

Empowering Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities for Improved Biodiversity Stewardship in the Solomon Islands

Review CEO Endorsement and Make a recommendation

Basic project information

GEF ID

11795

Countries

Solomon Islands

Project Name

Empowering Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities for Improved Biodiversity Stewardship in the Solomon Islands

Agencies

FAO

Date received by PM

9/12/2025

Review completed by PM

3/11/2026

Program Manager

Celine Augereau ep Coisy

Focal Area

Biodiversity

Project Type

GBFF

PIF
CEO

1. General Project Information

**a) Is the Project Information table correctly filled, including specifying adequate executing partners?b)
Are the project tags properly selected, i.e. any tag on 'support to IPLCs' or KMGBF target is justified
given the project description.**

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request
10/02/2025

Cleared.

Agency Response

**c) Are the Rio Markers for CCM, CCA, BD and LD correctly selected with corresponding CCM, CCA,
BD and LD benefits made explicit in the project objective, log-frame and/or theory of change?**

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request
10/02/2025

Cleared.

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 and other key expected outcomes?
b) Does the summary capture the essence of the project?**

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request
02/24/2025

a) Cleared

02/05/2026

a) Not cleared. The corrections made in the Summary in the Prodoc do not appear in the portal.
Please correct. Also, the numbers indicated in the Prodoc for CI 4 and 5 do not correspond to those
in the portal. Portal CI table is confusing, see comments below. Please correct.

01/14/2026

a) Not cleared. Please also complete with the GEBs given by targets in CI 4 and 5.

10/02/2025

a) Not cleared. Please complete giving the GEBs to be delivered.

b) Cleared.

Agency Response

a) Revisions have been made in the portal to reflect a summarised version of the information in the
Prodoc due to portal's word limit.

a) the GEBS are now provided

a) Further information has been included on the IUCN Red List Species that are expected to benefit from the target OECMs.

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) For multi-Trust Fund projects with GEF TF financing, are the GEF TF Project Financing and Co-Financing contributions to PMC proportional?

e) Is the PMC equal to or below 10% (for projects with GEF project financing less than or equal to \$2 million) or 5% (for projects above \$2 million)? If above, is the justification acceptable?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

03/05/2026

Cleared

03/02/2026

b) Not cleared. Please correct in the Indicative Project Overview , Outcome 2.2: **GEF Core indicator 4.5 and 5.4: Terrestrial and Marine OECMs supported. Remove 5.4 and add 5.3.**

02/24/2026

b) Not cleared. CI 5.3 is contextual. The same numbers of Ha should also be reported on CI 5.0: Area of marine habitat under improved practices to benefit biodiversity (excluding protected areas).

02/05/2026

b) Not cleared. CI for marine OECMs is 5.3 and not 5.4. Please correct.

c) Cleared.

e) Cleared

1/14/2026

b) Not cleared. The comment has not been addressed. Please complete giving the targets and indicators expected for each component (i.e nb ha of terrestrial or marine OECMs created) in the Project Description Overview (not in section C Project Description).

c) Not cleared, please address the comment for gender considerations in the Project Description Overview. Considering that the project is separate in multiple islands, the high M&E budget (6%) is justified.

e) Considering the specific geographical constraints for this project located in different islands, and the fact that it is a little more than 2 million budget, a high level of PMC is justified. But please correct to have the same level of contribution from GEF and co-financing to PMC.

10/02/2025

a) Cleared.

b) Not cleared. Please complete giving the targets and indicators expected for each component (i.e. number of terrestrial or marine OECMs created).

c) Not cleared. Gender approach is not clearly expressed in the project components. Please modify to make it most obvious and identify the dedicated budget. See comments below.

Please also consider reducing the M&E budget to 5% of the sub-total project budget i.e. total budget minus PMC amount.

d) NA

e) Not cleared. Currently GEF contribution is 8.42% and co-financing is 9.95%. Please correct to be equal and under 5% for both.

Agency Response

b) from the submitter's end, the overview table in both the portal version as well as the ProDoc of 10 Feb version, it shows CI 5.3 and not 5.4

the overview table now reflects 5.3.

b) CI 5.3 is now reflected in the CI5. There were problems with the portal which has been resolved by the GEF ITS team.

b) The CI number has been corrected to 5.3.

b) The Core Indicator targets are presented under Outcome 2.2.

c) The project outcomes and project outputs have been updated to address gender issues under the Project Description Overview. The section 'Project Summary' has also been updated accordingly.

e) Thank you for taking the said challenges into consideration. This is done

b) Relevant information has been entered.

c) Specific references have now been made throughout to the fact that the proposed processes will be inclusive and take into account the needs, interests and conditions of women.

We also see very little possibility of reducing M&E any further: all of the elements currently budgeted are strictly necessary and directly related to M&E. The budgets for baseline and ongoing monitoring of indicators are at best marginally sufficient, given the logistical challenges of the target localities. We have in fact seen it necessary on reflection to increase the budget for MTR and TE, given the high costs of international travel to Solomon Islands and domestic travel to the target localities.

e) We have made every effort to reduce PMC but see no way to reduce this further without significantly undermining its ability to deliver. The project ?falls between two stools? in terms of size: it is too small to benefit from economies of scale in terms of management costs, but is marginally too large to benefit from the rule that recognizes this by allowing 10% PMC for projects under USD 2 million.

The figure for cofinancing of PMC has been adjusted to be in the same proportion as the GEF funding for PMC.

