Strengthening Nature-Based Solutions to Restore Ecosystems, and Conserve and Enhance Blue Carbon Stocks and Biodiversity in Viet Nam

Review PIF and Make a recommendation

Basic project information

GEF ID
11668
Countries
Viet Nam
Project Name
Strengthening Nature-Based Solutions to Restore Ecosystems, and Conserve and Enhance Blue Carbon Stocks and Biodiversity in Viet Nam
Agencies
UNDP
Date received by PM
9/4/2024
Review completed by PM
10/8/2024
Program Manager
Wenxin Li
Focal Area
Multi Focal Area
Project Type
MSP

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

WL 10/2024: Yes.

WL 04/2025: Please reivse the project title to "Strengthening Nature-based-Solutions to Conserve and Enhance Blue Carbon Stocks and Biodiversity in Viet Nam". The agency may simply send a note to the OFP informing them of the change and seeking agreement by email - i.e., a new LOE is not necessary.

WL 08/2025: Noted.

Agency's Comments

5 May 2025

Thank you for your suggestion. In line with your recommendation, UNDP communicated this change to the GEF Operational Focal Point and the executing entity. However, they requested that the current title be maintained, as it is preferred by the government given the national context.

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

WL 10/2024: Yes.

Agency's Comments

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

GEFPO 10/2024: Please incorporate gender perspectives in Outcomes 1 and 3, on aspects relating to: developing plans, guidelines, financing mechanisms, communications and other knowledge products. Please ensure that women and women's groups are beneficiaries of technical support, financing grants and livelihood opportunities. In Output 4.1, please ensure that lessons learned on gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment are captured and shared.

WL 4/2025: cleared, to be confirmed by GEFPO after technical clearance.

Agency's Comments

30 March 2025

Thank you for your comments regarding the need to better incorporate gender perspectives in Outcomes 1 and 3, as well as the importance of ensuring that lessons learned on gender mainstreaming are captured and shared in Output 4.1.

In response to these comments, revisions have been made to ensure that gender equality and women?s empowerment are meaningfully integrated throughout the project. Gender-sensitive language has been incorporated into key project outcomes and outputs, as outlined below:

? **Outcome 1**: Inclusion of 'that are gender-responsive.'

? **Output 1.2**: Inclusion of ?gender-responsive.?

? **Output 1.4**: Addition of ?gender-sensitive.?

? **Outcome 1 indicators**: Addition of ?gender-responsive? to the second indicator.

? **Outcome 3**: Inclusion of ?including women and youth groups.?

? **Outputs 3.2 and 3.3**: Addition of ?particularly women and youth groups? and ?particularly women-led solutions,? respectively.

? **Outcome 3 indicators**: Inclusion of ?with preference to women- and youth-led groups? under the third indicator.

? **Outcome 4**: Inclusion of ?documented and...?.

? **Output 4.1**: Inclusion of ?gender-sensitive? and the explicit statement: ?Specific emphasis will be given to documenting and sharing lessons learned and best practices on women and youth empowerment, ensuring accessibility through various platforms for public and private stakeholders.?

? **M&E**: Inclusion of ?gender action plan.?

As part of the United Nations Development Programme?s (UNDP) Social and Environmental Standards (SES), a comprehensive gender analysis and a gender equality and women?s empowerment (GEWE) action plan are required. These elements will be prepared during the Project Preparation Grant (PPG) phase to ensure that GEWE considerations remain central to project design and implementation. These will be prepared in alignment with the Global Environment Facility?s (GEF) requirements for gender mainstreaming.

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

Secretariat's Comments WL 4/2025: Yes.

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

WL 10/2024: No, regarding (b). The PMC cost cover by GEF financing is 5% of the total GEF financing, and the part covered by co-financing is 1% of the total co-financing.

GEFPO 10/2024: There is no proportionality on the PMC - if the GEF contribution is kept at 5%, for a co-financing of $22,700,000 the expected contribution to PMC must be around $1,135,000 instead of $300,000 (which is 1.3%). As the costs associated with the project management must be covered by the GEF portion and the co-financing portion allocated to the PMC, the GEF contribution and the co-financing contribution must be proportional, which means that the GEF contribution to PMC might be decreased and the co-financing contribution to PMC might be increased to reach a similar level. Please amend either by increasing the co-financing portion and/or by reducing the GEF portion. A more definitive estimation of PMC will be presented and adjusted at CEO Endorsement stage.

	Sub Total ($)	3,336,160.00	22,700,000.00
Project Management Cost (PMC)			
	GET	166,808.00	300,000.00
	Sub Total($)	166,808.00	300,000.00
	Total Project Cost($)	3,502,968.00	23,000,000.00

WL 4/2025: cleared.

Agency's Comments

30 March 2025

Thank you for your comments on the lack of proportionality of the Project Management Cost (PMC). The allocation of co-financing has been adjusted, shifting USD 800,000 from Outcome 3 to the PMC co-financing while maintaining the expected co-financing ratio for the GEF investment.

