

# Reversing Ecosystem and Water Degradation in the Volta River Basin (REWarD-Volta River Basin)

Review CEO Endorsement and Make a recommendation

## Basic project information

**GEF ID**

9910

**Countries**

Regional

**Project Name**

Reversing Ecosystem and Water Degradation in the Volta River Basin  
(REWarD-Volta River Basin)

**Agencies**

UNEP, IUCN

**Date received by PM**

12/19/2019

**Review completed by PM**

12/14/2021

**Program Manager**

Astrid Hillers

**Focal Area**

International Waters

**Project Type**

FSP

**PIF** □  
**CEO Endorsement** □**Project Design and Financing**

**1. If there are any changes from that presented in the PIF, have justifications been provided?**

## Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

The submission is as complex as the PIF was ? which we cautioned at that point. Meanwhile the WB Volta project experiences and lessons ? incl. the ones leading to an early closure and partial disbursement of the grant ? further call for caution against such diversity of project activities. This was partly due to complexity of the design with multiple on the ground implementation to be designed and partly due to not setting up a project staffed and hence VBA capacity enhancing PMU at VBA. These lessons are changes that should be taken account of.

While the overall project component titles have remained the same compared to the PIF, there are two major changes which are of significant concern:

1. Change in execution from VBA execution and suggesting of **four** different executing agencies (incl VBA) and incl non-competitive hire of a for-profit consulting agency as an ?executing partner? and receiving contracts for > UD 1.2 million plus partial self-execution by one of the GEF agencies. Furthermore, the ownership, leadership and sustainability of project activities is doubtful with the minor role of VBA and country agencies in executing funds (see also other comments).
2. A shift from ?community driven? aspects of e.g. drought preparedness and from an IAS removal program to mainly consulting designed modeling and early warning with very little description on how to involve country entities and create on the ground implementation mechanisms and impacts e.g. on actual IAS removal. This is double concerning given the final evaluation/implementation completion findings of the GEF/WB project which demonstrated the need for strengthening VBA and country

systems, for simpler project design, and activities that are commensurate with VBA and country capacities.

The current project design is therefore a significant concern. It is now the time and opportunity to simplify project design and execution.

(8/12/2021). The revision of the project design and close cooperation with the Adaptation Fund WMO executed project has resulted in more focused design and more realistic outcomes.

1. Please revise the executing agencies not only in the word submission but also the portal entry - the latter still lists IUCN-Burkina Faso and DHI among the executing agencies. Please let us know if this can or cannot be done from UNEP side in the portal and if the GEF IT teams needs to aid in this.
2. Please confirm that UNEP assessed VBA having the capacity to execute the funds given support from GWP-WA and capacity building.

(11/11/2021) Comments addressed. Cleared.

#### Response to Secretariat comments

##### Agency response to comments from (8/12/2021).

1. Please revise the executing agencies not only in the word submission but also the portal entry - the latter still lists IUCN-Burkina Faso and DHI among the executing agencies. Please let us know if this can or cannot be done from UNEP side in the portal and if the GEF IT teams needs to aid in this.

Answer: This has been addressed in the portal.

2. Please confirm that UNEP assessed VBA having the capacity to execute the funds given support from GWP-WA and capacity building.

Answer: Although UNEP and IUCN did not carry out a formal capacity assessment, it is worth nothing, both institutions have long-standing collaboration with VBA for the implementation of several projects. In addition, VBA is also collaborating with other institutions, including the WMO, the African Union to implement projects. Over the five past years, the VBA has implemented a portfolio of nine project from various donors (Agence Fran?aise de Developpement/Fond Fran?ais pour l'Environnement Mondial, FIDA, AfDB, FAO) of an amount of more than USD 5 Million. Currently, VBA is implementing a portfolio of three projects of more than USD1 million per year. More

importantly, VBA is engaged in the process of strengthening its management capacity and a new organogram was validated in 2019. Thus, the Department of Administration and Finance will be strengthened with Head of Accounting, Finance and Budget. In this specific project capacity building is an important objective to support VBA in their capacities to deliver their mandate. The fact that GWP-WA will be supporting the implementation of the project working with the Project coordination unit within VBA premises will allow for the capacity to be satisfactory for project implementation.

This capacity building support to VBA will allow for a strengthening of the capacity of the organisation to deliver its mandate at regional level.

Additionally an organigramme of VBA institutional overview including VBA financial services division is attached as information documents in the Roadmap on the portal.

### **Agency Response 21/07/2021**

During the project preparation, UNEP and IUCN critically reviewed the WB Volta project experiences and lessons learnt and held extensive discussion with VBA and the country agencies to understand the causes of the early closure and partial disbursement of the grant. Other past and ongoing experiences on the ground implementation of project involving VBA and country partners were also analyzed. All this has led to improved activities and roles allocation between the regional executing agencies and the national agencies, taking into consideration existing technical capacities to deliver and the respective mandate.

The revised institutional arrangement and coordination is described in Section A6 of the ProDoC. Capacity building activities targeting VBA are described in Activity 2.1.1.3 under Output 2.1.1.

1. The revised institutional arrangement and coordination showing a leading role of VBA in the project is described in Section A6 of the ProDoC.

In this revised version of the ProDoc IUCN and DHI are no longer defined as ?executing partners?.

At country level, executing partners have been identified by VBA for field activities. They include VBA focal institutions. The national executing partners will work closely with the Project Management Unit established by VBA and supported by GWP-WA to develop and implement workplans and related budgets.

2. The project will collaborate with the WMO-led project on the community-oriented early warning system and develop further linkages with a centrally located web-based DSS system. Sites for implementing community-oriented early warning system are aligned with the WMO-led project and include communities at the borders between Burkina Faso-Ghana, Burkina Faso-Mali and Ghana-Togo.

The project design has been revised to address stronger involvement of local communities for the drought preparedness component (IAS removal component has been removed).

More specifically, Activity 2.2.1.1 (Develop community-based Drought Early Warning Systems (DEWS) in the six pilot sites) includes the test and validation of the methodology on 6 different pilot sites, which have been selected in consultation with WMO-led project.

**2. Is the project structure/design appropriate to achieve the expected outcomes and outputs?**

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

CooNo. The project is very complex and current design appears not aligned with local capacities.

**Overall comments:**

1. The complexity of design in its assumption of technical capacities, assuming country's willingness and capacity for data and information exchange, and diversity of activities is unlikely to lead to sustainable project outcomes. The prodoc itself notes on page 19: that "The nature of the project (multitude of disciplines in six countries based on stakeholder inputs) makes it challenging to provide a detailed project description in this project document." Please simplify project design.
2. The leadership of VBA and a plan to build its institutional together with its technical capacity needs to be more clearly described. (the prodoc is full of references of "consulting with VBA" but not on leadership and decisions by VBA structures). The prodoc indicates that the project coordinator and other staff will be hired by VBA (page 68). Please confirm that staff will hold VBA contracts and report to (who?) in VBA on day-to-day basis.
3. Please also indicate how the suggested PSC is interfacing and integrated into the regular VBA institutional structures.
4. Overall project execution functions need to be clearer and should be indicated for each component and sub-component. The mix of four entities, incl. non-competitive hire of a firm and partial self-execution by IUCN, is not acceptable as is. Specifically, It is noted that DHI is designated as an "executing agency" with components budgets exceeding a total of USD 1.2 million. While DHI has international experience in the field of modeling and forecasting and has won contracts (via competitive RFPs) in other basins (as described in the project) it is

noted with concern that there is no intended competitive bidding for the tasks outlined. Contract of this size should be competitively contracted.

Please discuss and revise the execution modalities and attach draft TORs and/or draft tender documents for large contracts under the project.