Project Outline

4. CHANGES COMPARED to PPG REQUEST

4.1 Are changes to the project design, including to elements put forward in the PPG request to meet GBFF selection criteria, been described and justified. And are they acceptable?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request
10/02/2025

Change in the title does not impact the content of the project. The CI targets are increased except for people targeted. Those changes are acceptable.

The changes for Action areas from PPG to CEO ER are also acceptable.

Agency Response

5 B. 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 other project outcomes? Is the private sector seen mainly as a stakeholder or as financier?**
- c) If this is a blended finance project under GBFF Action Area 4, is there a description of how the project and its financial structure are addressing financial barriers?**

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request
1/14/2026

b) Cleared.

10/02/2025

a) Cleared.

b) Not cleared. Please complete the institutional stakeholders description by giving description of the other types of stakeholders, communities, private sector, women associations, CSO...

c) NA

Agency Responseb) Additional information on key non-governmental stakeholders, presented in the Stakeholder Engagement Plan, has been summarized in the Project Rationale section.

6 B. Project Description

6.1 a) Is there a concise theory of change (a narrative and a diagram) 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 previous and ongoing investments (GEF and non-GEF), lessons and experiences in the country/region?

c) Are the project components (interventions and activities) described, proposed solutions, critical assumptions, and risks properly justified? Is there an indication of why the project approach has been selected over other 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 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)?

h) Are the relevant stakeholders (including women, IPLCs, private sector, CSOs) 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 descriptions?

j) Are the proposed elements to capture and disseminate knowledge and learning outputs and strategic communications adequately described?

k) Policy Coherence: Have any policies, regulations, or subsidies been identified that could counteract the intended project outcomes? How will that be addressed?

l) Transformation and/or innovation: Is the project going to be transformative or innovative? Are the specific levers of transformation identified and described? Does it explain scaling up opportunities?

m) For blended finance project only, is the financial structure adequately explained?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

03/05/2026

Cleared.

03/02/2025

Not cleared. Please remove the zero indicated in CI 5.2.

02/24/2025

b) Not cleared. See comment above on CI 5.0. CI 5.0 and 5.3 need to be consistent (total Ha expected at CEO endorsement). Please also remove the zero indicated in CI 5.2.

02/05/2026

d) Not cleared. Currently the numbers reported in the CI table for CI 4 and 5 are still not consistent. Please correct. CI 4.5 should also be reported under another CI 4.1, 4.2 or 4.3 for terrestrial areas because CI 4.5 is contextual. For marine areas CI 5 and 5.3 need to be filled for the same reason. The numbers of ha need also to be consistent at the end (20 000 ha for each). This needs to appear in the dedicated box: Total Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement).

f) Cleared.

i) Cleared.

1/14/2026

a) Cleared.

d)

- Component 1 : Cleared.

- Component 2: Not cleared

"Core Indicator 4.5 is tagged in the core indicator worksheet (the terrestrial part of the target OECMs. As explained in Section D2, it is not possible also to report targets for CIs 4.1 and 4.3, as the areas under improved management are located within the OECMs (this would imply double counting)." : CI 4.5 is a contextual Core sub-indicator and has to be also recorded in another Core sub-indicator under the Core indicator 4 Area of landscapes under improved practices. That means that what is recorded in CI 4.5 should be also recorded in CI 4.1, 4.2, 4.3 or 4.4. (see information and guidelines in the CI table). Idem for CI 5.3.

e) Cleared

f) Not cleared.

- PMC at 9.2% project sub-total budget while M&E at 5.5%, both higher than recommended threshold of 5% for projects of similar size. Considering that the project is separate in multiple islands, the high M&E budget (6%) could be justified.

- Office consumables, equipment,(Idem NGOs) are not eligible.

h) Cleared.

i) Not cleared.

- Under Learning, Knowledge, and Awareness-raising, it is still unclear how lessons learned and best practices related to the gender aspects of the project, especially efforts to empower women, will be captured and shared. At the same time, under M&E, the project does not explain how gender specific results, the implementation of the GAP, or related lessons learned will be reflected in the PIR, MTR, or TE. These elements are not integrated into the project document or activity descriptions, and the explanations do not clarify how gender perspectives will be incorporated into KM and reporting.

- Also, you have used the term gender-positive several times, and we would like to request clarification on what is meant by it, as this is not an official term used by FAO's Gender Policy, GEF's, or that of other international organizations to describe gender approaches in programs and policies. We kindly ask to adjust the terms gender-responsive or gender-transformative, which are the recognized standards. The GEF secretariat gender team is ready to discuss with the FAO team, if requested.

j) Cleared.

k) Cleared.

10/02/2025

a) Not cleared. Several figures in the CEO Approval Request Portal view, which is the document circulated to Council for review (pdf file ? see screenshots below), are not legible. Please review the formatting before resubmitting (ITS can help as needed)

Figure 5. Approximate area of project operation in the north of Vangunu



Figure 9. Mount Sasare Catchments KBA on Isabel, with approximate location of agricultural landscape for buffer zone approach



b) Cleared. A clear table is provided and a description of the works of different agencies (TNC, WWF...)

c) Cleared.

d) Not cleared.

