

Mainstreaming Sustainable Land Management (SLM) for Large-Scale Impact in the Grazing Lands of Limpopo and Northern Cape provinces in South Africa

Review CEO Endorsement and Make a recommendation

Basic project information

GEF ID

10179

Countries

South Africa

Project Name

Mainstreaming Sustainable Land Management (SLM) for Large-Scale Impact in the Grazing Lands of Limpopo and Northern Cape provinces in South Africa

Agencies

IUCN

Date received by PM

12/11/2020

Review completed by PM

9/8/2021

Program Manager

Jean-Marc Sinnassamy

Focal Area

Land Degradation

Project Type

FSP

PIF
CEO Endorsement

Part I ? Project Information

Focal area elements

1. Does the project remain aligned with the relevant GEF focal area elements as presented in PIF (as indicated in table A)?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request
September 1st, 2021

Addressed.

July 14th, 2021

Not fully addressed.

In the request for CEO endorsement, you included a text making the project eligible under all the GEF7 LD objectives ? it is not recommended to maintain this text. You selected the objective LD1.1 related to agriculture: you need to propose a rationale reflecting how the project fits well with this objective. Please, revise and simplify.

June 1st, 2021

Not fully addressed.

- We understand you want to keep the project as a LD1.1 and you do not consider the LD2.7. There is probably a mistake in the response (see below "the project will be kept as LD2.7").

-Please confirm and make coherent the use of acronyms: In the portal -cf. Part I on the Project Information - the main executing partner is DEA in collaboration with the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries in South Africa. In the review, you use DFFE;. In the project document, you write: "The Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE) is the execution partner on behalf of the Government of South Africa and will work closely with the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD). Please, correct and make the information coherent. It seems that DFFE should be the main executing partner, in association with DALRRD. Please, correct the part I in the portal.

January 31, 2021

The project content is aligned with the relevant GEF focal area elements presented in the PIF under the LD 1.1 objective on agriculture.

Some project aspects deal with the LD2.7 project on LDN. It is up to the GEF Agency to decide if the use of the LD2.7 is pertinent or not. We can agree on a full focus on LD1.1. Please, confirm.

- We note that in addition to the information in the portal, there is a template of request for CEO endorsement and a project document. We invite the GEF Agency to well check the numbers ? especially in the request for CEO endorsement ? some numbers (sums) are missing or are wrong (Table B, cofinancing).

- DEA in the portal, DEFF in the project document: please use the current valid acronym: DEFF.

Agency Response

IUCN Response to July 14 GEF Sec review comment:

Request for CEO Endorsement has been revised to describe how the project is aligned specifically with GEF7 LD focal area objective LD-1-1, ?maintain or improve the flow of agro-ecosystem services to sustain food production and livelihoods through Sustainable Land Management (SLM)?. This is found in section *Part II, Project Justification, (d) Alignment with GEF focal area and/or Impact Program strategies.*

Project description summary

2. Is the project structure/design appropriate to achieve the expected outcomes and outputs as in Table B and described in the project document?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

September 1st, 2021

Addressed.

July 14, 2021

- We found the two letters of cofinancing from DFFE in the documents Tab. However, in the portal, it is not correct to show \$17 million of cofinancing from DEFF and provide a proof of \$4 million. The right way would be to provide two lines of cofinancing from DEFF to reflect the amount of each letter. Please, revise.

- We take note of the revised explanations given by IUCN for the slightly higher pmc than the usual and accept them.

Cleared.

- The cofinancing ratio for the project and the pmc are around 1:8/1:7. It is acceptable.

Cleared.

June 1st 2021

Not addressed.

- We are very sorry, but it is very difficult to check the changes only with the responses in the review meaning "this has been clarified", "this has been explained". Please, highlight the sections that have been added or modified in the project document and the portal. Please ensure that the information is coherent between the project document and the portal: it seems that some corrections were made in the project document, but not reflected in the portal. Check the questions below from January 31, 2021.

- Please, note that pmc are expected to be cofinanced at a height similar to the project cofinancing ratio, or 1:8. With pmc of \$192,848, we would expect around \$1.54 million.

- Please note that the pmc should be calculated based on the grant used for the project components (=\$3,439,968). \$192,848 represents 5.61% of this amount. You were then right to maintain the rationale provided in the portal under the table B: "**The PMC for this project is higher than the norm for the following reasons. The project is being implemented in two sites that are at least 800 miles apart, creating a need for an expanded PMU team that can sufficiently monitor implementation in both sites.**

We can accept this reasoning.

- However, the second part of the explanation is not an element to justify additional costs. We suggest removing this information from the portal below the table

B: Further to the exchanges held between the agency and the Government on implementing arrangements, UNEP was selected by the Government to play the role of executing agency for this project (costs included in the components). This has resulted in higher costs for project management.

January 31, 2021

Result framework

Component 1 and 4

- All outputs under the component 1 are potentially welcome if you can make the case about the current commitment from national, provincial, and local levels in view of sustainability. Please, clarify. This comment is also applicable to the component 4 on learning and policy dialogue.
- The role of cofinancing in these components 1 and 4 would also help to better understand the additionality of GEF resources. Please, clarify.

Component 2

- Output 2.1.2: LDN targets and investment priorities are validated: Except a mistake of our part, we have not seen any map related to the existing LDN targets and priorities. Could you better explain how the proposed work fits with the state of the LDN framework in South Africa?

Component 3

- Please, explain how you can reach such high targets with only the component 3 in investment for \$1.1 million of GEF resources and a total cofinancing of \$2.45 million.
- Output 3.1.3 and 3.1.4: Could you please confirm cofinancing from the targeted private sector entities and financing mechanisms.?

Project Management Costs

- We are ready to understand the need for higher pmc than usual because of the logistics of the project targeting landscapes in Limpopo and Northern Cap Provinces distant from 800 miles (6%). Please, detail the budget lines that need additional resources.
- The additional fee of \$417,876 (13%) for UNEP as additional intermediary is just not aligned with GEF policies. These expenses should be supported by existing budget lines, between the Agency fees and eventually pmc. See the recommendations in the item 14 (Coordination).
- Cofinancing would also be needed for any role of a third entity in project arrangements . If this solution is still explored, please, correct.

Agency Response

IUCN Response to July 14 GEF Sec review comment:

Table C in the Request for CEO Endorsement, 'Confirmed sources of co-financing for the project by name and by type?', has been revised to show two separate lines of co-financing from DFFE corresponding to the two commitments documented in the two co-financing letters.

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

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request NA

Agency Response

Co-financing

4. Are the confirmed expected amounts, sources and types of co-financing adequately documented, with supporting evidence and a description on how the breakdown of co-financing was identified and meets the definition of investment mobilized, and a description of any major changes from PIF, consistent with the requirements of the Co-Financing Policy and Guidelines?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

September 1st, 2021

Addressed.

July 14, 2021

- We take note there are two letters of cofinancing from DEFF: you should have included two lines of cofinancing to reflect the pieces of evidence. As a matter of fact, it is not correct in the portal to have \$17 million of cofinancing and a proof of \$4 million in front of it. Please revise.