5. Funds flow, oversight, hiring and reporting of staff and/or consultants hired by the project all need clarification and a simpler structure putting VBA and countries in much greater leadership role.
6. Provide a clear plan on how the project is building the institutional capacity of VBA, incl its financial management, procurement and other necessary project execution functions. Please outline what staff is paid by the project and located in the VBA which will carry out these functions (in addition to technical lead staff). A clear staffing diagram is needed (see also earlier comments).
7. Please show how the WMO/Adaptation Fund project addressing floods and droughts (emphasis on floods) is institutionally linked to the current project. Will there be one PMU ? Some shared staff and equipment ? Other ?
- 8. Please provide diagrams for funds flow, institutional structures for project delivery and staff reporting lines.**
9. Please provide a clear *narrative* of the Theory of Change of the project (alongside the diagram) ? aligned with its PDO and supported by the design of components and activities.
10. Please revise the component descriptions across the board to be clearer on what the project will do and separate this from general technical background to the components.
  - 10.1. Please have clear descriptions of outputs and activities that align with the RF (and its indicators/targets) and are aligned to the budget and procurement plan. Often only the component text remains very general.
  - 10.2. Many of the components are void of making it clear WHO (what project staff and what country counterparts and on what level and how) will carry out the project activities. Who are counterpart agencies and/or actors for what component ? Project design should have identified national and local relevant counterparts (depending on the component this will differ).
  - 10.3. Has there been any assessment on how many project relevant stakeholders can be reached with very heavy reliance on e-modules, e-learning, and web-based decisions and dissemination tools in the countries ? <<For example ? see details under component 2 comments below: for the drought preparedness and response affected population groups are

mainly rural and the project is not clear on how affected groups will be reached with relevant information to them on drought threats and enable them to be more resilient and prepared to respond.>>

### **Component 1:**

1. - Please clarify the scope and envisioned uses of the DSS and knowledge and information system and ?embedded mathematical models? (use by who and for what and what are therefore data needs). As written there are no clear specs/TOR for this and the scope very wide/open-ended (see e.g. text on page 28: ?The implemented DSS will provide tools supporting water management within the Volta Basin with specific focus on analyzing priority investments for improved water availability, increased water security, socio-economic benefits, protection of ecosystems and natural resources and climate resilience in coordinated management of the Volta basin surface and groundwater resources and related ecosystems. ??)
2. - Please confirm: the DSS is envisioned as a planning not operational model.(?)of such
3. - What trainings are provided to the VBA and the observatory of emerging technologies (e.g. for data acquisition and in-house processing by VBA and national counterpart entities)?
4. - Who is ?we? ? this seems to refer to DHI ?
5. - How can the system be maintained and modified by key end-users even just in VBA ?
6. - In 1.1.2.1 ? Valuation and review of existing methods: please build on recent reviews and tools developed under IW:Learn which seem to have addressed the same. Who is leading/executing the sub-component 1.1.2 on Valuation ?
7. - 1.1.2.3 ? who will the scenarios be developed with ? who are in this case referred to by ?key stakeholders??
8. - 1.1.3.1 ? please provide criteria for pilot site selection and describe envisioned implementation mechanism for these in an annex.
9. - 1.1.3.4. what provision will the project suggest besides developing an alert to not abstract water when withdrawals go to a ?red? level? Unless there are alternate sources what will WUA do at that point?

### **Component 2:**

- Will the project support the countries in the ratification of the Water Charter (such as e.g. through dialogue processes, awareness raising and materials for cabinet , briefing , or other process support?)
- 2.1.1.2: the title indicates the establishment of improved structures for interaction between VBA and national entities, but then goes on to indicate the delivery of 6 training events on a range of different topics. The connection between intent and what is delivered is not so clear as written. Please address.
- 2.1.2 Please ? if maintained ? revise the IAS program to be designed for quantifiable impact in hotspot/priority areas (provide baseline and target). The IAS program was suggested by countries via VBA to address immediate needs in areas of known concern to them.
- 2.2.1 See earlier comment on the ?Community oriented early warning system? ? please be more clear on how communities will be engaged, how warnings will reach them, and how this will aid their drought preparedness and early response. Please differentiate on how to reach sedentary farming communities versus pastoralist groups. Please aim for a clearer description and design. It is appreciated that there will be a review of existing community based drought systems, yet would that not have been done in the PPG in order to inform project design?
- 2.2.2 The outline of how to build the capacity of the Observatory appears complex. Is there a capacity needs assessment done on which this will build on?
- Also, just a detail but: Have e-learning modules proven to be effective with the target groups ?

### **Component 3:**

1. - Please explain if there have been discussions to build on the feasibility and design work for community based interventions prioritized in the SAP and developed by the WB/GEF project instead of picking up new sites and activities on ecosystems restoration ?
2. - There are very many sites listed yet the project delivery mechanisms are not described.
3. - The component text describes number of people and ha targets for ?sustainable management? (also please provide an indication on what the indicators for this are); yet the table on key deliverables and benchmarks largely talks about ?use of manuals? etc.



Please be clear what the project aims at, with whom it will work and how (what is the project mechanisms to work with these local actors?).

4. - How specifically will the project work to address potential conflicts between farmers and pastoralists? What groups have been consulted during project design and how will activities be carried out?
5. - How does the selection of sites (e.g. such as under 3.1.1) build on community input or the SAP. Instead it describes an entity names as 'we' (e.g. a 'we will utilize the data?' 'we anticipate using remote sensing?' etc etc) in a top-down identification of sites and unclear activities at the sites. The 'we' are certainly not local stakeholders. None of the sub-activities of 3.1.1. seem to be lead by VBA, country or by local entities at the listed sites and impacts are unclear. Please revise and consider less sites, provide a clearer design incl the list of actors and locally lead mechanism to implement activities and trackable results indicators.
6. - Fisheries (3.1.2): The Volta basin is home to significant inland fisheries in Africa. Activities to assess resources and most threatened fisheries are well noted.
  - a. When it comes to implementation of 'ecosystems-based management' of fisheries and fish farming systems it remains unclear what the scope of project interventions are, what criteria are to identify fishing communities or to target fish farms (3.1.2.2.) and how many (even roughly are budgeted for?) and how. The description of efforts along value chains etc. is complex, yet rather generic (not specific in being aligned to regional/local situation of the Volta basin countries) and hence needs further elaborated project design.

#### **Component 4:**

1. - Please separate and budget separately: communication, KM, and M&E
2. - The intro to component 4 specifies that the project will use the previously designed communications strategy (under the WB/GEF supported effort), yet 4.1.1. makes no reference on the content and seems to start from square 1.
3. - Please confirm that the M&E budget is held/executed by the project (whatever the final execution modalities will be? see previous comments to revise the current execution) .

#### **PMC:**

1. - What is budgeted under PMC? e.g. all admin personnel belongs there
2. - For example: Project liaison office (budgeted under component 3) to 'plan, monitor, evaluate, and support?' would belong under PMC costs not project component costs

3. - How can the WMO/Adaptation Fund project share some of the PMC related costs ? (Staff, premises, ?). They would be co-located , correct ?

**Other budget related:**

- ? - Please provide budgeted unit costs (daily/monthly rates for consultants) not just lumpsums (see some the TORs in the annexes).
- ? -Annex E- please clarify unit costs per day or per month for consultants listed; - please also separate % of effort for technical effort versus project coordination/management. The latter % of staff time to be included in the PMC.
- ? - Could you please point us to the project initial or overall procurement plan, incl. procurement thresholds? Apologies for any oversight.

**Sustainability, innovation and scale up potential:**

The text says that this project will deal with updating the hydro-met network. IW regional funds are not set out to fund and maintain national networks; the adaptation fund and LDCF/SCCF are better designed to do so and assure national uptake and O&M costs.

**Stakeholder involvement:**

- Project design needs to strengthen the component description on how the project will be delivered ? often it is unclear who will deliver what effort and with what result (note: I noted that the RF is sometimes clearer on results than the component text, yet neither makes it clear on results will be achieved).
- Please clarify who was consulted at project design stage of entities that will carry out local actions (incl early warning and pilot activities).
- There are local consultant reports attached with a quite detailed overview of national and local entities. Please translate these findings into project component design/ component descriptions or relevant annexes (as you see fit) such that it will be clear who will carry out project activities on national level. We assume that the intent is not to have on the ground actions be all consultant executed.

**Gender:**

1. - The project component design is void of mentioning gender considerations. The mention of gender specific indicators does not convince gender sensitive design

especially of components with on the ground interventions. Please mainstream gender consideration into the project design and not rely on a separate 'gender section' only.

2. - Has there been a gender assessment during project design? Is there a report on this from PPG ?
3. - Can you please point me to the gender action plan for the project?

(8/12/2021). Most comments have been addressed. Please address the following in the revised submission:

1. Component 1: Please confirm that there is some form of a protocol or other agreement on data and information sharing in place which is a major assumption to enable the DSS and drought early warning system (see also your Theory of Change). If not, then this should be in place before committing to and contracting a DSS consultant team.

2. Comp 1.1.1.2 (pg 26 of word doc) lists a number of existing modeling frameworks in the Volta which are quite common and likely more known to technical staff than a tailor-made 'new enhanced modeling framework' which may be more sophisticated, but often much harder to maintain by regional institutions and country agencies. The inception phase should include a critical assessment and consultations with VBA and country agency technical staff and with them transparently assess pros and cons of improving existing simpler modeling methods versus a new and more complex system. Please include this assessment in the inception phase of the project and share the inception report with GEFSEC.

3. Ecosystem valuation methods - the point that methods need to be appropriate for the region is very much supported (e.g. is travel-cost based assessment a useful methodology here?). During implementation of the project, please also build on the wider UNEP experience in ecosystems valuation as well as the WB WAVES methodologies.

4. Component 2, Drought Early Warning System: How is the system envisioned to reach farming and pastoral communities? Cell phone based or what are locally feasible avenues envisioned? Will this be paid out of project funds?

5. Comp 2: Scenario Analysis: Please make it clear that scenarios will be stakeholder driven and co-designed with their inputs and not only imposed via international assessments of climate change and other pressures. In this regard the stakeholder scenario development process of the (now closed) GEF global project: *Integrated Solutions for Water, Energy and Land* project has developed excellent and low costs interactive scenario development tools that can provide the input to the DSS analysis of such. IW\_Learn will also disseminate these tools and you may want to consider building on this efforts.