- Component 1:

Please correct the number of outputs in Component 1 : 1.1 , 1.2, 2.1,2.2 should be 1.1.1, 1.1.2, 1.2.1 and 1.2.2

Output:

1.1. Relevant policy and regulatory frameworks at national and provincial levels are conservation based on community-led conservation areas

1.2. National and provincial institutions with capacities to support the model of bio-eas

2.1. Sustainable financing plans in support of community-led conservation areas

2.2 Capacity development programmes for administering financial instruments

While the project recognizes the importance of customary land tenure and traditional governance, could you consider strengthening engagement by ensuring that all relevant community groups?including women, youth, and marginalized populations?are actively involved in decision-making and benefit-sharing.

Could you explain how the project will ensure mechanism of coordination between the different government stakeholders and development partners to avoid duplication, clarify roles, and leverage synergies.

Ensure that gender considerations are integrated into all aspects of Component 1, from policy development to capacity building and benefit-sharing. Provide targeted support for women?s leadership and participation.

- Component 2:

Please correct the number of outputs in Component 2

Ensure that gender and youth considerations are integrated into all aspects of the component.

Please precise the part of terrestrial or marine OECMs to be created and update the CI 4.5 and 5.3. Currently CI 4.5 is not tagged. Please consider separating if needed areas in production areas (4.1 and 4.3).

- M&E: To improve adaptative management, could you consider providing elements on communities involvement in monitoring, tracking progress and outcomes.

e) Cleared.

f) Not cleared: Please refer to GEF Guidelines on the project cycle policy and update the budget table.

- Could you detail what are NGO administration, logistics and procurement support (2 NGOs) ?

- Office consumables, equipment,(Idem NGOs) are not eligible.

PMC at 9.2% project sub-total budget while M&E at 5.5%, both higher than recommended threshold of 5% for projects of similar size. Please consider reducing the M&E budget to 5% of the sub-total project budget i.e. total budget minus PMC amount.

g) The project will ensure resilience in the drivers by adopting a landscape and system level approaches which is flexible and adaptative. It plans to strengthen the institutional and community capacity framework. By ensuring knowledge management and monitoring it improves the capacity to adapt and be flexible. Furthermore, it will develop sustainable financing to support conservation.

h) Not cleared.

It is written that The project will not involved the private sector (E. POLICY REQUIREMENTS)

Private Sector

Will there be private sector engagement in the project?

No

And if so, has its role been described and justified in section C project description?

But also "The project will mobilize resources from the private sector to support its implementation, particularly support to women entrepreneurship through the newly established Protected Area Trust Fund. The project will also leverage the partnerships with philanthropic organizations to support capacity building, knowledge exchange, and innovative conservation initiatives ". Please clarify.

i) Not cleared. Please incorporate gender perspectives in Component 3 (livelihoods). Under Learning, Knowledge, Awareness-raising, please ensure that lessons learned and best practices in implementing the gender-related aspects of the project and efforts to empower women are captured and widely disseminated. Under M&E, please ensure that gender-specific results, implementation of the Gender Action Plan, and any lessons learned/best practices are included in PIR, MTR, TE.

j) Not cleared. Please precise how the project will work with Universities, research centers, Ministry of education to improve scholar curriculum, and capitalize knowledge, in particulier traditional knowledge. Under Learning, Knowledge, Awareness-raising, please ensure that lessons learned and best practices in implementing the gender-related aspects of the project and efforts to empower women are captured and widely disseminated. Under M&E, please ensure that gender-specific results, implementation of the Gender Action Plan, and any lessons learned/best practices are included in PIR, MTR, TE.

k) See comment above on coordination between government institutions. The Solomon Islands have a robust regulatory framework for environment conservation, with sectoral policies that can hinder it. The assessment of the current institutional and policy context should be done before policy alignment to be developed.

l) Cleared. The project is going to be transformative and innovative. It aims to empowered communities to integrate conservation value in their practices, in a participative way. It adopts a holistic approach recognizing the interconnections between landscape, land-tenure, farming systems and social development. The recognition of OECMs, and the community management is also innovative.

m) NA

Agency Response

It is not possible for the submitted to remove the 0 in 5.2. the IT team's support was sought to adjust this.

b) the portal issue with CI5.3 is now resolved.

d) CI4 - CI4.5 on OECMs is now also reported under CI 4.1. However, under CI5, marine OECMs (CI5.3) do not correspond to CI 5.1 (third party certification), or 5.2 (LME with reduced pollution and hypoxia). CI 5.3 of 20,000ha does not appear in the box on Total Ha expected at CEO endorsement

d) Component 2: Thank you for this clarification. In addition to the targets for CI4.5 and 5.3 on terrestrial and marine OECMs (20,000 ha each), a target of 15,000 ha has been given for CI4.1, within the area given for CI 4.5 (the terrestrial part of the OECMs), understanding that CI4.1 only refers to landscapes rather than seascapes

f) Thank you for your consideration. These items have already been reduced by approximately 60% from the original proposal and are intended solely for PMU use. Experience from the Solomon Islands has demonstrated that the project cannot operate effectively without allocating at least a minimal budget for such essential items, particularly given the limited provision within government and NGOs. Securing exceptional approval for office consumables, and equipment would strengthen project execution by the implementing partners.

i) The Section F.1 Knowledge management and Communication is further updated. The Section Annex N has been updated, including the indicators presented as the M&E Plan. The term gender-positive has been replaced with gender-responsive throughout.

a) The maps look fine from the submitter's end. They have been repasted. Technical snags appear regularly in the portal and to the extent possible, attempt is made to make the figures and tables legible.

d) The component-wise numbering was correctly entered, but there seems to be a problem with the margin in the portal due to which the first digit did not appear. The numbers have been pushed towards the centre to be visible in the CER, with the assumption that the first numbers appear.