June 2, 2021

The letter of cofinancing from DEFF mentions "R60 000 000.00 (approximately US\$4 094 480.89)". However, you included in the table C an amount of \$17,729,417. Please, clarify.

January 31, 2021

- In the portal, the current level of cofinancing is just not acceptable (\$2.45 million, ratio under 1:1), very far from the expectations at PIF level (\$145 million, ratio: 1: 40). Some explanations would be welcome to understand the situation. Please, note that a cofinancing of \$31.6 million is mentioned in the project document. Please check the different documents (portal, project document, and request for CEO endorsement) and make information coherent. See also the other numbers. There are different numbers in the table B, C, and D.

- The explanation provided ?cofinancing not mobilized? is not enough. A cofinancing ratio under 1:1 is a very wrong signal about the additionality of the GEF resources. The project seems a stand-alone project with out any catalytic effect for scaling up.

- It is not the intent to finance a GEF LD stand-alone project, especially in a country as South Africa, pretty advanced in the field of NRM. Please, revise the reasoning to highlight the additionality of the GEF resources.

- At PIF level, Germany mentioned potential synergies with two projects with the Ministry of Agriculture. Did you explore these opportunities?

- The PIF also builds on several initiatives (WOCAT, Landcare, Working for Water, Environmental Protection and Infrastructure Programme, etc): Did you approach these partners for potential cofinancing?

- LDN is also about innovation and the commitment of the private sector and investments partners: Did you explore any opportunities in these directions?

Agency Response

IUCN Response to July 14 GEF Sec review comment:

Table C in the Request for CEO Endorsement, 'Confirmed sources of co-financing for the project by name and by type', has been revised to show two separate lines of co-financing from DFFE corresponding to the two commitments documented in the two co-financing letters.

There are two co-financing letters from DFFE: 1) From DFFE itself for \$13 634 936 and 2) DFFE (working for Land Programme) for \$4 094 481. The combined co-financing commitment is \$17,729,417. These numbers have been updated in the ProDoc: Section 1.1. Page 2; and in the CEO Endorsement Request on the GEF Portal, Table C.

GEF Resource Availability

5. Is the financing presented in Table D adequate and does the project demonstrate a cost-effective approach to meet the project objectives?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

June 1st, 2021

Addressed

January 31, 2021

No.

- The cofinancing under 1:1 is not acceptable.

- Without cofinancing, it is difficult to understand how US\$ 1.1 million in investments (component 3), among a US\$ 3.629 million project, can meet the proposed objectives. Correct and clarify.

Agency Response The co-financing amount has been corrected and a total of \$28 783 860 has been confirmed. See: ProDoc: Section 1.1. Page 2.

Project Preparation Grant

6. Is the status and utilization of the PPG reported in Annex C in the document?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

June 1st, 2021

Addressed.

January 31, 2021

Please provide a list of studies and assessments developed during the PPG.

Agency Response

The following studies were completed:

- ? Guidance for Grant Making
- ? COVID 19 Risk and Opportunity Assessment.
- ? ESMS Screening Report
- ? Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF)

Gender Action Plan Framework

Core indicators

**7. Are there changes/adjustments made in the core indicator targets indicated in Table E?
Do they remain realistic?**

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

June 1st, 2021

Addressed.

January 31, 2021

No.

- The core indicators do not seem realistic in the proposed conditions.

- The core indicators are supposed to reflect the obtained results from the whole project, meaning the GEF grant + cofinancing. It is therefore surprising to find (almost) the same targets between the PIF and the CEO endorsement while the PIF was conceived

with \$145 million of cofinancing meanwhile the proposed project document includes a cofinancing of \$2.45 million. Please, explain.

- Please ensure that the targets between the different documents are consistent (portal, project document, and request for CEO endorsement).

Agency Response

? The core indicators should be achievable now that significant co-financing (\$27 million) has been secured.

The signed off PIF co-financing amount was \$36 million as opposed to the quoted \$145 million in previous iterations.

Part II ? Project Justification

1. Is there a sufficient elaboration on how the global environmental/adaptation problems, including the root causes and barriers, are going to be addressed?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

Yes. The problems, barriers and priorities are well described.

Agency Response

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

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

July 14, 2021

We take note of the summary of past and on-going actions inserted in the project document (p84-85) to clarify the baseline scenario and associated project.

Cleared.

June 1st, 2021

Please, highlight the modified sections in the project document and the portal (if possible).

January 31, 2021

There is indeed a baseline scenario.

We however recommend to complete this baseline scenario with projects and initiatives supported by bilateral, multilateral partners, and NGOs in collaboration with concerned authorities (environment, agriculture, water, etc.)Please, complete.

Agency Response A summary of Past and Planned Actions and Projects has been added and modified. See ProDoc, Section 3.5.1.16 page 84-85.

3. Is the proposed alternative scenario as described in PIF/PFD sound and adequate? Is there sufficient clarity on the expected outcomes and components of the project and a description on the project is aiming to achieve them?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

July 14, 2021

To clarify the proposed scenario, we understand that the text p.92 was added (section 4.3).

Cleared.

June 1, 2021

Not responded. Please, provide the revisions and highlight them in the project document and the portal.

January 31, 2021

Without further cofinancing and partnerships, the proposed scenario does not seem adequate. Please, clarify.

Agency Response

IUCN June 11 Response:

? Co-financing has been increased to \$28.7 million and a number of partnerships have been formalised. Please see section 4.3 page 92. The following text has been added:

?The core goal of the project is to assist South Africa to achieve LDN by 2030, by establishing enabling conditions for scaling up good SLM practices. This will be achieved by placing **130 000 Ha** of communal agricultural under direct SLM actions and **800 000 Ha** of communal land under improved governance. The overall project budget from The GEF is US\$3 629 816, while co-financing amounts to US\$28 783 860. All outputs of the study require significant stakeholder consultation as well as support from National, Provincial and Local Governments structures. Technical support for the project is provided by both DFFE and DALRRD as well as Working for Land (WFL) SANBI, UNEP and IUCN. This support will be distributed across all outputs and co-financing will be utilised. As distances between sites are large, particularly in the case of the Northern Cape, co-financing will be used to support travel costs of government officials as well as meeting expenses including venue hire. In order to implement the objectives, the Provincial and Local government structures have been mobilised and will play an important part in community organisation. Co-financing from the private-sector has not yet been sourced as implementing partners will be selected through a competitive bid process. Once selected, co-financing will be sourced from the relevant provide sector entities. There are a number of private sector stakeholders which may be able to assist and are active in the study sites. These include, Meat Naturally, the Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT) and Conservation South Africa. These stakeholders would bring significant technical and in-depth knowledge of SLM practices as well as the implementation of innovative financing instruments for communities. This would have to be approached once the procurement process has been finalised by the DFFE?.

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

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

Yes, the project is developed under the LD1.1 objective.

Addressed.

Agency Response

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

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

June 1st, 2021

Addressed.

January 31, 2021

- We wonder what the notion of mainstreaming and large-scale impact expressed at PIF level mean now at CEO endorsement. The project seems quite isolated, as a stand-alone project. Please, clarify.

