GEF-8 PROJECT IDENTIFICATION FORM (PIF)

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General Project Information

Project Title

Enhancing biodiversity conservation and reducing climate vulnerability in Central Vietnam for sustainable development utilizing a landscape approach

Region	GEF Project ID
Viet Nam	11395

Country(ies)	Type of Project
Viet Nam	FSP

GEF Agency(ies):	GEF Agency ID
WWF-US	G0046

Executing Partner	Executing Partner Type
Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE)	Government

GEF Focal Area (s)	Submission Date
Multi Focal Area	10/18/2023

Project Sector (CCM Only)

Taxonomy

Biodiversity, Focal Areas, Financial and Accounting, Payment for Ecosystem Services, Biomes, Tropical Dry Forests, Tropical Rain Forests, Sea Grasses, Mangroves, Protected Areas and Landscapes, Coastal and Marine Protected Areas, Terrestrial Protected Areas, Mainstreaming, Forestry - Including HCVF and REDD+, Tourism, Species, Threatened Species, Wildlife for Sustainable Development, Illegal Wildlife Trade, Influencing models, Strengthen institutional capacity and decision-making, Deploy innovative financial instruments, Demonstrate innovative approache, Convene multi-stakeholder alliances, Stakeholders, Communications, Awareness Raising, Education, Behavior change, Private Sector, SMEs, Individuals/Entrepreneurs, Indigenous Peoples, Civil Society, Non-Governmental Organization, Community Based Organization, Type of Engagement, Information Dissemination, Partnership, Consultation, Gender Equality, Gender results areas, Participation and leadership, Access to benefits and services, Access and control over natural resources, Capacity Development, Gender Mainstreaming, Women groups, Gender-sensitive indicators, Sex-disaggregated indicators, Beneficiaries, Capacity, Knowledge and Research, Knowledge Generation, Theory of change, Learning, Adaptive management, Climate Change Mitigation, Climate Change

Type of Trust Fund	Project Duration (Months)
GET	60

GEF Project Grant: (a)	GEF Project Non-Grant: (b)
9,000,000.00	0.00

Agency Fee(s) Grant: (c)	Agency Fee(s) Non-Grant (d)
810,000.00	0.00

Total GEF Financing: (a+b+c+d)	Total Co-financing
9,810,000.00	73,000,000.00

PPG Amount: (e)	PPG Agency Fee(s): (f)
200,000.00	18,000.00
PPG total amount: (e+f)	Total GEF Resources: (a+b+c+d+e+f)
218,000.00	10,028,000.00
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)

Vietnam is the 16th most biodiverse country in the world. The country is estimated to contain nearly 10% of the world's animal species and nearly 40% of its plant species are endemic. Vietnam is home to several of the world's iconic species with 109 large mammals and 850 bird species recorded[1][2]. This high level of diversity is significant for a relatively small country of 33.12 million hectares (ha). Vietnam's terrestrial, freshwater, and marine ecosystems support nearly 50,000 species, including nearly 7,500 micro-organisms, 20,000 terrestrial and aquatic plants, 10,500 terrestrial animals, 2,000 invertebrates and freshwater fish, and over 11,000 marine species[3]. Wetlands and forests are considered of highest global importance for biodiversity conservation and the mitigation of climate change hosting the highest level of biodiversity, playing a crucial role in provisioning and regulating ecosystem services and in carbon sequestration. Forest covers 42% of Vietnam's land area with a total of 14.7 million ha, while the country has a diverse array of wetlands totaling 12 million ha or one third of the natural area[4]. Despite best efforts, Vietnam has been coping with increasing levels fragmentation and disconnected islands of biodiversity from high rates of deforestation and biodiversity decline and high levels of Illegal wildlife trade are giving rise to empty forests. From 2001 to 2021, Vietnam lost 3.26 million ha of forest cover, equivalent to a 20% decrease since 2000, and 2.25Gt of CO_2e emissions[5]. Many wetlands are shrinking, being converted and degraded at an alarming rate, due to multiple pressures and climate change[6]. The project will support development of a multi-stakeholder, long-term vision for the landscape, and bring in public and private sector funding for improved management across the landscape to deliver this vision and generate triple wins for nature, climate, and people. It will take a holistic approach that recognizes the criticality of working with a wide range of national and provincial stakeholders towards shared landscape goals under a single umbrella, ensuring integration with ongoing master and provincial planning, injecting complementarity with ongoing conservation efforts and deep inclusion of the private sector and local community ownership, to achieve lasting and transformational change. The project will incentivize, leverage, and unlock greater financial flows to financing a common landscape conservation vision. Global environmental benefits will accrue through the project, include 731,446 ha under improved management for biodiversity conservation, 4,400 ha of

land under restoration and 130,532 ha of landscapes outside PAs under improved practices, 6,273,458 tonnes of CO_2 mitigated through an integrated landscape approach.

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[1] Thuaire B, Allanic Y, Hoang Viet A, Le Khac Q, Luu Hong T, Nguyen The C, Nguyen Thi T (2021). Assessing the biodiversity in Viet Nam – Analysis of the impacts from the economic sectors. WWF-Viet Nam, Ha Noi, Viet Nam.

[2] Duwe VK et al. (2022). Contributions to the Biodiversity of Vietnam. Biodiversity Data Journal 10.

[3] https://www.cbd.int/doc/world/vn/vn-nbsap-v3-en.pdf

[4] Tung, Nguyen & Dinh Dap, Nguyen. (2020). Analyse the biodiversity and socio-economic values of the wetlands in Vietnam. Technology audit and production reserves. 3. 25-31.

[5] Global Forest Watch: bit.ly/3THgs8Z

[6] Tung, Nguyen & Dinh Dap, Nguyen. (2020). Analyse the biodiversity and socio-economic values of the wetlands in Vietnam. Technology audit and production reserves. 3. 25-31.

Indicative Project Overview

Project Objective

Establish a sustainable, replicable and collaborative landscape-scale conservation model to promote biodiversity conservation and reducing climate vulnerability in Central Vietnam for sustainable development.

Project Components

Component 1. Enabling environment for biodiversity conservation via collaborative and adaptive landscape conservation/management approach

Component Type	Trust Fund
Technical Assistance	GET
GEF Project Financing ($)	Co-financing ($)
1,604,010.00	1,963,950.00

Outcome:

1.1 Strengthened legal, policy and financial framework enabling a replicable landscape conservation model in Central Vietnam for improved ecosystem functions, climate resilience and biodiversity outcomes.

Output:

1.1.1 A collaborative and gender inclusive landscape conservation working group established under the national Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (BES) partnership platform on biodiversity and ecosystem services to advance multi-level planning and coordination in high-value landscapes in Central Vietnam.

1.1.2 Harmonized policies, guidelines and a singular governance framework, inclusive of gender considerations, to enable coordination, information sharing and decision-making at the provincial level.

1.1.3 Innovative and gender appropriate financial mechanisms and tools established to incentivize investment in effective landscape management and biodiversity conservation, with transparent performance criteria for triple benefits.

1.1.4 Guidelines, regulations and other instruments, inclusive of gender considerations, developed and applied to integrated biodiversity and natural resources management and planning (including wetlands, production forests and logging, forest concessions; forest plantation design and management) and rules for identification, planning and management of Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures or OECMs), with capacity training for forest enterprises and community forest user groups, also mainstreamed into master, provincial and sectoral plans.

1.1.5 Recommendations for the revision of the Law on Biodiversity to enable support landscape management priorities, OECM management and wildlife protection, while ensuring gender equality.

Component 2. Sustainable landscape management, biodiversity conservation and application of innovative tools in key globally-important wildlife habitats

Component Type	Trust Fund
Investment	GET
GEF Project Financing ($)	Co-financing ($)
4,611,529.00	39,278,988.00

Outcome:

2.1 Deliver a validated, holistic, fully-funded, landscape-wide strategy for improved management and monitoring of biodiversity and carbon benefits

2.2 Increased management effectiveness across 731,446 ha of PAs in Central Vietnam

2.3 Connectivity between key protected areas and/or special use forests, covering at least 50,000 ha, targeted for improvement through the creation of ecological corridors/Biosphere Reserves/OECM

2.4 Improved integrated landscape and land-use planning and restoration measures at identified OECM sites to support high-value biodiversity and threatened species, leveraging gender-responsive community-based co-management measures to improve ecological and community benefits

Output:

2.1.1 A comprehensive and gender responsive 5- and 10-year multi-level landscape financing strategy covering priority measures for the Central Vietnam Landscape

2.1.2 A financing plan for the different landscape components with built-in incentives and crowdsourcing model

2.1.3 Operationalized financial partnerships to mobilize support for landscape and biodiversity management and conservation strategies

2.1.4 A complimentary fund for community-based and woman-centric pilot initiative(s) under a newly established finance mechanism in Central Vietnam

2.2.1 Capacity in management effectiveness, governance, and law enforcement of   proposed management boards of PAs, BCAs, OECM sites, and Wetland Nature Reserves improved to reduce threats to flagship species and wildlife through technical assistance and gender equality.

2.2.2 Development and implement of PWES guidance in TG-CH Wetland Nature Reserve to unlock financial potential of wetland conservation

2.3.1 Feasibility studies for enhancing contiguity and establishing connectivity between inter-provincial and trans-boundary landscapes, based on integrated landscape management principles approaches and innovative planning tools.

2.3.2 Improvement of effectiveness of corridor management plans.

2.4.1 OECM principals applied for site identification and selection, community and women's engagement, and other creative approaches for pilot program establishment and development of an effective OECM management mechanism in Central Vietnam.

2.4.2 Innovations tested and proliferated for wildlife conservation, landscape management and human wildlife conflict.

2.4.3 Sustainable livelihood developed for local forest, mangrove and wetland dependent communities, inclusive of gender considerations.

Component 3. Enhanced climate resilience and corridor connectivity

Component Type	Trust Fund
Investment	GET
GEF Project Financing ($)	Co-financing ($)
1,503,759.00	24,549,368.00

Outcome:

3.1 Enhanced climate resilience and corridor connectivity in and around high conservation value forested landscapes and wetlands

Output:

3.1.1 Assessment of climate vulnerability for Central Vietnam to identify areas significantly impacted by climate change, degraded forests, mangroves and wetlands to underpin restoration efforts

3.1.2 Study on feasibility of biodiversity credit for policy support

3.1.3 Site selection and restoration of degraded forests, mangroves and important wetlands leveraging nature-based solutions, increasing carbon sequestration, realizing carbon benefits, and improving connectivity to benefit long-term population viability of keystone, and threatened species

3.1.4 Best practice approaches to forest, mangrove and wetland restoration and reforestation / sustainable harvesting documented, and capacities enhanced through training and locally-relevant guidelines

3.1.5 On-the-ground application of nationally-tailored methodology for measuring carbon stocks applied, demonstrated and validated for the target areas in Central Vietnam

Component 4. Awareness raising and knowledge management to improve landscape management

Component Type	Trust Fund
Technical Assistance	GET
GEF Project Financing ($)	Co-financing ($)
601,504.00	2,945,924.00

Outcome:

4.1. Communication and knowledge management strategies developed and implemented to share and publicize project's results and advancements

Output:

4.1.1 Mechanism for impact management and dissemination of both a public-private financing model for climate, nature and people benefits, including women, and OECM model in Central Vietnam

4.1.2 A gender responsive communication strategy developed and under implementation to share and publicize project's results and advancements

4.1.3 Replication strategy developed for the Plain of Reeds important wetland and, at larger scale, for the Mekong Delta Landscape, inclusive of gender considerations.

