Scaling the capacity of UNCCD Parties for inclusive decision support in Land Degradation Neutrality

Review CEO Approval and Make a recommendation

Basic project information

GEF ID
11935
Countries
Global
Project Name
Scaling the capacity of UNCCD Parties for inclusive decision support in Land Degradation Neutrality
Agencies
UNDP
Date received by PM
1/30/2026
Review completed by PM

Program Manager
Asha Bobb-Semple
Focal Area
Land Degradation
Project Type
MSP

PIF
CEO
Part I - General Project Information

1. a) Is the Project Information table correctly filled, including specifying adequate executing partners?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

3/2/2026

Yes

Agency Response

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

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

3/2/2026

Yes

Agency Response

2. Project Summary.
a) Does the project summary concisely describe the problem to be addressed, the project objective and the strategies to deliver the GEBs or adaptation benefits and other key expected outcomes?
b) Does the summary capture the essence of the project and is it within the max. of 250 words?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

3/2/2026

Yes

Agency Response

3. Project Description Overview
a) Is the project objective statement concise, clear and measurable?
b) Are the components, outcomes, and outputs sound, appropriate and sufficiently clear to achieve the project objective and the core indicators per the stated Theory of Change?
c) Are gender dimensions, knowledge management, and M&E included within the project components and budgeted for?
d) Are the GEF Project Financing and Co-Financing contributions to PMC proportional?
e) Is the PMC equal to or below 10% (for MSP) or 5% (for FSP)? If above, is the justification acceptable?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

4/10/2026

Cleared.

3/2/2026

a), b), c) Yes

d) There is an error the co-financing entry. Please correct.

e) Yes

Agency Response

Agency Response 4/2/2026

Thank you for the review comments and guidance. All comments raised have now been addressed. The co-financing is now proportional to the GEF project financing

4. Project Outline
A. Project Rationale
a) Is the current situation (including global environmental problems, key drivers of environmental degradation, climate vulnerability) clearly and adequately described from a systems perspective and adequately addressed by the project design?
b) Have the role of stakeholders, incl. the private sector and local actors in the system been described and how they will contribute to GEBs and/or adaptation benefits and other project outcomes? Is the private sector seen mainly as a stakeholder or as financier?
c) If this is an NGI project, is there a description of how the project and its financial structure are addressing financial barriers?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

3/2/2026

a)-b) Yes

c) N/A

Agency Response

5 B. Project Description
5.1 a) Is there a concise theory of change (narrative and an optional schematic) that describes the project logic, including how the project design elements are contributing to the objective, the identified causal pathways, the focus and basis (including scientific) of the proposed solutions, how they provide a robust approach? Are underlying key assumptions listed?
b) Is there a description of how the GEF alternative will build on ongoing/previous investments (GEF and non-GEF), lessons and experiences in the country/region?
c) Are the project components (interventions and activities) described and proposed solutions and critical assumptions and risks properly justified? Is there an indication of why the project approach has been selected over other potential options?
d) Incremental/additional cost reasoning: Is the incremental/additional cost reasoning properly described as per the Guidelines provided in GEF/C.31/12? Has the baseline scenario and/or associated baseline projects been described? Is the project incremental reasoning provisioned (including the role of the GEF)? Are the global environmental benefits and/or adaptation benefits identified?

e) Other Benefits: Are the socioeconomic benefits resulting from the project at the national and local levels sufficiently described?
f) Is the financing presented in the annexed financing table adequate and demonstrate a cost-effective approach to meet the project objectives? Are items charged to the PMC reasonable according to the GEF guidelines?
g) How does the project design ensure resilience to future changes in the drivers and adaptive management needs and options (as applicable for this FSP/MSP)?
h) Are the relevant stakeholders (including women, private sector, CSO, e.g.) and their roles adequately described within the components?
i) Gender: Does the gender analysis identify any gender differences, gaps or opportunities linked to project/program objectives and activities and have these been taken up in component design and description/s?
j) Are the proposed elements to capture and disseminate knowledge and learning outputs and strategic

communication adequately described?
k) Policy Coherence: Have any policies, regulations or subsidies been identified that could counteract the intended project outcomes and how will that be addressed?
l) Transformation and/or innovation: Is the project going to be transformative or innovative? Does it explain scaling up opportunities?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

4/6/2026

Cleared.