Agency Response The project is linked closely with existing LandCare projects as well as other government initiatives such as Working for Land. A number of NGOs and private sector partners such as Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT), Conservation South Africa (CSA) and Meat Naturally have projects that will overlap with this GEF funded projects. The linkages, however, will only be known after the competitive bid process for implementing partners has been completed.

6. Is there further and better elaboration on the project's expected contribution to global environmental benefits or adaptation benefits?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

September 1st, 2021

To be confirmed at quality control (please check there is no duplication between the core indicators 3.1 and 4.3).

July 14, 2021

Not addressed.

We take note of the explanation provided in the text p.90. However, you need to proofread the text and make the information coherent between the project document and the portal:

- In the portal: the proposed targets at CEO endorsement are 150,000 ha of restored agriculture lands (core indicator 3.1) and 800,000 ha of productive landscapes under Sustainable Land Management (core indicator 4.3). We recommend to use exactly the same formulation and define the nature of activities you are planning to develop to reach these targets. P90, you make reference to "130 000 ha of landscapes under improved governance and other enabling conditions for restoration and SLM", "130 000 ha of degraded areas", "800 000 ha of land will be targeted for improved governance and coordination". **Please, revise and clarify the definitions used for "agricultural landscapes under restoration (core indicator 3.2) and { productive landscape under SLM (core indicator 4.3).**

June 1st, 2021

Please highlight the revised sections, or provide the revised text.

January 31, 2021

We can understand the general reasoning, but we are facing difficulties to agree on the proposed targets under the different core indicators. Please, revise, and/or reinforce the reasoning.

Agency Response

IUCN Response to Sept 1, 2021 GEF Sec comment.

Values for Core Indicators 3.1 and 4.3 have been revised to ensure no duplication of hectares between the two targets. All text in the CEO ER in Section II referring to GEB targets, as well as relevant text in the IUCN Project Document, has also been revised as needed to match the targets (130k ha under restoration; 670k ha under SLM).

IUCN Response to July 14 GEF Sec review comment:

The GEB Core indicator target for 3.1 has been corrected in the GEF portal to show a revised target of **130,000 ha** of degraded agricultural land restored.

The target landscapes in Limpopo and the Northern Cape provinces are production landscapes classified as a mixture of subsistence rain-fed agricultural lands and grazing lands, as well as some forested tracts that provide fuel wood among other services.

The interventions associated with the restoration and SLM targets are as follows (described in Section 4.2 of the Project Document (page 91-92) and Section 6 of the GEF CEO Endorsement Request, *Global environmental benefits*):

- **130,000 ha of degraded lands under restoration:** Interventions will include development of regional Sustainable Land Management Plans and community-level Participatory Range Management Plans developed in part through use of IUCN Participatory Assessment of Land Degradation and Sustainable Land management in Grassland and Pastoral Systems (PRAGA) to identify priority restoration approaches, and a range of natural and assisted regeneration applications including better designed and managed grazing on communal grazing lands as well as control of alien invasive and bush encroachment species. Additional improved water management techniques will be introduced and supported including conservation agriculture, appropriate water harvesting and other water saving techniques
- **800,000 of productive landscapes under improved sustainable land management** (note the target includes all degraded lands targeted for restoration (130,000 ha): local municipalities entrusted with land management in the target areas including Fetakgomo-Thubatse, Makhuduthamaga and Dawid Kruiper Local Municipalities will be provided with enhanced information and training to increase their capacity to design and manage more rational, sustainable land management approaches. Project-supported mechanisms include community level implementation plans, formalisation of community level Rangeland/Biodiversity Stewardship Agreements and local Sustainable Land Management Plans that facilitate landscape level scale up of activities conducted at target sites and support the implementation of improved SLM on key rangelands in the regions. Moreover, the project will work to reduce barriers to investment in sustainable land management, including investment of project funds into community-validated priority value chains that will enable improved SLM, and through financial capacity training and business case development to support development of bankable SLM proposals for submission to development banks. Finally, the project will support scaling up of SLM through Component 4 activities focused on capture and dissemination of project experiences with SLM to stakeholders at local and national levels to develop additional support for and investment in SLM.

7. Is there further and better elaboration to show that the project is innovative and sustainable including the potential for scaling up?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

July 14, 2021

Addressed.

June 1st, 2021

Please highlight the revised sections, or provide the revised text. We see the section 4.4 p.90 in the prodoc, but no information has been updated in the portal under the section 7) on Innovativeness, sustainability and potential for scaling up. Please, correct.

January 31, 2021

The notion of innovation in the project should be further developed.

The potential for scaling up is integrated in the output 4.1.2.

Agency Response

A section on innovation has been added (See Section 4.4. page 92-93):

There are a number of innovative activities that will be implemented through the course of the project. One central activity is the development of a Knowledge Management Platform (KMP) which will be established to house data and share information to stakeholders at various levels. Resources will be shared at a communal level to provide for SLM implementation in the form of tools, guidelines or training modules and inputs into the Participatory Rangeland Management Plan (PRMP) development. This repository of information will significantly improve access to useful SLM knowledge for both community members and local government officials.

Also key to the project is the development of innovative financing mechanisms for grazing lands. Access to finance is a key constraint for the development of sustainable, rural communities. Output 3 aims to implement a suite of innovative mechanisms tailor made for each of the landscapes. These may include incentivising sustainable grazing methods in return for access to markets, veterinary support and the development of small, micro, medium enterprises (SMMEs) related to the grazing value chain. Other mechanisms may include payment for ecosystem services (PES), biodiversity offsets and carbon sequestration activities linked to a carbon trading scheme.

Project Map and Coordinates

Is there an accurate and confirmed geo-referenced information where the project intervention will take place?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

Yes.

Agency Response
Child Project

If this is a child project, is there an adequate reflection of how it contributes to the overall program impact?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request
NA

Agency Response
Stakeholders

**Does the project include detailed report on stakeholders engaged during the design phase?
Is there an adequate stakeholder engagement plan or equivalent documentation for the implementation phase, with information on Stakeholders who will be engaged, the means of engagement, and dissemination of information?**

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request
June 1st, 2021

Addressed.

January 31, 2021

- Several partners mentioned in the PIF are not included in cofinancing. We have interrogations about the level of engagement with all these possible partners. Please, develop and correct.
- You wrote in the request for CEO endorsement that country circumstances and priorities of identified cofinancing partners have changed. Please, clarify.

Agency Response Every possible effort was made to incorporate and utilise the expertise of the partners identified in the PIF. Two executing parties were selected to fulfil a number of activities: University of Limpopo and Sol Plaatje University. DFFE requested that additional partners should be selected through a competitive bid process once the project begins. This meant that private sector and NGOs were unwilling to commit co-finance before they were selected. Other partners identified during the PIF ? Land Bank, DBSA and World Bank, have concluded the then-identified co-financing projects, and therefore could not commit anything

Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

Has the gender analysis been completed? Did the gender analysis identify any gender differences, gaps or opportunities linked to project/program objectives and activities? If so, does the project/program include gender-responsive activities, gender-sensitive indicators and expected results?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

Yes, there is a gender action plan, and gender-sensitive measures are included in the result framework.