4.1.4 A gender responsive knowledge management plan developed and implemented, including South-South cooperation activities

M&E

Component Type	Trust Fund
Technical Assistance	GET
GEF Project Financing ($)	Co-financing ($)
250,627.00	785,580.00

Outcome:

Project implemented according to Results-Based Management principles

Output:

ME1 Project M&E system designed and operational

ME2 Project evaluations completed on time to support project delivery and knowledge sharing

ME3 Monitoring Reports submitted on time to the Implementing Agency and GEFSEC

ME4 Monitoring of Gender Action Plan

Component Balances

Project Components	GEF Project Financing ($)	Co-financing ($)
Component 1. Enabling environment for biodiversity conservation via collaborative and adaptive landscape conservation/management approach	1,604,010.00	1,963,950.00
Component 2. Sustainable landscape management, biodiversity conservation and application of innovative tools in key globally-important wildlife habitats	4,611,529.00	39,278,988.00
Component 3. Enhanced climate resilience and corridor connectivity	1,503,759.00	24,549,368.00
Component 4. Awareness raising and knowledge management to improve landscape management	601,504.00	2,945,924.00
M&E	250,627.00	785,580.00
Subtotal	**8,571,429.00**	**69,523,810.00**
Project Management Cost	428,571.00	3,476,190.00
Total Project Cost ($)	**9,000,000.00**	**73,000,000.00**

Please provide justification

PROJECT OUTLINE

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

Intact habitat is recognized as essential for the functioning of large ecological systems, for the provisioning of ecosystem goods and services, cycling of water and carbon, and human health[1][7]. The Central Vietnam Landscape (CVL) is a trans-boundary landscape that houses one of the largest continuous natural forest areas in continental Asia, renowned for its unique biodiversity and a natural carbon sink. The CVL transects Nghe An, Ha Tinh, Quang Binh, Quang Tri, Thua Thien Hue and Quang Nam provinces, and the centrally-administered municipality of Da Nang.

This geographic scope is prioritized provinces in the "National Program on Conservation of Endanged and Rare Wildlife species prioritized for protection until 2030, with a vision to 2050" which was developed by MONRE and submitted to the Prime Minister for approval. Central Vietnam holds significant ecological and global environmental importance, making it an ideal candidate for a landscape management project whose scope is to consolidate different models for Vietnam and the region.

The landscape has significant conservation value as it is part of the Indo-Burma biodiversity hotspot, one of the world's most significant regions for biodiversity[2][8], home for many critically endangered species. This area is rich in a variety of plant and animal species, many of which are endemic, including the saola (Pseudoryx nghetinhensis). The region encompasses a range of ecosystems, from coastal and marine environments to lowland and montane forests, as well as sub-landscapes such as the CAL. Each of these ecosystems supports different species and ecological processes, and their management and conservation are crucial for maintaining the wider region's ecological balance. This area is not only aligned to the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment's recent biodiversity planning and priority setting under its recent NBSAP, but is also central to WWF-Vietnam's key geographic and thematic priorities in its 2021-2025 strategic plan, and an upcoming landscape strategy for 2025-2035 with increased cross-practice synergy, in wildlife, forests, freshwater, climate change and sustainable finance.

The CVL has a total forest area of 3,226,302 ha, of which natural forest area comprises 2,314,622 ha and plantation forest comprising 911,680 ha, with total forest coverage ranging between 47.17 % (Danang city) to 68.59%. The CVL includes 21 special use forests (i.e., protected areas such as national parks and nature reserves) totaling 424,992 ha and seven protection forests (i.e., areas designated for the protection and restoration of watersheds) consisting of 231,281 ha.[3][9] The Central Vietnam Landscape is home to 134 mammal species, more than 500 bird species and 902 species of endemic plants[4][10] (see Annex H, Tables 1 and 2 for more information). The forest habitat of the Central Vietnam Landscape is home to many endemic species, including the saola (Pseudoryx nghetinhensis - CR), large antlered muntjac (Muntiacus vuquangensis - CR), Truong Son muntjac (Muntiacus truongsonensis - DD), Owston's civet (Chrotogale owstoni - EN), crested argus (Rheinardia ocellata - CR), and Annamite striped rabbit (Nesolagus timminsi - EN); as well as other species of high conservation value including gibbons (Nomascus annamenis), red

and grey shanked douc langurs (Pygathrix spp), and several species of pheasant (Lophura spp)[5][11]. Per 2019 data, the population of Central Vietnam is approximately 18.5 million people, also comprising of 12 ethnic minority groups making up 10-12% of the population.

The CVL also comprises Tam Giang- Cau Hai (TG-CH), an important wetland nature reserve area in Thua Thien Hue province. As the largest brackish lagoon in Southeast Asia, TG-CH not only has an exceptionally high value of natural resources and biodiversity but is also significant as it serves a variety of important ecological functions. The TG-CH lagoon system has a total area of about 22,000 ha located along 68 km coastal area with the width from 1-10 km of Thua Thien Hue province. Total water covered areas is roughly 216 km2. The TG-CH wetland area has been officially established as the Wetland Nature Reserve Area under the Decision No.495/DQ-UBND of Thua Thien Hue Provincial People's Committee in 2020. The TG-CH Wetland Nature Reserve covers 2,071.5 ha including 799.1 ha of stringent protection sub-area; 1,242.9 ha of ecological rehabilitation sub-area and 29.5 ha administrative and services sub-area. Recent surveys identified total 1,296 species with 41 rare species in this area, included 295 phytoplankton species, 50 vascular plant species, 73 species of seaweeds and aquatic plants, 119 zooplankton species, 215 sea bottom fauna species, 361 species of fish and 137 species of birds. Among these species, there are several species included in the IUCN Red List and Viet Nam Red Book such as the Yellow-breasted bunting (Emberiza aureola) and the Asian dowitcher (Limnodromus semipalmatus), as well as many species of turtle, snakes, seagrass and many high-value emblematic species. In addition to its immediate ecological richness, TG-CH has untapped historical and cultural value spread throughout the lagoon.

Vietnam's economic growth over the past 30 years since the introduction of Doi Moi reforms has been remarkable, with the country transforming from one of the poorest nations in the world to a middle-income country. A recent study suggests that Vietnam may be the fastest-growing of the world's economies, with a potential of becoming the 10th-largest in the world by 2050[6][12]. While trade and investment have contributed to the improvement of living standards elevating many out of poverty, it has also put severe pressure on the natural environment. The most pervasive threats to wildlife in Vietnam include ecosystem degradation and land conversion, whereas the primary threats to plant species include biological resource usage, agriculture and aquaculture, residential and commercial development at the ecosystem level, biological resource use (including hunting and illegal trade of wildlife), agriculture and aquaculture, infrastructure development, natural system modification are the most common and key threats. By and large, the main threats to production landscapes are climate change and anthropogenic pressures, with the latter including illegal hunting, illegal logging, forest conversion, and encroachment for livelihood and small-holder farming for subsistence, infrastructure and economic development activities, further exacerbating habitat fragmentation and worsening climate change impacts on forest ecosystems (see Table 3 in Annex H). The intactness of the CVL has been particularly damaged by logging and land conversion to agriculture. It is estimated that during the past 20 years, 10,544 km2 of natural forest have been converted to plantation forests and land for agricultural purposes, whilst 2.8 million ha were converted to enable planting of cash crops[7][13]. Estimates also suggest that 0.5 million ha of poor and very poor natural forest remains in the six provinces making up the CVL[8][14] (see Figure 1 in Annex H for more information). Wetland habitats are not immune from climate change and human-induced change either. Many wetland areas in Central Vietnam have recently disappeared or shrunk due to over-exploitation of natural resources, environmental pollution, infrastructure and economic development. Altogether, this has led to severe habitat loss, fragmentation, and degradation. Environmental pollution such as noise and air pollution from tourist transportation, solid waste disposal, littering, sewage discharges, oil and chemicals from

recreational vehicles and other activities threaten biodiversity, wildlife habitat and public health in wetland habitats. Hue, a medium-sized city and listed as one of the greenest in Vietnam, has struggled with uncontrolled urban and air pollution, which has led to a deterioration of the natural environment and degradation of national monuments and heritage sites[9][15].

Landscape-level planning plays an essential role in biodiversity conservation, increasing heterogeneity through different measures including protecting core habitats, introduction of buffer zones, corridors and Other effective area-based conservation measures (OECM). There is growing recognition that taking a landscape or seascape level approach will help to secure the long-term health and ecological vitality of Vietnam's globally significant natural resources. A biodiversity conservation plan for the Central Annamite Landscape (for 2004-2020) was developed, but despite many contributing stakeholders, did not take a landscape-level approach. Interventions are fragmented, which compromises collective action and limits high-impact synergies (see Table 4 in Annex H for a summary of protection efforts by the Vietnam government). The Central Vietnam Landscape faces a number of barriers to optimal landscape planning and connectivity, including:

Barrier 1: Poor institutional coordination between multiple agencies for wildlife and forest conservation and land use. Approaches to biodiversity conservation are not yet comprehensive; although the ecosystem approach is mentioned in some policies, it has not been fully applied in practice, leading to management effectiveness that does not meet the requirements. Although Vietnam's Forest Protection and Development Law, and now as Forestry Law, establishes a legal framework for forest protection, it has several problems with collaborative landscape management, including a lack of clear guidance, limited participation, lack of incentives, weak enforcement mechanisms, and insufficient monitoring and evaluation. Additionally, institutional problems arise due to a lack of cross-sectoral planning integration and coordination between different government agencies. However, the growing recognition of this barrier has led to the establishment of a national biodiversity and ecosystem service (BES) platform on biodiversity and ecosystem services to promote initiatives for conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. Taking this multi-agency approach to landscape-level planning, also supported by governance is integral to securing the habitat of key species beyond immediate protected area borders.

Barrier 2: Complicated and incomplete policy and legal framework to holistically address landscape needs collaboratively with state and non-state entities in an integrated manner, in tandem with protected area and biodiversity conservation. While Vietnam has laws and regulations related to biodiversity conservation and protected areas, there is no comprehensive legal framework that specifically addresses landscape conservation, OECMs establishment, and management of biodiversity corridors. Currently, Vietnam has perhaps the most complicated legal system globally[10][16]. This system is characterized by the numerous legal documents and lack of cohesiveness leading to the inconsistency in interpreting and implementing. Many recent biodiversity corridor construction projects have paid more attention to the structure of the corridor with little or no attention to its functions and testing them also faces certain challenges. With respect to OECMs, overarching objectives fall under the scope of many laws and sub-law documents that have not yet been unified. This can lead to overlapping, difficult to delineate and complicated when implementing OECM in Vietnam. To implement these effectively the role and contribution of the private sector needs to be articulated. However, at present, Vietnam still lacks specific legal regulations, mechanisms and policies to encourage the participation of the private sector in natural resource management and biodiversity conservation in a holistic manner at scale. Also of concern is the lack

of a central repository to share, aggregate and make sense of the many sources of data held in disparate systems by different custodians.

