

Achieving biodiversity conservation through effective management and enhanced resilience to climate change in the existing protected area of the North Albanian Mountainous Region

Review PIF and Make a recommendation

Basic project information

GEF ID

10839

Countries

Albania

Project Name

Achieving biodiversity conservation through effective management and enhanced resilience to climate change in the existing protected area of the North Albanian Mountainous Region

Agencies

UNEP

Date received by PM

7/27/2021

Review completed by PM

10/6/2021

Program Manager

Mark Zimsky

Focal Area

Biodiversity

Project Type

MSP

PIF

Part I ? Project Information

Focal area elements

1. Is the project/program aligned with the relevant GEF focal area elements in Table A, as defined by the GEF 7 Programming Directions?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

7/28/2021

Yes. Cleared.

Agency Response

Indicative project/program description summary

2. Are the components in Table B and as described in the PIF sound, appropriate, and sufficiently clear to achieve the project/program objectives and the core indicators?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

7/27/2021

The Albanian government have proposed to expand protected areas in the North of the country, creating one, larger National Park that this project proposes to help manage. The PIF is not clear what step in the process is the declaration and when it will be completed. Please clarify.

We understand that there is a draft Decision of Ministers made available on the National Electronic Register for Public Notices and Consultations regarding the creation of the Albanian Alps National Park. <http://www.konsultimipublik.gov.al/Konsultime/Detaje/361>

It will combine the individually protected areas of Gashi, Theth, and Valbona into one new park, the Albanian Alps National Park. The area will cover 82,844.65 hectares. Please explain the discrepancy between this figure and the one presented in the PIF.

Article 5 states that any activity that exploits natural resources and was given permission to do so before the decision comes into force will be allowed to continue operating, as long as it complies with Law 81 on "protected areas." No others will be granted a permit after the decision comes into force.

While under Law 81 for Protected Areas, the construction of hydropower plants is prohibited in central subareas, hydro plants are continuing to be built in Gashi and along the Gashi river, causing widespread disruption to the environment.

The construction of HPPs along the Valbona River has been halted by court order, but the work had already advanced considerably. Please explain how the project will address this threat.

The PIF outlines numerous threats to the future park, but the project strategy does not address any of them: hydropower and road infrastructure and its impacts, unplanned and unsustainable tourism, lack of economic options for local people. The project strategy is two rather generic components on "capacity building" and finance, but without any real clear and explicit strategy to address the threats to the future park.

Please revise and reframe the project strategy so that the investment is more explicitly geared towards addressing the threats to the future park. This requires a significant redesign and much greater detail than the generic text in the PIF.

9/20/2021

Thank you for all the revisions and corrections which are cleared.

However, based on the response, we now note that the DCM will make a decision on the declaration of the new national park in September and approval is expected. Please provide an update on this decision making process and whether the approval has gone

through the system. If the approval has happened, please upload the formal decision document in an Annex.

10/6/2021

Thank you for the clarification. At the time of CEO approval of the MSP, we expect that the presentation of the DCM by the National agency for PA to the new Minister will have occurred and that the Council of Ministers will have approved the creation of the new protected area. The formal decision should be included in annex to the Project document.

The explanation provided below of the status quo is satisfactory at this moment in the development of the project.

Agency Response

Question: The PIF is not clear what step in the process is the declaration and when it will be completed. Please clarify.

Response: The declaration of the wider area will be final with the gazettelement of a Decision of the Council of Ministers (DCM). As noted in this review the draft Decision of the Council of Ministers has been published (16.07.2021) and is now in the phase of public consultation, which is now foreseen to be closed on 10.08.2021. Thus, in accordance with the procedures outlined in the law, and the expectations of the Ministry of Tourism and The environment is that the approval of the DCM is expected in September 2021.

Question: Please explain the discrepancy between this figure and the one presented in the PIF.

