

Strengthening management to combat threats from Aquatic Invasive Alien Species in Venezuela

Review PIF and Make a recommendation

Basic project information

GEF ID

11115

Countries

Venezuela

Project Name

Strengthening management to combat threats from Aquatic Invasive Alien Species in Venezuela

Agencies

FAO

Date received by PM

4/11/2023

Review completed by PM

4/25/2023

Program Manager

Mark Zimsky

Focal Area

Biodiversity

Project Type

FSP

GEF-8 PROJECT IDENTIFICATION FORM (PIF) REVIEW SHEET

1. General Project Information / Eligibility

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

b) Is the General Project Information table correctly populated?

Secretariat's Comments

4/24/2023

Please note confusion caused by the dissonance between the project title and then the actual project objective and its design. The project title seems to indicate that the project is focused only on managing one IAS in aquatic ecosystems, which is not aligned with the GEF-8 biodiversity strategy. However, the project objective and design appear to be more aligned with the GEF-8 strategy. Please revise title accordingly and revise the project design and text.

A more apt title would be: Strengthening management to combat threats from Aquatic Invasive Alien Species in Venezuela.

Please note that all GEF projects addressing IAS as a threat to biodiversity must follow the design emphasis of the GEF-8 biodiversity focal area strategy: "GEF will support the implementation of comprehensive prevention, early detection, control, and management frameworks that emphasize a risk management approach by focusing on the highest risk invasion pathways. As with the entirety of objective one of the GEF-8 strategy, this comprehensive approach to IAS management will require a whole-of-government approach that cuts across numerous ministries and government responsibilities. In addition, collaboration with the private sector will be required to ensure sustained implementation of a pathways approach. **Targeted eradication will be supported in specific circumstances where proven, low-cost, and effective eradication would result in the extermination of the IAS and the survival of globally significant species and/or ecosystems.** While GEF will maintain a focus on island ecosystems and engage with island states to advance this agenda, projects will be supported from continental countries that address IAS management and control through a comprehensive pathways approach with a focus on ensuring the long-term effectiveness and sustainability of any intervention."

The current project design needs to reflect this emphasis on GEF-8 and articulate how the project is implementing an approach that responds to these design criteria overall, and specifically as it relates to *Unomia s.* as a pilot and whether the eradication criterion is met. It appears that the focus is on management and control not eradication. If the species will not be eradicated, please discuss the management approach proposed, supported by the literature when possible and assessing risks clearly given that the current literature indicates that control and management of this species given the way that it propagates is very challenging with few if any documented successful experiences.

5/15/2023

Cleared.

Agency's Comments

05/12/2023

Thank you for the comment and the point is well taken. The project title has been adjusted as well as the narrative along the document to be clearer that the project aims to strengthen national capacities in a comprehensive way, taking lessons from the pilot.

Regarding the pilot IAS, *Unomia stolonifera*, due to the aggressiveness and rapid expansion of the IAS, the project strategy will consider different approaches, identifying areas where there is an early level of invasion and eradication is possible. In these areas, pilot procedures of removal will be tested, based on international experiences on similar IAS, and national experiences on *U. stolonifera*, and also implement activities to restore the habitat. Please note that a description of removal experiences has been included into Section A, addressing also a request from GEF SEC review. The project will also identify areas where due to the level of invasion, control and management is the most plausible option during the project lifetime, while also developing and implementing an early detection and quick action mechanism with participation of communities to contain the dispersion of the IAS. This approach will contribute to establish a protocol that will strengthen the national aquatic IAS management system in the country. The description of component 3 in Section B has been expanded to include this clarification.

2. Project Summary

Does the project summary concisely describe the problem to be addressed, the project objective and the strategies to deliver the GEBs or adaptation benefits and other key expected results?

Secretariat's Comments

4/24/2023

Please see comments above on the project design and the IAS support offered by the GEF-8 strategy. Please revise the summary and the design as necessary so that the eradication/control/management element of the project is simply a pilot within the overall project emphasis to develop a systematic approach to managing invasion pathways in aquatic ecosystems, consistent with the GEF-8 Strategy.

5/15/2023

Cleared.

Agency's Comments

05/12/2023.

Noted. The project title, summary and rationale has been revised accordingly.

3 Indicative Project Overview

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

b) Are the components, outcomes and outputs sound, appropriate and sufficiently clear to achieve the project objective and the core indicators per the stated Theory of Change?

Secretariat's Comments

4/23/2023

The project title gives the impression that this project is focused on the eradication/control/management of an aquatic IAS; however, the project objective and the project design seem to indicate something more comprehensive than that. This dissonance could be solved by changing the title of the project to better reflect the main objective of the project, while inserting the eradication and/or control of *Unomia s.* as one component of the project as a pilot management effort of an important IAS threatening reef ecosystems. Please revise accordingly and take note of observations above on the GEF-8 biodiversity strategy focus when it comes to investments in IAS management and control.

