Promoting Sustainable Approaches to Ecosystem Conservation in the Imatong landscape of South Sudan

Part I: Project Information

GEF ID
10870

Project Type
FSP

Type of Trust Fund
GET

CBIT/NGI
CBIT **No**
NGI **No**

Project Title
Promoting Sustainable Approaches to Ecosystem Conservation in the Imatong landscape of South Sudan

Countries
South Sudan

Agency(ies)
UNEP

Other Executing Partner(s)
Ministry of Environment and Forestry

Executing Partner Type
Government

GEF Focal Area

Multi Focal Area

Taxonomy

Focal Areas, Biodiversity, Influencing models, Transform policy and regulatory environments, Gender Equality, Gender Mainstreaming, Capacity, Knowledge and Research

Rio Markers

Climate Change Mitigation

Climate Change Mitigation 0

Climate Change Adaptation

Climate Change Adaptation 0

Duration

60 In Months

Agency Fee($)

332,782.00

Submission Date

9/15/2021

A. Indicative Focal/Non-Focal Area Elements

Programming Directions	Trust Fund	GEF Amount($)	Co-Fin Amount($)
LD-1-4	GET	863,242.00	5,000,000.00
BD-2-7	GET	2,639,726.00	10,000,000.00
	Total Project Cost ($)	**3,502,968.00**	**15,000,000.00**

B. Indicative Project description summary

Project Objective

To promote Sustainable Approaches to Ecosystem Conservation in the Imatong landscape of South Sudan.

Project Component	Financing Type	Project Outcomes	Project Outputs	Trust Fund	GEF Amount($)	Co-Fin Amount($)
Component 1: Enabling policy and regulatory frameworks for Forestry Protected Area (PA) effective planning, management and governance	Technical Assistance	**Outcome 1.1:** Forestry Protected Area management frameworks and governance reflect the diversity of needs and interests of key stakeholders and encourage horizontal and vertical co-ordination and co-operation mechanisms.	**Output 1.1.1:** National policy, regulatory and institutional frameworks governing forest PAs reviewed and implemented. **Output 1.1.2:** Collaborative Forest Management (CFM) mechanisms instituted and access to and sharing of benefits of biodiversity conservation and ecosystem services by local communities promoted **Output 1.1.3** Inclusive and gender sensitive multi-stakeholder co-ordination platforms for effective PA management and participatory M&E at national, and sub-national levels established, made functional and strengthened	GET	910,000.00	4,000,000.00

Component 2. Forest Management plan development and capacity building for effective forestry protected area management	Technical Assistance	**Outcome 2.1:** Forest Management plan developed, and National and PA management staff have the capacities that enable and support PAME achieving biodiversity conservation objectives	**Output 2.1.2:** Imatong forest Management plan developed and key priority actions implemented to address PAME challenges in an inclusive consultative manner and participatory approach. **Output 2.1.3:** Government and PA level staff trained in biodiversity conservation assessment, threat identification and monitoring, and PA management methods **Output 2.1.4:** Biodiversity threat assessments conducted, and strategies/actions plans to support protection of priority species developed and implemented. **Output 2.1.5:** Integrated Management Effectiveness Tool (IMET) established to track Protected Area Management Effectiveness (PAME) and to inform management decisions and IUCN Green Listing process	GET	1,134,968.00	5,000,000.00

Component 3: Promoting Sustainable agriculture practices and community livelihoods improvement to maintain forest cover in Landscapes around the Imatong Central Forest Reserve (ICFR)	Investment	**Outcome 3.1:** Reduced pressures on forest resources from unsustainable agriculture practices in Landscapes bordering the Imatong CFR through participatory land use planning and creation of sustainable income generating activities for improved community livelihoods	**Output 3.1.1:** Ecosystem services in Imatong Central Forest Reserve (ICFR) and productive landscapes bordering the ICFR evaluated. **Output 3.1.2:** Participatory land use plans for productive landscapes around the Imatong CFR developed, approved and implemented. **Output 3.1.3:** Key priority actions in the Land Use Plans for Productive Landscapes around the Imatong CFR implemented to address causes of degradation and deforestation and unsustainable land use practices **Output 3.1.4:** Regulatory frameworks that govern the management of productive landscapes around the ICFR developed, approved, and implemented at sub-national levels **Output 3.1.5:** Forest conservation centered sustainable income generating activities for improved community livelihoods identified and implemented	GET	900,000.00	4,250,000.00

Component 4: Knowledge management and learning	Technical Assistance	**Outcome 4.1:** Sector Agencies and relevant institutions applying and scaling up sustainable biodiversity conservation in policy and practice	**Output 4.1.1** Tools to track best practices and lessons learned from effective PA/ biodiversity conservation management measures developed and operationalized. **Output 4.1.2:** Best practices and lessons learned on effective PA/ biodiversity conservation management measures, analysis of village landscape plans, integrated land management training modules, developed documented and shared at National and Sub national levels and informing policy. **Output 4.1.3:** Targeted discussions at national, state and county levels to share lessons and identify additional areas for replication (potentially hosting workshops at local level to showcase results)	GET	392,000.00	1,000,000.00
				Sub Total ($)	**3,336,968.00**	**14,250,000.00**
Project Management Cost (PMC)						
				GET	166,000.00	750,000.00
				Sub Total($)	**166,000.00**	**750,000.00**
				Total Project Cost($)	**3,502,968.00**	**15,000,000.00**

C. Indicative sources of Co-financing for the Project by name and by type

Sources of Co-financing	Name of Co-financier	Type of Co-financing	Investment Mobilized	Amount($)
Recipient Country Government	Ministry of Environment and Forestry	Grant	Investment mobilized	1,900,000.00
Recipient Country Government	Ministry of Environment and Forestry	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	3,500,000.00
Recipient Country Government	Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security	Grant	Investment mobilized	1,000,000.00
Recipient Country Government	Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	2,000,000.00
Recipient Country Government	Ministry of wildlife conservation and tourism	Grant	Investment mobilized	500,000.00
Recipient Country Government	Ministry of wildlife conservation and tourism	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	2,000,000.00
Recipient Country Government	The Directorate of Forestry	Grant	Investment mobilized	500,000.00
Recipient Country Government	The Directorate of Forestry	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	2,000,000.00
Recipient Country Government	Torit County Government	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	200,000.00
Recipient Country Government	Ikotos County Government	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	200,000.00
Recipient Country Government	Imatong/Eastern Equatoria State Government	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	300,000.00
Donor Agency	International Union for Conservation of Nature	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	600,000.00
Civil Society Organization	South Sudan Nature Conservation Organization (SSNCO)	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	100,000.00
Other	University of Juba	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	100,000.00
Private Sector	The South Sudan Business Forum (SSBF)	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	100,000.00
			Total Project Cost($)	**15,000,000.00**

Describe how any "Investment Mobilized" was identified

Investments mobilized were identified in the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) budget allocations for the contributing Ministries. During the PIF development process, consultations were held with the government of South Sudan ministries, which expressed interest and commitment in increasing their investment in this high biodiversity value targeted landscape. Therefore, the Government agrees to mobilize resources to support the GEF grant so as to support the achievement of the project development objective, maximize outcomes and carry out replication and scaling-up actions. The figures will be confirmed during PPG through potential agreements.

D. Indicative Trust Fund Resources Requested by Agency(ies), Country(ies), Focal Area and the Programming of Funds

Agency	Trust Fund	Country	Focal Area	Programming of Funds	Amount($)	Fee($)	Total($)
UNEP	GET	South Sudan	Biodiversity	BD STAR Allocation	2,639,726	250,774	2,890,500.00
UNEP	GET	South Sudan	Land Degradation	LD STAR Allocation	863,242	82,008	945,250.00
				Total GEF Resources($)	**3,502,968.00**	**332,782.00**	**3,835,750.00**

E. Project Preparation Grant (PPG)

PPG Required **true**

PPG Amount ($)	PPG Agency Fee ($)
150,000	14,250

Agency	Trust Fund	Country	Focal Area	Programming of Funds	Amount($)	Fee($)	Total($)
UNEP	GET	South Sudan	Biodiversity	BD STAR Allocation	100,000	9,500	**109,500.00**
UNEP	GET	South Sudan	Land Degradation	LD STAR Allocation	50,000	4,750	**54,750.00**
				Total Project Costs($)	**150,000.00**	**14,250.00**	**164,250.00**

Core Indicators

Indicator 1 Terrestrial protected areas created or under improved management for conservation and sustainable use

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
110,000.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

Indicator 1.1 Terrestrial Protected Areas Newly created

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Total Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Total Ha (Achieved at TE)
0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

Name of the Protected Area	WDPA ID	IUCN Category	Total Ha (Expected at PIF)	Total Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Total Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Total Ha (Achieved at TE)

Indicator 1.2 Terrestrial Protected Areas Under improved Management effectiveness

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Total Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Total Ha (Achieved at TE)

110,000.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

Name of the Protected Area	WDPA ID	IUCN Category	Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Total Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Total Ha (Achieved at TE)	METT score (Baseline at CEO Endorsement)	METT score (Achieved at MTR)	METT score (Achieved at TE)
Imatong	14089	Habitat/Species Management Area	110,000.00						

Indicator 3 Area of land restored

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
50000.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

Indicator 3.1 Area of degraded agricultural land restored

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
50,000.00			

Indicator 3.2 Area of Forest and Forest Land restored

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)

Indicator 3.3 Area of natural grass and shrublands restored

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)

Indicator 3.4 Area of wetlands (incl. estuaries, mangroves) restored

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)

Indicator 4 Area of landscapes under improved practices (hectares; excluding protected areas)

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)

10000.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

Indicator 4.1 Area of landscapes under improved management to benefit biodiversity (hectares, qualitative assessment, non-certified)

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)

Indicator 4.2 Area of landscapes that meets national or international third party certification that incorporates biodiversity considerations (hectares)

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)

Type/Name of Third Party Certification

Indicator 4.3 Area of landscapes under sustainable land management in production systems

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)

Indicator 4.4 Area of High Conservation Value Forest (HCVF) loss avoided

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
10,000.00			

Documents (Please upload document(s) that justifies the HCVF)

Title	Submitted

Indicator 5 Area of marine habitat under improved practices to benefit biodiversity (excluding protected areas)

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)

Indicator 5.1 Number of fisheries that meet national or international third party certification that incorporates biodiversity considerations

Number (Expected at PIF)	Number (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Number (Achieved at MTR)	Number (Achieved at TE)

Type/name of the third-party certification

Indicator 5.2 Number of Large Marine Ecosystems (LMEs) with reduced pollutions and hypoxia

Number (Expected at PIF)	Number (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Number (achieved at MTR)	Number (achieved at TE)
0	0	0	0

LME at PIF	LME at CEO Endorsement	LME at MTR	LME at TE

Indicator 5.3 Amount of Marine Litter Avoided

Metric Tons (expected at PIF)	Metric Tons (expected at CEO Endorsement)	Metric Tons (Achieved at MTR)	Metric Tons (Achieved at TE)

Indicator 6 Greenhouse Gas Emissions Mitigated

Total Target Benefit	(At PIF)	(At CEO Endorsement)	(Achieved at MTR)	(Achieved at TE)
Expected metric tons of CO_2e (direct)	1544243	0	0	0
Expected metric tons of CO_2e (indirect)	0	0	0	0

Indicator 6.1 Carbon Sequestered or Emissions Avoided in the AFOLU (Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use) sector

Total Target Benefit	(At PIF)	(At CEO Endorsement)	(Achieved at MTR)	(Achieved at TE)
Expected metric tons of CO_2e (direct)	1,544,243			
Expected metric tons of CO_2e (indirect)				
Anticipated start year of accounting				
Duration of accounting				

Indicator 6.2 Emissions Avoided Outside AFOLU (Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use) Sector

Total Target Benefit	(At PIF)	(At CEO Endorsement)	(Achieved at MTR)	(Achieved at TE)

Expected metric tons of CO_2e (direct)	
Expected metric tons of CO_2e (indirect)	
Anticipated start year of accounting	
Duration of accounting	

Indicator 6.3 Energy Saved (Use this sub-indicator in addition to the sub-indicator 6.2 if applicable)

Total Target Benefit	Energy (MJ) (At PIF)	Energy (MJ) (At CEO Endorsement)	Energy (MJ) (Achieved at MTR)	Energy (MJ) (Achieved at TE)
Target Energy Saved (MJ)				

Indicator 6.4 Increase in Installed Renewable Energy Capacity per Technology (Use this sub-indicator in addition to the sub-indicator 6.2 if applicable)

Technology	Capacity (MW) (Expected at PIF)	Capacity (MW) (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Capacity (MW) (Achieved at MTR)	Capacity (MW) (Achieved at TE)

Indicator 11 Number of direct beneficiaries disaggregated by gender as co-benefit of GEF investment

	Number (Expected at PIF)	Number (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Number (Achieved at MTR)	Number (Achieved at TE)
Female	110,000			

Male	90,000			
Total	200000	0	0	0

Provide additional explanation on targets, other methodologies used, and other focal area specifics (i.e., Aichi targets in BD) including justification where core indicator targets are not provided

Aichi Targets: • Target 1: By 2020, at the latest, people are aware of the values of biodiversity and the steps they can take to conserve and use it sustainably. • Target 2: By 2020, at the latest, biodiversity values have been integrated into national and local development and poverty reduction strategies and planning processes and are being incorporated into national accounting, as appropriate, and reporting systems. • Target 5: The rate of loss of all natural habitats, including forests, is at least halved and where feasible brought close to zero, and degradation and fragmentation is significantly reduced. • Target 7: By 2020 areas under agriculture, aquaculture and forestry are managed sustainably, ensuring conservation of biodiversity. • Target 11: By 2020, at least 17 percent of terrestrial and in land water, and 10 percent of coastal and marine areas especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystems services, are conserved through effectively and equitably managed ecologically representative and well connected systems of protected areas and other effective area based conservation measures and integrated into wider landscapes and seascapes. • Target 14: By 2020, ecosystems that provide essential services including services related to water, and contribute to health, livelihoods, and wellbeing are restored and safeguarded taking into account the needs of women, indigenous and local communities, and the poor and vulnerable. SDG • Target 12.2: By 2030, achieve the sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources. Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) • Land Degradation Neutral South Sudan in 2030 compared to 2015 baseline i.e. LDN achieved by 2030 as compared to 2015 (no net loss). • 20% tree or forest cover by 2030 (in line with Vision 2040 and NDC).

Part II. Project Justification

1a. Project Description

1a. *Project Description.* Briefly describe:

The National context

South Sudan is a landlocked country, with five transboundary conservation landscapes, namely, Boma-Gambella National Park with Ethiopia, Kidepo Game Reserve–Kidepo Valley National Park with Uganda, Lantoto- Garamba with Congo, and Nimule National Park-Otze Wildlife Reserve with Uganda, and Imatong mountains with Uganda. The main habitat ecosystems of South Sudan includes: a) Lowland Forests, b) Montane Forests, c) Savannah woodlands, d) Grassland Savannahs, e) Floodplains, f) Sudd Swamps and other wetlands, and g) Semi-arid and arid lands (ASALs).

South Sudan contains one of the largest remaining untouched savannah and woodland ecosystems in Africa. South Sudan also contains one Ramsar site, the Sudd, the largest (57,000 km^2) wetland in Africa, and one of the largest freshwater ecosystems in the world. The South Sudan Sudd is recognized under the Ramsar Convention as habitat for the world's population stronghold of the shoebill stork and black-crowned crane. South Sudan has 27 IUCN protected areas (PAs) categories, covering about 98,214 km^2 of the land, and these include: 13 in Category VI (Protected Area with Sustainable Use of Natural Resources), 1 in Category V (Protected Landscape / Seascape), 3 in Category IV (Habitat / Species Management) and 9 in Category II (National Park)[1].

The country's wide range of habitats support a very rich diversity. The white-eared Kob, Tiang, Mongalla gazelle and Bohor reedbuck migrations across the eastern grassland savannahs and floodplains of Jonglei and Eastern Equatoria States that stretch into the Gambela region of Ethiopia represent one of the greatest animal migrations and wildlife spectacles of the world, comprising over 1.2 million individuals. Large mammal species include elephant, giraffe, buffalo and the endemic Nile lechwe, and large carnivore species, lion, leopard, cheetah and wild dog. Zebra, hartebeest, and buffalo are at risk of local extirpation unless effective protection can be quickly mobilized.