3/2/2026

The project is overall well designed. In relation to bullet l) please indicate the potential for scaling up to countries who are not in the pilot and how this can be done. noting the unique circumstances of different regions.

Agency Response

Agency Response 4/2/2026

The project description has been strengthened to more clearly articulate the potential for scaling up beyond the pilot countries and how this will be operationalized, while taking into account the diverse circumstances of different regions. Specifically, we: (1) Integrated additional text throughout the Project Description, including under each impact pathway and within Components 1?3, to explain how scaling will occur through knowledge products, pilot country experiences, South-South cooperation, and existing global mechanisms. (2) Highlighted the strong demand for the project, noting that more than 70 countries applied during the preparation phase. These applications were systematically analyzed to identify opportunities for engagement and alignment with ongoing initiatives, especially those led by UNDP. (3) Provided concrete examples of scaling pathways, including through ongoing or pipeline GEF-funded projects (e.g., Burkina Faso (GEF ID 11003/UNDP PIMS 6678), Eritrea (GEF ID 12080/UNDP PIMS 10304 - if approved at the June 2026 GEF Work Program), South Sudan (GEF ID 12086/UNDP PIMS 10371), Libya (GEF ID 11706/UNDP PIMS 10007) and Togo (GEF ID 11548/UNDP PIMS 9764), as well as through collaboration with initiatives such as the Blue and Green Islands Integrated Program for SIDS, already initiated through other UNCCD GM-UNDP collaboration and financing, and partnerships with the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). (4) Emphasized the scalability of the LDN-DSS, including its cloud-based and modular design, which allows adaptation to different national and regional contexts. In addition, Figure 3 has been updated to include a map of the countries that applied to the project and are considered as potential candidates for scaling up, providing a visual representation of the broader interest and scaling potential.

5.2 Institutional Arrangements and Coordination with Ongoing Initiatives and Project
a) Are the institutional arrangements, including potential executing partners, outlined on regional, national/local levels and a rationale provided? Has an organogram and/or funds flow diagram been included?
b) Comment on proposed agency execution support (if agency expects to request exception). Is GEF in support of the request?
c) Is there a description of coordination and cooperation with ongoing GEF and non-GEF financed projects/programs (such as government and/or other bilateral/multilateral supported initiatives in the project area, e.g.).

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

4/10/2026

Cleared

3/9/2026

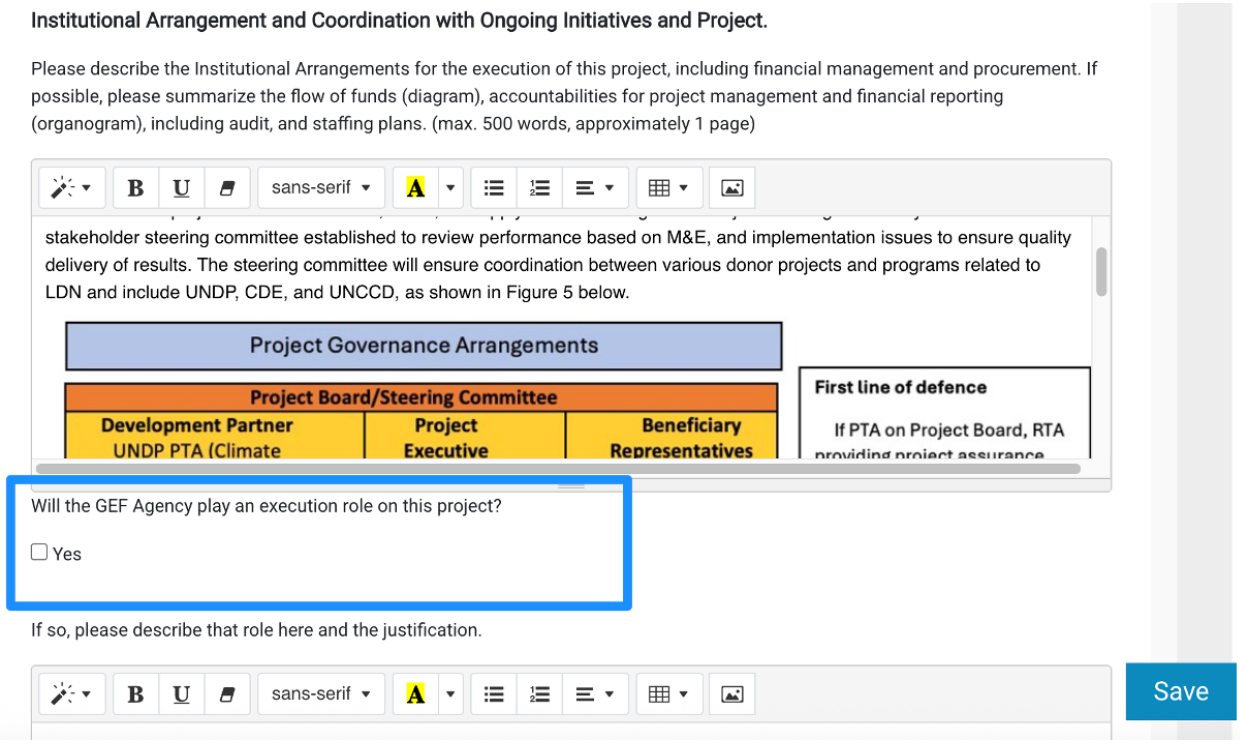
?For the avoidance of doubt, please answer ?No? to the question ?Will the GEF Agency play an execution role on this project?? which is currently blank.