5/15/2023

Cleared.

Agency's Comments

05/12/2023

Thank you for the comment. The project title, summary and rationale has been revised accordingly.

3.2 Are gender dimensions, knowledge management, and monitoring and evaluation included within the project components and appropriately funded?

Secretariat's Comments

4/24/2023

Yes, cleared.

Agency's Comments

3.3 a) Are the components adequately funded?

b) Are the GEF Project Financing and Co-Financing contributions to PMC proportional?

c) Is the PMC equal to or below 5% of the total GEF grant for FSPs or 10% for MSPs? If the requested PMC is above the caps, has an exception (e.g. for regional projects) been sufficiently substantiated?

Secretariat's Comments

4/24/2023

Yes, cleared.

Agency's Comments

4 Project Outline

A. Project Rationale

4.1 SITUATION ANALYSIS

a) is the current situation (including global environmental problems, key contextual drivers of environmental degradation, climate vulnerability) clearly and adequately described from a systems perspective?

b) Are the key barriers and enablers identified?

Secretariat's Comments

a) The problem is well articulated; however, the proposal should identify the current research on the control of *Unomia s.* and what solutions are possible. As currently described in the PIF, the characteristics of the species are such that the problem appears intractable and an investment to manage and control it unwise. Please discuss the current research on control of *Unomia s.*, the challenges in doing so, and the rationale for why the proponent believes that the current invasion is actually possible to control.

b) The barriers described are generic to the management and control of aquatic IAS, but do not deal directly enough with the barriers in controlling and managing the focus of the pilot intervention, *Unomia s.* Given the characteristics of the IAS which makes it particularly challenging to control or eradicate, it is quite surprising that there is no discussion on control and eradication methods that have worked elsewhere and what the barriers are for Venezuela to implement similar approaches and why these approaches have not been implemented yet in the Marine Protected Areas that are the target of the project. Please revise accordingly.

c) The Project design, and the project title, lead to a bit of confused presentation of the project objective. The main objective of the project should be to develop a system for managing aquatic IAS for the country that is self-sustaining financially (the PIF mentions the development of a financing mechanism). The project title indicates that the main objective to address the threat of *Unomia s.* Please revise and clarify the barriers with regards to all the establishment of a system to control entry of aquatic IAS and the specific barriers to addressing the threats of *Unomia s.*, which should include a discussion of the literature on the latest we know of control measures for *Unomia s.*

d) Given that the PIF that the project will create a financing mechanism, it is not clear why financing is not identified as a barrier. Please clarify.

5/15/2023

Cleared.

Agency's Comments

05/11/2023

a) Thank you for the comment. A description on the research of *U. stolonifera* as IAS has been included in section A, as well as experimental methodologies for control that have proven to be effective in the country and with similar aquatic IAS in other countries.

b) Point taken. A description of possible methods for control and eradication have been included in section A, as well as experiences carried out in the country, including in the Mochima National Park, one of the targeted MPAs of the project.

c) Noted with thanks. The title, summary and description have been adjusted to better reflect that the main objective is to strengthen the capacities of the country to combat aquatic IAS, and a description on measures to control *U. stolonifera* has been included into section A.

d) Thank you for the comment. A description has been included in barrier 1 to further explain the financial challenges in the country.

4.2 JUSTIFICATION FOR PROJECT

a) Is there an indication of why the project approach has been selected over other potential options?

b) Does it ensure resilience to future changes in the drivers?

c) Is there a description of how the GEF alternative will build on ongoing/previous investments (GEF and non-GEF), lessons and experiences in the country/region?

d) are the relevant stakeholders and their roles adequately described?

Secretariat's Comments

a) No, please clarify.

b) No, not really.

c) Not sufficiently. GEF and others have considerable experience in the implementation of IAS systems and management/control and eradication pilots. In addition, the literature on Unomia s. is quite robust, but the PIF does not refer to any of this literature or experience or how the design reflects these experiences. In addition, the invasion in Venezuela has been present for a number of years and the PIF is silent on the ongoing experiences, what is reasonable for a pilot given that the species has expanded considerably, and, in some areas, it is considered beyond the capacity to control it. Please revise accordingly and please cite current literature.

d) yes.

5/15/2023

Cleared.

Agency's Comments

05/12/2023

Thank you for the comments.

a) More detail has been included into Section A to be more clear that a comprehensive, integrated approach to detection, control and management of aquatic IAS, with communities involvement and updated information and protocols, is required.

b) The project approach to evaluate different alternatives and their costs, along with the linkage with the recent Strategy on Financial Sustainability for natural parks, identifying alternative sources of income, will allow the country to adapt to changes in the drivers. A text in Section A has been included.

c) Noted. A description of literature and experiences have been included in Section A.