Agency Response

Private Sector Engagement

If there is a private sector engagement, is there an elaboration of its role as a financier and/or as a stakeholder?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

June 1st, 2021

Addressed.

January 31, 2021

The role and importance of the private sector are elaborated.

However, their absence from cofinancing seems a problem. Please, clarify.

The role of the private sector as a investment, technical, or executing partner should be further developed. Please, complete.

Agency Response DFFE requested that private sector partners should be selected through a competitive bid process once the project begins. This meant that private sector and NGOs were unwilling to commit co-finance, investment or technical contributions before they were selected.

Risks to Achieving Project Objectives

Has the project elaborated on indicated risks, including climate change, potential social and environmental risks that might prevent the project objectives from being achieved? Were there proposed measures that address these risks at the time of project implementation?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request
September 1st, 2021

Addressed.

July 14, 2021

Risks: COVID-19: The level of information is acceptable p163 in the annex, following the GEF template on the COVID situation. However, this information has not been updated in the portal and the request for CEO endorsement. In these two documents, it is still mentioned that "this risk will be reassessed?". Please, correct.

Agency Response

IUCN Response to July 14 GEF Sec review comment:

Section 5 on the CEO Endorsement Request, "Risks to Achieving Project Objectives," has been amended to include the identified risks that the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic presents to the project and the risk mitigation measures that the project will support to mitigate these risks. This information is taken from Section 9.4 of the Project Document, pages 164-170.

Coordination

Is the institutional arrangement for project implementation fully described? Is there an elaboration on possible coordination with relevant GEF-financed projects and other bilateral/multilateral initiatives in the project area?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request
September 1st, 2021

We understand that the selection of UNEP as the main executing partner is a decision coming from the government. To be confirmed at Quality Control.

July 14, 2021

We take note of the changes described and especially the evolution of UNEP's role. However, UNEP is considered now as one of the co-executing partners, but UNEP is not mentioned in the budget. Please, clarify the tasks that will be assigned to UNEP and demonstrate their added value.

June 1st, 2021

Not fully addressed.

- Based on the diagram p. 131, it seems that the project team should be based at DEFF, and not UNEP. Please, correct the sentence on the same page: "The PMU will be responsible for directing, supervising, monitoring and evaluation and coordinating project implementation and will be located within ~~UNEP or~~ DEFF offices.

- See also the comments on the budget below (Annex C).

January 31, 2021

Implementation arrangements

- The project arrangements should be completely revised. The separation of implementation functions performed by GEF Agencies and execution functions by Project Executing Entities is a key feature of the governance of the GEF partnership.
- Basically, we expect from IUCN, as the GEF Agency, to "entail oversight of project execution to ensure that the project is being carried out in accordance with agreed standards and requirements". This role includes project supervision and oversight.
- We expect a Project Executing Entity (EA) "here the Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries (DEFF formerly DEA) in collaboration with the Department of Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries in South Africa, to execute the GEF Project, or portions of it, under the supervision of IUCN. Execution includes the management and administration of the day-to-day activities of the project.
- These roles between IUCN and DEFF should be reflected in an agreement, explaining the chain of accountability in accordance with specific project requirements. Execution implies accountability for intended and appropriate use of funds, procurement and contracting.
- We expect DEFF undertake the execution of projects, implying the ability to manage and administer the day-to-day activities of a project. Execution functions are financed through Project Management Costs (PMC), which are funded partly by the GEF funding and partly by the counterpart funding of the beneficiary government or other co-financing resources. The EA "reports and is responsible to the agency that carries out project implementation"

(http://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/documents/GEF_Guidelines_Project_Program_Cycle_Policy_20200731.pdf).

If DEFF is not qualified to ensure its role of execution, please see with the Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS), Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD formerly DAFF), or South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI).

Agency Response

IUCN Response to Sept 1, 2021 GEF Sec comment.

We have uploaded a letter from Mr Zaheer Fakir, GEF OFP for South Africa, confirming the selection of UNEP as executing partner by the Government of South Africa, for this project.

IUCN Response to July 14 GEF Sec review comment:

As described in the GEF Request for CEO Endorsement Section 6, *Institutional Arrangement and Coordination* (and Section 5 of the Project Document, pages 132-133), The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) will be the lead execution partner on behalf of the Government of South Africa. UNEP will be responsible for the execution of the project outputs and will receive and manage the whole GEF project budget. In addition, the PMC costs of \$192 848 will be allocated to UNEP. It is envisioned that UNEP will sub-contract a significant portion of project work to local partners including Sol Plaatje University, the University of Limpopo, the South African Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries (DEFF formerly DEA), and the South African Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD formerly DAFF).

UNEP was selected as the lead execution agency by the Government of South Africa (DEFF and DALRRD). UNEP has a successful history of GEF project implementation and has implemented close to 1,000 projects. UNEP also has a significant presence in South Africa and will bring expertise in SLM, project management, coordination of execution parties as well as good understanding of local, provincial and national government objectives.

Consistency with National Priorities

Has the project described the alignment of the project with identified national strategies and plans or reports and assessments under the relevant conventions?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request
September 1st, 2021

Addressed.

July 14, 2021

- p.76 prodoc: there is a text showing the alignment of the project with the national LDN targets. However, in the portal (7. Consistency with National Priorities) and the request for CEO endorsement, this alignment with the national LDN targets is not mentioned. Please, revise.

Agency Response

IUCN Response to July 14 GEF Sec review comment:

Text describing alignment of the project with, and contribution to, South Africa's LDN targets has been added to the Request for GEF CEO Endorsement document in section 7, *Consistency with National Priorities* (pages 38-40).

Knowledge Management

Is the proposed Knowledge Management Approach for the project adequately elaborated with a timeline and a set of deliverables?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

Yes.

Agency Response

Environmental and Social Safeguard (ESS)

Are environmental and social risks, impacts and management measures adequately documented at this stage and consistent with requirements set out in SD/PL/03?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

Yes

Agency Response

Monitoring and Evaluation

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

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

Yes.

Agency Response

IUCN Response to Sept 9, 2021 GEF Sec comment below on expenditure for Audit

The Audit M&E expenditure is now charged to the PMC and no longer part of the M&E budget. Changes have been made to the M&E budget table in the CEO ER, Section 9 in the Portal, Page 49 on the uploaded CEO ER Sept 9 hardcopy, and pages 151-152 on the IUCN Project Doc Sept 9 version

Benefits

Are the socioeconomic benefits at the national and local levels sufficiently described resulting from the project? Is there an elaboration on how these benefits translate in supporting the achievement of GEBs or adaptation benefits?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

July 14, 2021

Addressed.

June 2, 2021

Point taken on the text available p88 of the prodoc. Please, make the text coherent with the information proposed in the portal.

January 31, 2021

Maybe not enough explained, but there is a logic in the project to build the GEBs on social and economic benefits. Please, clarify.