Specifically, the indicative co-financing for Outcome 3 has been reduced from USD 14,200,000 to USD 13,400,000, with the reallocated amount increasing the PMC co-financing contribution to USD 1,100,000 (from USD 300,000). This adjustment ensures proportionality, maintaining the PMC allocation at approximately 5 percent. The revised figures have also been accurately reflected in the GEF Portal.

Adequate PMC funding is essential to ensure the project is managed effectively and implemented diligently.

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

WL 10/2024: No.

Please clarify the following aspects, for the target areas and context in Kien Giang province, rather than only in the national or broad Mekong Delta context: (1) the specific drivers for the threats to mangrove and seagrass degradation and the specific unstainable practices, e.g. what?s causing groundwater overexploitation and water changes in tidal regimes, what?s the main source of the pollution and (2) the rate of degradation. Please provide such information in PIF or specify how to develop them during PPG, as they are necessary to guide/assess/prioritize what NbS are appropriate for target areas and to estimate the blue carbon impact. Please also map and elaborate quantitatively for the target areas, to the extent possible, the composition of threats/drivers (e.g. conversion of mangrove forests to rice field, conversion to aquaculture ponds, pollution) in terms of area size, as the baseline.

WL 4/2025: Cleared.

Agency's Comments

30 March 2025

Many thanks for highlighting the absence of target area-specific data. Indeed, compared to other Mekong Delta provinces in Viet Nam, Kien Giang is rather poorly studied and under-researched. Additionally, as a border province, it faces further restrictions on information accessibility.

Drawing on the available literature, the PIF has expanded, to the greatest extent possible, on the specific drivers of mangrove and seagrass degradation and unsustainable practices in Kien Giang province. However, please note that data specific to Kien Giang, and particularly for the three proposed target areas?Phu Quoc National Park, Phu Quoc Marine Protected Area (MPA), and Kien Luong Protected Area?are scarce and not readily available.

Field visits to these areas are planned for the PPG phase, during which the Project Document and associated annexes (including an annex on landscape profile with the detailed information requested) will provide more detailed, location-specific information on the drivers of threats to mangrove and seagrass degradation, unsustainable practices, and rates of degradation, based on the final site selections.

In the PPG stage of the project, these field visits will enable the PPG team to gather additional data and insights through consultations with key local stakeholders, including provincial authorities, local communities, and ethnic minority groups. This information will enhance initial findings from the literature review.

In the meantime, due to their geographical and socioeconomic similarities, information related to the broader Mekong Delta region can reliably be generalised to Kien Giang Province. This especially applies for statistics and information on seagrass in Viet Nam, given that almost all of the country?s seagrass meadows are located in Kien Giang.

At this stage, due to resource constraints, data limitations, and time considerations, it is not possible to quantitatively map and elaborate on the threats and drivers for the target areas in terms of area size as a baseline. A comprehensive on-site baseline assessment, combined with detailed consultations to confirm target areas, will be conducted during the PPG phase.

Wording has been added to the PIF (Annex C) to clarify that data gaps in Kien Giang Province will be addressed during the PPG phase through field visits and stakeholder consultations. These efforts will collect location-specific data on mangrove and seagrass degradation, unsustainable practices, and degradation rates, refining initial findings from the PIF.

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

WL 10/2024: No.

a) Please clarify what other potential options are considered, including the selection of specific NbS approaches.

b) Please clarify how the project approach ensures resilience to future changes in the drivers.

WL 4/2025: Cleared.

Agency's Comments

30 March 2025

a) As detailed in Outcome 3, Output 3.3, the project aims to support the implementation of priority nature-based solutions (NbS) by communities, particularly women-led solutions, and private sector entities, with a focus on maximising blue carbon stock enhancement, biodiversity conservation, and climate mitigation benefits.

A wide range of potential NbS was initially reviewed by the PIF team, as documented in Annex I of the PIF. Based on this assessment, local best practices, and a structured priority screening process, a shortlist of seven NbS has been proposed for demonstration. These solutions were selected based on their potential to conserve and enhance globally threatened/significant biodiversity, reduce pressures on coastal ecosystems, and deliver co-benefits, such as improved livelihoods, income diversification, and protection from extreme events.

However, the full feasibility, site-specific applicability, and implementation details of these NbS will be further investigated, validated, and refined during the PPG phase through field assessments and stakeholder consultations. This is already noted in the PIF. This process will ensure that the most effective and context-appropriate solutions are selected.

b) Additional text has been added to Section B of the PIF (Project Description) to better clarify the linkage between the project outcomes, outputs, barriers and threats.