Response: The draft management plan states 86,086 ha, the Decision of the Council of the Territory (DCT) of December 2020, states 82,567.9 ha, the draft Decision of the Council of Ministers (DCM) of July 2021 states 82,844.65 ha. The project will further define the exact surface area to be protected through the initial project activities as defined in Output 1.1.2 through on site-demarcation. Enquires with National Agency for Protected Areas (within the Ministry of Tourism and Environment) suggest that the original figure has been amended due to the process of public consultations for the DCT and DCM. Footnotes have been added to the PIF to clarify.

Question: Please explain how the project will address this threat (HHPs)

Response: Additional texts has been added to the PIF in regard to explaining this specific threat.

The revised strategy will address this threat at three fronts, first, the project will establish a committee for assessing the HPPs and build a political consensus on HPP concessions. Next, the project will target financing institutions to enhance their ESG systems. Finally, in order to enhance enforcement of the law, law enforcers will be trained.

Under Component 1 two new outputs were created ?Output 1.1.2: Establishment of a committee for the assessment of constructed and planned HPP status in the Albanian

Alps PA?; and Output 1.2.5: Train national financial institutions to enhance their environmental and social safeguards assessments in the financing of HPPs? Thus the project proposes the creation of a committee with all relevant line ministries, (including MoTE and MIE), with representatives from local governments as well as local communities and NGOs, with the purpose to truly evaluate all current and planned HPPs in the Albanian The Alps, taking into consideration their impacts on biodiversity and the local communities, while ensuring proper information dissemination and providing a the constructive platform for dialogue with stakeholders aiming for more sustainable HPP infrastructure development. The project will identify national financial institutions and banks and introduce them with the proper tools and methodologies to integrate considerations on environmental and social safeguards, as well as reduce natural resource use and biodiversity impacts of HPPs in Albania.

Under Component 2 as specific output was added ?Output 2.1.3 - Strengthening of regulation and management of HPPs and other infrastructure, through capacity building on EIA and SEA and training law enforcement officers, private sector and community representatives on sustainable natural resource management in order to reduce pressures on BD, and of CC (MP Program 3).?

In addition under (revised) Component 2, ?The support of the project will be critical in bringing international experience to the issues and ensuring transparency and opportunity for all stakeholders to play a role in their solution. Briefly, there are 3 key areas that will be contained under this Program of the Management Plan and which the project will support the NP stakeholders to implement: a). improved regulation, mitigation, and management of existing and planned infrastructural development, in particular HPPs and road construction, b). sustainable tourism development, with the main focus on community benefits and cultural heritage conservation, c). sustainable land use (pasture, arable, and forestry) with a focus on supporting and strengthening rural communities to add value to traditional land use products in order to help preserve the cultural landscape while maintaining or improving livelihoods. The most challenging of these will be undoubtedly the existing and planned infrastructural development in the NP territory. In this context, a key role of the project will be to ensure regional and international best practices are applied and to support balanced and pragmatic solutions that reflect the inputs and interests of all parties, particularly those at the local level. Solutions will need to combine the strengthening and proper application of both pre-existing and new regulations for such development that adequately reflects their environmental and local socio-economic/cultural impact, as well as pragmatic efforts to mitigate the impacts of already existing (or future approved) development.?

The issue of HPPs is a very high priority one (both in the project area and nationally/regionally) but also one of great sensitivity. Provisionally the project developers foresee the most pragmatic approach will be: a). seek to mitigate/compensate impacts of any existing such HPPs (through management of the plants to minimize negative impacts, mitigation structures such as fish ladders, etc, compensation/offsetting through contributions/taxes to NP management ad local development), b). strengthened regulation and control of planned HPP development process through capacity building of all levels of stakeholders to apply proper EIA, the challenge in the courts, etc, c). awareness-raising and education. However, specifics need to be better articulated during PPG stage based on existing best practices and relevant experience in the region. There are risks entailed at this stage of project development in providing detailed plans not yet supported with a solid basis.

Question/request: Please revise and reframe the project strategy so that the investment is more explicitly geared towards addressing the threats to the future park.

The project strategic framework has been revised in order to better reflect how the investment is addressing the threats identified. This has been achieved through the division of the 1st component into two with added outputs? the first component dealing with preparatory, financing and capacity building, the 2nd on the support to practical MP implementation to address the threats and to build all stakeholder experience and know how to continue doing so in future. Subsequently, adjustments and additions have been made in the PIF text to reflect this change and add detail/justification.