Some of the endemic fauna species in the country include the Nile lechwe, the white-eared kob, Nile Sitatunga, Hoogstral's Striped Grass Mouse, and a recently discovered African climbing mouse *Dendromus ruppi*. South Sudan is known to be the only country in Africa with both species of eland - the common eland (*Taurotragus oryx*) and the Derby's (Giant) Eland (*Taurotragus derbianus*). South Sudan is also thought to be the centre of giraffe evolution. Reptiles endemic to South Sudan include the Torit Gracile Blind Snake, *Letheobiatoritensis* and the Mount Kinyeti Chameleon. Freshwater fish known exclusively from South Sudan include *Barbustongaensis* and *Labeotongaensis*. Endemic flora of South Sudan includes, *Chloroselast aposana*, and *Lepidochrysops nigritia*. Among the vascular plant species restricted to South Sudan are *Aloe diolii, Aloe macleayi,* a cycad - *Encephalartos mackenziei, Chlorophytum superpositum, Scilla chlorantha,* and *Panicumbambusiculme*.

Being signatory to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) since 2014, South Sudan is committed to achieving the objectives of the CBD and is scaling up its efforts to achieve the relevant Aichi targets defined in the CBD's strategic plan. One of the top priorities is strengthening the policy, legal and regulatory frameworks by fast tracking the enactment of the draft bills into law. The Government of South Sudan (GoSS) has developed a National Biodiversity Strategic Action Plan (NBSAP) (2018 – 2027) as a first step to realize the relevant Aichi targets. The GoSS NBSAP focuses on restoration of degraded forest areas (at least 30% of the degraded forests restored by 2024), degraded farmlands restoration, ecosystem resilience and the contribution of biodiversity to carbon stocks,

through conservation and restoration, including restoration of at least 15 % of degraded ecosystems, thereby contributing to climate change mitigation and to combating desertification. Under the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), the GoSS set the national LDN targets of 20% forest cover increase and 30% reduction of areas of stressed productivity by 2030.

1.1) the global environmental and/or adaptation problems, root causes and barriers that need to be addressed (systems description);

South Sudan is facing serious environmental and natural resources challenges including loss of biodiversity and its natural habitat degradation. The diversity of species, genes and ecosystems, in South Sudan, are threatened by a number of human pressures. These pressures affect the structure of natural habitat and local ecological communities may cause local extinctions of species, which in turn lead to reduced ecosystem goods and services, and human well-being. The threats to biodiversity include: 1) illegal wildlife poaching and trafficking and subsistence hunting carried out by local people. There is high demand for products from wild animals, bush meat, and game trophies; 2) uncontrolled deforestation; and illegal logging of hardwoods, and growing charcoal's production; 3) overgrazing and rangeland degradation and loss and agricultural expansion, increasing population growth, extreme rural poverty and drought; 4) natural habitat fragmentation; 5) adverse climate change impacts including increasing desertification and the delaying and shortening of rainy seasons and 6) human-wildlife conflicts especially with communities living near Protected Areas. Between 1973 and 2006, on average, South Sudan lost 2% of its forests to deforestation every year, which could lead to a near total loss of forest cover with its accompanying biodiversity within 50 years.[2]. It is estimated that the current annual loss of forests and other wooded land in South Sudan is at 277,630 hectares. Loss of forests is exacerbated by the unsustainable farming practices employed across South Sudan, with some parts of the country already classified as deserts.[3] Recent maps on land cover changes indicate a dramatic shift form woodland and forest to cultivated land and bare soil for agricultural production and fuel wood and charcoal.

These natural ecosystems such as forests contribute considerably to people's livelihoods and to the national economy. For example, the formal forest sector directly employs approximately 23,000 people and contributes ~$400 million towards the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Furthermore, an estimated 96% and 40% of rural households use fuelwood (i.e. firewood and/or charcoal) for cooking and household lighting, respectively. In addition to fuelwood, forests provide a variety of other ecosystem goods and services to South Sudanese communities, including: i) Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs) such as medicinal plants and food sources; ii) cultural and social services such as recreation and tourism; iii) regulating services such as soil protection, air/water purification and carbon sequestration; and iv) supporting services such as nutrient cycling and soil accretion. However, predicted climate change, including variable rainfall patterns and higher temperatures, will negatively affect these ecosystems, as well as the local communities that depend on them. Rapid population growth, the expansion of settlements and agriculture, high reliance on fuelwood, poor governance and low food security have led to the further degradation of the country's water and forest resources as a result of increased demand for firewood and charcoal, conversion of land for agricultural purposes and the unsustainable harvesting of forest products. This degradation is of increasing concern as it reduces the ability of these ecosystems to provide valuable ecological and socio-economic services and consequently jeopardizes the livelihoods of dependent local communities.

Under the Transitional Constitution of the Republic of South Sudan 2011, the people of South Sudan own all the country's land and its usage is regulated by the government in accordance with the Constitution and Law. The applicable law in this case is the Land Act of 2009. The Constitution prescribes a three-category land tenure system divided into public land, community land, and private land. Public land means all land owned, held or otherwise acquired by any level of government. This classification includes land owned by Bomas, Counties, States and federal government or administration and all land that is not otherwise designated as community or private. Hence there is no such thing as no-mans' land in South Sudan because land unclaimed by an individual or community belongs to the government by default. Community land includes all lands traditionally and historically held or used by local communities or their members. This category could include communal grazing lands for animals, hunting grounds, or locations of traditional sacrifices and worship. Private land includes registered land held by any person under leasehold tenure, investment land acquired under lease from the government, and any other land designated as private land in accordance with the law. The central Forest reserves are gazetted government lands surrounded by Community lands while be the targeted area of project proposed project.

The Imatong Central Forest Reserve

The Imatong Mountain ranges are mainly located in Eastern Equatoria in southeastern South Sudan and extend into the Northern Region of Uganda. Mount Kinyeti is the highest mountain of the range at 3,187 metres (10,456 ft), and the highest point of South Sudan. The Imatong Central Forest Reserve (ICFR) covers 103,200 ha extending into the Kidepo Valley National Park (KVNP) in Northern Uganda and Kidepo Game Reserve in South Sudan and the two PAs are contiguous

with each other. Wildlife moves between KVNP and Agoro-Agu Landscape in Uganda and Kidepo Game Reserve in South Sudan making this area a very critical landscape for trans-boundary biodiversity conservation of national, regional and global significance. The ICFR is a significant watershed and water tower as its rivers flow into River Nile and acts as a carbon storage, provides ecosystem services and commodity production.

The ICFR is part of the Eastern Afromontane biodiversity hotspot due to numerous threatened and endemic flora and fauna with species found. The diversity is due to its position between the West African rain forest, the Ethiopian plateau and the East African mountains, coupled with their relative isolation for long periods during which new species emerged. The forest contains over 500 bird species, many birds not found in other part of South Sudan and is a resting place for European songbirds en route to their over-wintering places in East Africa. Birdlife includes the endangered spotted ground-thrush (*Zoothera guttata)*. The Central Forest Reserve (ICFR) also supports over 2,000 vascular plant and is one of the largest intact *Podocarpus* forest in Africa. Among the vascular plant species restricted to South Sudan are *Aloe diolii, Aloe macleayi*, a cycad (*Encephalartos mackenziei*), *Chlorophytum superpositum*, *Scilla chlorantha*, and *Panicum bambusiculme*. Wild Arabica coffee grows in the forests of the Boma Plateau and Imatong Forest. ICFR supports abundant wildlife, including healthy populations of colobus and blue monkey, bush-pig and a local sub-species of bushbuck. The least visited south eastern Kipia and Lomwaga Uplands support the largest populations of elephant, buffalo, duikers, hyaena and leopard.

However, actual management and law enforcement have been lacking. The ICFR is poorly protected and managed and has been ecologically degraded. Besides having inadequate dimensions and lacking in connectivity, it is embedded within an agricultural landscape, and existing buffer zones around the ICFR have been encroached upon. Communities around the Imatong CFR rely heavily on the forests for poles for building shelters, crop cultivation, wild game hunting, wild foods, livestock grazing, medicinal plants, timber for construction and furniture making, firewood for cooking, making charcoal for sale, wild honey harvesting and other forest products for income and households needs. Traders from Torit also collect products from the forest, especially timber, bamboo, charcoal and honey. Most households (48.3%) use firewood and straw shrubs for lighting while the major energy source for cooking is firewood (87.9%) and charcoal (28.8%)[4]. There is an increasing quantity of bamboo poles coming from the Imatong CFR used for local construction of huts and furniture and for sale. Each household harvests about 35-100 bamboo poles per month, and poles are transported to Torit and Juba for sale.[5]
Inside Imatong CFR, illegal logging of indigenous species, especially mahogany (*Khaya senegalensesis* and *K. grandifolia*) is increasing. Return of refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) has spurred logging to supply local markets for building material, accelerating unregulated and often-illegal logging that is causing serious environmental degradation and threatens forest habitats and biodiversity. The unsustainable harvesting of forest products for cooking, building housing units and charcoal burning and crafts for sale is destroying biodiversity and the natural resource base. Encroachment through settlements, livestock over grazing in the ICFR, and uncontrolled wild game hunting bushfires are destroying trees and their capacity to regenerate.

Outside the ICFR, the influx of returning refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), and pastoralists with their cattle is increasing land use pressures in areas not previously occupied. There is unsustainable agriculture expansion transforming productive landscapes around Imatong CFR into unproductive landscapes. Future threats outside Imatong CFR could come from the revival of commercial farming in the region including coffee plantations in the Aloma Plateau, palm tree plantation in the Yambio and Nzara areas and tea and coffee plantations around the Upper Talanga, Katire and Gilo areas near the Imatong Mountains. Also, unplanned developments and unsustainable agricultural practices in the productive landscapes will lead to habitat destruction and disturbance to breeding grounds of migratory species, decreasing successful breeding and number of migratory birds visiting the area.

Imatong lies within the Equatorial Rainfall Region of South Sudan, which is a wet region with a mean annual rainfall of just under 1230 mm/year. Rainfall falls throughout the year, but peaks at 180 mm/month in the long rains from March to May and at 150 mm/year in the short rains during November. Daily mean temperature averages 22°C with a small seasonal range of around 2°C. Climate change will have an impact on this region as long-term trends show a very strong increasing of temperatures over the period 1979 – 2015, with a mean temperature increase of +0.46°C/decade. Total and extreme rainy days also show an upwards trend over the period. Please see table below regarding projected climate changes for key variables by 2050.[6]

Table: Summary of projected climate changes in Equatorial region of South Sudan for key variables by 2050:[7]

Region	Average Temperature [°C]	Total Annual Rainfall [mm/yr]	Number of Heavy Rainfall [Days/Year]	Rainy Days [Days/Year]
Equatorial	Increasing, + 1.5°C ti +2.5°C by 2050s but changes evident in next decades	Normal to increasing, ranging from no change to an increase of up to 50%. Change could become evident after 2070s.	Normal to increasing, ranging from no change to an increase of up to 100%. Change could become evident after 2050s.	No consistent sign in projections.

Possible increase in extreme rainfall events and increasing temperatures is likely to increase the pressure on water resources. The pressure on water resources, as well as the direct impacts of increasing temperatures and extreme rainfall, will likely put further strain on the agricultural sector on which the majority of the population depends.

Long-term Solution and Barriers:

The long-term solution is to facilitate a transformative shift from unsustainable to integrated sustainable land and forest management in the Imatong mountains landscape in order to secure habitat for biodiversity conservation, to maintain a flow of multiple ecosystem services and to support rural development of livelihoods opportunities. There are however several barriers that are preventing this solution to be actioned. These include:

Barrier 1: Lack of a comprehensive policy, legislative and regulatory frameworks, and coordination mechanisms for protected area effective management and biodiversity conservation:

South Sudan does not have policy and legislative frameworks in place on forest protected areas. South Sudan has an Environment Policy but does not have a policy governing forest protected area, and the use of its natural resources despite heavy charcoal burning, logging and deforestation. The relevant national legislation promoting the biodiversity conservation and management, and ecologically sustainable development in South Sudan is the Transitional Constitution of South Sudan first signed in 2011 and amended in 2015, in its Article 173, paragraph 2 promotes the protection of the environment and biodiversity. The Transitional Constitution of South Sudan provides the baseline of the preparation of the draft Environmental Protection Bill (2015) Wildlife Conservation and Protected Areas Bill (2015) and the Forestry Conservation and Protection bill (2013) (pending approval), when if adopted, will empower the Ministry of Environment and Forestry to supervise and co-ordinate all matters relating to the environment, forestry and wildlife protected areas. It is hoped that the draft bills will approved by the newly created inclusive national assembly under the coalition government. The South Sudan new parliament was sworn in, on 2 August 2021 under peace deal. The creation of an inclusive national assembly was a key condition of the 2018 ceasefire that paused five years of bloodshed between government and rebel forces that left nearly 400,000 people dead.[8]

The lack of a comprehensive legal framework has crippled effective forest management at national, state, county, *payam* (Parish) and *boma* (village) levels, where de facto arrangements have been utilized to govern the use of forest resources. Without a legal framework, the lack of clarity in regulations causes competing claims, loss of productivity and conflict. Mandates between the national and State governments, Non-Governmental Organization (NGOs) and Private Sector Organizations (PSO) overlap creating uncoordinated actions. Poor inter-sectoral coordination and collaboration among stakeholders negatively impact on forest management and investment. In addition, forest management is impacted negatively due to weak governance structures and untrained law enforcement entities and staff. Years of conflict have led to a lack of trained personnel in natural resource management and biodiversity conservation. Ex-soldiers and combatants, many of whom have very limited skills and understanding of biodiversity conservation were incorporated into the environment and natural resources sectors, and this is undermining effective PA management and biodiversity conservation.

There are inadequate structures to adequately manage environmental compliance, deforestation and biodiversity loss. There is a critical need to establish and build the capacity of an inclusive multi-stakeholder platform to champion the implementation of the policy, legal and regulatory reforms, and the implementation of effective protection and management of South Sudan's protected area network and natural resource sectors for tangible conservation outcomes. Top on the agenda on this is, PA management effectiveness assessments to measure the extent to which all of the necessary systems and processes are taking place in the PA, and to identify areas for improvement. This calls for strengthened coordination and partnership among stakeholders to achieve the desired Protected Areas Management Effectiveness (PAME) reporting outcomes as a foundation for IUCN Protected Area Green Listing.

Barrier 2: Lack of a forest management plan and management capacity for PA management and biodiversity conservation

The impact of the civil war years, in effect meant that there was no PA management planning in South Sudan. Almost all PAs in South Sudan, including Imatong CFR have no medium or long term (5-15 years) Management Plans. In the absence of Management Plans, key values of the protected areas have not been adequately identified and articulated. Management strategies to guide actions on the ground have not been developed by stakeholders in a participatory manner. There is no detailed PA zoning and detailed prescriptions to guide actions on the ground. PA boundaries are just on paper but are not surveyed or/and demarcated, creating conflicts with neighbouring communities over management boundaries and responsibilities, and benefit sharing.

It is important to develop the Imatong CFR Management Plan, to guide and control the management of PA resources, and the use of the area. The Management Plan will set forth the basic and development philosophy of the Imatong CFR, and provide strategies, programs, and actions necessary for effective Imatong CFR management to (re)solve the above identified challenges, and those to be identified during the management planning process, and in achieving the identified management objectives over a ten-year period. This would go a long way in addressing the pressing PA development needs in terms of support facilities and operations, and policy, legal and regulatory compliance as well as PA biodiversity assessments and M&E, and reporting on CBD in the long term and sustainable basis.

In addition, there is lack of capacity of both the government and PA management staff in data collection/information gathering for development of the management plan and its implementation.

Barrier 3: Lack of integrated land use planning in productive landscapes around Protected areas for improved community livelihoods to reduce pressure on the PA:

There is lack of capacity at the state, county, and community levels to implement a landscape approach to integrated land use planning and management that strengthens protection of the ICRF while at the same time supporting land and forest use in the surrounding landscape. Furthermore, there is a lack of respect for local and devolved governance, and a lack of understanding of how rural land users manage the landscape in terms of the roles of men and women and the balancing of multiple uses (agriculture, conservation forests). The result is that local rights and responsibilities are undermined leading to degradation and inequity. The NBSAP (2018) notes that assessing and building management strategies based on traditional community conservation and use systems will be key to understanding and reducing conflict over natural resources and pressures on forests and wildlife populations. Support from constituencies for community-based wildlife and forest resource management will need to be developed to control access, halt unsustainable commercial hunting, manage immigration into ecologically sensitive areas and ensure that local resources benefit local people. This will be achieved through zoning based on its value in producing certain services and integrating such values in land use planning. The capacity of farmers in sustainable land management practices also need to be developed in order to utilize land efficiently.

