

# Conservation and Sustainable Management of High-Value Arid Ecosystems in the Lower Amu Darya Basin

Review CEO Endorsement and Make a recommendation

## Basic project information

**GEF ID**

10439

**Countries**

Tajikistan

**Project Name**

Conservation and Sustainable Management of High-Value Arid Ecosystems in the Lower Amu Darya Basin

**Agencies**

UNDP

**Date received by PM**

11/22/2021

**Review completed by PM**

2/9/2022

**Program Manager**

Ulrich Apel

**Focal Area**

Multi Focal Area

**Project Type**

FSP

## **PIF**

### **CEO Endorsement**

#### **Part I ? Project Information**

#### **Focal area elements**

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

#### **Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request**

12/10/2021: Yes.

Cleared

#### **Agency Response**

##### **Project description summary**

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

#### **Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request**

12/10/2021: Yes.

However, please note question on gender and address in Table B as well, as appropriate.

01/18/2022: Additional comment on PMC proportionality:

PMC is highly disproportionate between GEF funding and co-financing contribution to PMC. If the GEF contribution is kept at 5%, for a co-financing of \$33,993,897 the expected contribution to PMC must be around \$1,699,695 instead of \$246,383 (which is 0.72%). As the costs associated with the project management have to be covered by the GEF portion and the co-financing portion allocated to the PMC, the GEF contribution and the co-financing contribution must be proportional, as per GEF guidelines. Please amend.

02/09/2022: Addressed.

Cleared

## Agency Response

Thank you for this comment. Please see response under Comment 12 (re: comment on gender) below

01/18/2022: PMC co-financing increased to \$1,699,695, as requested.

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

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request n/a

## Agency Response

Co-financing

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

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

12/10/2021: Yes.

01/18/2022: Please correct entries in Table C:

- National Academy of Sciences of the RT \$400,000 grant ? change ?GEF Agency? to ?Recipient Country Government?.

- State Committee for Environmental Protection? \$17,900,000 grant ? change ?State Committee for Environmental Protection? to ?IFAD?.

02/09/2022: Addressed.

Cleared

## Agency Response

01/18/2022: Apologies for the typos in the portal, these have been corrected.

GEF Resource Availability

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

**Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request**

12/10/2021: Yes.

The budget table has been checked for cost-efficiency as well and is tentatively cleared, (it will be checked one more time in the resubmission).

01/18/2022: ADDITIONAL COMMENTS on the budget:

- (i) We were unable to locate the Excel table in the documents tab in the portal. Please upload it to the documents? tab (it has to match the budget table in Annex E in Portal).
- (ii) In absence of a clear description of UNDP to carry out execution functions in section 6 and with no OFP exception request, UNDP should not be managing several budget items such as equipment/vehicle (\$13,000); contractual services / project manager ? project assistant (\$105,200); international consultants (\$46,000); local consultants (\$36,026) training works (\$15,000); travel / supplies / other operations costs (\$22,500)
- (iii) It seems to be a mistake that project office set-up is categorized as Vehicle ? please amend.
- (iv) It seems to be a mistake that gender mainstreaming technical assistance for sustainable alternative livelihood support is categorized as Equipment ? please amend and reassign this cost to the right category.
- (v) Given there is already budgeted office supplies, office maintenance, utilities, the miscellaneous expenses are duplicative ? please remove.

Please contact the reviewer by email should there be any questions on the budget comments.

02/09/2022: Addressed.

Cleared

**Agency Response 01/18/2022:** Thank you for these comments. They have been responded to and addressed as below, per the referenced comment numbering:

- (i) The Excel file has now been added.
- (ii) Thank you for the comment. The execution arrangements, which included the role of UNDP in support to execution services, have been discussed in the course of project preparation. These have been discussed and agreed with the GEF Secretariat, we now uploaded the evidence of the communication to Portal. The GEF OFP Letter on exception request, similarly, has been in

place, and has been uploaded to Portal. UNDP Project Document and Checklist have been reviewed to confirm that the specifics of UNDP support to execution is described in a consistent way throughout. With respect to Section 6, the following text has been added, which is a copy-paste from the Checklist and GEF OFF letter:

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Based on consultations between UNDP and the National Biosafety and Biodiversity Center (NBBC) under the Committee for Environmental Protection, which acts as the Implementing Partner, it has been agreed that the Mountain Societies Development Support Programme (MSDSP) and Caritas Tajikistan will be considered as Responsible Parties in support of the execution of Component 1 and portions of Components 2 and 3 of the project. After full analysis of execution options and partner capacities, a few execution support services remain outstanding, and were requested by the IP to be delivered by UNDP CO. Consultations with GEF confirmed this possibility. UNDP CO confirmed readiness to provide such services which will not be charged to GEF but will be provided from CO core resources. The services include:

- Technical role (membership) for the project Procurement Committee.
- Recruitment of the Project Manager and Project Administrative and Finance Assistant (who will report to the IP);
- International travel support and travel settlement at the request of the project Responsible Party (Parties) (when the latter are unable to provide such service);
- Organization of required monitoring and evaluation activities, in line with UNDP and GEF requirements (Component 4), including recruitment of evaluation experts for mid-term review and terminal evaluation.
- Support in recruiting thematic international consultants, as necessary and as requested by NBBC.
- Arranging for financial auditing of the project.
- Financial services related to processing of payments under contracts issued to individuals or organizations with respect to the above-mentioned bullets, concluded by UNDP including creating vendors and payment reconciliations.

During the PPG, all feasible execution options have been analyzed before UNDP execution of the selected services was considered. The experience of other agencies has been considered. Specifically, the World Bank model is not suitable for replication given that it is primarily a loan agency and has a different mode of country engagement than grant-based agencies such as UNDP. UNEP does not have a local office and executes its project with assistance from UNDP. FAO office faces similar execution support difficulties as UNDP. Thus, UNDP has been requested to help execute the above-mentioned services.

+++

Further details on execution arrangements and role of UNDP and other partners provided in the Project Document and Checklist and GEF OFP letter.

With respect to specific budget items mentioned in the question, we have adjusted budget entries so that all of them fit with the intended role of UNDP for execution support as proposed and agreed during the PPG phase. On the vehicle in particular, this is not GEF-funded, but provided by UNDP's own funding (TRAC) as co-financing to the project.

(iii) Thank you for this comment. This was a typo that has now been corrected in Annex H of the CEO Endorsement Request (?GEF Budget?) and in the Excel file.

(iv) Thank you for this comment. It was not a mistake that the activity expenditure was classified as equipment, but the budget note was not as clear as it could have been. This activity will procure equipment, materials and goods to provide gender-focused support for sustainable livelihoods. Clarification "(equipment, materials and goods procured for support)" added to budget notes in Prodoc TBWP and Annex H of CEO ER.

(v) Thank you for this comment. The miscellaneous budget line has been removed.

#### Project Preparation Grant

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

#### Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

12/10/2021: Yes.

However, in the portal table E entry, the totals are missing, please check.

01/18/2022: Table E entries are fixed.

However, DISCREPANCY FOUND in Annex C:

The Amount Spent to date (\$19,605.49) + the Amount Committed (\$75,955.89) in Annex C - Status of Utilization of Project Preparation Grant (PPG) (see screenshot below) add up to \$95,561.38, which is different from the approved amount (\$100,000) ? please amend.

02/09/2022: Addressed as per comment below and footnote in the document.

Cleared

#### Agency Response

Based on the email clarification with GEF reviewer this comment can be disregarded as missing data were caused by technical glitch on GEF side which has been in the meantime corrected.

01/18/2022: Thank you for the comment. The difference is unspent balance which is US\$ 4,438.62 and it will be returned to the GEF. Please kindly see the footnote under the table.

\*Expected unspent budget balance USD \$4,438.62 (status on October 27, 2021).

The unused PPG funds will be returned to the GEF.

