Action Programme (SANAP) to Combat Desertification, Land Degradation, and the effects of Drought (2018-2030), 2018. https://www.dffe.gov.za/sites/default/files/docs/nap_desertification_land_degradation_droughteffects.pdf, accessed 03 August 2023.

[15] United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), 2015. https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/21252030%20Agenda%20for%20Sustainable%20Development%20web.pdf, accessed 03 August 2023.

Coordination and Cooperation with Ongoing Initiatives and Project.

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

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

The institutional structure of the project is described below:

Implementing Agency: IUCN will serve this project as the implementing agency for the GEF, and will be the responsible for project supervision, and the provision of technical guidance.

Executing Agency: FAO will serve as the executing agency of the project, and they will co-execute with the National Department of Forestry, Fisheries and Environment (DFFE) in collaboration with the National Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD). Two Universities and Research Institutions around the project sites will also be considered for execution of some of the relevant project interventions.

FAO will be executing entity on the strength of available technical expertise on the subject in the country, subregional and head quarters who are dedicated to support the project. FAO as technical agency of UN responsible for agricultural resources management complements the IUCN to ensure that human progress, economic development and nature conservation take place together.

In addition, IUCN and FAO have been cooperating in country and in the region which provides fertile ground for effectiveness and upscaling of good practices. In South Africa IUCN and FAO are working in collaboration with the Government of South Africa through the Department of Agriculture, land Reform and Rural Development, Department of Forestry Fisheries and Environment as well as the Global water partnership on a US$110 Million dollar proposal for submission to the Green Climate Fund. This project which is at concept stage provides strong opportunities for upscaling many of the good SLM practices which will be implemented in the project.

The DFFE: through the associated provincial administration will be responsible for:

- The implementation of project activities.
- The day-to-day management and coordination of the project,
- Preparing and submitting regular Project Progress Reports (PPR}, financial reports, Annual Work Plan and Budget and other necessary documentation for the Project Implementation Review (PIR).

Project Steering Committee (PSC) will be set up and will include representatives of DFFE, IUCN, FAO, and other related GEF projects in South Africa. Detailed membership of PSC will be well-defined during project inception. Among other responsibilities the PSC will monitor and coordinate the planning of the implementation of the project.

The key responsibilities of PSC include the following:

- Providing guidance to ensure project implementation is in accordance with the project document.
- Reviewing and approve any proposed revisions to the project results framework and implementation arrangements;
- Reviewing amend and endorse all Annual Work Plans and budgets;
- Ensuring that co-financing support will be available on time;
- Advising on issues and problems arising during project implementation;
- Reviewing and approving the ToR for midterm and final evaluations

Core Indicators

Indicator 3 Area of land and ecosystems under restoration

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
30000	0	0	0

Indicator 3.1 Area of degraded agricultural lands under restoration

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

Indicator 3.2 Area of forest and forest land under restoration

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
30,000.00			

Indicator 3.3 Area of natural grass and woodland under restoration

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

Indicator 3.4 Area of wetlands (including estuaries, mangroves) under restoration

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

Indicator 4 Area of landscapes under improved practices (hectares; excluding protected areas)

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
20000	0	0	0

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

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
20,000.00			

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

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

Type/Name of Third Party Certification

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

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

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

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

Indicator 4.5 Terrestrial OECMs supported

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

Documents (Document(s) that justifies the HCVF)

Title

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

The project core indicators applicable and relevant for the scope of this project are Indictors 3: Area of land restored (Hectares), and Indicator 4: Area of landscapes under improved practices (excluding protected areas) (Hectares). The methodological approach and underlying logic to justify target level was informed by status and extent of land degradation in Xhariep and Dr Ruth Segomotsi Mompati district municipalities in the FS and NW provinces, as the proposed project site/areas. The project will rely on existing land degradation monitoring processes in obtaining targets for the indicators. In addition to official Government annual reports where districts report on status of land degradation including Area of land restored and Area of landscapes under improved practices the project will also rely on Agricultural Research Council's Institute for Soil, Climate and Water (ARC-ISCW) which has developed a Land Degradation Index, which takes into account soil erosion by water and wind, soil salinization and acidification, hydro-climatic parameters, land cover and the loss of biodiversity. Measurements will be corroborated with other sources of information in the public domain such as South African Land Degradation Monitor (SALDI)

Risks to Project Preparation and Implementation

Summarize risks that might affect the project preparation and implementation phases and what are the mitigation strategies the project preparation process will undertake to address these (e.g. what alternatives may be considered during project preparation- such as in terms of consultations, role and choice of counterparts, delivery mechanisms, locations in country, flexible design elements, etc.). Identify any of the risks listed below that would call in question the viability of the project during its implementation. Please describe any possible mitigation measures needed. (The risks associated with project design and Theory of Change should be described in the "Project description" section above). The risk rating should reflect the overall risk to project outcomes considering the country setting and ambition of the project. The rating scale is: High, Substantial, Moderate, Low.