Institutional and technical capacities to create and improve local communities' livelihood in forest protected areas are insufficient in South Sudan. These capacity barriers are exacerbated by absence of any structures for exchanges experiences and very limited experiences in promoting livelihood diversification, forest-based livelihoods, forest-related livelihoods and other alternative livelihood activities that may not be related to the forest protected areas at all. Both, the national and the state forest departments (with a limited annual budget of approximately $20,126) face many challenges, including lack of capacity and new approaches to community engagement that can increase buy-in to conservation objectives. Currently, local communities do not play a role in forest collaborative management and sustainable community livelihood development centred on forest conservation and enhanced management of Imatong CFR and the landscape at large. In and around ICFR, there is no community-based structure for natural resource management at the moment. As such the present conservation approach does not have the means to engage local people in managing and benefiting from natural resources therein. Consequently, communities in the landscape have neither the structure nor skills and instruments for participating in collaborative management of natural resource. To date, there are no income generating conservation-based projects in the Imatong landscape. Furthermore, there are no conservation compatible sustainable community livelihood activities for them to benefit from and contribute positively to conservation of the forest and the wildlife therein. Such community livelihood activities, even when initiated, are likely to encounter funding obstacles for their implementation. Nonetheless, conservation compatible, sustainable community livelihood and resilience initiatives in the Imatong landscape with strategic objectives for forestry conservation, wildlife conservation and improvement of PA management are inadequate. To date, there are no procedures and mechanisms for engaging with, consulting and involving local communities in the designation and management of PAs, neither for the generation of benefits for local communities nor compensation for potential losses. There are also no environmentally sustainable livelihoods initiatives supported among the communities. Even when initiated, such livelihood projects will require substantial funding for community development.

Barrier 4: Lack of knowledge on protected area management effectiveness (PAME) protocols and integrated landscape management approaches:

A critical constraint to effective PA in South Sudan is the very limited information that exists on biodiversity and the threats to biodiversity. So far, no system-level valuation exercise has been undertaken on the ecosystem services and goods provided by the Imatong CFR system to inform planning and management decisions. The lack of such information prevents building a strong case for local community and other stakeholder participation in the Imatong CFR, and broader production landscape sustainable management. This information lack is tied to a lack of national capacities in environmental valuation methodologies and PA and spatial land use management planning. Conservation personnel are not well trained. There is lack of PA management and biodiversity conservation technical capacity and skills, and there is total lack of conservation education programs. Overall, natural resources governance is very weak, and knowledge base extremely low, posing grave danger for forest management. Under the decentralization system of governance, overlaps exist among central Government institutions and those in the States.

This information gap coupled with lack of multi-sectoral collaboration, and PA and spatial land use planning, greatly reduces the effectiveness of existing efforts to manage PAs and preserve ecosystem services including critical habitat areas and the corridors between them. With a limited knowledge base, there is a big predicament on how to meet the ever-growing demand for agricultural products and address food security challenges while conserving biodiversity, providing critical ecosystem goods and services, and improving rural livelihoods. There is limited knowledge on how to have ecologically representative and connected network of PAs as well as productive agricultural landscapes supported by enhanced governance arrangements that conserve biodiversity and enhance food security, ecosystem resilience and biodiversity conservation at scale. An integrated landscape approach is seen as one approach to addressing the rampant challenges of, deforestation and loss of biodiversity at the local level. The strategic intent is to bring together stakeholders to collaborate and to integrate policy and practice for different land use objectives, with the purpose of achieving sustainable landscapes, and ensure PAME at scale through knowledge enhancement.

1.2) the baseline scenario and any associated baseline projects,

The Directorate of Forestry of the Ministry of Environment and Forestry was established following the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2005 and successive formation of Government of South Sudan. The Directorate of Forestry is charged with ensuring that effective implementation of Forestry Policy Framework and Legislation in all States of Southern Sudan is achieved. It comprises of seven (7) Forestry Departments and Units under a Directorate General. All Forestry Departments are headed by Directors and each Department consists of several specialized Units manned by Deputy Directors. The seven Forestry Departments are 1. Afforestation & Natural Forests Conservation; 2. Agro-forestry and Forestry Extension Services; 3. Forest Training and Research Unit; 4. Forests Survey and Inventories; 5. Forest Utilization and Sawmilling; 6. Forests Investment and Economics (National Forest Programs; Concessions Appraisals, Industries Units), and 7. Forest Administration & Finance. The Directorate of Forestry also has regional, county, and Payam (sub-county) offices and staff, and it is responsible for National Central Forest Reserves and their staff (primarily forest officers, extension workers, wardens and forest rangers). The Directorate of Forestry runs an annual recurrent budget of about USD 500,000 and its co-financing will contribute to components 1, 2 and 4 in managing the ICFR.

The South Sudan Wildlife Services (SWSS) within Ministry of Wildlife conservation and Tourism (MWCT) has primary responsibility for protected areas and wildlife conservation and management in the country. SWSS includes a headquarters with departments responsible for Wildlife Management, Law Enforcement, Tourism, Fisheries and Production, Training and Planning, as well as a Wildlife Conservation and Research College. SWSS also has regional, county, and Payam (sub-county) offices and staff, and it is responsible for wildlife management in the country. It runs an annual budget of about USD 500,000 and will co-finance of about USD 3,000,000 throughout the project period to contribute to components 1, 2 and 4 through its work in the Kidepo game reserve and Imatong wildlife conservation area.

The Department of Land Use Planning and Development under the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security develops land use plans and maps for government farms where it carries out (a) Soil surveys: to generate soil maps and accompanying reports that characterize the various soil types occurring in the survey area. (b) Generate land capability maps: to show different categories of land capability classes from prime arable land through marginal to non-arable land and (c) Develop land use plans: to cover resettlement plans, crops and forestry land suitability plans. Without GEF intervention, the Department of Land Use Planning will continue producing land use plans for government farms only and yet the highest levels of land degradation exist in areas around forest reserves.

Farm Africa under the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) funded project organizes farmers into groups (Farmers Field School) such that they cultivate in large scale using sustainable methods to produce and sell in bulk. The programme is estimated at $200,000 per year and will support farmers in the ICFR landscape.

The Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) is the agricultural programme of the New Partnership for Africa's Development, an African Union (AU) programme. Established by the AU assembly in 2003, CAADP focuses on improving food security, nutrition, and increasing incomes in Africa's largely farming-based economies. NEPAD–CAADP Project "Promotion of Sustainable Feed and Fodder Production and Utilization" worth USD 1.7 million is being implemented in Eastern Equatoria state by the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security.

The Food and Agricultural Organization supports the GOSS to achieve household food security, increased sustainable agricultural productivity through diversification and enhancement of agricultural activities. Forestry activities and Sustainable land Management is promoted in all the FAO projects, which offers leveraging opportunities. The total national investment is US$ 6 Million and about 10% (US$600,000) is invested in the Imatong landscape in form of land management e.g conservation agriculture, soil erosion control and farm inputs

Acacia Water and Wetlands International Kenya are working together in Kinaite Catchment in the Imatong landscape, on the Protracted Crisis Horn of Africa (PCHA) Project (2018 –2028). The aim of the project is long term community stability and resilience through strategic interventions for food security, water security and disaster risk reduction (DRR). Protecting and restoring ecosystems while optimizing ecosystem services and ecosystem-based catchment management planning contribute to sustainable livelihoods and resilience to disasters. Wetlands International will also work in Kinaite Catchment in the Partners for Resilience project (PfR) (2018-2022). This programme are implemented in partnership with the Netherlands Red Cross, South Sudan Red Cross, the Red Cross Climate Centre and Cordaid with the support of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA).The programme is implemented in close collaboration with key public and local stakeholders both at the Federal and State levels, and is expected to consolidate community participation in environmental conservation through capacity building and awareness raising directly linked to water resources.

The USD1,400,000 African Development Bank (AfDB) funded project "Good Governance and Capacity Building in Natural Resources (2020 – 2024)" is currently being implemented in all the ten States of South Sudan. The objective is to provide support to the evolution of inclusive policies and strategies for the sustainable management of forest resources in South Sudan through institutional capacity building sector management and information system development.
There are a number of interventions in support of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the area that have the potential to reduce community reliance on unsustainable use of natural resources, including illegal hunting and forest encroachment. One of those initiatives, "Emergency livelihood support to crisis-affected populations in South Sudan" project executed by FAO and funded by DFID aimed at providing livelihood support to conflict-affected displaced and vulnerable populations for enhancement of food security and diet diversification for vulnerable households. In the same area, a project implemented by the Norwegian Church Aid in collaboration with GLOBAL AIM which is a local NGO assists International Displaced Persons (IDPs) and host communities through the distribution of non-food items, psychosocial support, and training programs on water, sanitation and hygiene, prevention of gender-based violence, and HIV and AIDS awareness. Similarly, a couple of national NGOs, working in collaboration with the Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare to implement "Building Resilience among host communities and IDPs" focused on livelihood initiatives that could complement the proposed project's sustainable community based-natural resource management efforts.

1.3) the proposed alternative scenario with a brief description of expected outcomes and components of the project;

Component 1: Enabling policy and regulatory frameworks for biodiversity conservation

The aim of this component is to strengthen policy, legislative and institutional capacity of the GoSS for biodiversity conservation and effective management of forestry. This objective will be achieved through the following outcomes and outputs:

Outcome 1.1: Forestry Protected Area management frameworks and governance reflect the diversity of needs and interests of key stakeholders and encourage horizontal and vertical co-ordination and co-operation mechanisms.

This outcome will be achieved through 3 outputs, namely.
Output 1.1.1: National policy, regulatory and institutional frameworks governing forest PAs reviewed and implemented:

A comprehensive expert review process will be undertaken by an external expert team to identify process gaps in the enactment of the enabling policy, regulatory and institutional frameworks in the environment and forestry sectors in South Sudan. The experts' report will identify barriers, opportunities and entry points to facilitate fast tracking of the policy, regulatory and institutional frameworks review process. The report will include recommendations for improving the policy, regulatory and institutional framework of the environment and forestry sectors, and how to fast track enactment of the necessary policy, regulatory and institutional reforms. A national stakeholder workshop will be convened to discuss experts' team report recommendations. The final recommendations endorsed

by stakeholders will be submitted to the Government of South Sudan for action, and will include: (i) a set of reforms to enhance sector performance; (ii) national biodiversity conservation objectives that the reforms are expected to advance; (iii) an action plan and designated national entities responsible for leading the implementation of the recommendations, (iv) approximate timeframe and sequence for the implementation of each recommendation; and (v) indicators against which the effects of proposed reforms can be assessed.

Output 1.1.2: Collaborative Forest Management (CFM) mechanisms instituted and access to and sharing of benefits of biodiversity conservation and ecosystem services by local communities promoted:

The aim of this output is to promote community participation in forest management for sustainable biodiversity outcomes through Collaborative Forest Management (CFM) in South Sudan. The key activities will be: (i) Review of the policy, legal and regulatory framework that enables CFM application in the South Sudan context. (ii) Developing and securing approval of the National CFM Strategy and Action Plan for South Sudan based on the reviewed and approved CFM policy, legal and regulatory framework. (iii) Awareness raising and promotion of the approved National CFM Strategy and Action Plan at national, state, county, *payam* (Parish) *boma* (village) and PA levels. (iv) Piloting CFM in the Imatong CFR based on wide stakeholder participation, collective responsibility and equity in the management of forest reserves, and on improving the livelihoods of forest-dependent communities. One of the key achievements of the CFM at PA level is establishment of robust community institutions that ensure transparent decision making, adequate representation and participation of women, men and vulnerable groups, and the equitable sharing of forest benefits and responsibilities in the Imatong CFR.

Output 1.1.3: Inclusive and gender sensitive multi-stakeholder co-ordination platforms for effective PA management and participatory M&E at national, and sub-national levels established, made functional and strengthened:

The aim of this output is to mobilize key stakeholders in South Sudan to establish a formal multi-disciplinary and inclusive national platform for learning, and sharing challenges, experiences, opportunities and development planning scenarios in order to have coherence and consistency in the implementation of new policy, legal and regulatory frameworks in the biodiversity conservation and forestry sector. In this regard, the project will carry out identification, analysis and profiling of the key stakeholders in the sector and develop a Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP) that describes how the stakeholders will be engaged in an effective manner and, in line with the GoSS policy and institutional frameworks.

The project will establish and build the capacity of an inclusive and gender sensitive multi-stakeholder platform for effective PA management and M&E. The platform will consist of all the key, and relevant stakeholders at national, sub-national, landscape and PA level. The process will involve stakeholder mapping and analysis in consultation with the relevant line Ministries, Departments and Agencies in the GoSS. The main purpose of the Platform is to promote an Integrated Landscape Management Approach (ILMA) in the Imatong CFR Landscape. The Platform will be a forum for the stakeholders to discuss and address critical issues that are hindering or slowing down sustainable development in the landscape. It is a forum for various stakeholders to get a common understanding of issues in the landscape and agree on the inter-linkages of various sectors and actors within the landscape. The shared understanding of the interlinkages and synergies between sectors and actors will then guide strategic interventions that enhance positive change in community livelihoods and the landscape ecosystem integrity. The Platform also then provides space for the stakeholders to coordinate and jointly engage in policy lobbying and advocacy with a collective voice. In addition, the Platform will be able to provide her members with opportunities for capacity building through knowledge sharing, learning and consolidation of experiences for the betterment of society at large.

Component 2. Forest Management plan development and capacity building for effective forestry protected area management

The aim of this component is to enhance the Imatong CFR Management and capacity building for PAME. This is in line with Strategic Objectives 5 and 6 of the GoSS NBSAP with the following targets: (i) Develop a programme for effective management of PAs and PA current network, including situation analysis and development of General Management Plans for all PAs by 2024 (ii) Provide technical capacity support of national and PA level management staff and (iii) generate information for biodiversity conservation and effective protected area management. This project will support the GoSS in delivering on this target through the following outcome and outputs.

Outcome 2.1: Forest Management plan developed, and National and PA management staff have the capacities that enable and support PAME achieving biodiversity conservation objectives.

Output 2.1.1: National guidelines for PA management planning developed and technical capacity of national and PA level management staff built:

This output is focused on supporting the GoSS in building its capacity on PA management planning and management. It will involve developing national and standard guidelines for PA participatory management planning for South Sudan in form of a National Protected Area Planning Manual, and training of key GoSS staff in PA participatory management planning and management. The process will be participatory and inter-disciplinary in nature involving key national, sub national, landscape and PA staff.

The key areas of focus in the output will be: (1) Identification of planning team and defining roles. (2) Analyzing existing legislative process for PA management plan and procedures for its approval. (3) Gathering data (characterizing the resources and conditions in the PA, delineating/refining the boundaries of the PA, identifying stakeholders, assessing legal status of PA, identifying trends in resource conditions, use, and needs of local populations and identifying key information gaps). (4) Specifying means and processes for public participation. (5) Developing desired conditions, objectives, and desired conditions for the PA. (6) Defining PA-wide guidelines on resource use. (7) Identifying PA management zones and defining management objectives and necessary guidelines for each. (8) Approval processes for the PA Management Plans. (9) Defining PA implementation modalities. (10) Defining monitoring and evaluate (M&E) indicators for PAME. (11) Defining procedures for revising and updating the PA management plans as information improves, conditions change, and monitoring results come in.

Output 2.1.2: Imatong forest Management plan developed and key priority actions and implemented to address PAME challenges in an inclusive consultative manner and participatory approach:

Subsequently, the project will support the GoSS to prepare the Imatong CFR General Management Plan using the guidelines developed in Output 2.1.1, taking into consideration the following key basic steps: (i) Formation of an inter-disciplinary and inclusive Core Planning Team (CPT); (ii) Review of existing legal instruments of gazettement and other documents, including; biodiversity inventory data, other survey/research and technical documents and reports; (iii) Field reconnaissance to verify and validate secondary data and information, and to collect primary data; (iv) Consultations with National, State, County, and boma leaders, CSOs, traditional leaders and local communities neighbouring Imatong CFR to collect their views, and additional data and information to inform the planning effort.

Once the PA Management Plan has been developed and approved, the project will facilitate PA management staff to develop, and implement site specific action plans, and annual operational plans to operationalize the Master/General Forest Management Plan implementation. This will involve development and implementation of detailed: (i) Zonation management plans. (ii) Development plans on infrastructure, works and other investments in parts of the PA. (iii) Site management plans for sites within the PA that require intensive management. (iv) Biodiversity and Cultural Heritage Conservation Plans to guide on how to conserve sites of high biodiversity and cultural heritage significance. The annual operations planning will include: (i) activities to be delivered based on the long-term Forest Management Plan; (ii) key targets and key performance indicators; (iii) quality standards; (iv) risk management plan; (v) staffing and resource (including budget) requirements for activity implementation; (vi) implementation timetables; and (vii) a process for monitoring progress of the implementation of the Operational Annual Plans (OAPs).