6. Component 3: fisheries: Please provide some indication what fisheries are targeted (which main species), what the current situation is and why riverine fisheries are not sustainable, what the drivers of the unsustainable situation are (e.g, such as lack of information on stocks and sustainable fishing efforts; lack of regulation or lack of other institutional or other capacities such as post harvest processing, other ...).

7. Please explain what you mean more specifically with an 'adoption of ecosystems-based value chain approaches' within the crop and livestock pilots.

8. Please address gender aspects in the project components and especially across component 3 pilots. For example post harvest fish processing is most often in majority done by women and assuring their needs and access to resources (incl. finance and technical training) is therefore important to be included in the project. There is no mention of gender or specifically women in the component description. Does the project have a gender action plan?

9 9. Component 4: the WB/GEF project should have developed a communications strategy. Please summarize the main points. The current project - as mentioned in the previous comments - appears to start from scratch on this. In addition, the approach described is extremely generic and again seems to start from a baseline where no previous work or stakeholder assessment has been done and no audiences have been defined.

10. M&E plan and budget: Well noted that the UNEP/IUCN GEF agency due diligence to monitor the project progress and its benchmarks and indicators is covered by the agency fee as per GEF policies. But would you not have a budget for project internal monitoring (by PMU staff)?

11. The Results framework indicators [mainly for components 1 and 2 (components 3 and 4) are much clearer] - need to be apply quantifiable indicators where possible. Often formulations are rather vague both for the indicators and the end of project targets. Also, if the indicator is "# of ..." then the end of project target should provide a number or range and not a vague description. Also, please provide indicate that numbers (such as for training, consultations etc) will be gender disaggregated where applicable.

For component 3: Please revisit the indicator 'ha's of fisheries under sustainable fishing practices' which seems rather odd.

12. Please update the text of the incremental costs section. It still refers to the previous version and mentions work on shallow groundwater and IAS.

**(11/11/2021)** Most comments addressed, but please see **below re comment 10.**

UNEP and IUCN are expected to cover their oversight functions by agency fees. Mid-term and Terminal Evaluations on the other hand are to covered by projects grant and administered by the executing agencies - while the implementing agencies will tightly oversee this process (e.g. clear the TORs and the procurement of the consultant). At present there are several budget lines allocating prject funds to be administered by the GEF agencies which is not allowed. for example the implementing agencies technical oversight and quality assurance functions - see below - have to be covered by the agency fees.

b) Implementing Agencies, technical support, monitoring field mission, quality assurance*					40	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	40			20	20
b) Implementing Agencies, technical support, monitoring field mission, quality assurance*					40	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	40			20	20

(11/29/2021) Revision and clarification in the M&E section and project noted that the GEF agencies will not spend any GEF grant funds for technical oversight or M&E functions, yet will have a role to oversee (but not handle consultant funds and hiring) for the MTR and TE of the project. While this comment has been addressed, please note and address below:

>> There is a discrepancy in PMC: PMC in table B in the portal is USD 339,170, while Annex G/budget in the portal is USD 364.000. The UNEP prodoc has the same issue. Please address.

(12/14/2021) Comments addressed. The PMC has been revised to be consistent across table B and the project budget. Cleared.

N

2.

(.

Response to Secretariat comments

**Agency Response to comments 11/29/2021**

In response to the discrepancy in PMC: The PMC in table B in the portal and the Annex G/budget in the portal have been revised to ensure coherence. The UNEP prodoc annexes has also been amended in this sense as well.

**Response to comments 11/11/2021**

These comments have now been addressed in the ProDoc for the REWarD project in a) the main text under the section M&E plan in table page 80 and b) in the annexes G (M&E plan) and F (budget) in the ProDoc.

## Agency response 8/12/2021

1. Component 1: Please confirm that there is some form of a protocol or other agreement on data and information sharing in place which is a major assumption to enable the DSS and drought early warning system (see also your Theory of Change). If not, then this should be in place before committing to and contracting a DSS consultant team.

**Answer:** This has been addressed in the main text of the ProDoc under section A.1 Project Description (page 20) and refers to the VBA Convention signed by the Head of States covering data sharing. The convention has also been attached in the roadmap of the portal.

2. Comp 1.1.1.2 (pg 26 of word doc) lists a number of existing modeling frameworks in the Volta which are quite common and likely more known to technical staff than a tailor-made 'new enhanced modeling framework' which may be more sophisticated, but often much harder to maintain by regional institutions and country agencies. The inception phase should include a critical assessment and consultations with VBA and country agency technical staff and with them transparently assess pros and cons of improving existing simpler modeling methods versus a new and more complex system. Please include this assessment in the inception phase of the project and share the inception report with GEFSEC.

**Answer:** This has been addressed in the main text of the ProDoc under activity 1.1.1.2. (page 26).

3. Ecosystem valuation methods - the point that methods need to be appropriate for the region is very much supported (e.g. is travel-cost based assessment a useful methodology here?). During implementation of the project, please also build on the wider UNEP experience in ecosystems valuation as well as the WB WAVES methodologies.

**Answer:** This is well noted and the project will ensure to build on the UNEP experiences, the WB WAVES methodologies and IUCN experiences. This has been addressed in the main text of the ProDoc under activity 1.1.1.2. (page 26)

4. Component 2, Drought Early Warning System: How is the system envisioned to reach farming and pastoral communities? Cell phone based or what are locally feasible avenues envisioned? Will this be paid out of project funds?

**Answer:** This has been addressed in the text of the ProDoc under the description of Activity 2.2.1.2 in the main text (page 40)

5. Comp 2: Scenario Analysis: Please make it clear that scenarios will be stakeholder driven and co-designed with their inputs and not only imposed via international assessments of climate change and other pressures. In this regard the stakeholder scenario development process of the (now closed) GEF global project: *Integrated Solutions for Water, Energy and Land* project has developed excellent and low costs interactive scenario development tools that can provide the input to the DSS analysis of such. IW\_Learn will also disseminate these tools and you may want to consider building on this efforts.

**Answer:** This has been addressed in the text of the ProDoc under the description of Activity 2.2.1.2 in the main text (page 40).

6. Component 3: fisheries: Please provide some indication what fisheries are targeted (which main species), what the current situation is and why riverine fisheries are not sustainable, what the drivers of the unsustainable situation are (e.g, such as lack of information on stocks and sustainable fishing efforts; lack of regulation or lack of other institutional or other capacities such as post harvest processing, other ...).

**Answer:** This has been addressed in the text of the ProDoc under the description of Output 3. 1.2 for details in the main text (page 45, 46)

7. Please explain what you mean more specifically with an 'adoption of ecosystems-based value chain approaches' within the crop and livestock pilots.

**Answer:** This has been addressed in the text of the ProDoc under the description of Output 3. 1.1 for details in the main text (page 43)

8. Please address gender aspects in the project components and especially across component 3 pilots. For example post harvest fish processing is most often in majority done by women and assuring their needs and access to resources (incl. finance and technical training) is therefore important to be included in the project. There is no mention of gender or specifically women in the component description. Does the project have a gender action plan?

**Answer:** This has been addressed in the text of the ProDoc under the description of Output 3. 1.2 for details in the main text (pages 45, 46)

9 Component 4: the WB/GEF project should have developed a communications strategy. Please summarize the main points. The current project - as mentioned in the previous comments - appears to start from scratch on this. In addition, the approach described is extremely generic and again seems to start from a baseline where no previous work or stakeholder assessment has been done and no audiences have been defined.

**Answer:** This has now been added to component 4, page 49/50 of the Pro Doc

10. M&E plan and budget: Well noted that the UNEP/IUCN GEF agency due diligence to monitor the project progress and its benchmarks and indicators is covered by the agency fee as per GEF policies. But would you not have a budget for project internal monitoring (by PMU staff)?

**Answer:** IUCN/UNEP due diligence has been now addressed in the budget section of the ProDoc as well as in the revised Table C: M&E plan (page 79/80) of the Pro Doc and in Annex G.

11. The Results framework indicators [mainly for components 1 and 2 (components 3 and 4) are much clearer] - need to be apply quantifiable indicators where possible. Often formulations are rather vague both for the indicators and the end of project targets. Also, if the indicator is "# of ...." then the end of project target should provide a number or range and not a vague description. Also, please provide indicate that numbers (such as for training, consultations etc) will be gender disaggregated where applicable.

**Answer:** The results framework has been revised accordingly (Annex A page 3 onwards)



For component 3: Please revisit the indicator 'ha's of fisheries under sustainable fishing practices' which seems rather odd.

**Answer:** Amendments were made to Table 5 on page 42 of the ProDoc

12. Please update the text of the incremental costs section. It still refers to the previous version and mentions work on shallow groundwater and IAS.