Risk Categories	Rating	Comments
Climate	Moderate	Climate risks – extremely high temperatures cause harmful health impacts, even loss of life of project beneficiaries and stakeholders implementing this project interventions. This may result in project implementation delays. Mitigation measure: Enhancing sharing of climate information to alert communities to safeguard their lives. Increased temperatures and heat waves have been linked to respiratory diseases, Mitigation measure: Climate change plans must be implemented to mitigate the effects.
Environment and Social	Low	The Environment and Social Framework supports green, resilient, and inclusive development by strengthening protections for people and the environment, and making important advances in areas such as labor, inclusion and non-discrimination, gender, climate change, biodiversity, community health and safety, and stakeholder engagement. Social, political, conflicts. Mitigation measure: This project will follow the GESI approaches that are followed to ensure inclusivity and leaving no one behind to alleviate potential conflicts

		that may arise in case this is not undertaken.
Political and Governance	Low	Changes in leadership and governance structures could affect the prioritization of the project. Mitigation measure: Working relationships with all the leadership and governance structures within the project implementation sites, in these provinces will be strengthened.
Macro-economic	Low	The project explores various support mechanisms to enhance governance performance on economy and decide on actions it can take to increase or slow growth. Mitigation measure: The project design includes an exit strategy based on institutional strengthening to ensure the sustainability of the capacities acquired at national and local levels, combined with incentive mechanisms that create behavioral change.
Strategies and Policies	Low	Low involvement of governmental institutions in the implementation process: Lack of expertise or interest in the Government might lead to misunderstanding of progress and challenges on the ground and to a certain extent to the lack of recognition of best practices for sustainability and replication. Mitigation measure: Stakeholder engagement with all the relevant role players will be undertaken at the beginning of the project to facilitate buy-in and ownership of the project and strengthen sustainability of the interventions implemented.
Technical design of project or program	Low	Inadequate technical solutions to address the challenges identified. The project builds on lessons learned from past projects implemented in South Africa. The project will build on previous experiences from key government and local community

		level. Mitigation measure: The project aims to deliver long-term results, a participatory approach is needed and a meaningful engagement of local populations, organizations and authorities in the planning and implementation of SLM practices is a key to success.
Institutional capacity for implementation and sustainability	Low	Staff turnover within provincial and local governments involved in the implementation of the project may compromise the effectiveness of interventions and make difficult to anchor training efforts and building long-lasting capacity within local government institutions and local communities. Mitigation measure: Recruitment will prioritize hiring local staff living in or near the communities of the project interventions sites.
Fiduciary: Financial Management and Procurement	Low	Insufficient administrative oversight, resulting in failures to adequately procure goods and services needed. Mitigation measure: IUCN will work closely with the PMU to ensure financial management and procurement are done in an appropriate and timely manner. Large procurements are not currently foreseen as part of this project. If the PPG reveals the need to make such procurements, they will be done through IUCN systems rather than through executing agencies. The proposed executing agencies have experience working on similar projects.
Stakeholder Engagement	Low	Stakeholders are not adequately engaged in project design and implementation resulting in incorrect assumptions and poor coordination, affecting the sustainability of the project interventions beyond the 5 years duration of this project. There

		are a limited number of key stakeholders in the project and their involvement will be critical at every stage of the project (including both development and implementation phases). Mitigation measure: Extensive stakeholder consultation was undertaken during the PIF, and more consultations that include project beneficiaries and traditional leaders/authorities (as the custodians of the rural land) will be undertaken during the project proposal granting (PPG) phase to facilitate buy-in and ownership of the project.
Other		
Financial Risks for NGI projects		
Overall Risk Rating		Adequate mitigation measures will be implemented.

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

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

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

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

The project follows GEF-8 ecosystems restoration and rehabilitation programming, aimed at addressing the Land Degradation Focal Area, including sustainable land management, building climate resilient communities and livelihoods, strengthening of governance, policy instruments, multistakeholders and community dialogues. The activities of the project are in line with the vision of the GEF to achieve healthy and resilient ecosystems by promoting sustainable land management and supporting the achievement of the LDN on addressing the drivers of land degradation in productive landscapes where agricultural, forestry, and rangeland management practices are the foundation for the livelihoods of rural communities. The Biodiversity and Climate Change Focal Area supports mainstreaming SLM policy instruments into biodiversity and climate-resilient community and livelihood policies.

This proposed project is aligned with the following global, regional, and national land, biodiversity, climate change, and socio-economic development policies, strategies, and plans:

(i) **National Action Programme to Combat Desertification (NAP, 2018)**[1][30]: **-** aims to identify factors contributing to desertification, land degradation and drought as well as to implement practical measures necessary to combat desertification and to mitigate the effects of drought.