Agency Response

The GEB's have been elaborated on in the ProDoc in Section 4.1 (page 90). The text now reads: "The project promotes the "greening" of local economies through ensuring the use of land for economic purposes is done in an environmentally sustainable way. This "greening" is then coupled with empowerment opportunities through training, support and microfinance for scale up of improved land management practises. The combination of activities directly promotes and supports socio-economic development and maintenance within the economically marginal focal areas?."

Annexes

Are all the required annexes attached and adequately responded to?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

September 1st, 2021

To be confirmed at quality control.

July 14, 2021

- Thanks for reminding us that the budget summary is included in the GEF budget template: this summary needs to be included as a table in the portal - some users do not have access to the attached document. Please, insert a budget summary.

- UNEP is not included in the budget and we cannot see their role. Please correct. See the budget (fifth page of the excel budget): DEFF is the only executing entity. Please, explain the role UNEP, their added value and the associated budget.

- We do not understand the note on the last page of the budget meaning "[1] In exceptional cases where GEF Agency receives funds for execution, Terms of Reference for specific activities are reviewed by GEF Secretariat?. Actually, the GEF Agency is not supposed to execute activities in the project as the National Implementation Mode is the preferred option. Please, clarify what you meant.

- Basically, the budget has evolved to the following breakdown. We acknowledge the fact that SPL and UL are long-term partners with a comparative advantage. However, there is still 30% of the budget for consultants (\$1.086 million). We may wonder if the use of consultants at this height is a good thing, or if there is a risk of sustainability. Wouldn't it be possible to empower national or local entities present on the long term in the considered landscapes (extension services, local administration/agency, NGO).

SPL	907,500
UL	907,500
consultants	1,086,968
SGP	450,000
M&E	50,000
Evaluation	35,000
pmc	192,848
Total	3,629,816

- It is still difficult to understand how these main partners (UL, SPL, and consultants) are going to facilitate the implementation of 130,000 ha of agricultural lands under restoration and 800,000 ha under SLM mainly with technical assistance (planning, consultancies, training...). Once you will have updated the section related to the core indicators and provided the definitions applied to "restoration" and "sustainable land management), we will hopefully understand better the logic between the intention, the targets and the GEF financed activities on the field, Please, revise.

June 2, 2021

Portal: Annex E

- A table with a budget summary would be welcome.

- Please find the comments below made on the Appendix A: GEF Budget Template:

Basically, the project budget proposes series of contract for the Sol Plaatje University (SPL) ? 16 sub-contracts for \$740,494 (20% of the budget grant), the University of Limpopo (UL) ? 16 sub-contracts for also \$740,494, local contracts for \$1,133,828

(31%), the project team and M&E support (\$340,000, 9%), a technical capacity support (\$325,000, 9%), and a small grant program (\$350,000, 10%) for a total of \$3,629,816 of GEF resources.

This budget raises a number of technical questions, before the control quality:

- The implementation arrangements include a role to UNEP. Please, clarify the role of UNEP in the budget and its execution, as we do not find out any reference to UNEP.
- The Sol Plaatje and Limpopo Universities have a significant role in the project execution. We wonder if they are not having a role that should be led by local stakeholders (SLMP development, PRMP development, mainstreaming SLMP in existing structures, integration of LDN targets in the SLMP, various agreements). How do you anticipate the buy-in from local authorities and stakeholders?
- We take note of the assessments, studies, tools, proposed through these contracts, but it is not that easy to see how these contracts will allow 800,000 ha of landscapes under SLM, 150,000 ha of agricultural landscapes restored, and will benefit to 1,177,138 people. The way you defined ?beneficiaries? may be developed. Please, clarify.
- Except a part of the budget from the small grant program (less than 10% of the project budget), and \$232,994 for each region to implement restoration activities, we do not see significant investments on the ground to the benefit of smallholder farmer (access to finance, microfinance, access to seeds). Are you optimistic that the proposed training will be enough to produce the expected benefits in terms of SLM and restored lands?
- What the line 58 under Salary and benefits/staff costs means? This Technical and Capacity Support for an amount of \$325,000 is assigned to the component 2. Based on the formulation, it might be assigned to the pmc. Please, clarify.
- This budget is essentially designed with contracts for consultants (31%) and universities (40%). We take note of two contracts of \$20,000 for mainstreaming LDN targets in the Northern Cape landscape and the Limpopo landscape. However, the sustainability of the approach seems questionable. Please, clarify.
- The line 57 includes a national safeguard consultant (\$20,000) assigned to the M&E component. The justification of such budget in the M&E is not possible. It seems this budget should be assigned to pmc. Please, clarify and correct.

January 31, 2021

No.

Agency Response

IUCN Response to Sept 9, 2021 GEF Sec comment on the Project budget and classification of expenditures

The Project budget has been revised to clarify that UNEP will not be subcontracting any work to UNEP to execute activities. Rather, local consultants, Contractual Services

Company(s), and non-UNEP sub-contracted executing partner/entities will be utilized for all non-PMC supported project activities. Changes have been made to Annex E in the GEF CEO ER on the Portal, the hardcopy Sept 9 GEF CEO ER (page 60), as well as in the IUCN Project Document, pages 153-157.

IUCN Response to Sept 1, 2021 GEF Sec comment.

Responses and actions taken to address GEF Quality Control concerns identified below:

- 1) The Component "Executing Agency Fee" should not have been in Table B, is not any part of the project, and has been removed from the CER Portal document.
- 2) The following justification for higher than normal PMC has been added to the CER document on the portal, in the corresponding field below Table B: "The PMC for this project (5.6%) is a bit higher than the normative threshold of 5.2% for the following reasons: The project is being implemented in two sites that are at least 800 miles apart, creating a need for an expanded PMU team that can sufficiently monitor implementation in both sites. In addition, the project targets remote landscapes in some of the poorest regions in South Africa, with limited capacities of project partners and institutions. The increased PMC will be used to cover the additional costs of working in these locations." Allocation of co-financing has been adjusted to bring the PMC portion of co-financing to 5.6%, matching the proportionality of GEF project funding.
- 3) The risk tables on the CER document have been reformatted so are hopefully easier to read.
- 4) The Budgeted M&E plan is described and included in Section 9, Monitoring and Evaluation, of the GEF CEO ER, and in Section 7, pages 150-153 of the IUCN Project Document.
- 5). SANBI has been reclassified as "Recipient Country Government" in the CER in the GEF portal.
- 6) The budget table in the Portal CEO ER, Annex E, has now been pasted from Word rather than Excel, and should be more readable in the GEF Portal. The GEF Budget template format, breaking out items by expenditure category, with Components, M&E, and PMC shown as separate columns, has been used.
- 7). GEF Core Indicator 11 now matches the figures shown in Annex A: Project Results Framework (804,326 direct beneficiaries; 430,584 females, 373,742 males).

IUCN Response to July 14 GEF Sec review comment:

A summary of the budget is now included in the GEF CEO Endorsement Request, Annex E. As noted above and in full consultation with government and other project

partners, project execution arrangements have changed since PIF approval. UNEP will serve as the lead execution partner on behalf of the Government of South Africa. UNEP will be responsible for the execution of the project outputs and will receive and manage the whole GEF project budget. In addition, the PMC costs of \$192 848 will be allocated to UNEP. It is envisioned that UNEP will sub-contract a significant portion of project work to local partners including Sol Plaatje University, the University of Limpopo, the South African Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries (DEFF formerly DEA), and the South African Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD formerly DAFF).