5 B. Project Description

5.1 THEORY OF CHANGE

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

b) Are the key outputs of each component defined (where possible)?

Secretariat's Comments

4/24/2023

For component one, please clarify the strategy for financial sustainability as it relates to the management and control of aquatic IAS. It is not clear how the needed revenues will be raised to strengthen the management of aquatic IAS.

Please provide a better articulation of the relationships of aquatic IAS management to however terrestrial IAS are managed and controlled--this relationship is not clear in the proposal.

For the component on the pilot control, please consider including control groups so that areas that are untreated are also monitored to assess the efficacy and cost-effectiveness of the control measures introduced.

Please clarify if the actions supported by the project will continue after project closure and what the strategy is for the Government to absorb the costs of the actions identified for managing aquatic IAS, writ large.

5/15/2023

Cleared.

Agency's Comments

05/11/2023

Noted with thanks. Section B has been updated to clarify the expected financial strategy to sustain project results, which will include public resources from the Government and also from other sources such as a percentage from the incomes of tourism, trade and transportation. The financial strategy to be developed by the project will also identify other potential sources, including the partners that are investing resources as cofinancers, (Ministry of People's Power for Eco-socialism MINEC, the National Parks Institute INPARQUES and the Environmental Services for Ecosocialism SAEC). Descriptions on the articulation with the management of IAS in general have been included in Section A. We appreciated and welcome the suggestion on control groups, which were considered but not explicit, so this has been included in the description of Component 3 in Section B.

5.2 INCREMENTAL/ADDITIONAL COST REASONING

Is the incremental/additional cost reasoning properly described as per the Guidelines provided in GEF/C.31/12?

Secretariat's Comments

4/25/2023

Yes, cleared.

Agency's Comments

5.3 IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK

a) Is the institutional setting, including potential executing partners, outlined and a rationale provided?

b) Comments to proposed agency execution support (if agency expects to request exception).

c) is there a description of potential coordination and cooperation with ongoing GEF-financed projects/programs and other bilateral/multilateral initiatives in the project area

d) are the proposed elements to capture and disseminate knowledge and learning outputs and strategic communication adequately described?

Secretariat's Comments

4/25/2023

Yes, cleared.

The GEF Implementing Agency aims to carry out executing functions ? there is a justification as well as the Letter of Support signed by the OFP. This arrangement is approved.

Agency's Comments

05/12/2023

Noted with thanks.

5.4 a) Are the identified core indicators calculated using the methodology included in the corresponding Guidelines (GEF/C.54/11/Rev.01)?

b) Are the project's indicative targeted contributions to GEBs (measured through core indicators)/adaptation benefits reasonable and achievable?

Secretariat's Comments

4/25/2023

Yes, cleared.

Agency's Comments

5.5 NGI Only: Is there a justification of financial structure and use of financial instrument with concessionality levels?

Secretariat's Comments

4/25/2023

NA.

Agency's Comments

5.6 RISKS

a) Are climate risks and other main risks relevant to the project described and addressed within the project concept design?

b) Are the key risks that might affect the project preparation and implementation phases identified and adequately rated?

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

Secretariat's Comments

4/25/2023

Yes, for the most part.

Please articulate the risks associated with the failure to control Unomia s. based on the proposed strategies identified in the PIF.

We note that FAO attached the Environmental and Social Risk rating in the Portal and risk certification. However, the Environmental and social risk in the section of "Risks to Project Preparation and Implementation" (page 33) said "moderate" risk, but the Policy requirement section of the ESS risk rating said high/substantial risk (page 41). Please make the ESS risk rating consistent in the PIF.

5/15/2023

Cleared.

Agency's Comments

05/12/2023

Thank you for the comments, which has been addressed in the updated table of risks.

5.7 Qualitative assessment

a) Does the project intend to be well integrated, durable, and transformative?

b) Is there potential for innovation and scaling-up?

c) Will the project contribute to an improved alignment of national policies (policy coherence)?

Secretariat's Comments

4/25/2023

Yes, on all counts.

Agency's Comments

6 C. Alignment with GEF-8 Programming Strategies and Country/Regional Priorities

6.1 Is the project adequately aligned with focal area and integrated program strategies and objectives, and/or adaptation priorities?

Secretariat's Comments

4/25/2023

Yes, cleared.

Agency's Comments

6.2 Is the project alignment/coherent with country and regional priorities, policies, strategies and plans (including those related to the MEAs and to relevant sectors)

Secretariat's Comments

4/25/2023

Yes, cleared.