(ii) **National Climate Change Adaptation Strategy (NCCAS, 2017)**[2][31]: aims to reduce the vulnerability of society, the economy, and the environment to the effects of climate variabilities and the long-term climate change. It gives effect to the National Development Plan's vision of creating a low-carbon and climate resilient economy and just society.

(iii) **National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP, 2015)**[3][32]: aims to conserve, manage, and sustainably use biodiversity to ensure equitable benefits to the people of South Africa, now and in the future.

(iv) **The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), 2022**[4][33]: identified action-oriented global targets for urgent action over the decade to 2030. The Global Biodiversity Framework aims to maximize biodiversity values and sustainability, and to conserve and sustainably use biodiversity. The project aligns with actions identified in Targets 2, 3, 5, 11 of the GBF, while considering national circumstances, priorities, and socioeconomic conditions.

(v) **The Paris Agreement (2015)**[5][34]: the UNFCCC COP 21 adopted the Paris Agreement, which established a global goal for adaptation that seeks to enhance adaptive capacity, strengthen resilience, and reduce vulnerability to climate change. The Paris Agreement acknowledges that adaptation action should consider, among other things, ecosystems.

(vi) **Drought Resilient and Prepared Africa (DRAPA, 2018)**[6][35]: strategic framework for drought management and enhanced resilience to drought in Africa. Drought is a complex natural hazard that is global in nature and has cross-cutting impacts on many aspects of livelihoods and sectors of society. These include agriculture, energy, food security, health, water resources, migration, and resource conflict, amongst others.

(vii) **The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) 2018–2030 Strategic Framework, 2017**[7][36]: this framework aims achieve the objectives of the Convention and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular (SDG) 15 and target 15.3: by 2030. The vision of the Strategy is "A future that avoids, minimizes, and reverses desertification/land degradation and mitigates the effects of drought in affected areas at all levels and strive to achieve a land degradation-neutral world consistent with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, within the scope of the Convention".

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[1] National Action Programme to Combat Desertification (SANAP, 2018).

/https://www.dffe.gov.za/sites/default/files/docs/nap_desertification_land_degradation_droughteffects.pdf, accessed 03 August 2023.

[2] National Climate Change Adaptation Strategy, 2017. https://www.dffe.gov.za/sites/default/files/legislations/session2_draftnational_adaptationstrategy.pdf, accessed 03 August 2023.

[3] South Africa's 2nd National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, 2015 – 2025. https://www.cbd.int/doc/world/za/za-nbsap-v2-en.pdf, accessed 03 August 2023.

[4] The CBD Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), 2022. https://www.cbd.int/doc/decisions/cop-15/cop-15-dec-04-en.pdf, accessed 03 August 2023.

[5] The Paris Agreement, 2015. https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/parisagreement_publication.pdf, accessed 03 August 2023.

[6] Strategic Framework for Drought Risk Management and Enhancing Resilience to Drought in Africa, 2018. ISBN 978-92-95110-77-9 (electronic copy) https://knowledge.unccd.int/sites/default/files/2019-04/African_drought_white_paper.pdf, accessed 04 August 2023.

[7] The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) 2018–2030 Strategic Framework, 2017. https://www.unccd.int/resources/other/unccd-2018-2030-strategic-framework, accessed 04 August 2023.

D. POLICY REQUIREMENTS

Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment:

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

Yes

Stakeholder Engagement

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

Were the following stakeholders consulted during project identification phase:

Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities:

Civil Society Organizations: Yes

Private Sector: Yes

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

Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

One of the barriers to the adoption of SLM in South Africa is the changing role of men and women in relation to land management. An increasing number of women are the principal land managers in their households, yet in many cases men retain decision-making power over land use and management even if they have migrated elsewhere to work. This project will consider cultural and traditional gender and social inclusion dynamics that exist within communities and recognises the different roles between men and women during the implementation of project activities, while encouraging and prioritizing the participation of women, youth, and people with disabilities. This prioritization process will ensure that the different priorities of each group are considered and acknowledged. This will lead to investment in actions that are specifically of interest to women, as well as ensuring that women are supported in activities that might be traditionally considered the role of men. This process will be guided and facilitated in collaboration with the relevant Free State and North West Provincial and local representatives.

This challenge will be addressed through using the participatory Community Environmental Action Planning (CEAP) approach, targeting both women and men land managers. This approach will be informed by a preliminary stakeholder analysis that identifies household dynamics and ensures that women are equitably represented in this participatory planning fora. In most communities, depending on gender dynamics, men and women will produce separate CEAPs, and the prioritization process will ensure that the different priorities of

each group are considered. This will lead to investment in actions that are specifically of interest to women, as well as ensuring that women are also prioritised and supported in activities that might be traditionally considered the role of men. During the project preparation phase, the project will identify suitable gender indicators, possibly including monitoring the number of women, youth and people living with disability engaged in the implementation of the proposed SLM, CSA and NBs actions, the participation of women in different markets for land-related goods and services, and the extent of women's inputs into public planning.