Agency Response

Agency Response 4/2/2026

We confirm that UNDP will only play a GEF Agency role and facilitate connections under Component 3 on South-South, to link the activities under this Global MSP with other ongoing UNDP-led initiatives, through UNDP pledged co-financing, and therefore at no cost to the GEF grant.

The portal doesn?t give an option to answer ?No?, please see below



5.3 Core indicators
a) Are the identified core indicators calculated using the methodology and adhering to the overarching principles included in the corresponding Guidelines (GEF/C.62/Inf.12/Rev.01)?
b) Are the project's targeted contributions to GEBs (measured through core indicators and additional listed outcome indicators) /adaptation benefits reasonable and achievable?
Are the GEF Climate Change adaptation indicators and sub-indicators for LDCF and SCCF properly documented?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

3/2/2026

Yes

Agency Response

5.4 Risks
a) Is there a well-articulated assessment of risk to outcomes and identification of mitigation measures under each relevant risk category? Are mitigation measures clearly identified and realistic? Is there any omission?
b) Is the rating provided reflecting the residual risk to the likely achievement of intended outcomes after accounting for the expected implementation of mitigation measures?
c) Are environmental and social risks, impacts and management measures adequately assessed and rated and consistent with requirements set out in SD/PL/03?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

3/2/2026

Yes

Agency Response

5.5 For NGI Only: Is there a justification of the financial structure and of the use of financial instrument with concessionality levels?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement RequestN/A

Agency Response

6 C. Alignment with GEF-8 Programming Strategies and Country/Regional Priorities
6.1 a) Is the project adequately aligned with Focal Area objectives, and/or the LDCF/SCCF strategy?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

4/6/2026

Cleared.

3/2/2026

Yes, however please align with LD4 rather than LD 1.

Agency Response

Agency Response 4/2/2026

This has been addressed in all sections of the CEO ER, including the financing tables.

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

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

3/2/2026

Yes

Agency Response

6.3 For projects aiming to generate biodiversity benefits (regardless of what the source of the resources is - i.e., BD, CC or LD), does the project clearly identify which of the 23 targets of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework the project contributes to and how it contributes to the identified target(s)?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement RequestN/A

Agency Response

7 D. Policy Requirements

7.1 Are the Policy Requirement sections completed?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

3/2/2026

Please see comments below.

Agency Response

7.2 Is the Gender Action Plan uploaded?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

4/10/2026

Cleared

3/9/2026:

i)Please ensure that lessons learned and best practices in integrating gender equality are included in knowledge products to be developed/produced, and that these are widely disseminated.

ii)I couldn?t find the Gender Action Plan. Please request the Agency to upload or to point us to where the document is located. Once the GAP is uploaded, we will review the project?s alignment with the GAP.

Agency Response

Agency Response 4/2/2026

Best practices and lessons learned in integrating gender equality will be included in knowledge products. This intention is now clearly articulated in the description of component 1, in particular in the knowledge products, the e-learning course content, and the dissemination activities.

The Gender Action Plan was attached to the initial submission. We will ensure this is uploaded again, but we also request the Reviewer to check on the GEF?s side as we think this may be an issue with the GEF Portal.

7.3 Is the stakeholder engagement plan uploaded?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

4/23/2026

Cleared.