To ensure long-term resilience, the project embeds sustainability and adaptability into its interventions. Strengthening the regulatory and institutional environment at national, regional, and provincial levels will provide a solid foundation for continued NbS adoption. Cross-sectoral coordination mechanisms will facilitate mainstreaming NbS across relevant policies, ensuring their long-term integration. Training and capacity-building efforts will equip local communities, government agencies, and private sector actors with the knowledge to adapt and refine NbS as conditions evolve. Additionally, financial sustainability is a core consideration, with mechanisms such as job creation, incentives like Certified Emission Reductions (CERs), and private sector investment designed to maintain and scale NbS interventions over time.

These measures collectively enhance the project's resilience, ensuring its interventions remain effective and adaptable in response to future environmental and socio-economic changes.

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

WL 10/2024: No. Please clarify and map how the outputs of each component would directly address specific threats and drivers, including the expected causal pathways, and the key assumptions underlying these, so that any potential material gaps (if any) would be identified.

Component 1: please consider including a comprehensive policy and guideline gap analysis as an output to guide the delivery of the proposed component 1 outputs.

Component 2: please consider including a comprehensive coordination/capacity gap analysis for the target area as an output to guide the delivery of the proposed component 2 outputs, considering all the ongoing similar initiatives.

Component 3: please specify how to ensure a comprehensive list of NbS is developed during PPG, how each of the NbS solution listed addresses most of the location-specific drivers and threats and improves resilience for degradation and/or increase carbon stock, and their expected implementation costs with references and comparison to benchmarks (including the cost estimates in Annex 1). Please reconcile the mangrove restoration costs quoted in Annex 1, which vary widely as US$ 4,100 to US$ 8,343/ha in one section, and 10,000-15,000 US$/ha in another section.

WL 04/2025: Cleared.

Agency's Comments

30 March 2025

Re. "clarify and map?": A flowchart has been added as Annex J, illustrating how project activities under each outcome and output would contribute to overcoming specific barriers, addressing root causes, and ultimately reducing threats to blue carbon ecosystems. Kindly note that this is not a revised theory of change, but rather a different visual representation of the linkage between the above-mentioned elements.

Re. "including a comprehensive policy and guideline gap analysis as an output" for Components 1 and 2?: It has been ensured that the comprehensive gap analyses are included in the assessments planned by the project, specifically under Output 1.1 and Output 2.1. Under Output 1.1, ?the project will undertake a comprehensive assessment of existing policies and stakeholder needs related to the conservation, restoration, and management of coastal mangrove, seagrass, and coral reef blue carbon ecosystems at the national, regional, and provincial levels.? For Output 2.1, the output statement has been revised to begin with ?Capacity needs assessed and targeted capacity building programmes implemented for??. To further clarify, the wording ?including identification of gaps? has been added to the text in the PIF.

Re. "ensure a comprehensive list of NbS is developed": The PPG phase will involve a thorough process to ensure a comprehensive and validated list of NbS. This will include an in-depth review of NbS piloted in Viet Nam, assessing their costs, benefits, and scalability gaps. Additionally, detailed localised data collection and consultations with local communities will be conducted to validate geographic suitability and identify potential challenges related to natural resource availability and ecosystem degradation.

Pilot demonstrations will focus on selected land- and seascapes that reflect the broader challenges, threats, and barriers impacting blue carbon ecosystems. These pilots will support the development of best-practice NbS with strong potential for scaling up. To enhance clarity, the PPG phase will establish selection criteria that prioritise areas reflecting larger-scale issues, recognising the limitations of available resources for extensive coverage.

Cost estimates for each NbS will be derived from existing references and benchmarks, providing an informed basis for assessing expected implementation costs and benefits. Community validation and engagement will be central throughout the process, ensuring that selected solutions are locally relevant, address site-specific drivers of degradation, enhance resilience, conserve biodiversity, and support blue carbon stock enhancement.

Re. "reconcile the mangrove restoration costs quoted": The Government (former Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development [MARD]) has issued Circular 21 (2023), which provides cost norms for forest restoration and enrichment (link below). Therefore, the project follows government costing practices and recommends applying the established cost norms for the project's consideration. The pricing is indicative based on available information. The cost and pricing will be validated during the PPG stage based on the latest available data.

Source: Th?ng t? 21/2023/TT-BNNPTNT ??nh m?c kinh t-truong/Thong-tu-21-2023-TT-BNNPTNT-dinh-muc-kinh-te-ky-thuat-Lam-nghiep-592413.aspx

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

WL 10/2024: Yes.

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

WL 10/2024: No. GEF policies, further explained in the Guidelines on Project and Program Cycle, require that ?the separation of implementation functions performed by GEF Agencies and execution functions performed by Project Executing Entities is a key feature of the governance of the GEF Partnership and an important aspect of the GEF Minimum Fiduciary Standards.? See https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/documents/GEF_Guidelines_Project_Program_Cycle_Policy_20200731.pdf. (pages 44-45)

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

WL 4/2025: Cleared.