Stakeholder Engagement

This PIF development process for this proposed project involved consultations with all the relevant stakeholders identified and organised by the DFFE UNCCD National Focal Point Office, as well as FAO, and IUCN as executing and implementing entities for this proposed project, respectively. See attached meeting attendance registers and minutes from these meetings. The second and follow up stakeholder engagement session included the participation of representatives from the Free State and North West provincial government (provinces where the project sites are geographically located), to guide the project scope and proposed interventions, as an effort to promote buy-in and ownership of the project. Tables 4 and 5 outline the list of stakeholders consulted and their roles and responsibilities in the project development and implementation, respectively.

Table 4: List of stakeholders consulted during the development of this Project Information Form

Meeting Name	**Summary of participating Organisations**	**Date of Consultation**
Second meeting of the National Coordinating Body (NCB) of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification	*The following government departments and organisations attended this consultation meeting:* ***Government Departments:*** DFFE, DALRRD, Gauteng Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (GDARD), Western Cape Department of Environmental Affairs and Development Planning (WCDEADP), Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS), Limpopo Economic Development, Environment and Tourism (LEDET), National Disaster Management Centre (NDMC), Northern Cape Department of Education and Sports Development. ***Academia:*** University of South Africa, North West University and Rhodes University ***Research Institutions:*** Agricultural Research Council (ARC), Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI), South African National Parks (SANParks), and South African National Space Agency (SANSA) ***Non-Governmental Organisation (NGOs)/Civil Society Organisations (CSOs),*** and	22-23 March 2023

	Private Sector	
Discussion the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) 8 Sustainable Land Management project programming and implementation modalities	FAO, IUCN, DFFE and DALRRD	13 April 2023
Working session on PIF development and finalization.	DFFE, DALRRD, FS, NW provinces, FAO, IUCN	31 July – 04 August 2023

Table 5: Roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders consulted during the development of this Project Information Form

Stakeholder	Role in Project Preparation
Department of Forestry, Fisheries, and the Environment (DFFE)	DFFE, which is the GEF Operational Focal Point for the Government of South Africa, provides leadership in environmental management, conservation, and protection towards sustainability for the benefit of South Africans and the global community. DFFE is responsible for environmental policy, legislation and developing and implementing South Africa's UNCCD programme of work, including the implementation and the piloting of the LDN target setting process in the country. DFFE will provide the primary oversight for the project and will coordinate the participating institutions to implement their components.
Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD)	DALRRD has the primary responsibility for researching and promoting sustainable agricultural techniques and restoring degraded agricultural lands. The department's mandate includes facilitating the adoption of community-based natural resource management approaches, and it is a key partner for the implementation of CBNRM in South Africa. DALRRD's role in the development of this project is to provide technical input regarding issues that align with national priorities related to its mandate, to guide project design and site selection based on current baseline projects and initiatives, and to ensure that relevant stakeholders are consulted during project design and that relevant partners are identified to implement the project.
Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS)	DWS is the custodian of South Africa's water resources and has the primary responsibility for formulating and implementing policies governing this sector. While striving to ensure that all South Africans gain access to clean water and dignified sanitation, the department also promotes effective and efficient water resources management to ensure sustainable economic and social development. DWA's role in the development of this project is to provide technical input regarding issues that align with national priorities related to its mandate, to guide project design and site selection based on current baseline projects and initiatives, and to ensure that relevant stakeholders are consulted during project design and that relevant partners are identified to implement the project.
Local and Provincial Government	Local and Provincial government departments are responsible for planning, budgeting, service delivery and economic development in the target districts and municipalities and will be key implementation partners for all components and co-leaders of the project. Municipalities and relevant provincial departments will be involved at all stages of project development, implementation, and capacity building.
International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)	IUCN provides public, private, and non-governmental organisations with the knowledge and tools that enable human progress, economic development, and nature conservation to take place together. IUCN is a global authority on the status of the natural world and the measures needed to safeguard it. IUCN will work in close collaboration with DFFE and other stakeholders on the development of the project document and execution of the project.
Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO)	The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) is a specialized agency of the United Nations that leads international efforts to defeat hunger with 195 members. FAO aims to provide countries with strategies and mechanisms for addressing the interlinked challenges of climate change, natural resources management, biodiversity maintenance and environmental sustainability while transitioning to more climate-resilient and sustainable agri-food systems. FAO convened in collaboration with IUCN a stakeholder consultative write shop from 31 July to 4th August 2023 through which the PIF was finalised. FAO will work closely with DFFE, DALRRD and IUCN to execute the project.
Academia	Academic institutions play a knowledge base and capacity building role through providing training for students in the natural resources related management field, that includes SLM, CSA and NbS. Universities in both provinces will be consulted during the PPG phase. In the Free state Province, the University of Free state and the Central University of Technology and in the North West Province, the North West University will be assist in the development of the project.