Project interventions to deliver the project targets of bringing 130,000 ha of degraded lands under restoration and 800,000 ha of production landscapes are now better defined and summarized in Section 4.2 of the Project Document (page 91-92) and Section 6 of the GEF CEO Endorsement Request, *Global environmental benefits*. In addition, Section 3 of the GEF CEO Endorsement Request and Section 4.5 of the Project Document describing the Project components and expected outcomes have been edited to ensure consistency of language in describing approaches and associated outcomes and targets.

Project Results Framework

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request Yes.

Agency Response

GEF Secretariat comments

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request
September 1st, 2021

Addressed.

At PIF level, we highlighted some key points to check at CEO endorsement. Please, provide a table of response:

- Provide a comprehensive risk analysis.
- Confirm cofinancing.
- Confirm the participation of the private sector.
- Confirm gender differentiated information in the description, the analysis, the result framework, and indicators.

- Confirm the definition of the indicator 4.1 and justify the interest for global important biodiversity.
- Confirm the number of beneficiaries and the definition used.
- Develop the financing mechanisms to be tested and scaled up with the private sector and banks.
- Develop the implementation arrangements with local partners.

Agency Response

The following has been elaborated and developed during the project preparation phase:

GEF Comments	Response	Evidence
- Provide a comprehensive risk analysis.	Developed and elaborated during project preparation	Section 4.6 in ProDoc (Starting Page 118)
- Confirm cofinancing.	Confirmed during project preparation	See signed co-financing letters
- Confirm the participation of the private sector.	The private sector has been consulted and included in various components of the project	See Section 3.4 and 4.5.3
- Confirm gender differentiated information in the description, the analysis, the result framework, and indicators.	Developed and elaborated during project preparation. The results framework includes gender differentiation indicators and gender differentiation has been included in descriptions of the project, protect target areas and component descriptions	Project Results Framework (Section 2) State of Equality (Section 3.1.4) Component descriptions (Section 4.5)
- Confirm the definition of the indicator 4.1 and justify the interest for global important biodiversity.	Indicator 4.1 as per ProDoc is defined as the Allocation of public finance to support implementation of SLM policies and practices. The importance for biodiversity has been outlined in the description of GEB's	Project Results Framework (Section 2) Section 4.6 in ProDoc (Starting Page 118)

- Confirm the number of beneficiaries and the definition used.	1 177 138 beneficiaries (677 138 female and 500 000 male) Direct beneficiaries are defined as those individuals living within the landscape intervention areas and that would benefit from improved SLM practices that result in improved environmental or social benefits. This would be measured by the development and implementation of the regional Sustainable Land Management Plan (SLMP) and the community level PRMP.	Project Results Framework (Section 2)
- Develop the financing mechanisms to be tested and scaled up with the private sector and banks.	The development of the financing mechanism is proposed under component 3	Please see Section 4.5.3 in the ProDoS
- Develop the implementation arrangements with local partners.	The implementation arrangements have been outlined in the stakeholder engagement plan in the ProDoc.	Please see Section 6 in the ProDoc

Council comments

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

July 14, 2021

Point taken.

June 1st, 2021

- See the comments from Germany at PIF level:
- Did you contact the local GIZ office?
- Germany made a comment about the need about value chain approaches, and look for synergy with existing projects, as the E4D. Please, confirm you followed up this comment.
- Germany also recommended to develop synergy with the Ministry of Agriculture, Water, and Forestry and GIZ projects as the Bush Control and Biomass Control Project. Please, confirm your follow up.

Agency Response

DFFE stated that collaboration with GIZ at this stage of the project planning was not required. Once the project begins, GIZ will be approached.

-This approach was taken during project preparation aligning proposed approaches with existing projects and key points within the value chains. Please see Section 3.5 for exploration of these synergies

STAP comments

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

July 14, 2021

Addressed.

June 2, 2021

The point will be reviewed in the project document and the portal when highlighted sections will be available. Thanks for your understanding.

January 31, 2021

Please, include responses to the STAP comments made a PIF level.

- We take note of the proposed Theory of Change. However, if the proposed ToC summarizes well the result framework, we are not clearly seeing the pathway for change. Some further explanations would be welcomed.

Agency Response

- ? The ToC has been extensively elaborated and updated during project preparation and the concern raised has been addressed. Please see Section 2.1 (Page 9) of the ProDoc. A description of the ToC has been included Section 2.1, page 10 -11.
- ? A stakeholder engagement plan (SEP) has been developed and included in the ProDoc, Section 6, page, Table 6.2 pages 140-152.
- ? A climate risk assessment was included in the completed ESMS Questionnaire. Section 5, page 19. The risk assessed was: ?Is there a risk that climate variability and changes might affect the effectiveness of project activities or the sustainability of intended changes? If yes, explain how the project intends to lower such risk?.
The risk response was negative, and the following mitigation text was developed:
?The sensitivities to climate change impacts have been assessed and these are seen as negligible due to the nature of proposed project activities.

The predominant historic climatic impacts in the target regions have been extensive droughts and, more specifically in the Limpopo region, increased prevalence of high

velocity rain events. These patterns are expected to continue and likely become more prevalent in the future (over the next 30 years).

The increased prevalence of these climatic patterns has historically increased the vulnerability of communities in both regions and is expected to continue this trend if no interventions are applied.

Climate change, however, is a driver of the targeted problem and therefore interventions put in place will reduce vulnerability to ongoing impacts from climate change. The impacts of climate change on biodiversity and therefore resilience of these natural systems to degradation is compounded by unsustainable land management. By addressing unsustainable land management at a large scale- mainstreaming of SLM in these drylands- the project will increase the resilience of these systems and their communities to the impacts of climate change.

The risks to the project through impacts of climate change are furthermore negligible due to the nature of activities and implementation modalities.

The project aims to mainstream SLM approaches of which include training, awareness, strengthened management and governance which incorporates climate change adaptation. As a result, firstly the efficacy of project interventions on SLM adaptation is magnified (due to the risks introduced through climate change) and secondly the adoption of project strategies by communities, local and regional stakeholders is magnified due to the risks of climate change faced on a global scale?.

As the risk was negative, a further risk assessment was not conducted.

? Outcome indicators have been developed for the project. Methodologies and sources of verification have been proposed in Section 2: Project Results Framework page 3-8.

A Gender Action Plan (GAP) has been developed for the project and has been submitted to through the portal.

Convention Secretariat comments

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request NA

Agency Response

Other Agencies comments

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request NA

Agency Response

CSOs comments

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request NA

Agency Response

Status of PPG utilization

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request Addressed.

Agency Response

Project maps and coordinates

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request Yes.