Agency's Comments

30 March 2025

a) Thank you for the guidance on the Agency execution requirements. It is noted that dual execution should not be included at the PIF stage. The proposed implementation modality has been revised as National Implementation Modality (NIM) throughout the document. As suggested, focus will remain on project preparation and, if Agency execution becomes necessary, it will be ensured that full information and justification are provided as part of a policy exception request at the appropriate stage.

b) During the revision of the PIF in response to comments received, the government of Viet Nam underwent a major restructuring. As a result, the Executing Agency has changed from the

Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment to the newly formed Ministry of Agriculture and Environment.

This change follows the merger of the former Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment with the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, consolidating them into a single entity. Despite this transition, the project's counterpart remains the Department of Climate Change. The restructuring has expanded the mandate of the focal ministry, facilitating more integrated and cross-sectoral solutions through the project.

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

NN 09/2024: - The Biodiversity focal area relevant Core Indicators are proposed but the targets are extremely small, in particular, CI 1.1 Terrestrial Protected Areas (PAs) Newly Created (1,480 ha proposed), 2.2 Marine PAs under improved management effectiveness (307 ha proposed), and 4.1 Area of landscapes under improved management to benefit biodiversity (3,000 ha proposed).

- It is also unclear whether the project will create new PAs, since the proposed project site is already considered as an established PA. The Kien Giang PA (WDPA ID 478284 is 11,881 square km = 1,188,100 ha), and the proposed project relevant target ha appears extremely small compared to the project site PA, even considering the smaller Phu Quoc MPA (WPDA ID 303088, 336 square km = 33,600 ha). Some hectarage indicated in Annex C do not seem to match WPDA figures. Please explain.

- The description provided for CI 1 appears to be more aligned with CI 1.2 Terrestrial PAs under improvement management effectiveness, rather than the proposed CI 1.1. Please also provide METT.

- For CI 5.1 Fisheries under third-party certification incorporating biodiversity conservation (2,000 proposed without specific unit), is missing type/name of the third-party certification. The description for CI 5.1, referring to 2,000 hectares, potentially seems to suggest CI 2.2 if it is within MPAs, or, otherwise, go directly under CI 5, Area of marine habitat under improve practices (excluding protected areas) (hectares). If the referred area is also an OECM, then the same information should be recorded under the indicator ?Marine OECMs supported?. Please use the relevant CI.

- The Land Degradation focal area relevant CI 3.2 Area of forest and forest land under restoration is proposed at 335 ha, which is also an extremely small target.

- CI 11. Even though the description suggests the ?low gender baseline? and tendency that men dominate forest, aquaculture and marine activities, 35% women for both direct and indirect beneficiaries appear very low in the Southeast Asia context.

- In Annex C Project Location the species in the Kien Gian Biosphere Reserve are listed. Please clarify why the Reticulated Python, which is LC in the Red list, is considered to have special conservation priority.

- Conservation of globally threatened terrestrial and marine species through 1,790 hectares of terrestrial and marine PAs is very insignificant. If the agency believes this small hectarage would still contribute any significant biodiversity, please articulate what they exactly are and how the project activities will help achieve it.

WL 10/2024:

- Please provide Excel calculation sheets to allow the reviewer to reproduce the GHG calculations. Given that EXACT or NEXT (as the recommended tools for the AFOLU sector) is not used, the agency should per GEF guidelines justify alignment of their GHG emission methodology with IPCC guidelines and include references and justifications for some assumptions made (e.g. carbon increment rate, number of years to reach full carbon stock, the total size of the area for the project intervention). The assumptions should also include the BAU deforestation rate and the deforestation rate with the project intervention. The justification should specify how the project intervention helps to achieve the avoided deforestation.

WL 04/2025:

-- For CI 5.1 Fisheries under third-party certification incorporating biodiversity conservation: 2000ha is still listed under this CI, although recognized to be a correction in the agency's comments.

- Please consider including the following feedback from the agency in the PIF: "During the PPG stage, whether the METT or other PA management tools are locally applied will be re-assessed and it will be ensured that project interventions contribute to relevant PA management performance indicators while strengthening existing management frameworks. Where opportunities arise, we will advocate for the adoption of the METT tool in PAs and MPAs".

- The Excel file for GHG calculations is much appreciated. However, the methodology needs to be further clarified/imrproved. For seagrass, please confirm and justify that the GHG calculations included only biomass and excluded the carbon stored in sediment which is considered to have much higher sequestration potential than the living biomass. Please clarify why the dry biomass value of 8.2tdm/ha is much higher than the value of 0.82 tdm/ha in Reference 10, page 10. For mangrove in aquaculture, please provide the reference for the existing carbon stock 10tC/ha. Please include the full reference for Phuong et al 2015.