Output 2.1.3: Government and PA level staff trained in biodiversity conservation assessment, threat identification and monitoring, and PA management methods:

The capacity of Government national and PA level staff will be built on biodiversity conservation assessment, threat identification and monitoring, and PA management methods, and the following activities will be undertaken to achieve this output: (i) Conducting a technical capacity and institutional needs assessment of Government national and PA level staff in biodiversity conservation assessment, threat identification and monitoring, and best PA management practices and methodologies; (ii) Development of Capacity Building Plan (CBP) for improving the capacity of staff on biodiversity conservation assessment, threat identification and monitoring, and PA management; and (iii) Build the capacity of staff through training, re-tooling and exchange visits. This training will include aspects on Integrated Management Effectiveness Tool (IMET) to track Protected Area Management Effectiveness and to support PA planning and inform management decisions and PA IUCN Green Listing (Output 1.2.3). The training will respond to the specific data collection requirements, information management, protected area management effectiveness, governance and social assessments and others. At the end of this training, participants will have sufficient knowledge and skills to institutionalize and roll out IMET assessments across South Sudan's protected and conserved area network. The training will also cover funding required to implement IMET at an institutional and site level (Imatong CFR), landscape and national level.

Output 2.1.4: Biodiversity threat assessments conducted, and strategies/actions plans to support protection of priority species developed and implemented:

The project will carry out biodiversity threat assessments to inform decision making, strategies, programmes and policies in the CBD and the GoSS NBSAP as well as to provide basic information on biodiversity (status, stresses, benefits) required in the CBD on impact assessment and minimizing adverse impacts as well as inform CFM implementation (Output 1.2.3). The project will use a Rapid Biodiversity Assessment approach (more applicable in areas where there is very

little published or unpublished information such as South Sudan). The assessments will include: (i) Baseline inventory, focusing on overall biological diversity rather than extensive or detailed information about specific taxa or habitats. (ii) Indicator species-specific assessment to provide a rapid appraisal of the status of selected indicator species as an indicator of biological diversity, in terms of species and community diversity to inform us about the overall health of ecosystems. (iii) Ecosystem change assessment to determine the effects of human activities or natural disturbances on the ecological integrity and associated biodiversity. (iv) Resource assessment to determine the potential for sustainable use of selected biological resources in Imatong CFR under the Collaborative Forest Management (CFM) arrangements (Output 1.1.2).

Output 2.1.5: Integrated Management Effectiveness Tool (IMET) established to track Protected Area Management Effectiveness (PAME) and to inform management decisions and IUCN Green Listing process:

The project will promote and introduce the PA Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT) to track Protected Area Management Effectiveness (PAME), and to inform management decisions and the IUCN Green Listing process of the Imatong CFR. First published in 2002, the METT was one of the first tools developed to reflect the IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) Framework for PAME. The METT provides a composite measurement across 38 parameters integrating all six components of the WCPA Framework (Context, Planning, Input, Process, Output and Outcome). The IMET tool will be designed in the context of South Sudan to directly support managers, both in the field and at the national level, to improve the effectiveness of protected area management and, biodiversity conservation. The IMET tool will assist in PA planning, monitoring and evaluation and guide in designing mechanisms to improve management patterns and conservation outcomes. The IMET tool will be supported by a computer-based application (available in both online and offline versions) to collect, organize and analyse data to facilitate informed decision-making for protected area management, operations and planning. It will contain several forms which allow the compilation of a variety of data from many sources: raw data, documents and personal knowledge from different stakeholders such as management teams, scientists and community members. IMET will structure the information with quantified targeted outcomes, and its internal statistics module providing a score-based estimation of level and quality of management with visual graphics of the relative contribution of each indicator to management effectiveness. The project will also establish partnerships with national agencies and other conservation partners aiming to roll out IMET assessments across their protected and conserved area network throughout South Sudan.

Component 3: Promoting Sustainable agriculture practices and community livelihoods improvement to maintain forest cover in Landscapes around the Imatong Central Forest Reserve (ICFR)

This component is aiming at to improving land use practices and restoration activities in productive area around Imatong CFR, to reduce pressure on the forest but also improve livelihoods of the surrounding communities. The component will strive to contribute to strengthening both the management and governance skills of the Community Forest Management Groups. This will also contribute to increasing participatory management at the community level, managing resources in a sustainable manner, and improving the livelihoods of group members, including youth and women, so that the groups will be able to sustain themselves independently by the end of the project period. This will be achieved through the following outcome and outputs:

Outcome 3.1: Reduced pressures on forest resources from unsustainable agriculture practices in Landscapes bordering the Imatong CFR through participatory land use planning and creation of sustainable income generating activities for improved community livelihoods

Output 3.1.1: Ecosystem services in Central Forest Reserve (ICFR) and productive landscapes bordering the ICFR evaluated:

Detailed information about ecosystem services (ES) provided by Imatong CFR is required to: (i) Increase awareness of the multiple benefits provided by the PA, which can help solicit support for safeguarding the PA. (ii) Support management decisions and help ensure equity in resource use and benefits sharing among stakeholder groups. (iii) Establish a baseline to monitor changes over time, or to enable evaluation of the consequences of management decisions or policy changes on ES delivery. (iv) Provide additional evidence in applications to accreditation or certification systems, such as the IUCN Green List of Protected and Conserved Areas.

Output 3.1.2: Participatory land use plans for productive landscapes around the Imatong CFR developed, approved, and implemented.

The participatory land use plans for productive landscapes around Imatong CFR will be developed and implemented through a participatory and multi-disciplinary process.

Output 3.1.3: Key priority actions in the Land Use Plans for Productive Landscapes around the Imatong CFR implemented to address causes of degradation and deforestation and unsustainable land use practices

This output builds on Output 3.1.2 above, and will involve: (i) Awareness raising and training of community members, farmer groups and production landscape management committees that are to be established at *Payam* (Parish) and *Boma* (village) levels to implement the IPLMP and CEAPs; (ii) Implementation of the priority Nature- Based Solutions identified in the IPLMP and CEAPs by the trained community members, farmer groups and *Payam* and *Boma* Committees; and (iii) Joint stakeholder participatory Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E). (iv) restoration of agriculture lands through establishment of demonstration plots, farmer field schools and promotion of SLM strategies, climate smart agriculture and use of improved seeds.

Output 3.1.4: Regulatory frameworks that govern the management of productive landscapes around the ICFR developed, approved, and implemented at sub-national levels:

The project will support the GoSS to formulate regulatory frameworks (local bye-laws/ordinances) to regulate the unsustainable management of the productive landscapes around Imatong CFR, based on the nature and magnitude of the problem as revealed by the ES valuation (Output 3.1.1).

Output 3.1.5: Forest conservation centered sustainable income generating activities for improved community livelihoods identified and implemented.
Under this output, the project will strive to assist women in establishment of sustainable Income Generating Activities (IGAs) to be undertaken in or near the home in some pilot villages. This could also be one of the main objectives of the self-help female groups formed with the support of the project through its reinforcement of group promotion activities. IGAs tend to give women a higher status within the family and studies generally indicate that the greater the amount of income under women's control, the greater the amount of time devoted to their children's education, health, and nutrition. The Identification of IGAs will come from a bottom up approach. An IGA should correspond to the needs of the community, more specifically women. This means that it may be implemented after some steps have already been carried out with the Project's support like Participatory Rural appraisals (PRAs) with women to identify problems, elaboration of a negotiated development programme and group promotion. All these activities will be carried out using participatory methods. In this context, it seems more appropriate to focus on planning, organizing and supporting IGAs.

The output will strive to promote Community Forestry (CF) and Non-Wood Forest products (NWFPs) industries by establishing community-based enterprises and develop alternative income sources for livelihoods of rural communities. Specifically the project will establish community-based rural enterprises for forestry products by end of the project period; Increase alternative IGAs like Payments for Environmental Services (PES) Scheme for timber, NWFPs, and community-based ecotourism will be identified and operationalized; develop skills in wood products and five non-wood forest products. Community Forest association (CFA) members will be trained in wood product development and new NWFP products will be developed and market linkages established. Community members from enterprises will be trained on operation and maintenance of equipment. Vulnerable communities will be identified, indigenous adaptation practices will be documented, and climate-smart adaptation measures will be initiated. Important/ vulnerable timber and non-timber species will be documented including medicinal plants.

Component 4: Knowledge management and learning

The project will facilitate and enhance knowledge acquisition and experience sharing at local, landscape, national and regional levels through better access to information, knowledge, learning, and networking for purposes of catalyzing coordinated implementation of biodiversity loss reduction. This will be achieved by; (i) developing and operationalizing an interactive M&E system to track project activity implementation progress, outputs and outcomes (Output 4.1.1), and (ii) documenting and sharing best practices and lessons learned at landscape, national and regional levels to inform uptake of best practices, lessons learned and policy (Output 4.1.2).

Outcome 4.1: Sector Agencies and relevant institutions applying and scaling up sustainable biodiversity conservation in policy and practice

Output 4.1.1 Tools to track best practices and lessons learned from cost-effective PA/ biodiversity conservation management measures developed and operationalized:

The project will develop an M&E System and learning framework. The M&E System will be based on an appropriate, widely available and open source operating system with a friendly user interface that will ensure the system's effectiveness, sustainability and interactivity. This will also allow easy access and use of the M&E System for tracking of interventions.

Output 4.1.2: Best practices and lessons learned on cost-effective PA/ biodiversity conservation management measures documented and shared at National and Sub national levels and informing uptake and policy.

Best practices and lessons learnt will be discussed and documented throughout the project cycle with all stakeholders at all levels (community, PA, landscape, State and national levels). This includes during; baseline data collection, stakeholder engagement meetings, participatory planning meetings, project implementation meetings and learning and joint M&E missions.

Output 4.1.3: Targeted discussions at national, state and county levels to share lessons and identify additional areas for replication (potentially hosting workshops at local level to showcase results)

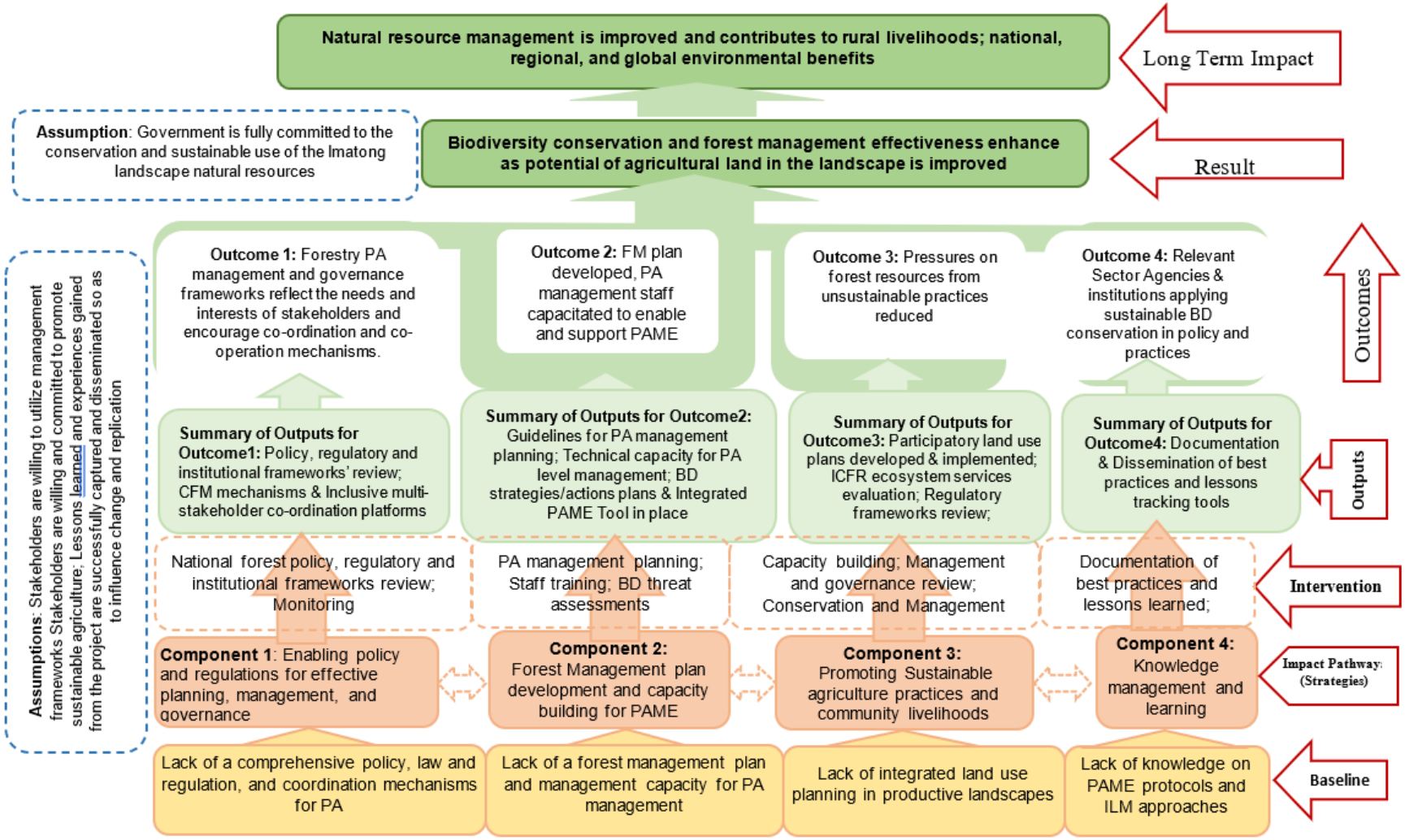
Theory of change for the Imatong Landscape project

The above alternative scenario can be summarized into a Theory of Change (described and presented in the table below):

The intervention logic for the project is premised on the understanding that resources will be deployed to implement the interventions (activities) to deliver outputs which in turn will lead to certain institutional and behavioral changes (outcomes) at the intermediate level provided that the assumptions and certain pre-conditions governing project implementation hold true. At the lowest level of the theory of change, necessary and sufficient interventions will be deployed to deliver outputs. The key assumptions underpinning this level of the theory of change is that there is political will for integrated landscape management, interest and commitment from the local communities. The next level of the theory of change, shows that outputs will lead directly to the delivery of the project outcomes, namely: (a) the Government of South Sudan adopts and starts enforcing an updated a comprehensive policy, legislative and regulatory frameworks, and coordination mechanisms for protected area effective management and biodiversity conservation in the Imatong landscape (b) develop and implement a forest management plan and generate management capacity for PA management and biodiversity conservation (c) develop and implement an integrated land use planning in productive landscapes around Protected areas for improved community livelihoods to reduce pressure on the PA d) knowledge on protected area management effectiveness (PAME) protocols and integrated landscape management approaches.

The underpinning assumption here is that government is fully committed to the conservation and sustainable use of the Imatong landscape biodiversity and forestry resources. The outputs are deemed as sufficient and adequate to deliver the stated outcomes if the following assumptions are true: (i) Stakeholders are willing to cooperate in the project; (ii) Local communities are cooperative; (iii) Local scientists and other professionals are willing to partner with local communities; (iv) Information dissemination pathways are readily available for awareness creation. It is anticipated that delivery of the project objective will lead to the delivery of the anticipated project impact which is “Natural resource management is improved and contribute to rural livelihoods, national, regional and global environmental benefits”. In order to achieve the stated impact, factors/conditions (impact drivers) are necessary for the project to move from outcomes to delivery of impact: (i) target stakeholders exhibiting continuous commitment to integrated landscape management approaches; (ii) continuous engagement and ultimate ownership/buy-in of project activities by stakeholders; and (iii) project partnerships and personnel with key institutions/policy champions to drive political will necessary for policy change are stable.

Theory of change for the South Sudan Imatong project



1.4) alignment with GEF focal area;

The proposed project is designed to contribute to the GEF biodiversity and land degradation focal areas objectives of BD-2-7 Address direct drivers to protect habitats and species and improve financial sustainability, effective management, and ecosystem coverage of the global protected area estate and LD-3-4 Reduce pressures on natural resources from competing land uses and increase resilience in the wider landscape. Under components 1 and 2, the project will deliver global environmental benefits through improved management of the Imatong CFR leading to species conservation in in the landscape, hence making the project aligned with BD2.7. In addition, global environmental benefits will extend beyond the CFR as efforts to scale up biodiversity conservation in the landscape will be attained through components 3 and 4. The project will aim at Reducing pressures on natural resources from competing land uses around Imatong CFR (LD- 3-4), by bringing together local, sub-national and national stakeholders to participatory develop and implement joint land use plan thus establishing a coordinated scheme for programming to attain integrated sustainable land management in the Imatong landscape.