**Answer:** Amendments were made in section 4 of main text 'Incremental/additional Costs' on page 54 of the Pro Doc.

### **Agency response 21/07/2021**

The project design was improved by (i) abandoning certain outputs in favour of more capacity building to VBA, (ii) reducing the number of sites/countries for field intervention, (iii) clarifying roles and activities between the regional executing (VBA), the national agencies (VBA country focal structures) and (iv) clarifying the coordination mechanism between the regional and national executing agencies.

1. After consultations with VBA the project design has been simplified as follows:

Output 1.1.3 ('Shallow Groundwater?') and Output 2.1.2 ('Invasive Species?') have been removed from the REWARD project and been replaced by 'support to preparation of a concept note' to address these two aspects (Activity 2.1.1.3).

VBA capacity building:

Resources previously allocated for output 1.1.3 and 2.1.2 (550,000 USD in total) have been allocated to capacity building of VBA and being part of output 2.1.1. The proposed capacity building activities (2.1.1.3) have been prepared in collaboration with VBA.

2. During the project preparation, VBA and its national focal structures effectively led the process and took decisions about the design and the content of the project.

PMU staff will hold VBA contracts and the reporting line will be the Executive Director of VBA on day-to-day basis. VBA will then report periodically to UNEP/IUCN on the project performance. See details in section A3 and A6.

3. Decisions from the regular VBA institutional structures (Conference of Head of State and Government; Council of Ministers in charge of Water resources; Stakeholders' Forum on Volta Basin development, Expert Committee) will guide the decisions made by the PSC. On the other hand, decisions from the PSC will feed into the agenda of the institutional structures of VBA to accelerate uptake of the project achievements. This linkage will be key for transformational changes at all levels within the Basin. The PMU will be anchored with the Deputy Executive Director of VBA, and various components will engage with VBA's institutional structure as described in Figure 7 of the ProDoc.

4. The overall project execution functions have been revised (see revised section A.6). Furthermore, the execution of each output has been specified in a concise text block before the description of each output in section A.1.3. Details are provided for ?Execution and key stakeholders?, ?Targets, indicators, and means of verification?, and ?Procurement?.

DHI no longer features as an executing agency.

See also answer to previous comment immediately above on the execution modalities.

Initial draft ToR for large contracts under the project are provided in Annex E. During the inception phase tender documents will be prepared in accordance with the procurement manual (also to be developed during inception).

5. In accordance with follow-up discussions between GEF Sec and UNEP, the overall project execution functions, including flow of funds and reporting lines, have been revised (see revised section A.6, including Figure 6)

6. In line with previous assessment of the VBA capacity, a new activity (2.1.1.3) has been developed to strengthen VBA capacity for project management and procurement. GWP-WA will support this capacity building through its close day-to-day collaboration with the PMU and the VBA Secretariat.

The staffing list is provided in A6.1 (under PMU) and A6.2 (under National Executing Partners). Under PMU, the following four staff are listed, to be hired by and located in VBA: Regional Project Coordinator, Administrative assistant, Procurement officer and M&E and Social Safeguard Specialist. Under National Executing Partners, the national focal points in the six countries will be hired by the project, contracted through VBA.

7. VBA is hosting both the technical assistant of the WMO/adaptation Fund project and the REWarD project Management unit. Both staffs will co-organize annual planning workshops to ensure proper linkage and complementarities of both project deliveries and allow shared costs where necessary. See section A6

The collaboration between the WMO/Adaptation Fund project is detailed in output 2.2.1.

The WMO project will focus on floods while the REWarD project will focus on drought. However, discussion with WMO project have ensured that agreement on the pilot sites can be reached for complementarity of the two projects. A detailed list of the

complementary of the pilot sites for testing community-based EWS between WMO-led project and the REWARD project has been added to the document [\(page 36\)](#).

It is expected that WMO-led project representatives will be part of the Project Steering Committee (PSC). The collaboration between the two projects has been described in the chapter A.6 'Institutional Arrangement and Coordination'.

8. The overall project execution functions, including flow of funds and reporting lines, have been revised (see Figure 6 in revised section A.6)

9. Narrative of the Theory of Change has been developed and inserted above the illustration of the ToC at the end of Annex A.

10. All component descriptions have additional or revised text, as introduction before the output descriptions, on what the components will do.

10.1. Outputs and activities have been checked against the Results Framework (Annex A) and amended where needed. In order to make clearer links between the description, the RF and the procurement plan, the following information is now provided in headline format in the main text for each output: 'Execution and key stakeholders?', 'Targets, indicators and means of verification?' and 'Procurement'.

10.2 Counterparts have been identified for each output using reports from the regional consultants. This is clarified in section A.3.

Furthermore, the execution of each output has been specified in a concise text block before the description of each output in section A.1.3.

10.3 In activity 2.2.1.1 and 2.2.1.2, a description has been added on how local communities will be involved in the implementation of the drought EWS.

It should be noted that the detailed description of the e-learning module in output 2.2.2 has been removed from the main document.

### **Component 1:**

### **Component 2:**

<p>1. - Please clarify the scope and envisioned uses of the DSS and knowledge and information system and ?embedded mathematical models? (use by who and for what and what are therefore data needs). As written there are no clear specs/TOR for this and the scope very wide/open-ended (see e.g. text on page 28: ?The implemented DSS will provide tools supporting water management within the Volta Basin with specific focus on analyzing priority investments for improved water availability, increased water security, socio-economic benefits, protection of ecosystems and natural resources and climate resilience in coordinated management of the Volta basin surface and groundwater resources and related ecosystems. ??)</p>	<p>The implemented DSS is described in the document and outlines the requirements of each component that will compose the implemented DSS.</p> <p>Output 1.1.1 describes the water resources model and its planning application. Output 2.2.1 describes the Drought Early Warning System.</p> <p>The ?embedded mathematical models? are just a means to reach the expected Output 1.1.1.</p> <p>The needs for data will be clarified at the start of the project during the inception phase to ensure all the expected data are requested and collected by and from the stakeholders. As for the expected users (?by who?) the stakeholders have been identified and listed in Section A.3 of the main document.</p>
<p>2. Please confirm: the DSS is envisioned as a planning not operational model(?)of such</p>	<p>The DSS will is envisaged to be composed of several components. One of the key components will be the water resources model and its planning application (Output 1.1.1). However, it is also envisaged that a Drought Early Warning System (referred as DEWS) will be integrated into the DSS (Output 2.2.1). The latter will be more an operational system since it is expected to be updated automatically on a regular basis to provide timely information and warnings related to drought hazard.</p>
<p>3. What trainings are provided to the VBA and the observatory of emerging technologies (e.g. for data acquisition and in-house processing by VBA and national counterpart entities)?</p>	<p>Training provided to the staff at the Volta Basin Observatory (including, as appropriate, national-level key stakeholders) and relevant research Centres will be discussed with VBA and detailed at the start of the project (see activity 2.2.2.3).</p>
<p>4. Who is ?we? ? this seems to refer to DHI?</p>	<p>The sentences where ?we? were used have been reformulated to avoid any ambiguity.</p>
<p>5. How can the system be maintained and modified by key end-users even just in VBA?</p>	<p>Activity 2.2.2.2 (Providing operational manuals) will provide VBA a set of manuals describing and documenting the procedure to maintain and update the DSS. One of the manuals will be specifically on ?Operation and Maintenance? for the entire system.</p>
<p>6. - In 1.1.2.1 ? Valuation and review of existing methods: please build on recent reviews and tools developed under IW:Learn which seem to have addressed the same. Who is leading/executing the sub-component 1.1.2 on Valuation?</p>	<p>Reference has been made in the text to the IW:Learn publication ?GEF Guidance Documents to Economic Valuation of Ecosystem Services in IW Projects? which will be considered in the analysis.</p> <p>This output 1.1.2 will be executed jointly through GWP WA and VBA</p>

7. - 1.1.2.3 ? who will the scenarios be developed with? who are in this case referred to by ?key stakeholders??	Section 1.1.2.3 has been moved to 2.2.2.1. ?Key stakeholders? has been changed to ?the principal stakeholders at the regional and national levels? to be consistent with the terminology used in the ?Stakeholders? section of the document.
8. - 1.1.3.1 ? please provide criteria for pilot site selection and describe envisioned implementation mechanism for these in an annex.	NA (Output 1.1.3 has been removed)
9. - 1.1.3.4. what provision will the project suggest besides developing an alert to not abstract water when withdrawals go to a ?red? level? Unless there are alternate sources what will WUA do at that point?	NA (Output 1.1.3 has been removed)

- Will the project support the countries in the ratification of the Water Charter (such as e.g. through dialogue processes, awareness raising and materials for cabinet, briefing , or other process support?	Yes, the project will support the process towards the ratification of the Water Charter. This will be done as part of activities 2.1.1.1 and 2.1.1.2. A more detailed plan for the preparation of the ratification of the Water Charter shall be agreed between VBA and the Member States during the initial stage of the project and be reflected in the detailed workplan.
- 2.1.1.2: the title indicates the establishment of improved structures for interaction between VBA and national entities, but then goes on to indicate the delivery of 6 training events on a range of different topics. The connection between intent and what is delivered is not so clear as written. Please address.	Heading of activity 2.1.1.2 has been amended to ?Establish <b>and Build Capacity</b> of National and Regional Coordinating Committees of Water Users in the Volta Basin? to reflect the actual capacity building described for the activity. Principles and content of the Water Charter will be part of the capacity building under activity 2.1.1.2.
- 2.1.2 Please ? if maintained ? revise the IAS program to be designed for quantifiable impact in hotspot/priority areas (provide baseline and target). The IAS program was suggested by countries via VBA to address immediate needs in areas of known concern to them	To reduce the complexity of the project design, the output on IAS removal has been abandoned. Funds have been allocated to capacity building for VBA instead.

