

Restoration of the remaining ecosystems in selected urban areas within threatened ecoregion of Central Iraq to conserve biodiversity and strengthen human-nature connectivity

Review PPG Request and Make a recommendation

Basic project information

GEF ID

11766

Countries

Iraq

Project Name

Restoration of the remaining ecosystems in selected urban areas within threatened ecoregion of Central Iraq to conserve biodiversity and strengthen human-nature connectivity

Agencies

UNDP

Date received by PM

11/1/2024

Review completed by PM

Program Manager

Hannah Fairbank

Focal Area

Biodiversity

Project Type

GBFF

GEF-8 Project Preparation Grant request Review Sheet

1. General Project Information / Eligibility

a) Does the project meet the criteria for eligibility for GBFF funding?

b) Is the General Project Information table correctly populated?

Secretariat's CommentsCleared

Agency's Comments

II. Indicative Project Overview

a) Is the project objective presented as a concise statement and clear?

b) Are the components, outcomes and outputs sound, appropriate and sufficiently clear to achieve the project objective?

Secretariat's CommentsCleared

Agency's Comments

c) Are the components adequately funded?

d) Are the GEF Project Financing and Co-Financing contributions to PMC proportional (only for Multi-trust Funds PPGs with BD from the GEF Trust Fund)?

e) Is the PMC equal to or below 5% of the total GEF grant for projects of more than \$2 million or 10% for projects of less than \$2 million? If the requested PMC is above the caps, has an exception (e.g. for regional projects) been sufficiently substantiated?

Secretariat's CommentsCleared

Agency's Comments

III. Project Rationale

a. Does the project adequately describe the: (i) current situation/baseline conditions within the project geographic area or project thematic area; (ii) problem(s) that the project will address; (iii) goal and objectives of the project; and (iv) justification for the project intervention; and (v) expected results including the Global Environmental Benefits and an estimate of the project's contributions to the relevant biodiversity core indicators.

Secretariat's CommentsCleared

Agency's Comments

IV. Project Description

a) Is there a concise theory of change that describes the project logic, including how the project design elements will contribute to the objective, the expected causal pathways, and the key assumptions underlying these?

b) Are the project components and activities identified in the theory of change adequately described.

c) Is a list of stakeholders that will be involved in the project and their roles in the design and implementation of the project provided?

d) Are the Specific Action Area(s) that the project is aligned with identified and an explanation provided on and how the project will support the achievement of the specific Action Area objective(s).

Secretariat's CommentsCleared

Agency's Comments

V. Does the proposal adequately describe how the project meets the following criteria:

a) Potential to generate global environmental benefits (GEBs) (include a description of the GEBs the project will generate per the GEF-8 Core Indicators for biodiversity);

b) Alignment with the National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans and/or National Biodiversity Finance Plans or similar instruments to identify national and/or regional priorities;

c) The level of policy coherence and coordination across multiple ministries, agencies, the private sector, and civil society that the project aims to support;

d) Whether the project will mobilize the resources of the private sector and philanthropies'; and

e) Whether and how the project will engage with and provide support to IPLCs.

Secretariat's CommentsCleared

Agency's Comments

VI. Project results indicators

Is the table correctly populated and consistent with the Project Description?

Secretariat's CommentsCleared

Agency's Comments

VII. Project Financing Tables

a) Are all the tables correctly populated?

b) Are the indicative expected amounts, sources and types of co-financing consistent with the requirements of the Co-Financing Policy and Guidelines (only for projects with GEF TF components)?

Secretariat's Comments

12 December 2024

Cleared

10 December 2024

a.) No. The financing tables include cents (e.g. decimal places), which cannot be committed by the Trustee. Please remove the cents and keep rounded numbers.

Agency's Comments

UNDP 11-12-2024

Decimals removed from GEF portal entries.

VIII. Project Endorsement

a) Has the project been endorsed by the country's(ies) OFP and has the OFP at the time of PPG request submission name and position been checked against the GEF database?

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

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

Secretariat's Comments

12 December 2024

Cleared

December 11, 2024:

Please ensure that the correspondence uploaded to the document tab is in a readable format. As a precautionary measure please also email the pdf to the GEFSEC PM and policy officer.

December 2, 2024:

1.) The final paragraph of the LOE, the letter makes reference to the GEF TF instead of GBFF. Please upload to the "Documents" tab of the GEF Portal submission an email from the OFP clarifying that the project only requires resources from the GBFF.