-- For new planting activities (30ha mangrove and 2ha seagrass), please consider applying an appropriate annual carbon sequestration rate for new plants for each year based on the expected new plant density. It's not clear why 50% was applied for the mangrove. For the seagrass, it's not clear why each year the carbon sequestration would equal to 3.85 the existing c stock.

- For improved management (seagrass and mangrove), please consider including two components: the loss of carbon stock (if any) in the baseline, and the increased carbon stock compared to the current level (including natural regeneration and new planting/intercropping) due to the project.

-- CI4 and CI4 should be used to calculate CI6.6 indirect GHG AFOLU .

WL 08/2025:

- In sheet "Time Series_11.03.2024", the CO_2 sequestration value for mangroves should be the difference of carbon stock in year 1 and in year 20, instead of the carbon stock of year 20. Please ensure that the units are labelled and used consistently between tCO_2 and tC, in Column C.

- Please compare the annual sequestration rates with the IPCC tier 1 values in Table 4.2 of https://www.ipcc-nggip.iges.or.jp/public/wetlands/draft/Final_Draft_Wetlands_Supplement/Chp_4_FD_Wetlands_Supplement.pdf, and elaborate/justify the difference.

WL 09/2025: all of the GHG mitigated under Core Indicator 6 should categorized under AFOLU sector.

WL 09/2025: this is not yet corrected and can be addressed during the PPG stage.

Indicator 6.1 Carbon Sequestered or Emissions A
Land Use) sector

Total Target Benefit	(At PIF)	(At CEO Endorsen
Expected metric tons of CO_2e (direct)	467,719	
Expected metric tons of CO_2e (indirect)		
Anticipated start year of accounting	2025	
Duration of accounting	20	

Indicator 6.2 Emissions Avoided Outside AFOLU (

Total Target Benefit	(At PIF)	(At CEO Endorsement
Expected metric tons of CO_2e (direct)	875	

Agency's Comments

11 September 2025

Thank you for clarifying that seagrass benefit should be within AFOLU sector. All Core Indicator 6 mitigation benefit is coming from ?6.1 Greenhouse gas emission mitigated in the AFOLU sector (direct + indirect) (6.5+6.6)?

28 August 2025

Question 1:

Many thanks, we have implemented the suggested correction. In the sheet ?Time Series_11.03.2024?, we have corrected the calculation so that the sequestration value is now the difference between the carbon stock in Year 1 and Year 20 for Columns B and C. Units have also been reviewed and are now clearly labelled and used consistently between tCO? and tC in Column C.

This approach is applied only to Columns B and C because they represent stock values (standing carbon) that accumulate over time. To quantify sequestration, the correct metric is the net change in stock over the project period.

Columns D?G represent cumulative removals or avoided emissions from interventions (enhanced mangroves, aquaculture, seagrass planting). These columns already report the total amount sequestered or avoided from the start of the intervention, so the value in Year 20 inherently captures the entire benefit. Subtracting Year 1 would understate the result, as these columns do not represent standing stock but rather accumulated removals.

An updated Excel estimation sheet reflecting these corrections is attached.

Furthermore, another minor change has been made. The project interventions focus on existing mangrove forests, both natural and planted. Due to the current lack of disaggregated data on carbon stock by tree age and species, we applied a relative growth rate approach to estimate the annual carbon sequestration rate. During the implementation phase, we will conduct stratification and baseline carbon stock assessments to enable more precise estimation of sequestration rates.

We have converted the carbon stock units to tCO?e for cells B7 and C7 (highlighted in red). In cell B10, the ??44/12? conversion factor (used to convert carbon to CO?e) has been removed, as this conversion is already reflected in the revised units for B7.

Question 2:

The estimated carbon sequestration rate applied in our calculations (24.5 tCO?e/ha/year) falls within the range provided by the IPCC for mangrove ecosystems, which is 0.10?10.2 tC/ha/year (equivalent to approximately 0.36?37.4 tCO?e/ha/year).

This rate is based on empirical data from the previous UNDP?GCF project on coastal resilience, which undertook carbon stock measurements in 2022 across representative mangrove sites in the Mekong Delta. The sample size and methodology in that project were designed to reflect conditions in areas of significant mangrove coverage, ensuring the value is both regionally relevant and scientifically robust.

5 May 2025

On the CI 5.1 comment: It is confirmed that 2,000 hectares is listed directly under CI 5 (Area of marine habitat under improved practices to benefit biodiversity) in the Core Indicator Reporting Sheet. This is from **marine habitat improve practices outside of the protected areas.** This does not pertain to CI 5.1 (Fisheries under third-party certification incorporating biodiversity conservation) and entry under 5.1 is now removed.