<p>- 2.2.1 See earlier comment on the ?Community oriented early warning system? ? please be more clear on how communities will be engaged, how warnings will reach them, and how this will aid their drought preparedness and early response. Please differentiate on how to reach sedentary farming communities versus pastoralist groups. Please aim for a clearer description and design. It is appreciated that there will be a review of existing community based drought systems, yet would that not have been done in the PPG in order to inform project design?</p>	<p>See Act. 2.2.1.2 for amended description on how to reach different groups.</p> <p>Review of existing systems has been removed from section 2.2.1. the most recent reviews of the existing systems were done under the GEF Flood and Drought Management Tools project (2014-2018), and then more recently with focus on Ghana during the CTCN project ?Improving resiliency of crops to drought through strengthened early warning within Ghana?.</p>
<p>- 2.2.2 The outline of how to build the capacity of the Observatory appears complex. Is there a capacity needs assessment done on which this will build on?</p>	<p>Activities in output 2.2.2 have been revisited to include capacity building based on case studies in order to ensure capacity is built on real cases. Thus, activity 2.2.2.1 (Scenario Analyses with Case Studies) has been introduced in this output. A capacity needs assessment has not been made yet but will be made as part of activity 2.2.2.3 and as basis for the capacity building.</p> <p>Moreover, the description of the other activities of 2.2.2 has been simplified.</p>
<p>- Also, just a detail but: Have e-learning modules proven to be effective with the target groups ?</p>	<p>Text on E-learning has been removed</p>

**Component 3:**

<p>1. - Please explain if there have been discussions to build on the feasibility and design work for community based interventions prioritized in the SAP and developed by the WB/GEF project instead of picking up new sites and activities on ecosystems restoration ?</p>	<p>At the PIF stage, it was discussed to build on the WB/GEF project at the PIF stage. However, given that the WB/GEF project was closed without implementing community interventions, stakeholders agreed during the project preparation phase to align the locations of the community-based interventions to the WMO/adaptation project. Thus, community-based interventions will take place in locations where the WMO-led project will pilot test the Early warning systems, with extension to some new locations to help scale out results from both WMO-led and Rewards projects. See Section A1.3, Component 3.</p>
---	--

<p>2. - There are very many sites listed yet the project delivery mechanisms are not described.</p>	<p>Component 3 will be implemented in four countries (Burkina Faso, Ghana, Mali and Togo), three transboundary locations (two on black Volta and one on Oti). The delivery mechanism has been described whereby VBA will sign sub-grants agreements with its focal institutions in the four countries for the implementation of Component 3. These focal institutions have comparative advantages for executing field activities as compared to VBA. See section A1.3, component 3.</p>
<p>3. - The component text describes number of people and ha targets for ?sustainable management? (also please provide an indication on what the indicators for this are); yet the table on key deliverables and benchmarks largely talks about ?use of manuals? etc. Please be clear what the project aims at, with whom it will work and how (what is the project mechanisms to work with these local actors ?).</p>	<p>The benchmarks have been reviewed according to the project aims, see Annex I. There is no reference to use of manuals. The description of the project mechanism to work with local actors has been improved (see section A3 and A6).</p>
<p>4. - How specifically will the project work to address potential conflicts between farmers and pastoralists ? What groups have been consulted during project design and how will activities be carried out ?</p>	<p>The application of the ecosystem-based approach will help address potential conflicts between different groups of users, including farmers and pastoralists. The project will work with different groups of natural resources users. In the Black Volta, fishers and fish processors (women) in Bagri, Ghana, Sourou and Manoa, Burkina Faso; and agropastoral communities in Burkina Faso, Mali and Ghana were consulted. The inclusion of Oti is from previous IUCN work, but the project will also work with the same groups of users as in the Black Volta.</p>
<p>5. - How does the selection of sites (e.g. such as under 3.1.1) build on community input or the SAP. Instead it describes an entity names as ?we? (e.g. a ?we will utilize the data ?? ?we anticipate using remote sensing?? etc etc) in a top-down identification of sites and unclear activities at the sites. The ?we? are certainly not local stakeholders. None of the sub-activities of 3.1.1. seem to be lead by VBA, country or by local entities at the listed sites and impacts are unclear. Please revise and consider less sites, provider a clearer design incl the list of actors and locally lead mechanism to implement activities and trackable results indicators.</p>	<p>See component 3, section A1.3. Sites selection builds on the SAP which suggested such action be implemented upstream of lake Volta, and inputs from country stakeholders during the project preparation. It was possible to visit some transboundary sites in Ghana, Burkina Faso and Mali. Finally, the selected sites were crosschecked with the WMO-led project sites for early warning system to ensure complementarity and scaling out.</p>
<p>6. - Fisheries (3.1.2): The Volta basin is home to significant inland fisheries in Africa. Activities to assess resources and most threatened fisheries are well noted.</p>	<p><i>NA</i></p>

<p>a. When it comes to implementation of ?ecosystems-based management? of fisheries and fish farming systems it remains unclear what the scope of project interventions are, what criteria are to identify fishing communities or to target fish farms (3.1.2.2.) and how many (even roughly are budgeted for?) and how. The description of efforts along value chains etc. is complex, yet rather generic (not specific in being aligned to regional/local situation of the Volta basin countries) and hence needs further elaborated project design.</p>	<p>Countries and VBA finally agreed to drop fish farming, because of high cost as compared to the project budget. The project will therefore support the improvement of riverine fishing. Fisheries and fishing communities to work with have been clearly identified. See output 3.1.2.</p>
--	--

**Component 4:**

<p>1. - Please separate and budget separately: communication, KM, and M&amp;E</p>	<p>Done. Communication is under output 4.1.1; knowledge management is under output 4.1.2; and monitoring and evaluation is under output 4.2.1</p>
<p>2. - The intro to component 4 specifies that the project will use the previously designed communications strategy (under the WB/GEF supported effort), yet 4.1.1. makes no reference on the content and seems to start from square 1.</p>	<p>Reference to the previously designed communications strategy and its content has been included in the description of output 4.1.1.</p>
<p>3. - Please confirm that the M&amp;E budget is held/executed by the project (whatever the final execution modalities will be ? see previous comments to revise the current execution) .</p>	<p>In accordance with revised section A.6, one of the tasks of the PMU is ?Ensure proper M&amp;E and communication of the project progress and achievements?. Therefore, PMU will also administer the budget for regular M&amp;E.</p>

**PMC:**

<p>1. - What is budgeted under PMC ? e.g. all admin personnel belongs there</p>	<p>The following items are budgeted under PMC: Project coordinator (part time), Admin assistant, costs for resource pool, travel, steering committee, office supplies, communication and consumables</p>
<p>2. - For example: Project liaison office (budgeted under component 3) to ?plan, monitor, evaluate, and support? would belong under PMC costs not project component costs</p>	<p>Project liaison officer consultancy has been abandoned (IUCN is no longer executing part of the project) and replaced by Ecosystem management expert, and the budget has been reduced. The balance is used for capacity building of VBA.</p>
<p>3. - How can the WMO/Adaptation Fund project share some of the PMC related costs ? (Staff, premises, ?). They would be co-located , correct ?</p>	<p>VBA will make every effort to promote cost sharing between the WMO project and REWarD. To do this, staff could share the same offices to facilitate joint work on work plans and the production of technical documents. The two projects could also share procurement services.</p>



**Other budget related:**

- Please provide budgeted unit costs (daily/monthly rates for consultants) not just lumpsums (see some the TORs in the annexes).	Daily/monthly consultancy fee rates have been estimated and inserted in Annex E
-Annex E- please clarify unit costs per day or per month for consultants listed; - please also separate % of effort for technical effort versus project coordination/management. The latter % of staff time to be included in the PMC.	All consultancies listed in Annex E now have estimated fee rates. All consultants will work 100% on technical aspects.
Could you please point us to the project initial or overall procurement plan, incl. procurement thresholds? Apologies for any oversight.	An overall procurement plan for the project will be prepared during the inception phase, based on existing procurement guidelines of UNEP, IUCN, VBA and GWP-WA, and also respecting requirements for GEF-financed projects.