Research Institutions	Research provide and lead the research agenda that might be required as part of the implementation of this proposed project. The research institutes to be consulted include the institute of Natural Resources, Land and Accountability Research Centre, The Council of Scientific Research, Agriculture Research Commission, Institute of Rural Development and the Environment and Development Agency.
Civil Society Organisations (CSOs)/ Non-Governmental Organisation (NGOs)	CSOs and NGOs operating in the project areas will be engaged during project design and project implementation as appropriate. CSOs also will ensure that the interests of different stakeholders are considered during the project design and implementation. Organisation that will be consulted will be inclusive of women, youth and people with disabilities. These include organisations such as Farmers group support, Farm Africa, Crop life south Africa, Youth in Tourism, National Council of and for Persons with Disabilities, Bokamoso Youth Organisation , Disabled people South Africa in the Northwest Province and in the Free state organisations such as the Association of people with disabilities will be approached. N.G.Os such as Birdlife South Africa, Wildlife and Environmental Society of South Africa , Rivers for life and Fresh Water research centre will also be included. These groups will provide invaluable information on the real situation on the ground and where exactly to focus on as well as shape the activities that are to be considered in the project.
Private Sector	Relevant private sector operators in the project area include commercial farmers, mining companies and others. The private sector will be engaged to participate in both the development of the project document and the implementation of project interventions. Engagement of Private sector will be important during implementation of all three project components and particularly component 3 on Public and private investments support to community institutions for communal management of the multiple benefits of healthy rangelands. The private sector has a role to play in the imparting of skills and providing the market needs on the value addition and marketing of rangeland ecosystem services. Private sector will also play a key role in the development of investment plans. Companies such as Sibanye Still water and Impala platinum mine in the Northwest Province will be consulted whilst in the Free state Sibanye Still waters and Welkom Mines will be consulted.
Local communities, community institutions, indigenous people, and vulnerable groups *(Not consulted during PIF development, and to be consulted at PPG stage).*	Local communities, community institutions, indigenous people and vulnerable groups will be consulted during project development and actively engaged during project implementation particularly during the rangeland assessment and community environmental action planning. Knowledge generated through the project will be packaged to meet the needs of the different stakeholder information needs. Local communities, community institutions, indigenous people will be active participants during project implementation and the key beneficiaries of all the project interventions. These include the Bagamoya Wildlife Estate, Boskoppie Lion and Tiger reserve, Greater Rustenburg Community Foundation, Famsa(Potchefstroom) and Ambassadors for change. The community groups will provide specific information on what they need assistance with and how best the project can be carried out without living anyone behind
Traditional Leaders/Authorities *(Not consulted during PIF development, and to be consulted at PPG stage).*	As the custodians/owners of most of the rural land, they will serve as entry points that play a critical role to facilitate access to the land that will be selected for the implementation of some of the project interventions, as well assist in ensuring community buy-in and ownership of the project, to strengthen sustainability of the interventions post this project 5-year implementation period.

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

Private Sector

Will there be private sector engagement in the project?

Yes

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

Yes

Environmental and Social Safeguard (ESS) Risks

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

Overall Project/Program Risk Classification

PIF	CEO Endorsement/Approval	MTR	TE
Medium/Moderate			

E. OTHER REQUIREMENTS

Knowledge management

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

Yes

ANNEX A: FINANCING TABLES

GEF Financing Table

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

GEF Agency	Trust Fund	Country/ Regional/ Global	Focal Area	Programming of Funds	Grant / Non-Grant	GEF Project Grant($)	Agency Fee($)	Total GEF Financing ($)
IUCN	GET	South Africa	Biodiversity	BD STAR Allocation: BD-1	Grant	3,614,681.00	325,320.00	3,940,001.00
IUCN	GET	South Africa	Land Degradation	LD STAR Allocation: LD-1	Grant	1,785,273.00	160,673.00	1,945,946.00
Total GEF Resources ($)						**5,399,954.00**	**485,993.00**	**5,885,947.00**

Project Preparation Grant (PPG)

Is Project Preparation Grant requested?

true

PPG Amount ($)

150000

PPG Agency Fee ($)

13500

GEF Agency	Trust Fund	Country/ Regional/ Global	Focal Area	Programming of Funds	Grant / Non-Grant	PPG($)	Agency Fee($)	Total PPG Funding($)
IUCN	GET	South Africa	Biodiversity	BD STAR Allocation: BD-1	Grant	100,409.00	9,037.00	109,446.00
IUCN	GET	South Africa	Land Degradation	LD STAR Allocation: LD-1	Grant	49,591.00	4,463.00	54,054.00
Total PPG Amount ($)						**150,000.00**	**13,500.00**	**163,500.00**