Barrier 3: Poor framework for engaging key stakeholders, funding and incentivizing investment and ownership in protected areas (PAs) and landscapes. Funding for landscape conservation efforts in Central Area is often limited, which can make it difficult to implement large-scale initiatives such as ecological corridors. One of the main challenges is the limited availability of funding from government sources, which may be insufficient to cover the high costs of managing and protecting these areas. Vietnam is also well below the South East Asia regional spending average on PAs and inadequate to manage its PA network. According to a study conducted by the Vietnam Environment Administration in 2017 - surveying 102 protected areas across the country, including national parks, nature reserves, and special-use forests - the average budget for managing a protected area in Vietnam was around VND 1.5 billion (equivalent to approximately USD 65,000[11][17]) per year. This budget was used to cover various expenses, including personnel salaries, equipment and infrastructure maintenance, conservation activities, and community development programs. This did not include the costs associated with maintaining connectivity and addressing the conservation needs within the wider adjacent landscape. Furthermore, even the top-end of the budget is also well below the South East Asia regional spending average on PAs and inadequate to manage its PA network, let along wider landscape needs[12][18]. Watershed protection forest owners also receive limited funding from the central and local governments for protection and management activities. Forest owners in some watersheds receive a non-performance based, and relatively modest payment for forest environment/ecosystem services (PFES). This compensation mechanism is managed by national and provincial Forest Development and Protection Funds (i.e., 14-22 USD/ha/year) for their participation in forest protection and management. Additionally, there is a lack of private sector investment due to the perceived low profitability and high risks associated with investing in protected areas. Another challenge is the lack of effective mechanisms to generate revenue from ecosystem services such as carbon sequestration, biodiversity conservation, and water regulation, which can help finance protected areas. As a potential solution to this barrier, WWF is exploring and maturing its capabilities in establish robust legal, policy, and financial frameworks, with the primary goal of promoting jurisdictional carbon financing. WWF's advances in this domain will be articulated in greater detail during the PPG stage. While there is a large engagement of the private sector in industry, the participation and support of both the private sector and community for conservation in the wider landscape, for key biodiversity corridors between PAs and within OECMs are limited. The private sector has not fully integrated whole-landscape or conservation policies into business operation principles due to lack of specific guidelines for integration. Therefore, its participation in conservation activities is very limited. Although the Government of Vietnam has issued regulations to identify OECMs in Vietnam, there are not yet uniform, detailed and specific guidelines, and practical experience in achieving unified conservation objectives is lacking altogether. As such, there are insufficient mechanisms and incentives to seize the growing demand from private (e.g., companies with net zero targets) and public entities to invest in high-quality nature-based interventions, unlock greater financial flows by increasing supply of quality nature-based interventions and to align ambition from state- and nonstate actors to support systems change.

Barrier 4: Limited awareness, data and capacity among government and private sector entities to ensure the successful implementation and proliferation of whole-landscape models to conservation. Finally, there is a general lack of public awareness and understanding of the importance of landscape planning and connectivity for biodiversity conservation in the Central Vietnam Landscape. This can make it difficult to build public support for conservation initiatives and may result in limited political will to implement landscape planning measures. Government agencies have limited understanding of the value of biodiversity and ecosystem services and the importance of their preservation for maintaining healthy functioning ecosystems. Essential

ecosystem services provided by protected areas are underappreciated by multiple stakeholder groups and therefore, undervalued and not considered in provincial development planning. The forests in Central Vietnam Landscape spanning the six targeted provinces, especially those in wetlands and peatland habits, have tremendous carbon value and their integrity is linked to Government of Vietnam's Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in September 2020 and its voluntary pledge to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 27% by 2030. However, such values are often not taken into account during development planning, when the immediate benefits of land conversion for infrastructure and production uses trumps such longer term socio-economic benefits to the nation.

As these barriers illustrate there is a need to double down and engineer a new paradigm from investing in landscape and seascape management through the two distinct strategic entry points of protected area management and biodiversity mainstreaming, to one that aggressively prioritizes an area-based investment strategy and strategies to respond to the drivers of biodiversity loss within large landscape and seascape mosaics. There is also an urgent need to move away from project-based and short-term funding models, to one that is landscape-needs driven, with a longer-term horizon to patch in public and private funding. At the core of this approach is a conviction that a more integrated and complimentary approach is likely to achieve more durable results in conservation, sustainable use, and restoration

[1] Watson, J.E., Evans, T., Venter, O., Williams, B., Tulloch, A., Stewart, C., Thompson, I., Ray, J.C., Murray, K., Salazar, A. and McAlpine, C., 2018. The exceptional value of intact forest ecosystems. Nature Ecology & Evolution, 2: 599-610.

[2] https://www.cepf.net/sites/default/files/indo-burma-ecosystem-profile-brochure-digital.pdf

[3] Initial concept note developed by MONRE in consultation with WWF-Vietnam

[4] Le, X. T., Pham, T. T., Nguyen, T. V., & Nguyen, T. T. (2018). Assessing the status of biodiversity conservation in Central Vietnam. Journal of Environmental Management, 223, 35-44.

[5] Le, X. T., Pham, T. T., Nguyen, T. V., & Nguyen, T. T. (2018). Assessing the status of biodiversity conservation in Central Vietnam. Journal of Environmental Management, 223, 35-44.

[6] 'The World in 2050'. PricewaterhouseCoopers. Retrieved 24 April 2017.

[7] bit.ly/40lQZUY

[8] Initial concept note developed by MONRE in consultation with WWF-Vietnam

[9] Bhati, A. S., Nguyen, T. H., Goswami, A., & Kamble, Z. (2021). Sustainable tourism development in Vietnam: A case of Hue. Asia-Pacific Journal of Innovation in Hospitality and Tourism, 10(2), 79–94.

[10] Report of Minister of Justice Ha Hung Cuong (2014)

[11] There was a significant variation in funding levels between different types of protected areas, with national parks receiving the highest average budget of VND 3.7 billion (equivalent to approximately USD 160,000) per year, while special-use forests received the lowest average budget of VND 400 million (equivalent to approximately USD 17,000) per year.

[12] Based on the benchmark from South East Asia which the average of 196 staff and a budget of USD 1,000 per km².

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

Theory of Change

The proposed GEF-8 project in the CVL aims to enhance biodiversity conservation and mitigate climate vulnerability through a comprehensive landscape approach. The project Theory of Change (ToC) is that if an enabling framework and multi-sectoral partnerships can be established to integrate wildlife and forest conservation with economic activities, and if these partnerships establish a financial framework to mobilize investment to restore and connect critical habitats, improve management of conservation areas, and utilize nature-based solutions for climate resilience across diverse landscapes, then threats in the landscape will be

reduced and the project will deliver multiple benefits of forest conservation, connectivity, carbon sequestration, wildlife protection, climate resilience and community benefits. The project also emphasizes, utilizing, and strengthening knowledge management for sustainable environmental stewardship. Taken together, the project aims to address the institutional issues facing biodiversity management in Vietnam by focusing on six provinces and one centrally-administered municipality within the Central Vietnam Landscape. The project will cover an area of 3,226,302[1][19] ha that includes some of the most important forests for biodiversity. Component 1 will hone in on the enabling framework and policies to enable key stakeholders at the national and provincial level to engage in cross-sectoral mainstreaming within multiple use landscapes with the necessary governance, supportive policies, guidelines and financial mechanism in place to be tested and scaled. It will develop multi-sectoral partnerships in government and bring together the private sector and holders of privately-owned concession licenses. Component 2 will work on the validation of a landscape-level model that will take a holistic approach to landscape management, aiming to reconcile the competing needs of wildlife conservation and economic activities across landscapes through supportive and fully tested policies and guidelines, with special attention to feasibility studies for definition of ecological corridors, OECMs and co-management opportunities and intersectoral coordination. Most importantly, it will test a financial mechanism and tap into the investment community's desire to support high-quality and high-impact interventions, as well as match their needs with specific landscape priorities defined through a co-created, fully costed landscape management and business plan for Central Vietnam. Component 3 will enhance climate resilience and corridor connectivity via restoration of degraded forests, mangroves and important wetlands using nature based solutions. The project will develop clear parameters and metrics for measuring carbon benefits utilizing the best available scientific information. Preliminary assessment indicates that there could be up to 7,974,725 tonnes of carbon sequestered that would be documented and contributed to Vietnam's NDC. Finally, Component 4 will strengthen knowledge management to help Vietnam aggregate lessons learned, best practices and practical experience.

The Project Objective is: establish a sustainable, replicable and collaborative landscape-scale conservation model to biodiversity conservation and reducing climate vulnerability in Central Vietnam for sustainable development. While landscape conservation is enshrined in the Forest Protection Law and while there was a landscape plan for Central Vietnam, the bottleneck is that it was not implemented at the landscape level and the lack of collaboration by non-state actors. A transformational shift towards a biodiversity conservation strategy and action plan for the entire CVL will be a departure from past piecemeal project-by-project conservation efforts that have fallen short of bringing together efforts under one umbrella to achieve a common landscape vision with unified objectives, conservation priorities and diversified long-term funding. The integrated landscape management (ILM approach being promoted acknowledges that while PAs are the foundation and essential building blocks of biodiversity conservation, these hotspots of biodiversity can also quickly erode and their conservation value lost if they become increasingly fragmented and removed from the broader landscape context. At the heart of the ILM approach is a recognition that management of buffer zones around PAs, and biological corridors that connect PAs and OECMs, are imperative to delivering sustainable forest and land management that incorporates climate change adaptation and mitigation, and conservation of globally-threatened wildlife.

To overcome the barriers articulated in "Section A" the project is purpose-built to hasten comprehensive effective collaborative action to:

> i. Restore and protect biodiversity corridors connecting PAs and key conservation wetlands at critical sites in Central Vietnam by improving the legal framework at the landscape level;
> ii. Engage interests from different sectors to enhance the protection, management and sustainable financing of both PAs and conservation corridors in Central Vietnam;

iii.   Improve livelihoods for local forest-dependent communities through engagement in sustainable forest management and the wise use of non-timber forest products (NFTPs) to minimize the likelihood of encroachment and the unsustainable exploitation of forest resources.

The Project Components (as the GEF Project Alternative) aim to remove the barriers to achieving the project's targeted conservation impacts (see Outcomes in the TOC in Figure 1), namely: to maintain ecosystem services and resilience, improve connected habitats for key wildlife species to facilitate their movement, conserve key globally-threatened wildlife populations, while co-benefiting a diversity of other biodiversity, and support resilient community livelihoods for forest dependent communities consistent with sustainable forest and land management; all while delivering significant carbon benefits. It is important to note that while nature-based solutions predominantly resonate to the GEF in the context of Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation, this is very much also a biodiversity-oriented project, with the lion's share of funding earmarked from the biodiversity focal area, and therefore, nature-based solutions are expected to be leveraged to deliver biodiversity benefits noted above. These will be studied and documented in greater detail during the PPG stage based on due diligence from technical studies.

There are two main preconditions to the GEF Alternative:

      i.   Central level government of Vietnam is able to create supporting conditions through enhanced policies and comprehensive legal and financial framework allowing for the multi-level stakeholder collaboration across sectors on conservation measures at the landscape level to take root;
      ii.   More robust landscape models are tested and developed together with community-level commitment towards managing wildlife and their threatened habitats.

Key assumptions underpinning the Theory of Change include the following:

● It is assumed there will be a continuity of political commitment for ecological arguments over economic ones;
● It is assumed that there is an inverse relationship between greater coherence of policies and legal framework governing OECMs and corridors, and increasing fragmentation of landscapes in Central Vietnam;
● It is assumed that fully funded strategies will lead to landscape management goals being met;
● It is assumed there will be strong multi-sectoral and inter-agency partnerships and collaboration;
● It is assumed that ministries and provincial departments are willing to apply guidelines to development and sectoral planning;
● It is assumed that co-management arrangements are agreed to with local communities and that they will be direct beneficiaries of enhanced wildlife conservation across landscapes;
● It is assumed that policies and wildlife impact guidelines are enforced and illegal activities curtailed.