**Sustainability, innovation and scale up potential:**

The text says that this project will deal with updating the hydro-met network. IW regional funds are not set out to fund and maintain national networks; the adaptation fund and LDCE/SCCF are better designed to do so and assure national uptake and O&M costs.	The text in section A.1.6 on ?Innovativeness, sustainability and potential for scaling up? has been amended accordingly. The project will not deal with updating the hydromet network.
---	--

**Stakeholder involvement:**

- Project design needs to strengthen the component description on how the project will be delivered ? often it is unclear who will deliver what effort and with what result (note: I noted that the RF is sometimes clearer on results than the component text, yet neither makes it clear on results will be achieved).	Outputs and activities have been checked against the Results Framework (Annex A) and amended where needed. In order to clarify how the project will be delivered, the following information is now provided in headline format in the main text for each output: ?Execution and key stakeholders?, ?Targets, indicators and means of verification? and ?Procurement?.
- Please clarify who was consulted at project design stage of entities that will carry out local actions (incl early warning and pilot activities).	A large and varied group of stakeholders were consulted during project design, representing national institutions (including the VBA national focal points), the private sector, and civil society, in all six basin countries. The list of envisaged stakeholders is included in section A.3.
- There are local consultant reports attached with a quite detailed overview of national and local entities. Please translate these findings into project component design/ component descriptions or relevant annexes (as you see fit) such that it will be clear who will carry out project activities on national level. We assume that the intent is not to have on the ground actions be all consultant executed.	Chapter A.3 on ?Stakeholders? has been reformulated to give more precise overview of the stakeholders and their possible involvement at the regional/national/local levels in the project.

**Gender:**

<p>1. - The project component design is void of mentioning gender considerations. The mention of gender specific indicators does not convince gender sensitive design especially of components with on the ground interventions. Please mainstream gender consideration into the project design and not rely on a separate ?gender section? only.</p>	<p>As part of the revision of the ProDoc, a Gender Mainstream Strategy was developed particularly for the REWarD project, focusing on specific gender action points for each output of the project. This provides a very targeted plan for how to mainstream gender into the implementation. See Annex U for further details.</p>
<p>2. - Has there been a gender assessment during project design? Is there a report on this from PPG ?</p>	<p>Yes, as mentioned above, gender issues have been assessed and a strategy for gender mainstreaming during implementation is included as Annex U.</p>
<p>3. - Can you please point me to the gender action plan for the project? The same as above.</p>	<p>Please see Annex U.</p>

**3. Is the financing adequate and does the project demonstrate a cost-effective approach to meet the project objective?**

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

1. No. the project seems to complex and cover too many activities. This is furthermore more urgent as all co-finance is in kind (parallel) and only the WMO/Adaptation Fund (and possibly GCF?) provides very closely mutual supporting on regional level (and not so clear how it is doing so in terms of work planning, staffing or possibly back-to-back PSC meetings to effectively coordinate efforts).
2. DHI is correctly labeled as ?international consultant?. As mentioned before, given the size of contracts (390 K; 390K and 440 K) an RFP needs to be issued (and specs/TORs to be attached).
3. Annex F ? VBA was designated as the main project execution agency at PIF stage. What has there been consideration to retain this with possible support by by a procurement/FM agency/consultancy or similar.
4. The VBA hired lead coordinator is a senior regional expert; please clarify monthly salary and how it compares to similar project salaries on such regional posts.
5. IUCN execution ? mixing of implementing and executing functions is not allowed under GEF policies (there are few exceptions; please refer to the GEF policy). Also, how would there be USD 1.6 mill equipment costs?
6. GWP ? please clarify its role. Why are there no funds transferred directly to countries for specific items and all funds suggest to go to GWP or IUCN (the latter mixing IUCN roles ? see above and earlier comments)

(8/12/2021). Comments have been addressed in the agency response and the revised document. Cleared.

Response to Secretariat comments

**Agency response 21/07/2021**

<p>1. No. the project seems to complex and cover too many activities. This is furthermore more urgent as all co-finance is in kind (parallel) and only the WMO/Adaptation Fund (and possibly GCF?) provides very closely mutual supporting on regional level (and not so clear how it is doing so in terms of work planning, staffing or possibly back-to-back PSC meetings to effectively coordinate efforts).</p>	<p>The project has been simplified, by abandoning outputs on groundwater assessment and invasive aquatic species, and by reducing the scope of activities of others (e.g. abandoning fish farming under output 3.1.1). The balance of funds has been allocated to capacity building of VBA.</p>
<p>2. DHI is correctly labeled as "international consultant". As mentioned before, given the size of contracts (390 K; 390K and 440 K) an RFP needs to be issued (and specs/TORs to be attached).</p>	<p>DHI has been removed as an Executing Agency. The services will be procured through GWP-WA using their procurement system.</p>
<p>3. Annex F ? VBA was designated as the main project execution agency at PIF stage. What has there been consideration to retain this with possible support by by a procurement/FM agency/consultancy or similar.</p>	<p>In accordance with follow-up discussions between GEF Sec and UNEP, the overall project execution functions, including flow of funds and reporting lines, have been revised (see revised section A.6, including Figure 6). VBA and GWP-WA are now the only Executing Agencies.</p>
<p>4. The VBA hired lead coordinator is a senior regional expert; please clarify monthly salary and how it compares to similar project salaries on such regional posts.</p>	<p>The monthly salary for this position is budgeted at USD 3,100. This salary is aligned with the VBA salary scale and is similar to what is applied in the region by institutions comparable to VBA.</p>
<p>5. IUCN execution ? mixing of implementing and executing functions is not allowed under GEF policies (there are few exceptions; please refer to the GEF policy). Also, how would there be USD 1.6 mill equipment costs? IUCN to respond on the equipment</p>	<p>IUCN is removed from the execution role</p>

6. GWP ? please clarify its role. Why are there no funds transferred directly to countries for specific items and all funds suggest to go to GWP or IUCN (the latter mixing IUCN roles ? see above and earlier comments)

In accordance with follow-up discussions between GEF Sec and UNEP, the overall project execution functions, including flow of funds and reporting lines, have been revised (see revised section A.6, including Figure 6). IUCN no longer has any executing role.

GWP-WA will execute outputs and activities that are related to DSS and early warning systems and link to the WMO project where GWP-WA is also an Executing Partner.

Funds to be used at national level (largely Component 3) will be channeled through VBA because of its basin-wide mandate and its direct link to national partners. VBA will sign sub-grant agreement with countries, through its national focal institutions as indicated in the institutional arrangement (A.6).

**4. Does the project take into account potential major risks, including the consequences of climate change, and describes sufficient risk response measures? (e.g., measures to enhance climate resilience)**

#### Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

A risk matrix is provided and project component 1 itself aims to assess specific climate risks to the basin.

- The low/medium rating based on the regional nature seems low given the current seemingly immense complexity of the project design. Both the rating may need to be increased and the project design more clear and simpler.
- Ditto for the rating of low institutional coordination and unclear regional, national, local responsibilities
- Data exchange ? rated low to medium. This is a key prerequisite to procuring several of the project components/sub-components. Is there an adequate data exchange protocol ( or similar) in place ? This seems to be pre-requisite for the project and should be secured now. If commitment is in place , please annex documentation.
- Masterplan ? Project will support with DSS tools but falls short of being able to develop a basin master-plan nor does UNEP or IUCN have a track record on this as discussed at PIF stage.

(8/12/2021). Please answer the question in bullet 3 of the previous comments.

(11/11/2021) Comment addressed. Cleared.

Response to Secretariat comments

**Agency response to comments 8/12/2021**

- Data exchange ? rated low to medium. This is a key prerequisite to procuring several of the project components/sub-components. Is there an adequate data exchange protocol ( or similar) in place ? This seems to be pre-requisite for the project and should be secured now. If commitment is in place , please annex documentation.

**Answer:** Article 4 of the VBA convention (see Convention portant Statut du fleuve Volta et création de l'Autorité du Bassin de la Volta (ABV)) takes care of the data exchange protocol between the countries Members. The VBA Convention including Article 4 on data exchange has been uploaded onto the roadmap in the portal.

**Agency response 21/07/2021**

A risk matrix is provided and project component 1 itself aims to assess specific climate risks to the basin.	
- The low/medium rating based on the regional nature seems low given the current seemingly immense complexity of the project design. Both the rating may need to be increased and the project design more clear and simpler.	Rating raised to medium. The execution design, working directly with the VBA national focal points, will help mitigate the risk.
- Ditto for the rating of low institutional coordination and unclear regional, national, local responsibilities	Ditto. Rating raised to medium. The execution design, working directly with the VBA national focal points, will help mitigate the risk.
- Data exchange ? rated low to medium. This is a key prerequisite to procuring several of the project components/sub-components. Is there an adequate data exchange protocol (or similar) in place? This seems to be pre-requisite for the project and should be secured now. If commitment is in place, please annex documentation.	Rating maintained. Component 2 has a strong focus on promoting regional collaboration and dialogue, providing ample opportunities to promote and facilitate data sharing, not least in the context of the Water Charter.
- Masterplan? Project will support with DSS tools but falls short of being able to develop a basin master-plan nor does UNEP or IUCN have a track record on this as discussed at PIF stage.	There has been no attempts or requests by stakeholders during the preparation to establish a master plan under the REWARD project

**5. Is co-financing confirmed and evidence provided?**

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

1. Letters of co-finance are provided in all cases
2. Please confirm that all co-finance numbers only reflect the relevant portion of listed projects that align with the project PDO and directly support project

implementation (e.g. for IUCN, UNEP (SDG monitoring - please also take note of the US Council member comment specifically with regard to SDG monitoring), and in some of the national letters of co-finance ?

