



Central Asia Water and Land Nexus (CAWLN) for Ecosystem Restoration, Improved Natural Resource Management and Increased Resilience

Review PIF and Make a recommendation

Basic project information

GEF ID

11378

Countries

Regional (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan)

Project Name

Central Asia Water and Land Nexus (CAWLN) for Ecosystem Restoration, Improved Natural Resource Management and Increased Resilience

Agencies

FAO

Date received by PM

10/17/2023

Review completed by PM

11/10/2023

Program Manager

Taylor Henshaw

Focal Area

Multi Focal Area

Project Type

PFD

GEF-8 PROJECT IDENTIFICATION FORM (PIF) REVIEW SHEET

1. General Program Information

a) Is the Program Information table correctly filled, including specifying adequate executing partners?

Secretariat's Comments

Please provide responses to [upstream](#) comments and resubmit. Thank you

Upstream Comment 1: The PFD needs to be simplified. The text is much too long and lacks precision. Some key messages about the program are lost deep in the text.

8th of November 2023 (thenshaw): General Program Information: Yes

(1) *Child Project Executing Entities will be selected in the PPG phase. However, as noted below, institutional arrangements still need to be captured, including an organogram depicting roles, responsibilities and decision making processes.

Please enter Executing Entity name and type as per child projects? concept notes if information is available.

(2) Program Commitment Deadline should be 8/9/2025:

(3) General Comments:

(i) The use of terms comment still stands. It would be helpful to include the entire definitions annex toward the beginning of the Program Overview section to provide clarity for the reader.

(ii) Please conduct a sweeping edit of the document, as there are a number of important typos. Please also increase the font size of the submission text. Please consider more sub-headings to clarify messaging.

(iii) The coordination child project title is "Coordinated approach for Land Restoration in Vulnerable Ecosystems of Central Asia" and the program title includes "restoration" in the title. Yet the program is delivering a mere 1,305 ha of restoration. This needs to be revisited. The coordination project title is also not representative of other aspects of the program title. Please explain.

26th of November 2023 (thenshaw):

(1) Addressed.

(2) Addressed.

(3) (i) Addressed.

(ii) Not addressed. There are still a number of typos that disjoint sentences. Please address.

(iii) Addressed.

28th of November 2023 (thenshaw):

(3)(ii) Addressed.

Agency's Comments

28 November:

(3) (ii) Another through proofreading and sweeping editing has been conducted and the text is updated.

24 November:

1) Executing Entities will be agreed upon during the PPG phase. 2) Program Commitment Deadline is updated as 8/9/2025. 3) (i) The terms are defined. While the concepts used for the program WLN (Water Land Nexus) and IWM (Integrated Watershed Management) as the core concepts for the program are defined in the rationale, the other terminologies such as SLM, LDN and SFM are defined in the program description as they are approaches used in the execution of the program based on national preferences. (ii) A general edit/proofreading of the document has been conducted, font sizes are increased and additional sub-headings are included to clarify the messaging. (iii) The core indicators for the whole program has been updated. Regarding the coordination project title, it emphasizes the coordination aspect of the project, with a specific highlight on land restoration as per countries' common expectation for

support and sharing of good practices and experiences for land restoration as a means to achieve the overall program goals. Mention of the "Vulnerable Ecosystems" points out to the multiple layers of drivers for degradation of natural ecosystems, as well as the consideration and mainstreaming of the Water-Land Nexus Approach within the scope of the coordination project's work. The objective and description of the child project will emphasize all aspects of the program to strengthen what may be missing from the title.

4 November:

The text was shortened in accordance with the requirements given, highlighting a few key major points and dropping minor ones.

Correspondingly, the PFD was simplified with the priority given to the major points.

b) Are the Rio Markers for CCM, CCA, BD and LD correctly selected, if applicable?

Secretariat's Comments

8th of November 2023 (thenshaw): Yes

Agency's Comments

2. Program Summary

a) Does the program summary concisely describe the problem to be addressed, the program objective and the strategies to deliver the GEBs or adaptation benefits and other key expected outcomes?

b) Is the program's geographical coverage explicit, as well as the covered sectors? Does the summary explain how the program is transformative or innovative?

Secretariat's Comments

Upstream Comment 2: The Program Summary is very general and needs to be reimagined. The Project Summary makes use of a whole set of potentially relevant terms ? from nature-based solutions to transformative change and from the Paris Agreement to satellite monitoring for evidence-based decision-making ? but is not very clear why all these matter, what the exact problem is, how the problem is going to be solved (with all the different approaches mentioned) and what the specific impact (in the region and/or global environmental benefit) will be; e.g. ?a notable objective is to catalyse transformative change? is not very specific or informative. How is this program unique from what was done before? How will it succeed when other interventions have been less impactful?

8th of November 2023 (thenshaw): The summary text is improved but still needs substantial revision.

(a) (i) In the opening paragraphs, please be very precise on what the drivers of environmental degradation are and what the barriers are that the program will strive to overcome.

(ii) Why is a programmatic approach necessary? Why is a unified strategy necessary? How will addressing the environmental problems through a program deliver a range of impacts that single investments would not be able to achieve? What are the program outcomes? Please explain the program structure, including the role of the coordination project and the objectives of the national projects and how all seven child projects will contribute to overcoming the barriers. Please include the programmatic approach schematic in the program summary. It is helpful for the purpose of quickly explaining the program structure.

To help establish the programmatic approach, please bring up language from the program rationale section (i.e.):

"Given the **transboundary** nature of many of these environmental problems and time required for ecosystems restoration, behavioral change and resilience buildup, there is a pressing need to foster cooperation among the riparian countries now in the hope of tangible results in the near future. Nature and ecosystem services don't respect barriers and the lack of integrated and aligned actions from the five CA governments have aggravated the situation. The proposed program is a reflection of the five governments' commitment for strengthening the ongoing behavior change in all the countries to enhance cooperation and work towards a common approach."

(iii) Why is the GEF increment needed? How is the program really transformational?

(iv) The program objective should be precisely stated, and should be slightly recast (see comment in next section).

(v) Please include the specific Core Indicator targets in the project summary.

i.e., "this project will place _____ area of landscapes under improved practices"....

As noted below, the Core Indicator targets are much too low for this size of investment. Please increase targets significantly, with more on the ground activities to deliver against the targets.

(vi) To establish geographic interconnection (and to help explain the reason for a programmatic approach), please note that the Amu Darya and Syr Darya make up the Aral Sea Basin. Please also identify the five basin riparians and how they are geographically positioned in the basin.

(vii) Please briefly define the Aral Sea Disaster for the reader and define further in project description (see comment below).

(viii) It would be helpful to include the types of stakeholders that will be engaged/benefit from the program.

(ix) The sentence "Desertification, LD, and inefficient water management are recognized as regional environmental challenges in CA". The way this sentence is phrased the "environmental challenge" is not "inefficient water management", it should probably be "water insecurity". Inefficient water management is the driver. Please spell out LD

(x) Please include "water security" as a fundamental pillar of this investment. Water security should be reflected more prominently, perhaps in the objective or even the program title.

(b) The covered sectors description is missing. Please include.

(ii) The transformation aspect should be reflected through addressing the comments above. But please briefly mention how this program is innovative. How is this program unique from what was done before? How will it succeed when other interventions have been less impactful?

(iii) In the summary, please highlight the co-financing that the program will leverage.

*Addressing these comments will exceed the summary description word count maximum. However, it is important that these elements are efficiently captured up front. Please consider utilizing headings to concisely convey these messages.

26th of November 2023 (thenshaw):

(a) (i) Addressed.

(ii) Addressed.

(iii) Addressed.

(iv) Addressed.

(v) Addressed.

(vi) Addressed.

(vii) Addressed.

(viii) Addressed.

(ix) Addressed.

(x) Addressed.

(b) (i) Addressed.

(ii) Addressed.

(iii) Addressed.

Agency's Comments

24 November:

(a) (i) Program Summary has been updated to state precisely the drivers of the environmental degradation and the barriers the program will strive to overcome. (ii) The significance and need for the programmatic approach, a unified strategy, the range of impacts that this will bring, program's outcomes, structure; the role the coordination project will play, objectives of all the child project are expressed clearly and the quoted text referring to the need for the programmatic approach at the regional level is brought up to the Program Summary section. (iii) The benefit of GEF incremental support and the transformational aspect of the program are indicated explicitly. (iv) Program objective is adjusted according to the comment in the next section and included in the Program Summary section with the Indicative Program Overview Table (Table 1). (v) Core Indicator targets are revised and included in the Program Summary section. (vi) The riparian countries and how they are geographically positioned in the basin; as well as the fact that Amu Darya and Syr Darya river basins together make up the Aral Sea Basin are indicated. (vii) The Aral Sea Disaster is mentioned and further defined in the Rationale section as the review comment below in the relevant section. (viii) Information on the types of stakeholders is included. (ix) The specific sentence is removed. (x) The emphasis on 'water security' has been increased, prioritizing it in the Program Objective, focusing on it as the initial factor in the problem analysis and including an analysis on the feedback loops diminishing water security in the root causes/drivers section. (b) (i) The covered sectors are listed. (ii) The innovative dimensions of the program and the approach that it is proposing are stated explicitly. The ways in which the shortcomings of previous interventions are considered in ensuring higher possibility for achieving lasting and transformatory results are also indicated. (iii) Identified co-financing amount is included in the Program Summary section.