## Core indicators

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

### Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

12/10/2021: Clarification questions:

- We note the increase in restoration area under indicator 3. Is the target realistic in view of the funding and co-funding available for this activity?
- Is there any further documentation available for the HCVF sites targeted under indicator 4.4? While this is not mandatory, if there is further documentation available, please upload as an additional information.

01/18/2022: Addressed.

Cleared

### Agency Response

Thank you for these comments. Please see below bulleted responses, in relation to the two bulleted questions.

- Based on the analysis and consultations conducted during the PPG, the project stakeholders believe the current figures are realistic. The figure indicated at the PIF stage was a conservative estimate based on limited data availability at the PIF stage, and characterizing only one of the multiple types of restoration activities. During the PPG phase additional and improved data was collected for the targeted forest resources and their degraded areas. The revised figure includes multiple types of restoration activities, including support for natural regeneration, through the implementation of sustainable forest management activities. The area to be proactively reforested has actually been revised downward (from 650 ha to 400 ha) based on considerations related to funding and co-funding available.

- The main information regarding HCVF sites targeted under indicator 4.4 is in the forestry expert report, which is included in Annex 17 of the Prodoc. Relevant information related to HCVF sites is also included in the maps of the priority project districts, included in Annex 3 of the Prodoc.

### Part II ? Project Justification

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

### Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

12/10/2021: Clarification questions:

- Noting in the barriers sections it is stated that 'there is virtually no technical or extension support provided by public agencies to local livestock farmers?..Farmers suffer from lack of know-how about sustainable agricultural practices, and lack of capital for their implementation'. What kind of mechanisms will be put in place to ensure sustained technical support to land users on sustainable pasture management, SLM and SFM methods?

- In addition, noting the barrier on lack of financial support and incentives to shift to sustainable forms of pastoralism and other SLM approaches , what mechanisms are being put in place to address this? There is very vague mention of working with micro-credit institutions under the private sector section, however additional details are needed under the project description on how this will be implemented?

01/18/2022: Addressed.

Cleared

### Agency Response

Thank you for these comments. Please see below bulleted responses, in relation to the two bulleted questions.

- There are three key mechanisms that the project will leverage to support sustained technical support in relation to sustainable pasture management. These are not mechanisms to be "created", but mechanisms that the project will link with and build on in the priority project areas. The first is the national Pasture Management Knowledge Sharing Platform, which brings together stakeholder organizations from across the country to support knowledge sharing and information exchange related to sustainable pasture management. Through the project's work, local support organizations and resource users will be linked to this platform. The second is the project's foreseen partnership with IFAD, through its CASP+ project, which is a larger scale and longer-term project, which will encompass multiple priority areas targeted under the GEF project, but also many other areas of the country. The CASP+ project will continue to build local level capacity related to sustainable pasture and sustainable land management. Third, the project's anticipated partnership with the Mountain Societies Development Support Programme is a key element to also provide a long-term foundation for technical support related to sustainable pasture management, as MSDSP has extensive experience in this regard, and has a long-standing presence in Tajikistan.

Information on these mechanisms added to the sustainability section of the Prodoc (para 109), and referenced under the Prodoc description of Output 1.3.

- There are also three elements to financial support and incentives for increasing implementation of sustainable pasture management. The project itself provides a source of financial support to enable local livestock smallholders to self-organize and develop capacity for sustainable pasture management in priority areas - the project will support the formation and strengthening of Pasture User Groups in priority areas. In addition, the Pasture User Group structure (as outlined in national laws and regulations) is designed to create financial incentives for sustainability by reducing the tragedy of the commons

phenomenon that occurs when livestock herders have not established a collective interest. Finally, in relation to the micro-credit institutions, the project includes multiple activities that support sustainable and alternative livelihoods (for example, under Output 1.1 and Output 1.3), that relate to shifting livelihoods away from livestock-based livelihoods toward other more sustainable agricultural practices, including elements such as value-added processing of nuts and fruits. Thus, the project will work to link local resource users and smallholders in priority areas with the existing micro-credit organizations in order to further scale-up such shifts and further development of sustainable livelihoods.