Component 1:

While the project recognizes the importance of customary land tenure and traditional governance, could you consider strengthening engagement by ensuring that all relevant community groups including women, youth, and marginalized populations are actively involved in decision-making and benefit-sharing.

As explained in the introductory text to Outcome 2.1, ?through facilitation and advisory support, the project will ensure the engagement of local entities (Councils of Chiefs, churches and civil society organizations) and community members in [the proposed] planning processes, and the strengthening of their capacities to represent and express the needs, priorities and proposals of diverse local stakeholders.

In the description of Output 2.2.2, it is furthermore explained that, at local level, working through NGO partners, the project will:

- Strengthen the capacities of Councils of Chiefs, churches and CSOs for participating in landscape-level collaborative decision-making and conflict management processes, through training and ?handholding?, to prepare them for their long-term roles as co-facilitators of these processes in the future, taking into account the specific context of each community.
- Strengthen the capacities of community organizations for participating in landscape- and seascape-level collaborative decision-making and conflict management processes, through training and handholding, to prepare them to be able to represent the interests of community members in these processes in the long term.

Under Output 1.1.2, it is explained that the project will provide facilitation, advisory and capacity development support to MECDM and other sector ministries to promote effective intersectoral collaboration, in order to address the current inconsistencies and conflicts between their respective actions? [including] through the establishment and facilitation of coordination platforms (regular and/or ad hoc)? .

Could you explain how the project will ensure mechanism of coordination between the different government stakeholders and development partners to avoid duplication, clarify roles, and leverage synergies.

Existing policies and legislation under the Environment and Conservation Department provides for coordination on certain environmental issues: for example, the Environment Act 1998 provides for an Environment Advisory Committee with members elected from different focuses and representations; the Act is currently under review with proposals to establish an Environment Management Board to undertake task similar to that of the Advisory Committee, as well as a new panel at technical level to undertake assessments, monitoring or investigations relevant to national environment standards and any forms of prescribed development. Similarly, the Protected Areas Act 2010 establishes the Protected Areas Advisory Committee that coordinates relevant efforts relating to conservation and they have prerogatives to establish sub-committees to support their work or the intents of the Act.

- Provide advisory and handholding support directly to local community members to allow them to participate effectively in landscape/seascape-level collaborative decision-making and conflict management processes.

The document provides an estimated area breakdown between the terrestrial and marine parts of the OECMs. The precise area breakdowns will be defined on the basis of the detailed community-led participatory design processes to be supported by the project.

Ensure that gender considerations are integrated into all aspects of Component 1, from policy development to capacity building and benefit-sharing. Provide targeted support for women's leadership and participation.

Specific references have now been made throughout to the fact that the proposed processes will be inclusive, equitable, take into account the needs, interests and conditions of women and generate benefits for women where possible.

As explained in the Stakeholder Engagement Plan, the project will work with organizations with demonstrated capacities for promoting women's leadership and participation, including Mother's Unions, KAWAKI and the Western Province Women's Group.

Component 2: Same as commented above regarding the margins in the portal.

Please precise the part of terrestrial or marine OECMs to be created and update the CI 4.5 and 5.3. Currently CI 4.5 is not tagged. Please consider separating if needed areas in production areas (4.1 and 4.3)

Specific references have now been made throughout to the fact that the proposed processes will be inclusive, equitable, take into account the needs, interests and conditions of women and young people, and generate benefits for women where possible.

Core Indicator 4.5 is tagged in the core indicator worksheet (the terrestrial part of the target OECMs. As explained in Section D2, it is not possible also to report targets for CIs 4.1 and 4.3, as the areas under improved management are located within the OECMs (this would imply double counting).

- M&E: To improve adaptive management, could you consider providing elements on communities involvement in monitoring, tracking progress and outcomes.

As explained under Output 4.1.1, the project will support the establishment of a national network of community-led conservation initiatives, spanning all of the kinds of modalities summarized

above, to compile, share and disseminate this knowledge in such a way that it guides ongoing and future initiatives.

Additional text has been added under Output 2.2.2, explaining that project support to the formulation of management plans will be complemented by the participatory definition of indicators of management effectiveness of the conservation areas, formulated in such a way that they can be monitored by local stakeholders and their results used to guide the adaptive application of the management plans, and accompanied by strengthening of the capacities of the local communities to apply them. These may include easily measurable direct or proxy indicators of ecosystem health and the status of key species, as well as measures of changes in behaviour and management practices among community members (such as reductions in the occurrence of damaging practices)?.

f) These are pro-rata salary costs of existing finance, administrative, procurement and logistical support staff of the two NGOs, based in Solomon Islands.

-We have reduced these by 50%, but based on experience it is not possible to expect the Government to assume the costs of office consumables and equipment of cooperation projects, given the cumulative size of the portfolio.

- We have made every effort to reduce PMC, but see no way to reduce this further without significantly undermining its ability to deliver. The project falls between two stools in terms of size: it is too small to benefit from economies of scale in terms of management costs, but is marginally too large to benefit from the rule that recognizes this by allowing 10% PMC for projects under USD 2 million.