4 November:

The program summary has been updated.

3 Indicative Program Overview

- a) Is the program objective statement concise, clear and measurable?**
- b) Are the components and outcomes sound, appropriate and sufficiently clear to achieve the**

program objective and the core indicators per the stated Theory of Change?

c) Are gender dimensions, knowledge management, and M&E included within the program components and appropriately funded?

d) Are the GEF program Financing and Co-Financing contributions to PMC proportional?

e) Is the PMC equal to or below 5%? If above 5%, is the justification acceptable?

Secretariat's Comments

Upstream Comment 3: The proposed program could use quite a bit of focus and a better articulation of how it is both necessary and sufficient to achieve its overall goal. Please see STAP's [ToC primer](#) and [STAP's PIF screening guidelines](#) for guidance.

Upstream Comment 4: This overall lack of clarity is embodied in the objective which is also very long and seems to want to encompass everything, everywhere, all at once. Enhancing the resilience and sustainability of agrifood systems in Central Asia, while mainstreaming ecosystems restoration and improving rural livelihoods by streamlining integrated practices of natural resources management in river basins (including waters catchment areas and associated irrigation networks), that address local and regional environmental challenges; fostering data-driven decision-making and innovation-based solutions in natural resource management; and stimulating transboundary cooperation and intersectoral dialogue among riparian countries. Please tighten the objective to one sentence (two max).

Upstream Comment 5: The PFD should briefly summarize the history of regional approaches (e.g. CACILM 1 & 2, regional IW work) and how this new program builds on previous regional efforts. Why is a regional approach important, especially in this region? (the section regional approach is currently very uninspiring).

Upstream Comment 6: In the theory of change and the objective, there is a strong focus on agri-food systems; this is, however, not really reflected in the description of the problem (which include watershed management, deforestation, socioeconomic aspects, management/policy issues, etc. but do not really explain why agri-food systems are at the core of the problem and therefore should be at the heart of the project) or in key components of the project

Upstream Comment 7: The rationale for investing LD global set-asides is largely lacking. The idea was that the LD set asides would not only coordinate the program, but promote **LDN** in the region, in particular knowledge management and learning and exchange regarding LDN. The PFD should consult with the PISLM project in the Caribbean, where we also added \$1 million LD set asides for that purpose.

Upstream Comment 8: In general, LDN needs to feature more prominently as a underlying guiding principle for the work on sustainable land management. The term is only mentioned in passing, and in very general terms; it doesn't appear to be a guiding principle. LDN is absent in the description of the regional approach.

Upstream Comment 9: There is some inconsistency in the use of terms ? sometimes the document refers to IWRM, IRBM, watershed management, IWM, etc ? in the theory of change, the focus is on IWM, but this leaves the question whether this includes land management or whether the focus on agri-food systems will be on the water rather than on the land side (from the figure on page 22 it seems to be on water specifically, which does make sense but should be explained more clearly then)

Upstream Comment 10: Component 3 needs justification. There have been several initiatives on data in the region, including the [Central Asia Spatial Agent](#), which seems to have already captured what is proposed here. What is new? How does Component 3 set itself apart from what was previously done/what is ongoing in the region?

Upstream Comment 11: While component 5 focuses on biodiversity, the need to do this and the underlying rationale are not really clear from the description of the problem; also, it could be explained more how this relates to the other program components; the interventions and expected outcomes under this component remain particularly unclear, both with regards to what actually will be done and with regards to how this contributes to/fits into the overall project logic

Upstream Comment 12: Good that there is a ToC but it is unconvincing that these components will be enough to achieve the final goal. It struck us in the beginning that one of the major issues for the region since the collapse of the Soviet Union (30 years ago!) is lack of region-wide planning and large scale investment. We think the project is trying hard to tackle the first piece but don't see anything in there about investment beyond the project. What are the incentives for farmers and local communities to change their practices? This is particularly concerning given the lack of attention paid to stakeholders from the outset. There will be satellite remote sensing but to what end? And will local organizations, universities, etc. be trained to use it or will this be a product from FAO that will disappear once the project is over?

Upstream Comment 13: Harmonized regulations are a big ask, especially in a regional context where regional cooperation (and related institutions) is weak and previous attempts to come up with harmonized regulation failed. Wouldn't coordination be more realistic (so coordination in policies, commitments under basin treaties and e.g. through basin management plans, etc.)? Achieving harmonized regulation across all 5 Central Asian states seems unrealistic in the time frame of the project

8th of October 2023 (thenshaw):

(a) The program objective should be precisely stated, and should be slightly recast. "Enhance water land nexus in Central Asia for mainstreaming ecosystems restoration, increasing resilience and improving rural livelihoods" to "To enhance water-land nexus approaches and implementation in Central Asia for mainstreaming ecosystems

restoration, increasing resilience and improving rural livelihoods." Is "approaches and implementation" correct here? "To enhance water-land nexus _____(?)_____ in Central Asia...." The summary states that the goal is to "enhance Water-Land Nexus (WLN) and achieve Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) in Central Asia for mainstreaming ecosystems restoration, increasing resilience and improving rural livelihoods". Is the goal to achieve LDN or work to support the countries achieve LDN? Please state the objective and then refer to LDN.

(b) Partly, please address the following:

(i) Please change "Strategic Action Plans" to "Strategic Action Programs"

(ii) Please provide some additional detail on the Earth Observation Platform activity. Will this be a replication of a Platform in another basin?

(iii) Please consider strengthening the scope of Component 5 (including funding envelope) to deliver increased GEBs (as measured by targets against the GEF Core Indicators). Some of the GEB targets are very low for a program this size.

(iv) Please explain why the Turkmenistan national project is not partly mapped to Component 5.

(v) Component 5 is labelled as Ecosystem Services in some places and Biodiversity in some places. Please clarify and be consistent, as these are not necessarily the same. Ecosystem services are the goods and services that biodiversity provides. Perhaps changing the title to "Protecting Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services"?

(vi) Across the component descriptions section, please map where the Core Indicator targets will be achieved.

(vii) Comment 6 still stands. There is still a strong focus on agri-food systems. Please explain why agri-food systems are at the core of the problem and therefore should be at the heart of the project or in key components of the project.

(viii) Comment 11 still stands: While component 5 focuses on biodiversity, the need to do this and the underlying rationale are not really clear from the description of the problem; also, it could be explained more how this relates to the other program components; the interventions and expected outcomes under this component remain particularly unclear, both with regards to what actually will be done and with regards to how this contributes to/fits into the overall project logic.

(ix) Looking at the five components, most of the budget is allocated to the first three components, which do not really target on the ground interventions and GEBs. This seems to be the crux of the issue concerning the low Core Indicator targets. There is not enough planned on the ground to deliver meaningful GEBs as measured through the Core Indicators. Please revise.

(c) Partly,

M&E in "Table B". Please include GEF financing and co-financing for M&E. Please also include M&E outcomes. Please ensure new totals are in line with policy re: PMC proportionality. Please ensure M&E component, outcomes and outputs, including MTR/TE etc...are captured in the project description section.

Gender: Gender is broadly captured across the components. As per guidance, gender issues specifying any differences, gaps or opportunities linked to program objectives have to be elaborated and taken up in component descriptions (specific activities). Please ensure that gender perspectives are reflected in these project components/outputs (beyond being "gender responsive").

Please integrate gender perspectives in the Program Overview section also for Program Outcome 02 (Knowledge and lessons learned) and Program Outcome 10 (ensure that women and young people are beneficiaries). Please ensure that the Gender Action Plans to be developed are budgeted, monitored and reported on.

KM will be well captured in Component 1.

(d) Yes

(e) Yes

26th of November 2023 (thenshaw):

(a) Addressed.

(b) (i) Addressed.

(ii) Addressed.

(iii) Addressed.

(iv) Addressed.

(v) Addressed.

(vi) Addressed.

(vii) Addressed.

(viii) Addressed.

(ix) Addressed.

(c) M&E: Addressed.

Gender: Addressed.

KM: Addressed.

Agency's Comments

24 November:

(a) The program objective has been adjusted. (b) (i) 'Strategic Action Plans' have been changed to 'Strategic Action Programs'. (ii) More information on the Earth Observation Platform is included. The Platform will be built with reference to the good practices in other regions. (iii) The scope of Component 5 is strengthened, the allocated funding for the work foreseen under the component is increased and the GEB targets are increased. (iv) The linkage of the national project in Turkmenistan to Component 5 is corrected. (v) Consistency in the titling of Component 5 as 'Protecting Ecosystem Services' is ensured. (vi) The percentage of Core Indicator targets' achievement are indicated under each component description. (vii) Agri-food systems are considered as one of the main drivers of ecosystem degradation and the among the main areas that are impacted by the same processes. The PFD text is revised to clarify the role of the agri-food systems as a driver and among the areas that will benefit from the transformatory results of the program, while de-emphasizing the strong focus on the agri-food systems as the target area of intervention for the program. (viii) The PFD is revised to strengthen the narrative on how the protection of ecosystem services relates to the other program components and clarify the need to include the work in this area, based on the revised problem description and rationale. (ix) The budget allocation between the components and the Core Indicator/GEB targets are revised. (c) GEF financing and co-financing; as well as the outcomes for M&E are included. It has also been ensured that the totals are in line with the policy on PMC proportionality. The M&E component, outcome and outputs, including MTR and TE are indicated, with a reference to the M&E section, which contains further information. The gender issues related to differences, gaps and opportunities are elaborated under component descriptions and reflected in project component and outputs. The gender perspectives are integrated in the Program Overview section and Outcome 2 and Outcome 10. The Gender Action Plans for each of the Child Projects will be developed and budgeted during the PPG phase and requirements for the monitoring and reporting on these action plans will be included in the project documents.