There are three desired end states (represented as Outcomes) envisioned as part of the project as follows:

- O1: Strengthened legal, policy and financial framework enabling the establishment of a replicable landscape conservation model in Central Vietnam, for improved ecosystem functions, climate resilience and biodiversity outcomes;
- O2:Increased management effectiveness across 731,446 ha under improved management for biodiversity conservation and 130,532 ha of landscape outside of PAs under improved practices, as well as improved community forest management (OECMs, SUFs and PFs);
- O3: Enhanced climate resilience and corridor connectivity in and around high conservation value forested landscapes and wetlands;
- O4: Communication and knowledge management strategies developed and implemented to share and publicize project's results and advancements, including scientific awareness.
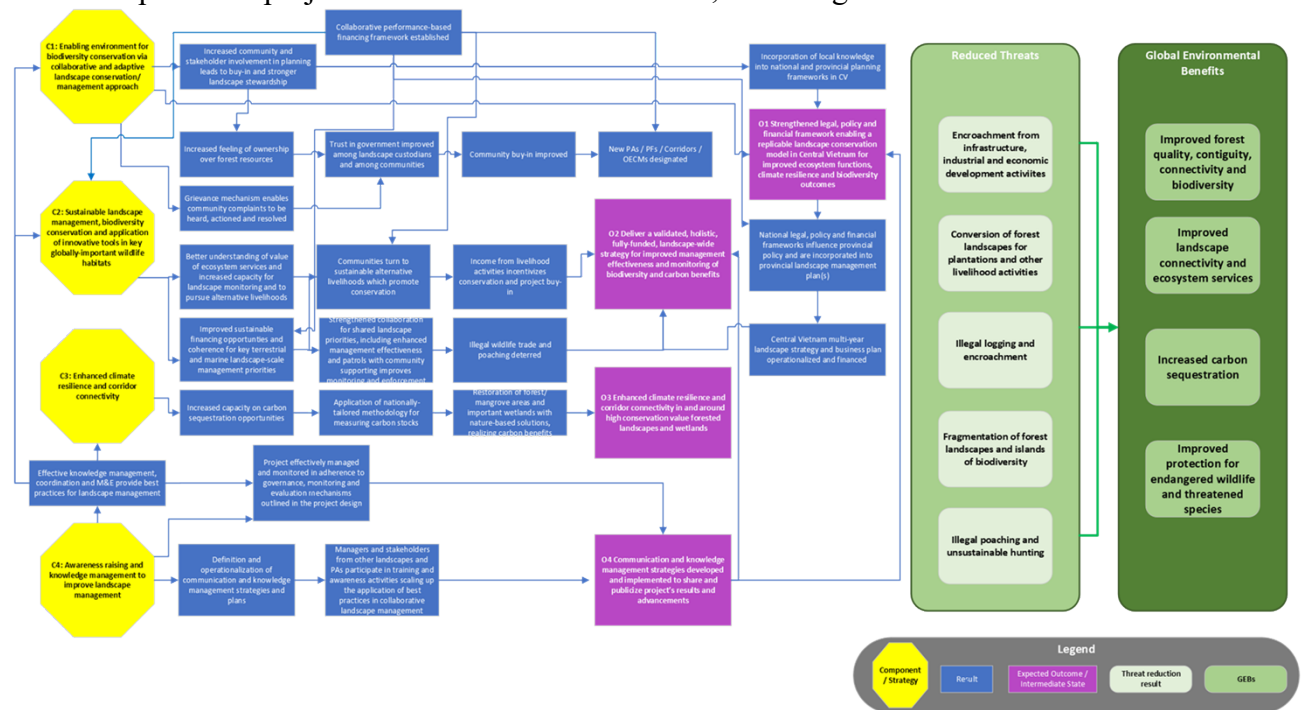
The Theory of Change is underpinned by the following impact pathways:

- Operate at a Landscape Scale: All interventions and activities ought to be framed and should occur through a multisectoral lens within a wider landscape, proactively engaging development sectors, private sector, academia and communities along the way. Effective management, therefore, needs to go beyond the scope of PAs and be managed holistically;
- Strengthen institutional capacity at national, provincial, and local levels: Activities articulated in the project emphasize a multi-pronged approach to help policy and decision makers internalize mainstreaming of wildlife across sectors at the national level, as well as capacity-building at a provincial level to connect national-level supportive policy measures with local-level environmental decision-making.
- Adopt a community-driven approach: To ensure sustainability post-project, all interventions and activities should be determined by the needs and priorities identified by communities themselves using a shared-learning process and cross-pollination of knowledge and approaches. Local communities will engage in decision-making process relevant to landscape planning and nature resources management, play critical role in co-management, and benefit from sustainable livelihood support and benefit -sharing mechanisms.
- Consider the diversity of gendered experiences and perspectives: Women and men both experience and contribute differently to environmental change. Women are typically more

marginalized and hence more vulnerable than men, and as a result, are usually disproportionately impacted by the negative consequences of environmental change.

● A consolidated whole landscape and costed financing strategy is a driver of collective landscape priorities being met: With respect to landscape financing, the logic is as follows: (i) if a national / sub-national framework with supporting guidelines for financing landscapes is established under Component 1; and (ii) if the project can convene the various stakeholders to develop a shared vision and strategy for the whole Central Vietnam landscape and identify its needs and priorities for different time horizons; and (iii) if the project can identify and cost out the core management needs, and (iv) if the project can develop a financing / business plan for the different landscape components and bring in/incentivize/crowdsource that financing, and (v) if the project can test this approach through a proof of concept in the demonstration landscape in Central Vietnam to then refine the national / sub-national framework and guidelines in Component 1 by injecting lessons learned; (vi) then it is assumed that it can deliver an agreed, holistic, fully-funded, landscape-wide improved management for biodiversity and carbon benefits.

To achieve this objective, the project will deploy four strategies (Project Components) with interventions / outputs described in the paragraphs below.

Component 1: Enabling environment for biodiversity conservation via collaborative and adaptive landscape conservation/management approach Taken together, this will entail strengthening the institutional and policy framework, as well as financing mechanisms to synchronize landscape priorities with biodiversity conservation within the broader landscape and put in place an enhanced policy and regulatory framework, with supporting guidelines, to enable a replicable landscape conservation model for Central Vietnam.

The Component outcome will help establish and consolidate a governance system that enables a strengthened legal, policy and financial framework for a landscape conservation model in Central Vietnam (Outcome 1.1). The project will establish a gender inclusive working group under the national BES platform (Output 1.1.1) to explore, share information and review critical regulations, policies and guidelines pertaining to landscape connectivity, corridors and OECMs. A similar unified mechanism, inclusive of gender considerations, will be established at the provincial level (Output 1.1.2) to enable coordination, information sharing and decision-making. These gender appropriate governance mechanisms are expected to adopt a comprehensive performance-based financial mechanism and strategies to incentivize investment (Output 1.1.3), together with gender responsive guidelines, regulations and other instruments (Output 1.1.4) to improve landscape contiguity, prioritizing species needs that will be informed by international experiences and best practice. Where relevant, recommendations will be made to revise the Law of Biodiversity, while promoting gender equality (Output 1.1.5) to address gaps related to operationalizing greater cohesiveness of landscape management priorities. Based on experiences in applying the regulations, policies and guidelines developed under Component 1 through pilot initiatives to be determined within the target landscape, the multisectoral governance system will ultimately refine and finalize these through an ongoing feedback loop by leveraging through permanent flows of dialogue and negotiations at the national and provincial level to advance in tailoring appropriate connectivity mechanisms based on the landscape context and priority needs for protection. The central idea is to unify different initiatives, and avoiding overlapping activities and piecemeal priorities. WWF's advances and capabilities in jurisdictional carbon financing aims to pave the way for the eventual implementation of carbon financing initiatives. In addition, to facilitate this the project will delve into an exploration of the enabling conditions required to enable the adoption of a jurisdictional carbon approach, further enhancing the potential for carbon financing in the region and in Vietnam.

Component 2: Sustainable landscape management, biodiversity conservation and application of innovative tools in key globally-important wildlife habitats. This Component will work on the practical validation of a landscape-level model that will take a holistic approach to landscape management, aiming to reconcile the competing needs of wildlife conservation and economic activities across landscapes through experiential learning and ground-truthing. Above mentioned threads to the conservation will be addressed, especially with the local community engagement. Most importantly, it will test a financial mechanism and tap into the investment community's desire to support high-quality and high-impact interventions, as well as match their needs with specific landscape priorities defined through a co-created, fully costed landscape management and business plan for Central Vietnam. In doing so, it will deliver a validated, holistic, fully-funded, landscape-wide strategy for improved management and monitoring of biodiversity and carbon benefits (Outcome 2.1) leading to increased management effectiveness across 731,446 ha for biodiversity conservation within the CVL (Outcome 2.2), enable connectivity of at least at least 50,000 ha through a range of measures (Outcome 2.3) and the adoption of improved integrated conservation and land-use planning measures at identified OECM sites for ecological and community benefits (Outcome 2.4).

A key emphasis will be to deliver a validated, holistic, fully-funded, landscape-wide strategy for improved management and monitoring of biodiversity and carbon benefits, together with a comprehensive gender responsive 5- and 10-year multi-level landscape financing strategy covering priority measures (Output 2.1.1) and supported by a financing plan for the different landscape components with built-in incentives and a crowdsourcing model (Outcome 2.1.2) to operationalize financial partnerships and mobilize support for landscape and biodiversity management and conservation strategies (Output 2.1.3). A complimentary fund for community-based and woman-centric pilot initiative(s) (Output 2.1.4) under a newly established finance mechanism in Central Vietnam will help nurture ownership and accelerate community co-management across the landscape. The integrated set of regulations, policies and guidelines will support decision making to generate aggregated management priorities to serve as roadmap for the conservation and restauration actions to be worked out by the project in demonstrative areas and replicated in other areas once tested through Component 4. Overall management effectiveness, governance and enforcement/monitoring capabilities of PAs, BCAs, OECM sites and Wetland Nature Reserves will be improved through technical assistance and gender equality (Output 2.2.1) Decree 99/2010/ ND-CP and Decree 147/2016-ND-CP, now replaced by the Decree 156/2018/ND-CP and Decree 83/2020/ND-CP, were the first legal framework for PFES applied in forestry sector in Vietnam. The Payment for Wetland Ecosystem Services (PWES) has been acknowledged in the Article 138 of the Vietnam's Environmental Protection Law in 2020. The project will support the implementation of payments for marine and wetland ecosystem services. Then doing the review and evaluate to make recommendations and improve the policy in the future. In particular, the project will develop and implement PWES guidance in TG-CH Wetland Nature Reserve to unlock financial potential of wetland conservation (Output 2.2.2). Emphasis will be given to the application of national criteria to establish corridor connected landscapes and include feasibility studies to study opportunities for enhanced contiguity (Output 2.3.1) based on integrated landscape management principles approaches and innovative planning tools and Decision 523/QD-TTg and will result in the development and implementation of corridor management plans (Output 2.3.2) within the landscape. Similarly, OECM sites will be identified and selected through application of guiding principles (Outputs 2.4.1) for which community and women's engagement innovations for wildlife conservation, landscape management and human wildlife conflict will be tested (Output 2.4.2) to build an effective OECM management mechanism, including data innovations to pull together disparate landscape data managed by different custodians made possible through data sharing agreements, with special attention to livelihood and gender development for forest and wetland dependent communities (Output 2.4.3). The PPG phase will also undertake studies to document and categorize different nature-based solutions and their relevance to biodiversity enhancements in globally relevant landscapes in Central Vietnam.

