



Strengthening institutional capacities for securing biodiversity conservation commitments

Review CEO Endorsement and Make a recommendation

Basic project information

GEF ID

10776

Countries

India

Project Name

Strengthening institutional capacities for securing biodiversity conservation commitments

Agencies

UNDP

Date received by PM

10/4/2023

Review completed by PM

10/20/2023

Program Manager

Jurgis Sapijanskas

Focal Area

Biodiversity

Project Type

FSP

PIF
CEO Endorsement

Part I ? Project Information

Focal area elements

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

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

JS 10/17/2023 - Cleared.

Agency Response

Project description summary

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

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

JS 11/18/2023 - Cleared.

JS 11/16/2023 - Thank you for the resubmission. A few tables and graphs are off-margin in the portal (e.g. Annex E budget). Please ensure that all tables and graphs are within margins upon resubmission.

JS 11/6/2023 - Cleared. Thank you for the revisions and responses throughout the review sheet.

JS 10/17/2023

1- We note the detailed table explaining changes compared to PIF stage. However, this table is limited to component 1 and part of component 2, when output 3.5 (Improved monitoring and compliance strengthened and supporting integration of biodiversity) seems to have been removed compared to PIF stage. Please provide a full table justifying all changes.

2- Some of the changes compared to PIF stages presented in the dedicated table are not reflected in table B of the portal entry. For instance, the project objective has not been changed and still shows:

Project Objective

To mainstream biodiversity conservation and its sustainable use/management into local level self-governance institutional planning and budgeting systems in two high biodiversity landscapes in India

Please revise, make sure that the portal entry table B is up to date.

3- We note the reduction of the target in core indicator 4 from 320,000 ha at PIF stage to 272,000 ha is due to a reduction of the number of villages that will receive "intense technical assistance through the project" from 400 to 40. Please justify the latter decrease, including in the portal entry.

4- Please correct the following typo (highlighted part should be deleted):

Indicator 11:

At least 30% increase in capacity of block and district officials to effectively use new financial instruments (as measured using UNDP Capacity Development Scorecard) to the value of at least \$50,000 per champion village cluster

Agency Response

6 November 2023

Thank you for the helpful review comments and queries on the Project Document and CEO Endorsement Request submitted to the GEF by the Government of India (with the National Biodiversity Authority in the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change as the implementing partner), supported by UNDP. Responses to all comments are below:

1. Thank you for the correct observation that Output 3.5 has been removed in the final project design, and that this change was not explained. The original Output 3.5 has indeed intentionally been removed, and has been addressed instead in the project's M&E system. This has now been explained in the matrix of changes in the CEO ER document, and is further clarified here below.

The focus of Component 3 is now clearly on Knowledge and data management for improving integration of biodiversity into local development planning and budgeting across India, not only during the project lifetime, but beyond, through mainstreaming biodiversity considerations into existing local governance processes. The original Output 3.5 was more limited in scope, and focused on monitoring of project results specifically, i.e. the project's Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) system. The old Output 3.5 has now been removed, and monitoring of project results has now been shifted to be covered through the project's M&E budget, guided by two sections in the Project Document: *Section V: Project Monitoring and Evaluation*, and *Section VI: Monitoring and Evaluation Plan*. Section V goes into detail on the issues previously covered in Output 3.5 (i.e. monitoring of the project outcomes, mid-term and terminal evaluation, monitoring results provide input to enable adaptive management), and covers the arrangements (and budget) for i) inception of the project; ii) ongoing monitoring and evaluation of project outputs, outcomes and results; iii) monitoring of safeguards and gender compliance; and iv) independent evaluation of project results. Section VI provides a table showing precisely how progress on key outcome indicators will be monitored, including for each outcome: indicators, targets, data sources/collection methods, frequency of collection, responsibility for collection, means of verification, and risks/assumptions.

2. The project objective has been corrected in the portal entry as follows: To mainstream biodiversity conservation and its sustainable use/management into local **development** planning and budgeting systems in two high biodiversity landscapes in India, **and create platforms for replication**.

3. Once a costing exercise was done on how to provide meaningful technical assistance to villages that goes beyond identifying to actually planning, financing and implementing priority biodiversity actions, it became clear that the original target of 400 villages for such intensive support was not achievable within the limited project budget. Instead it was decided to support only 40 'champion village' clusters and their lands in this intensive manner, and to publicize their results in order to achieve a demonstration effect in others of the 445 target villages.

With intensive support, these champion villages should be able to achieve meaningful results on the ground in relation to the planned target of around 150 ha/village to be brought under improved environmental and biodiversity friendly forest and land management measures. To attempt to achieve this in all 445 target villages was not seen as realistic within the project

budget and timeframe, and it was felt that such an attempt could lead to reporting of inputs rather than concrete results on the ground.

As a compromise, however, it was decided to provide a medium level of support to the 445 target villages (identified as having high or medium biodiversity within their lands), that will be supported not only to produce/validate People's Biodiversity Registers, but also to mainstream priority biodiversity actions into their local development plans, including strengthening of their Biodiversity Management Committees. This work will then form a stepping stone towards taking action along the lines of the champion villages, building on leveraged co-finance gained during project implementation.

4. Thank you for pointing out this error. The extraneous text highlighted in blue by the reviewer has now been removed.

CEO ER text under Outcome 2 Indicator 11 now reads correctly: *?Indicator 11: At least 30% increase in capacity of block and district officials to effectively use new financial instruments (as measured using UNDP Capacity Development Scorecard)?*

16 November 2023

Thank you for the comments. This has now been corrected in the portal.

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

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request NA

Agency Response

Co-financing

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

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

JS 11/16/2023 - All cleared

JS 11/6/2023 -

2 - Thank you for the clarification but this does not address the comment in full, and it particular please provide email from the co-financier (Government of Meghalaya) to clarify the amount and type of co-financing to be provided during the lifetime of the project.

The rest is cleared.

JS 10/17/2023 -

1- Please tag as "Public Investment" what is currently reported as grant co-financing from MoEFCC and Tamil Nadu to be consistent with the supporting letters provided.

2- The letter from the Government of Meghalaya states that the \$11,686,931 are to be provided over a period of 6 years when the project is to last 5 years. Not all of the \$11,686,931 can thus be considered as co-financing this project. In addition, the letter does not specify the type of co-financing to be provided, but the language rather points to in-kind support instead of the grant label used in table C. Please provide an email from the co-financier to clarify the amount and type of co-financing to be provided during the lifetime of the project.

3- The PIF review requested that PPG leverage co-financing from the private sector given the project's focus on innovative and blended finance solutions. We note that no co-finance from the private sector has been secured at this stage. Please explain.

Agency Response

6 November 2023

1. Indeed, the government 'Grant' co-financing in each case can be correctly identified as 'Public Investment', and the tagging has been adjusted in both the CEO ER and the UNDP-Govt of India project document (hereafter referred to as 'the prodoc'). This applies to the co-finance from MoEFCC, the State Government of Tamil Nadu, and also the State Government of Meghalaya (see explanation on Meghalaya in relation to point 2 below).

Table C in the CEO ER doc has thus been amended to read as follows:

| Sources of Co-financing | Name of Co-financier | Type of Co-financing | Investment Mobilized | Amount (\$) |
|-------------------------|---|----------------------|------------------------|-------------|
| Recipient Government | Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) | Public Investment | Investment mobilized | 6,744,307 |
| Recipient Government | Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) | In-kind | Recurrent expenditures | 400,000 |
| Recipient Government | Government of Tamil Nadu | Public Investment | Investment mobilized | 9,940,041 |
| Recipient Government | Government of Tamil Nadu | In-kind | Recurrent expenditures | 355,000 |
| Recipient Government | Government of Meghalaya | Public Investment | Investment mobilized | 11,686,931 |

Accordingly, two tables in the prodoc have also been amended, i.e. the Co-financing Table under Partnerships and the Co-financing table under Section VIII. Financial Planning and Management.

2. The Meghalaya co-finance will be provided over the 60 months of the project implementation (originally envisaged as falling into parts of the six calendar years 2023-2028, hence the minor discrepancy, now moot since the project will not start before 2024), which will provide state level support in mainstreaming biodiversity across the Nokrek-Balpakram landscape including the districts of West Garo, East Garo and South Garo via

strengthening land-use planning, development planning and buffer strengthening; improving financing and incentives for biodiversity positive practices in the state; improving knowledge management, communication and digital information management for improving the integration of biodiversity into local development planning and budgeting in Meghalaya; and monitoring and evaluation of project outputs.