4 November:

Comment 3: The PFD has been updated to address the comment.

Comment 4: The objective has been shortened for clarity.

Comment 5: This information has been added in the section Coordination and Cooperation with Ongoing Initiatives and Programs

Comments 6: The PFD has been updated to address this comment.

Comments 7: The information has been added throughout the whole document.

Comments 8: LDN has been added as a guiding principle for the project, Output 1 and 4 have been adjusted also to better reflect it.

Comment 9: An annex (annex I) has been created to add the needed clarification for the program, several terminologies are used in the scientific literature and policy documents with different/ similar meaning. The program does not aim to resolve the issues in the debate in conceptual approaches, so a document with the concepts and their meaning (anchored in scientific literature) was produced.

Comment 10: The component 3 is anchored in new technologies, which are not addressed by other initiatives in the region until now. The main difference is to have almost real time satellite image monitoring system in place for basin monitoring.

Comment 11: Component 5 has been re-drafted to address this comment,

Comments 12: Most of this comment has been address and the ToC has been updated, but more details regarding investments and incentives will only be possible to be address during the PPG phase, more emphasis on the lack of this info at this stage and need to further discussion during the PPG phase were added.

Comments 13: In the context of this program, 'harmonized policies' refer to the process of harmonization, not necessarily to final agreements that have been signed. Harmonization can occur at different levels, at varying speeds, and with diverse impacts. For the program, a shift towards harmonized policies and frameworks is anticipated, this have been discussed with the countries and there is a political willingness to move toward policy harmonization in some areas, this can only be through including common elements into national policies (harmonization) and not necessary by supranational agreements.

4 Program Outline

A. Program Rationale

a) Is the current situation (including global environmental problems, key drivers of environmental degradation, climate vulnerability) clearly and adequately described from a systems perspective and adequately addressed by the program design?

b) Has the role of stakeholders, incl. the private sector and local actors in the system been described and how they will contribute to GEBs and/or adaptation benefits and other program outcomes? Is the private sector seen mainly as a stakeholder or as financier?

c) Is the baseline situation and baseline projects and initiatives well laid out and how the program will build on these?

d) Have lessons learned from previous efforts been considered in the program design?

e) For NGL, is there a brief description of the financial barriers and how the program ? and the proposed financial structure- responds to these financial barriers.

Secretariat's Comments

Upstream Comment 14: What is the private sector's role in the program? Its role is not described well nor justified in the program description.

Upstream Comment 15: The project rationale section, for example, is far too long (exceeding the max 3-5 pages by at least double). without responding very well (or directly) to the questions in the GEF PIF template. It reads like a dissertation with so much information on the region which is great but really what we want to know is what are the key drivers, how might they change under different scenarios, what is the baseline and what does this project need to do to change the baseline, what are the barriers and enablers and why this program in particular? It should also describe the different stakeholders and their roles, and importantly ? how does this project fit with other GEF and non-GEF past and ongoing projects. These last two pieces, in particular, are missing. There are or have been other projects in the region ? what have been the results? What did they achieve or what didn't they achieve and why not?

Upstream Comment 16: Alignment with the IW Focal Area is missing under ?Focal areas and MEA alignment in the region?. Enhancing water security should be explicitly part of the overall program goal.

Upstream Comment 17: The challenges current water management is facing ? as opposed to earlier times under the Soviet Union ? could be explained better; so far, the document states that there is less funding, aging infrastructures and variation in policy frameworks, but it does not explain how this leads to/contributes to the actual problems (which Soviet-style management certainly paved the way for, which is not being reflected in the document); this makes it difficult to then connect the objectives and activities to the problems (and thus build a coherent theory of change)

Upstream Comment 18: The role of the various stakeholders could be made a bit clearer; the program seems to put a lot of emphasis on multi-stakeholder approaches, especially

private sector and civil society, but is not quite clear about how they get involved (and how their involvement will be ensured), especially in light of the rather complex political landscape for non-state actors in the region; this is e.g. reflected in assumption A4, but it remains open what the project would do to support this/mitigate related risks

Upstream Comment 19: Youth engagement is largely missing. Youth should be a central stakeholder in program activities.

8th of November 2023 (thenshaw):

(a)

(i) Please reorder this section to help sharpen the messaging for the reader:

(1) Current Situation

(a) Environmental Problems

(i) Water Insecurity

*In this section, please include descriptions (basin context) from the child IW project concept notes

(ii) Land Degradation/Deforestation

(iii) Climate Change

(iv) Biodiversity Loss

*are there specific examples of biodiversity loss that can be cited?

(v) Human Impacts (*impacts on population not anthropogenic impacts on environment)

(b) Root Causes/Drivers

*including anthropogenic impacts on environment

(c) Barriers to Overcome

(2) Baseline Situation, Projects and Initiatives

Please move future outlook to after baseline, which will help with the transition from baseline to alternative scenario.

(ii) Please clarify meaning of "updated". "These reservoirs now play updated and crucial roles in national economies, environmental conservation, and food security"

(iii) Please include a brief summary (in a box) of the Aral Sea Disaster. Please also include a box on the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea and how the program builds off this effort.

(iv) Please attach more scientific evidence/figures to impacts on livelihoods, poverty and disadvantaged groups.

(v) The drivers section is not compelling/clear. Please consider utilizing a diagram that includes the feedback loops.

(vi) The introduction to the barriers section is confusing/misleading.

"Despite all the efforts, strong **water governance mechanisms** and higher levels of cooperation among countries remain lacking due to a high number of interconnected factors and the sensitivity of water-related negotiations and agreements. Many fundamental needs that have not been sufficiently addressed in CA were identified" The main barriers to be addressed towards achieving resilient agrifood systems in the region are multifaceted and include, among others"

Again, the objective noted here is achieving resilient agri-food systems, which is not the all encompassing objective. What are the barriers to overcome the drivers of water insecurity, land degradation and climate change impacts? (and biodiversity loss?)

(vii) Please significantly recast/elaborate on the barriers.

"Insufficient Monitoring and Data Utilization: Capacities to streamline evidence-based decision-making." What kind of monitoring and data utilization? The insufficiency comes from a lack of capacity? Why is there a lack of capacity? Who lacks capacity?

"Unsustainable Agriculture and Ecosystems Management Practices: Over-reliance on monocultures, low adoption of Nature positive solutions and innovations, excessive water use, overgrazing, land tenure issues, lack of integrated sustainable resources management". This is a lot packed into one barrier, conflating solutions, management, policies and usage. Management practices is a driver. But what is the actual barrier? Why is there low adoption of nature based solutions? Why is there a lack of integrated sustainable resources management? Why is there overgrazing?

"Weak and Fragmented Regulatory Frameworks: Inconsistent and poorly enforced policies, lack of harmonized policies and regulations". Why are there poorly enforced policies and a lack of harmonized policies and regulations? Where is the disconnect?

"Limited Institutional Capacity and Cooperation: Lack of regional, intergovernmental and intersectoral cooperation hindering effective natural resource management." Why is this the case?

"Lack of Awareness, Knowledge and Skills Among Local Communities: Gaps and challenges in accessing knowledge about the water-land nexus approach and related technologies and innovations". Several other projects/initiatives have attempted to build

awareness of these issues. Why has this not worked? Why is the uptake of technologies slow?

"Insufficient Community Engagement: Insufficient socio-economic incentives. Lack of awareness and participation among farmer communities, including women and youth". Same as above. Several other projects/initiatives have attempted to build awareness of these issues. Why has this not worked?

"Insufficient transboundary cooperation of water management among the riparian countries: as water is a shared but limited resource among all the riparian countries, lack of proper coordinated actions have aggravated the situation throughout the years." Why have coordination efforts come up short? What kinds of "proper coordinated action" have been missed? What about barriers associated with IFAS?

(viii) Please move program objectives to the program description section.

In the objectives write up, please be more precise:

"It aims to catalyze transformative and sustained change at regional, national, and subnational levels as well as addressing critical global environmental problems including land degradation, water insecurity, diminishing ecosystem services, biodiversity loss, and unsustainable water and land management practices."

Unsustainable water and land management practices are the drivers of the problems, not the problems themselves. Please revise throughout. There needs to be better separation of the problems, the drivers and the barriers.

(b) Stakeholders: The role of stakeholders, including local actors and the private sector can be made more explicit in the drivers and barriers sections. Please revise accordingly. Is lack of private sector finance a barrier, and one that the program will address?

(c) Only partly. Some of the baseline projects and initiatives are mentioned in the program rationale. The baseline projects and initiatives text needs to be much more elaborated. What is the history of regional approaches? What have these initiatives done? How will the program build on these? How does this program fit with other GEF and non-GEF past and ongoing projects? What about the World Bank's CAWEP? Other Switzerland initiatives? Please move this section to its own section and not lumped together with drivers.