Please provide justification

Sources of Funds for Country Star Allocation

GEF Agency	Trust Fund	Country/ Regional/ Global	Focal Area	Sources of Funds	Total($)
IUCN	GET	South Africa	Biodiversity	BD STAR Allocation	4,049,447.00
IUCN	GET	South Africa	Land Degradation	LD STAR Allocation	2,000,000.00
Total GEF Resources					**6,049,447.00**

Indicative Focal Area Elements

Programming Directions	Trust Fund	GEF Project Financing($)	Co-financing($)
BD-1-1	GET	3,614,681.00	8686753
LD-1	GET	1,785,273.00	
Total Project Cost		**5,399,954.00**	**8,686,753.00**

Indicative Co-financing

Sources of Co-financing	Name of Co-financier	Type of Co-financing	Investment Mobilized	Amount($)
Recipient Country Government	Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development North West Province, South Africa	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	3167576

Recipient Country Government	Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development Free State Province, South Africa	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	3122356
Recipient Country Government	Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development National Government, South Africa	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	2396821
Total Co-financing				**8,686,753.00**

Describe how any "Investment Mobilized" was identified

Not Applicable

ANNEX B: ENDORSEMENTS

GEF Agency(ies) Certification

GEF Agency Type	Name	Date	Project Contact Person	Phone	Email

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

Name	Position	Ministry	Date (MM/DD/YYYY)
Ms Shahkira Parker	GEF Operational Focal Point for South Africa	Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment	9/14/2023

ANNEX C: PROJECT LOCATION

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

This proposed project will be undertaken in the Free State and North West provinces of South Africa.

The North West Province

The North West falls largely within the Savanna and Grassland biomes. A total of 41 South African vegetation types and two (2) subtypes occurs in the province. Thirteen (13) of these are considered threatened ecosystems due to the amount of habitat converted to other land uses. Eight (8) vegetation types are endemic to the province. Aquatic biodiversity is high, with 98 wetland types and 35 river types present in the province. Most of these aquatic features are threatened ecosystems, with 52% of the wetland types and 80% of the river types classified as threatened. Three Important Bird Areas of South Africa fall entirely within the province, and another three fall partially within the province. The Magaliesberg Mountain Range is a Protected Environment in terms of the National Environmental Management: Protected Areas Act (No. 57 of 2003) (hereafter referred at as the Protected Areas Act). It also forms part of a Biosphere Reserve and is one of the Important Bird Areas of South Africa. The Harts River supports the Barberspan Bird Sanctuary wetland Ramsar site near Delareyville and Sannieshof. Several relatively pristine dolomitic eyes (springs) are supported in the province

and several freshwater springs, lakes and waterfalls that have created very unique tufa systems are recognised to be of international importance. In the North West province, there are 15 Type 1 protected areas i.e. statutory reserves, that cover 1.94% (203 259 ha) of the province. Conservation areas, i.e. the Magaliesberg Protected Environment excluding Kgaswane Mountain Reserve (27 061 ha) and two (2) municipal reserves (6 019 ha) that have been validated, cover approximately 0.32% of the province. The total area under conservation, i.e., validated protected areas (PAs) and conservation areas (CAs) amounts to 236 339 ha (2.25%). The North West is home to the Magaliesberg Biosphere Reserve, as well as the Taung Skull Fossil Site, the Cradle of Humankind (which both form part of the Fossil Hominid Sites of South Africa) and the Vredefort Dome World Heritage Sites.

The key pressures on biodiversity in the North West are associated with agriculture (cropping, livestock and game ranching, and game breeding), mining and urban expansion. Other pressures not associated with land use change impacts, but which result in the degradation of natural habitat and loss of biodiversity include, the dependence of rural communities on natural harvestable products; poor water catchment and river management; and climate change. Environmental degradation due to alien invasive species encroachment, bush encroachment (bush thickening and associated chemical control), genetically modified crops; and, harvesting, poaching and trading in indigenous species also place significant pressures on biodiversity in the North West (NW READ, 2014). Whilst there is a definite concentration of mining taking place in the Platinum Belt and the Golden Highway / Treasure Development Corridor to the east of the province, and generally close to Gauteng, there is significant loss of natural habitat taking place across the entire province due primarily to agriculture and urban expansion (see Section 2.8). Therefore, the NWBSP, which is primarily aimed at influencing land use planning and decision-making, is recommended as a tool for proactively taking biodiversity into account to promote sustainable development. Agricultural and mining activities are key sectors that impact on freshwater features in the North West. Urban development also impacts heavily on these resources.