Revisions and clarifications have been added relating to the engagement and role of micro-credit partners. Additional information added to the project description of Output 1.3.

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

### **Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request**

12/10/2021: Yes.

Cleared

### **Agency Response**

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

### **Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion**

12/10/2021: Clarification questions:

-Is there any consideration for a cross-sectoral multi-stakeholder governance mechanism (e.g. working group) at the district level that could work on monitoring the integrated activities focused on biodiversity conservation and land degradation neutrality and continue to do after the project has ended?

-What mechanisms/tools will be utilized to monitor data and progress in terms of land rehabilitation, restoration etc especially linked to the SLM activities and eventual linkage to LDN? Who will be targeted for capacity strengthening?

01/18/2022: Addressed.

Cleared

### **Agency Response**

Thank you for these comments. Please see below bulleted responses, in relation to the two bulleted questions.

- At the district level there are existing organizations that would be well placed to play this role. The Jamoat Resource Centers (JRCs) are local-level community organizations that

provide support and coordination on a range of cross-sectoral and integrated development issues. The project does aim to engage these JRCs as a key partner for supporting linkages between the project and local resource users (currently mentioned in the section on Private Sector Engagement, p. 28 of the Prodoc). As part of the project's sustainability and exit strategy the project will work with the JRCs in the priority project districts to develop the relevant capacity to continue tracking and monitoring LDN and biodiversity conservation results, in collaboration with relevant partners at the local level (i.e. PAs, Pasture User Groups, etc.) and national partners (Committee for Environmental Protection, NBBC, etc.). In addition, the project will be working with local level multi-sectoral resource management mechanisms, such as PA multi-stakeholder management committees. These other local level multi-stakeholder (and multi-sectoral) mechanisms would also be expected to play a role in the sustainability of project results.

Additional references have been added to Prodoc sustainability section (p. 39) referencing the role of JRCs, and other multi-stakeholder mechanisms to support sustainability.

- The LDN monitoring mechanisms and tools to be applied will significantly depend on the finalized national LDN targets, and the associated indicators to track progress toward the LDN targets. The finalization of the LDN targets is anticipated in Q2 2022. However, monitoring is likely to include a variety of tools and mechanisms, including emerging and new technologies such as remote sensing technologies. The project is also building on existing baseline data sources, and will leverage comparable tools and mechanisms to ensure land degradation and restoration monitoring is comparable to baseline data. For example, a recent FAO analysis of Land Productivity Dynamics in Tajikistan found that "Most of the vegetated area of the country presents stable productivity (58 percent), but 34.4 percent presents declining or stressed productivity. A total of almost 2 million ha of grassland, 200 000 ha of croplands and 12 000 ha of forests are in that situation, partially correlated with negative precipitation trends in the Southeast of the country." This analysis ("Overview of Land Degradation Neutrality in Europe and Central Asia: LDN in Tajikistan") was based on remote sensing analysis. Other standard land degradation and monitoring tools will be applied at the site-level, such as scientific analysis of soil, visual assessment, scientific botanical assessments, etc. The project will make use of internationally recognized and recommended LDN monitoring mechanisms and tools, including those highlighted by the UNCCD in relation to LDN monitoring (<https://knowledge.unccd.int/ldn/ldn-tools>), such as the Land Potential Knowledge System (LandPKS) and LADA-Local. However, the specific mechanisms and tools will be further specified during implementation, based on their relevance to Tajikistan's LDN targets and the Tajikistan land management context. These tools and mechanisms will be further developed and specified during implementing, during the execution of Output 3.2, which is specifically focused on capacity development on LDN monitoring. Capacity development efforts will primarily target government technical experts who are responsible for monitoring and reporting on the degradation status of Tajikistan's land resources, and for reporting on Tajikistan's national LDN targets. This is likely to include, for example, technical experts from the Committee for Environmental Protection, the Agency on Land Management, Geodesy and Cartography, and the Forestry Agency; this may also include technical experts from the Ministry of Agriculture, in relation to the degradation of arable lands.

The text of the above response has been included in the Prodoc.