Response to review dated 9/20/2021

The DCM has not yet been approved due to the changes in the Cabinet. Though the same party stayed in power, the Cabinet including the Prime Minister have changed after the national elections. The new cabinet was declared by the winning party on September 2, approved by the Decree of the President of Albania on September 14, 2021, and sworn in office on September 18. This restructuring led to a change in the leadership of the Ministry of Tourism and Environment. Mr Blendi Klosi, who held this position since 2017, handed over to the new Minister Mis. Mirela Kumbaro. Minister Kumbaro formally took office on the 22nd of September. Due to this change, the presentation of the DCM by the National agency for PA to the new Minister might take some time before she takes it forward and sends it to the Council of Ministers. It is expected that the approval will be delayed for some time but will be completed during the PPG phase. We will provide an update in the project document and include the formal decision in the Project document.

Co-financing

3. Are the indicative expected amounts, sources and types of co-financing adequately documented and consistent with the requirements of the Co-Financing Policy and Guidelines, with a description on how the breakdown of co-financing was identified and meets the definition of investment mobilized?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

10/12/2021

On the Project Management Costs (PMC) there is no proportionality in the co-financing contribution to PMC.

If the GEF contribution is kept at 10.0%, for a co-financing of \$7,100,000 the expected contribution to PMC must be around \$710,000 instead of \$600,000 (which is 8%).

As the costs associated with the project management have to be covered by the GEF portion and the co-financing portion allocated to the PMC, the GEF contribution and the co-financing contribution must be proportional, which means that the GEF contribution to PMC might be decreased and the co-financing contribution to PMC might be increased to reach a similar level.

Please amend either by increasing the co-financing portion and/or by reducing the GEF portion.

10/21/2021

Yes. Cleared.

Agency Response

20211019

We changed the PMC cost of co-finance to \$710,000.

GEF Resource Availability

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

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

7/28/2021

Yes. Cleared.

Agency Response

The STAR allocation?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

7/28/2021

Yes. Cleared.

Agency Response

The focal area allocation?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

7/28/2021

Yes. Cleared.

Agency Response

The LDCF under the principle of equitable access?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

7/28/2021

NA.

Agency Response

The SCCF (Adaptation or Technology Transfer)?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

7/28/2021

NA.

Agency Response

Focal area set-aside?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

7/28/2021

NA.

Agency Response

Impact Program Incentive?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

7/28/2021

NA.

Agency Response

Project Preparation Grant

5. Is PPG requested in Table E within the allowable cap? Has an exception (e.g. for regional projects) been sufficiently substantiated? (not applicable to PFD)

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion
7/28/2021

Yes.

Agency Response
Core indicators

6. Are the identified core indicators in Table F calculated using the methodology included in the corresponding Guidelines? (GEF/C.54/11/Rev.01)

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion
7/28/2021

Please clarify the total hectares of the Park.

9/20/2021

Cleared.

Agency Response

We updated the total hectares based on the final ha in the DCM.

Project/Program taxonomy

7. Is the project/program properly tagged with the appropriate keywords as requested in Table G?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion
7/28/2021

Yes. Cleared.

Agency Response

Part II ? Project Justification

1. Has the project/program described the global environmental/adaptation problems, including the root causes and barriers that need to be addressed?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

7/28/2021

While the threats to the park are well articulated the response is rather generic and does not respond specifically as to how the threats to the park will be addressed and mitigated and/or removed by this investment.

9/20/2021

Cleared.

Agency Response

Detail has been added and barriers revised.

2. Is the baseline scenario or any associated baseline projects appropriately described?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

7/28/2021

Yes. Cleared.

Agency Response

3. Does the proposed alternative scenario describe the expected outcomes and components of the project/program?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

7/28/2021

Please see references above regarding the failure of the project design to specifically address the threats to biodiversity in the park and adjust and rewrite this section accordingly. While the threats to the park are well articulated the response is rather generic and does not respond specifically how the threats to the park will be addressed.