(d) As above, no, what are the lessons from the baseline projects? How will the program succeed when other interventions have been less impactful?

(e) N/A

26th of November 2023 (thenshaw):

(a) (i) Addressed.

(ii) Addressed.

(iii) Addressed.

(iv) Not responded to in review sheet. Addressed.

(v) Addressed.

(vi) Partly Addressed. The barriers are now well articulated. However, the problem statement for which the barriers are identified is still different in different places. Please be consistent in the problem statement.

I.e., "***Barriers preventing effective action to address the problem:*** The main current challenges hindering achievement of sustainability"

"Barriers to WLN and IWM adoption in Central Asia

Despite the above initiatives, a number of key barriers remain that hinder application of the water-land-nexus approach and achieving resilient ecosystems and sustainable agrifood systems in the region. "

"The programmatic approach will make interventions along several pathways, incorporating IWM principles, that reflect measures to address the barriers to sustainable use and management of water, land and natural resources "

"These barriers hinder the advancement of agri-food systems and communities in Central Asia from their current unsustainable state (baseline) towards greater resilience and improved ecosystem health. "

"The program and its child projects are innovative in that they will address the underlying institutional and capacity barriers that are holding back transformation of natural resources use and management to ensure sustainability."

(vii) Addressed.

(viii) Addressed.

(b) Addressed.

(c) Addressed.

(d) Addressed.

28th of November 2023 (thenshaw):

(vi) Addressed.

Agency's Comments

28 November:

(vi) The consistency of the problem statement throughout is ensured.

24 November:

(a) (i) The section has been re-written to address all the comments. (ii) The sentence is rewritten to remove the unclear expression. (iii) A summary of the Aral Sea Disaster and information and the relation of the program to IFAS is included in two separate boxes. (v) Drivers section is rewritten for greater clarity and focus and a diagram with selected feedback loops is included. (vi) Barriers section is rewritten for greater clarity and coherence. (vii) Barriers section is rewritten for greater clarity, taking into consideration all the comments. (viii) Program's Objectives is moved to the program description section and is rewritten for greater clarity. (b) Stakeholders section is rewritten with more consideration for the private sector. (c and d) The baseline projects and initiatives (including CAWEP) are considered in more detail, including elaboration of how the program will build up on their experiences. The baseline projects and initiatives are moved to their own section, as per the comment.

4 November:

Comments 14: The private sector role in the program were under addressed as per several issues, including lack of clarity from the countries as well as time constrains, some initial discussions took place with investments banks, but this will be properly discussed and included in the program during the PPG phase.

Comments 15: The text has been heavily revised to address this comment.

Comments 16: This information has been included.

Comments 17: The text has been heavily revised to address this comment.

Comments 18: A stakeholder matrix has been included.

Comments 19: Youth engagement is foreseen in several components, but mostly in the copoint 3 when the program focus on next generation and build national capacity.

5 B. Program Description

5.1 a) Is there a concise theory of change (narrative and an optional schematic) that describes the program logic, including how the program design elements are contributing to the

objective, a set of identified key causal pathways, the thrust and basis (including scientific) of the proposed solutions, how they provide a robust solution and listing the key assumptions underlying these?

b) Is there a description of how the GEF alternative will build on ongoing/previous investments (GEF and non-GEF), lessons and experiences?

c) Are the program components described and proposed solutions and critical assumptions and risks properly justified? Is there an indication of why the program approach has been selected over other potential options?

d) **Incremental/additional cost reasoning:** Is the incremental/additional cost reasoning properly described as per the Guidelines provided in GEF/C.31/12? Have the baseline scenario and/or associated baseline programs been described? Is the program incremental reasoning provisioned (including the role of the GEF)?

e) Are the relevant levers of transformation identified and described?

f) Is there an adequate description on how relevant stakeholders (including women, private sector, CSO, e.g.) will contribute to the design and implementation of the program and its components?

g) **Gender:** Does the description on gender issues identify any differences, gaps or opportunities linked to program objectives and have these been taken up in component description/s?

h) Are the proposed elements to capture, exchange and disseminate knowledge and lessons learned adequate in order to benefit future programs? Are efforts for strategic communication adequately described?

i) **Policy Coherence:** How will the program support participating countries to improve, develop and align policies, regulations or subsidies to not counteract the intended program outcomes?

Secretariat's Comments

Upstream Comment 20: The transboundary dimension of water use and management is not really explored sufficiently (it is mentioned in the context of food security, but not much more; also not in the part on barriers, where it should feature as a key barrier); however, this is a crucial element that the project needs to address, which therefore needs to be included in the description of the problem; it does come into the theory of change as one component, but could be better explored/linked

Upstream Comment 21: Strategic Action Programs for each basin are no longer outputs. Please explain why only TDAs will be carried out. SAPs are a critical element for GEF IW support to the program.

Upstream Comment 22: Inputs to IW:LEARN activities should feature more prominently in the PFD and not just in the IW child projects.

Upstream Comment 23: Some of the assumptions presented on pages 22 are probably too optimistic or at least require some work themselves (e.g. A1 willingness of states to cooperate or make data available); it could be useful to explore a bit further how some of the work under the project actually contributes to this/mitigates challenges relating to these assumptions (e.g. can some of the policy work under the project contribute to states of the region increasingly acknowledging the benefits of cooperation which would potentially increase their willingness to cooperate); also A6 (climatic trends) is not clear ? is this current state or certain climate change scenarios

Upstream Comment 24: The document emphasizes gender-responsive solutions, but it is not really clear how those look like/what makes a specific solution gender-responsive (there is not really a description which components of the theory of change should be gender-responsive, how they will be made gender-response and which gender-related problems they address in the first place)

8th of November 2023 (thenshaw):

(a) Yes, but please address comments in sections above and revise if necessary.

(b) No, as noted above. Please revise accordingly.

(c) Yes

(d) Incremental costs can be made more explicit. Please revise, including phrasing the text "Without the GEF increment..." "The GEF increment will provide [additionality]". Incremental costs argument will be strengthened when baseline scenario/associated baseline programs/initiatives (including how they have fallen short or did not provide the right levers of change) has been better articulated.

(e) Levers of transformation: This will be strengthened by addressing comments in above sections.

(f) Stakeholders: Partly, please elaborate on the role of local actors in project implementation. What rural livelihoods will actually be enhanced through the program?

One of the key tenants of this program is to contribute to the ongoing process of strengthening the cooperation and establishing common solutions. However, the distinct roles of key stakeholders is not clear and remain very general with statements like ?relevant stakeholders?. The PFD should further define the important role of different stakeholders to achieve program objectives and further specify the different stakeholders as relevant to component 2, 4, and 5 and CSOs and local communities in particular.

(g) Gender: See comments on gender aspects in earlier sections of review sheet.

(h) Knowledge: Yes

(i) Policy coherence: Yes

26th of November 2023 (thenshaw)

(b) Addressed.

(d) Addressed.

(f) Addressed.

* Because the reader will not see the Annex H child project summaries, please provide a concise narrative (not just listed components) for each of the seven child projects (200 words max each). This can be in table format: column 1 Name of Child Project; column 2 Scope of Project.

28th of November 2023 (thenshaw):

Addressed.

Agency's Comments

Nov 28:

A table with the summary of the child projects is included.

Nov 24:

(b) The description of how the GEF alternative is built on ongoing/previous investments (GEF and non-GEF), lessons and experiences is included in the rationale section; under subtitle number 2 'Baseline Situation. Projects and Initiatives' as per the outlined proposed in the comments under 4th Section in this review sheet, pertaining to the Rationale Section. (d) The critical importance of the incremental support in possibly leading to a transformatory change is expressed explicitly in accordance with the guidance in the comment, in a subsection titled 'Incremental Cost Reasoning'. (f) Stakeholder section is revised. More work will be done on this matter during the PPG process.

Nov 4:

Comments 20: The rationale has been updated to better reflect this comment.

Comments 21: Component 2 has been updated to address this comment.

Comments 22: IW:LEARN has been included at program level.

Comments 23: program description has been updated to address this comment.

Comments 24: A gender action plan has been prepared to address this comments with more clarity, also additional information have been added in the program description

5.2 Program coherence and consistency

a) How will the program design ensure resilience to future changes in the drivers and allow for adaptive management needs and options?

b) Is the potential for achieving transformative change through the integrated approach adequately described? How is the program going to be transformative or innovative? Does it explain scaling up opportunities?

c) Are the countries or themes selected as child projects under the program appropriate for achieving the overall program objective?

d) Are the descriptions of child projects adequately reflective of the program objective and priorities as described in the ToC?

e) Is the financing presented in the annexed financing table adequate to meet the program objectives?

Secretariat's Comments

Upstream Comment 25: The focus on Restoration in the coordination child project is too narrow, and the title is misleading. Restoration is only one element of LDN, the whole range of the LDN activities should be considered. The title and design should focus on the Land-Water nexus and elaborate on the rationale of why the program combines IW and LD resources.