We also see very little possibility of reducing M&E any further: all of the elements currently budgeted are strictly necessary and directly related to M&E. The budgets for baseline and ongoing monitoring of indicators are at best marginally sufficient, given the logistical challenges of the target localities. We have in fact seen it necessary on reflection to increase the budget for MTR and TE, given the high costs of international travel to Solomon Islands and domestic travel to the target localities.

h) The response in Section E has been modified to indicate that there will be private sector engagement and that this is explained in the project description.

i) It is stated under Output 3.1.1 that Particular emphasis will be placed on options that provide opportunities for empowerment and income generation by women in the production and/or value chain stages?, and that Support to sustainable production support will be backed up, as relevant, by support to the development of associated small businesses, value-adding, value chain development, and financial mechanisms, with particular emphasis on opportunities for promoting the engagement and empowerment of women in productive and value-adding actions?. It has also now been specifically stated that those involved in the collaborative definition of these kinds of sustainable management and livelihood support options will include women.

This has now been stipulated in Section F1.

This has now been stipulated in Annex N.

j)As explained under Output 4.1.1, the project will build on and continue the work of the EREPA project, which aims to establish a standardized data repository platform, compile information on natural systems and assets, and integrate its information and metadata into existing data platforms, as well as the production and dissemination of training, awareness and educational materials through the Solomon Islands National University (in partnership with the Indigenous Knowledge Institute), Regional Training Centres, and relevant Government Ministries and NGOs?.

It is also explained that the project will support the incorporation of messages on community-led conservation and lessons learned into the school curriculum supported through the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development, the Solomon Islands National University through its relevant Faculty, Schools and Centres.

This has now been stipulated in Section F1.

This has now been stipulated in Annex N of the project document.

k) Based on the results of the context analyses carried out during the PPG phase, Section B of the ProDoc describes the key policy and regulatory frameworks of relevance to the project, and then goes on to explain that an important barrier is the complexity of the policy frameworks and limited institutional coordination at the sub-national level to mainstream IPLC driven biodiversity conservation and sustainable use in OECMs. As proposed under Outcome 1.1, further more detailed and updated analyses of the evolving policy and regulatory context will be carried out during project implementation with close engagement of the relevant Government institutions.

6.2 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 initiatives (e.g., government, other bilateral/multilateral).

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

02/05/2026

b) Cleared

1/14/2026

a) Cleared.

b) Not cleared. Please, fill the paragraph answering the question.

Will the GEF Agency play an execution role on this project?

10/02/2025

a) Not cleared. Please provide an organigram of funds flow.

b) Not cleared. Please, fill the paragraph

Will the GEF Agency play an execution role on this project?

If so, please describe that role here and the justification.

Please clarify the role of NGOs WCS and TNC and give details on their role under (or not?) the Ministry of Environment responsibilities.

c) Cleared.

Agency Response

b) The GEF Implementing Agency will play no role in its execution, apart from the assurance activities. The project will be implemented through the Operational Partner Implementation Modality (OPIM).

a) done

b) No exception is requested.

6.3 GEF Core indicators and GBFF indicators

a) Are the identified GBFF and relevant GEF 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 GBFF indicators, relevant GEF core indicators, and additional listed outcome indicators) reasonable and achievable?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request
03/02/2026

Cleared.

02/24/2026

Not cleared. See comments above on CI 5.0.

02/05/2026

Not cleared. See comments above to fill correctly the table

1/14/2026

a) Not cleared. See comment above. Core sub-indicators 4.5 and 5.3 are contextual and won't involve double counting. You need fill both: 4.5 and another sub-indicator for CI4, idem for Core sub-indicator 5.3 and CI5. They permit capture results in OECMs. See guidance in the portal.

10/02/2025

a) Not cleared.

The project intends to creates terrestrial OECMs. If such please fill the CI 4.5 which is a contextual sub-indicator. See comments above and clarify. If production areas are targeted please, also fill CI 4.3. Please also under CI 5.3 include WDPA ID for the listed supported OECMs.

CI 11: Clarify the target because it is written 15000.

Changes from PPG to CEO ER" At the same time, the target for the number of beneficiaries has been reduced from 30,000 to 15,000 people, given that the total population of the wards in which the project sites are located is less than 20,000".

b) Cleared.

Agency Response

The portal glitch on CI 5 has now been resolved.

Duly noted. Please see responses above. Revision made to CI4, but CI5 total ha does not appear.

a) Thank you for the clarification, this has been addressed, and a target has been included for CI 4.1.

a) The target for CI 4.5 has been filled, as in the Core Indicator Spreadsheet. The areas under improved management are located within the OECMs, and so cannot be claimed as core indicator (4.3) targets as this would involve double counting.

WDPA IDs for 5.3 are entered.

The identities and areas of the localities currently included on the WDPA, that coincide with the target localities, have been listed in Section C2. These are not listed in the Core Indicator Spreadsheet, as they are reported as OECMs (CI 4 and 5), rather than as PAs (CI 1 and 2).

1. The target landscapes coincide wholly or partially with the following localities listed on the World Database on Protected Areas (WDPA) and have been entered against the above list:

? Barasipo MPA (ID 555544146), area 3.53km².

? Buni MPA (ID 555544157), area 1.43km².

? Barivuto MPA (ID 306289), area 1.62km².

? Grant Island, Patuparoana MPA (ID 555547890), area 14.84km².