3. Private sector engagement remains an important part of the project design, as outlined in Component 2, now titled 'Improved **blended** financing and incentives for biodiversity positive practices in the two landscapes?', and expanded on in the CEO ER document and Prodoc for further clarity (see below). It was not possible to secure private sector co-finance before commencement of project implementation, but the leveraging of private sector investment during the project is seen as critical, and will be tracked and reported on in each annual PIR. This will draw on data generated through the completion of the project tracking tool in *Annex 23 Biodiversity Priority Action Tracking Tool*, which captures cash and in-kind contributions from public and private sector co-financiers, leveraged during the project in support of implementation. See screenshot below, with an example of leveraged in-kind co-finance:

| No. | Date, type and source of funds / equipment requested | Date, type and source of funds /equipment received | Partners and contacts |
|------------------------------|--|---|---|
| <i>Hypothetical example:</i> | | | |
| M1 | <i>Request made by VEC to Forest Department (on 23 October 2023) to support on accessing bamboo seedlings from the Meghalay State Scheme for Demarcation and Consolidation (including Extension) of Forest</i> | <i>5,000 bamboo seedlings received from Meghalay State Scheme for Demarcation and Consolidation (including Extension) of Forest on 3 January 2024</i> | <i>District Field Officer X, Tel: 1234567 Autonomous District Council Forester X, Tel; 7654321 Department of Finance, Government of Meghalaya</i> |

In addition, Activity 2.1.4 involves the design of a comprehensive 'Tracking tool for biodiversity finance', to be used for measuring new sources of finance coming in to fund priority biodiversity actions in champion villages, and for use by the Forestry Departments and District Coordination Mechanisms to track new sources of finance for actions contributing to the landscape plans. Activity 2.3.4 will apply the new tool with leadership of champion villages, the Forestry Departments and District Coordination Mechanisms.

15 November 2023

We have received confirmation via email from the Principal Chief Conservator of Forest (Wildlife) of the State Government of Meghalaya confirming the co-financing of USD 11,686,931 for the project duration and the type of co-financing as 'public investment'.

GEF Resource Availability

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

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request JS 10/17/2023 - Cleared.

Agency Response
 Project Preparation Grant

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

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request JS 10/17/2023 - Cleared.

Agency Response
 Core indicators

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

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request
 JS11/18/2013 - Cleared.

JS 11/16/2023

3- Thank you for the revisions. However, from the attached EX-ACT spreadsheet, it seems that clearance of invasive alien vegetation on 2,200 ha is still included as equivalent to bringing degraded land to tropical dry forest state with more than half a million of tCO2eq in mitigation benefits.

| Final land-use | Fire used? (y/n) | Initial land-use | Initial agroforestry systems | Reforested area (ha) | | Total emissions (tCO2-e) | | Balance |
|---|------------------|------------------|------------------------------|----------------------|---------|--------------------------|----------|--------------|
| | | | | Without | With | Without | With | |
| Tropical dry forest | NO | Degraded land | Please select | 0 | D 2,200 | 0 | -540,550 | -540549.5718 |
| Planted Tropical rainforest | NO | Agroforestry | Multistrata | 0 | D 260 | 0 | -39,475 | -39474.55417 |
| Planted Tropical dry forest | NO | Degraded land | Please select | 0 | D 180 | 0 | -47,484 | -47484.1158 |
| Planted Tropical moist deciduous forest | NO | Degraded land | Please select | 0 | D 160 | 0 | -61,114 | -61113.8 |
| Tropical moist deciduous forest | NO | Degraded land | Please select | 0 | D 1,200 | 0 | -225,840 | -225839.988 |

Please revise by removing entirely this row in EX-ACT or explain to what other activity correspond the 2,200 ha included in EX-ACT above.

JS 11/8/2023

2- It is well noted that the PAs have not yet been registered in the WDPA. Please confirm that these PAs will be registered in the WDPA as part of the project.

3- Thank you for the detailed explanations. However, the net carbon effect over 20 years of clearing invasive alien vegetation is not obvious. It is not clear that it would lead to net mitigation and it is unlikely that it will be equivalent to bringing degraded land to tropical dry forest state, as currently modeled in EX-ACT. To ensure conservative estimates, please remove this part from the EX-ACT calculations and revise the target accordingly (reduction

of 540,549 tCO₂eq). Please also provide the revised Ex-ACT spreadsheet with the next submission.

The rest is cleared, thank you.

JS 10/17/2023 -

1- Since the project state that it "will improve management practices in 266,000 hectares of state-owned Reserve Forests which are OECMs rather than strict PAs)", please consider reporting under the contextual sub-indicator 4.5 Terrestrial OECMs supported. Since this is a contextual sub-indicator, reporting under it is in addition to what is already included in the core indicator table, i.e. there is no need to change what is already included under core indicator 4. Please see guidelines

here: https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/documents/2022-09/Results_Framework_Guidelines_2022_06_30.pdf

2- Please include all WDPA IDs for protected areas reported under core indicator 1.2 ? they are mandatory at CEO endorsement.

3- We note that the target on core indicator 6 remains similar to that of PIF stage when the total surface area to be impacted by the project has been reduced by close to 18%. Most of the mitigation benefits rest on the assumption that the project will be able to move 34,301 ha of forests from large degradation level to a low degradation level (that is recover the equivalent of 50% of the biomass it holds in a undegraded state) within the 20-year period, compared to the scenario that these forests will continue to undergo degradation without the project. Given the type of interventions planned over these forests, a gain of 50% of the equivalent of undisturbed forest biomass seems to be an overestimate. Please reconsider the EX-ACT calculation to ensure estimates are conservative.

4- The PIF review requested that PPG investigate the possibility of reporting some results on core indicator 4.4 (loss of HC VF avoided). Please explain why it was not considered possible.

Agency Response

6 November 2023

1. At the time the project document and CEO ER were submitted, there was no sub-indicator 4.5. This has subsequently been added for GEF-8.

| High Conservation Value criteria if the forest has yet to be recognized by the related network. | | | | | |
|---|---------|-----------------------------|-------------|---------------------|----|
| <pls select> | | | | | |
| Indicator 4.5 | | Terrestrial OECMs supported | | Sum >>> | - |
| Name of OECM | WDPA ID | Expected (hectares) | | Achieved (hectares) | |
| | | PIF Stage | Endorsement | MTR | TE |
| | | | | | |

We have tentatively added this as a new sub-indicator, on the understanding that a) it is fine to use a GEF-8 sub-indicator for a GEF-7 project, and b) this is the same area as that described under Indicator 4.1 part b (possible since 4.5 is a contextual and not a component sub-indicator, as mentioned and as per the guidelines referenced).

| Indicator 4.5 (contextual) | Terrestrial OECMs supported (Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures) | | | | |
|--|--|-------------------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|
| WDPA ID | Name of OECM | Hectares | | | |
| | | Expected | | Achieved | |
| | | PIF Stage ¹² | Endorsement | MTR | TE |
| [Improved management in state-owned Reserve Forests (OECMs) – same area as under Indicator 4.1 part b above] | | | | | |
| <i>Sathyamangalam landscape</i> | | | | | |
| n/a | Erode Forest Division | | 82,144 | 24,643 | 82,144 |
| n/a | North and South Nilgiris Divisions | | 51,294 | 15,388 | 51,294 |
| n/a | Coimbatore Forest Division | | 123,265 | 36,980 | 123,625 |
| <i>Garo Hills landscape</i> | | | | | |
| n/a | Tura Peak | | 419 | 126 | 419 |
| n/a | Emangiri | | 829 | 249 | 829 |
| n/a | Rewak | | 647 | 194 | 647 |
| n/a | Baghmara | | 4,391 | 1,317 | 4,391 |
| n/a | Angratoli | | 3,011 | 903 | 3,011 |
| | Total | | 266,000 | 79,800 | 266,000 |

2. This has been checked with the Government of India and the World Database on Protected Areas and no ID numbers are yet available apart from the one already included for Nokrek National Park under Core Indicator 1.2. If additional ID numbers become available during project implementation, these will be added to the worksheet and reported at MTR and TE.

3. We have reconsidered the EX-ACT calculations (made using EX-ACT V9.0) and are satisfied that the estimates are sufficiently conservative, and that we can have confidence in them. It is anticipated that over a period of 20 years from project commencement, emissions of 5,890,186 tons of CO₂-equivalent will be avoided, as a result of two sets of interventions, or parts, as discussed below. Additional benefit is expected from improved management practices in 6,000 hectares of communally owned land in the 40 champion village lands, identified as having high potential to help fulfil the landscape zonation plan. However, these benefits are not included in the estimates at this stage as the exact location, conditions and the planned interventions will be determined during the implementation phase.