On the comment related to METT: Thank you very much for the recommendation to include this feedback in the PIF. It has been incorporated into the section on Core Indicators (page 51). Added text reads, *?During the PPG stage, whether the METT or other protected area management tools are locally applied will be reassessed. It will be ensured that project interventions contribute to relevant protected area management performance indicators while strengthening existing management frameworks. Where opportunities arise, we will advocate for the adoption of the METT tool in protected areas and marine protected areas.?*

On the comment related to seagrass: Thank you for your observation. For seagrass, we confirm that the GHG calculations are based solely on the carbon in living biomass, using the best available data identified through our literature review. Carbon stored in sediments?which indeed has a higher sequestration potential?was not included in the current estimates, in line with the methodological scope of our assessment.

The dry biomass value of **8.2 tDM/ha** provided in the Excel file is the correct estimate based on our selected references. The value of **0.82 tDM/ha** appears to have been mistakenly included as a typo in an earlier version and does not reflect the data used in our calculations. The typo is now corrected in the latest version.

Explanation for C aquaculture 10tC/ha: This is an estimate. For southern mangrove carbon, it is estimated at 236 tCO?/ha for above-ground biomass (AGB), with a total of 283 tCO?/ha (as per the referenced document). The aquaculture estimates of 10tC/ha or 36.6 tCO?/ha is used because mangroves in aquaculture areas account for 8?10% of the area; to be conservative, it is calculated using 8%. The full reference for Phuong et. al 2015 is as follows: https://cgspace.cgiar.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/b4c4e67c-2744-41a7-94fb-05770bfdd3d4/content. This has also been added to the ?Carbon? sheet in Annex K.

On the comment related to planting activities: Thank you for your comments. For mangroves, the intervention is enrichment planting. The 50% increase in carbon stock over 20 years was used as an estimated enhancement relative to existing carbon levels, based on our observations from enrichment planting sites in Viet Nam.

For seagrass, the focus is on conservation by addressing conversion rather than new planting. The assumption is that, without intervention, approximately 20% of seagrass area would be lost over the next 20 years due to degradation or conversion?equivalent to 1% loss avoided per year through conservation efforts. The value for annual carbon benefit is therefore based on the avoided loss of seagrass area and the associated carbon stock that would otherwise be emitted.

On the comment related to improved management (seagrass and mangrove): Thank you for the valuable feedback. For improved management of seagrass and mangrove ecosystems, the baseline carbon stock used to estimate additional removals reflects the most recent data available at the time of project design. We acknowledge the importance of capturing both components you highlighted: (i) potential carbon stock loss under the baseline (i.e. without intervention), and (ii) carbon stock increases due to improved management, including natural regeneration and enrichment planting/intercropping.

During the implementation phase, carbon monitoring will be designed to account for both avoided emissions and sequestration, covering all relevant sources and sinks. This will allow us to quantify the net carbon benefits of the intervention more accurately and in line with IPCC and GHG accounting guidelines.

On the comment related to CI4 and CI4 and indirect benefits: There appears to be a typo in the comment (repetition of CI.4). Due to limited data availability and the need for broader projections and assumptions regarding indirect benefits at the PIF stage, these benefits are typically estimated during the PPG stage. This approach is commonly accepted for GEF projects.

30 March 2025

Explanation for Revisions to Core Indicator Targets in the GEF 9818 Project

During the revision of the PIF package for the proposed GEF project, especially when addressing the comments on CI 6 estimates, the PIF team closely examined the inputs for the estimates for CI 6. While the total for CI 6 remains unchanged and will be further verified during the PPG, it became evident that the project does not contribute to 335 hectares under CI 3 as initially indicated. Instead, it only contributes to 30 hectares, reflecting the planned mangrove restoration efforts, which are now no longer counter under CI 3. Accordingly, the adjusted targets are below:

The target for Core Indicator 1 (Terrestrial Protected Areas Created or Under Improved Management for Conservation and Sustainable Use) has been revised from 1,480 hectares to 1,450 hectares.

The target for Core Indicator 3 (Area of Natural Habitats Restored) has been adjusted from 335 hectares to 30 hectares.

These revisions ensure consistency, prevent overestimation, and provide a more accurate representation of the project?s impact in alignment with GEF?s reporting requirements.

GENERAL ARGUMENTATION

Re. "targets are extremely small": The project has identified the Kien Giang Biosphere Reserve as the key area for testing interdisciplinary approaches and piloting NbS to address global challenges such as climate change and biodiversity loss. This aligns with UNESCO?s philosophy on Biosphere Reserves, which promotes sustainable use through local engagement.

The project's focus is on actively involving local communities and key stakeholders in planning and demonstrating NbS. However, it does not specifically aim to collaborate with the Kien Giang Biosphere Reserve Management Authority to enhance overall management effectiveness, nor with the designated authorities of National Parks or the Marine Protected Area (MPA). Instead, the emphasis is on empowering local communities and private sector actors to implement and invest in NbS at the community level.

Given that local communities typically manage relatively small designated areas within the broader land- and seascape, the scale of NbS interventions will be proportionally smaller compared to the overall size of the Biosphere Reserve. Consequently, while NbS demonstrations will contribute to broader conservation objectives, the project's targets remain modest relative to the full extent of the Biosphere Reserve.