4/20/2026

It is well noted that agency now has provided a stakeholder engagement plan for this project. However, agency should substantiate information on the different roles of key stakeholder related to project components and activities, including means and timing of engagement and consultations with key stakeholders and specifying details on the specific civil society organizations and local community groups to be engaged in project implementation.

4/10/2026

We note the stakeholder consultation report, however we are unable to locate the stakeholder engagement plan that clearly describe the different stakeholders? roles related to project components and activities, including plans and means to engage and consult local communities, women, youth and Indigenous People in project implementation. Please provide.

3/9/2026:

We are unable to locate a stakeholder engagement report or plan for this project. Please clarify and provide information on consultations during project development and a stakeholder engagement that clearly describe the different stakeholders? roles related to project components and activities, including plans and means to engage and consult local communities, women, youth and Indigenous People in project implementation.

Agency Response

Agency Response 4/22/2026

The Stakeholder Engagement Plan has been revised to substantiate information provided on the different roles of key stakeholders, including which components they?ll be engaged under, and the methods and timing of engagement. We would like to emphasize that the central strategy of the project is to co-create and co-develop tools, technical guidance and knowledge products with partners, including government institutions who are the primary target for utilization of the tools, guidance and knowledge products. As also indicated in the project title, this is a capacity building initiative, so the primary targets for training and capacity building are the diverse set of stakeholders at global, regional and country levels.

Agency Response 4/14/2026

The Stakeholder Engagement Plan has been submitted with the package (Annex 8) and also posted in the portal library as a separate attachment. There are two separate documents regarding stakeholder consultations and engagement, one is a Stakeholder Consultation Report and the other (Annex 8) is a Stakeholder Engagement Plan detailing out how all the selected countries as well as other partners, will be engaged throughout project implementation.

Agency Response 4/2/2026

A Stakeholder consultation and engagement report has been prepared and uploaded with the revised CEO ER package.

7.4 Have the required applicable safeguards documents been uploaded?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

4/10/2026

Cleared.

3/9/2026:

We note that UNDP has attached Social and Environmental Screening Template and stakeholder engagement plan. An overall ESS risk is classified as Low. Indigenous Peoples? abilities to manage their lands and territories should be maintained and enhanced in all UNCCD policies and actions, including recognition and support for Indigenous Peoples? lands and territorial rights, tenure systems, and governance, as well as collective actions and efforts related to the restoration of degraded lands and conservation of indigenous and traditional lands and territories. Thus, Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous Peoples organizations should play important role in this project.

i) Please ensure involvement of Indigenous Peoples organizations (not only CSOs) in 10 pilot countries as key stakeholders and partners in this project, particularly Component 2, LDN and SLM implementation. (CEO Approval, page 15-19; and page 93-104)

ii) Please consider integration of recognition and support for Indigenous Peoples? lands and territories rights as a part of participatory practices where relevant in the project activities with free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) from Indigenous Peoples.

iii) Please also consider including monitoring indicators related support recognition and identification of Indigenous and traditional land and territories.

Agency Response

Agency Response 4/2/2026

We have incorporated explicit references to the involvement of Indigenous Peoples organizations as key stakeholders and partners throughout Component 2, particularly in relation to participatory processes for LDN monitoring, assessment, and SLM implementation. Specifically, Indigenous Peoples organizations are now clearly included alongside NGOs and CSOs in the description of stakeholder engagement, capacity development activities, national networks, participatory workshops, co-development of LDN-DSS, and training activities. These additions ensure their meaningful participation across all relevant outputs and processes in the 10 pilot countries.

While the project does not involve direct interventions on Indigenous Peoples? lands and territories, we have strengthened Component 2 to explicitly recognize their rights and ensure appropriate consideration within participatory processes and decision-support tools. Specifically, the text now includes references to the recognition of Indigenous Peoples? lands and territories in spatial analyses and LDN-DSS, as well as the application of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) principles where relevant. Provisions have also been added to ensure that any use of related data is conducted in consultation with Indigenous Peoples organizations and in a manner that is respectful and context-appropriate.

In the results framework, every indicator that counts number of people we have added "disaggregated by sex, age and IP & LC groups"

8 Annexes
Annex A: Financing Tables
8.1 GEF Financing Table and Focal Area Elements: Is the proposed GEF financing (including the Agency fee) in line with GEF policies and guidelines? Are they within the resources available from (mark all that apply):
STAR allocation?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

3/2/2026

Yes

Agency Response
Focal Area allocation?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

4/6/2026

Cleared.