Upstream Comment 26: The document puts a lot of emphasis on hydro-social systems and related complexities, however, it does not clearly describe what this means (does it mean the high level of alteration of natural flows/the significant impact of man-made infrastructure on the river system) and consequently also not what this implies for the project (what should be addressed by the project and why)

8th of November 2023 (thenshaw):

(a) How is durability/adaptive management built into the program? What is the program off-ramp strategy?

- (b) In theory, yes, but the Core Indicator targets are too low to achieve transformational change. Please consult GEF Sec and revise.
- (c) In theory, yes, but as mentioned above and below, the Core Indicator targets are too low for the child projects to be deemed appropriate to achieve the overall program objective. Please consult GEF Sec and revise.
- (d) Partly. The child projects need to carry out on the ground interventions that include higher Core Indicator targets.
- (e) To be determined on resubmission. The level of funding is not commensurate with the targeted GEBs, which feed into the program objectives. Please see comments below.

26th of November 2023 (thenshaw):

- (a) Addressed.
- (b) Addressed.
- (c) Addressed.
- (d) Addressed.
- (e) Addressed.

Agency's Comments

24 November:

- (a) The program description has been updated to address this comment. (b) The core indicators have been updated. (c) The core indicators have been updated. (d) The child projects carry out several on the ground investment. More details are available in Annex H.

4 November:

Comments 25: LDN has been added as a guiding principle for the project, Output 1 and 4 have been adjusted also to better reflect it.

Comments 26: The definition has been added in annex I

5.3 Program Governance, Coordination and Cooperation with Ongoing Initiatives and Programs

- a) Are the program level institutional arrangements for governance and coordination, including potential executing partners, outlined on regional, national/local levels and a rationale provided? Has a program level organogram / diagram been included, with description of roles and responsibilities, and decision-making processes?**

- b) Is there a description of coordination and cooperation with ongoing GEF and non-GEF financed initiatives, projects/programs (such as government, private sector and/or other bilateral/multilateral supported initiatives in the program area, e.g.).**

Secretariat's Comments

Upstream Comment 27: Several IFIs and GEF donors (e.g., Germany, Switzerland) have programs/investments in the region and the PFD should clearly show how these actors have been consulted during the PFD development process.

Upstream Comment 28: There is an active UNDP-GEF project in the region titled "Strengthening the resilience of Central Asian countries by enabling regional cooperation to assess high-altitude glacio-nival systems to develop integrated methods for sustainable development and adaptation to climate change?". Please demonstrate that this larger program incorporates into its structure the necessary coordination mechanisms at relevant levels with the UNDP project, including via a close dialogue with the UNESCO Office in Almaty, in cooperation with UNESCO's International Hydrological Programme, and that links are secured with the envisioned NAPs under the glaciers project

8th of November 2023 (thenshaw):

(a) No, please address the following:

(i) The program level institutional arrangements for governance and coordination, including potential executing partners, is not described. Nor is a rationale for the institutional arrangements provided. Please explain and include a diagram/organogram of the institutional arrangements. What are the roles, responsibilities and decision making processes? The institutional arrangements is an important component for this program to move ahead.

(ii) Please explain what "It is expected that a neutral regional player takes over the process" means.

(iii) What about coordination with the World Bank-managed CAWEP trust fund?

(iv) Please better describe coordination with IFAS.

(b) Partly. What about private sector initiatives that the program could capitalize on? Please include.

26th of November 2023 (thenshaw):

(a) (i) Partly. The flow of coordination can be better articulated in the organogram and needs to be recast. Roles, responsibilities and decision making processes is not clear. In the current diagram it looks like there is an overall PCU reporting to several executing partners. Please add to the organogram each child project and its own PSC and PCU, and where they fit.

(ii) Addressed.

(iii) Addressed.

(iv) Addressed.

(b) Addressed.

*Please include in the coordination section an explanation of possible coordination with the proposed IFAD - GEF project in Tajikistan (Tajikistan Ecosystem Restoration and Resilient Agriculture (TERRA)), which, if approved, would run in parallel to this program and could provide an indirect/complimentary national-level set of inputs/outputs that the program could help scale up across the region.

28th of November 2023 (thenshaw):

(a) Addressed.

(b) Addressed.

Agency's Comments

28 November:

(a) (i) More details on the foreseen implementation arrangements are included; such as the roles, responsibilities and mechanisms for decision making. The organogram/diagram is updated, including the mention of the PSC and PCU for each of the child projects.

Relevant text on the coordination with the IFAD-GEF project in Tajikistan (TERRA) is also included.

24 November:

(a) (i) The institutional arrangements section has been further elaborated together with the inclusion of an organigram. (ii) The sentence is rewritten for greater clarity. (iii) The commitment to ensure greater coordination with CAWEP fund is indicated in Coordination and Cooperation section, which will be a priority to establish during the PPG phase. (iv) Potential Execution Role for IFAS is indicated. More information on IFAS and how the program aims to coordinate with it is included in the rationale and program description sections. (b) The private sector initiatives will be identified during the PPG phase.

4 November:

Comments 27: The EU commission have been consulted by FAOLOB office. The REU office have consulted with Switzerland Cooperation and Development Agency (and invited them for meeting and consultation). The attempts to build up synergies and coordination are ongoing and the communication will be increased during the PPG phase.

Comments 28: The coordination process will be done during the PPG phase and the results and activities under the ongoing project will be included when adequate in the program. Also coordination mechanisms and consultation will be established during the PPG phase to assure synergies among the 2 initiatives.

5.4 Program-level Results, Monitoring and Reporting

a) Are the global environmental benefits and/or adaptation benefits identified? Does the PFD describe how it will support the generation of multiple environmental benefits which would not have accrued without the GEF program?

b) Are the identified core indicators calculated using the methodology and adhering to the overarching principles included in the corresponding Guidelines (GEF/C.62/Inf.12/Rev.01/GEF/C.54/11/Rev.01)?

c) Are the program's targeted contributions to GEBs (measured through core indicators and additional listed outcome indicators) / adaptation benefits reasonable and achievable? Are the GEF Climate Change adaptation indicators and sub-indicators for LDCF and SCCF properly documented?

d) Other Benefits: Are the socioeconomic benefits resulting from the program at the global, national and local levels sufficiently described?

e) Is the described approach to program level M&E aiming to achieve coherence across child projects and to allow for adaptative management?

Secretariat's Comments

Upstream Comment 29: The description of the global environmental problem to be addressed, the challenges, drivers of change and root causes are addressed, but somewhat implicitly and often not in clear differentiation from each other (e.g. in part A it is described what causes the problem, what contributes to it, etc., but it's not really clear what the core problem is ? and how this is a global environmental problem and not only a very regional one, given the focus on the Aral Sea but not so much on broader/beyond-region implications ? and accordingly the responses/objectives are not as clearly targeted as they could be)

Upstream Comment 30: There are apparent mismatches in the overall PFD design and the core indicators:

- The PFD and the child projects prominently mention restoration, but there are only 835 ha targeted (?)

- The target for area of improved management is >85 million ha (?) This would constitute the entire GEF-8 target, so it is unclear how the program will achieve this (?)
- It is also not in line with the very small number of beneficiaries, which are only 2300 people (?)
- Core Indicator 7 should be ?1? shared ecosystem ?Aral Sea Basin?, not ?2?
- Please include targets for the sub-indicators for Core Indicator 7.

8th of November 2023 (thenshaw):

(a) The GEBs need to be made more explicit. As example, "GEBs" and "global environmental benefits" does not come up in a search of the document. Please create a heading "GEBs" and explain in detail. Please include targets against Core Indicators to help explain GEBs.

(b) No, the methodological approach and underlying logic to justify targets is missing. Please revise accordingly. Please provide an explanation on the methodological approach and underlying logic to justify target levels for Core and Sub-Indicators under the core indicator table.

(c) No, please increase the targets:

(i) Core Indicator 3: 1,305 ha is very low for a program of this size.

(ii) Core Indicator 4: 168,000 ha is also quite low.

(iii) Core Indicator 6: Please explain the GHG mitigation calculation/methodology used.

(iv) Core Indicator 7: Indicator 7.2 notes "2" for both Amu Darya and Syr Darya. It is understood that one TDA will be updated and a new one generated, so the targets should be "2" and "1"

There is no target for 7.4 **IW:LEARN** activities. Please also ensure 1% of IW child project budgets will go toward **IW:LEARN** activities.

(iii) Core Indicator 11: 4,850 direct beneficiaries from a \$29M program is extremely low and not acceptable. Please revise the figure significantly, keeping in mind the differences between direct and indirect beneficiaries. This low target seemingly equates to a very weak on the ground set of activities.

(d) Other Benefits

Please consult the new STAP document, INCORPORATING CO-BENEFITS IN THE DESIGN OF GEF

PROJECTS. https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/documents/2023-06/EN_GEF.C.64.STAP_Inf_03_Incorporating_cobenefits_in_the_design_of_GEF_projects.pdf

Please summarize the "prerequisite co-benefits" and the "incidental co-benefits". Co-benefits are ?positive effects of GEF investments that are not included in its formal set of

global environmental benefits (GEBs).? Co-benefits are categorized into prerequisite or incidental co-benefits.

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

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

(e) Partly,

(i) The listed project indicators does not include the GEF Core Indicator targets. Please include.