Part 1: 4,000 ha of degraded forest land (outside of PAs) will be targeted for restoration-related interventions, improving carbon sequestration in these areas, compared with the situation without the project in which they continue to degrade. The calculations are based on the assumptions that:

? Restoration activities will be carried out on 4,000 hectares of forested land or degraded forest land, by:

- a) clearing of invasive alien vegetation in 2,200 ha (Tropical Dry Forest) by Forest Department working with tribal communities to clear (and process wood from) *Lantana camara* and *Prosopis juliflora* from Reserve Forests (from a state of degradation of 3 to a state of 0, avoiding the alternative of shifting to a state of 4);
- b) regenerative mixed-use agroforestry on 260 ha (Planted Tropical Dry Forest) on highly degraded communal forest land, through Gram Panchayat leasing land to Dalit women's groups, e.g. growing indigenous fruit trees, spices and medicinal plants along with vegetables, food and fodder crops for sale (from a state of degradation of 4 to 1, avoiding 5);
- c) Enrichment planting in 180 ha (Tropical Dry Forest) and 160 ha (Subtropical Humid Forest ? used Planted Tropical moist deciduous forest as proxy in the EXACT) of Sacred Groves, demarcated by Gram Panchayats or tribal communities for protection, with enrichment planting of indigenous tree species (from a state of degradation of 2 to 0, avoiding 4); and
- d) Natural regeneration of 1,200 ha (Subtropical Humid Forest ? used Tropical moist deciduous forest as proxy in the EXACT) by Village Councils, allowing land formerly under *jhum* (shifting cultivation) to recover over time, with strict exclusion of resource use (from a state of degradation of 4 to 2, avoiding 5).

Part 2: Deforestation will be slowed, in the scenario with the project (compared with the scenario without the project) through better management of 200,528 ha inside PAs (of which 143,096 ha are forested); and 266,000 ha of forest outside PAs (of which 187,134 ha are forested). (Please see CEO ER Annex G and the EX-ACT spread sheet, as well as *Annex 15c* to the UNDP-GEF Project Document for details).

Benefit is calculated from the 5 Protected Areas (totalling to 200,528 hectares), where 3 PAs in Meghalaya cover 27,268 hectares (Nokrek ? National Park ? 4,748 hectares, Balpakaran National Park ? 22,000 hectares and Siju Wildlife Sanctuary ? 520 hectares) and 2 PAs in Tamil Nadu cover 173,260 hectares (Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve of 141,161 hectares and Mudumalai Tiger Reserve of 32,099 hectares) using forest management module. The benefit would arise from better management of two types of forests within these PAs. The forest within the PAs is protected, but enforcement is not always effective. The benefit would come from a reduction in the rate of deforestation as a result of better enforcement and community engagement. The Tropical Dry Forest type rate of deforestation is expected to reduce by 0.5% (i.e., current rate of 2.5% will be reduced to 2%) as a result of project interventions. Similarly, the deforestation rate for Subtropical Humid Forest (Tropical moist deciduous forest as proxy in the EX-ACT) will be reduced by 0.6% (i.e., current rate of deforestation will be reduced from 3% to 2.4%).

? Benefit is calculated from improved management practices in 266,000 hectares of Reserve Forests (i.e., outside of the Protected Areas). The benefit will arise from better management of two types of forests within these reserve forests. As expected, the forests have higher deforestation rate compared to forests within the PAs. But the benefit would come from a reduction in the deforestation rate. The Tropical Dry Forest type rate of deforestation is expected to reduce by 1.1% (i.e., current rate of 5.5% will be reduced to 4.4%) as a result of project interventions. Similarly, the deforestation rate for Subtropical Humid Forest (Tropical moist deciduous forest as proxy in the EXACT) will be reduced by 0.9% (i.e., current rate of deforestation will be reduced from 4.5% to 3.6%).

4. The Forest Survey of India does not currently identify High Conservation Value Forests, and due to the complexity of this area of work, it was decided not to tackle this during this relatively modest project (under USD 5 million in GEF investment).

15 November 2023

2) We confirm that the project will facilitate the registration of these PAs in the WDPA during the implementation stage.

3) Thank you for your suggestion and for taking the time to explain the GHG benefits arising, or lack thereof, from clearing Invasive Alien Species from 2,200 ha of degraded Tropical Dry Forest. As per your suggestion, after making this adjustment, EX-ACT calculation has yielded a reduction of 740,000 tCO₂eq in the total emission to avoid the target. We are not sure how you arrived at 540,549 tCO₂eq, but when the changes were made the difference from the previous estimate is 740,000 tCO₂eq. The annex is revised to reflect the new estimates and the assumptions section also has been updated to reflect the latest changes. For your reference, the revised EX-ACT excel is included in the resubmission.

16 November 2023

Thank you for comments. The 2,200 ha has been removed from the calculation. The revised GHG mitigated is 5,349,603 tons of CO₂e

Part II ? Project Justification

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

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

JS 11/16/2023 - cleared.

JS 11/8/2023 - This section is still missing from the portal entry. Please include the main elements of the ProDoc to describe, in the portal entry, the global environmental problems, root causes and barriers that need to be addressed.

JS 10/19/2023 - This section is missing from the portal entry. Please correct.

Agency Response

15 November 2023

Thank you for the comments. The global environmental problems, root causes and barriers that need to be addressed have been included in the portal.

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

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

JS 10/19/2023 - Cleared.

Agency Response

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

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

JS 11/8/2023 - Cleared.

JS 10/19/2023 - We note the more detailed description of the Alternative scenario in the ProDoc.

1- Please see comment in first comment box on table explaining changes compared to PIF.

2- The PIF planned for the project to contribute to the development of blended finance solution. It states "Other partnerships will be explored during the PPG stage to develop and implement locale specific blended financial solutions." The PIF review requested that the CEO endorsement package set realistic objectives related to blended finance and be specific on (i) the exact role the project intends to play in this area, (ii) the tentative sources of public and private finance for blending and on the (iii) partnerships that would be leveraged. Yet, blended finance is not mentioned once in the alternative scenario and there is no justification provide for this apparent deletion from the project's scope. Please explain.

Agency Response

6 November 2023

1. Please refer to table showing changes from the PIF stage in CEO ER doc. (pg. 16-24)

2. Thank you very much for pointing this out. The original work envisaged on blended finance has not in fact, been cut out of the project's scope, although we acknowledge that this impression has been created, since the actual term 'blended finance' was no longer used in the Project Document and CEO Endorsement Request. The term 'blended finance' has now been explicitly reintroduced in both documents, to avoid any confusion, together with a more extensive elaboration (under the private sector engagement sections of the documents) on what is envisaged in Component 2 in this regard.

We note that the term 'blended finance' refers to the strategic use of public environment/development finance to mobilize private capital flows, resulting in positive results for both investors and communities. This is indeed what is envisaged in Component 2 which aims to have the outcome that 'Enhanced financing and engagement by public and private sectors to implement actions for biodiversity conservation and sustainable resource use.' The title of Component 2 has been amended to 'Improve **blended** financing and incentives for biodiversity-positive practices in the two landscapes'.

The project's approach to blended finance can be summarized as follows: GEF investment in the project, and the public sector co-finance (both committed and to-be-leveraged), should lead to the unlocking of private sector funding in three forms: (i) corporate social responsibility funding for biodiversity priority actions; (ii) supply chain investments and off-

take agreements for the products of new forest-based and eco-friendly enterprises in the champion villages; and (iii) engagement in Access and Benefit Sharing Agreements, where relevant, for non-timber forest products. The detail on all the Activities under the three Outputs of Component 2 can be seen in the Project Document (which has a 17-page detailed outline of all the project components). Herewith further clarity (now included in the prodoc and CEO ER doc) on the following:

(i) The exact role the project intends to play in this area: The exact role the project intends to play is set out in Outputs 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3. In Output 2.1 'Resource gap assessed, and financial solutions and resource mobilisation strategy developed for landscape and local plans?', blended finance solutions are very much a part of this process. This involves an Activity (2.1.3) to 'Develop champion village resource mobilization strategies?', including the following financing mechanisms that blend public and private finance: a. Central and state government schemes and missions; b. Access and Benefit Sharing agreements; c. Corporate Social Responsibility (including liaison with the India Business and Biodiversity Initiative of the Confederation of Indian Industries). These are also three prioritized biodiversity finance solutions of BIOFIN India, which has highlighted the importance of blended finance. Output 2.2 will help provide incentives for forest conservation by supporting communities in champion villages on establishing, operating and putting on a sound business footing by project end ? at least one forest-based or eco-friendly enterprise, or set of enterprises in a value chain, in each of the 6 districts. In Output 2.3, BIOFIN methods and approaches will be applied in supporting local governance institutions, communities and officials to develop their capacity to access additional financial resources, and also to track biodiversity-relevant expenditure, including blended finance.

(ii) The tentative sources of public and private finance for blending: Three sources of private sector finance can be identified, for blending with public finance (in the form of (i) the GEF investment, (ii) the co-financed public investment, and (iii) additional funding to be leveraged from Central and State-government sponsored schemes and missions). The three areas for blending this public finance with private finance are as follows:

Firstly, there are 150 India-based private corporations identified by BIOFIN as having made expenditure/ investments for biodiversity conservation, some of which operate in the two project states and can be approached round developing partnerships. For example, companies who presented at a 2022 UNDP-BIOFIN India conclave organized with the MoEFCC on their current initiatives on biodiversity conservation included [Godrej & Boyce](#), [Coromandel International](#), [National Thermal Power Corporation](#) and [TVS Motor Company Limited](#). India is the first country to legally mandate corporate social responsibility, wherein companies of a certain turnover and profitability must spend two ? percent of their average net profit for the past three years on CSR. New CSR partnerships could support eco forest-based and eco-friendly enterprise establishment. Alternatively, CSR could support agro-ecosystem restoration interventions (important in this UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021-2030), such as: clearing of invasive alien vegetation from Reserve Forests; regenerative mixed use agroforestry on highly degraded communal forest land or monocrop tree plantations; enrichment planting of indigenous tree species in Sacred Groves; or natural regeneration allowing land formerly under *jhum* (shifting cultivation) to recover over time (see details in notes to *Annex 15a GEF 7 Core Indicator targets and worksheet*).