While finance for the park could be increased and "capacity built" , the threats could continue unabated and undermine its integrity. Please revise the project intervention strategy to more directly address the threats that undermine the ecological integrity of the future park.

9/20/2021

Cleared.

Agency Response

We believe this issue has been addressed based on the reframing of the project strategic framework and addition of detail on planned activities that will address the threats and achieve outputs and Outcomes. Please see the response to ?2. Are the components in Table B and as described in the PIF sound, appropriate, and sufficiently clear to achieve the project/program objectives and the core indicators??

4. Is the project/program aligned with focal area and/or Impact Program strategies?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

7/28/2021

Yes. Cleared.

Agency Response

5. Is the incremental/additional cost reasoning properly described as per the Guidelines provided in GEF/C.31/12?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

7/28/2021

This section has to be revised once the project intervention strategy is revised.

9/20/2021

Cleared.

Agency Response **Revision made.**

6. Are the project's/program's indicative targeted contributions to global environmental benefits (measured through core indicators) reasonable and achievable? Or for adaptation benefits?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

7/28/2021

No, due to the failure of the strategy to directly address the threats to the future Park and its biodiversity.

9/20/2021

Cleared.

Agency Response

Strategy revised to more clearly address the threats.

7. Is there potential for innovation, sustainability and scaling up in this project?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

7/28/2021

No. As currently formulated the project is not innovative in approach, the sustainability is suspect as the finance target is very modest, hence "scaling" such an investment is unlikely. Please revise this section once the project intervention strategy is revised.

9/20/2021

Cleared.

Agency Response

Revised.

Project/Program Map and Coordinates

Is there a preliminary geo-reference to the project's/program's intended location?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

7/28/2021

Yes. Cleared.

Agency Response

Stakeholders

Does the PIF/PFD include indicative information on Stakeholders engagement to date? If not, is the justification provided appropriate? Does the PIF/PFD include information about the proposed means of future engagement?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

7/28/2021

Please describe the consultations with stakeholders in the project area that have taken place.

9/20/2021

Cleared.

Agency Response

The following was added in the PIF:

This project has been endorsed by the Ministry of Tourism and Environment in 2019. Since then, national stakeholders in Tirana and local stakeholders in Tropoja have been engaged during the drafting of the project in order to discuss needs, challenges and possible opportunities for improving the biodiversity conservation in the area while positively impacting livelihoods of the local community.

Some of the meetings that took place during the drafting of the project concept and PIF, include:

Meetings with the Ministry of Environment, including the Minister, Deputy Minister, GEF Focal Point, Departments of Environmental Protection, Department of Biodiversity Protection, Department of Forestry and Pastures and NAPA. During these meetings the PA of the Albanian Alps were identified as a priority site for the protection of biodiversity. The ministry experts also identified the need for increasing the climate change resilience of this area, which has been reflected in Component 1 (Outputs 1.1.1 and 1.1.3) of the project. Information on existing projects and contributions towards the latest legal acts and strategic documents with relevance to the project were also identified through meetings with ministry experts.

Through a series of meetings with the NAPA, it was determined that the Government of Albania through the proposal of the MoTE was conducting the procedures for expanding the existing PA and declaring the landscape scale Albanian Alps National Park. Threats, and barriers of the area have been thoroughly discussed. Documents such as the Decision of the Council of the Territory, the existing Management Plan, and the latest Decisions of the Council of Ministers on PAs were provided and discussed in detail, and finally reflected in Outputs 1.1.2, 2.1.1, 2.1.2, 2.1.3, 1.3.3)

Through meetings with UNDP the objectives and results of the GEF financed project ?Enhancing financial sustainability of the protected area system in Albania? initiated in 2015, were identified. Discussions with UNDP were focused on the results of the project and possibilities for creating synergies and applying lessons learned with the National Financing Strategy, Dajti and Llogara Business Plans, which have been reflected in the PIF and will be further detailed through the activities of Outputs 1.2.2 and 1.2.3.

Several meetings and communications were carried out with GIZ, which contributed to the description of the Albanian Government?s initiative of expanding the protected areas in the Albanian Alps, as well as the maps outlining the borders, habitats, and land use of the expanded National Park.