(ii) An indicator on SAPs is missing. It should be phrased as "...SAPs endorsed at the ministerial level by all participating countries"

(iii) Indicators on gender aspects and youth engagement are missing. Please include.

(iv) What about LDN indicators? Please include

(v) What about reporting, PIRs, MTR and TE? Please include

(vi) What about adaptive management? Please include

*Please ensure every indicator is measurable.

Please note that the indicators need to be significantly improved/expanded in PPG.

26th of November 2023 (thenshaw):

(a) Addressed.

(b) Partly. As part of the methodological approach, please explain the exact calculations, including from which each child project the figures are coming. For GHG reductions, please provide more detail on the specific methodology and math to get to the total target.

(c) Addressed.

(d) Addressed.

(e) Addressed.

28th of November 2023 (thenshaw):

(b) Addressed.

Agency's Comments

28 November:

Relevant text explaining the methodologies for the calculation of Core Indicator targets is improved and more details are provided. The Ex-act calculations, assumptions and methodology is presented in more detail in Annex J: Ex-act Calculations. Below is a capture of the breakdown of CI targets per Child Project:

	Core Indicator 3			Core Indicator 4		Core Indicator 6		Core Indicator 11	
	3.1	3.2	3.3	4.1	4.3	Direct	Indirect	men	women
PC	40	20	10		200,000	219,886	604,041	60,000	60,000
KYZ	800	600		20,000	100,000	114,105	1,589,894	25,000	25,000
TURK	450				39,000	6,611	404,417	20,000	15,000
UZB	1,000	300	100	50,000	230,000	39,903	2,352,761	34,500	34,500
Amu Darya	120	190	50	40,000	310,000	17,322	1,057,072	47,000	40,000
Syr Darya	450	300	50	20,000	250,000	29,694	2,268,734	42,000	37,000
KAZ	840		50		70,000	30,310	2,383,920	23,500	23,500
Total	3,700	1,410	260	130,000	1,199,000	457,831	10,660,839	252,000	235,000

24 November:

(a) The subsection on Global Environmental Benefits is added in the program summary section. (b) The methodology for the core indicators have been enhanced in each child project. (c) The core indicators have been updated. (d) The co-benefits have been included. (e) The information has been updated

November 4:

Comments 29: the program rationale has been heavily updated to address this comment.

Comment 30: All the GEBs have updated.

? Core Indicator 7 is selected as ?TDA/SAP for Amu Darya River? and ?TDA/SAP for Syr Darya River?; as these will be produced separately.

? Targets for Core Indicator 7 are included.

5.5 Risks to Achieving Program Outcomes

a) Are climate and other main risks relevant to the program identified and adequately described? Are mitigation measures outlined and realistic? Is there any omission?

b) Are the key risks and mitigation measures that might affect implementation and the achievement of outcomes adequately rated?

c) Are environmental and social risks and impacts adequately screened and rated and consistent with requirements set out in SD/PL/03?

Secretariat's Comments

8th of November 2023 (thenshaw):

(a) Partly, The climate change risk is too briefly described. At this stage, more clarification on threats and impacts are needed to be able to consider appropriate mitigation measures. Please outline the key aspects of the climate change projections/scenarios (including a time horizon, ideally 2050, if the data is available), list key potential hazards for the program that are related to the climate scenarios and identify mitigation measures. For further guidance, please refer to STAP guidance available here: <https://www.stapgef.org/resources/advisory-documents/stap-guidance-climate-risk-screening>

Given the description in the opening paragraphs, it seems climate change risk should be considered substantial. Please consider/revise accordingly.

(b) Yes

(c) Yes

Agency's Comments

24 November:

The climate change risk section has been updated.

6 C. Alignment with GEF-8 Programming Strategies and Country/Regional Priorities

6.1 a) Is the program adequately aligned with Focal Area and IP Elements, and/or LDCF/SCCF strategy?

***For IPs: is the program adequately aligned with the Integrated Program goals and objectives as outlined in the GEF 8 programming directions?**

Secretariat's Comments

8th of November 2023 (thenshaw): Partly, please address the following:

(1) Please explain which Focal Area objectives the program aligns with and why.

26th of November 2023 (thenshaw): Addressed.

Agency's Comments

24 November:

Explanation is included.

b) Child project selection criteria: Are the criteria for child project selection sound and transparently laid out?

Secretariat's Comments 8th of November 2023 (thenshaw): Yes

Agency's Comments

6.2 Is the program alignment/coherent with country / regional / global priorities, policies, strategies and plans (including those related to the MEAs and to relevant sectors)?

Secretariat's Comments

8th of November 2023 (thenshaw): Yes

Agency's Comments

7 D. Policy Requirements

7.1 Are the Policy Requirement sections completed?

Secretariat's Comments

8th of November 2023 (thenshaw):

(a) Gender equality and women's empowerment: Partly, please see comment above.

(b) Stakeholder engagement: Yes,

(c) Private sector: Partly, please explain why private sector was not consulted during the PFD design, yet private sector will be a major stakeholder in program implementation. What is the plan for engaging the private sector in PPG?

26th of November 2023 (thenshaw):

(a) Addressed.

(c) Addressed.

Agency's Comments

24 November:

(a) This comment has been addressed in the program description

(c) During the preparation of the program, although the countries have been in agreement with the involvement of the private sector, there was no clear consensus on which private sector and how they should be engaged. As per time constraint it was agreed that this discussion would be done during the PPG phase. The issue will be treated as a priority during the PPG, through the development of a private sector engagement plan for the program with 2 scales, at national and regional levels.

7.2 Environmental and Social Safeguards

Have safeguard screening document and/or other ESS document(s) attached and been uploaded to the GEF Portal? (annex D)

Secretariat's Comments

8th of November 2023 (thenshaw): Yes, but please explain the following:

(1) ESS notes "Project will not implement activities on the ground". It is expected that several activities will take place on the ground through this program.

(2) Please provide information about further environmental and social impact assessment and environmental and social action plan (particularly related to land tenure, displacement, and resettlement) for the Child Project level by the CEO endorsement stage besides Gender action plan.

*The program overall ESS risk is classified as moderate, and FAO attached the Environmental and Social Safeguards Screening checklist.

26th of November 2023 (thenshaw):

(1) Addressed.

(2) Please confirm this will be done, noting the confirmation in the PFD.

28th of November 2023 (thenshaw):

(2) Addressed.

Agency's Comments

28 November:

FAO confirms that the Environmental and Social Impact assessment and Environmental and Social Action Plans for each of the Child Projects; along with the Gender Action plan, will be prepared during the PPG stage, in the lead up to the application for the CEO Endorsement request.

24 November:

The ESS has been updated.

8 Other Requirements

Knowledge Management

8.1 Has the agency confirmed that a project level approach to Knowledge Management and Learning has been included in the PFD?

Secretariat's Comments 8th of November 2023 (thenshaw): Yes

Agency's Comments

9 Annexes

Financing Tables (Annex A and Annex H)

9.1 GEF Financing Table:

a) Is the proposed GEF financing (including the Agency fee) in line with GEF policies and guidelines? Are they within the resources available from (mark all that apply):

Country STAR allocation?

Secretariat's Comments

8th of November 2023 (thenshaw): Partly,

(1) Please address Kazakhstan financing issues re: STAR funds noted in comments below.

26th of November 2023 (thenshaw): Addressed.

Agency's Comments

24 November:

Please see the response below.

Non-STAR Focal Area allocation?

Secretariat's Comments 8th of November 2023 (thenshaw): Yes

Agency's Comments

LDCF under the principle of equitable access?

Secretariat's Comments N/A

Agency's Comments

SCCF A (SIDS)?

Secretariat's Comments N/A

Agency's Comments

SCCF B (Tech Transfer, Innovation, Private Sector)?

Secretariat's Comments N/A

Agency's Comments

Focal Area Set Aside?

Secretariat's Comments 8th of November 2023 (thenshaw): Yes

Agency's Comments

IP Set Aside

Secretariat's Comments N/A

Agency's Comments

IP Contribution

Secretariat's Comments N/A

Agency's Comments

For Child Project Financing information (Annex H)

b) Are the IP Matching Incentives amounts correctly calculated according to the country STAR focal areas? allocated amounts? Are the IP contributions aligned with the Program? The allocated amounts (including Agency Fee) match those in LoE?

c) Project Preparation Grant Table: Are the IP Matching Incentives amounts correctly calculated according to the country STAR focal areas? allocated amounts? The allocated amounts (including PPG Fee) match those in LoE? Is the requested PPG within the authorized limits set in Guidelines? (pop up information?) If above the limits, has an exception been sufficiently substantiated?

d) Sources of Funds Table: Are the allocated sources of funds for each and every one of the three STAR Focal Areas within the Country's STAR envelope by the time of the last review?

e) Indicative Focal Area Elements Table: (For IPs) The selected Indicative Focal Area element corresponds to the respective IP?

f) (For non-IPs) The selected Indicative Focal Area Elements are aligned with the respective Program?

g) Co-financing Table: Are the indicative expected amounts, sources and types of co-financing provided and consistent with the requirements of the Co-Financing Policy and Guidelines?

Secretariat's Comments

Upstream Comment 31: The PPG for the regional component is above the \$300,000 maximum

8th of November 2023 (thenshaw):

*Please remove all files uploaded to this section other than the revised consolidated child concept file.