1.5) incremental/additional cost reasoning and expected contributions from the baseline, the GEFTF, LDCF, SCCF, and co-financing;

Component	Without GEF project support	With GEF project support	The incremental and global benefits
Component 1: Enabling policy and regulatory frameworks for biodiversity conservation	Without GEF project support, effective forest management at national, state, county, *payam* (Parish) and *boma* (village) levels will continue to be crippled. Without a clear policy, legal and institutional framework, poor inter-sectoral coordination and collaboration among stakeholders will continue, negatively impacting on forest management and investment. Weak PA governance structures and untrained law enforcement entities and staff will continue managing the PA with their limited skills on PA management and biodiversity conservation, further undermining effective PA management effectiveness and biodiversity conservation	With GEF project support; (i) At least 80% of all legislation and policy documents will be reviewed, and (ii) At least one multi--stakeholder governance platform established and taking lead in PAME implementation. Hence, there will be increased PA management effectiveness reflected in sound PA governance, resulting in reduced off-take/ harvest of PA resources due to increased enforcement of the approved regulations and statutorily mandated anti-poaching operations, enhanced PA management due to increased human capacity and increased budgetary allocations to legally approved Forestry Sector budget lines, reduced PA illegal incursions due to implementation of established and approved PA regulations, restoration of PA physical integrity due to establishment of PA targeted interventions, greater PA age due to reduction in external disturbance, larger PA size due to reduced encroachment, greater indigenous local community involvement in PA governance due to establishment of multi-stakeholder forums, greater gross domestic product per capita due to greater PA benefits sharing with wider community, large animal size due to less harassment and abundant forage, greater benefits to the local community due to implementation of CFM arrangements, clearer and demarcated boundary of PA due to resolution of land tenure legal issues, lower corruption due to streamlined roles, responsibilities and coordination mechanisms, and strictness of protection due to clearer mandates bestowed by strengthened policy, legal and regulatory framework.	The incremental benefits will be: (i) reduced pressure on the HVCF from the local communities; (ii) Enhanced forest cover due to PA adaptive management and reduced deforestation; (iii) substantial increase in forest carbon stocks; (iv) reduction in GHGs emissions and climate change mitigation; (v) increased resilience of forest-dependent communities; and (vi) enhanced biodiversity conservation.
Component 2: Protected Area management planning and fina	Without GEF project support: The PA will continue to be managed without due regard to its ecological values, and it will be less a	With GEF project support; (i) At least 60% of the staff will be trained and have their capacity built in PA management and biodiversity conservation, (ii) One PA Management Plan will be dev	The PA critical habitats will be safeguarded, and species therein will thrive unimpacted by human disturbance, and their populations will increase. A well-managed PA will have intact eco

ncing mechanisms	nd less effectively managed. The PA will not be able to serve the overall goal of achieving ecological balance that optimizes biodiversity and the health and well-being of ecosystems, biodiversity, and humanity. The communities will not be able to reap the greatest benefits from the PA and protect areas that are most important for biodiversity, including intact ecosystems; ensure that conservation supports land connectivity wherever possible; pursue conservation to ensure that the global system of protected areas is representative of our planet's diverse nature and ecosystems; and support indigenous peoples' land rights and promote indigenous-led conservation.	eloped, and implemented, (iii) PAME tool will be operational and informing decision making, (iv) At least one multi--stakeholder governance platform will be established and taking lead in PAME implementation; and (v) (ii) At least 2 PA Financing Models established and operational. The PA Management Plan that has support from all the key stakeholders will result in increased funding for conservation and protected area management and transition toward reliable and sustainable long-term funding. The PA financial sustainability will reinforce PA management capacity to become more responsive to changing opportunities and external demands, strengthen institutional capacity to use financial and business planning tools, establish more supportive economic policy and market conditions and involve a wider range of stakeholders in PA management. Additionally, national environmental agencies will work with financial and economic agencies to ensure that policies, markets and prices in other sectors do not undermine PA financial sustainability. PA authorities will construct financial portfolios incorporating a diversity of funding sources and multiplicity of beneficiaries, and will build a diverse, secure and stable funding portfolio for the PA that will act as a model for scaling up to other PAs in South Sudan.	systems, that can play a vital role in disease prevention. When managed in collaboration with nearby communities, local economies benefit from the PA through ecotourism, bringing new revenue and employment that directly benefits communities, making them participate more in safeguarding the PA biodiversity. Through CFRs arrangements, local people will safeguard and foster the biodiversity in ecosystems that serves as important dietary components for local communities resulting in greater supplies for local communities to consume or sell ecosystem products. A well safeguarded PA will protect watersheds that ensure a clean water supply. The PA habitats will be able store excess greenhouse gases like carbon and keep them from our atmosphere, regulating the global climate. A well-managed PA will halt harmful human-induced activities, and, in turn, sequester carbon to reduce climate change. In summary, effectively managed Imatong CFR will become a critical tool for safeguarding biodiversity, maintaining ecosystem balance, preserving important habitats, building resilience to climate change, providing global food security, maintaining water quality, conserving natural resources, driving economic success, curbing the spread of diseases and pests, and providing many other benefits to wildlife and human wellbeing.
Component 3: Promoting Sustainable agriculture practices to maintain forest cover in Landscapes around the Imatong CFR	Without GEF project support, the barriers to sustainable landscape management will persist, and there will be continued unsustainable agriculture and natural resources management practices in the productive areas around the ICFR. Food and fiber production will not be able to support biodiversity and ecosystem services in the producti	With GEF project support, a participatory Land Use Plan will be developed and implemented covering at least 60, 000 ha in the buffer area around ICFR. Improved practices in these areas will include: (i) 50,000 ha of production landscapes outside ICFR will be placed under improved practices; and (ii) 10, 000 ha of HCVFs will be safeguarded and protection in the area outside of the ICFR. The combination of trees and crops in spatial or temporal arrangements results in greater structural an	The incremental benefits will be: (i) Increased and stabilized crop productivity through combinations of vegetation management, crop diversification, soil fertility and sustainable soil and water management practices leading to increased incomes, poverty reduction and reduced pressure on the HVCF from the local communities; (ii) Enhanced forest cover through afforestation, reforestation, and sustainable and adaptive management, while reducing deforestation will substan

	on landscapes and contrib ute to human well-being. T here will be no synergies a nd trade-offs among ecolo gical, economic, cultural, a nd social objectives at sca le, and the interactions am ong different land uses wil l not be complementary b ut, competing. The land m anagement strategies in t he production landscapes will not produce an optim al ecological balance, and production sectors will co ntinue to work in silos, not across sectors, ensuring t hat, Integrated Land Mana gement (ILM), and forestr y and biodiversity policy st rategies are adequately int egrated.	d functional complexity compared to monoculture production. This comple xity leads to gains in efficiency of cap turing and utilizing nutrients, light and water, improves food and nutritional s ecurity, results in valuable cultural lan dscapes, and mitigates environmenta l degradation, thus offering a sustaina ble alternative to input-intensive "singl e commodity" production. This contri butes to poverty alleviation, increasin g food security, and halting deforestat ion and fosters rural quality of life and cultural values, improving water qualit y, controlling soil erosion, and conser ving biological diversity. Ultimately, th e approach offers a wide range of env ironmental, social, cultural, and econo mic benefits at landscape scale, a key strategy for the "perennialization" of a griculture aimed at establishing perm anent vegetative cover for ecosystem services and biodiversity conservatio n and protection.	tially increase forest carbon stocks, absorb GHGs , which will mitigate cli mate change and conserve biodivers ity while preventing land degradation and increasing the resilience of fores t-dependent communities and enabli ng forest ecosystems to adapt to ext reme events, such as heatwaves, dro ughts, floods, landslides, and sand a nd dust storms, as well as pest and d isease control, further enhancing soc ietal and ecological resilience to clim ate change; and (iii) Adoption of agr oforestry practices and mixed farmin g systems will contribute to increase d soil quality and carbon sequestrati on, maintenance of soil fertility and n utrient cycling and control soil erosio n, while providing food and income t o local communities and enhancing community resilience to climate cha nge leading to increased incomes, p overty reduction and reduced pressu re on the forest from the local comm unities which results in improved bio diversity conservation. (iv) promotio n of IGAs will empower women and y outh in improving their livelihoods, th eir financial status and give women greater amount of time devoted to th eir children's education, health, and n utrition through its reinforcement of group promotion activities. By adopting, applying and scaling up and out SLM technologies and practi ces as nature based solutions to add ress drivers of deforestation and for est and land degradation, biodiversit y loss, and climate change, the actio ns will simultaneously address LDN, climate change mitigation, while achi eving other co-benefits, such as prot ection of biodiversity and securing th e quantity and quality of soil and wat er resources.
Component 4: Knowledg e managem ent	Without GEF project supp ort in generating knowled ge and best practices in P A management and biodiv ersity conservation and int egrated landscape manag	There will be relevant, accurate, usabl e, timely biodiversity data and inform ation, essential for sound decision m aking and supports efforts to strengt hen biodiversity information sharing, t hrough the development and promoti	The incremental and global benefits: Funding bodies, policy makers and c onservationists will use the results t o highlight problems and to set priori ties, and to promote better manage ment policies and practices by mana

	egrated landscape manag ement, and sharing those experiences with stakehol ders, there will be limited data and information to in form decision making, an d PAs will continue to be mismanaged. There will b e inadequate investment i n ecosystems, species an d genetic resource manag ement, impacting negative ly on biodiversity conserva tion, ecosystem products and services and ultimatel y, human wellbeing.	hrough the development and promoti on of standards and best practices fo r information management. There will be enhanced knowledge acquisition a nd experience sharing at local, landsc ape, national and regional levels throu gh better access to information, know ledge, learning, and networking, and P A planning and management will be e vidence based. This leads better PA management; effective resource alloc ation; accountability and transparenc y; community involvement in PA mana gement; building of trust and constitu ency of BD champions, and promotio n of protected area values.	ment policies and practices by mana gement agencies. Managers will use evaluation results to improve their pe rformance, and to report on achieve ments to senior managers, the gover nment or external stakeholders. Loc al communities and other stakeholde rs, including civil society, will establis h how far their interests are being ta ken into account. This will catalyze c oordinated implementation of biodiv ersity loss reduction, land degradatio n neutrality (LDN), and climate chang e mitigation.

1.6) global environmental benefits (GEFTF) and/or adaptation benefits (LDCF/SCCF); and

This project will reduce biodiversity loss and increase biodiversity conservation potential of agricultural and forest landscapes in South Sudan by enhancing and expanding the role of PA categories V and VI, and other conservation measures including the full IUCN PA Matrix of governance types. It is targeting areas of high biodiversity value where deforestation and degradation persists as an ongoing threat but where conventional exclusionary measures are neither socially acceptable nor operationally viable. By strengthening existing policy and regulatory frameworks, decision-making processes and governance structures, the project will directly contribute to national policies and strategies aimed at stabilizing land-use, protecting and conserving HVCFs, addressing the interests of local communities, supporting sustainable land use and improving ecological connectivity and biodiversity conservation.

By focusing on improving the policy and regulatory framework, and sustainable biodiversity and land-use strategies, implementation, promoting productive landscapes restoration and reducing deforestation activities, the project will deliver conservation and use economic models that directly contribute to the achievement of Aichi Targets 7 and 11. The project will help advance early actions that reconcile and optimize land-use decision making to reduce deforestation and forest degradation, enhance carbon stocks through the restoration of ecosystem functionality and promote enhanced and sustainable management of current low-carbon land-use strategies.

The Imatong landscape is a potential key biodiversity Area in the region. The Imatong Central Forest Reserve (ICFR) is part of the Imatong landscape that includes the Kidepo Valley National Park (KVNP) in Northern Uganda and Kidepo Game Reserve in South Sudan area a very critical landscape for trans-boundary biodiversity conservation of national, regional and global significance. The government of South Sudan has been wishing to alleviate the ICFR into a National Park and to advocate for creation of a Transfrontier Conservation Area (TFCA). The Imatong landscape supports large populations of elephant, buffalo, duikers, hyaena and leopard. This project will provide information to policy makers in this regard. The forest contains over 500 bird species, many birds not found in other part of South Sudan and is a resting place for European birds en route to their over-wintering places in East Africa. One of the bird species in the area is the endangered spotted ground-thrush (Zoothera guttata), that deserves protection. The ICFR supports over 2,000 vascular plant and is one of the largest intact Podocarpus forest in Africa. This is the only area in South Sudan where the vascular plant species restricted to the country are housed including Aloe *diolii, Aloe macleayi*, a cycad (*Encephalartos mackenziei), Chlorophytum superpositum, Scilla chlorantha, and Panicum bambusiculme*. The Imatong landscape is a significant watershed and water tower as its rivers flow into River Nile.

1.7) innovation, sustainability and potential for scaling up.

Innovation: Collaborative Forest Management (CFM) mechanism is not yet a widespread practice in South Sudan, and the methodologies of establishing the Integrated Management Effectiveness Tool (IMET) to track Protected Area Management Effectiveness (PAME) and to inform management decisions and IUCN Green Listing process will be applied for the first time in the country. The equipment, devices and intervention strategies that are proposed for adoption by the Forestry department at both national and state levels and at the site level are innovations in the national context. Innovation will also be infused in the training and capacity building methods that the project will promote.

Sustainability: The overall sustainability of the project results will be supported by embedding capacity into the institutions and entities that need and can make good use of strengthened abilities and resources. At the national level, the project will raise awareness among legislators, the Council of Ministers, and other decision makers on the importance of conserving South Sudan's forestry resources, thereby increasing their support for additional funding for conservation and for mainstreaming conservation objectives across all branches of government, including in particular Finance, Tourism, and Planning and Natural Resource Management. Capacity building will strengthen the on-going ability of law enforcement and protected area agencies with jurisdiction over species and their habitats, and of rural communities dependent on natural resources for their livelihoods, to continue to carry out activities that can benefit wildlife, forestry and ecosystem services. Building good policies, strong legislation and the capacity to implement them will establish the enabling environment for Protected Area Management Effective (PAME). Securing alternative development pathways that rely on a resilient and healthy wildlife stock and forestry resource base that benefits communities will reduce the incentives for rural populations to engage in poaching, hunting, illegal harvesting of forestry products or destructive ecosystem management practices. The project will seek to create stable situations on the ground where there is proper enforcement along with local communities engaged in conservation-compatible activities that generate local benefits while generating global environmental benefits.

Potential for scaling-up: The proposed project will address capacity building for staff within the Directorate of Forestry (Ministry of Environment and Forestry on Protected Area Management Effective (PAME), managing information systems, monitoring; training on implementing monitoring, enforcement; and training on PA management for staff at the targeted PA sites, which together will allow for best practices and lessons learned through national and on-site enforcement activities to be easily and be widely up-scaled to overall national forest management operations. The Project will catalyze different innovations that can be deployed at speed and scale across other sites. Training of CBOs and local communities within and adjacent to the targeted Imatong CFR and community co-management processes will be crucial for developing models that can be replicated elsewhere in the country, and replication of lessons and best practices may be enabled in areas such as monitoring, enforcement, ecotourism and other biodiversity-compatible livelihood opportunities. International exchanges with other countries practicing Community Based Natural Resource Management, such as Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, will be used to further strengthen skills in these technical areas among stakeholders in the Imatong landscape, who can then provide peer training to their colleagues at other sites in South Sudan.

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[1] IUCN ESARO (2020). *The state of protected and conserved areas in Eastern and Southern Africa. State of Protected and Conserved Areas Report Series No. 1*. Nairobi, Kenya: IUCN ESARO.

[2] South Sudan Forest Policy, 2012

[3] Winslow et al. 2011

[4] African Wildlife Foundation (AWF) (2014). *Socio-Economic Baseline Survey of Imatong Mountains Water Tower, and Kinyeti River Watershed, South Sudan,* 2014. African Wildlife Foundation, Nairobi/Kenya

[5] African Wildlife Foundation (AWF) (2014). *Socio-Economic Baseline Survey of Imatong Mountains Water Tower, and Kinyeti River Watershed, South Sudan,* 2014. African Wildlife Foundation, Nairobi/Kenya

[6] African Development Bank, 2018. National Climate Change Profile.

[7] African Development Bank, 2018. National Climate Change Profile.