Component 3: Enhanced climate resilience and corridor connectivity. This component aims to enhance climate resilience and corridor connectivity via restoration of degraded forests, mangroves and important wetlands using nature based solutions. A clear parameters and metrics will be developed for measuring carbon benefits utilizing the best available scientific information. Preliminary assessment indicates that there could be up to 6,273,458 tonnes equivalent mitigated/sequestered over 20 years of carbon sequestered that would be documented and contributed to Vietnam's NDC (Outcome 3.1). Climate vulnerability assessments (Output 3.1.1) aim to identify areas that are most vulnerable to the effects of climate change, and to develop strategies for restoring, managing and protecting these ecosystems in the face of these impacts, recognizing that improved practices from a land degradation perspective and from a climate change mitigation perspective are not always equivalent and therefore, selection will be prioritized on the basis of those identified practices that yield the greatest climate change mitigation potential. Areas selected for restoration based on their carbon sequestration potential and long-term benefits (Output 3.1.3) will be assessed during the PPG, but, will likely be a subset of the 22,000 ha lagoon system located along 68 km coastal area of Thua Thien Hue province. This Output will be designed as a follow-up to Outputs 2.1.2 to 2.1.4 to help realize the long-term vision and planning needs of the Central Vietnam Landscape or complimentary funding and benefit-sharing mechanisms in support of site-based initiatives of landscape restoration and carbon sequestration in and around high-conservation value forest landscapes and/or wetlands to benefit long-term population viability of keystone, and threatened species. The project will implement best practice silvicultural approaches, inclusive of gender considerations (Output 3.1.4)) across 130,532 ha within the CVL (see assumptions underpinning values for Core Indicator 4), to reduce fragmentation in land preparation, soil analysis, selection of appropriate indigenous species, planting and management (including avoiding damage) to build resilience and support biodiversity, enhancing connectivity via forest restoration, management of pests, diseases and fire control, and effective management of age structures and tree densities. The project will also implement best practices in wetland management at key areas in the TG-CH lagoon system and in riparian transitional zones. Each aspect will be supported by capacity building of local communities, ministries, and provincial departments, with the development of local language guidelines and training modules. Finally, the project will implement and demonstrate the nationally-tailored methodology (Output 3.1.5) for measuring carbon stocks under the Emission Reduction Payments Agreement (ERPA); this will be validated at the start or after the finalization of methodology, mid-term and end of project for each target province and centrally-managed municipality. The project will develop guidance on the implementation a mechanism for biodiversity offsets (Output 3.1.2) as an additional financing source for biodiversity conservation. This Output may lead to guidelines and a draft policy framework by the end of the project lifecycle, but unlikely to be tested for replication under Component 2.

Component 4: Awareness raising and knowledge management to improve landscape management. This Component will focus on consolidating and disseminating project and scientific results from the other components as part of the knowledge management and supported by a national- and provincial-level knowledge management platform, anchored through governance mechanisms established under Component 1, so that similar approaches can be implemented elsewhere, resulting communication and knowledge management strategies developed and implemented to share and publicize project's results and advancements (Outcome 4.1). Data and information collated through the experience of implementing collaborative landscape management will be aggregated (Output 4.1.1) to form the basis of a replicable and gender inclusive model for application in other parts of Vietnam and within a transboundary context (i.e., Truong Son range traversing Vietnam and Laos PDR). A gender responsive communication strategy (Output 4.1.2), replication strategy, inclusive of gender considerations, to be developed in at least one other region of Vietnam: the Plain of Reefs, and, at the larger scale, in the Mekong Delta Landscape to be considered during the PPG (Output 4.1.3) and a gender responsive knowledge management plan prioritizing strengthening of existing KM platforms (Output 4.1.4) will be the primary vehicles through which data and information will be transformed into knowledge and improved capacities to build a viable and multi-faceted landscape conservation model.

The proposed project strategically aligns with recent investments and several ongoing initiatives (see subsequent section on coordination and cooperation with ongoing initiatives and projects) in Central Vietnam, leveraging existing frameworks and opportunities for collaborations to enhance impact. Key among these are previous GEF projects in Vietnam, which have

established models for biodiversity conservation and natural resource management, with a particular emphasis on integrating these objectives into socio-economic development. The project will draw on these experiences, particularly in strengthening legal and regulatory frameworks for wildlife protection and exploring sustainable tourism as a means of promoting biodiversity. It is anticipated that ongoing and/or newly-approved GEF-7 projects with overlapping timelines will coordinate through annual work planning and yearly adaptive management meetings to ensure approaches are aligned. The proposed project will also build on a number of WWF projects, and will focus on gleaning best practices in consolidating a landscape model, expanding protected area management, leveraging where possible community engagement approaches and successes and, advancing the development sustainable financing mechanisms. The landscape approach will be informed by the successes and lessons learned from these existing projects, ensuring a comprehensive and cohesive strategy that aligns with regional priorities and leverages existing expertise and find ways to best make use of scarce human and financial resources.

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[1] Includes the centrally-administered municipality of Da Nang.

Coordination and Cooperation with Ongoing Initiatives and Project.

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

No

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 project builds upon a strong baseline of prior GEF investment in Vietnam including:

● Under ADB/GEF-5 project "The Greater Mekong Subregion Biodiversity Conservation Corridor, Phase 2", implemented between June 2015 to December 2020, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE) and three provinces in Central Annamites (Quang Tri, Thua Thien Hue and Quang Nam) have established and implemented a pilot of three biodiversity corridors. Outputs 1.1 and 1.2 are relevant.

● GEF-6 Mainstreaming Natural Resource Management and Biodiversity Conservation Objectives into Socio-Economic Development Planning and Management of Biosphere Reserve in Vietnam, implemented by MONRE and supported by UNDP, will provide a scalable model for mainstreaming biodiversity conservation and natural resources management objectives into governance, planning and management of socio-economic development.

● GEF-6 Strengthening Partnerships to Protect Endangered Wildlife in Vietnam, implemented by MONRE and supported by the World Bank, focuses on strengthening the legal and regulatory framework, and the related implementation capacity for the protection of threatened wildlife, and is relevant under the project's demand reduction component, includes activities to change behavior of key consumer groups for illegal wildlife products and raise industry awareness of the links between tourism and illegal wildlife trade (e.g. ivory purchase in Vietnam's under-the-radar markets by Chinese tourists).

● GEF-7 Sustainable Forest and Forest Land Management in Vietnam's Ba River basin landscape, implemented by the Forest Inventory and Planning Institute (FIPI) of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD), is relevant as it uses the tourism sector as one of its pilot sectors to promote a comprehensive and integrated approach to mainstream land, resource management, and biodiversity conservation into forest management. The latter is particularly important as the project explores ways to bridge PES to marine and wetland habitats.

● GEF-7, Integrated Sustainable Landscape Management in the Mekong Delta of Vietnam, implemented by MONRE and the Institute of Policy and Strategy for Agriculture and Rural Development (IPSARD), supported by the Food and Agriculture Organization provides a model for the development and use of an integrated monitoring and reporting platform to enable the

aggregation of periodic reports, updates, and information from myriad stakeholders and how to harvest related information to enhance decision-making.

● GEF-7 Nature-Based Tourism Project in Quang Binh and Ninh Thuan provinces aims to promote sustainable tourism development and biodiversity conservation in the country. One of the innovative aspects of this project is its focus on integrating biodiversity conservation into tourism master and sectoral planning and development at the destination level. Perhaps most applicable to the GEF-8 Central Vietnam Landscape project will be the development of guidelines for Payment for Marine Ecosystem Services (PMES) that will be piloted in wetland habitats and offer up opportunities for replication and further refinement.

WWF has several projects in Vietnam that are relevant to landscape conservation, demonstrating WWF's commitment to promoting landscape conservation and sustainable land-use practices in Vietnam:

● The WWF NbS Origination Platform is an initiative that aims to facilitate the development of nature-based solutions (NbS) projects to address environmental challenges such as climate change, biodiversity loss, and sustainable development. The platform provides a range of services to support the development of NbS projects, including project identification, design, financing, and monitoring. It also provides access to a network of experts, investors, and other stakeholders to help NbS project developers connect with the resources they need to succeed. It seeks to mainstream the use of nature-based solutions as a key approach to address global environmental challenges and accelerate the transition to a more sustainable future.

● The USAID Biodiversity Conservation and Wildlife Demand Reduction Program, implemented by the World Wildlife Fund, is a program aimed at reducing demand for wildlife products and promoting sustainable biodiversity conservation in Asia, including in Vietnam. The program involves working with local communities, governments, and businesses to promote sustainable production and consumption practices, as well as implementing targeted campaigns to reduce demand for wildlife products and on strengthening legal and policy frameworks related to biodiversity conservation and wildlife trade, as well as supporting the development and implementation of effective law enforcement strategies to combat illegal wildlife trade.

● The Carbon and Biodiversity (CarBi) works in pursuit of maintaining the biodiversity values of two provinces in the Central Annamites Landscape with key objectives to: (i) expand and improve protected area management; (ii) implement national and international wildlife and timber trade frameworks; (iii) community engagement in natural resource management; and (iv) developing sustainable financing mechanism;

● The Dutch Fund for Climate and Development (DFCD) focuses on support to private enterprises as project holders in bankable nature solution projects that are closely linked to resource-dependent communities vulnerable to climate change, such as rattan harvesters, ginseng growers, or smallholder plantation forest growers with FSC certification etc. in the Central Annamite Landscape.

● Forest Landscape Restoration (FLR) program: This program focuses on restoring degraded forest landscapes and promoting sustainable land-use practices to enhance landscape connectivity and promote biodiversity conservation. The program includes a range of activities, including reforestation, agroforestry, and sustainable forest management.

● Strengthening Forest Law Enforcement and Governance (FLEG): This project aims to promote sustainable forest management and combat illegal logging and trade in timber and forest products. The

project includes activities such as capacity building for forest rangers, strengthening law enforcement mechanisms, and promoting sustainable forest certification.

● Sustainable Landscapes and Livelihoods (SLL): This program focuses on promoting sustainable land-use practices and enhancing landscape connectivity to support both biodiversity conservation and local livelihoods. The program includes activities such as agroforestry, sustainable land-use planning, and community-based conservation.

● Mekong Delta Landscape Conservation: This project focuses on promoting sustainable land-use practices and enhancing ecosystem resilience in the Mekong Delta region of Vietnam. The project includes activities such as reforestation, sustainable aquaculture, and community-based conservation.

● WWF has been actively involved in pioneering efforts to establish carbon financing mechanisms worldwide, including in Vietnam. Through strategic partnerships, policy advocacy, and innovative projects, WWF aims to create effective frameworks that incentivize and enable the financing of carbon reduction initiatives, facilitating the transition to a low-carbon future and promoting sustainable landscape conservation practices.

Other projects and initiatives material to the scope of the GEF-8 project:

·   In October 2020, Vietnam's Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development signed a landmark agreement with the Forest Carbon Partnership Fund (FCPF) through the World Bank, opening financing of USD 51.5 million for Vietnam's efforts to reduce carbon emissions from deforestation and forest degradation between now and 2025. Under the Emission Reduction Payments Agreement (ERPA), Vietnam is expected to reduce CO2 emissions by 10.3 million tons in six North Central provinces, with the project potentially being able to leverage its approach under Component 3.