Please also note that the target areas are indicative at this stage, based on the current analysis. These will be further assessed during the PPG stage, with opportunities for expansion explored where feasible.

SPECIFIC RESPONSES

Re. "CI 1.1 Terrestrial Protected Areas (PAs) Newly Created (1,480 ha proposed": The project does not intend to establish new protected areas (PAs) but rather aims to enhance the management effectiveness of existing ones. The 1,450-hectare area referenced pertains specifically to Core Indicator (CI) 1.2, which measures terrestrial protected areas under improved management effectiveness, rather than CI 1.1, which tracks the creation of new terrestrial protected areas.

The World Database on Protected Areas (WDPA) incorrectly lists the Kien Giang Marine Protected Area when it should be the Kien Giang Biosphere Reserve. To improve clarity, the WDPA IDs and corresponding areas have been added to Annex C for reference.

Re. "Some hectarage indicated in Annex C do not seem to match WPDA figures": Annex C is revised to reflect the latest figures confirmed by local sources. Sources are reflected in the footnotes. The WDPA presents information that the Viet Nam MAB Committee updated the information in the WDPA latest in 2009.

Re. "description provided for CI 1": It is confirmed that the contribution to CI 1 does indeed come from CI 1.2, rather than CI 1.2. This is correctly reflected in the description in the PIF, as well as the core indicator Excel file.

Re. "Please also provide METT": At the project design stage, a METT assessment has not yet been conducted in the PAs of Kien Giang. However, existing government regulations on PA management will be adhered to in the project design. During the PPG stage, whether the METT or other PA management tools are locally applied will be re-assessed and it will be ensured that project interventions contribute to relevant PA management performance indicators while strengthening existing management frameworks. Where opportunities arise, we will advocate for the adoption of the METT tool in PAs and MPAs.

Re. "CI 5.1 missing type/name of the third-party certification": Core Indicator (CI) 5.1 has been revised to zero, as the project does not currently anticipate achieving third-party certification. This was an error. This possibility will be reviewed during the PPG phase, and the indicator will be adjusted if necessary. Instead, the 2,000 hectares has been reallocated under CI 5 (Area of marine habitat under improved practices, excluding protected areas). For further details, please refer to the description of CI 5 on page 47.

Re. CI 3.2 ?The Land Degradation focal area...?: The target for CI 3.2 is acknowledged to be relatively low at 30 hectares. This aligns with the broader rationale for some of the project's modest targets, as explained above. The total GEF financing from the LD STAR Allocation is significantly lower compared to allocations for BD and CC, making this target realistic given the available investment. Substantial co-financing will be allocated to land restoration efforts, including management, active restoration, and natural regeneration. While these interventions will contribute to broader restoration outcomes, the core indicator worksheet only accounts for what is directly supported through GEF investment, excluding the indirect benefits from co-financed activities.

Re. CI 11 "35% women for both direct and indirect beneficiaries": Thank you for highlighting that the 35% target for women among both direct and indirect beneficiaries appears low in the Southeast Asian context. This conservative estimate was initially based on local cultural dynamics, where men tend to dominate project-related activities such as aquaculture and marine conservation. However, the target has now been revised to 45%, ensuring greater representation of women. This adjustment has been reflected throughout the PIF and in the indicator reporting worksheet. Furthermore, as noted on page 47, gender targets will be further assessed during the PPG stage, with opportunities for increasing women?s participation explored.

Re. "Reticulated Python": While the species may be classified as Least Concern (LC) globally, in Viet Nam, it is considered Critically Endangered (CR), as listed in the 2007 Viet Nam Red Data Book. This heightened risk status is due to significant population declines caused by illegal hunting and habitat destruction.

Re. "Excel calculations": An Excel file has been prepared detailing all sources of information, including the assumptions and intervention areas (Annex K_Calculations for Project Contributions to Target Indicators_GEF 9818).

Assumptions are outlined in the sheet titled ?Proposed_11.03.2024.? The rate of carbon accumulation for mangroves is derived from actual carbon monitoring conducted under GCF-funded projects. The rate of seagrass loss is based on historical changes in seagrass coverage, as well as multiple studies on seagrass biomass and carbon sequestration rates.

While the EXACT tool is designed for landscape-scale assessments, covering all carbon sources and sinks related to land use, land-use changes, and land management (similar to GHG accounting), its application in Viet Nam presents challenges. This is primarily due to the tool?s broad scope, which encompasses all land-use types, whereas this project specifically targets mangroves and seagrass ecosystems. As a result, the project adopted an alternative approach that is more suited to the project?s scope and available data.