? Secondly, selected private companies commercially exploiting biological resources in the project landscapes will be approached for negotiating Access and Benefit (ABS) agreements ? for local endemic species on which communities hold the traditional knowledge (see prodoc *Annex 27: List of potential livelihoods for enterprise development*

support). A total of 244 ABS agreements have already been signed in India, with the most well-known ones being for commercial use of Red Sanders wood, Neem leaves and Pepsico's agreement with coastal communities in Tamil Nadu to pay for access to seaweed and traditional knowledge on its uses. The BD project Activity 2.2.7 aspires to add two more agreements through the BD project, potentially including *Citrus spp.* from Meghalaya, particularly those varieties with scientifically proven highest medicinal properties, i.e. Kachai lemon (*Citrus jambhiri* Lush.), Khasi papeda (*Citrus latipes* (Swingle) Tanaka), Chinotto (*Citrus myrtifolia* Raf.) and Pomelo (*Citrus grandis* (L.) Osbeck) for processing into powders for export markets as sources of functional components, bioactive compounds, and antioxidants with nutritional, analgesic, anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, anthelmintic, antibacterial, antifungal, and hypolipidemic properties. This specialized area of blended finance will be supported by Biodiversity Governance Specialist (see Annex 6 Overview of Project Staff and Technical Consultancies).

Thirdly, implementation of landscape plans and priority biodiversity actions will be supported by blending public and private finance, particularly in support of the forest-based and eco-friendly enterprises, such as fodder production and processing, bee-keeping and honey, agroforestry combining medicinal plants and fruit trees, bamboo and cane furniture, essential oils from flowers, adding value to existing tree crops e.g. cashew roasting, orange pulp, broom grass broom-making. Public finance will come from a wide range of Central and State schemes and missions, e.g. Apiculture Mission for beekeeping and honey, or Aroma Mission for oil production from aromatic plants cultivation. State-level private sector partners will be brought in as buyers of agroforestry produce, and as financiers of processing operations. Where private sector partners are brought in as buyers, this will involve their investment in the supply chain, effectively leveraging a blended finance solution, since it will build on the villages' accessing of support from central and state schemes. Where appropriate for slightly larger scale aggregation and processing, the project will engage the Promotion and Incubation of Market Driven Enterprises (PRIME) initiative of the Government of Meghalaya and the Entrepreneurship Development and Innovation Institute (EDII) of the Government of Tamil Nadu for additional technical and financial support.

(iii) The partnerships that will be leveraged: In addition to the partnerships with private sector companies discussed at length above, through their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programmes, new Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS) agreements, and dedicated partnerships with buyers of the products of the six forest-based or eco-friendly enterprises to be supported in the landscapes, partnerships will also be put in place with specialized business incubation service providers. Such service providers (likely from the private sector) will provide support to enterprises and coops on putting agreements in place with buyers, with fair prices negotiated, and rolling out of a marketing and branding strategy for each of the six enterprises/value chains. They will support communities to identify specific activities along each value chain for women and men, including beneficiaries from socially marginalized groupings, with special attention paid to opportunities for youth. They will support on feasibility studies and business plans and establishing / strengthening appropriate cooperative or other governance structures to oversee each operation, hire the necessary personnel, manage the finances and share the profits, registered and with a bank account. They will conduct a leadership programme on Women in Business with women participants in Self Help Groups, and new enterprise ventures, covering basic business skills, as well as financial and digital literacy. They will run a customized training and incubation support programme for

each enterprise and its governance group/s, including support on installing processing equipment / accessing Schemes, and developing a sustainability plan that involves phasing out subsidization of input supply through the project, as cash flow increases. They will help to put agreements in place with buyers, with fair prices negotiated, and roll out marketing and branding strategy for each of the six enterprises / set of enterprises in a value chain. They will support at least two enterprises/cooperatives to identify potential for, research structure of, facilitate, negotiate and conclude ABS agreements, with sharing guided by FPIC consultations. Such business support partnerships will be key to the success of the enterprises as financially sustainable enterprises in the long term, continuing to provide incentives for community conservation.

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

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

JS 10/19/2023 - Cleared.

Agency Response

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

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

JS 10/19/2023 - Cleared.

Agency Response

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

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

JS 12/8/2023 - Cleared.

JS 10/19/2023 - Please see comment box related to core indicators and address comments in this section as necessary.

Agency Response

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

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

JS 11/8/2023 - Cleared.

JS 10/19/2023 - This section, which has been drastically reduced compared to PIF and does not do justice to the project design, is not adequate. Please revise and provide a more comprehensive elaboration that highlights the project's main innovations and synthesizes the project's approach to durability and scaling up.

Agency Response

6 November 2023

Thank you for pointing out that the sections on innovativeness, sustainability and potential for scaling up ? in both the CEO ER and the prodoc ? were too cryptic and did not capture the wealth of detail in the design of the project components which will ensure that these goals will be achieved. The CEO ER document section 7 and the corresponding prodoc section on ?Innovativeness, sustainability and potential for scaling up? have now been expanded to read as follows:

The project is innovative in bringing together two elements of local governance in India ? on the one hand the biodiversity conservation system with State Biodiversity Boards (SBBs), Biodiversity Management Committees (BMCs) and People?s Biodiversity Registers (PBRs), and on the other hand the system of local development planning and budgeting ? to unlock biodiversity-positive actions at village level in two high biodiversity landscapes, providing a model for replication elsewhere in India.

The model piloted and the lessons learnt will be shared across the States of Tamil Nadu and Meghalaya, and with the other States of India through the SBBs that are convened together regularly through the National Biodiversity Authority (NBA), under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC). The project will help to fulfill the provisions of India?s Biological Diversity Act 2002 in the two target States, by empowering not only the SBBs at state level, but also the BMCs at the local and district levels, which exist everywhere on paper, but are mostly yet to become operational. The BMCs in turn are responsible for the development of PBRs for each Gram Panchayat or Village, and the project will help to shift beyond having PBRs on paper, to having updated PBRs drawn up in a participatory manner and accessible digitally.

India also has an extensive framework for village level development planning through local Panchayati Raj self-governance institutions (including traditional structures in the North-East), and many central and State government schemes exist for financing rural development, into which biodiversity can be mainstreamed. This innovation will be supported by the State Institutes for Rural Development (SIRDs) in the two target States, as well as the National Institute for Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, and central government departments supporting panchayat raj institutions, rural development and forest conservation. Village level development planning is meant to be integrated, strategic, participatory, and strategic in theory, but in practice consists of limited interactions between local governance institutions and block and district officials to request limited infrastructure inputs, with opportunities to access myriad biodiversity-relevant schemes going largely untapped.

This will be addressed with multi-stakeholder participatory planning at landscape level in Component 1, and support to mainstreaming priority biodiversity actions into local development plans in 445 target villages, with targeted capacity building interventions for women and men in local governance institutions, including the socially marginalized. The specialized training material being developed here will then be mainstreamed into the curriculum of the SIRD system in the two States and beyond. Component 2 will include support to local governance institutions, communities and officials to develop their capacity to

access additional financial resources, and also to track biodiversity-relevant expenditure. Component 3 will then apply the learning across the rest of Tamil Nadu and Meghalaya, through organizing workshops in Chennai and Shillong, co-hosted by SBBs and SIRDs, inviting all line departments, district councils and administrations, and participants from local self-governance institutions and traditional structures, on lessons learnt and outcomes on biodiversity integration in development planning and budgeting processes.

This experience and learning will also be replicated in other States of India, through Activity 3.4.2, implementing an ongoing State Biodiversity Boards learning programme on mainstreaming biodiversity into rural development, including expansion of Other Effective Area-based Conservation Mechanisms (OECMs) - with all 29 State Biodiversity Boards across India, utilizing the monthly online forum of SBBs facilitated by the NBA, with support from SBB interns. Internships will be arranged through government co-finance to the project, placing young women and men in SBBs and SIRDs to promote the importance of mainstreaming biodiversity into rural development, building on the NBA-UNDP Biodiversity Samrakshan Internship Program.

Through Activity 3.4.3 a national biodiversity mainstreaming conference will be co-hosted by MoEFCC, the NBA, the National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, the central Ministry of Panchayati Raj and the central Ministry of Rural Development, to disseminate lessons learnt on strengthening BMCs and local governance institutions for conservation, restoration and sustainable use in high-biodiversity landscapes. Through Activity 3.4.4. a national replication strategy will be devised, drawing together results from Tamil Nadu and Meghalaya workshops, SBB learning programme and national conference, to develop a pathway to national replication and a national resource mobilization strategy for mainstreaming biodiversity into local development planning and budgeting, including prioritization of next set of high-biodiversity landscapes, as well as relevant policy notes. This will include developing learning products on project innovations, including mainstreaming biodiversity into rural development, and expansion of Other Effective Area-based Conservation Mechanisms (OECMs) in high biodiversity landscapes.