? Kia MPA (ID 555547898), area 450.0km²

C11: This has been corrected to 15,000

6.4 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
10/02/2025

a) Cleared

b) Cleared

c) Cleared

Agency Response

7 C. Alignment with Programming Strategies, Country/Regional Priorities

7.1 a) Is the project adequately aligned with the GBFF Action Areas and, for MTF projects, with Focal Area objectives?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

10/02/2025

Cleared.

Agency Response

7.2 Is the project aligned with the National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans, National Biodiversity Finance Plans, and/or similar instruments to identify national and/or regional priorities. For MTF projects, is the project aligned with other relevant country and regional priorities, policies, strategies and plans (including those related to the MEAs and relevant sectors)?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

10/02/2025

Cleared.

Agency Response

7.3 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 Request

10/02/2025

Cleared.

Agency Response

8 D. Policy Requirements

8.1 Are the Policy Requirement sections completed?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

1/14/2026

Cleared.

10/02/2023

Please clarify activities lead by IPLCs as the project indicates that they are not in the steering committee or equivalent decision-making body but the amount of resource to support actions by IPLCs is quite high.

Agency Response

Given the dispersed nature of the target localities, it is not practical for representatives of the IPLCs present there to form part of the project steering committee; their interests will instead be represented indirectly by the two Provincial Governments. The amount given as supporting actions by IPLCs consists of the following items, which will directly benefit IPLCs:

- ? Provision of inputs (e.g. planting materials, equipment) for Farmer Field Schools, leader farmers and sustainability-based businesses
- ? Community grants for productive and value adding activities
- ? Support for agreement, demarcation and facilitation of individual community-led PAs/OECMs.
- ? Identification and support of sustainable management and livelihood support options that contribute to biodiversity conservation
- ? Advisory and facilitation support for the identification of business options based on sustainable production and the strengthening of village-based businesses

8.2 Is the Gender Action Plan uploaded?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request
10/02/2025

Cleared.

Agency Response

8.3 Is the stakeholder engagement plan uploaded?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request
10/02/2025

Cleared.

Agency Response

8.4 IPLCs:

- a) Has the amount of GBFF project financing to support actions by IPLCs been sufficiently justified and have changes compared to PPG request stage, if any, been adequately justified?
- b) If applicable, does Section C 'Project Description' describe the IPLCs who will benefit from the project and detail their role in the project? Have appropriate project tags related to IPLCs been selected?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request
1/14/2026

a) Cleared.

10/02/2025

a) Not cleared. Please justify why the amount of financing to support actions by IPLCs has been multiplied nearly by 2 while the amount of people has been divided by 2.

b) Cleared. In Solomon Islands most of the inhabitants are indigenous.

Agency Response

The IPLC budget in the PPG request was a desk-based estimate, and it was only when the budget was fully developed, and specific activities and cost items identified, following technical and logistical analyses and community consultations, that it was possible to check and adjust it.

The number of beneficiaries given in the PPG Request was also a desk-based estimate, and was also reviewed and adjusted following technical and logistical analyses and community consultations. The original target was an overestimate and was found not to be achievable as it was in excess of the total populations of the wards corresponding to the target localities.

9 Annexes

Annex A: Financing Tables

9.1 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?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request
0/02/2025

Cleared.

The changes for Action areas from PPG to CEO ER are acceptable.

Agency Response

9.2 Source of Funds

If using GEFTF resources, 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

Agency Response

9.3 Confirmed co-financing for the project, by name and type:

Noting GBFF does not require but encourages co-financing, 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
1/14/2026

Cleared.

10/02/2025

Not cleared. Please explain how GCF can cofinance.

Agency ResponseReference in the MECDM co-financing letter to the multi-year readiness project has been removed, and replaced by the GCF Knowledge-Action-Sustainability for Resilient Villages (SOLKAS); the relevance of the two GCF projects as cofinancing has been explained underneath the cofinancing table in Annex A.

Annex C: Project Results Framework

9.4 a) Have the GBFF indicators and relevant GEF core indicators been included?

- b) Have SMART indicators been used; are means of verification well thought out; are the targets appropriate for the 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
02/05/2026

b) Cleared

1/14/2026

b) Not cleared. Please precise by providing sex-disaggregated indicators (ex. output 2.1.4 Number of actors).

10/02/2025

a) Cleared.

b) Not cleared. Please complete with some sex-disaggregated indicators.

Agency Response

b) Annex C Project Results Framework has been further updated

b)The indicators have been reviewed and made sex-disaggregated and gender-sensitive as relevant

c)The indicators have been reviewed and made sex-disaggregated and gender-sensitive as relevant.

Annex D: Status of utilization of PPG

9.5 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
02/05/2026

Cleared

1/14/2026

Not cleared. Please provide details on international travel.

10/02/2025

Not cleared. Please provide details on international travel.

Agency Response

The international travel was utilized by the International Project Design Expert, who travelled to the Solomon Islands to conduct the project design workshop and stakeholder

consultations. Expenditure on international travel (for the International Project Design Expert) was as follows:

1. DSA $\$376 \times 10 = \$3,760$
2. Airfare, terminals = $\$228 + \$10,528 = \$10,756$

Travel expenditure has been broken down into local (USD 15,250) and international (USD 14,516)

Annex E: Project map and coordinates

9.6 Have geographic coordinates of project locations been entered in the dedicated table? Are relevant illustrative maps included?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request
10/02/2025

Cleared.

Agency Response

Annex F: Environmental and Social Safeguards Documentation and Rating

9.7 Have the relevant safeguard documents been uploaded to the GEF Portal? Has the safeguards rating been provided and filled out in the ER field below the risk table?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request
10/02/2025

Cleared.