Agency Response

Does the termsheet in Annex F provide finalized financial terms and conditions? Does the termsheet and financial structure address concerns raised at PIF stage and that were pending to be resolved ahead of CEO endorsement? (For NGI Only)

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

NA

Agency Response

Do the Reflow Table Annex G and the Trustee Excel Sheet for reflows provide accurate reflow expectations of the project submitted? Assumptions for Reflows can be submitted to explain expected reflows. (For NGI Only)

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request NA

Agency Response

Did the agency Annex H provided with information to assess the Agency Capacity to generate and manage reflows? (For NGI Only)

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request NA

Agency Response

GEFSEC DECISION

RECOMMENDATION

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

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

September 10, 2021

Thanks: All points are addressed. The project is recommended for CEO endorsement.

September 9, 2021

Most of comments previously provided were addressed. However, please, address the two following items from the annex E (budget) and the M&E table now readable in the portal. In addition to the portal, please, reflect these changes in the different attached documents for coherence (project document, request for CEO endorsement, annexes).

- Comment 4: now there is a M&E budget table ? however per Guidelines, Audits have to be charged to PMC (as opposed to M&E) ? please ask the Agency to remove it from here, adjust the M&E budget, and charge Audits to PMC.

- Comment 6: the budget is readable now. There is one comment:

o Several budget items show UNEP being subcontracted to execute some activities: UNEP pays themselves for a service that should be provided by a consultant. In other words, this project shows UNEP as Executing Agency subcontracting themselves for \$851,745 (24.7% of GEF resources). This is not allowed. Please ask the Agency to revise and include the consultants that would carry out such activities instead of UNEP. If the option is for these activities not being carried out by consultants but by project's staff, they need to be charged to the PMC (both portions: GEF and co-financing funds). If additional to PMC, some of these project's staff need to be charged to the project's components, TORs presenting the specific deliverables for each component are required.

September 8th, 2021

All points raised by the control quality are addressed so far. The project is recommended for CEO endorsement.

September 7th, 2021

Thanks for the amendments.

1. We suggest removing elements not raised in the current review. If needed, further exchanges with the GEFSEC will be possible to verify additional issues and coherence with other GEF/IUCN programs.
2. The budgeted M&E plan has been included. Thanks. Please, ensure that the full table fits into the margins.

Table: Budgeted M&E plan

M&E Activity	Frequency	Responsible	Budget (US\$)
			Project Allocation
Initiation Workshop	Once off, within the first two months of the project	PMU, SACN CO, UNEP	10 000
Project Implementation Work Plan	Once off, within the first two months of the project	PMU, SACN CO, UNEP, IPI	None
Quarterly Progress Monitoring	Quarterly throughout the project	PMU, SACN CO, UNEP, IPI	None
Annual Monitoring: Annual Project Review	Annually throughout the project	PMU, SACN CO, UNEP, IPI	None
Mid-Term Evaluation	Mid-point of project implementation (24-36 months)	PMU, SACN CO, UNEP, External consultants (i.e. evaluation team)	17 500
Final Evaluation	At least three months before the end of the project	PMU, SACN CO, UNEP, External consultants (i.e. evaluation team)	17 500
Project Technical Report	At least three months before the end of the project	PMU, SACN CO, UNEP	None
Visits to Field Sites	Annually	PMU, SACN CO, UNEP, and PSC	Accounted in Operational Budget
Audit	Annually	PMU, SACN CO, UNEP, External consultants (i.e. evaluation team)	11 000
Sub-TOTAL INDICATIVE COST Excluding PMU staff time and Travel Expenses			15545 000
GRAND TOTAL			15545 000

3. Annex E: You indeed include a table under word, more readable. However, the table is still out of the margins. Please, correct.

ANNEX E: Project Budget Table

Please attach a project budget table.

The table below describe a location of the project budget by Expenditure Category, Component and Outcome, and breaking it out into sub-totals for M&E and PMU.

Expenditure Category	Detailed Description	Component 1, Outcome 1.1	Component 2, Outcome 2.1	Component 3, Outcome 3.1	Component 4, Outcome 4.1	Sub-total	M&E	PMU	TOTAL (US\$)	Responsible Entity (Excluding funding for training, technical assistance, and M&E expenses)
Grants/ Subgrants	Develop and implement a small grants program			400 000						UNEP
Subcontracted consulting services	UNEP to develop and implement a M&E	70 000								UNEP
	UNEP to develop monitoring mechanism and user establishments on use of the M&E	40 000								UNEP
	UNEP to determine skills, indicators and methods and produce change in resources budget	20 000								UNEP
	South African University (SAPS) to conduct skills audit on establishments in Northern Cape land	30 000								UNEP

September 3, 2021

Please, address the following elements from Control Quality:

1. Table B includes a component namely Executing Agency fee. This can't be accepted as a project's component. Also, there are no funds allocated. Please ask the Agency to remove this.

Executing Agency fee	Technical Assistance	GET		
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2. PMC is 5.6% of the subtotal, which is beyond the threshold allowed in Guidelines. Based on the technical review, we can understand the need for a slight increase of pmc for this project targeting remote landscapes in a complex environment (poorest regions of South Africa, weak capacities of local governance and institutions...). However, please include such justification in the correspondent field (where currently is said *The PMC for this project is within the threshold provided by the GEF?*). Also, increase the cofinancing portion of pmc at 5.6% (currently at 5.2%)

3. The risk table is slightly off the margins ? please ask the Agency to adjust

5. Risks to Achieving Project Objectives

Elaborate on indicated risks, including climate change, potential social and environmental risks that might prevent the project objectives from being achieved, and, if possible, the proposed measures that address these risks at the time of project implementation. (table format acceptable):

Risks to PROJECT OUTCOMES FROM THE ONGOING COVID-19 PANDEMIC, AND MITIGATION MEASURES THAT THE PROJECT WILL TAKE TO ADDRESS THESE RISKS EXCEPT PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION (BASED FROM PAGES 164-170 OF THE PROJECT DOCUMENTS) [NOTE: LIKELIHOOD OF IMPACT ON PROJECT OR LIKELIHOOD OF OPPORTUNITY ARISING THROUGH PROJECT (1: VERY UNLIKELY-5: EXTREMELY LIKELY)]

Risk/Opportunity Description	Likelihood [1]	Description of Likelihood	Action/Mitigation Measure
Risk to Availability of Technical Expertise and Capacity and Changes in Timeliness			
The re-statement of COVID-19 containment measures	4	It is unlikely South Africa will return to level 5 on a national scale. In his various addresses to the nation President Cyril Ramaphosa has described how disaster management will take a regional approach to varying COVID-19 response levels (i.e. levels will vary across spaces), with urbanised areas having highest risk, there is a low likelihood that the target sites and regional areas will return to such a high level of lockdown management. The risk of varying restrictive regulations remains a risk to the project through required interactions with role-players and stakeholders at a national scale. It is likely that impacts would be felt to varying degrees across project activities depending on the nature of the activity.	The Project-Wide COVID-19 Readiness protocol and checklists will be developed and implemented throughout the project. Please see ESMF for further details.
Government capacity is reduced as human resources are mobilised elsewhere	2	The project has been designed to work closely with government institutions throughout project interventions and as such, the restriction government human resources would impact the project. The likelihood of this occurring, however, is relatively low. The project design phase fell directly in the timeline amidst the COVID panic (March to November 2020). Government has, in the learning curve accompanied by the initial spike of COVID cases, learnt and adapted their approaches and general objectives. Government agencies have had time throughout 2020 to re-orient resources and priorities to adapt to the pandemic and have integrated their own systems and internal policies to deal with a recurrent spike in cases. Through continuous project consultations with government agencies through this time, the government agencies appear to remain committed and focused on the project.	No reactive measure is proposed, however through close consultation with government stakeholders throughout the project design process, the likelihood of risk has been reduced.