3. I assume that this consideration (applying only a relevant fraction) is the base for the listed DHI co-finance in table C to be below its letter of co-finance. Please confirm.

(8/12/2021). Comments have been addressed in the agency response and the revised document. Cleared.

### Response to Secretariat comments

#### Agency response 21/07/2021

1. Letters of co-finance are provided in all cases	YES
2. Please confirm that all co-finance numbers only reflect the relevant portion of listed projects that align with the project PDO and directly support project implementation (e.g. for IUCN, UNEP (SDG monitoring - please also take note of the US Council member comment specifically with regard to SDG monitoring), and in some of the national letters of co-finance ?	UNEP and IUCN confirm that their co-finance numbers reflect only the relevant portion of the listed projects.
3. I assume that this consideration (applying only a relevant fraction) is the base for the listed DHI co-finance in table C to be below its letter of co-finance. Please confirm.	DHI's co-financing letter has been amended to clarify that the co-financing is an estimate of the fraction that is relevant for the support to the REWARD project.

#### 6. Are relevant tracking tools completed?

#### Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

1. Please fill out all relevant core indicators in the Portal instead of the TT and please fill out all relevant core indicators both in the Portal and in the worksheet. TDA/SAP related sub-indicators have been filled out but please also incl. in the Portal and worksheet (not only the portal) the ?ha under improved management? and their location; as per the project RF.
2. GEF 6 tracking tools are no longer needed.
3. Please fill out Rio Markers as appropriate

(8/12/2021) Please fill out the description of the areas/locations for core indicator 4.

(11/11/2021) The core indicator sheet is attached. While not all pilot areas are known, please add the locations at mid-term. Cleared.

Response to Secretariat comments

Agency response to comments 8/12/2021

Please fill out the description of the areas/locations for core indicator 4.

Answer: Table 5 (page 42) under component 3 contains indicator value, as well the locations.

Agency response 21/07/2021

1. Please fill out all relevant core indicators in the Portal instead of the TT and please fill out all relevant core indicators both in the Portal and in the worksheet. TDA/SAP related sub-indicators have been filled out but please also incl. in the Portal and worksheet (not only the portal) the ?ha under improved management? and their location; as per the project RF.	<i>The indicator sheet is completed and uploaded in the Portal.</i>
2. GEF 6 tracking tools are no longer needed.	<i>Noted and removed accordingly</i>
3. Please fill out Rio Markers as appropriate	Done (Part I ? F: Project Taxonomy)

**7. Only for Non-Grant Instrument: Has a reflow calendar been presented?**

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request N/A

Response to Secretariat comments

**8. Is the project coordinated with other related initiatives and national/regional plans in the country or in the region?**

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

- 1) The project indicates collaboration with a number of initiatives, yet there seem to still be overlap and also not a clear operational linkage e.g. with the WMO adaptation fund project. Please provide a table on what each project does and how they compliment each other.
- 2) How will the project build on the Volta Hycos and TIGERNET efforts (mentioned early in the prodoc)?
- 3) Please use the inception phase to design an effective coordination mechanisms with related other national and regional level efforts described

in the prodoc. Does VBA host a yearly development partner coordination meeting?

(8/12/2021). Comments have been addressed in the agency response and the revised document. Cleared.

Response to Secretariat comments

**Agency response 21/07/2021**

<p>1) The project indicates collaboration with a number of initiatives, yet there seem to still be overlap and also not a clear operational linkage e.g. with the WMO adaptation fund project. Please provide a table on what each project does and how they compliment each other.</p>	<p>The WMO project has a particular focus on flood hazards whereas REWarD has a strong focus on drought hazards. In the description of output 2.2.1, the complementarity of pilot sites for testing community-based EWS between WMO-led project and the REWarD project has been detailed. Table 4 in the ProDoc outlines the complementarity between the two projects regarding pilot sites.</p>
<p>2) How will the project build on the Volta Hycos and TIGERNET efforts (mentioned early in the prodoc)?</p>	<p>The REWarD project will build extensively on the Flood and Drought Management tools project, which was already based on the Volta HYCOS as well as the TIGER NET project.</p>
<p>3) Please use the inception phase to design an effective coordination mechanisms with related other national and regional level efforts described in the prodoc. Does VBA host a yearly development partner coordination meeting?</p>	<p>Noted, the inception will design appropriate coordination mechanisms with similar initiatives and projects as mentioned in revised text for section A1.2 on 'baseline scenario?'. Yes, VBA organizes two types of development partners coordination meetings. The first is held every two years back-to-back with the VBA ministers' council. The second is the Volta basin stakeholders' forum which is organized yearly</p>

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

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

Yes, it does have a costed M&E plan.

1. Yet as indicated on page 73 the implementing agencies appear to draw on PMC costs (i.e. project budget) for project implementation and oversight function (e.g. monitoring of project progress. This is not allowable under GEF policies).
2. Ditto for management of the MTR and TE costs. An exception would need to be requested by the agencies to be considered for approval by GEFSEC (GPU manager). If approved further steps are needed.



3. Please note that the audit costs should be included in the PMC (not the M&E costs)

(8/12/2021). Comments have been addressed in the agency response and the revised document. Cleared.

(11/11/2021) In the present version comments 1. - 3. of above do not appear to be addressed. Please correct this.

(11/29/2021) Comments addressed. Cleared.

#### Response to Secretariat comments

Agency Answer to comments of 11/11/2021

The comments 1 to 3 have now been addressed with respective changes in the main text (M&E plan) of the ProDoc and in the Annexes (Annex F and G).

#### Agency response 21/07/2021

1 Yet as indicated on page 73 the implementing agencies appear to draw on PMC costs (i.e. project budget) for project implementation and oversight function (e.g. monitoring of project progress. This is not allowable under GEF policies).	This mistake has been corrected. The text now indicates that costs are covered by Implementing Agency fees.
2 Ditto for management of the MTR and TE costs. An exception would need to be requested by the agencies to be considered for approval by GEFSEC (GPU manager). If approved further steps are needed.	Ditto (same answer as above)
3 Please note that the audit costs should be included in the PMC (not the M&E costs)	As indicated in the budgeted M&E plan, the audit costs will be included in and paid from the PMC budget

#### 10. Does the project have descriptions of a knowledge management plan?

##### Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

Yes, it provides a knowledge management effort ? yet as for other components the formulation of the component needs to be sharpened to be more clear on what will and can be done under the project and by who. The description is encompassing but generic. More focus and alignment of component descriptions to the RF and budget would be very helpful to be able to follow what the project is set out to do.

(8/12/2021) Cooperation with IW-Learn is key to the GEF portfolio and to be budgeted at 1 % of the grant. For now I see an allocation of 6 K only in the GEF budget annex. Please amend.

(11/11/2021) Comment addressed. Cleared.

#### Response to Secretariat comments

##### **Agency response to comments from 8/12/2021**

Cooperation with IW-Learn is key to the GEF portfolio and to be budgeted at 1 % of the grant. For now I see an allocation of 6 K only in the GEF budget annex. Please amend.

Answer: Allocation for IW-learn activities is now 71 kUSD (=1% of GEF grant). GEF Budget in Annex F has been adjusted.

##### **Agency response 21/07/2021**

The general description of the knowledge management under the project (Component 4) has been strengthened. In addition, the alignment with the RF has been documented in a concise text block before the description of each output. Details are provided for ?Execution and key stakeholders?, ?Targets, indicators, and means of verification?, and ?Procurement?.

#### **Agency Responses**

#### **11. Has the Agency adequately responded to comments at the PIF stage from:**

GEFSEC

#### Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

No.

-Please respond to the request to at endorsement provide detail on HOW the project will involve national agencies and build on and strengthen local governance systems in the delivery of on the ground efforts.

- It is unclear how the project is addressing potential use conflicts e.g. on groundwater , between farmers and pastoralists.

- please explain how the drought early warning will reach communities (farmers and pastoralists) and how this knowledge is translated to recommendations to increase their drought preparedness and response.

- IW not funding national Hydromet networks ? see earlier comments

(8/12/2021) Overall yes and please now address the remaining ER comments.

Cleared.