[8] (https://www.africanews.com/2021/08/02/south-sudan-swears-in-new-parliament-vowed-under-peace-deal/)

1b. Project Map and Coordinates

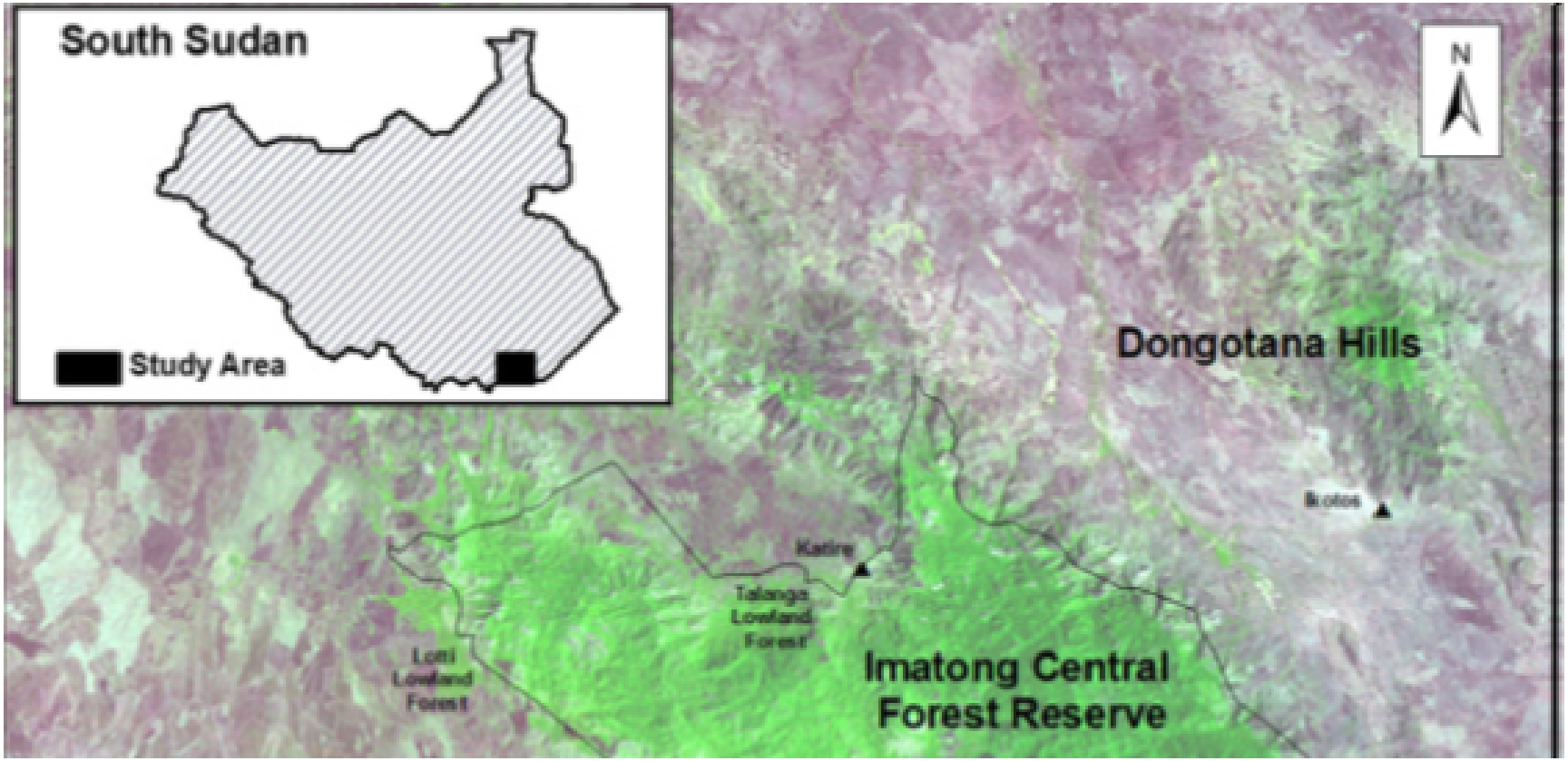
Please provide geo-referenced information and map where the project interventions will take place.

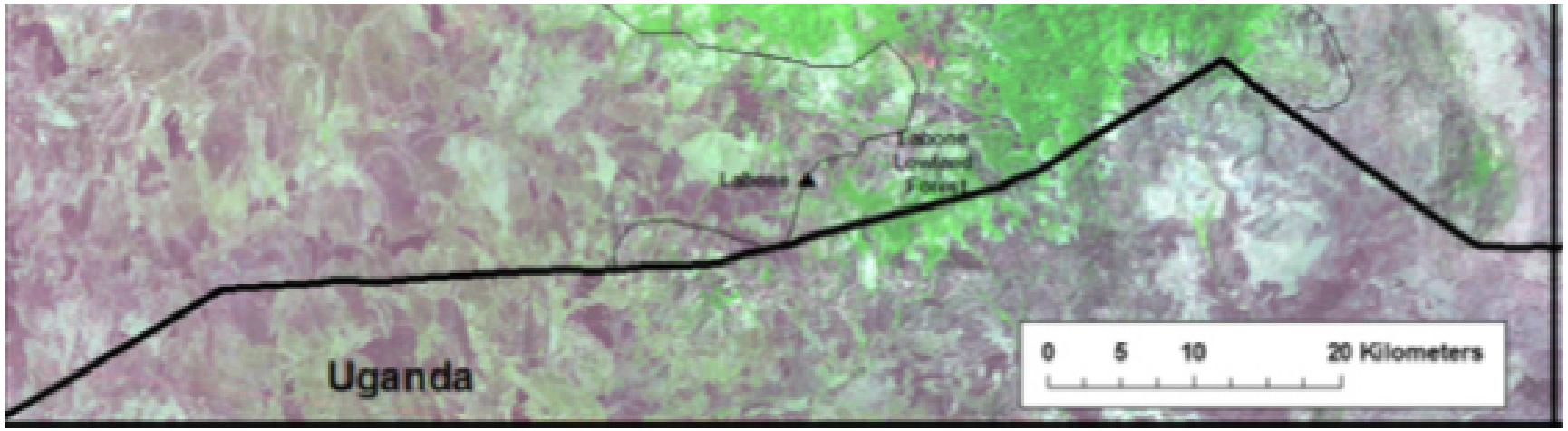
The Geo-referenced coordinates are 3°57'0"N 32°54'0"E

Annex A

PROGRAM/PROJECT MAP AND GEOGRAPHIC COORDINATES

(when possible)

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2. Stakeholders

Select the stakeholders that have participated in consultations during the project identification phase:

Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities Yes

Civil Society Organizations Yes

Private Sector Entities Yes

If none of the above, please explain why:

A wide range of stakeholders participated in the consultations during the project identification phase and will continue to participate during both full project development and implementation Phase. These include stakeholders at the Central Government Ministries, Departments and Agencies, especially the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security and Ministry of Environment and Forestry. At Landscape/Regional level; East Equatoria Sate Government and Torit and Ikotos County officials and stakeholders. At *Boma* (Village) level; communities neighbouring Imatong CFR. There have also been targeted stakeholder engagements and consultations with other categories of stakeholders, namely; Civil Society Organizations (CSO) such as World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF), Private Sector Organizations (PSO) such as the South Sudan Business Forum (SSBF), research and academic institutions such as University of Juba, faith based organizations, and traditional institutions.
Overall, the stakeholder engagement process was and will continue to be consultative, interactive and participatory in nature. At each level, various tools were and will continue to be employed, and these include: Focus group discussions; Gender mapping; Transect walks; Landscape Analysis; Timeline and Trends Analysis; Livelihood Analysis; and Problem & Solution Matrix Analysis. During full project development phase, at least one gender-responsive decision-support tool and participatory gender analysis process will be applied to identify intervention pathways that unlock the barriers that currently prevent women and men from participating in decision making and benefiting equitably from natural resources management and biodiversity conservation.

In addition, provide indicative information on how stakeholders, including civil society and indigenous peoples, will be engaged in the project preparation, and their respective roles and means of engagement

The key stakeholders have been consulted and their input has been incorporated into this proposal. Their expected engagement during the project implementation phase is described in the table below:

Stakeholder	*Relevant Role*
Ministry of Environment and Forestry	Will be the lead GOSS institution overseeing the design and implementation of the project and will act as the official project implementing partner. At the systemic and institutional level, it will play a leading role in developing strategies for any legal and institutional reform processes. It will chair the project steering committee and most local working groups.
Directorate of Forestry (Ministry of Environment and Forestry)	Management of National Forest Reserves (NFR) Will be responsible for operationalization of the collaborative forest management (CHM) at national level Provide technical guidance on forest management Drafting legislation, laws and policies for the CFR management. Will design the project activities at the CFR management level, including activities to improve PA management, support infrastructure development, and work closely with targeted communities. At the individual level, it will identify staff to participate in project supported trainings and capacity development
Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security	Will provide support for working with farmers in areas around the Imatong CFR in implementation of integrated land management practices and agroforestry Will support promotion of on-farm growing of targeted species like bamboo, etc The Ministry will be responsible for component 3 of the project that deals with promotion of SLM/ILM practices at farm level The Land Use Planning section of the Ministry will be responsible for monitoring land degradation and catchment rehabilitation
Ministry of Wildlife Conser	The Ministry of Wildlife Conservation and Tourism is responsible for wildlife protected areas (national parks and game reserves) in

Ministry of Wildlife Conservation and Tourism (MWCT)	The Ministry of Wildlife Conservation and Tourism is responsible for wildlife protected areas (national parks and game reserves) in the country. It will contribute to the project by providing information in working towards upgrading of the Kidepo Game reserve and Imatong natural forests into a national park of a transfrontier conservation area. Will provide support in biodiversity and wildlife conservation in the Imatong CFR and the surrounding biodiversity hotspots in the landscape.
Local communities and CBOs	Community representatives at the local level, including representatives of indigenous groups, will be engaged in the project design and implementation through consultation processes and through the establishment of site-based coordination mechanisms including CFM. Communities particularly affected by ICFR will be engaged in designing the project activities on forest resource management and environmentally sound livelihoods projects, in accordance with community priorities.
State Governments	Management of Sate Forest Reserves (SFR) Will be responsible for operationalization of the collaborative forest management (CHM) at state level Drafting legislation, laws and policies for the state forest reserve and community forest management. Will design the project activities at the state level, including activities to improve PA management, support infrastructure development, and work closely with targeted communities. At state level, it will identify staff to participate in project supported trainings and capacity development
County Governments	Local governments at all levels will be involved in project design, project implementation and decision making, and will be responsible for representing all stakeholders within their communities, including indigenous groups.
International Union for Conservation of Nature	Will provide technical support in PA management, assessments and surveys, green listing of the Imatong conservation area, knowledge management, developing learning materials, generating and documenting lessons and best practices and liaising with other countries for exchange visits
South Sudan Nature Conservation Organization (SSNCO)	Development, advocacy, lobbying and awareness creation Participate in conducting awareness creation about biodiversity conservation among communities Under the National Environment Policy, CBOs are expected to play a pivotal role in advocacy on sustainable management of biodiversity and ecosystems through mobilizing and sensitizing local people and ensuring that the concerns of the underprivileged are integrated in to the national development plans. Under this project, CBOs will be consulted and involved in creating awareness within indigenous peoples and local communities (IPLCs)
South Sudan Business Forum (SSBF)	The SSBF works with farmers in value chain improvement by organising them into associations and cooperatives to sell their produce in bulk. SSFF will organise farmers in training as a group like including establishing field schools.
University of Juba	The College of Natural Resources at the University of Juba staff members may be able to provide specialist and technical inputs in to the design of project activities. Students and recent graduates of the College may also be assigned to undertake scientific surveys or other work to assist in project design and implementation.
Farming Associations	The project will facilitate the grouping and formulation of Farmers Associations in the Imatong landscape. These Associations will be responsible for ensuring environmental integrity of the productive areas around Imatong CFR by contributing to the management and implementation of planned community-based environment management activities.
Community Groups	Existing community-based organizations/groups will be strengthened to implement environmental management projects at payam level. They will support activities such as reforestation and will be beneficiaries of livelihoods initiatives piloted in the landscape.
Farmers	Farmers will be beneficiaries of livelihoods initiatives piloted in the landscape. They will be assisted to form Farmers Associations and or groups and their capacities will be strengthened through training in SLM and INRM practices. They will provide their farms to act as demonstration sites. Farmer field schools will be established with the support of farmers.

3. Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

Briefly include below any gender dimensions relevant to the project, and any plans to address gender in project design (e.g. gender analysis).

The Transitional Constitution of South Sudan of 2011, and as amended in 2015, grants equal rights to all regardless of gender. South Sudan ratified the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 2014; and it also has ratified the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa. The Government adopted a National Gender Policy in 2012, which represents a reference framework for the promotion of equity and gender equality. Nevertheless, the country has ranked 169th out of 188 on the UN Gender Development Index (GDI), which compares disparities between women and men in three basic dimensions of human development – health, knowledge and living standards disparities between women and men in three basic dimensions of human development[1]

In traditional South Sudanese households, given that women and men use biological resources differently and to different extents to accomplish their defined social roles in many rural local communities, gender considerations will be taken into account during the project preparation as well as during its implementation phase. A report by Farm Africa[2] notes that more than half the farmers in the Imatong area are women and many men and women farmers are under 40 years. This provides a basis for gender-based interventions such as start-up agribusiness service providers that could lead to commercialization and greater food security at rates higher than normally expected. The project's efforts to support climate-smart agriculture and sustainable NTFP use to support ecological and livelihood security provide an avenue for gender mainstreaming and economic empowerment through activities such as value-added processing and horticulture. Vegetable production is minimal at present in the IML. Young people and women take quickly to high value horticultural crops that often generate significant cash returns within three months. Intensive production on areas of less than 500-1,000 m^2 can increase the nutritional status of families and generate cash from sales of surpluses. The project can thus include women and youth as drivers of change. During the PPG phase, efforts will be put in place to collect gender specific data and desegregate to ensure representation of women and men in the stakeholders consultative process.

The project will apply a gender responsive approach in all the four project components. During project design, the project will carry out project specific gender analyses and develop a gender action plan. The gender action plan will identify and support opportunities to include women in the design and implementation of activities with an aim to: (a) strengthen access to and control of land, forests, water, and other productive assets and resources for women; (b) increase their participation and leadership in decision-making processes relating to the environment; and (c) ensure that economic benefits coming from the sustainable use of forest resources and restoration efforts are shared equitably between men and women; (d) promote more equitable benefit sharing, and empower both women and men; (e) establish a Gender Platform to assist the project in understanding and achieving gender objectives; (f) identifying training needs, knowledge products, and communication efforts towards increasing the number of commitments and initiatives aimed at promoting gender equality linked to biodiversity benefits access and; (g) fill information gaps related to gender-related challenges and opportunities facing men and women at national and landscape levels. Data will be disaggregated by gender to monitor differentiated project impacts on men and women.

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[1] United Nations Development Programme (2015). Human Development Reports: Gender Inequality Index. http://hdr.undp.org/en/composite/GII

[2] Farm Africa. November 2014. Assessment of Agricultural Opportunities for Communities in the Imatong Mountain Watershed, Eastern Equatorial State, South Sudan. Report to the African Wildlife Foundation

Does the project expect to include any gender-responsive measures to address gender gaps or promote gender equality and women empowerment? Yes

closing gender gaps in access to and control over natural resources; Yes

improving women's participation and decision-making; and/or Yes

generating socio-economic benefits or services for women.

Will the project's results framework or logical framework include gender-sensitive indicators?

Yes

4. Private sector engagement

Will there be private sector engagement in the project?

Yes

Please briefly explain the rationale behind your answer.

During the project identification stage, a brief consultation was undertaken with private sector companies like South Sudan Business Forum (SSBF), Equatoria Teak Company (ETC) and the farmers associations. Further consultations will be undertaken during PPG stage.
South Sudan Business Forum (SSBF) will work with farmers in value chain improvement by organizing them into associations and cooperatives to sell their produce in bulk. SSFF will organize farmers in training as a group including establishing farmer field schools. It will then connect them with markets to sell their produce. With the support of SSBF, the project will ensure participation of the local communities and farmers association.
Equatoria Teak Company (ETC) is South Sudan's leading sustainable forestry company, and Africa's second largest teak grower. The group is based in Nzara, Western Equatoria State, with a second location in Lainya County, Central Equatoria State. The company has concession rights over more than 3,500ha of mature teak plantations and an additional 73,000ha of forestry concession, which is not planted. ETC has built a new sawmill in Nzara and is harvesting, milling and exporting teak products to international markets. The company has a nursery and silviculture programme that it is looking to strengthen. The majority shareholder in ETC is Maris Capital (www.mariscapital.com) which has extensive experience in managing businesses in Sub-Saharan Africa. The company will provide technical support to farmers to plant trees as one of its out-grower schemes
Detailed consultations with private sector will be undertaken during the PPG.

The project will progressively expand its engagement with key private sector players in South Sudan to accelerate the attainment of the envisioned outcomes of shared interest and shared value. A detailed and tailored private sector engagement policy paper will be drafted to guide in implementation of the proposed project. This will be done with a view to rallying a wider call to action, and mandate to work hand-in-hand with the private sector to design and deliver iterative and transformational ecosystem management approaches, while opening the space to catalyze value chains and job creation.

5. Risks to Achieving Project Objectives

Indicate risks, including climate change, potential social and environmental risks that might prevent the Project objectives from being achieved, and, if possible, propose measures that address these risks to be further developed during the Project design (table format acceptable)

A number of risks including cOVID19 and climate risks, have been identified which may prevent or hinder the project from achieving its objectives and the necessary measures that will be taken to eliminate or reduce those risks are presented in table below.