The project also includes a sustainability strategy for the forest-based and eco-friendly enterprises, which are themselves key to providing incentives for long term biodiversity conservation. Component 2 supports communities in champion villages on establishing, operating, and putting on a sound business footing by project end, at least one forest-based or eco-friendly enterprise, or set of enterprises in a value chain, in each of the 6 districts. Hands-on support will be provided by full-time Community Facilitators, managing the work of specialized NGO partners and business incubation service providers. Through Activity 2.2.5 they will deliver a customized training and incubation support programme for each enterprise and its governance group/s, including support on installing processing equipment and accessing central and State Schemes and Missions, developing full business plans, including sustainability plan that involves phasing out subsidization of input supply through the project, as cash flow increases. Securing the long-term survival of the forest-based and eco-friendly enterprises by placing them on a sound business footing is crucial for the continuation of the incentive they provide for biodiversity conservation, and the model they provide for replication within and beyond the project landscapes.

Project Map and Coordinates

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

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

JS 11/16/2023 - Cleared.

JS 11/8/2023

Thank you but it the geo location information has still not been included in the portal entry:

GEO LOCATION INFORMATION

The Location Name, Latitude and Longitude are required fields insofar as an Agency chooses to enter a project location under the set format. The Geo Name ID is required in instances where the location is not exact, such as in the case of a city, as opposed to the exact site of a physical infrastructure. These IDs are available on the [GeoNames' geographical database](#) containing millions of placenames and allowing to freely record new ones. The Location & Activity Description fields are optional. Project longitude and latitude must follow the Decimal Degrees WGS84 format and Agencies are encouraged to use at least four decimal points for greater accuracy. Users may add as many locations as appropriate. Web mapping applications such as [OpenStreetMap](#) or [GeoNames](#) use this format. Consider using a conversion tool as needed, such as: <https://coordinates-converter.com> Please see the Geocoding User Guide by clicking [here](#).

Location Name

Latitude

Longitude

Geo Name ID

Location & Activity
Description

Please provide.

JS 10/19/2023 - Detailed maps are provided.

Please insert the geographic location of the sites (Latitude and Longitude in decimal degree format) directly under the dedicated data entry field 'GEO LOCATION INFORMATION'.

Agency Response

6 November 2023

Coordinates for the location of the project sites have been included. Please see below:

Landscape 1: Sathyamangalam-Nilgiri project landscape, Tamil Nadu State

11.033 N, 76.3510 E; 11.033 N, 77.66496 E

11.94265 N, 76.3510 E; 11.94265 N, 77.66496 E

Landscape 2: Nokrek-Balpakram project landscape in Garo Hills, Meghalaya State

25.232 N, 90.120 E; 25.163 N, 90.9705 E

25.6226 N, 90.120 E; 25.6226 N, 90.9705 E

15 November 2023

The geo location of the project landscapes have been updated in the portal.

Child Project

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

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

NA

Agency Response

Stakeholders

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

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

JS 10/19/2023 - Cleared. We note the detailed report on PPG engagement in annex 9a and the Stakeholder engagement plan in annex 9b.

Agency Response

Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

Has the gender analysis been completed? Did the gender analysis identify any gender differences, gaps or opportunities linked to project/program objectives and activities? If so, does the

project/program include gender-responsive activities, gender-sensitive indicators and expected results?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

JS 10/19/2023 - Cleared. We note the budgeted Gender Analysis and Action Plan provided as Annex 11 to the UNDP-GEF Project Document.

Agency Response

Private Sector Engagement

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

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

JS 11/8/2023 - Cleared.

JS 10/19/2023 -

1- The PIF elaborated at length on plans to involve the private sector to develop blended finance mechanisms for conservation financing. As commented on the alternative scenario, blended finance seems to have been removed from the scope of the project without justification. Please explain.

Agency Response

6 November 2023

1- The specific term "blended finance" was not used in the Project Document and CEO ER document, creating the impression that this area of work was to be discontinued or diminished in the final project design. This is emphatically not the case, and we apologize for the wrong impression created by the elimination of the term and by the very short sections of the documents outlining the approach to private sector engagement and how the GEF funds will be utilized to unlock leveraged co-finance from the (public and) private sector during project implementation.

This situation has now been rectified through edits to Component 2 and the sections on co-finance and partnerships - please see response above on this matter. In addition, the title of Component 2 has been adjusted to highlight the importance of this issue - "Component 2: Improve **blended** financing and incentives for biodiversity-positive practices in the two landscapes".

Risks to Achieving Project Objectives

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

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

JS 10/19/2023 - Cleared.

Agency Response

Coordination

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

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

JS 12/8/2023 - Cleared. We note that delays in technical clearance were associated with the agency's delays in responding to GEFSEC comments on the proper IA/EA arrangements. After discussions with the OFP, the country decided that full National Implementation Modality (NIM) was appropriate for this project.

[JS 11/27/2023](#)

Thank you the resubmission of the project. The supporting letters (including the last dated November 20, 2023) for the proposed execution services by the Implementing Agency are well noted. However, as previously explained, based on the evidence provided, the GEF Secretariat has found that this case does not merit an exception to the separation of implementation and execution roles, which are meant to be separate per policy.

As per GEF guidelines, the Agency consulted the GEF Secretariat one year ago to seek an exception on potential execution services to be provided for this project. At that time, the GEF Secretariat replied that it considered the reasons provided (to avoid delays) did not merit an exception to GEF policy. Without further consultation, justification or investigation of a third-party option, the CEO endorsement package proposes that the Implementing Agency would provide execution support on a wide range of services. Further, we note that the CEO endorsement requests states that the Executing Agency has been assessed as displaying ?Very Low Risk for procurement capacity on GEF [?] projects? and a ?Low risk relating to all the following categories: Organization, People and Behaviors, Reporting and Accountability, Assets and Inventory, Procurement, and Systems?.

The GEF Secretariat requests that the proposed execution arrangements be revised, aligned

with GEF policy to separate implementation and execution roles, in order to proceed with endorsement. Please note that this project needs to be CEO endorsed by December 10, 2023, to avoid automatic cancellation as per the GEF Cancellation Policy.

JS 11/8/2023 -

Thank you for the response and the additional supporting letter is well noted. However, the previous comments and assessment still hold. Given the evidence provided, the GEF Secretariat does not assess this case merits an exception to the segregation of implementation and execution roles. Please revise the proposed execution arrangements as a condition for resubmission.

JS 10/20/2023 -

Implementation and execution roles on GEF projects are meant to be separate per policy and guideline. As per guidelines, the Agency consulted the GEF Secretariat one year ago to seek an exception on potential execution services to be provided for this project. At that time, the GEF Secretariat replied that it considered the reasons provided (to avoid delays) did not merit an exception to the general rule of separation between execution and implementation roles.

Without further consultation or justification, the CEO endorsement package proposes that the Implementing Agency would provide execution support on a wide range of services, including recruitments, procurements, payment processes, travel and logistics, and Knowledge sharing and South-South cooperation. The budget identifies UNDP as the responsible entity for a total of \$3.7 million or 76% of the GEF project financing, while the Executing Agency would be responsible for 24% of GEF project financing. We note that the CEO endorsement requests states that the Executing Agency has been assessed as displaying 'Very Low Risk for procurement capacity on GEF [?] projects' and a 'Low risk relating to all the following categories: Organization, People and Behaviors, Reporting and Accountability, Assets and Inventory, Procurement, and Systems?'. We also failed to find any evidence that third-party options have been investigated, should execution support be indeed required. Given the evidence provided, the GEF Secretariat does not assess this case merits an exception to the segregation of implementation and execution roles.

Please revise the proposed execution arrangements as a condition for resubmission.

Agency Response

6 November 2023

Thank you for the comments. The Implementing Partner/EA, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has requested UNDP to provide execution support services for this project. We would also like to note approval granted for three EA projects (GEF ID 10914; 10493; 10194) where retroactive approval had to be obtained from GEF Sec to change the implementation modality from a full NIM to CO support to NIM after the project was CEO endorsed. We note the following rationale on the government's request to UNDP to provide execution support services:

1. Financial Management of Resources

Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) is an entity of Government of India (GoI) which has robust financial systems. While appropriate financial systems, rules and guidelines are in place, GoI processes for managing funds are time intensive and often experiences heavy procedural delays. This often affects the overall implementation of projects, resulting in extension of timelines and delay in project delivery. Issues pertain to:

Fund Transfer: The accounting of the financial transactions of MoEFCC is handled by the Central Treasury i.e. Controller of Aid, Audit and Accounts (CAAA). The funds for the project are transferred by UNDP/ Agency to the Controller of Aid, Audit and Accounts (CAAA), being the Central Treasury of MoEFCC as per the budget allocation by Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance. The funds to MoEFCC are received from the Budget allocation by Ministry of Finance in the form of Externally Aided Project in annual budget, where the MoEFCC then releases funds to the relevant parties.