·   The USAID Vietnam Forests and Deltas Program (2012-2017) supported Vietnam's transition to resilient, sustainable development. The program helps put national policies and strategies into practice to respond to environmental change, with a focus on the forestry and agriculture sectors and strengthening livelihoods. Addressing long-term environmental change risks and gender vulnerabilities in both forest and delta landscapes are key program objectives.

·   The USAID/Sustainable Forest Management project aims (2020-2025) to reduce emissions from deforestation, forest degradation, and poor timber plantation management practices in seven provinces in Vietnam (Lao Cai, Son La, Hoa Binh, Thanh Hoa, Nghe An, Quang Tri, and Quang Nam) with the objectives to improve and expand community forest management, increase conservation –friendly enterprise in forest dependent community, increase functionality of law enforcement system against forest crimes, improve forest management practices and mobilize domestic resources for forest management and protection.

This project will learn experience of the above mentioned projects in community forest management, collaborative management, community-based anti-poaching groups, etc., to fill in the gaps, explore possibility of maintaining and scaling-up existing modalities to accelerate their impacts as well as ensure their sustainability. The project will also make efforts to coordinate with the Indo Malay IP to share lessons and best practices under GEF8.

Core Indicators

Indicator 1 Terrestrial protected areas created or under improved management

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
731446.29	0	0	0

Indicator 1.1 Terrestrial Protected Areas Newly created

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
70000	0	0	0

Name of the Protected Area	WDPA ID	IUCN Category	Total Ha (Expected at PIF)	Total Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Total Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Total Ha (Achieved at TE)
TBD			70,000.00			

Indicator 1.2 Terrestrial Protected Areas Under improved Management effectiveness

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Total Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Total Ha (Achieved at TE)
661446.29	0	0	0

Name of the Protected Area	WDPA ID	IUCN Category	Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Total Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Total Ha (Achieved at TE)	METT score (Baseline at CEO Endorsement)	METT score (Achieved at MTR)	METT score (Achieved at TE)
Bac Huong Hoa NR	555594125	Protected area with sustainable use of natural resources	23,456.00						
Bach Ma NP	71309	Protected Landscape/Seascape	37,496.00						
Dakrong NR	10384	Protected area with sustainable use of natural resources	37,666.01						
Dong Chau - Khe Nuoc Trong NR			22,128.94						
Elephant SHCA			18,977.00						

Ke Go NR	61931	Habitat/Species Management Area	24,801.00					
Phong Dien NR	303039	Habitat/Species Management Area	40,789.02					
Phong Nha Ke Bang NP	900883		123,320.78					
Phu Huong NR	10343	Protected Landscape/Seascape	40,186.50					
Pu Hoat NR	303023		34,589.89					
Pu Mat	61595	National Park	93,524.70					
Sao la Quang Nam NR	303100		15,486.00					
Sao la Thua Thien Hue NR	303100		15,324.93					
Song Thanh NP	303066		76,669.68					
Vu Quang NP	10375	National Park	57,029.84					

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)
4400	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)
2,200.00			

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)
2,200.00			

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)
130532	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)
130,532.00			

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

Indicator 6 Greenhouse Gas Emissions Mitigated

Total Target Benefit	(At PIF)	(At CEO Endorsement)	(Achieved at MTR)	(Achieved at TE)
Expected metric tons of CO_2e (direct)	896208	0	0	0
Expected metric tons of CO_2e (indirect)	5377250	0	0	0

Indicator 6.1 Carbon Sequestered or Emissions Avoided in the AFOLU (Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use) sector

Total Target Benefit	(At PIF)	(At CEO Endorsement)	(Achieved at MTR)	(Achieved at TE)
Expected metric tons of CO$_2$e (direct)	896,208			
Expected metric tons of CO$_2$e (indirect)	5,377,250			
Anticipated start year of accounting				
Duration of accounting				

Indicator 6.2 Emissions Avoided Outside AFOLU (Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use) Sector

Total Target Benefit	(At PIF)	(At CEO Endorsement)	(Achieved at MTR)	(Achieved at TE)
Expected metric tons of CO$_2$e (direct)				
Expected metric tons of CO$_2$e (indirect)				
Anticipated start year of accounting				
Duration of accounting				

Indicator 6.3 Energy Saved (Use this sub-indicator in addition to the sub-indicator 6.2 if applicable)

Total Target Benefit	Energy (MJ) (At PIF)	Energy (MJ) (At CEO Endorsement)	Energy (MJ) (Achieved at MTR)	Energy (MJ) (Achieved at TE)
Target Energy Saved (MJ)				

Indicator 6.4 Increase in Installed Renewable Energy Capacity per Technology (Use this sub-indicator in addition to the sub-indicator 6.2 if applicable)

Technology	Capacity (MW) (Expected at PIF)	Capacity (MW) (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Capacity (MW) (Achieved at MTR)	Capacity (MW) (Achieved at TE)

Indicator 11 People benefiting from GEF-financed investments

	Number (Expected at PIF)	Number (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Number (Achieved at MTR)	Number (Achieved at TE)
Female	1,350			
Male	1,650			
Total	**3,000**	**0**	0	**0**

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

Core Indicator 1: A total of 661,446 ha will be realized through improved natural resource management including activities that promote enhanced management of natural resources such as conserving biodiversity, maintaining ecosystems services, strengthening sustainable use of natural resources, mitigating climate change, and/or promoting community participation in natural resource management and monitoring at 15 PAs and verified through annual METT scores and SMART data / patrol reports. Core Indicator 1 will also include 70,000 ha of terrestrial protection forest and wetlands slated for increased protection status for biodiversity conservation under the project via new mechanisms based on due diligence conducted under Component 2.

Core Indicator 3: Based on preliminary consultations during the PIF stage and realistic calculations grounded in WWF Vietnam's experience in both terrestrial and wetland restoration activities, it is assumed that one-tenth of the total hectares of the TG-CH lagoon system will be under restoration together with an equal number of terrestrial forest across the Central Vietnam Landscape with 4,400 hectares in total slated for restoration under Component 3.

Core Indicator 4: Based on consultations with executing partners during the formulation of the PIF, it is assumed that a total of 130,532 ha will be under improved practices within the Central Vietnam Landscape outside existing PAs. This amount is calculated on the basis that the project will target 15% of the total 870,217 ha rich / highly intact protection forest (51,808 ha), medium / moderately intact protection forest (15,519 ha), poor / sparsely intact protection forest (57,997 ha) and very poor / severely degraded protection forest (5,208 ha) protection forests within the CVL. These figures and the specific areas where improved management practices will take place (with corresponding methods for each), will be revisited during the PPG phase once due diligence and more in-depth consultations have occurred, as well as once a detailed landscape report is developed and validated.

Core Indicator 6: The GHG emissions reductions resulting from the project were estimated using the Ex-Act tool version and a period of 20 years (5 years project and 15 years capitalization phase). Reference is made to the figure below articulating -6,273,458 tonnes of CO2 equivalent mitigated/sequestered, calculated using the FAO EXACT tool. This includes -896,208 direct over the course of the project and -5,377,250 direct (post project), with the total being -6,273,458 over a 20-year accrual period.

Multi-dimensional approaches have been followed to underlying logic to justify target levels for indicators. From the implementation of projects and institutional works, there is a large amount of evidence available on literatures and reports that helps to serve as a benchmark and baseline data to judge or estimate the target levels of the indicators. These include expert knowledge, document reviews, referring web-based information, consultation with the relevant stakeholder who are engaged in the implementation of protected area management both at national and site level. The different government initiatives and commitments including policy framework, institutional capacity, budget allocation, infrastructure and manpower have been taken into consideration. In addition, information has been gathered from different stakeholders including the private sector, NGOs, and communities. Moreover, country commitments for international agreements have also been considered for identifying the indicators.

By safeguarding the CVL and with it, the Central Annamites and key forests and wildlife within the Indo-Burma hotspot, the project will generate global environmental benefits in multiple GEF focal areas with emphasis being placed on biodiversity conservation and addressing Climate Change while simultaneously advancing the Government of Vietnam's main landscape objectives within its NBSAP, as well as its commitments to a few major international environmental conventions. The natural resource management practices of communities participating have the potential to impact positively or negatively some of the country's most environmentally fragile and fragmented areas. Vietnam's unique, globally important ecosystems are at risk of serious irreversible degradation and with it, their ecological functions. At the same time, it must be recalled that, although environmental protection is a priority in Vietnam, resources are scarce and meeting whole landscape needs. Therefore, incremental GEF financing will be necessary to ensure that local development plans integrate into broader landscape ones, and a framework is established to unlock greater financial flows to financing a common landscape conservation vision. GEF support will be provided to strengthen the institutional and legal framework for centralized landscape planning and management.

For further information on the global significance of the targeted landscape see information from WWF Vietnam data at: https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/6e985316b63945efa1da17aa42ff67ed

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	Drought has been in recent years the major cause of forest and wetland decline in the project region, carrying a substantial increase in degradation and decline of landscape integrity and its ecological functions. Scientific evidence show that the forest canopy and wetland management are effective buffers which is able to reduce the effects of drought and high temperature under the canopy. The project will carry out a more in-depth climate assessment during preparation, and will define water and wetland management techniques and drought resistant varieties in response to the risks as part of the PPG due diligence.
Environment and Social	Moderate	The project region is not characterized by overt socio-environmental conflicts over resources, and the scope of the intervention is prone to soften the existing ones in view of the triple wins and collaborative approach of the CVL, which depends on healthy forests and wetlands to thrive, and on the opportunity to preserve and recover the remains of forest assets through the multiple use landscape management. Nonetheless, the project will carry out a socio-economic assessment as well as stakeholder and gender action plans

		to minimize social issues. If ethnic minorities are present in the project area, the project will follow FPIC procedures.
Political and Governance	Moderate	Currently, the sustainable management of natural resources is a consensus among political forces in Vietnam, anchored through strong MEA and national commitments in the country's NBSAP. The project will operate in an area with potential risks coming from actual or potential attrition between different governmental bodies and private sector interests. In order to minimize this risk, the project will follow a participatory and consensus building approach during its design. Other political risks, at the time of project execution, might arise which will be triaged and mitigations put in place accordingly.
Macro-economic	Low	While there are pressures to modernize through economic development and development projects, the project is purpose-built to include the private sector and other public entities to participate in landscape planning and increase the financial flows towards unified landscape objectives based on ecological goods and service needs. The intervention logic is itself a mitigation to macro-economic pressures.
Strategies and Policies	Low	This PIF has referenced a number of Laws, Decrees and Decisions that require strengthening as a mitigation measure to ensure gaps related to cohesive landscape planning and financing mechanisms to do so are filled. As a mitigation the project will close loopholes and ensure that guidelines are harmonized and supported by instructions on how

		they ought to be implemented. Capacity building as a cross-cutting priority will further mitigate strategy and policy risks. More due diligence will occur during the PPG.
Technical design of project or program	Moderate	There is a potential risk, albeit moderate, to the main governmental entities to push project objectives and water down the intervention logic in ways that are not fully compatible with the scope of the project design, resulting in funding being spread thin across so many priorities that those with the biggest impact will suffer. WWF-USA and WWF-VN will ensure that during the PPG that the GEF conditions of the grant are met. Annual work plans during implementation will be approved by the steering committee and vetted against the original scope of the design.
Institutional capacity for implementation and sustainability	Low	The potential executing partner, Nature and Biodiversity Conservation Agency (NBCA) has demonstrated during the PIF to have a suitable profile to afford the leadership and has strong underpinnings related to the scope of the project. If needed, the project will support capacity building of the key stakeholders and provide readiness training if required to demystify GEF implementation policies. A capacity assessment during the PPG will underscore any gaps upon which training efforts will be designed.
Fiduciary: Financial Management and Procurement	Low	The prospective executing partner MONRE has a strong capacity of financial and procurement record with other GEF initiatives having been completed or in flight. A due diligence assessment will be undertaken during project development.