In July 2019, a team of experts conducted meetings with key local stakeholders in Tropoja Municipality. Discussions with the Kukes Regional Agency of Protected Areas, located in Tropoja Municipality, were centered on gathering of data on biodiversity, issues in the territory of the PA, the RAPA?s needs for equipment, capacity building, and greater cooperation with other local and regional institutions in the Albanian Alps. This information formed the backbone of the description of the environmental problems, threats, and barriers in the PA, as well as Outputs 1.3.2, and 1.3.3.

Meetings were held with two local NGOs TOKA and Journey to Valbona. The discussions with this organizations centered on local issues, past and existing projects in the area, needs for comprehensive maps of the area, the current engagement of the population in planning processes (inclusive of gender disparities), potential for development of financing mechanisms that would improve the local livelihoods while support the conservation of the biodiversity in the area. Introductions to existing operators were made showcasing the areas potential for activities such as kayaking, hiking, horseback riding, training of local guides, marketing of local products jams, honey, blueberries, support the development and marketing for local eco-tourism hostels and mountainous huts, as well as marketing of local artisanal crafts. This has been reflected in the PIF in Outputs 1.2.3 and 1.3.3 and will be further taken in consideration

during the PPG phase, while outlining the activities for these outputs. Other meetings included local businesses such as Rilindja Restaurant and Guesthouse in Valbona Valley, a local horse farm as well as a Local Stan and Guesthouse in Lugina e Gjarprit, Gjelaj. Business owner mentioned their needs for creating a more sustainable and ecological business model for operating in a protected area.

A meeting was organized with ECRAN in order to discuss the strategy used to engage stakeholders in the consultation meetings during the elaboration of the Management Plan of the Albanian Alps National Parks, as well as the issues raised by stakeholders at the time. During this meeting information was gathered on public participation during the 13 consultations meetings engaging more than 200 stakeholders including national government institutions, national agencies, national experts, NGOs and academia. Local stakeholders included participants from local government, local forestry departments, rangers, Regional Agency for Protected Areas, local hotel and restaurant owners, guide operators, and local NGOs, and the process of consensus building for the current version of the MP.

Meetings were organized with PPNEA to gather information on the ongoing activities of the Balkan Lynx Recovery Programme (BLRP) and the current monitoring of the Carnivore Ecology in the Gashi River Reserve, while discussing possibilities for creating positive synergies several of the project's outputs under Outcome 1.1. Meetings were organized with the Agricultural University of Tirana, in order to discuss status and data for the project, especially output 2.1.3.

Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

Is the articulation of gender context and indicative information on the importance and need to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women, adequate?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

7/28/2021

Yes. Cleared.

Agency Response

Private Sector Engagement

Is the case made for private sector engagement consistent with the proposed approach?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

7/28/2021

Yes, but the case for sustainable tourism as a viable economic alternative has not been made effectively, hence, private sector engagement may be very limited in the end.

Please elaborate more clearly the strategy for engaging private sector actors to transform their approach to tourism in the Albanian Alps.

9/20/2021

Cleared.

Agency Response

The following paragraph included in the PIF:

During a scoping exercise conducted in 2019 with tourist organization in Tropoja Municipality meetings were organized with several operators offering services such as:

- Accommodations in Valbona Valley, and mountainous huts (Albanian stans) discussing their needs for better marketing of the eco-tourism features of their businesses, as well as better business models/plans for more sustainable year-round activities.
- Local guide operators as well as kayaking, and hiking tour guide in the Valbona and Thethi areas expressing needs for better path markings and comprehensive maps of the entire area, as well as detailed maps showcasing the biodiversity and cultural values of the PAs.
- Horseback riding and farm owner outlining the need for better business plan, and better connectivity in the PAs.
- Blueberry collector, honey producer, dairy produce producer and artisanal worker outlining the great potential of the area for producing quality and unique products, expressing needs for better post agriculture management and better marketing tools.