Table of Risk and Risk Management Mitigation

Risk	Rating	Risk mitigation measures
Land tenure conflicts create obstacles to protected area management effectiveness and sustainability	Medium	Establishment of multi-stakeholders' platforms is one of the targets of the project. All key stakeholders will participate in the project design, implementation and M&E from the outset. Their roles and responsibilities in PA management will be clearly articulated and benefits clarified. Conflict resolution mechanisms will be designed and embedded into the stakeholder participation plan. In the design of PA management approaches, specific attention will be given to co-management options, given the intricate linkages between local livelihoods and the natural resource base. The project will also link with GoSS institutions charged with resolving land tenure problems such as the Land Commission to assist in addressing such conflicts.
Increase in speed of degradation and loss of habitat induced by human activities	Medium	By securing the PA in the region and designing a strategy for restoration of production landscapes bordering the PA, hence, creating connectivity, the project will be ensuring that PA core areas are managed and human impacts are limited in scope.
National reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts do not integrate biodiversity conservation concerns	Medium/ High	Development partners will be engaged in strengthening the capacity of the GOSS in conducting environmental assessments and valuations. The GOSS is also engaged in an extensive policy and regulatory reform process. Through the project steering committee and other coordination mechanisms, UNEP will ensure that the project outcomes are supported by this critical baseline.
Confusion over jurisdiction/ governance between GoSS and state levels	Low	During project full proposal preparation phase, an in-depth governance and mandate analysis will be undertaken to determine the boundaries of the GOSS and State administrations. This governance analysis will inform the approach adopted and the focus of institutional and systemic capacity development activities so as to target the most relevant administrations. Vertical and horizontal inter-ministerial coordination also form part of the project, to ensure project activities are not undermined by sectoral or state-level decisions.
Potential problems of community access issues of protected area biodiversity under the collaborative forest management (CFM).	Low	Formal guidelines will be developed to ensure participatory planning and management strategies for the PA to include local communities. Mapping of traditional community PA use patterns and consultative processes will be employed to ensure that potential access rights and potential displacement issues are identified and addressed appropriately and that local communities are directly involved in the PA planning, decision making and management process. Legislation will be developed as necessary to enshrine co-management as a recognized approach for protected area management and conservation.
lack of adoption or engagement by local commun	M	The project will develop participative community consultation, educational and awareness programmes, and will use the partnership approach with indige

gement by local communities		d awareness programmes, and will use the partnership approach with indigenous peoples and local communities to ensure full involvement in the project.
Indigenous peoples and local ccommunities may oppose regulations that restrict their activities relevant to Forest and biodiversity conservation measures	M	The project will develop participative community consultation, educational and awareness programmes, and will use the partnership approach with indigenous peoples and local communities to ensure full involvement in the project.
Political instability and armed conflict	Medium	The Republic of South Sudan achieved independence on 9 July 2011 after signing the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005 that ended two decades of civil war. However, there are still tensions between the Nuer and Dinka tribesmen. The situation will be monitored closely, as will the impacts of the results. At this stage this risk is considered as a moderate one, especially as the project is focused on Imatong CFR which is mainly inhabited the Langi and Acholi ethnic groups.
Lengthy legislative process, and slow adoption of laws, policy and regulations on forest and protected areas	M	The project will support capacity building and awareness-raising activities to improve understanding of the whole implementation of the national protected areas process and knowledge for parliamentarians, decision makers and key stakeholders to facilitate the drafting of all relevant legislation.
High turnover at ministerial and government institutions level and partner agencies and loss of key staff initially involved and trained by the project	H	The project will support broad-based involvement of different government entities, NGO, CSO and the public. Capacity building and awareness-raising activities will be undertaken among all relevant government agencies staff and will not rely on individual staff. The project management unit will be able to inform new staff on the project objectives, progress and opportunities and benefits regarding biodiversity conservation and protected areas.
Risks that COVID-19 poses for all aspects of PIF concept and CEO endorsement packages	Low	The government will recruit enough and well knowledgeable consultant at national level to finalise the PPG on time. The gov't will also allow UNEP to recruit an international consultant with the right expertise to work on the PPG.
COVID 19 Restrictions of movement and holding meetings may make it difficult for the project development team to have adequate stakeholder engagement that will be fully inclusive.	High	The government of South Sudan has eased movement within the country and so stakeholder meetings will be conducted although in small groups of people
Limited capacity and experience for remote work and online interactions as well as limited remote data and information access and processing capacities to overcome COVID19 challenges	Low	The GoSS has procured and installed enough infrastructure in its offices for remote meetings. It also buys data for its staff for use even while working from home. **The opportunity** it has is that government staff has and will learnt and get more experience in remote learning and adoption of virtual computer-based work and managing virtual meetings. Currently the capacity of GOSS staff in online working and internet-based work in is very low.
Risk of ongoing or new human disease outbreaks such as the COVID-19 Pa	High	The project will comply with government directives in order to reduce health risks to project staff and stakeholders. Project start up could be delayed if necessary due to ongoing health risks and operational constraints caused by cas

such as the COVID-19 Pandemic affecting project implementation.		essary due to ongoing health risks and operational constraints caused by social distancing, self-isolation and other measures. Flexibility has been provided in the project budget through allowing a six-month buffer at each end for project start-up and completion delays. Implementation may be paused if necessary, in affected areas while government disease prevention or control measures are implemented and resumed at a later time if feasible. The Project Steering Committee will guide project responses through email correspondence for ongoing situations, as required. Revision of the project workplan may be necessary, and an extension request may be required if implementation is substantially delayed. If possible, project support for PPE and IT communications to facilitate remote working will be sought.
Health risk for staff, partners and communities in the pilot sites, including disruption and/or suspension of activities; and spread of COVID-19 among targeted communities	M	In the short term, during project implementation, the mitigation measures will include protection of staff, partners and people in need by using protective equipment and physical distancing. Revision and implementation of adjusted Stakeholder Engagement Plan. Take preventive actions to minimize the risk of the spread and impact of COVID-19. For long term mitigation, the COVID 19 pandemic provides **an opportunity** for the local communities, CSOs, NGOs, and government agencies to come together for effective planning to mitigate the impacts associated with the pandemic. The project will take care of this during the development of the local land use plans, state development plans, integrated landscape management plans, and sectoral plans.
Force majeure or acts of nature, such as the new pandemic, COVID-19 may delay implementation of project activities.	L	The project will take the following actions to mitigate negative results arising from force majeure or acts of nature, such as COVID-19 or any other health related risk: a) Identify critical stakeholders the absence of whom can lead to unplanned delays, b) Consider legal and financial implications of the force majeure COVID-19 and develop a mitigation plan at the inception stage, c) Communicate any disruptions due to force majeure, such as COVID-19, to all stakeholders, including staff and UNEP, d) Conduct scenario analysis and consider alternative delivery methods, such as virtual or online meetings, radio programmes, recorded messages and guidelines, personal protective equipment or any other steps that will allow the project to be completed on time and on budget, even if it is delayed at some stages. **The opportunity** is that this risk will also be mitigated by the conservation of Imatong CFR biodiversity, benefits for people for nature and traditional knowledge, directly contributing to the post-2020 global biodiversity framework to provide nature-based solutions to pandemics and other acts of nature
Natural hazards, including landslides, drought, floods and fires at project sites and the worsening impacts of climate change during project implementation damage or destroy SLM measures implemented through the project.	M	Impact: The implementation of the project will be stopped or delayed as communities recover from the impacts of the extreme weather events and fires. The project is intended to manage this risk through promoting actions aimed at mitigating the impacts of climate change and drought. Specific action will include the promotion of afforestation programmes among rural communities and the institutionalisation of development planning systems that reduce land degradation. In addition, disaster risk and response plans may be put in place in collaboration with selected communities
Climate change is predicted to change rainfall patterns and exacerbate drought conditions, exacting	M	The project will strengthen the awareness and adaptive capacity of local communities in the project sites during the community trainings, meetings and communication/awareness materials which will be developed. The project will also coordinate with the meteorological authorities to provide the local autho

ght conditions, exacting an additional stress on the already vulnerable ecosystems		also coordinate with the meteorological authorities to provide the local authorities with up to date information on climate, short term forecasts, seasonal forecasts, long-term climate scenarios, environmental monitoring, early warnings of severe meteorological and climatic events, and other relevant data, all at a suitable spatial scale and packaged in a manner suitable for making on-farm and sector management decisions.
Increased desertification and loss of agricultural and grazing land, and crop loss and reduced crop yields owing to increased temperatures and changing rainfall patterns due to climate change	M	The project will coordinate with the Ministry of Agriculture to promote the use of climate Smart Agriculture (CSA) approach through innovative practices and SLM strategies to mitigate against climate change challenges including loss of agricultural and grazing land, and crop loss and reduced crop yields. In addition, the project will work with the meteorological authorities to provide the local authorities with up to date information on climate, short term forecasts, seasonal forecasts, long-term climate scenarios, environmental monitoring, early warnings of severe meteorological and climatic events, and other relevant data, all at a suitable spatial scale and packaged in a manner suitable for making on-farm and sector management decisions

6. Coordination

Outline the institutional structure of the project including monitoring and evaluation coordination at the project level. Describe possible coordination with other relevant GEF-financed projects and other initiatives.

The project will be implemented by UNEP and executed nationally by the Ministry of Environment and Forestry (MoEF). UNEP – through its GEF Task Manager (TM) and Funds Management Officer (FMO) - will monitor the implementation of the project, review progress in the realization of the project outputs, and ensure the proper use of GEF funds. The UNEP TM will be directly responsible for: (i) providing consistent and regular project oversight to ensure the achievement of project objectives; (ii) liaising between the project and the GEF Secretariat; (iii) ensuring that both GEF and UNEP policy requirements and standards are applied and met (i.e. reporting obligations, technical, fiduciary, M&E); (iv) approving budget revisions, certifying fund availability and transferring funds; (v) organizing mid- and end-term evaluations and reviewing project audits; (vi) providing technical, legal and administrative guidance if requested; and (vii) certifying project operational completion. The Ministry of Environment and Forestry (MoEF) will be the Executing Agency on behalf of the Government of South Sudan and will provide overall coordination and supervision. The MoEF will be accountable to UNEP for the achievement of the project objective and outcomes, according to the approved overall project work plan. MoEF will implement the project in collaboration with project partners such as Ministry of Wildlife Conservation & Tourism (MWC&T), Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (MA&FS); State government institutions (Eastern Equatoria State-Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Eastern Equatoria State); Universities (University of Juba); Civil society institutions (South Sudanese Development Organization (SSDO), Eco-Peace Initiative, South Sudan Wildlife Society (SSWS), South Sudan Nature Conservation Organisation (SSNCO), International Union for Conservation of Nature. To expedite delivery of outputs, the MoEF will sign Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) with project partners to implement specific activities of the project. These memoranda will clearly spell out the activities agreed upon and responsibilities of each party in the execution of the project. The mandate, expertise and competencies of the partners are some of the criteria that will be used in identifying activities to be implemented by project partners. A Project Management Unit (PMU) will be established in the Department of Biodiversity of the Ministry of Environment and Forestry. A Project Steering Committee (PSC) will be established to provide policy and strategic guidance for project implementation, while IUCN will provide technical support. The ministry of agriculture will also provide technical support with regard to land use plan development and implementation

GEF ID 9551 Title “Capacity Development in Reducing Illegal Wildlife Trade and Improving Protected Area Management Effectiveness in South Sudan” implanted by UNEP worth GEF funding of USD 5,329,452 and Co-financing of 15,950,000 that is focusing on the Nimule national park and 3 Protected areas in the Sudd region. It aims at (a) Improving Park management and wildlife protection in Nimule NP, Strengthening capacities and information for wildlife protection in and around Nimule National Park and developing Community-based conservation and sustainable livelihoods for communities living around Nimule national park (b) strengthened Protection of Sudd ecosystem and associated PAs (Shambe, Meshra, Zeraf) , Strengthened capacities and information for wildlife protection in and around three protected areas in the Sudd Ecosystem and Community based conservation in the Sudd ecosystem. This project will use these lessons and will community conservation approach to collect and document level of awareness of communities on the benefits of ecosystem restoration with a view to change mindsets on benefits of ecosystem restoration and ecosystem services.

GEF ID 9723 titled “Strengthening the Capacity of Government and Communities in South Sudan to Adapt to Climate Change” implemented by UNEP Worth GEF funds USD 9,032,420 and co-financing of USD 30,000,000). The project is aiming at (a) developing Institutional capacity for adaptation to climate change developed (b) transferring EbA adaptation strategies to communities as part of an agreed land-use plan structured to reduce people’s vulnerability to climate change and (c) Strengthening knowledge base and transfer of knowledge on climate change effects and adaptation benefits. The two projects will work together land use planning at community level.

10178 Title Watershed approaches for climate resilience in agro-pastoral landscapes implemented by UNDP and UNIDO worth GEF funds of USD 9,384,703 and co-financing of USD 29,500,000. The project is aiming at (a) strategies and capacities to implement community based and gender-sensitive climate change adaptation for agriculture and food value chains across South Sudan (b) Best practices in climate change resilient agriculture and food value chains adopted by rural communities (c) Assisting Communities in micro-watersheds to adopt natural resources management and restoration to reduce climate change impacts. This project will use the lessons learnt in agriculture and food value chains and in working with Communities to adopt natural resources management and restoration

At the transboundary level, this project will have very strong linkages with the GEF ID 4456 Titled “Conservation and Sustainable Use of the Threatened Savanna Woodland in the Kidepo Critical Landscape in North Eastern Uganda” Implemented by UNDP worth GEF funding of USD 3,080,000 and co-financing of USD10,400,000 focusing at Strengthening management effectiveness of the Kidepo critical landscape PA cluster.

7. Consistency with National Priorities

Is the Project consistent with the National Strategies and plans or reports and assesments under relevant conventions?

Yes

If yes, which ones and how: NAPAs, NAPs, ASGM NAPs, MIAs, NBSAPs, NCs, TNAs, NCSAs, NIPs, PRSPs, NPFE, BURs, INDCs, etc

The project is consistent with the Government of the Republic of South Sudan (GOSS) national policies and legislation: (i) The Transitional Constitution of the Republic of South Sudan (2011); (ii) Draft Environmental Protection Policy (2013); (iii) Draft Environmental Protection Bill (2013); (iv) Forest Policy (2014); and (v) Draft Policy on Wildlife Conservation and Protected Areas (2012). The project is also consistent with, and contributes to the achievement of: (i) The Fifth National Report to The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) (2015); (ii) The United Framework Conventions on Climate Change (UNFCCC); (iii) The National Adaptation Programme of Actions (NAPA); (iv) Vision 2040 of the GOSS; and (v) The South Sudan Development Plan (SSDP) (2011–2016).
The project is aligned to and supports the implementation of the Government of South Sudan (GoSS) National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (2018 to 2027). The South Sudan National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) represents a major step forward towards fulfilling the sustainable development goals (SDGs) enshrined in the Transitional National Constitution 2011 and the Vision 2040. This project, therefore, contributes to, and supports the GoSS in achieving her national priorities in Vision 2040 and global commitments.

The proposed project is in line with the United Nations Cooperation Framework (UNCF) for South Sudan Priority Area # 1: Building Peace and Strengthening Governance ; by contributing to the national efforts to engage with communities on the wise use of natural resources and promote dialogue, reconciliation, expand community interdependence, access and sustainable management of natural resources. The proposed project is fully consistent with South Sudan's national priorities as laid out in its Fifth National Report to the Convention of Biological Diversity 2015 and the Draft National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, in particular with its national target 13 together with 14 and 16 on conservation of biodiversity, addressing the reduction of biodiversity loss and improved sustainable use of the native biodiversity. In terms of women's empowerment, the project seeks similar outcomes like the Gender Policy (2013) and South Sudan National Women's Strategy (2016) which emphasize the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment in all policies and programmes of government, private sector and civil society in order achieve improved and sustainable livelihoods. Women face unequal access to production resources, limited decision-making power and mobility, particularly in rural areas. The project will also contribute to the implementation of the National Capacity Self-Assessment (NCSA) findings and recommendations. This National Capacity Self-Assessment (NCSA) project is part of the UNEP/GEF support to the Republic of South Sudan to strengthen the capacity of national, state and local institutions and communities to manage the environment and support processes for implementation of Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs). Capacity development needs will be assessed at the individual, institutional and systemic (policy and legislative framework) levels, including by assessing vertical (local & regional authorities –national government) and horizontal (government – NGOs/CBOs) coordination structures for planning and executing activities. The NCSA project focused in three phases, namely: (i) thematic situation analysis and capacity needs identification, (ii) identification of synergies among the MEAs, and (iii) the NCSA action plan process.