Agency's Comments

6.3 For projects aiming to generate biodiversity benefits (regardless of what the source of the resources is - i.e. BD, CC or LD), does the project clearly identify which of the 23 targets of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework the project contributes to and how it contributes to the identified target(s)?

Secretariat's Comments

4/25/2023

The project is not aligned with Target 1 of the GBF therefore please delete that target from the list.

5/15/2023

Cleared.

Agency's Comments

05/12/2023

Point taken, Target 1 has been deleted.

7 D. Policy Requirements

7.1 Is the Policy Requirements section completed?

Secretariat's Comments

4/25/2023

Yes, cleared.

Agency's Comments

7.2 Is a list of stakeholders consulted during PIF development, including dates of these consultations, provided?

Secretariat's Comments

4/25/2023

Yes, cleared.

Agency's Comments

8 Annexes

Annex A: Financing Tables

8.1 Is the proposed GEF financing (including the Agency fee) in line with GEF policies and guidelines? Are they within the resources available from (mark all that apply):

STAR allocation?

Secretariat's Comments

4/25/2023

Yes, cleared.

Agency's Comments

Focal Area allocation?

Secretariat's Comments

4/25/2023

Yes, cleared.

Agency's Comments
LDCF under the principle of equitable access?

Secretariat's Comments
4/25/2023

NA.

Agency's Comments
SCCF A (SIDS)?

Secretariat's Comments
4/25/2023

NA.

Agency's Comments
SCCF B (Tech Transfer, Innovation, Private Sector)?

Secretariat's Comments
4/25/2023

NA.

Agency's Comments
Focal Area Set Aside?

Secretariat's Comments
4/25/2023

NA.

Agency's Comments

8.2 Is the PPG requested within the allowable cap (per size of project)? If requested, has an exception (e.g. for regional projects) been sufficiently substantiated?

Secretariat's Comments

4/25/2023

Yes, cleared.

Agency's Comments

8.3 Are the indicative expected amounts, sources and types of co-financing adequately documented and consistent with the requirements of the Co-Financing Policy and Guidelines?

Secretariat's Comments

4/25/2023

Yes, cleared.

Agency's Comments

Annex B: Endorsements

8.4 Has the project been endorsed by the country? (ies) GEF OFP and has the OFP at the time of PIF submission name and position been checked against the GEF database?

Secretariat's Comments

4/25/2023

Yes, cleared.

Agency's Comments

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

Secretariat's Comments

4/25/2023

Yes, cleared.

Agency's Comments

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

Secretariat's Comments

4/25/2023

Yes, cleared.

Agency's Comments

8.5 For NGI projects (which may not require LoEs), has the Agency informed the OFP(s) of the project to be submitted?

Secretariat's Comments

4/25/2023

NA.

Agency's Comments

Annex C: Project Location

8.6 Is there preliminary georeferenced information and a map of the project's intended location?

Secretariat's Comments

4/25/2023

Yes, cleared.

Agency's Comments

Annex D: Safeguards Screen and Rating

8.7 If there are safeguard screening documents or other ESS documents prepared, have these been uploaded to the GEF Portal?

Secretariat's Comments

4/25/2023

Yes, cleared.

Agency's Comments

Annex E: Rio Markers

8.8 Are the Rio Markers for CCM, CCA, BD and LD correctly selected, if applicable?

Secretariat's Comments

4/25/2023

Yes, cleared.

Agency's Comments

Annex F: Taxonomy Worksheet

8.9 Is the project properly tagged with the appropriate keywords?

Secretariat's Comments

4/25/2023

Yes, cleared.

Agency's Comments

Annex G: NGI Relevant Annexes

8.10 Does the project provide sufficient detail (indicative term sheet) to take a decision on the following selection criteria: co-financing ratios, financial terms and conditions, and financial additionality? If not, please provide comments. Does the project provide a detailed reflow table to assess the project capacity of generating reflows? If not, please provide comments. Is the Partner Agency eligible to administer concessional finance? If not, please provide comments.

Secretariat's Comments

4/25/2023

NA

Agency's Comments

9 GEFSEC Decision

9.1 Is the PIF and PPG (if requested) recommended for technical clearance?

Secretariat's Comments

4/25/2023

No, a number of revisions are required as identified above. Please revise and resubmit.

5/15/2023

Yes, PIF is recommended for technical clearance.

Agency's Comments

05/12/2023

Thank you, comments have been addressed and the document updated.

9.2 Additional Comments to be considered by the Agency at the time of CEO Endorsement/ Approval

Secretariat's Comments

Agency's Comments

Review Dates

PIF Review

Agency Response

First Review

4/25/2023

Additional Review (as necessary)

5/15/2023

Additional Review (as necessary)

Additional Review (as necessary)

Additional Review (as necessary)