Impacts involve changes in water quality (e.g., acid mine drainage, wastewater from treatment plants, fertilizer and pesticide run-off), including changes in water flow regimes within rural and urban areas (e.g., catchment hardening and increased storm water flows) and mining areas (e.g., river diversions). For example, water quality in the Crocodile River is severely degraded and alterations in flow have occurred (Roux, 2015a). Increased storm water run-off from urban areas and failing waste treatment works have also resulted in channel and flow modification, as well as degraded water quality. For example, Baberspan, which is a Ramsar site, is threatened by raw sewage outfalls at Lichtenburg, Biesiesvlei, Sannieshof and Schweizer-Reneke urban areas (Roux, 2015b). Rising population and increased growth in the mining, agricultural and industrial sectors pose increasing threats on the aquatic resources in the North West. Groundwater extraction also creates potential imbalances between the rate of utilisation and sufficient groundwater replenishment (READ, 2013).

Alien fish species, such as the common carp (Cyprinus carpio), have altered natural habitat in the Crocodile River, whereas largemouth bass (Micropterus salmoides) threaten fish species in the Groot Marico River. Furthermore, alien plant infestations also impact on river systems, for example along the Hex River near Rustenburg; and infestations of the alien reed, Arundo donax, around the Buffelspoort Dam on the Sterkstroom River (Roux, 2015b). Although the protected area network and its expansion through land purchase and biodiversity stewardship agreements can play an important role in protecting specific sites, the combination of habitat loss, development pressures, and high land values is likely to preclude protected area expansion from being the dominant conservation mechanism in the region. Hence, the use of controls related to land use (e.g., land use schemes, SDFs) and development approvals (both strategically using EMFs and

reactively via the EIA process) represent the best prospect for ensuring long-term persistence of biodiversity in the province.

Other responses to the pressures in the North West include wetland rehabilitation through the Working for Wetlands Programme (under the auspices of the Expanded Public Works Programme) and the National DWS River Ecostatus Monitoring Program (REMP), (previously called the National River Health Program (RHP)), which monitors and assesses the ecological status of rivers in South Africa. To safeguard aquatic resources, data collected as part of REMP, along with the National Freshwater Ecosystem Priority Assessment (NFEPA) (Nel et al., 2011), has provided valuable inputs into the NWBSP in order to prioritise and safeguard freshwater resources.

The Free State Province

The Free State is divided into one metropolitan municipality (Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality) and four district municipalities; namely Fezile Dabi, Thabo Mofutsanyana, Lejweleputswa, and Xhariep. Free State (FS) is almost uniformly at about 1,300m above sea level, with the climate being typical of the interior plateau with summer rainfall, cold winters and lots of sunshine. Almost all precipitation falls in the summer months, with aridity increasing towards the west. Frost occurs throughout the region usually from May to early September in the west and up to early October in the east. To the north, the Vaal irrigation area nourishes the small assortment of farming towns below it, and the Free State countryside is often green. Areas in the east experience frequent snowfalls in winter, especially on the higher ranges, whilst the west can be extremely hot in summer. The south brings hot, dry summer days and long, cold winter nights. This semi-desert area also experiences fluctuations of temperature from day to night. The west is warm and cold in equal measure, its inhabitants making use of the many artificial water recreation facilities to endure the heat, and use heating facilities in winter's low temperatures. FS has a generally hot, arid climate with the strongest warming for South Africa being projected in Free State and other inland provinces.

The rain season is likely to shift, starting later and characterised by a shorter rainy season with the duration of the dry spell likely is to increase, resulting in drought and negative implications for agriculture and the water sector. At the same time, intensified rainfall is projected to increase, with the likelihood of heavy downpours punctuated by longer dry spells. Heavy rainfall often results in flash flooding and land degradation. The Free State economy is dominated by agriculture, mining and manufacturing, and is known as the 'bread basket' of South Africa, where about 90% of the province is under cultivation for crop production. It produces approximately 34% of the total maize production of South Africa, 37% of

wheat, 53% of sorghum, 33% of potatoes, 18% of red meat, 30% of groundnuts, and 15% of wool. Therefore, agriculture is the most vulnerability sector in the Free State from a food security and

water availability and usage point of view.

The impacts of climate change on water resources in the country indicate a reduction in soil moisture and runoff. In FS, large-scale agriculture as well as small-scale farmers and the rural poor who practice rain-fed agriculture rely on water for irrigation purposes. There is likely going to be incidences of dry spells due to increase in temperatures, or extreme floods and hailstorms, which could damage agricultural produce (www.freestate.gov.za). The province is the world's fifth-largest gold producer, and the mining sector is the major employer. It is a leader in the chemicals industry, being home to the giant synthetic-fuels company, Sasol. The Vredefort Dome, 10km in diameter, about 100km south-west of Johannesburg, is South Africa's seventh World Heritage Site. FS has enhanced its capacity to adapt to extreme climate events, by preparing for disaster risk reduction and management (i.e. Disaster Management Plan in place, early warning systems available, Disaster Management Centre and Research input from University of Free State and other research institutions).

This proposed project will be undertaken in Xhariep and Dr Ruth Segomotsi Mompati district municipalities, in the Free State and North West provinces of South Africa. See the maps below.