However, Govt approval for authorising, processing and approving fund transfer takes on average 6 - 8 months.

2. Procurement Processes: The procurement policies and procedures are contained in Procurement of Goods and Services General Financial Rules (GFR). As per government norms, procurement is made based on advertisement and tenders in which any vendor can participate. Similar to above, while appropriate systems, rules and guidelines are in place, GoI procurement processes also are time consuming, and end to end procurement process takes minimum 4 -6 months. For other operational and logistical requirements (consultants, international and national travel/arranging workshops, IT equipment), UNDP support has been sought by Ministry as it has proven to be cost effective, efficient through a transparent and competitive process. In addition, Ministry has a cap on consultancy fees governed by its internal salary norms. This restricts the Ministry's ability to engage high quality technical expertise. UNDP has been facilitating the availability of highly skilled and experienced consultants in various divisions of the Ministry across the verticals. Further, procurement of any goods / services through GoI process entails a Goods and Services Tax (GST). This results in high transaction costs of running a project for the IP/EA given the opportunity costs.

3. Knowledge Sharing and South-South Cooperation: Given the global expertise and extensive outreach of UNDP, the Implementing Partner/EA has also requested for provision of services for engaging with eminent international organizations for exchange of best practices, participation at regional and international forums and facilitation of exposure visits. This will enable effective knowledge sharing and information dissemination which is currently challenging for the IP owing to long approval processes and procedural delays.

4. Capacity of IP: The HACT micro assessment conducted for the IP during the PPG phase resulted with a 'moderate' risk rating, which is largely attributed to (i) risk management and (ii) absence of gender policy. With experience in provision of execution support services to other GEF projects, UNDP has been the agency of choice of the Ministry for provision of operational support to implement these projects in a cost/resource/time-effective manner. To support the GoI in the effective and timely implementation of the project, UNDP will provide execution support services under recruitment, procurement and travel.

As noted in the GEF audit checklist, a clear firewall will be maintained by the IA in the provision of the support services from that of oversight function.

15 November 2023

UNDP has consulted the Executing Agency and the OFP's office on the feedback from GEF Sec on the execution support requested from UNDP and the execution arrangement. The government has communicated to UNDP Country Office in India that the OFP's office is going to write to GEF Secretariat to consider the request on an exceptional basis. While the letter is expected in a day or two, UNDP has been asked to resubmit the project to GEF Sec.

4 December 2023 (submitted in the portal on 6 Dec 2023)

We took note of GEF's stance on the execution arrangement and consulted the executing entity and OFP. While the government would like to receive some level of execution support services from UNDP the reasons for which are noted in the previous round of response, the EA has agreed to revert to a full national implementation modality (NIM) and this has been approved by the OFP. Accordingly, the execution arrangement has been revised to reflect full NIM in the ProDoc and CEO ER including the TBWP and GEF budget table.

Consistency with National Priorities

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

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

JS 10/19/2023 - Cleared.

Agency Response

Knowledge Management

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

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

JS 10/20/2023 - Cleared. We note timelines are provided in the workplan provided as Annex 3.

Agency Response

Environmental and Social Safeguard (ESS)

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

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

JS 10/20/2023 - Cleared.

We note the High/Substantial risk rating, which is identical to PIF stage rating. We also note the attached Social and Environmental Screening and the Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF) provided as annex 10, which plans for \$100,000 for ESMF implementation. We further note that an Environmental and Social Impact Assessment, an Environmental and Social Management Plan, 2 Social Inclusion Plans, 2 Resettlement Action Plans, 2 Livelihood Actions plans are planned for development.

Agency Response

Monitoring and Evaluation

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

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

JS 11/8/2023 - Cleared.

JS 10/20/2023 - We note the detailed M&E plan provided in sections V and VI of the ProDoc.

1- On indicator 4 corresponding to core indicator 4.1 (Improved practices to benefit biodiversity), please explain how "improved practices to benefit biodiversity" will be measured in practice in the context of this project, upon what criteria will the project team in charge of execution decide that a given hectare has been brought under improved practices to benefit biodiversity.

Agency Response

6 November 2023

1- Thank you for this question. We agree that it is very important to have a clear way of measuring, monitoring and reporting on both Core Indicator 4 (4.1) *Improved management practices in 6,000 hectares of communally owned land in the 40 champion village lands*; and *Improved management practices in 266,000 hectares of state-owned Reserve Forests through integration of biodiversity and ecosystem considerations into forest working plans*. This also applies for Core Indicator 3 (3.2) *Area of degraded forest land restored through natural regeneration, clearing of invasive alien vegetation, enrichment planting and intensive mixed use agroforestry*.

As shown in the notes to Core Indicator 4 in *Annex 15a GEF 7 Core Indicator targets and worksheet*, Improved management practices in 6,000 hectares of communally owned land in the 40 champion village lands, identified as having high potential to help fulfil the landscape zonation plan may include:

- ? Cultivation of food crops and commercially valuable species on common lands using an agro-ecological approach (Tamil Nadu)
- ? Land use decisions to provide spatial solutions to human wildlife conflict, including siting of water sources away from settlements, creating buffers of non-edible crops, beehives and bamboo hedges (both landscapes)
- ? Restoration of shared freshwater resources like springs, ponds and wetlands
- ? Protecting intact areas of forest as Community Reserves (Garo Hills) for biodiversity conservation and wildlife corridors, and genetic pools for medicinal species
- ? Applying sustainable harvesting protocols for forest produce as basis for processing and ABS agreements (tribal communities in Tamil Nadu, Garo Hills)

Improved management practices in 266,000 hectares of state-owned Reserve Forests (which are OECMs rather than strict PAs) through integration of biodiversity and ecosystem considerations into forest working plans, drawing on the landscape zonation plan, and capturing results in the tracking tool for the plan. This will include planning for cooperation with communities on forest protection, restoration, alien clearing, HWC mitigation, improved connectivity and ecotourism (with implementation funded through government budgets and schemes).

Because it is critical to track both these kind of improved practices in detail, for monitoring and reporting purposes, the Project Document includes a tool that will be applied by the PMU, *Annex 24 Indicative tracking tool for restoration and improved land use* ? see snapshot below:

| Indicator | | Targets | | Description of indicators and targets | | | | |
|---|---|--|--|--|--|--|---|-------------------------|
| GEF Core Indicator 4: Total area of land to come under improved land use practices (ha) | | Baseline: 0 hectares Mid-term: 93,000 ha (2,000 × 46,500) Project end: 272,000 ha (6,000 × 45,333) | | This is Part (a) of the indicator will track the area of project landscapes outside PAAs that comes under improved management to benefit biodiversity through two distinct sets of project activities (a: 6,000 × b: 266,000 = total: 272,000 ha) as follows: (a) Improved management practices in 6,000 hectares of communally owned land in the 40 champion village lands (b) Improved management practices in 266,000 hectares of state-owned Reserve Forests (DRCMs rather than strict PAAs) through integration of biodiversity and ecosystem. pprix. ation into forest working plans | | | | |
| Improved land use interventions and results | | | | | | | | |
| Land practice / plan intervention number | Village, District, Landowners | Current land management practice | Improved land management practice OR improved forest working plan | Describe actions taken | Describe follow-up needs | Location of intervention area (GPS coordinates) | Size of intervention area (no. of hectares) | Contributes to 4a or 4b |
| Hypothetical example: | | | | | | | | |
| LP T1 | Kempanlengalalayam Gram Panchayat Erode District Tamil Nadu "Panombake" communal land | Degraded communal land not under any productive use | Cultivation by women's cooperative of food and fodder crops, fruit trees and commercially valuable forest species on common lands using an agro-ecological approach, with shade canopies, intercropping / crop rotation, soil and water conservation measures and organic fertilizer | Community consultations through Gem Panchayat Land parcel of 4 hectares leased to a group of 50 Dalit women Capacity development on cooperative formation and financing Cooperation with forest dwellers to access seed material for valuable forest species, and state schemes for fruit tree seedlings | Ongoing support from government schemes for provision of inputs and capacity building Project training for women's leadership | Centre point of land plot at 11.5242°N, 77.3023°E See diagram with polygon and coordinates of corner points - Map LP T1 | 4 hectares | 4a |
| LP T2 | Reserve Forests of Erode Forest Division Erode District Tamil Nadu under Tamil Nadu Forest Department | Previously had forest working plans without biodiversity integrated | 2023 Forest Working Plans for all Erode Reserve Forests now include planning for cooperation with communities on forest protection, restoration, alien clearing, BMC mitigation, improved connectivity and ecotourism | Community consultations on forest working plans Use of specialist consultants for alien clearing management plans | Follow-up capacity development needed for communities participating in joint patrols | Erode Forestry Department Office at 11°20' 32.7228" N, 77°43' 41.3940" E See map of all Erode Reserve Forests under plans - Map LP T2 | 82,144 hectares | 4b |

Benefits

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

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

JS 10/20/2023 - Cleared.