### Response to Secretariat comments

#### Agency response 21/07/2021

<p>-Please respond to the request to at endorsement provide detail on HOW the project will involve national agencies and build on and strengthen local governance systems in the delivery of on the ground efforts.</p>	<p>The revised institutional arrangement and coordination showing a leading role of VBA in the project is described in Section A6 of the ProDoC. At country level, executing partners have been identified by VBA for field activities. They include VBA focal institutions. The national executing partners will work closely with the Project Management Unit established by VBA and supported by GWP-WA to develop and implement workplans and related budgets.</p>
<p>- It is unclear how the project is addressing potential use conflicts e.g. on groundwater , between farmers and pastoralists.</p>	<p>Potential conflicts are addressed through the development and implementation of local conventions. See details in the narrative of activity 3.1.1.3</p>
<p>- please explain how the drought early warning will reach communities (farmers and pastoralists) and how this knowledge is translated to recommendations to increase their drought preparedness and response.</p>	<p>Description of Activity 2.2.1.1 and 2.2.1.2 have been revised to address the involvement of local communities in the implementation of the DEWS.</p>
<p>- IW not funding national Hydromet networks ? see earlier comments</p>	<p>The text in section 1.6 on ?Innovativeness, sustainability and potential for scaling up? has been amended accordingly. The project will not deal with updating the hydromet network.</p>

STAP

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

- STAP had asked for clearer rationale for targets and for benefits? please respond to comment 1.

- STAP comment 3 and their favorable note that the project will address environmental security aspects such as conflict potential between farmers and pastoralists. Yet that aspect from the PIF is no longer evident in the prodoc. Please strengthen.

(8/12/2021) While very concise the STAP comments have been addressed. Cleared.

#### Response to Secretariat comments

##### Agency response 21/07/2021

- STAP had asked for clearer rationale for targets and for benefits? please respond to comment 1.	Addressed by additional text in Part I ? E and in section A.7
- STAP comment 3 and their favorable note that the project will address environmental security aspects such as conflict potential between farmers and pastoralists. Yet that aspect from the PIF is no longer evident in the prodoc. Please strengthen.	Potential conflicts are addressed through the development and implementation of local convention. See details in the narrative of activity 3.1.1.3

#### GEF Council

#### Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

Please respond to the comments by the US and German Council members

<https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/work-program-documents/Compilation%20of%20Council%20Comments%20-%20June%202018%20Work%20Program.pdf>

(8/12/2021) Please for transparency list and respond to the German and US council member comments in Annex B of the ER.

(11/11/2021) See above comment. Please include the responses to Council comments in Annex B of the endorsement request.

(11/29/2021) Comment addressed. Cleared.

## Response to Secretariat comments

Agency response (11/11/2021) **Responses to comments from Germany and US.**

The responses are inserted at the end of Annex B and marked in green color. In alignment with the responses in Annex B we have also modified the text in section A.1-3 (page 19-20) of the main text of the ProDoc.

### **Agency response to comments 8/12/2021**

#### **5. Regional (*Burkina Faso, Benin, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Mali, Togo*): Reversing Ecosystem and Water Degradation in the Volta River Basin (REWARD-Volta River Basin) (UNEP/IUCN) (GEF Financing: \$ 7,122,566) GEF ID = 9910**

##### *Germany's Comments*

*Germany approves the following PIFs in the work program but asks that the following comments are taken into account:*

Germany appreciates the detailed PIF addressing transboundary water management in the Volta River Basin.

Suggestions for improvements to be made during the drafting of the final project proposal:

? Germany remarks that the indicative Focal Areas in Table A, namely, IW1-1 and IW2-3 are not consistent with the Focal Areas stated in the project justification, which are IW2-3+4 and IW3-7. Although, the project addresses some aspects of IW2-4 (WEF-Nexus) and IW3-7 (sustainable fisheries), Germany evaluates that the presented framework corresponds most to IW1-1 (transboundary water management) and IW2-3 (management of surface and groundwater resources).

In response to section 5 on page 9 of the Council minutes

To address Germany's Comments: UNEP agrees that the presented framework corresponds most to IW1-1 (transboundary water management) and IW2-3 (management of surface and groundwater resources) as reflected in Table A of the ProDoc (page 1).

##### *U. S.'s Comments*

- ? In response to a previous question posed by the United States government (?There does not seem to be a project-level framework for Multilateral Environmental Agreement (MEA) reporting, is that accurate??), part of the agency response stated ?Finally, the project could also support the countries (coordinated by VBA) with SDG-reporting.? We would like both the agency and the GEF to confirm that no project money will be spent on SDG reporting within this project, as the GEF is the financial mechanism of the MEAs, and not the SDGs.
  
- ? We would appreciate further information on how the project will support reporting to the relevant GEF MEAs (e.g. CBD, UNFCCC, UNCCD) by the member states as coordinated by the Volta Basin Authority.

To address the *U. S?s Comments* UNEP would like to confirm that no project money will be spent on SDG reporting within this project. Of course, UNEP does alignment of its GEF financed projects with its own UNEP work programme and the contribution to the overall SDG framework.

- ? The project communication strategy will be able to support Volta Basin Authority to coordinate and report on the contribution of its different initiatives towards different MEAs.

#### **Agency response 21/07/2021**

UNEP and IUCN and GEF confirm that no project money will be spent on SDG reporting.

Convention Secretariat

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request N/A

Response to Secretariat comments

#### **Recommendation**

#### **12. Is CEO endorsement recommended?**

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

No. Please address comments upon which the project will need to undergo a comprehensive review again given the multitude of interrelated comments. Executing arrangement and level of complexity are of especially high concern. It would be good to have a conference call and have an exchange on main/overall points of the review after you had time to discuss internally among UNEP and IUCN teams.

(8/12/2021) Please address the remaining comments.

(11/11/2021) Not yet. Please address the few previous comments that have not been addressed so far.

(11/30/2021) Please address the comment under question 2. above noting the discrepancies of PMC within the portal and prodoc and resubmit.

(12/28/2021) Please include the GEF core indicators and appropriate targets in Annex A "Project Results Framework" and resubmit.

(1/20/2022) The GEF core indicators 4, 7 and 11 have now clearly been included in the results framework. The project is recommended for endorsement.

#### Response to Secretariat comments

Answering the comment of (12/28/2021), the GEF core indicators and appropriate targets in Annex A "Project Results Framework" have now been included and aligned.

The comments from (11/11/2021) have now been addressed in the Agency response in the main text of the ProDoc and in the Annexes and reflected in the review sheet.

The comments from 8/12/2021 have now been addressed in the current version of the review sheet

The comments have been addressed after internal review and assessment and taking into consideration guiding exchange with the GEF.

## Review Dates

	Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request	Response to Secretariat comments
<b>First Review</b>	2/13/2020	7/21/2021
<b>Additional Review (as necessary)</b>	8/12/2021	8/12/2021
<b>Additional Review (as necessary)</b>	11/11/2021	11/11/2021
<b>Additional Review (as necessary)</b>	12/1/2021	11/29/2021
<b>Additional Review (as necessary)</b>		

## CEO Recommendation

### Brief Reasoning for CEO Recommendations

**Context.** The Volta Basin (400,000 km<sup>2</sup>) is one of the major West African river basin that drains into the Gulf of Guinea. Its resources are shared by six countries: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Mali, and Togo, of which Burkina Faso and Ghana have the major part. Although, overall, the economic situation has improved in recent years, the countries that share the Volta Basin remain among the poorest in the world. The basin's natural resources are vital to its population and to its economic development. The most important economic sectors are agriculture (which is currently extensive and mostly rain-fed), livestock production, fisheries, forestry, and the harvesting of biodiversity. Existing infrastructure developments to manage water resources, notably for hydropower and irrigation, have already impacted the hydrological cycle at many points, and future plans pose a potential threat to the sustainability of resources if not managed sustainably. Previous GEF project supported the drafting of the Water Charter (approved by the Council of Ministers at its 7th Ordinary Session held in Accra, Ghana in May 2019) and a TDA/SAP with the SAP signed by two ministers in each of the countries in 2014

**Project.** The proposed project is supporting a number of SAP priorities. Taking into consideration the institutional challenges in terms of policy, legal and legislative frameworks disparities across the countries, as well as the degradation of basin's environmental resources, the project will have four major pillars: i) improvement of the knowledge base and provision of management tools for informed decision making; ii)



strengthening of transboundary planning, regional and in country cross-sectoral coordination and support to a region-wide, community-oriented drought early warning systems; iii) strengthening of resilience of ecosystems for sustainable livelihoods and ecosystems protection, including enhanced water productivity for crop and livestock production and sustainability of freshwater fisheries; and iv) knowledge management and communication.

**Innovation, Sustainability and Scale-up.** The project will lay the foundation for coordinated, transboundary and cross-sectoral planning and informed decision making on the type and location of sustainable planned infrastructure development in the basin. It will also build national and regional capacity at the Volta Basin Authority (VBA) in the use of DSS tools and enhance technical capacity at the Volta Basin Observatory. Further, the project's investments e.g. to increase water productivity for crop and livestock production and sustainable freshwater fisheries will build on and enhancing national and local institutional mechanisms and enable future scale-up of successes and lessons across additional locations areas in the basin countries.