

Conservation and Sustainable Management of Land Resources and High Value Ecosystems in Lake Sevan Basin for Multiple Benefits

Review CEO Endorsement and Make a recommendation

Basic project information

GEF ID

10854

Countries

Armenia

Project Name

Conservation and Sustainable Management of Land Resources and High Value Ecosystems in Lake Sevan Basin for Multiple Benefits

Agencies

UNDP

Date received by PM

12/8/2022

Review completed by PM

2/8/2023

Program Manager

Asha Bobb-Semple

Focal Area

Multi Focal Area

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

1/17/2023:

Yes

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

2/8/2023:

Cleared.

1/17/2023:

Yes the project is well structured. However please consider the following in the narrative:

- Inclusion of specific interventions targeting women or with the inclusion of gender considerations. We find this aspect is limited in Table B and the Alternative Scenario.

Agency Response UNDP 2/7/2023: (response to question incorrectly dated by the system on 3/17/2023)

Thank you for this comment, fully noted. The Table B has been adjusted in order to better reflect the gender dimension (Output 1.1.3; Output 3.1.4; Indicator 19). The alternative scenario has been strengthened to reflect how the project will address some of the main gender gaps.

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

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request N/A

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

2/8/2023:

Cleared.

1/17/2023:

Not fully.

- a. Ministry of Environment: Please split Public Investment and In-kind as per the co-financing letter.
- b. WWF-Armenia : Please split Grant and In-kind as per the co-financing letter.

Agency Response

UNDP 2/7/2023:

Thank you for flagging this aspect. The Co-financing table has been adjusted accordingly and amounts split as indicated.

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

2/8/2023:

Thank you for your responses.

Cleared.

1/17/2023:

Not fully.

-We note the inclusion of vehicles in the project budget without justification. In keeping with GEF policies, please explore other options to cover this cost.

-The salary of the Project Manager and International Advisor are being charged across components and PMC. Per Guidelines, the costs associated with the project's execution have to be covered by the GEF portion and the co-financing portion allocated to PMC. There seems to be co-financing close to 4M in grants. Please review.

- Please clearly identify who the Executing Partner is in the column ?Executing Agency receiving funds from GEF Agency?.

- Office supplies and other operating costs should be charged to PMC

Agency Response UNDP 2/7/2023:

Thank you for the comments.

1- 1) We have removed the funds allocated to patrolling motor boats. The amount was re-distributed: BL 13: increased amount of the field equipment and field guides and fire fighting

equipment; BL 11: increased the amount dedicated to supporting communities entering conservation agreements.

2- 2) - We kept the salary of the Technical Advisor is fully covered by GEF funds, charged across technical components, as his/her main role is to provide technical inputs to the project team (including the project manager) and provide technical support to technical teams of consultants. With respect to the role of Project Manager, it is suggested to retain this position presented partly under PMC and partly across components, as that role will also provide some technical assistance (40%). Please refer to the Project Manager TOR in the Annex 7 of the Prodoc and Project Management para under Institutional Arrangement Coordination section of the CEO Endorsement Request. Technical assistance of the Project Management Unit is critical with respect to defining the technical specifications: (i) Elaboration of methodologies and Study on the land degradation assessment (Output 1.1; and 1.2) (ii) Inputs into pastures inventory and assessment of degradation (iii) Technical inputs and editing of Guidelines and Manuals developed under Output 1.1. 1.2, 2.2.1 (iv) Technical inputs and editing of the PA Business Management Plan (Output 2.1.2) (v) Training modules and awareness raising materials (Output 4.1.1; 3.1.1; 3.1.2; 3.1.3; 3.1.4) (vi) Technical inputs into the Project Sustainability and Replication Strategy; (vi) Technical inputs into the grant proposals review (3.1.4); (vii) technical inputs in support of the recommendations for behaviorally informed policies (across outputs).

- The rest of project manager's salary has been charged equally to GEF and co-financing budgets under PMC (30% each). Available cash co-financing under PMC for that project is only 100,000 US\$ (UNDP TRAC) which has been included in UNDP budget table (TBWP). The rest of PMC co-financing is in-kind.

3- 3) Thank you, the Executing Partner is clearly identified in the budget tables.

4- 4) Office supplies are now charged to PMC only.

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

2/8/2023:

Cleared.

1/17/2023:

Please include the missing \$ 5,321 in the column "amount committed" in the appropriate row.