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

### **Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request**

12/10/2021: Yes.

Cleared

### **Agency Response**

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

### **Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request**

12/10/2021: Yes.

Cleared

### **Agency Response**

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

### **Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request**

12/10/2021: Yes.

However, the adaptation benefits are not fully clear and/or not fully in line with the project selecting RIO marker "1" for Adaptation.

01/18/2022: Addressed.

Cleared

### **Agency Response**

Thank you for the comment. There are numerous adaptation co-benefits that are anticipated from the project. Adaptation benefits from the proposed project will include outcomes such as increased resilience to landslides and erosion resulting from extreme climate events, reduced severity and frequency of wildfire, increased resilience of local agricultural livelihoods, and increased water regulation of vegetated slopes. Information detailing adaptation co-benefits from specific project outputs added to section 6 "global environmental benefits (GEFTF) and/or adaptation benefits (LDCF/SCCF)" of the CEO Endorsement Request.

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

### **Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request**

12/10/2021: Clarification questions:

There are number of measures mentioned under this section that appear to be vague or do not appear to be stated in the project activities mentioned under project description. Please clarify and incorporate the project description.

Scaling Up: The information on scale up is noted, however it is not clear how the project will facilitate scale and replication. What actions are being taken to integrate the approaches in the governance system at the district level as well as at different levels (sub national or national) so that they can be replicated? How is the training being institutionalized? What are the plans to facilitate continuation of the technical and financial support to incentivize land users to continue the SLM, SFM and biodiversity conservation activities and for land users in other districts to take up the new approaches?

01/18/2022: Addressed.

Cleared

### **Agency Response**

Thank you for the comment. The section has been revised and strengthened, highlighting the actions the project will take to facilitate replication. Relevant references have been added to the description of the project activities, under Outputs 1.1, 1.2, 2.2, and 2.3. Revisions and additions have also been made to section on sustainability and catalytic role of the Prodoc (pp. 41-42).

**Project Map and Coordinates**

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

### **Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request**

12/10/2021: Yes.

Cleared

### **Agency Response**

**Child Project**

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

### **Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request**

n/a

### **Agency Response**

**Stakeholders**

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

### **Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request**

12/10/2021: Not fully.

How were stakeholders engaged during the project design stage? Please elaborate.

01/18/2022: Addressed.

Cleared

### **Agency Response**

Thank you for the comment. During the project development phase the full range of stakeholders were consulted, and their inputs, priorities, and suggestions were incorporated in the project design. Stakeholder organizations were met on a one-on-one basis throughout the project development process, as outlined in Annex 11 of the Prodoc. In situations where it was not possible to meet in person, remote meetings and phone calls were used to consult with stakeholders about the project. Finally, the project stakeholder validation workshop was attended by more than 50 individuals representing stakeholder organizations from civil society, government, development partners, resource managers, and others. The workshop produced numerous qualitative comments that were further reflected in the project design.

The text of the above response has been included in the stakeholder engagement section of CEO Endorsement Request (p. 13, Section 2.) and the Prodoc (para 75, p. 29).

### **Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment**

**Has the gender analysis been completed? Did the gender analysis identify any gender differences, gaps or opportunities linked to project/program objectives and activities? If so, does the project/program include gender-responsive activities, gender-sensitive indicators and expected results?**

### **Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request**

12/10/2021: Not fully.

Gender: The gender dynamics and proposed interventions are noted under the Gender section. However, they do not seem to be considered under Table B as concrete outputs or targets or in the project description/strategy.

Additionally, are there women focused NGOs/civil society groups that should be included as a stakeholder?

01/18/2022: Addressed.