Agency Response

Annex G: GEF Budget template

- 9.8 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
02/24/2026

c) Cleared.

02/05/2026

b) Cleared.

c) Not cleared. Whereas one can understand and accept that on top of the (i) National Project Coordinator and the (ii) Administrative, Logistics, Finance and Procurement Assistant,

additional positions are required because the project will take place in two target provinces, there is no justification to have (i) 2 NGO Technical Direction and Oversight; (ii) 2 NGO Provincial Coordinators; and; (3) 2 NGO administration, logistics and procurement support (6 additional positions). Considering that there are "2 Provincial Environment Officers" co-financed by MECDM, please merge the 2 NGO Technical Direction and Oversight with the 2 NGO Provincial Coordinators (we assume that the positions that will be removed are the two NGO Technical Direction and Oversight, whose cost is \$56,000 - if so, please indicate to which activity these funds will be reallocated).

01/14/2026

a) Cleared

b) Not cleared.

- PMC and M&E: cleared

- Please remove the line entirely for Technical Support Services as it is now empty.

- Please note that the previous comment regarding separating costs for Contractual Services ? Individual from those for Contractual Services ? Companies was not addressed in the intended section. The comment was aimed at the budget category ?5650 Contracts? on p. 84-85 of the CEO Approval document. Instead, the Agency has addressed the comment under the ?5023 Training and Workshop? category. Please make the requested changes to the ?5650 Contracts? section and split this one section into two: 1) Contractual Services ? Individual and 2) Contractual Services ? Companies.

- Thank you for the explanation on the budgeting of fuel and boat costs. Please note that the previous comment requested clarification as to why these costs are not borne by the co-financed budget. The [Guidelines on the Project and Program Cycle Policy](#) strongly urge Agencies to draw these costs from the co-financed budget. Please provide the requested explanation as to why these costs cannot be paid out of the co-financed budget. If you find the explanation reasonable, your explicit approval to use GEF resources to purchase the boat is required in the review sheet.

c) Thank you for the updated TORs for the core project staff.

i. Please note that the Project Coordinator as proposed is drawing only 5% of its total cost from the PMC budget, although most of the tasks in the TOR are project management in nature. The [Guidelines](#) expressly state (p. 68) that activities such as TOR development and procurement packages, management of outputs, deliverables and consultants, financial and progress monitoring and reporting, stakeholder engagement and consultation, management of KM plans, etc., are all to be drawn from PMC and not the component budget. Given the Agency's request for a substantially higher PMC than other GEF projects over \$2M, please revise the budget so that the Project Coordinator is paid for by PMC and only drawing from the component budget for technical work s/he will be instrumental in delivering. For the avoidance of doubt, the following TOR bullets appear to describe technical work for this role:

- Provide technical advisory guidance to the project team and Government (national and provincial) on PA/OECM issues and on the formulation, updating and implementation of strategic and spatial plans in support of biodiversity conservation
- Provide technical advisory support to Provincial Environment Officers in their interactions with Provincial Governments of relevance to the project
- Oversee/develop/coordinate implementation of gender-related work, including training, in accordance with the gender analysis and action plan, including the annual review of the plan.

ii. By the same token, three other positions are drawing from both PMC and component budgets without sufficient justification based on their TORs. Please budget the Administrative, Logistics, Finance and Procurement Assistant and the two NGO administration, logistics and procurement support positions under PMC only and remove the contribution to these roles from the component budget.

10/02/2025

a) No, please complete with the executing partner for each line.

b) Not cleared.

- PMC at 9.2% project sub-total budget while M&E at 5.5%, both higher than recommended threshold of 5% for projects of similar size. Please consider reducing the M&E budget to 5% of the sub-total project budget i.e. total budget minus PMC amount.

- Please explain what is Technical Support Services of \$6,550 covering for? Please note that any fees/support services costs by the Agency are ineligible for the project budget.

- Please separate Contracts to Individuals from Contracts to Company into two different categories: each one must be presented in individual budget lines.

- Car and boat hire and fuel totaled \$160,000 at 6.7% project budget is expensive. Per Guidelines, it is expected that these costs are assume by the co-financing resources. Please explain why there is no alternative and please reduce the cost.

- National project coordinator, and NGO technical director, and oversight and NGO provincial coordinators are being charged to project components and PMC. Titles of these positions don't match with the provided TORs in the prodoc. Also, TORs focus mainly on management work which means the associated costs should be charged to PMC ? it is unclear why several coordinators are required when there are projects in islands countries with one single coordinator. Please revise the TORs accordingly for consistency and the charge to project components for a more reasonable number of coordinators.

- There is difference between the budget table and the Portal's component table as follows. Please correct the budget table to make it match.

	Budget table	Portal's component table	Difference
Component 1	133,960	133,960	0
Component 2	319,460	355,627	-36,167
Component 3	1,485,503	1,485,503	0
Component 4	80,700	80,700	0
M&E	118,550	118,550	0
PMC	236,167	200,000	36,167
Grant Total	2,374,340	2,374,340	0

c) Not cleared. Please provide TORs for staff funded by GEF.

Agency Response

c)1. We are only proposing 2 months/year for each of these Technical Direction and Oversight positions.