*Please consult with GEF Sec regarding further specific comments on child projects.

(b) The allocated amounts match the LOEs for Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyz Republic and Uzbekistan. The Kazakhstan letter does not. Please secure a new letter accordingly.

(c) The PPG for each child project is within the authorized limits set in Guidelines.

(d) The Sources of Funds Table: STAR allocations match the LOEs for Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyz Republic and Uzbekistan. The Kazakhstan letter does not. Please secure a new letter accordingly.

(e) N/A

(f) No, see comment under 9.4 below.

(g) No, please see comment under 9.5 below

26th of November 2023 (thenshaw): Addressed.

Agency's Comments

24 November:

It is not possible to remove files from the preparer's end in the section Annex H. Please include all the files, but the one titled "Child Projects Concept Note.v3_revised after second review".

(b and c) The correct letter from Kazakhstan with the endorsement of two regional projects and the STAR allocation for the national child project is uploaded.

4 November:

Comment 31: There are three child projects that have regional/sub-regional scope (include multiple countries within the sub-region as beneficiaries). These are:

LDN Coordination Project (Beneficiaries: 5 CA Countries) ? the PPG amount USD 50,000

IWM in Amu Darya (Beneficiaries: TAJ, UZB, TUK) ? the PPG amount USD 150,000

IWM in Syr Darya (Beneficiaries: KYR, UZB, KAZ) ? the PPG amount USD 150,000

There is no PPG amount foreseen that is higher than USD 300,000.

9.2 Project Preparation Grant (PPG): if PPG for child projects has been requested: has the PPG table been included and properly filled out adding up to the correct PPG and PPG fee totals as per the sum of the child projects?

Secretariat's Comments

8th of November 2023 (thenshaw): No, please see comment above and below re: Kazakhstan source of funds/STAR allocation.

26th of November 2023 (thenshaw): Addressed.

Agency's Comments Please see responses above and below.

9.3 Sources of Funds for Country STAR Allocation

Does the table represent the sum of STAR allocations sources utilized for this program?

Secretariat's Comments

8th of November 2023 (thenshaw): No, please address the following

(1) The Kazakhstan STAR figures in the GEF Financing table (and PPG table) differ from the Kazakhstan STAR figures in the Sources of Funds for Country STAR Allocation. The GEF Financing table includes BD STAR and LD STAR.

GEF Agency	Trust Fund	Country/ Regional/ Global	Focal Area	Programming of Funds	GEF Program Financing(\$)	Agency Fee(\$)	Total GEF Financing(\$)
FAO	GET	Regional	Land Degradation	LD Global/Regional Set-Aside	892,432	80,318	972,750.00
FAO	GET	Regional	International Waters	International Waters: IW-3	892,432	80,318	972,750.00
FAO	GET	Regional	International Waters	International Waters: IW-3	5,354,588	481,912	5,836,500.00
FAO	GET	Regional	International Waters	International Waters: IW-3	4,437,156	399,344	4,836,500.00
FAO	GET	Kazakhstan	Biodiversity	BD STAR Allocation: BD-1	1,530,506	137,744	1,668,250.00
FAO	GET	Kazakhstan	Land Degradation	LD STAR Allocation: LD-1	1,530,505	137,745	1,668,250.00

The STAR Allocation table includes CC STAR.

Sources of Funds for Country STAR Allocation

GEF Agency	Trust Fund	Country/ Regional/ Global	Focal Area	Source of Funds	Total(\$)
FAO	GET	Kazakhstan	Climate Change	CC STAR Allocation	3,500,000.00
FAO	GET	Kyrgyz Republic	Biodiversity	BD STAR Allocation	1,000,000.00
FAO	GET	Kyrgyz Republic	Land Degradation	LD STAR Allocation	2,500,000.00
FAO	GET	Turkmenistan	Biodiversity	BD STAR Allocation	500,000.00
FAO	GET	Turkmenistan	Climate Change	CC STAR Allocation	1,500,000.00
FAO	GET	Turkmenistan	Land Degradation	LD STAR Allocation	1,784,000.00
FAO	GET	Uzbekistan	Biodiversity	BD STAR Allocation	200,000.00
FAO	GET	Uzbekistan	Climate Change	CC STAR Allocation	2,400,000.00
FAO	GET	Uzbekistan	Land Degradation	LD STAR Allocation	3,000,000.00
Total GEF Resources(\$)					16,384,000.00

Please correct.

26th of November 2023 (thenshaw)

(1) Addressed.

Agency's Comments

24 November:

(1) It is our understanding that the GEF Financing table and the PPG tables need to reflect the programming of the funds and not the source of the funds. It should be considered that both the GEF Financing Table and the PPG table have a column titled 'programming of funds' under which relevant GEF-8 Focal Area Objectives are selected which the use of the funds are contributing towards the achievement of.

Since the Government of Kazakhstan has requested FAO to use the funds from the Climate Change STAR Allocation for purposes serving Biodiversity Preservation and Combatting Land Degradation; it would not be possible to identify Focal Area Objectives under Climate Change area to associate the programming of the funds under the GEF Financing table and the PPG table. Thus, the original allocation under both the GEF Financing table and PPG table are kept.

In addition, when trying to change the Focal Area allocation in the GEF Financing Table and PPG table, the system checks the amounts against the 'Indicative Focal Area Elements' table (which indicates the programming of the funds, which is indicated differently for the case of Kazakhstan National Child Project) and would not validate if the two amounts are different (ie, if the source of fund - CC - is entered in the GEF

Financing and the PPG tables); as per the below screenshot.

*Sub-totals of GEF Project Grant Amount by focal area (BD) don't match between Focal Area Elements table and GEF Financing table.

*Sub-totals of GEF Project Grant Amount by focal area (CC) don't match between Focal Area Elements table and GEF Financing table.

*Sub-totals of GEF Project Grant Amount by focal area (LD) don't match between Focal Area Elements table and GEF Financing table.

9.4 Indicative Focal Area Elements

For non-IP Programs

Does the table contain the sum of focal area elements and amounts as per the sum of the child projects?

Secretariat's Comments

8th of November 2023 (thenshaw): No, please address the following:

(1) Please list each FA objective only once and summarize the total amount going towards those objectives

(2) Please select the focal area objectives to which the PFD is aligned as per the ?indicative Program overview table? and in line with the core indicators targeted.

(a) If the program is designed to address LDN, the FA objective **LD-4** has to be selected accordingly.

(b) There does not appear to be much investment towards **BD-1-3** justified. BD-1-3 is for ecosystem restoration, which is restoration of ecosystems/habitats of high ecological value and significant global biodiversity significance. Crop-land, agricultural land, rangeland restoration which is all listed in the core indicator table is not BD-1-3, it is **LD-2** ?Landscape restoration?.

(c) Please clarify which activities in the program address **CC-M-1-4** and to which extent?

(d) Please note that this table should show the alignment of the program/project with the FA objectives, in GEF-8 the *SOURCE* of funding maybe different than *PROGRAMMING* of the funding.

Indicative Focal Area Elements

Top of Form

Programming Directions	Trust Fund	GEF Project Financing(\$)	Co-financing(\$)
IW-3	GET	892,432.00	15,219,870.00
LD-1	GET	892,432.00	15,219,870.00
IW-3	GET	5,354,588.00	87,435,000.00
IW-3	GET	4,437,156.00	65,350,810.00
BD-1-3	GET	1,530,506.00	27,338,520.00
LD-1	GET	1,530,505.00	27,338,520.00
BD-1-3	GET	874,575.00	15,726,716.00
LD-1	GET	2,186,436.00	39,261,804.00
BD-1-3	GET	438,897.00	5,616,035.00
CCM-1-4	GET	1,316,687.00	16,809,813.00
LD-3	GET	1,565,979.00	19,987,977.00
BD-1-3	GET	2,671,937.00	6,000,000.00
CCM-1-4	GET	534,388.00	2,000,000.00
LD-1	GET	1,781,292.00	12,200,000.00
Total Project Cost (\$)		26,007,810.00	355,504,935.00

26th of November 2023 (thenshaw):

- (1) Addressed.
- (2) (a) Addressed.
- (b) Addressed.
- (c) Addressed.
- (d) Addressed.

Agency's Comments

24 November:

(1) Please kindly consider that it is not possible to enter FA objective areas manually on the main program page. The FA objectives are entered under each child project and they get carried over and listed separately in the main program page. For your kind consideration, below is a list of aggregated amounts for each of the FA objectives:

	GEF Project Financing(\$)	Co-financing(\$)
IW-3	10,684,176	168,005,680
LD-1	5,498,233.00	78,800,324.00

LD-3	1,565,979.00	19,987,977.00
LD-4	892,432.00	15,219,870.00
BD-1-3	4,641,340.00	38,954,555.00
BD-1-4	874,575.00	15,726,716.00
CCM-1-4	1,851,075.00	18,809,813.00

(2) Focal area objectives are selected according to the program goals and structure, in line with the targeted indicators.

(a) The Focal Area Objective for the Coordination project is has been changed to LD-4.

(b) The countries have expressed their expectations for the program to deliver Biodiversity Preservation outcomes and contribute to ecosystem preservation. Some adjustments have been made to include BD-1-4 for mainstreaming biodiversity according to the comment. However, the PPG process will identify and concretize the contributions of the individual country child projects in the areas of restoration of ecosystem/habitats with high ecological value.