Cleared

### **Agency Response**

Thank you for the comment. The gender aspects have been primarily mainstreamed in the project at the activity level and in terms of project execution, as outlined in in Section 4.1 ?Project Description and Expected Results? of the GEF-UNDP Prodoc (pp. 14-21), which describes the project in more detail than is outlined in Table B. Table B does include a gender-disaggregated indicator related to beneficiaries. Additional gender-disaggregated indicators are also included in the results framework. We are happy to make some additions and elaborations in Table B, and relevant sections of the Prodoc, that specifically call out gender aspects as well. Women-focused NGOs and civil society groups are included within the project stakeholder engagement plans in the context of NGOs and civil society organizations. The national NGO Zan va Zamin ("Women and Land") has been preliminarily identified as a possible key partner for project activities related to gender-focused livelihood activities (under Output 1.1, but other aspects of the project as well), and this NGO participated in stakeholder consultations during the project development phase.

Additional references made in Table B to the inclusion of gender considerations and focus on women in relation to multiple project outputs. Additional elaborations related to gender considerations and engagement of women made in Prodoc description of project activities. Women's NGO Zan va Zamin specifically mentioned in stakeholder engagement table.

### **Private Sector Engagement**

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

### **Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request**

12/10/2021: Yes.

Cleared

### **Agency Response**

#### **Risks to Achieving Project Objectives**

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

### **Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request**

12/10/2021: Not fully.

In the risk section, please address the climate change risk and the COVID-19 risks in the usual GEF standard table, before providing the UNDP risk assessment table. These two risks are the major risks that the reviewer would like to assess and it would be helpful to bring them upfront.

Further on COVID-19: Please include the current impact of COVID on Tajikistan and the project target area, how green recovery will be incorporated into the project.

01/18/2022: Addressed.

Cleared

### **Agency Response**

Thank you for the comment. We have brought the climate and COVID risks upfront. Climate change risks were included in the table, and Covid-19 risks have been added to the standard risk table in the Prodoc (Section 4.5, p. 36-40). Additional narrative information on covid impacts the project's support for green recovery have also been added to the risk section, following the risk table.

### **Coordination**

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

### **Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request**

12/10/2021: Yes.

01/18/2022: ADDITIONAL REQUEST:

There is no narrative in Section 6 ? Institution arrangements in Portal ? it only makes reference to the content in ProDoc. Please include brief information here that allow the reader to understand these arrangements as often times this CEO Endorsement Portal view is the only document that is consulted by reviewers (this project needs to be circulated 4 weeks prior to CEO Endorsement).

In absence of a clear description of the institutional arrangements, it is not possible to understand whether the content of the UNDP Checklist is accurate, particularly with the reference to the ?few execution support services remain outstanding?, and the reason why UNDP would provide such services at the request of Tajikistan?s OFP. If it is confirmed that UNDP will not carry out any execution function, the Checklist needs to be updated to reflect the current situation ? otherwise, it creates confusion. Further, several budget items are managed by UNDP (see comments on budget), which needs to be clarified as well in this context.

02/09/2022: Addressed.

Cleared

**Agency Response** 01/18/2022: Thank you for the comment. We have amended Section 6 accordingly, and provided additional clarifications in one of the previous questions. We also uploaded the evidence of discussion and agreements on UNDP execution support role in the course of the PPG.

**Consistency with National Priorities**

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

**Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request**

12/10/2021: Yes.

Cleared

**Agency Response**

**Knowledge Management**

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

**Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request**

12/10/2021: Yes.

Cleared

**Agency Response**

**Environmental and Social Safeguard (ESS)**

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

**Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request**

12/10/2021: Yes.

Cleared

**Agency Response**

## **Monitoring and Evaluation**

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

### **Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request**

12/10/2021: Yes.

Cleared

## **Agency Response**

### **Benefits**

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

### **Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request**

12/10/2021: Not fully.

Benefits: It is not clear why RIO Marker 1 was selected for Adaptation. Please indicate what adaptation benefits are expected.

01/18/2022: Addressed.

Cleared

## **Agency Response**

Thank you for the comment. Please see previous response in relation to adaptation benefits and Rio Marker 1.

### **Annexes**

**Are all the required annexes attached and adequately responded to?**

### **Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request**

12/10/2021: Yes.

Cleared

## **Agency Response**

**Project Results Framework**

### **Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request**

12/10/2021: Is included in the project document and reference made in the portal section.

02/09/2021: As the project will have to be circulated to Council, we request to insert the project framework also in Annex A of the portal, so that we have a complete set of all relevant documents for circulation. Thank you!