2. The NGOs will be acting on behalf of the GBFF project, executing its activities in line with its ToC, principles and results framework, but at the same time:

? They are globally recognised leading international conservation NGOs and, as such, they each have significant technical and practical value added to bring to the project; this was one of the major factors taken into account in selecting them for inclusion in the project. This contribution can only be assured if the project makes some provision for their highly qualified technical staff at national level to provide technical direction and oversight, in close coordination with the NTC and Government counterparts, and in complement to the more practical and operational on-the-ground work of the full-time provincial coordinators.

? To ensure the optimum resource utilization and maximize the ground impact, we have reduced NGO's consultants' budget during first round of revision and redirected those funds towards farmers' inputs without waiting for GEF comments. More specifically, we reduced the duration for NGO's provincial coordinators to two years from initial four years, while limiting the technical direction and oversight positions engagement to eight months.

? The technical direction and oversight positions will play vital roles in ensuring that the GBFF-funded activities are integrated into these and develop synergies with the other ongoing investments of the NGOs in Solomon Islands such as farmer capacity building, and OECM framework development and national strategic plans for the conservation of key species. These positions have been reduced to half time over four years.

b) The TSS row (and all other blank rows) have been removed

Apologies for the misunderstanding, this distinction has now been made in the section on budget category 5650 Contracts.

As indicated in the initial repose, Government logistical resources (boats etc.) are seriously limited and often either occupied for other uses or out of action due to breakdowns and lack of parts, and reliance on these would seriously jeopardise project operations. We therefore consider that, as the only feasible option, these costs should be covered by GEF resources.

Please note that these costs refer to fuel and rental, not to boat purchase

c) The percentage of the National Technical Coordinator's salary that is assigned to PMC has now been increased to 10%, while at the same time the ToRs have been edited to reflect more correctly the principally technical nature of this post. Other adjustments to the budget now results in PMC accounting for only 9.5% of the total of the sub-components.

The budget for these posts is now assigned entirely to PMC.

a)The executing partner has been indicated for each budget line

b)We have made every effort to reduce PMC, but see no way to reduce this further without significantly undermining is ability to deliver. The project 'falls between two stools' in terms

of size: it is too small to benefit from economies of scale in terms of management costs, but is marginally too large to benefit from the rule that recognizes this by allowing 10% PMC for projects under USD 2 million.

We also see very little possibility of reducing M&E any further: all of the elements currently budgeted are strictly necessary and directly related to M&E. The budgets for baseline and ongoing monitoring of indicators are at best marginally sufficient, given the logistical challenges of the target localities. We have in fact seen it necessary on reflection to increase the budget for MTR and TE, given the high costs of international travel to Solomon Islands and domestic travel to the target localities.

These costs are now reflected in the costs of the Mid-Term Review and Terminal Evaluation

Contracts to Individuals and Contracts to Companies/Services Providers have been separated into two different categories

This figure is based on experiences with previous projects, and reflects the logistical practicalities of operating in the widely dispersed localities target by the project, which are scattered across a number of different islands within the two target provinces. In most locations, there is no practical alternative to contracting locally available boats and providing fuel. Government logistical resources (boats etc.) are seriously limited and often either occupied for other uses or out of action due to breakdowns and lack of parts, and reliance on these would seriously jeopardise project operations. Please note that the amount budgeted here is significantly less than in the recently endorsed GEF-8 FSIP project in Solomon Islands.

The National Project Coordinator in the budget coincides with the ToRs, which are largely technical in nature.

The terms of reference of the other posts mentioned have now been aligned with what appears in the budget.

It is necessary to have two separate provincial coordinators given that the two target provinces are widely separated, and different NGOs will be executing project activities in the two provinces (building on their respective existing relations, presence and logistics in each province).

ToRs have been provided for all of the budgeted positions:

- National Technical Coordinator (NPC) and PA/OECM specialist
- Gender, Stakeholder, Knowledge Management and M&E Specialist
- Administrative, Logistics, Finance and Procurement Assistant
- NGO Technical Direction and Oversight
- NGO Provincial Coordinators
- NGO administration, logistics and procurement support

Annex H: Blended Finance Relevant Annexes

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

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement RequestNA

Agency Response

Additional Annexes

10. GEFSEC DECISION

10.1 GEFSEC Recommendation
Is the project recommended for approval?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request
03/05/2026

All the comments have been addressed. The project is now recommended for approval.

03/02/2026

The project is still not ready. Please address the last comments.

02/24/2026

The project is still not ready. Please address the last comments. Still the CEO Endorsement Request Portal view, which is the document circulated to Council for review has several sections with blue shadow. Please, remove these shadows in the new version.

02/05/2026

The project is still not ready. Please address the comments. Still the CEO Endorsement Request Portal view, which is the document circulated to Council for review has several sections with blue shadow. Please, remove these shadows in the new version. The ProDoc still is not available for selection. Please classify it as ?Public?.

1/14/2026

The project is not ready yet. Please address the comments.

The ProDoc is not available for selection ? please classify it as ?Public?.

The CEO Endorsement Request Portal view, which is the document circulated to Council for review has several sections with yellow shadow. Please remove these shadows in the new version.

10/30/2025

The project is not yet ready.

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

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

10.3 Review Dates

	CEO Approval	Response to Secretariat comments
First Review	10/30/2025	
Additional Review (as necessary)	1/14/2026	

CEO Approval Response to Secretariat comments

Additional Review (as necessary) 2/5/2026

Additional Review (as necessary) 2/24/2026

Additional Review (as necessary) 3/5/2026