8. Knowledge Management

Outline the knowledge management approach for the Project, including, if any, plans for the Project to learn from other relevant Projects and initiatives, to assess and document in a user-friendly form, and share these experiences and expertise with relevant stakeholders.

The project will facilitate and enhance knowledge acquisition and experience sharing at local, landscape, national, regional and global levels through better access to information, knowledge, learning and networking for purposes of catalyzing coordinated implementation of PAME and biodiversity loss reduction. This will be achieved by; (i) developing and operationalizing an interactive M&E system to track implementation of project activities for purposes of scaling out in similar areas in South Sudan, (ii) documenting, packaging and sharing best practices and lessons learned at landscape, national and regional levels to inform uptake of good practices and lessons learned, and policy influencing and, (iii) establishing and enhancing the functionality of national, county and PA level multi-stakeholder platforms to champion PAME and restoration of production landscapes outside PAs.

9. Environmental and Social Safeguard (ESS) Risks

Provide information on the identified environmental and social risks and potential impacts associated with the project/program based on your organization's ESS systems and procedures

Overall Project/Program Risk Classification*

PIF	CEO Endorsement/Approval	MTR	TE
Low			

Measures to address identified risks and impacts

Provide preliminary information on the types and levels of risk classifications/ratings of any identified environmental and social risks and potential impacts associated with the project (considering the GEF ESS Minimum Standards) and describe measures to address these risks during the project design.

Table of Risk and Risk Mitigation measures

Risk	Rating	Risk mitigation measures
Land tenure conflicts create obstacles to protected area management effe	Medium	Establishment of multi-stakeholders' platforms is one of the targets of the project. All key stakeholders will participate in the project design, implementation and M&E from the outset. Their roles and responsibilities in PA managem

ctiveness and sustainability		ent will be clearly articulated and benefits clarified. Conflict resolution mechanisms will be designed and embedded into the stakeholder participation plan. In the design of PA management approaches, specific attention will be given to co-management options, given the intricate linkages between local livelihoods and the natural resource base. The project will also link with GoSS institutions charged with resolving land tenure problems such as the Land Commission to assist in addressing such conflicts.
Increase in speed of degradation and loss of habitat induced by human activities	Medium	By securing the PA in the region and designing a strategy for restoration of production landscapes bordering the PA, hence, creating connectivity, the project will be ensuring that PA core areas are managed and human impacts are limited in scope.
National reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts do not integrate biodiversity conservation concerns	Medium/ High	Development partners will be engaged in strengthening the capacity of the GOSS in conducting environmental assessments and valuations. The GOSS is also engaged in an extensive policy and regulatory reform process. Through the project steering committee and other coordination mechanisms, UNEP will ensure that the project outcomes are supported by this critical baseline.
Confusion over jurisdiction/ governance between GoSS and state levels	Low	During project full proposal preparation phase, an in-depth governance and mandate analysis will be undertaken to determine the boundaries of the GOSS and State administrations. This governance analysis will inform the approach adopted and the focus of institutional and systemic capacity development activities so as to target the most relevant administrations. Vertical and horizontal inter-ministerial coordination also form part of the project, to ensure project activities are not undermined by sectoral or state-level decisions.
Potential problems of community access issues of protected area biodiversity under the collaborative forest management (CFM).	Low	Formal guidelines will be developed to ensure participatory planning and management strategies for the PA to include local communities. Mapping of traditional community PA use patterns and consultative processes will be employed to ensure that potential access rights and potential displacement issues are identified and addressed appropriately and that local communities are directly involved in the PA planning, decision making and management process. Legislation will be developed as necessary to enshrine co-management as a recognized approach for protected area management and conservation.
lack of adoption or engagement by local communities	M	The project will develop participative community consultation, educational and awareness programmes, and will use the partnership approach with indigenous peoples and local communities to ensure full involvement in the project.
Indigenous peoples and local ccommunities may oppose regulations that restrict their activities relevant to Forest and biodiversity conservation measures	M	The project will develop participative community consultation, educational and awareness programmes, and will use the partnership approach with indigenous peoples and local communities to ensure full involvement in the project.
Political instability and armed conflict	Medium	The Republic of South Sudan achieved independence on 9 July 2011 after signing the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005 that ended two decades of civil war. However, there are still tensions between the Nuer and Dinka tribesmen. The situation will be monitored closely, as will the impacts of the results. At this stage this risk is considered as a moderate one, especially as the project is focused on Imatong CFR which is mainly inhabited the Langi and Acholi ethnic groups.
Lengthy legislative proce	M	The project will support capacity building and awareness-raising activities to

Lengthy legislative process, and slow adoption of laws, policy and regulations on forest and protected areas	M	The project will support capacity building and awareness raising activities to improve understanding of the whole implementation of the national protected areas process and knowledge for parliamentarians, decision makers and key stakeholders to facilitate the drafting of all relevant legislation.
High turnover at ministerial and government institutions level and partner agencies and loss of key staff initially involved and trained by the project	H	The project will support broad-based involvement of different government entities, NGO, CSO and the public. Capacity building and awareness-raising activities will be undertaken among all relevant government agencies staff and will not rely on individual staff. The project management unit will be able to inform new staff on the project objectives, progress and opportunities and benefits regarding biodiversity conservation and protected areas.
Risks that COVID-19 poses for all aspects of PIF concept and CEO endorsement packages	Low	The government will recruit enough and well knowledgeable consultant at national level to finalise the PPG on time. The gov't will also allow UNEP to recruit an international consultant with the right expertise to work on the PPG.
COVID 19 Restrictions of movement and holding meetings may make it difficult for the project development team to have adequate stakeholder engagement that will be fully inclusive.	High	The government of South Sudan has eased movement within the country and so stakeholder meetings will be conducted although in small groups of people
Limited capacity and experience for remote work and online interactions as well as limited remote data and information access and processing capacities to overcome COVID19 challenges	Low	The GoSS has procured and installed enough infrastructure in its offices for remote meetings. It also buys data for its staff for use even while working from home. **The opportunity** it has is that government staff has and will learnt and get more experience in remote learning and adoption of virtual computer-based work and managing virtual meetings. Currently the capacity of GOSS staff in online working and internet-based work in is very low.
Risk of ongoing or new human disease outbreaks such as the COVID-19 Pandemic affecting project implementation.	High	The project will comply with government directives in order to reduce health risks to project staff and stakeholders. Project start up could be delayed if necessary due to ongoing health risks and operational constraints caused by social distancing, self-isolation and other measures. Flexibility has been provided in the project budget through allowing a six-month buffer at each end for project start-up and completion delays. Implementation may be paused if necessary, in affected areas while government disease prevention or control measures are implemented and resumed at a later time if feasible. The Project Steering Committee will guide project responses through email correspondence for ongoing situations, as required. Revision of the project workplan may be necessary, and an extension request may be required if implementation is substantially delayed. If possible, project support for PPE and IT communications to facilitate remote working will be sought.
Health risk for staff, partners and communities in the pilot sites, including disruption and/or suspension of activities; and spread of COVID-19 among targeted communities	M	In the short term, during project implementation, the mitigation measures will include protection of staff, partners and people in need by using protective equipment and physical distancing. Revision and implementation of adjusted Stakeholder Engagement Plan. Take preventive actions to minimize the risk of the spread and impact of COVID-19. For long term mitigation, the COVID 19 pandemic provides **an opportunity** for

argeted communities		For long term mitigation, the COVID-19 pandemic provides **an opportunity** for the local communities, CSOs, NGOs, and government agencies to come together for effective planning to mitigate the impacts associated with the pandemic. The project will take care of this during the development of the local land use plans, state development plans, integrated landscape management plans, and sectoral plans.
Force majeure or acts of nature, such as the new pandemic, COVID-19 may delay implementation of project activities.	L	The project will take the following actions to mitigate negative results arising from force majeure or acts of nature, such as COVID-19 or any other health related risk: a) Identify critical stakeholders the absence of whom can lead to unplanned delays, b) Consider legal and financial implications of the force majeure COVID-19 and develop a mitigation plan at the inception stage, c) Communicate any disruptions due to force majeure, such as COVID-19, to all stakeholders, including staff and UNEP, d) Conduct scenario analysis and consider alternative delivery methods, such as virtual or online meetings, radio programmes, recorded messages and guidelines, personal protective equipment or any other steps that will allow the project to be completed on time and on budget, even if it is delayed at some stages. **The opportunity** is that this risk will also be mitigated by the conservation of Imatong CFR biodiversity, benefits for people for nature and traditional knowledge, directly contributing to the post-2020 global biodiversity framework to provide nature-based solutions to pandemics and other acts of nature
Natural hazards, including landslides, drought, floods and fires at project sites and the worsening impacts of climate change during project implementation damage or destroy SLM measures implemented through the project.	M	Impact: The implementation of the project will be stopped or delayed as communities recover from the impacts of the extreme weather events and fires. The project is intended to manage this risk through promoting actions aimed at mitigating the impacts of climate change and drought. Specific action will include the promotion of afforestation programmes among rural communities and the institutionalisation of development planning systems that reduce land degradation. In addition, disaster risk and response plans may be put in place in collaboration with selected communities
Climate change is predicted to change rainfall patterns and exacerbate drought conditions, exacting an additional stress on the already vulnerable ecosystems	M	The project will strengthen the awareness and adaptive capacity of local communities in the project sites during the community trainings, meetings and communication/awareness materials which will be developed. The project will also coordinate with the meteorological authorities to provide the local authorities with up to date information on climate, short term forecasts, seasonal forecasts, long-term climate scenarios, environmental monitoring, early warnings of severe meteorological and climatic events, and other relevant data, all at a suitable spatial scale and packaged in a manner suitable for making on-farm and sector management decisions.
Increased desertification and loss of agricultural and grazing land, and crop loss and reduced crop yields owing to increased temperatures and changing rainfall patterns due to climate change	M	The project will coordinate with the Ministry of Agriculture to promote the use of climate Smart Agriculture (CSA) approach through innovative practices and SLM strategies to mitigate against climate change challenges including loss of agricultural and grazing land, and crop loss and reduced crop yields. In addition, the project will work with the meteorological authorities to provide the local authorities with up to date information on climate, short term forecasts, seasonal forecasts, long-term climate scenarios, environmental monitoring, early warnings of severe meteorological and climatic events, and other relevant data, all at a suitable spatial scale and packaged in a manner suitable for making on-farm and sector management decisions

Supporting Documents

Upload available ESS supporting documents.

Title	Submitted

Part III: Approval/Endorsement By GEF Operational Focal Point(S) And GEF Agency(ies)

A. RECORD OF ENDORSEMENT OF GEF OPERATIONAL FOCAL POINT (S) ON BEHALF OF THE GOVERNMENT(S): (Please attach the Operational Focal Point endorsement letter with this template).

Name	Position	Ministry	Date
M. David Batali Oliver	GEF Operational Focal Point /Director General for Environmental	Ministry of Environment and Forestry	9/14/2021

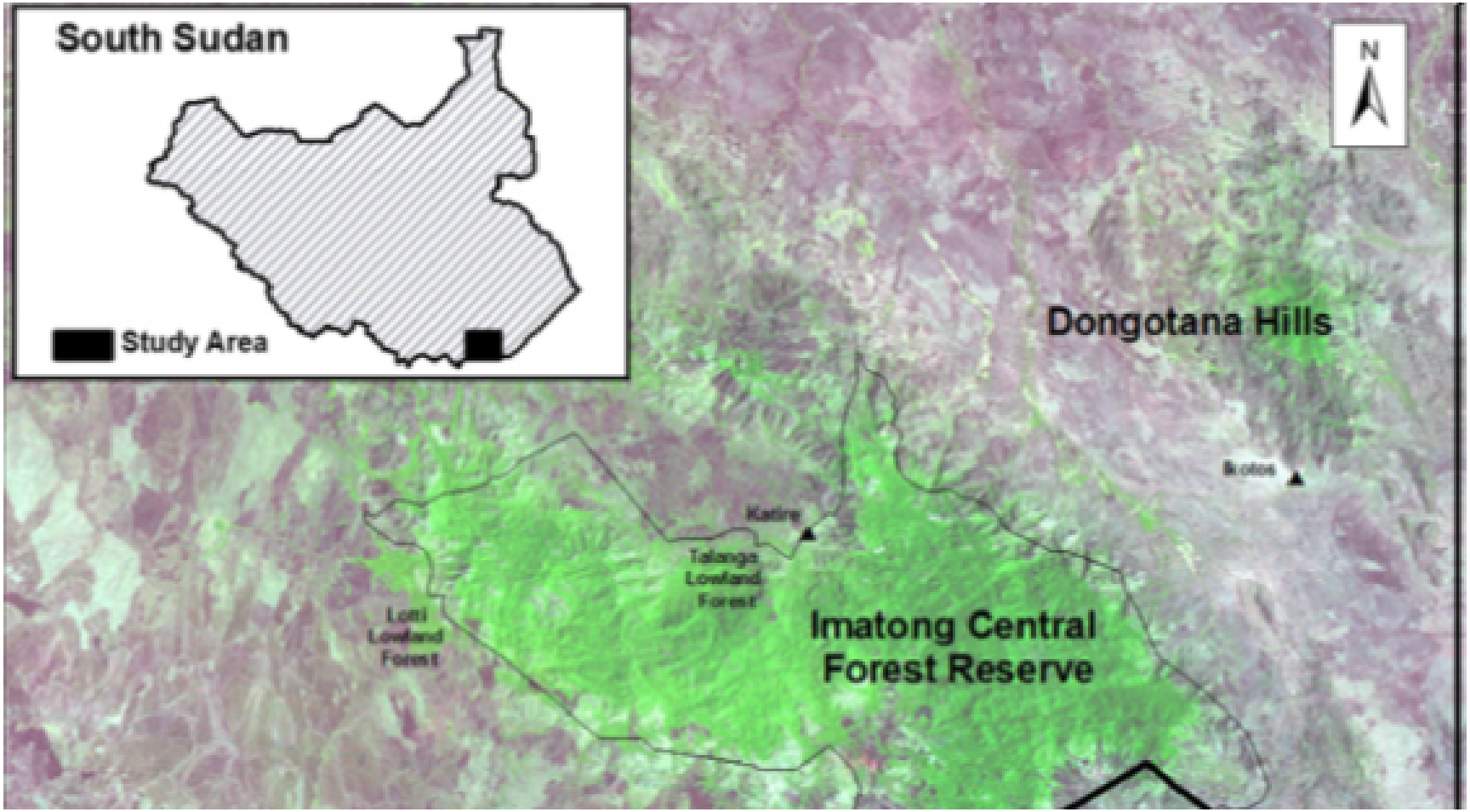
ANNEX A: Project Map and Geographic Coordinates

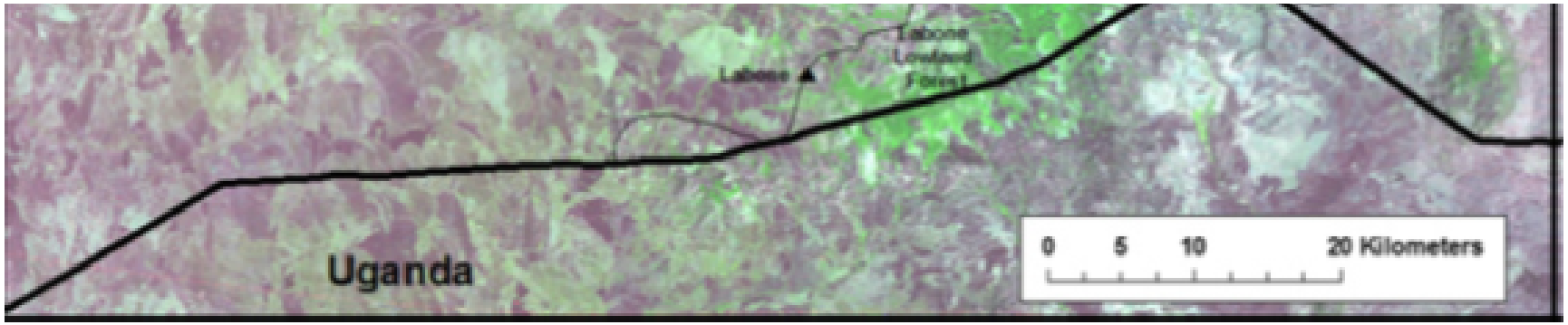
Please provide geo-referenced information and map where the project intervention takes place

Annex A

PROGRAM/PROJECT MAP AND GEOGRAPHIC COORDINATES

(when possible)





The project will take place in Imatong mountains landscape located at (3°57'0"N 32°54'0"E) in the Republic of South Sudan (map is in Annex A)