02/14/2022: Has been inserted.

Cleared

## **Agency Response**

02/09/2021: Thank you for the comment. We inserted the project framework in Annex A of the portal.

**GEF Secretariat comments**

### **Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request**

12/10/2021: GEFSEC comments at PIF stage have been adequately responded to.

## **Agency Response**

**Council comments**

### **Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request**

12/10/2021: Have been responded to.

Cleared

## **Agency Response**

**STAP comments**

### **Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request**

12/10/2021: Have been responded to.

Cleared

## **Agency Response**

**Convention Secretariat comments**

**Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request** none received

**Agency Response**

Other Agencies comments

**Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request** none received

**Agency Response**

CSOs comments

**Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request** none received

**Agency Response**

Status of PPG utilization

**Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request**

Has been provided in Annex C.

01/18/2022: DISCREPANCY FOUND:

The Amount Spent to date (\$19,605.49) + the Amount Committed (\$75,955.89) in Annex C - Status of Utilization of Project Preparation Grant (PPG) add up to only \$95,561.38, which is different from the approved amount (\$100,000) ? please amend.

02/09/2022: Addressed.

Cleared

**Agency Response**

**01/18/2022:** Thank you for the comment. The difference is unspent balance which is US\$ 4,438.62 and it will be returned to the GEF. Please kindly see the footnote under the table.

**\*Expected unspent budget balance USD \$4,438.62 (status on October 27, 2021).**

**The unused PPG funds will be returned to the GEF.**

Project maps and coordinates

**Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request** Have been provided.

**Agency Response**

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

**Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request**

n/a

**Agency Response**

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

**Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request** n/a

**Agency Response**

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

**Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request** n/a

**Agency Response**

**GEFSEC DECISION**

**RECOMMENDATION**

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

**Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request**

12/10/2021: No. Please address comments made in this review.

01/18/2022: No. Please address comments made in this review.

02/09/2022: Please insert project framework into Annex to facilitate a complete set of documents for Council circulation.

02/14/2022: Yes. Program Manager recommends CEO endorsement.

**Review Dates**

|                     | <b>Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement</b> | <b>Response to Secretariat comments</b> |
|---------------------|---|---|
| <b>First Review</b> | <b>12/10/2021</b>                             |   |

|   | <b>Secretariat Comment at<br/>CEO Endorsement</b> | <b>Response to<br/>Secretariat comments</b> |
|---|---|---|
| <b>Additional Review<br/>(as necessary)</b> | 1/18/2022   |   |
| <b>Additional Review<br/>(as necessary)</b> | 2/9/2022  |   |
| <b>Additional Review<br/>(as necessary)</b> | 2/14/2022   |   |
| <b>Additional Review<br/>(as necessary)</b> |   |   |

**CEO Recommendation**

**Brief reasoning for CEO Recommendations**

This UNDP/GEF project has the objective to secure high value arid ecosystem biodiversity and associated ecosystem services, while ensuring resilient and sustainable livelihoods in Tajikistan's lower Amu Darya landscape. The project applies an approach of government resource managers and local communities jointly planning and implementing integrated natural resource use practices that are biodiversity friendly and support healthy soil and vegetation. The project aims to address the poverty-environment nexus in all aspects of the project, including catalyzing community economic benefits from sustainable pasture and forest management by investing directly into schemes that support long-term resilience of ecosystems. The project will work in 7 protected areas covering an area of 157,500 ha in the targeted landscape and will bring 596,000 ha of production landscapes under sustainable management. The project will also restore 121,400 ha of forest and pastures and directly benefit 100,000 project participants.

The risk of COVID-19 in terms of project implementation will be mitigated through adequate safeguards such as: (i) clear procedures in place in case of COVID-19 reinstatement of restrictions, approved during project inception (ii) use of protective equipment, maintaining social distancing and using remote methods of engagement whenever possible (iii) and adaptive management measures. Project implementation will adhere to government regulations and health standards and other appropriate safeguards, including those of UNDSS.