During the PPG phase, the project will start engaging all the representative stakeholders, private sector operator and discuss further sustainable tourism initiatives to be taken into consideration in the zonation, and management plan, as well as the drafting of specific financing mechanisms for the Albanian Alps and the practical applications (outputs 1.1.2, 2.1.2, 2.1.3, 1.2.3).

Risks to Achieving Project Objectives

Does the project/program consider potential major risks, including the consequences of climate change, that might prevent the project objectives from being achieved or may be resulting from project/program implementation, and propose measures that address these risks to be further developed during the project design?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

7/28/2021

Please clarify the project's strategy for working amidst the pandemic and how the project has assessed the impact that the pandemic will have on future tourism revenue and how the project can adapt to that.

9/20/2021

Cleared.

Agency Response

Current strategy (with amendments amended in the PIF):

The following information has been added:

To achieve the proposed objectives, the project team will continue applying corresponding measures to adjust to COVID19 restrictions during the PPG stage. Following the past year experience, in order to protect human health and also for cost-saving reasons, most of the stakeholders' meetings will be conducted virtually using different online tools. In case of inevitable face-to-face/in-person meetings, the project will adhere to the standardized measures of protection to reduce infections risks (social distancing, masks, disinfectants). Analytic work, capacity development and production of knowledge management materials will be conducted (as much as possible) as deskwork, in virtually connected teams or in small groups of people/participants to reduce COVID-19 infection risks. As the project is in its initial development stage, and its technical implementation start is expected in late 2022, all the risks that the project may face by COVID-19 protection measures will be elaborated/redesigned in detail during the PPG phase. Activities will be carefully planned to allow enough time for site work to be conducted in small groups and spread out in the territory to minimize traveling and meeting in big teams, while bringing in international expertise and using the best online tools available. The project design also incorporates a recognition that resilience is linked to diversity of land uses and livelihoods and that over dependence on any one option brings risks (as demonstrated currently in terms of tourism during the pandemic). Thus, the design of practical implementations will not be based only on sustainable tourism options but also activities such as production of quality food and sustenance options. The Covid19 pandemic brings opportunities as well as risks that the project needs grasp.

In July 2020, the UNCT in Albania also developed and approved the COVID-19 Socio-Economic Recovery and Response Plan^[1], identifying 113 priority actions to promote socioeconomic development in Albania by minimizing and mitigating the negative impact of COVID-19, and by building forward better. The actions outlined support the Government of Albania in its recovery across five pillars, namely, (i) health response and systems strengthening, (ii) pro-poor social systems, (iii) resilient economic recovery, (iv) macro-economic and fiscal management, and (v) social cohesion and local resilience. The objective is to ensure a concerted, collaborative and all-inclusive effort to address the multidimensional impacts of the COVID-19, and to protect the needs and rights of people living under the duress of the pandemic. This project is in line with the objectives and actions outlined in this document and will support the local community in the Albanian Alps, in their recovery actions while also mitigate the risks of any future outbreak, by mainstreaming information, preparedness and mitigation actions in the management plan, capacity building and awareness raising events.

UNEP has a very active portfolio in the Western Balkan region, including Albania where despite the challenges presented by the pandemic excellent results have been achieved on every project through the application of adaptive management practices, flexibility, and revisions of work plans and careful monitoring of work on-site. Several activities were conducted through online platforms, fieldwork was rearranged and performed as soon as the situation allowed and restrictions were lifted, we moved around the work plan so that it reflects the seasonality of the covid-work plans. Constant communication was kept with local project offices, while an array of local experts have been engaged on-site, exercising careful monitoring and engagement of local stakeholders including equal participation of both men and women.

[1] <https://albania.un.org/en/86279-un-albania-covid-19-socio-economic-recovery-and-response-plan>

Coordination

Is the institutional arrangement for project/program coordination including management, monitoring and evaluation outlined? Is there a description of possible coordination with relevant GEF-financed projects/programs and other bilateral/multilateral initiatives in the project/program area?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion
7/28/2021

Yes. Cleared.

Agency Response **Consistency with National Priorities**

Has the project/program cited alignment with any of the recipient country's national strategies and plans or reports and assessments under relevant conventions?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion
7/28/2021

Yes. Cleared.