Stakeholder Engagement	Low	Due to aggressive timelines of the PIF a fulsome stakeholder engagement was not conducted, however, WWF VN and NBCA have undertaken numerous consultations prior to PIF development related to the NbS Origination Platform. Reference is made to Information Document 2: Stakeholder Assessment, accompanying the PIF for the salient stakeholders that will likely be involved. There is a negligible risk that important stakeholders may not buy into the project approach as they were not involved during its ideation. Therefore, the stakeholder assessment will need to be validated at the outset of the PPG as a mitigation to build collective ownership. With respect to ethnic minorities, since project activities are not defined at a granular level, it is not possible to define whether ethnic minorities are affected. A detailed mapping and stakeholder engagement plan will be developed during project preparation.
Other		
Financial Risks for NGI projects		
Overall Risk Rating	Moderate	

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 proposed project is aligned with the GEF-8 Biodiversity and Land Degradation Focal areas as follows: Biodiversity Focal Area (BDFA). The project will follow a landscape approach to improve conservation, sustainable use and restoration of the Central Vietnam Landscape across 6 provinces and 1 centrally-administered municipality (BDFA Objective 1). Specifically, the project will support ecosystem restoration and biodiversity mainstreaming into agriculture, forestry and wetland management sectors (BD1-3) by financing (i) testing and putting in place appropriate measures to improve contiguity of landscapes and ecosystem services

and promoting consultative integrated spatial land use planning activities to optimize production without undermining biodiversity; and (ii) will support the development of a stronger policy and regulatory framework that supports measures farmers efforts to sustainably use biodiversity and conserve forests

It is important to note that while nature-based solutions predominantly resonate to the GEF in the context of Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation, this is very much also a biodiversity-oriented project, with the lion's share of funding earmarked from the biodiversity focal area, and therefore, nature-based solutions are expected to be leveraged to deliver biodiversity benefits noted above. These will be studied and documented in greater detail during the PPG stage based on due diligence from technical studies.

Climate Change (CCM). The project is aligned to the Climate Change focal area, specifically CCM 1.4- as it will support mitigation options in high carbon ecosystems and in the agriculture sector, through the application of nature-based solutions. The interventions supported the project will generate significant co-benefits, notably in terms of climate adaptation and improved livelihoods for local communities, enhanced biodiversity and reduced degradation of terrestrial forests, mangroves and wetlands. Through Component 3, the project will include the protection and restoration of these ecosystems. In the targeted areas, the nature-based solutions will demonstrate a high potential in terms of reducing carbon loss and providing continued or enhanced natural CO2 removal.

The project is aligned with the following national and global strategies and plans that link directly to global conventions and related initiatives:
· Vietnam's Biodiversity Master Plan calls for a combination of conservation methods, balancing preservation with sustainable resource use, and complying with biodiversity laws. The plan also aims to ensure safety, mitigate depletion, and mobilize all resources for equitable stakeholder interests.
· Vietnam National Capacity Self-Assessment (NCSA) under UNCBD, UNFCCC, UNCCD: recognizes the need for multi-stakeholder consensus and decision-making, interaction of capacity building in wider efforts to achieve sustainability, promotion of partnerships and collaboration to maximize impacts and create synergies, etc. that can have a positive impact in conservation of species, habitats and ecosystem services in the Central Vietnam Landscape.
· National Adaptation Program of Action (NAPA), Draft 2021-2030: The project will contribute directly to four of the priority climate change adaptation areas of activity, namely: securing climate smart agricultural and livestock production practices; mainstreaming of climate change into development and implementation of strategies and plans, and strengthening capacity building to respond to climate risks.
· The project will contribute to Target(s) 2, 3 and 4 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework by contributing to the 30% target area of degraded terrestrial, inland water, and coastal and marine ecosystems under effective restoration, in order to enhance biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services, ecological integrity and connectivity. This will be achieved through the project's integrated landscape approach and the use of connectivity measures including corridors and OECMs, among other conservation tools to be studied under Component 1. Fewer fragmented forests and islands of biodiversity will have positive conservation impacts on known threatened species, the recovery and conservation of species, in particular threatened species, to significantly reduce extinction risk.

The project also contributes to the post-2015 development agenda, notably with respect to the following Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):
- SDG 15 Protect, restore, and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss, by supporting targets 15.1 (conservation and sustainable management of forests in Vietnam, including PA networks), 15.2

(sustainable forest management), 15.3 (reducing desertification, restoring degraded land) and 15.5 (reduced degradation of natural habitats).

The project also aligns with and contributes to the following Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework targets:

Kunming-Montreal GBF Target	Alignment Statement
Target 1: Ensure that all areas are under participatory, integrated and biodiversity inclusive spatial planning and/or effective management processes addressing land- and sea-use change, to bring the loss of areas of high biodiversity importance, including ecosystems of high ecological integrity, close to zero by 2030, while respecting the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities.	The proposed GEF-8 project in Central Vietnam aligns with Target 1 by prioritizing participatory and integrated spatial planning at the whole landscape level, aiming to significantly reduce the loss of high biodiversity areas and ecosystems. It emphasizes the involvement of local communities and indigenous peoples in management processes, respecting their rights. This approach is designed to maintain ecological integrity and support biodiversity conservation efforts, aligning with the goal of minimizing biodiversity loss by 2030.
Target 2: Ensure that by 2030 at least 30 per cent of areas of degraded terrestrial, inland water, and marine and coastal ecosystems are under effective restoration, in order to enhance biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services, ecological integrity and connectivity.	The proposed GEF-8 project is closely aligned with Target 2, as it includes a significant focus on the restoration of degraded ecosystems, including terrestrial and inland water (wetland) areas. By implementing nature-based solutions and prioritizing ecological integrity and connectivity, the project aims to enhance biodiversity, ecosystem functions, and services. This strategy is targeted to cover a substantial portion of the region's ecosystems, contributing to the goal of effectively restoring at least 30% of degraded areas by 2030.
Target 3: Ensure and enable that by 2030 at least 30 per cent of terrestrial and inland water areas, and of marine and coastal areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services, are effectively conserved and managed through ecologically representative, well-connected and equitably governed systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, recognizing indigenous and traditional territories, where applicable, and integrated into wider landscapes, seascapes and the ocean, while ensuring	The proposed GEF-8 landscape project supports Target 3 by focusing on the effective conservation and management of a substantial portion of terrestrial and inland / coastal wetlands. It emphasizes the establishment of ecologically representative and well-connected systems of protected areas and other conservation measures. These efforts

that any sustainable use, where appropriate in such areas, is fully consistent with conservation outcomes, recognizing and respecting the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities, including over their traditional territories.	are integrated into broader landscapes and seascapes, with a strong commitment to recognizing and respecting the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities, including their traditional territories. This approach ensures that conservation outcomes are harmoniously balanced with sustainable use, where appropriate, within these areas.
Target 4: Ensure urgent management actions to halt human induced extinction of known threatened species and for the recovery and conservation of species, in particular threatened species, to significantly reduce extinction risk, as well as to maintain and restore the genetic diversity within and between populations of native, wild and domesticated species to maintain their adaptive potential, including through in situ and ex situ conservation and sustainable management practices, and effectively manage human-wildlife interactions to minimize human-wildlife conflict for coexistence.	The proposed GEF-8 landscape project aligns with Target 4 by implementing urgent management actions aimed at halting human-induced extinctions of known threatened species. The project's focus on the recovery and conservation of threatened species, particularly through habitat restoration and connectivity, aims to significantly reduce their extinction risk. These include saola (*Pseudoryx nghetinhensis - CR*), large antlered muntjac (*Muntiacus vuquangensis -* CR), Truong Son muntjac (*Muntiacus truongsonensis -* DD), Owston's civet (*Chrotogale owstoni -* EN), crested argus (*Rheinardia ocellata -* CR), and Annamite striped rabbit (*Nesolagus timminsi -* EN); as well as other species of high conservation value including gibbons (*Nomascus annamenis*), red and grey shanked douc langurs (*Pygathrix spp*), and several species of pheasant (*Lophura spp*). Additionally, it prioritizes maintaining and restoring the genetic diversity of native species and effectively managing human-wildlife interactions, promoting coexistence and the sustainable management of biodiversity.
Target 12: Significantly increase the area and quality, and connectivity of, access to, and benefits from green and blue spaces in urban and densely populated areas sustainably, by mainstreaming the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, and ensure biodiversity-inclusive urban	The proposed GEF-8 landscape project in Central Vietnam supports Target 12 as its geographic scope transects 6 provinces and an urban center, thereby focusing on the

planning, enhancing native biodiversity, ecological connectivity and integrity, and improving human health and well-being and connection to nature, and contributing to inclusive and sustainable urbanization and to the provision of ecosystem functions and services.	enhancement of green and blue spaces in urban and densely populated areas. By exploring different models of landscape conservation, it implicitly integrates conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity into urban planning, thereby increasing the area, quality, and connectivity of these spaces. The project's approach is designed to improve ecological integrity and connectivity, contributing to better human health and well-being, and fostering a stronger connection to nature. This aligns with the goal of inclusive and sustainable urbanization, enhancing native biodiversity and providing vital ecosystem functions and services.
Target 19: Substantially and progressively increase the level of financial resources from all sources, in an effective, timely and easily accessible manner, including domestic, international, public and private resources, in accordance with Article 20 of the Convention, to implement national biodiversity strategies and action plans, mobilizing at least $200 billion per year by 2030, including by: (a) Increasing total biodiversity related international financial resources from developed countries, including official development assistance, and from countries that voluntarily assume obligations of developed country Parties, to developing countries, in particular the least developed countries and small island developing States, as well as countries with economies in transition, to at least $20 billion per year by 2025, and to at least $30 billion per year by 2030; (b) Significantly increasing domestic resource mobilization, facilitated by the preparation and implementation of national biodiversity finance plans or similar instruments according to national needs, priorities and circumstances; (c) Leveraging private finance, promoting blended finance, implementing strategies for raising new and additional resources, and encouraging the private sector to invest in biodiversity, including through impact funds and other instruments; (d) Stimulating innovative schemes such as payment for ecosystem services, green bonds, biodiversity offsets and credits, and benefit-sharing mechanisms, with environmental and social safeguards;	The project will support development of a multi-stakeholder, long-term vision for the landscape, and bring in public and private sector funding for improved management across the landscape to deliver this vision and generate triple wins for nature, climate, and people.