Agency's Comments

UNDP 11-12-2024

Thank you for your observation regarding the final paragraph of the LOE. A document has been added to the "Documents" tab of the GEF Portal submission (PDF). The OFP clarified that the submission for the project "Restoration of the remaining ecosystems in selected urban areas within threatened ecoregion of Central Iraq to conserve biodiversity and strengthen human-nature connectivity" (GEF ID 11766) to be implemented by UNDP is requesting funds from the Global Biodiversity Framework Fund only. No funding from the GEF Trust Fund is requested.

The correspondence has been uploaded to the document tab in a clear and readable PDF format. Additionally, as a precautionary measure, the agency has emailed the document to the GEFSEC Project Manager and the policy officer.

IX. GEFSEC Decision

a. Is the PPG recommended for technical clearance?

b. Additional comments to be considered by the Agency during project preparation

Secretariat's Comments

December 12, 2024

Cleared

December 12, 2024

Noted. Please recall that any exceptions to separation of implementation and execution roles are to be proposed and considered only at CEO endorsement stage.

At PPG stage, Agency (?dual?) execution should not be included in the Agency's proposal. Once the Agency has sufficiently progressed in project preparation and if it anticipates a need for Agency execution, the Agency would submit full information and justification for a request for policy exception.

December 11, 2024

No. Please remove UNDP dual execution from the project from the project information and the stakeholder sections of the PPG and address the other remaining comments highlighted in yellow in the review sheet. Please resubmit as soon as possible.

GEF policies, further explained in the Guidelines on Project and Program Cycle, require that ?the separation of implementation functions performed by GEF Agencies and execution functions performed by Project Executing Entities is a key feature of the governance of the GEF Partnership and an important aspect of the GEF Minimum Fiduciary Standards.?

See

https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/documents/GEF_Guidelines_Project_Program_Cycle_Policy_20200731.pdf. (pages 44-45)

At PPG stage, Agency (?dual?) execution should not be included in the Agency's proposal. Once the Agency has sufficiently progressed in project preparation and if it anticipates a need for Agency execution, the Agency would submit full information and justification for a request for policy exception.

December 2, 2024

No. Please see issue regarding the LOE above, and resubmit as soon as possible.

Agency's Comments

UNDP 13 December 2024

We have removed UNDP from execution role in the cover page "TBD" and we added "The final decision on Agency execution will be provided at the CEO endorsement stage." in the stakeholders list. for this to be decided in CEO ER stage.

UNDP 11-12-2024

Thank you for your feedback regarding the removal of UNDP dual execution from the project information and stakeholder sections of the PPG. Unfortunately, it is not feasible to remove UNDP dual execution at this point due to the high financial management risk rating identified in the HACT Macro Assessment of the relevant entities of the Government of Iraq.

The Ministry of Environment (MoE) could be a potential executing partner for the project. However, the MoE is subject to significant fiduciary and operational risks, as highlighted in the HACT Macro Assessment, requiring extensive execution support. In addition, the complexities of Iraq's public financial regulations would cause significant delays of project operations. To mitigate these challenges, the Government of Iraq has requested UNDP to serve as the executing entity for this project through a Direct Implementation Modality (DIM) arrangement. This arrangement has already been used in other GEF funded projects. UNDP will ensure strict separation of oversight and execution support roles. This approach not only ensures efficient project execution, which is particularly important for a project like this one with relatively small budget, but also helps to progressively build the capacity of the MoE and other national environmental institutions.

The alternative option of engaging an NGO as Executing Agency has been discussed but is not preferred by the Government of Iraq due to its limited scope for enhancing government capacity. In addition, while International NGOs present in the country are highly capable, they involve elevated operational costs driven by security concerns and high consultancy rates. On the other hand, local NGOs involve lower costs but often fall short of meeting the requirements outlined in the HACT framework.

For these reasons, UNDP respectfully asks the GEF to agree with the proposed modality, as requested by the Government of Iraq, which is cost-efficient, mitigates fiduciary and operational risks, and supports capacity-building for the GoI.

Review Dates

	PPG Request Review	Agency Response
First Review	12/2/2024	12/10/2024
Additional Review (as necessary)	12/11/2024	

**PPG Request
Review**

**Agency
Response**

Additional Review (as necessary)	12/12/2024
Additional Review (as necessary)	
Additional Review (as necessary)	