3/2/2026

Yes, however please align the funding with LD 4.

Agency Response

Agency Response 4/2/2026

Corrected throughout the documents.

LDCF under the principle of equitable access?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement RequestN/A

Agency Response
SCCF A (SIDS)?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement RequestN/A

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

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement RequestN/A

Agency Response
Focal Area Set Aside?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement RequestYes

Agency Response

8.2 Project Preparation Grant (PPG)
a) Is the use of PPG attached in Annex: Status of Utilization of Project Preparation Grant (PPG) properly itemized according to the guidelines?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

4/10/2026

Cleared.

3/2/2026

Please disaggregate the budget line items. Please review the eligible PPG expenditures in the Guidelines (p. 9-11) and amend this section to describe what eligible PPG activities were financed with the PPG. For example, Development of the Agency?s own project document is not an eligible PPG expense.

Agency Response

Agency Response 4/2/2026

The PPG Utilization Table has been revised to provide details on PPG expenditure items and associated costs. Please refer to the CEO ER, Annex D

8.3 Source of Funds
Does the sources of funds table match with the amounts in the OFP's LOE?
Note: the table only captures sources of funds from the country's STAR allocation

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

3/9/2026

Yes

Agency Response

8.4 Confirmed co-financing for the project, by name and type: Are the amounts, sources, and types of co-financing adequately documented and consistent with the requirements of the Co-Financing Policy and Guidelines?
e.g. Have letters of co-finance been submitted, correctly classified as investment mobilized or in-kind/recurring expenditures? If investment mobilized: is there an explanation below the table to describe the nature of co-finance? If letters are not in English, is a translation provided?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

3/9/2026

Yes

Agency Response

Annex B: Endorsements
8.5 a) If ? and only if - this is a global or regional project for which not all country-based interventions were known at PIF stage and, therefore, not all LOEs provided:
Has the project been endorsed by the GEF OFP/s of all GEF eligible participating countries and has the OFP name and position been checked against the GEF database at the time of submission?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

3/9/2026

Yes.

Agency Response

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

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

4/10/2026

Cleared

3/9/2026

Uploaded, but not compiled as one document.

Agency Response

Agency Response 4/1/2026

LOEs now merged into 1 PDF document and uploaded to the GEF Portal.

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

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

4/6/2026

Cleared.

3/9/2026

Not fully. Please double check the LOEs. The LOE for Palau does not include the Source of Funds; LOE for Madagascar refers GBFF. Please amend.

Agency Response

Agency Response 4/2/2026

A revised LOE has been requested from the Government of Palau and uploaded with the revised CEO ER package.

For Madagascar, an earlier version of the letter, which referred to GBFF, was erroneously uploaded. The correct letter has now been uploaded.

Annex C: Project Results Framework
8.6 a) Have the GEF core indicators been included?
b) Have SMART indicators been used; are means of verification well thought out; do the targets correspond/are appropriate in view of total project financing (too high? Too low?)
c) Are all relevant indicators sex disaggregated?
d) Is the Project Results Framework included in the Project Document pasted in the Template?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

3/2/2026

Yes

Agency Response

Annex E: Project map and coordinates
8.7 Have geographic coordinates of project locations been entered in the dedicated table? Are relevant illustrative maps included?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

4/10/2026

Cleared.

3/9/2026

Under Annex E, please provide geo-referenced information and map where the project interventions will take place. For Global or coordination projects, agencies are encouraged to include the geographic location of any physical project activity (such as event or knowledge sharing activity), to ensure the project is visible. In the case of a program, Agencies may enter at least the country or capital city of the country of countries participating in the program.

Agency Response

Agency Response 4/2/2026

Done. Geographic coordinates for the capitals of all the selected countries is now included, complimenting the maps already included in Figure 3.

Annex G: GEF Budget template
8.8 a) Is the GEF budget template attached and appropriately filled out incl. items such as the executing partner for each budget line?
b) Are the activities / expenditures reasonably and accurately charged to the three identified sources (Components, M&E and PMC)?
c) Are TORs for key project staff funded by GEF grant and/or co-finance attached?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

4/23/2026

Cleared.