Agency Response UNDP 2/7/2023:

Thank you, we included total committed amount (US\$ 11,811.68) in the table now.

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

11/7/2023:

No adjustments made and the Core Indicators remain realistic.

Agency Response

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

2/8/2023:

Cleared.

1/17/2023:

Not fully.

Please include the current context as it relates to the private sector within this landscape.

Agency Response UNDP 2/7/2023:

Thank you for this comment. The description of the private sector in the targeted regions is strengthened (Project justification Section CEO ER and para 6-7 Prodoc).

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

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

1/17/2023:

Yes

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

2/8/2023:

Thank you for the responses. You may also wish to refer to the UNCCD-SPI technical report, which provides guidance on drought smart land management.

1/17/2023:

Yes, however please consider the comments below.

-Please also consider the comment above on the gender aspects.

- Drought has been indicated as a key challenge faced in the landscape. Please elaborate on the land based drought mitigation measures being considered as a part of the SLM interventions? Please include drought mitigation in the taxonomy.

Agency Response

UNDP 2/7/2023:

1) Thank you for the comment. The alternative scenario includes additional paragraphs to strengthen the gender aspects:

The GEF alternative scenario builds on lessons learned from previous GEF and other experiences with respect to demonstrating integrated and participative landscape approaches, promoting the participation of women and other vulnerable groups in the natural resources management. The project's strategy seeks to respond to the gender gaps prioritized by the GEF Gender Implementation Strategy:

(i) The project addresses unequal access and control over natural resources through activities under Component 3, advocating for women's rights, including gender sensitive measures in the pasture management strategies, forest management plans, agro-forestry measures and sustainable water management plans for arable areas. Gender responsive approaches in the LDN compatible SLM measures will be identified and implemented throughout the project. The project is committed to deliver a gender balanced approach to selection of the farms that will benefit from tailored technical assistance and facilitation of accessing funding for sustainable pasture management measures.

(ii) The project will further address unbalanced women's participation in decision making in environmental planning and management at all levels. The project will facilitate a balanced gender representation, with a view of addressing the usual low participation of women in stakeholder engagement meetings in the target communities. Under Output 1.1.3, the Intersectoral Stakeholders Committee will include at least 30% women representatives as committee members. Furthermore, the project will facilitate the inclusion of women in training and capacity building initiatives among policy makers (minimum 50%). The project further commits to integrate gender sensitive considerations into any project-born amendments to regulations and associated explanatory materials related to agricultural sector strategy development. The project will foster women group participation in public hearings, supporting the advocacy on women role models in the targeted communities.

(iii) The project will promote women's access to social and economic benefits. The project targets at least 50% of farmers and farming and fishery entrepreneurs receiving sustainable land management training, sustainable fishery/aquaculture training and technical support services being women. The training needs assessment will be conducted in the target regions to identify specific training needs of women farmers, which may be different in different communities. Under Output 3.1.2 the project's efforts will be directed towards strengthening local women entrepreneurship, and enabling training of women (4.1.1.) in pasture management and sustainable agricultural practices and business development (3.1.1). Dedicated support to women farmers, women entrepreneurs and support to youth participation and trainings is embedded in the project strategy. The project further seeks to support women's technical knowledge and capacities to overcome knowledge related barriers to establishing profitable local green businesses in the agricultural sector, by introducing green agriculture technologies and practices used in regenerative agriculture. Special attention will be paid to information dissemination channels (social media, newspapers, announcements, calls, partner organizations etc.) targeting women.

2) Thank you for this comment. We have elaborated more on the drought mitigation measures and included drought mitigation in the taxonomy. The following para was added to the Alternative Scenario section

? In Vayots Dzor, where the drought and sandstorms are more frequent, the project-supported SLM measures will address the decline in ecosystems and livelihoods caused by frequent summer droughts experienced by the remote communities with limited access to water, by leveraging investments in local irrigation infrastructure in the targeted villages, supporting farmers implement drip irrigation measures, climate resilient farming practices and cultivation of drought resistant species. Guidelines for local farmers in local language and brochures on LDN compatible pasture and forest management as well as guidelines for rural entrepreneurship in ecotourism and agrotourism will strengthen farmers' technical knowledge on drought resilient crop farming?

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

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request
1/17/2023:

Yes

Agency Response

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

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request
1/17/2023:

Yes

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

1/17/2023:

Yes

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

2/8/2023:

Cleared.