4. The budgeted M&E plan is missed in Portal ? it should match the M&E column in Budget that is also missed. Please ask the Agency to include it.

9. Monitoring and Evaluation

Describe the budgeted M and E plan

The project will be monitored through the following M&E activities:

Inception Workshop: A project Inception Workshop will be held within the first three months of the project start date with those with assigned roles in the project organisation structure, the IUCN Country Office (CO) and other appropriate stakeholders. The participation of technical experts responsible for supporting project design will be critical to the success of the inception workshop. The Inception Workshop is crucial to building ownership for the project results and to plan the first year of the Annual Work Plan (AWP).

The Inception Workshop will address the following key issues: 1) Assist all partners to fully understand and take ownership of the project; 2) Detail the roles and responsibilities of the project team; 3) Discuss the roles, functions and responsibilities with the project's decision-making structure, which includes communication lines, reporting and conflict resolution; 4) Discuss the terms of reference for project staff as needed; 5) Finalise the AWP based on the project results framework and GEF Tracking Tool; 6) Review and agree on the indicators, targets and their verification; 7) Provide a detailed overview of the M&E requirements, schedule and budget; 8) Confirm financial reporting procedures and obligations; and 9) Plan and schedule Project Steering Committee meetings. The development of an Inception Workshop Report is a key output of this process.

Project Implementation Work Plan: Following on from the Inception Workshop, the Project Management Unit (PMU) will be tasked with adapting and developing the strategic work plan. The work plan will outline the general timeframe for completion of the project outputs and achievement of outcomes. The work plan will set out the project activities from inception to completion.

Quarterly Progress Monitoring: Progress will be monitored on a quarterly basis. Based on the risk analysis developed, the risk log shall be monitored and updated. Project Outcomes, outputs, activities and indicators will be monitored. The monitoring will be in line with DFFE and IUCN processes.

Annual Monitoring: The Annual Project Review (APR) is prepared to monitor progress made since the start of the project and in particular for the previous reporting period (i.e. 30 June to 1 July). The APR includes the following reporting requirements: 1) Progress made toward project objective and project outcomes comprising of indicators, baseline data and end of project targets; 2) Project outputs delivered per project outcome (annual); 3) Lesson learnt and good practice; 4) AWP and expenditure reports; 5) Risk and adaptive management; and 5) GEF Focal Area Tracking Targets.

Supervision Missions: The PMU, the IUCN CO and members of the PSC will conduct visits to project sites based on the agreed schedule in the Inception Report. A site visit report will be developed and circulated to the project structures.

Mid-Term Evaluation: The project will undergo an Independent Mid-Term Evaluation (MTE) at the midpoint of the project (i.e. project months 34-36). The MTE will determine progress being made towards the achievement of outcomes and will identify course correction if required. The findings of the MTE will be incorporated as recommendations for enhanced implementation during the final half of the project. The organisation and terms of reference (TOR) of the MTE will be decided after consultation between the parties to the project document. The independent consultant will be recruited at least six months prior to the planned commencement of the MTE. The relevant GEF Focal Area Tracking Tools will also be assessed in the MTE.

Terminal Evaluation: An Independent Final Evaluation (FE) will take place three months prior to the final PSC meeting. The FE will focus on the delivery of the project's results as initially planned. The FE will look at the impact and sustainability of results, including the contribution to capacity development and the achievement of global environmental benefits.

Project Terminal Report: The PMU will prepare the Project Terminal Report (PTR) during the last 3 months. The PTR is a comprehensive report which will summarise the results achieved, lessons learnt, problems met and areas where results may not have been achieved. Furthermore, the PTR will provide recommendations for further steps that may need to be taken to ensure sustainability and replicability of the projects results.

Learning and Knowledge Sharing: Results from the project will be shared within and beyond the project intervention area. The project will identify, analyse and share lessons learned that may be beneficial in the design and implementation of similar projects. The project will disseminate learnings and best practice through relevant and appropriate networks and forums.

5. Cofinancing: SANBI should not be categorized as Private Sector but as Recipient Country Government if, as per information below, is overseen by the Department of Forestry.

National Government of South Africa

National Government - Economic Services & Infrastructure Development - Public Entities

South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI)

Overview Management Financial

Contact Details

Postal Private Bag X101, Silverton, 0184

Physical 2 Cussonia Avenue, Brummeria, Pretoria

Tel 012 843 5000

Fax 012 804 3211

Web www.sanbi.org

Overview

The South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI) has a broad mandate that is primarily derived from the NEMBA Act, but also from other legislation and processes over the past decade. The mandate is to explore, reveal, celebrate and champion biodiversity for the benefit and enjoyment of all South Africans, which includes managing the National Botanical Gardens (NBG) as 'windows' to South Africa's biodiversity for *enrichment and restoration*.

Private Sector	SANBI	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	2,159,606.00
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6. The budget in Portal is illegible? please ask the Agency to include a readable budget. While we just be in a position to provide specific comments on the budget once resubmitted in a readable form in Portal, please tell the Agency that the way the budget is presented does not allow the Secretariat to assess which budget categories (civil works, contractual services, consultants, salaries, etc.) are charged to which sources (project's components, M&E, PMC). The way this budget is presented (per activities instead of per categories, with no M&E source) impedes to carry out such analysis (please refer to the budget template in page 46 of the attached Guidelines).

7. On Core Indicators: please align core indicator 11 (number of direct beneficiaries disaggregated by gender) between Core Indicator table (1,177,138 beneficiaries) and Annex A: Project Results Framework (804,326 beneficiaries).

September 1st, 2021

The project is recommended for clearance, upon confirmation from the quality control (core indicators, implementation arrangements, budget, and documentation).

July 14, 2021

The project cannot be recommended yet for CEO endorsement. Please address the remaining items above. Please, highlight the sections that will have been modified - we will gain time at the next round and will hopefully be in measure to recommend the project at the next round.

June 2, 2021

The project cannot be fully reviewed. Please see the comments above, provide a version with the changes highlighted, report also the changes in the portal, and respond to the questions raised on January 31, 2021. Some clarifications were added to help your responses.

January 31, 2021

The PIF cannot be recommended yet. There are deep concerns about cofinancing, partnerships, and implementation arrangements. We would like to alert the GEF Agency about the upcoming constraint of time to avoid an automatic project cancellation.

Review Dates

	Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement	Response to Secretariat comments
First Review	1/31/2021	
Additional Review (as necessary)	6/2/2021	
Additional Review (as necessary)	7/15/2021	
Additional Review (as necessary)	9/1/2021	
Additional Review (as necessary)		

CEO Recommendation

Brief reasoning for CEO Recommendations