(e) Optimizing co-benefits and synergies of finance targeting the biodiversity and climate crises; (f) Enhancing the role of collective actions, including by indigenous peoples and local communities, Mother Earth centric actions and non-market-based approaches including community based natural resource management and civil society cooperation and solidarity aimed at the conservation of biodiversity; (g) Enhancing the effectiveness, efficiency and transparency of resource provision and use.	
Target 22: Ensure the full, equitable, inclusive, effective and gender-responsive representation and participation in decision-making, and access to justice and information related to biodiversity by indigenous peoples and local communities, respecting their cultures and their rights over lands, territories, resources, and traditional knowledge, as well as by women and girls, children and youth, and persons with disabilities and ensure the full protection of environmental human rights defenders.	The proposed GEF-8 project in Central Vietnam aligns with Target 22 by ensuring the full, equitable, inclusive, and gender-responsive participation of indigenous peoples, local communities, women, youth, and persons with disabilities in decision-making processes related to biodiversity. It respects their cultural rights, lands, territories, and traditional knowledge, and emphasizes access to justice and information. More explicit connections to this target are envisioned during the PPG as the project undertakes rigorous due diligence and deeper consultations with communities.

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).

Yes

Were the following stakeholders consulted during project identification phase:

Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities: Yes

Civil Society Organizations: Yes

Private Sector: Yes

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

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). Reference is made to Table 3 "Roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders for implementation of the project" contained in Information Document 2 (Annex J): Stakeholder Assesmsent, included as supplementary information to this PIF. Reference is also made to Tables 4, 5 and 6 within the Stakeholder Assessment which lists the consultations undertaken during the PIF development.

Per discussions during the PIF and further conversations that will formalize implementation arrangements during the PIF, the Project will be implemented by the Nature and Biodiversity Conservation Agency* (NBCA) (*Subject to the capacity assessment carried out by the GEF Implementing Agency, as appropriate) under the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE). This is consistent with the Letter of Endorsement from the GEF Operational Focal Point. As noted above indicative roles and responsibilities have been documented in Table 3 of the Stakeholder Assessment in Annex J.

During the PPG stage, comprehensive assessment and analysis of key local industry and private players, their impacts/dependency on ecosystems as well as means to engage the private sector would be made to ensure the collaboration of the private sector with the provincial government towards implementation of landscape conservation approach to protect biodiversity, reduce climate change vulnerability other impacts to ecosystems in the targeted landscapes of Central Vietnam. These would include: (i) identification and assessment of potential financial mechanism and investment opportunities for landscape and biodiversity conservation in Central Vietnam; (ii) providing recommendations and inputs for 5 and 10-year multi-level landscape financing strategy; (iii) identifying and supporting feasibility studies and development of profiles for establishment of new OECMs and corridors; (iv) developing safeguards and environmental actions for these businesses that integrates best practices; (v) capacity building for enhancing co-management practices with businesses and the effective enforcement and monitoring of business outcomes; and (vi) co-financing to support local livelihood. Reference is made to Table 6 in Annex H for a list of private sector entities active in the project landscape who will be consulted as part of the PPG.

In terms of private-public partnerships, the project will seek opportunities to engage the private sector in promotion of corporate social responsibility (CSR) and sustainable businesses and practices to enhance green job creation, social welfare and contribution to local development. Partnership arrangements and co-financing commitments of private sector will be finalized during the PPG stage. At PPG stage, efforts will be made to include activities that integrate biodiversity conservation practices into the design, planning development and management of business products and services and into supply chain management, with the recognition that the private sector realizes that minimization of their negative impacts and find ways to help promotion conservation and sustainable development will be in their long-term interests and responsibility.

(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 ($)
WWF-US	GET	Viet Nam	Biodiversity	BD STAR Allocation: BD-1	Grant	7,650,000.00	688,500.00	8,338,500.00
WWF-US	GET	Viet Nam	Climate Change	CC STAR Allocation: CCM-1-4	Grant	1,350,000.00	121,500.00	1,471,500.00
Total GEF Resources ($)						**9,000,000.00**	**810,000.00**	**9,810,000.00**

Project Preparation Grant (PPG)

Is Project Preparation Grant requested?

true

PPG Amount ($)

200000

PPG Agency Fee ($)

18000

GEF Agency	Trust Fund	Country/ Regional/ Global	Focal Area	Programming of Funds	Grant / Non-Grant	PPG($)	Agency Fee($)	Total PPG Funding($)
WWF-US	GET	Viet Nam	Biodiversity	BD STAR Allocation: BD-1	Grant	170,000.00	15,300.00	185,300.00
WWF-US	GET	Viet Nam	Climate Change	CC STAR Allocation: CCM-1-4	Grant	30,000.00	2,700.00	32,700.00
Total PPG Amount ($)						**200,000.00**	**18,000.00**	**218,000.00**

Please provide justification

Sources of Funds for Country Star Allocation

GEF Agency	Trust Fund	Country/ Regional/ Global	Focal Area	Sources of Funds	Total($)
WWF-US	GET	Viet Nam	Biodiversity	BD STAR Allocation	8,523,800.00
WWF-US	GET	Viet Nam	Climate Change	CC STAR Allocation	1,504,200.00
Total GEF Resources					**10,028,000.00**

Indicative Focal Area Elements

Programming Directions	Trust Fund	GEF Project Financing($)	Co-financing($)
BD-1-1	GET	6,650,000.00	47000000
BD-1-3	GET	1,000,000.00	1000000
CCM-1-4	GET	1,350,000.00	25000000
Total Project Cost		**9,000,000.00**	**73,000,000.00**

Indicative Co-financing

Sources of Co-financing	Name of Co-financier	Type of Co-financing	Investment Mobilized	Amount($)
Recipient Country Government	Goverment of Viet Nam (NBCA)	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	39250000
GEF Agency	WWF US	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	1476917
GEF Agency	WWF US	Grant	Investment mobilized	412000
Civil Society Organization	WWF Denmark, WWF Vietnam, WWF US	Grant	Investment mobilized	23575083
Civil Society Organization	WWF Vietnam	Grant	Investment mobilized	766000
Private Sector	IKEA	Grant	Investment mobilized	320000
Donor Agency	USAID	Grant	Investment mobilized	7200000
Total Co-financing				**73,000,000.00**

Describe how any "Investment Mobilized" was identified

Investment mobilized has been identified as the following:

• $412,000 grant to WWF-US from Apple to cover direct and indirect personnel costs for the Forest, Climate, and Private Sector Engagement teams for work in Central Annamite Landscape for the NBS Origination Platform

• $23,575,083 of funding via secured and anticipated mobilization of resources by WWF Denmark, WWF Vietnam and WWF US from public and private sector sources for the NbS Origination Platform for the Central Vietnam Landscape

• $766,000 from an Apple grant to WWF Vietnam to be spent in Central Annamite Landscape

• $320,000 (to be confirmed) grant from IKEA for work in Central Annamite Landscape

• $7,200,000 USAID funding through WWF Vietnam and partners for the Biodiversity Conservation Action project that will end in 2025.

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)
Nguyen Duc Thuan	Director, Vietnam Environment Protection Fund	Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment	10/17/2023
Nguyen Duc Thuan	Director, Vietnam Environment Protection Fund	Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment	11/16/2023

ANNEX C: PROJECT LOCATION

Please provide geo-referenced information and map where the project interventions will take place
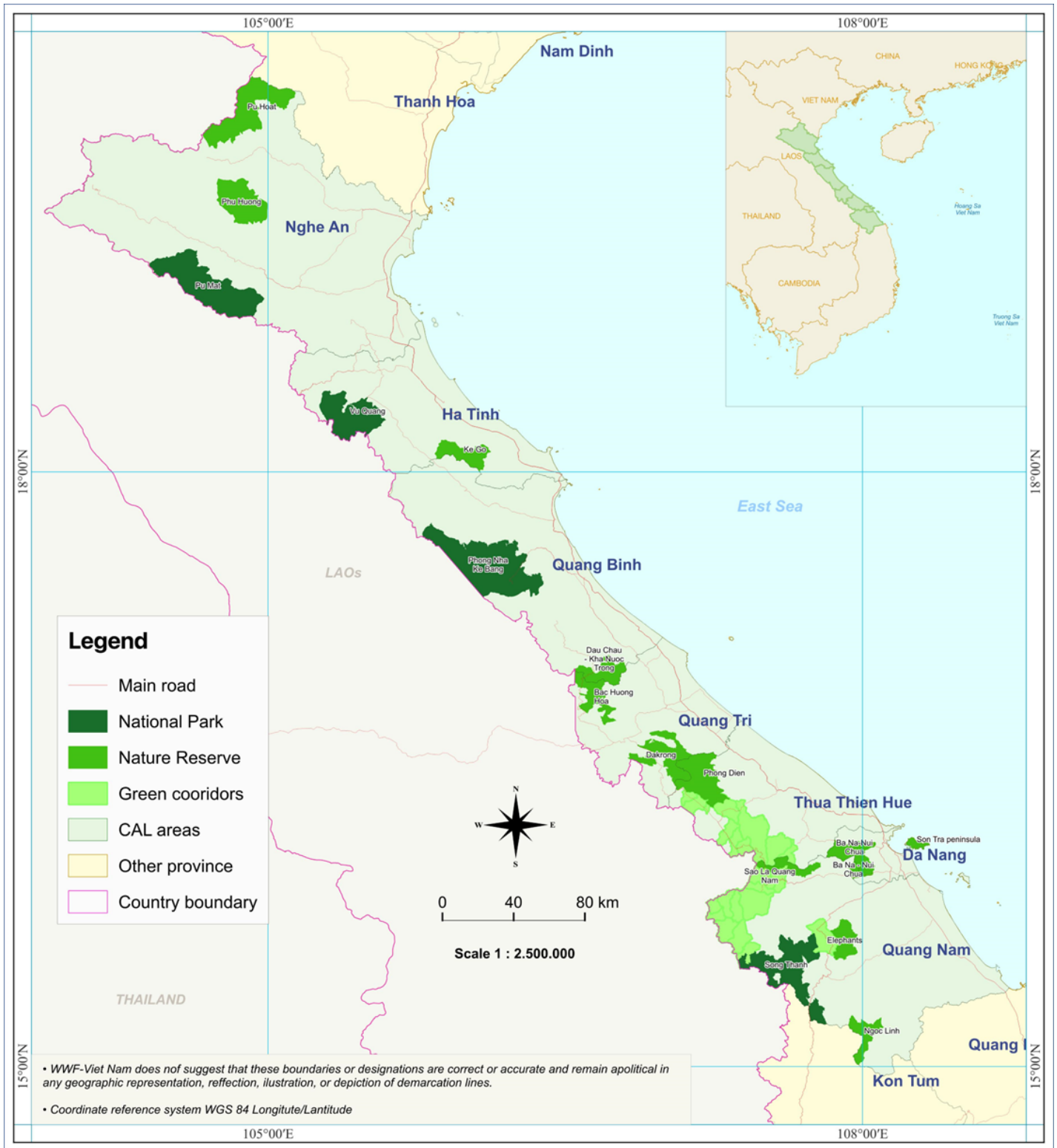
ANNEX D: ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL SAFEGUARDS SCREEN AND RATING

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

Title

ANNEX E: RIO MARKERS

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

ANNEX F: TAXONOMY WORKSHEET

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Influencing Models	Strengthen Institutional Capacity	Convene multi-stakeholder alliances	Demonstrate Innovative Approaches
Stakeholders	Indigenous Peoples	Private Sector	Local Communities
Capacity, Knowledge and Research	Capacity Development	Knowledge Generation and Exchange	Knowledge and Learning
Gender Equality	Gender Mainstreaming	Gender Result Areas	Beneficiaries
Focal Area/Theme	Biodiversity	Protected Areas and Landscapes	Mainstreaming