1/17/2023:

The project has many different initiatives and this section could benefit from additional details on the plans/mechanisms that will be put in place to facilitate sustainability and continuity. In particular with reference to the training aspects of the project as well as the financial mechanisms.

Agency Response

UNDP 2/7/2023:

Thank you for your comment. We have added additional paragraphs to emphasize the proposed sustainability pathways e.g embedding the generated knowledge in existing university curricula through the engagement of the University of Gavar; embedding the proposed agri-environmental payment scheme to be tested through this project within the new or existing governmental programmes that are financing pastures management, through the engagement of the Ministry of Environment and Ministry of Economy.

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

1/17/2023:

Yes

Agency Response

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

N/A

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

1/17/2023:

Yes

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

2/8/2023:

Cleared.

1/17/2023:

Yes. However as indicated above, please integrate the gender provisions into the narrative of the project description.

Agency Response UNDP 2/7/2023:

Gender provisions have been included in the narrative of the project description (as detailed above in this document).

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

1/17/2023:

Yes

Agency Response

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

1/17/2023:

Please elaborate on the climate risks to the project.

Agency Response UNDP 2/7/2023:

Thank you for this comment. Additional paragraphs were added to elaborate on the climate risk in the project document (paragraph 210) and CEO ER document Risk Section.

The following text was added: "With regard to the climate risks, the increasingly dry and arid climate is making forest ecosystems vulnerable to wildfires especially in Vayots Dzor region. The vulnerability of the agriculture sector to climate change is relatively high, and it considerably varies across land zones and crops. For example, the vulnerability of agriculture is more significant in low and medium altitude zones in Armenia, while in the highland mountainous zone risks associated with climate change are comparatively less evident. About 80% of the territory of Armenia is exposed to various degrees of desertification, which is not only the consequence of anthropogenic activity, but also a consequence of water and wind erosion of soils, hot dry spells, drought, lack of humidity, landslides, natural salinization etc. Climate change, along with various anthropogenic phenomena, contributes to the vulnerability of organic carbon reserves in soils.[1]". Based on the PPG risk assessment, the project falls into Moderate climate risk category and it includes climate sensitive- SLM measure, ISLUPs and biodiversity spatial elements (including consideration of potential climate impact on species migration or vegetation cover) as a management strategy to further address/integrated climate change aspects detailed in the project document under different Outcomes and Annexes 16,18 and 20. Climate parameters and future projections of land suitability into different assessments will provide targeted resilience measures and sustainability of SLM measures and ISLUPs. An assessment of the vulnerability of livelihoods in the areas of intervention, including natural disasters, will be undertaken as part of targeted assessments of the project. Furthermore, additional attention will be given to data showing the impact of climate change influences landcover and land user in the country and how projected future climate change will continue to impact the project area. Together with the specialized MoE departments, the project will explore using the project-born climate risks analysis during the LDN target setting and ISLUPs development to the reports under the UNFCCC (e..g MRV, NDC, BTR etc)?"

[1] https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/NC4_Armenia_.pdf

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
1/17/2023:

Yes

Agency Response
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
1/17/2023:

Yes

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
1/17/2023:

Yes

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
1/17/2023:

Yes

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
1/17/2023:

Yes

Agency Response
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
1/17/2023:

Yes

Agency Response
Annexes

Are all the required annexes attached and adequately responded to?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request
1/17/2023:

Yes

Agency Response
Project Results Framework

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request
1/17/2023:

Yes

Agency Response
GEF Secretariat comments

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request N/A

Agency Response

Council comments

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

1/17/2023:

Yes

Agency Response

STAP comments

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

1/17/2023:

Yes

Agency Response

Convention Secretariat comments

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request N/A

Agency Response

Other Agencies comments

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request N/A

Agency Response

CSOs comments

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request N/A

Agency Response

Status of PPG utilization

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

1/17/2023:

Yes

Agency Response

Project maps and coordinates

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

1/17/2023:

Yes

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

N/A

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 N/A

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 N/A

Agency Response

GEFSEC DECISION

RECOMMENDATION

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

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

2/15/2023:

The project is technically cleared and recommended for CEO Endorsement.

1/17/2023:

The CEO Endorsement is not yet technically cleared. Please address the comments above.

Review Dates

	Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement	Response to Secretariat comments
First Review	1/17/2023	
Additional Review (as necessary)	2/8/2023	
Additional Review (as necessary)	2/15/2023	
Additional Review (as necessary)		
Additional Review (as necessary)		

CEO Recommendation

Brief reasoning for CEO Recommendations