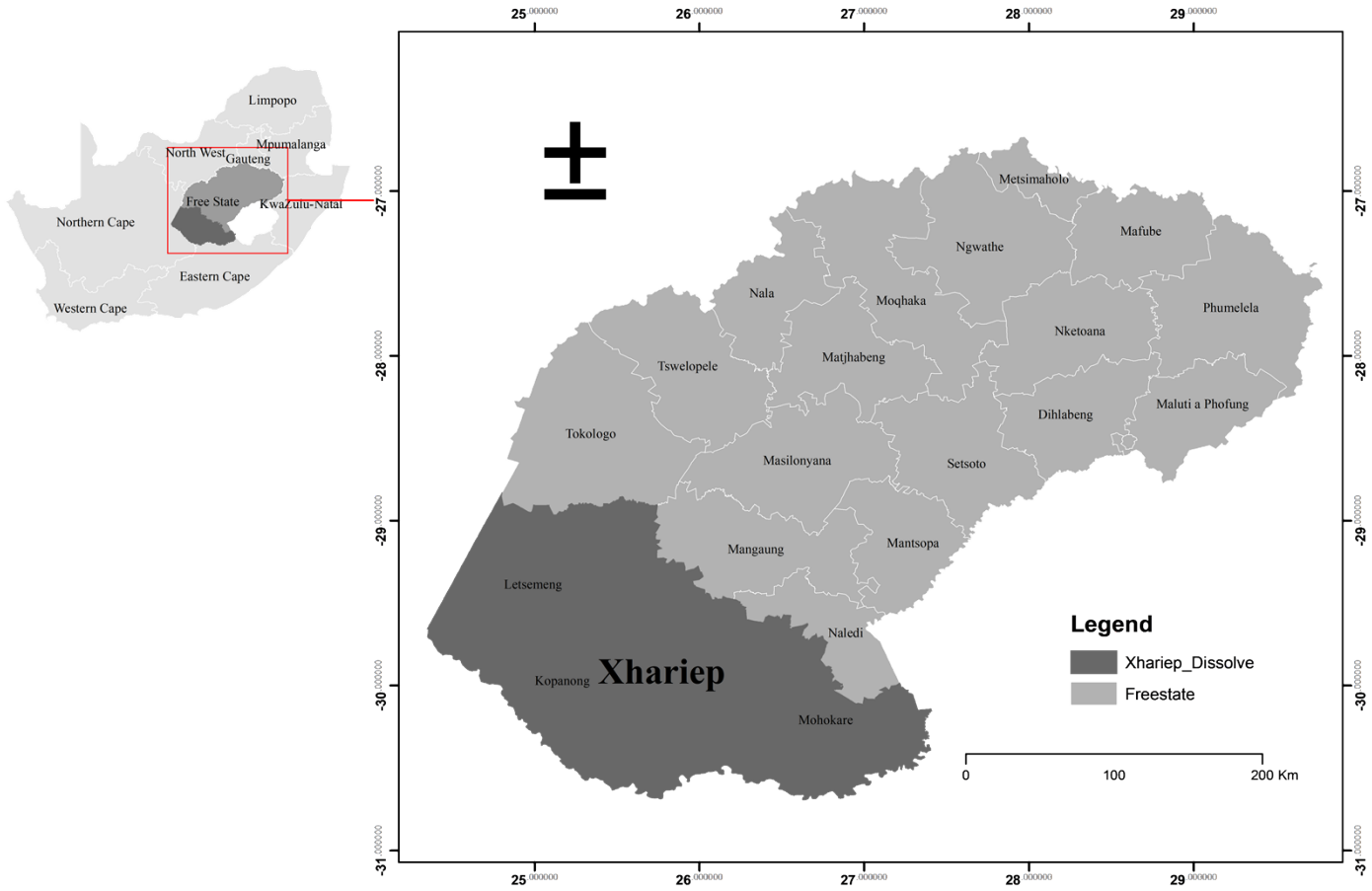

Figure 4: Map showing the Xhariep District in Free Province of South Africa

(Figure 5. map showing Dr Ruth Segomotsi Mompati in North West province of South Africa- uploaded in the roadmap section)

ANNEX D: ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL SAFEGUARDS SCREEN AND RATING

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

Title
ES screening_GEF8 South Africa

ANNEX E: RIO MARKERS

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

ANNEX F: TAXONOMY WORKSHEET

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Influencing Models	Strengthen institutional capacity	Deploy innovative financial instruments	Transform policy and regulatory environments
Stakeholders	Private sector	Local communities	Civil society
Capacity, Knowledge, and Research	Knowledge generation and exchange	Leaming	Capacity Development
Gender Equality	Gender mainstreaming	Women	Youth
Focal Area/Theme	Land degradation	Biodiversity	Climate Change