Agency Response

Annexes

Are all the required annexes attached and adequately responded to?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

JS 12/14/2023. Cleared. We note no execution services will be provided by the Agency and that the corresponding costs have been removed from the budget accordingly.

JS 11/8/2023

1a- UNDP is tagged as the responsible entity on most budget items, for a total of \$3.7 million or 76% of the GEF project financing. We also note the budget for planned IA execution services of \$40,589 charged to PMC. The response is well noted but please see comment on Coordination above on the IA playing an execution role.

The rest is cleared. On 1b, we note from the ProDoC ToRs that the Biodiversity Specialist is mainly to develop training material.

JS 10/20/2023 -

1- Budget:

1a- UNDP is tagged as the responsible entity on most budget items, for a total of \$3.7 million or 76% of the GEF project financing. We also note the budget for planned IA execution services of \$40,589 charged to PMC. Please see comment on Coordination above on the IA playing an execution role.

1b. The M&E Specialist should be charged on the M&E budget. Please correct, ensuring that the M&E budget stays within indicative limits.

1c. Most of the budget is assigned to undetermined contractors and consultants. No established local partners seem to be identified for subcontracting, when institutionalization is an important part of the project's theory of change. Please explain how the modalities chosen to channel the funds are also to contribute to building long-term capacity of local partners and institutionalization of the work developed under the project.

2- BD tracking tool / baseline METT scores: We note the attached spreadsheets. However, please provide in the spreadsheets the name, affiliation and contact details for the person(s) who completed the baseline METT assessment.

Agency Response

6 November 2023

1a - Thank you for the comments. While UNDP is indicated as responsible entity to provide execution services for a total budget of US\$ 3.7 million, the IP/EA will be the one deciding on the approval of the work plan and budget by the project board and, request for services outlined in the LoA. The cost for providing services will be charged based on a universal price list which is lower than or comparable to the cost charged by similar agencies.

1b. The primary responsibility of this position is to develop the biodiversity tracking tools and monitor the progress against the project contribution to biodiversity conservation. In this regard, it is noted the qualifications and expertise sought is more aligned with the requirement for an expert on biodiversity indexing and monitoring, further expanding on the development of the indicative tracking tool as described in Annex 24. For this reason, the title of the position has been altered to read "Biodiversity Specialist (Biodiversity Tracking Tool)".

1c. The project will be contracting local institutions such as the State Institute of Rural Development, Indian Institute of Forest Management, State Biodiversity Boards, etc. who were consulted during the project design stage as part of the broader stakeholder consultative process. to institutionalize the trainings, workshops, and capacity building activities. This process will be undertaken through a Request for Proposal during project implementation to allow for a fair recruitment process to identify suitable partners in the project landscapes to build the capacities of local partners to continue the work developed under the project.

2. This has been added in the METT spreadsheets.

15 November 2023

OFP's office has communicated to UNDP Country Office that they are going to communicate directly to GEF Secretariat to consider the request on an exceptional basis.

Project Results Framework

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request JS 10/20/2023 - Cleared.

Agency Response

GEF Secretariat comments

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

JS 11/8/2023 - Cleared.

JS 10/20/2023 - This has not been addressed. Please provide a matrix explaining how GEFSEC PIF-stage comments to guide PPG have been addressed. The comments were:

1- Many outputs are very high-level at this PIF stage and particular effort will be have to devoted during PPG to design concrete outputs with specific, clearly-defined underlying activities. In particular, output 1.7 is very theoretical at this PIF stage and its added-value will be revisited at CEO endorsement stage. (Output 1.7: Integrated strategies for transitioning towards a green and resilient recovery demonstrated at the local and district level)

2- Please consolidate co-financing during PPG, and especially leverage co-financing from the private sector given the project's focus on innovative and blended finance solutions.

3-Special attention will have to be paid during PPG, including on stakeholder mapping and consultations, so that the CEO endorsement package sets realistic objectives related to blended finance and is specific on (i) the exact role the project intends to play in this area (e.g. work on the enabling environment; prepare/aggregate a pipeline of investable projects; or just facilitating collaboration between project developers and investors ?), (ii) the tentative sources of public and private finance for blending and on the (iii) partnerships that would be leveraged.

4- Please consolidate targets under GEF core indicators during PPG and at least maintain this level of impact at CEO endorsement request, while investigating the possibility of reporting some results on core indicator 4.4 (loss of HCVF avoided).

5-Please develop a climate risk assessment that focusses on risks climate change poses for the durability of project outcomes rather than attempting to tackle all climate risks that may exist in the targeted landscapes

6- During PPG, please determine the best format and positioning for the Landscape Level Coordination Committee (LLCC) and State-level Coordination Committees (SCCs) to ensure proper functioning and legitimacy vis-?-vis existing institutional arrangement / structures.

Agency Response

6 November 2023

These comments from the GEF secretariat were addressed in the original submission to the GEF for CEO endorsement, and the way in which this was done is now captured here for the record. These comments and responses have also been added to the Prodoc *Annex 14 Comment-Response Matrix GEF Council and STAP Comments* and also to the (identical) Annex E to the CEO ER document.

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| <p><i>1- Many outputs are very high-level at this PIF stage and particular effort will be have to devoted during PPG to design concrete outputs with specific, clearly-defined underlying activities. In particular, output 1.7 is very theoretical at this PIF stage and its added-value will be revisited at CEO endorsement stage. (Output 1.7: Integrated strategies for transitioning towards a green and resilient recovery demonstrated at the local and district level)</i></p> | <p>The outputs were all adjusted to be much more concrete and less vague, with specific underlying Activities designed (and budgeted for) for each of the Outputs, and shown in detail in the Project Document's component outline in Section II. Project Strategy?. Following the comments by the GEF secretariat, inputs from the PPG team and discussion with government counterparts, Output 1.7 was removed as a separate focus of work. Whilst valuable, the work envisaged could almost form a project in itself and cannot be squeezed into the current project. As an alternative, the important One Health messaging has now been included in the public awareness campaign in Component 3, as Activity 3.2.2 Develop messaging and communications sub-strategy on One Health approach, highlighting interconnected nature of human, livestock, wildlife, forest, soil and water health. In addition, a module on this topic will be prepared with the National Institute for Rural development, for inclusion in course materials for local development planning.</p> |
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| <p><i>2- Please consolidate co-financing during PPG, and especially leverage co-financing from the private sector given the project's focus on innovative and blended finance solutions.</i></p> | <p>The co-financing was consolidated and finalized during the PPG phase, and is summarized in the tables in the CEO ER document and Project Document, with <i>Annexes 13a, 13b, 13c and 13d</i> containing the UNDP and public sector co-financing commitment letters. As mentioned in the new comment-response matrix, it was not possible to secure private sector co-finance before commencement of project implementation, but the leveraging of private sector investment during the project is seen as critical, and will be tracked and reported on in each annual PIR. This will draw on data generated through the completion of the project tracking tool in <i>Annex 23 Biodiversity Priority Action Tracking Tool</i>, which captures cash and in-kind contributions from public and private sector co-financiers, leveraged during the project in support of implementation. In addition, Activity 2.1.4 involves the design of a comprehensive 'Tracking tool for biodiversity finance', to be used for measuring new sources of finance coming in to fund priority biodiversity actions in champion villages, and for use by the Forestry Departments and District Coordination Mechanisms to track new sources of finance for actions contributing to the landscape plans.</p> |
| <p><i>3-Special attention will have to be paid during PPG, including on stakeholder mapping and consultations, so that the CEO endorsement package sets realistic objectives related to blended finance and is specific on (i) the exact role the project intends to play in this area (e.g. work on the enabling environment; prepare/aggregate a pipeline of investable projects; or just facilitating collaboration between project developers and investors ?), (ii) the tentative sources of public and private finance for blending and on the (iii) partnerships that would be leveraged.</i></p> | <p>Special attention was paid during the PPG phase to setting more realistic and less vague objectives in relation to blended finance and private sector engagement. The newly refined objectives were described in full in the Project Document component outline, but were not adequately summarized in the private sector sections of the CEO ER document or Prodoc, and not effectively visible, since the term 'blended finance' was not used. In the second submission to the GEF this has been rectified, and a full account of this is provided in the comment-response matrix of 3 November 2023, outlining in detail the specifics on: (i) the exact role the project intends to play in this area, (ii) the tentative sources of public and private finance for blending and (iii) the partnerships that will be leveraged.</p> |
| <p><i>4- Please consolidate targets under GEF core indicators during PPG and at least maintain this level of impact at CEO endorsement request, while investigating the possibility of reporting some results on core indicator 4.4 (loss of HCVF avoided).</i></p> | <p>This was done for the first GEF submission, and is outlined in Annex E to the CER document (Prodoc <i>Annex 15a GEF 7 Core Indicator targets and worksheet</i>), including detailed notes on the indicators at the end of the worksheet template. The Forest Survey of India does not currently identify High Conservation Value Forests, and due to the complexity of this area of work, it was decided not to tackle this during this relatively modest project (under USD 5 million in GEF investment). At the GEFSec's request, indicator 4.5 on OECMs from the GEF-worksheet has now been included (counting the same 266,000 hectares as 4.1, since 54.5 is a contextual sub-indicator).</p> |