Agency Response **Knowledge Management**

Is the proposed ?knowledge management (KM) approach? in line with GEF requirements to foster learning and sharing from relevant projects/programs, initiatives and evaluations; and contribute to the project?s/program?s overall impact and sustainability?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion
7/28/2021

Yes. Cleared.

Agency Response

Environmental and Social Safeguard (ESS)

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

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

7/28/2021

Yes. Cleared.

Agency Response

Part III ? Country Endorsements

Has the project/program been endorsed by the country's GEF Operational Focal Point and has the name and position been checked against the GEF data base?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

7/28/2021

Yes. Cleared.

Agency Response

Termsheet, reflow table and agency capacity in NGI Projects

Does the project provide sufficient detail in Annex A (indicative termsheet) to take a decision on the following selection criteria: co-financing ratios, financial terms and conditions, and financial additionality? If not, please provide comments. Does the project provide a detailed reflow table in Annex B to assess the project capacity of generating reflows? If not, please provide comments. After reading the questionnaire in Annex C, is the Partner Agency eligible to administer concessional finance? If not, please provide comments.

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

7/28/2021

NA.

Agency Response

Response to the comment below: Please see our response in Section 2 ?Are the components in Table B and as described in the PIF sound??

GEFSEC DECISION

RECOMMENDATION

Is the PIF/PFD recommended for technical clearance? Is the PPG (if requested) being recommended for clearance?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

7/28/2021

No. Please revise and resubmit.

Please also remove the duplicated sections of the PIF in the portal of which there are many.

9/20/2021

Thank you for the many clarifications and revisions that have been undertaken.

The remaining issue has to do with whether the DCM has been completed and whether an approval has been given for the establishment of the new national park which was to have taken place in September 2021. As noted above, please advise on whether this has happened and if the establishment of the new park has been approved, please upload as an Annex in the documentation of the project and reference this approval in the relevant sections of the PIF. If a decision has not yet been taken, please advise when it will occur.

10/12/2021

No. Please correct the proportionality with the Project Management Costs being born by GEF and cofinancing as noted above and resubmit.

10/21/2021

Yes. All issues have been addressed. PIF is recommended for technical clearance.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Additional recommendations to be considered by Agency at the time of CEO endorsement/approval.

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion
10/6/2021

At the time of CEO approval of the MSP, we expect that the presentation of the DCM by the National agency for PA to the new Minister will have occurred and that the Council of Ministers will have approved the creation of the new protected area. The formal decision should be included in annex to the Project document.

Review Dates

	PIF Review	Agency Response
First Review	7/28/2021	
Additional Review (as necessary)	9/20/2021	
Additional Review (as necessary)	10/12/2021	
Additional Review (as necessary)	10/21/2021	
Additional Review (as necessary)		

PIF Recommendation to CEO

Brief reasoning for recommendations to CEO for PIF Approval

The project will support national and local stakeholders to effectively initiate the functional establishment and practical management of the Albanian Alps National Park (AANP) on a sustainable basis, by addressing key barriers, i.e., limited systemic, institutional and individual capacity and limited practical experience and ?know-how? to implement new integrated conservation and rural development approaches. In addition, the project will address two issues not adequately addressed in existing planning, specifically long-term sustainable financing mechanisms for the AANP to ensure financial sustainability, and the need to incorporate actions to increase resilience to climate change.

The overall project objective is therefore to ?To achieve biodiversity conservation through effective management and enhanced resilience to climate change in the North Albanian Alps Mountainous Region?.

The project has three components. Component 1 aims at ensuring the establishment of the necessary enabling environment for effective management of the AANP. Component 2 seeks to support effective management to address the identified threats to the AANP by strengthening the practical experience of the Albanian Alps NP stakeholders to effectively implement the management plan. Component 3 aims to capture the key lessons and experiences gained to raise awareness of the benefits and facilitate replication of good practices. The project will further enhance sustainability of the NP through strengthening the availability of sustainable financing, and introduction of focused management planning and actions to enhanced CC resilience.