4/20/2026

This comment was not addressed in the resubmission ? Please request the agency to have one row for each activity with its associated costs instead of presenting multiple items as a bundle. In other words, each of these four items under Other Operating Costs should appear on its own line. When resubmitted, we will review the budget table.



4/10/2026

Please see follow up comments.

a. Please review Appendix A in the project cycles guidelines. We would kindly request the agency to add one row to include the sub-total for each expenditure category.

b. Some expenses seem to have been misclassified: Senior Research Scientist, Research Scientist, Research Associate, Communications officer, etc?. These seem to be positions that should be categorized as Salary and benefits /Staff costs rather than consultancies. Please revise.

c. Instead of having multiple rows for one position (as seen in the screenshot above) please request the agency to have one row for each position. The amount can be distributed across components.

d. International consultants should be categorized as Contractual services ? individual.

e. Please request the agency to have one row for each activity with its associated costs instead of presenting multiple items as a bundle.

f. The M&E inception workshop estimated for 10k does not have an amount provided in any column. Please add the 10k or remove the activity from the budget.

g. The activities labeled ?National Organization ? Country? we don?t know understand what these funds will be used for . Please provide details of the activity that will be funded for each item.

4/6/2026

Comment a ii) is noted and cleared.

3/2/2026

i) Not fully. Please note that the GEF Budget Table should be disaggregated by cost item rather than by output. Each line of the table should refer to a distinct contract(or), consultant, or item. For example, the first line for Contractual Services ? Individual contains two costs for consultation ($23,000) and workshop facilitation ($80,000). These two items should be combined into a single line only if the Agency expects to contract a single individual to conduct both activities. Please follow this approach for the entire budget table. For project personnel budget items, please include the position title in the Detailed Description column.

ii). The budget proposes to expend about 45% of the GEF financing on project personnel. Please review the budget to identify potential cost efficiencies, noting that most GEF projects typically spend about 1/3 of the GEF financing on personnel.

b) Yes

c) Please include TORs for project staff.

Agency Response

Agency Response 4/22/2026

Thank you for your comment, this has been adjusted in the budget table, and the items appear now under different lines

Agency Response 4/14/2026

a) The Sub-totals have been added under each expenditure category

b) The above mentioned positions have been re-classified to Salary and benefits /Staff

c) The respective lines for equal positions have been merged in one lines showing the costs distribution across components

d) International consultants have been moved under Contractual services ? individual

e) The rows have been merged showing the costs distribution among the activities

f) The Inception Workshop costs have been inserted under M&E column

g) National Organizations and experts will co-produce and provide feedback on the knowledge products produced, adding relevance to the national contexts, by procuring the services of national and regional organizations (Universities, NGOs, consulting firms, etc.) in 10 countries. The respective notes have been entered in the GEF budget template

Agency Response 4/2/2026

i. The budget has been disaggregated as requested.

ii. The personnel costs for the project exceed ? of the GEF financing due to the nature of the project as a capacity building project, rather than a project with landscape-level activities. The personnel costs are therefore related to technical experts who will develop technical tools and guidance and deliver technical workshops for the countries, as well as for project management. The estimated total for these costs is about 40% of the GEF budget.

c) TORs for project staff have been included (please refer to the ProDoc Annex 7)

Annex H: NGI Relevant Annexes
8.9 a) Does the project provide sufficient detail (indicative term sheet) to assess the following criteria: co-financing ratios, financial terms and conditions, and financial additionality? If not, please provide comments.
b) Does the project provide a detailed reflow table to assess the project capacity of generating reflows? If not, please provide comments.
c) Is the Agency eligible to administer concessional finance? If not, please provide comments.

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement RequestN/A

Agency Response

Additional Annexes

9. GEFSEC DECISION

9.1.GEFSEC Recommendation

Is the project recommended for approval

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

4/23/2026

All comments have been addressed. The CEO endorsement is recommended for approval.

4/20/2026

Please address the follow up comments above.

4/10/2026

Please address the follow up comments above.

3/2/2026

The project is not yet technically cleared. Comments to be addressed.

9.2 Additional Comments to be considered by the Agency during the inception and implementation phase

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

9.3 Review Dates

	CEO Approval	Response to Secretariat comments
First Review	**3/9/2026**	
Additional Review (as necessary)	**4/10/2026**	
Additional Review (as necessary)	**4/20/2026**	
Additional Review (as necessary)	**4/23/2026**	
Additional Review (as necessary)		