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| <p>5-Please develop a climate risk assessment that focusses on risks climate change poses for the durability of project outcomes rather than attempting to tackle all climate risks that may exist in the targeted landscapes</p> | <p>This was done for the first GEF submission, and a project-specific <i>Climate risk screening report</i> was included as <i>Annex 26</i> to the Project Document. The report highlights the main climate change impacts and hazards that may pose specific risks to the achievement of the project objectives in the two target landscapes ? the Sathyamangalam landscape at the intersection of Western and Eastern Ghats in Tamil Nadu, and the densely forested Garo Hills landscape in Meghalaya. The report identifies these specific project-related risks, and proposes measures for how these can be mitigated.</p> |
| <p>6- During PPG, please determine the best format and positioning for the Landscape Level Coordination Committee (LLCC) and State-level Coordination Committees (SCCs) to ensure proper functioning and legitimacy vis-?vis existing institutional arrangement / structures.</p> | <p>This was done for the first GEF submission, following extensive consultations during the PPG Phase. Through project Output 1.1, ? Functional multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder coordination and governance mechanisms will be established to facilitate biodiversity conservation and sustainable use in two multiple use landscapes?. This will include a <i>State and Landscape Coordinating Committee</i> in each of the two landscapes: Sathyamangalam and Garo Hills; with annual meetings to be chaired by the Forest Departments of Tamil Nadu and Meghalaya State Governments, and including departments covering local governance and rural development, as well as Garo Hills Autonomous District Council (ADC), representatives of district administrations and civil society. It will also include a <i>District Coordination Mechanism</i> in each of the 6 districts whose territory is included in the landscapes: Nilgiris, Coimbatore, Erode, West Garo, East Garo & South Garo, meeting every 6 months under District Collectors (TN) / Deputy Commissioners (ML), with input from Autonomous District Council (ADC) in Meghalaya, and community representatives. Please see <i>Annex 7</i> for full terms of reference for these state & landscape and district level coordinating structures.</p> |

Council comments

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

JS 11/8/2023 - Cleared.

JS 10/20/2023 -

1- The Council commented that integrating biodiversity conservation outcomes into 400 Peoples Biological Diversity Register was a too small target for this project. The Agency response is that the target is now 512 villages when the rest of the project documents rather point to 445 villages and also has decided, without proper justification, to reduce to 40 the number of villages with high technical support. Please clarify in the response what is the number of villages to be supported with high-level of technical support and the number with a lower level of project support and justify the number given the current targeted institutions' capacity, the budget and the project's theory of change:

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| <p>Peoples Biological Diversity Register (PBDR): The project has targeted that it would integrate biodiversity conservation outcomes into 400 PBDR. Considering the existing capacity of the forest department in these two states and the size of the project, the target is considered to be too low. It is not clear why the target is not higher.</p> | <p>The project now targets 512 villages with medium to high biodiversity rest conservation and connectivity potential, for capacity development support on People's Biodiversity Registers, as well as mainstreaming biodiversity actions into village level development planning, following a mapping exercise conducted in the Nokrek-Balpakram Landscape and the Sathyamangal giri landscape.</p> |
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Agency Response

6 November 2023

1- Thank you for pointing out an error which has now been rectified ? the figure of 512 villages for PBRs was based on an earlier iteration of the mapping exercise (see below) which was subsequently refined and led to the final figure of 445 villages. It was not possible to raise the target further, but the scope of support to these villages now encompasses support for mainstreaming biodiversity actions into village level development planning, as well as into the PBRs themselves (see below).

Following extensive consultations with communities and local government structures during the Project Preparation Grant phase, the project design has been revised to optimize the impact of interventions, whilst also being technically feasible within budgetary and time constraints, thus maximizing the chance of successful delivery on the original intended outcomes for the project. There are now two sets of villages that will be involved in the project in the two project landscapes ? the Sathyamangalam-Nilgiri landscape in Tamil Nadu, and the Nokrek-Balpakram landscape in Meghalaya. These two sets of villages fall into two categories: *Category A: Target villages for capacity development on mainstreaming biodiversity into development planning*, and the more intensive support to *Category B: Champion villages for financing and undertaking biodiversity priority actions*.

The number of Category A ?target villages? to be involved is 445, which is close to the original planned number of 400, and is based on the mapping exercise (see Annexes 19a, 19c for analysis, and Annexes 15b, 15d for lists of villages). The number of Category B ?champion villages? to be involved is only 40, allowing for more intensive support to be piloted, with a view to scaling up this approach both during and beyond the project, as the value of this support is demonstrated and proven. The selection process for the champion villages of Category B is set out in detail in Annex 20 to the Project Document ?Draft selection process for champion villages?.

Category A: Target villages for mainstreaming biodiversity into development planning

The project involves capacity development and support for the local governance institutions of 445 villages in the high biodiversity and forest fringe areas of the two landscapes, (i) to mainstream biodiversity into local development planning and budgeting, and (ii) to update their People's Biodiversity Registers as the basis for undertaking future biodiversity actions. The prioritization of these high- and medium-biodiversity villages was based on a mapping of priority areas for implementation of biodiversity actions and enhancing connectivity ? see *Annexes 19a* and *19c* for the full analysis. The names of the 445 prioritized villages are listed (and shown on maps) in *Annexes 15b* and *15d*.

Category B: Champion villages for financing and undertaking biodiversity priority actions

More focused and intensive technical assistance will be provided by the project, through both GEF funds and government co-finance, to a smaller set of 40 villages or clusters of villages,

which will act as champions for demonstrating the value of integrating biodiversity into developing planning and undertaking priority biodiversity actions in support of landscape zonation plans that protect, connect and restore forest for its multiple benefits. During the project implementation period, it is hoped that other villages from amongst the 445 that have received the basic capacity development and support will learn from and be inspired by these 'champion villages', and undertake similar biodiversity priority actions. Appendix 1 to this annex lists the key project activities to be undertaken through the project in champion villages.

The set of 40 champion villages will be a sub-set of the 445 villages, and will therefore by definition be located in priority areas for implementation of biodiversity actions and enhancing connectivity (and thus climate change resilience) of protected areas. The 40 champion villages / village clusters will include two main groups, with the first group divided into two parts:

1. In the Sathyamangalam-Nilgiri landscape, 10 tribal communities living in or near protected areas will be selected (A), and 10 Gram Panchayats which include forest fringe areas (B);
2. In the Nokrek-Balpakram landscape, 20 Village A?king Lands will be selected (usually 2-3 hamlets each), with communally owned forest (controlled by the Nokmas).

(Note: Many of the Gram Panchayats in the Sathyamangalam-Nilgiri landscape contain only a few villages with high or medium biodiversity, and it is these clusters of villages that will be selected as champion villages. However, because local self-governance is undertaken through the Panchayat Raj institutions, the whole Gram Panchayat will be involved in the project ? in planning and undertaking actions in these parts of the Gram Panchayat lands, including forested, partially forested or underutilized communal areas.)

STAP comments

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request JS 10/17/2023 - Cleared.

Agency Response

Convention Secretariat comments

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request NA

Agency Response

Other Agencies comments

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request NA

Agency Response

CSOs comments

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request NA

Agency Response
Status of PPG utilization

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request JS 10/17/2023 - Cleared

Agency Response
Project maps and coordinates

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request JS 10/17/2023 - see similar comment box above.

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

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

NA

Agency Response

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

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request NA

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

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request NA

Agency Response

GEFSEC DECISION

RECOMMENDATION

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

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

JS 12/14/2023. The project is recommended for endorsement. Delays in technical clearance were associated with the agency's delays in responding to GEFSEC comments on the proper IA/EA arrangements. After discussions with the OFP, the country decided that full National Implementation Modality (NIM) was appropriate for this project.

JS 11/27/2023 - Not at this stage. Please revise the execution arrangements and resubmit.

JS 11/16/2023 - Not at this stage. Please address the few remaining comments above and resubmit.

JS 11/8/2023 - Not at this stage. Please address comments above and resubmit.

JS 10/20/2023 - Not at this stage. Please address comments above and resubmit.

Review Dates

| | Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement | Response to Secretariat comments |
|---|---|---|
| First Review | 10/20/2023 | 11/6/2023 |
| Additional Review (as necessary) | 11/8/2023 | 11/15/2023 |
| Additional Review (as necessary) | 11/16/2023 | 11/16/2023 |
| Additional Review (as necessary) | 11/27/2023 | 12/6/2023 |
| Additional Review (as necessary) | 12/8/2023 | |

CEO Recommendation

Brief reasoning for CEO Recommendations