(c) Relevant child projects have specific targets and design elements to promote Nature based Solutions in order to contribute to the climate change mitigation targets of the countries.

(d) This is well noted and the Indicative Focal Area Elements table is prepared in order to reflect the programming of the funding and has divergences from the source of the funds.

9.5 Indicative Co-financing

Are the indicative amounts, sources, and types of co-financing adequate and reflect the ambition of the program? Has the subset of co-finance which are expected to be investment mobilized been identified and defined (FI/GN/01)?

Secretariat's Comments

Upstream Comment 32: Please provide the indicative co-financing for the program. It is difficult to understand the GEF incremental cost reasoning without it. Given the size of the program, it is expected that there will be significant investment mobilized.

8th of October 2023 (thenshaw): Partly, please address the following:

(1) The indicative co-financing amount is ambitious. Below the co-financing table, please explain what each co-financing figure of investment mobilized is (both public investment and grant). Please describe how the co-financing amounts are supporting project implementation in some form.

(2) Please be specific with names of co-financiers (i.e, specific ministries). Under the names column, please remove specific references to which child project the co-financing is attached to. For investment mobilized, this should be included in the field (per comment 1 above).

26th of November 2023 (thenshaw):

(1) Addressed.

(2) Addressed.

Agency's Comments

24 November:

(1) The explanation regarding all the co-financing sources and how they support the project implementation is present under the co-financing tables present in each of the Child Projects. While the main program page compiles all the co-financing amounts from the Child Project pages, it does not contain a section for us to be able to repeat this information on the main program page.

(2) Specific names of the ministries which are the sources of co-financing are included. The reference to child projects are kept, as the main program page compiles the co-financing sources from individual child projects separately, without an indication for which project the co-financing is provided to and without manually indicating the associated project, the compiled list have the same Ministry providing co-financing multiple times, without a possibility to differentiate which purpose the indicated co-financing is for. For the investment mobilize, explanation of the source is present under the co-financing table under each child project.

4 November:

Comment 32: Co-financing amounts have been included as identified in consultation with the program countries.

Annex B: Endorsements

9.6 Has the program and its respective child project been endorsed by the GEF OFP/s of all GEF eligible participating countries and has the OFP name and position been checked against the GEF database at the time of submission?

Secretariat's Comments

8th of November 2023 (thenshaw): Yes, but please address the following:

(1) Please list country name next to ministry in record of endorsement table

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

Name	Position	Ministry	Date
Saule Sabiyeva	Deputy Director of the Climate Policy Department	Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of the Republic of Kazakhstan	10/9/2023 
Melis Turgunbaev	Minister	Ministry of Natural Resources, Ecology and Technical Supervision	9/12/2023 
Sheralizoda Bahodur	Chairperson	Committee of Environmental Protection Under the Government of The Republic of Tajikistan	9/4/2023 
Berdi Berdiyev	Head of the Department for Coordinating International Environmental Cooperation and Projects	Ministry of Environmental Protection of Turkmenistan	9/2/2023 
Jakhongir Talipov	Head of Department	Ministry of Natural Resources - International Cooperation and Projects	9/14/2023 

26th of November 2023 (thenshaw): Addressed.

Agency's Comments

24 November:

The names of the countries are listed next to the ministries in the record of endorsement table.

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

Secretariat's Comments 8th of November 2023 (thenshaw): Yes

Agency's Comments

Do the letters follow the correct format and are the endorsed amounts consistent with the amounts included in the Portal?

Secretariat's Comments

8th of November 2023 (thenshaw): No, please address the following:

(1) The LOE template was modified (an important sentence was removed). This is the only footnote that refers to the need of the Implementing Agency to assess the capacities of the proposed executing partner.

I am pleased to endorse the preparation of the above project proposal with the support of the GEF Implementing Agency(ies) listed below. If approved, the preparation of the proposal will be supported by and the project executed by [to be terminated if not selected yet / local - national - regional - global organization]. I request the GEF Implementing Agency(ies) to provide a copy of the project document before it is submitted to the GEF Secretariat for CEO endorsement / Approval.

The total financing (from [GEFTF, LDCF, SCCF]) being requested for this project is US\$ [], inclusive of project preparation grant (PPG), if any, and Agency fees for project cycle management services associated with the total GEF Project Financing. The financing requested for [country] is detailed in the table below.

Source of Funds	GEF Agency	Focal Area Source	Amount (in US\$)				Total
			GEF Project Financing	GEF Project Financing Agency Fee	Project Preparation Grant (PPG)	Project Preparation Grant (PPG) Agency Fee	
(select)	(select)	(select)					0
(select)	(select)	(select)					0
(select)	(select)	(select)					0
(select)	(select)	(select)					0
Total GEF Resources			0	0	0	0	0

¹ Subject to the capacity assessment carried out by the GEF Implementing Agency, as appropriate.

The reason for this is that the GEF Implementing Agencies are responsible and accountable to the Council for the use of GEF funds, so the Implementing Agency needs to be sure that the institution that will manage the GEF funds has the capacity to do so. In other words, the GEF Implementing Agency must assess whether the potential executing agency/partner has all the required minimum fiduciary / procurement standards, so this institution shows enough capacity for the management of funds.

To avoid the need for new LOEs, to formally allow the Implementing Agency to assess the capacity of the proposed executing partner, an email from each OFP expressing his/her agreement with this assessment before CEO Endorsement of the child projects will be acceptable? this email from each country OFP must be appended to the Documents tab.

(2) The revised LOE from Kazakhstan has been uploaded. Please ensure the new LOE is uploaded to the record of endorsement section of the submission

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

Name	Position	Ministry	Date
Saule Sabiyeva	Deputy Director of the Climate Policy Department	Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of the Republic of Kazakhstan	10/9/2023 
Melis Turgunbaev	Minister	Ministry of Natural Resources, Ecology and Technical Supervision	9/12/2023 
Sheralizoda Bahodur	Chairperson	Committee of Environmental Protection Under the Government of The Republic of Tajikistan	9/4/2023 
Berdi Berdiyev	Head of the Department for Coordinating International Environmental Cooperation and Projects	Ministry of Environmental Protection of Turkmenistan	9/2/2023 
Jakhongir Talipov	Head of Department	Ministry of Natural Resources - International Cooperation and Projects	9/14/2023 

26th of November 2023 (thenshaw):

(1) Partly Addressed. Reviewer cannot open file. Please consolidate the five LOEs and emails from OFPs into a single PDF document and upload to Portal Documents tab.

(2) Addressed.

28th of November 2023 (thenshaw):

(1) Addressed. Acknowledged that Kazakhstan LOE includes the footnote.

Agency's Comments

28 November:

A consolidated PDF with LoEs and the OFP e-mails regarding the acknowledgement of the requirement for assessment is uploaded (kindly notice that the Kazakhstan LoE has the footnote on the requirement for assessment, thus no additional e-mail is included from the Kazakhstan OFP).

24 November:

(1) Additional e-mails from the OFPs confirming their acknowledgment of the requirement for an assessment before any execution arrangement can be finalized is uploaded on the documents section within a zip file titled 'OFP additional emails confirming assessment requirement for execution arrangement?.'

(2) The correct LoE from Kazakhstan is uploaded on the endorsement section of the submission.

Annex C: Program Locations

9.7 a) Are geo-referenced information and maps provided indicating where the program interventions will take place?

Secretariat's Comments

8th of November 2023 (thenshaw): Partly, please generate a new map with the following:

- (1) Please add country and basin labels to the map.
- (2) Please include geo coordinates of the intervention areas below the map

26th of November 2023 (thenshaw):

- (1) Addressed.
- (2) Addressed.

Agency's Comments

24 November:

An updated map has been prepared and uploaded.

Annex G: NGI Relevant Annexes* (*only for non IP programs)

9.9 a) Does the program provide sufficient detail (indicative term sheet) to take a decision on the following selection criteria: co-financing ratios, financial terms and conditions, and financial additionality? If not, please provide comments.

b) Does the program provide a detailed reflow table to assess the program capacity of generating reflows? If not, please provide comments.

c) Is the Agency eligible to administer concessional finance? If not, please provide comments.

Secretariat's Comments N/A

Agency's Comments

Additional Annexes

10 GEFSEC Decision

10.1 GEFSEC Recommendation

Is the program recommended for clearance?

Secretariat's Comments

18 October 2023 (thenshaw): Please explain in the review sheet how each **upstream comment** is addressed. A full technical review of the PFD will then be carried out. Thank you.

8th of November 2023 (thenshaw): No, please address above comments and resubmit. Thank you.

26th of November 2023 (thenshaw): No, please address above comments and resubmit. Thank you.

28th of November 2023 (thenshaw): Yes

Agency's Comments

24 November:

Comments are addressed.

4 November:

Comments are addressed.

10.2 Additional Comments to be considered by the Agency(ies) during the child project development.

Secretariat's Comments

Agency's Comments

10.3 Review Dates

	PIF Review	Agency Response
First Review	11/8/2023	11/4/2023
Additional Review (as necessary)	11/26/2023	11/24/2023
Additional Review (as necessary)	11/28/2023	
Additional Review (as necessary)		
Additional Review (as necessary)		