Within this project, interventions on mangroves focus on enhancement and restoration to facilitate carbon removals, while interventions on seagrass prioritise improved conservation for emission reductions alongside restoration efforts to enhance carbon sequestration. Estimates for carbon removals and emission reductions are projected over a 20-year period, with annual carbon changes documented in the sheet ?Time Series_11.03.2024.?

After reviewing CI 6 contributions, please note that mangrove forest and related contributions (704,252 tCO_2e) remain AFOLU under sub-Indicator 6.5, while seagrass contributions (875 tCO_2e) are now moved under sub-indicator 6.7 (outside AFOLU sector).

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

Secretariat's CommentsN/A

Agency's Comments

5.6 RISKs

a) Is there a well-articulated assessment of risk and identification of mitigation measures under each relevant risk category?

b) Is the rating provided reflecting the residual risk to the likely achievement of intended outcomes after accounting for the expected implementation of mitigation measures?

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

NN 09/2024: Stakeholder risk is marked Substantial, however, only mitigation measures are proposed, while it is unclear why and how the stakeholder risk is substantial for the proposed project. Please explain. In relation to this risk category, please clarify why the Stakeholder Engagement section suggests that UNDP did not directly consult with stakeholders including Indigenous People (or ethnic minorities), CSOs or private sector actors at the PIF stage, even though they are checked under the Policy Requirements section. This also raises a question whether the appropriate risk assessment has been made.

WL 10/2024: Please clarify what specific lessons from other projects will effectively mitigate the overall ?Substantial? risk rating.

WL 04/2025: The comments below responded to the question on the stakeholder risk. Please clarify what specific lessons from other projects will effectively mitigate the overall ?Substantial? risk rating.

WL 06/2025: cleared.

Agency's Comments

5 May 2025

Thank you for your comment. UNDP Viet Nam will apply successful lessons learned from similar past projects to effectively mitigate the ?Substantial? stakeholder risk rating. These include:

Adhering to UNDP Enterprise Risk Management policies through the development and implementation of standard risk management tools, including a risk register, safeguards documents (ESMF/A/P, IPP/F, SEP, GAP), and other relevant assessments related to operational risks (e.g., the Partner Capacity Assessment Tool ? PCAT).

Continuously identifying new risks, updating, and implementing mitigation measures where necessary. For example, in GEF Project ID 9361 (successfully closed), implemented by UNDP in Viet Nam, a risk review conducted after three years of implementation led the project team to elevate the overall SES risk from Moderate to Substantial after observing increasing likelihood of some pre-identified risks. Subsequently, the project?s ESMF and ESMP were updated, trainings for project partners were organised, and reports were submitted to the Project Board. The risk management of this project was rated as Highly Satisfactory in the Independent Final Evaluation.

Establishing and operating a robust project-level Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM). The GCF Project FP013 successfully applied a system (SeaTell) to track and address concerns and complaints from communities. All concerns were resolved in a satisfactory manner, and the operation of the GRM was highly praised in the Independent Final Evaluation of FP013.

Ensuring strong stakeholder engagement and a robust monitoring and evaluation system. For instance, in the GCF Project FP125, implemented by UNDP in Viet Nam, weekly project progress updates?including any arising issues?were shared with all stakeholders. This facilitated the early identification of emerging risks and the implementation of appropriate mitigation measures.

Conducting comprehensive community consultations based on FPIC principles. In GCF Project FP125, consultations were carried out in all 68 project communes, with careful attention to cultural and linguistic factors, to seek the consent of local communities. This process is fully prescribed and documented in the project?s IPP.

Mobilising field coordinators to support project implementation and monitor risks at the field level. In the aforementioned projects, local coordinators?who are familiar with the local context and speak local languages?were mobilised to conduct frequent field visits and promptly detect early signs of new risks. The projects also designed a simple real-time reporting template (using Kobo Toolbox) to enable coordinators to report directly, including photos and information from the field.

This project will benefit from the extensive and demonstrable experience gained from similar past projects implemented by UNDP in Viet Nam, as well as from the expertise of the Regional Risk Management Specialist and Regional Technical Advisor from the Bangkok Regional Hub, who provide oversight and quality assurance in risk management.

30 March 2025

Stakeholder risk for the proposed project has been rated as substantial based on the preliminary Social and Environmental Screening Procedure (SESP) conducted by the PIF team, as well as the pre-SESP clearance provided by UNDP?s Social and Environmental Safeguards Advisor at the PIF stage. This rating reflects substantial risks related to stakeholder participation, engagement, and inclusion, particularly concerning traditionally marginalised groups such as ethnic minorities, women, and economically disadvantaged communities.

Project activities may potentially disrupt livelihoods, restrict resource access, and introduce safety and environmental hazards, which could lead to grievances, human rights concerns, and diminished community support. Additional risks may arise from land tenure issues, cultural impacts, and climate vulnerability, further emphasising the need for proactive risk management.

This assessment represents an initial risk estimation, which will be re-evaluated during the PPG stage.

UNDP?s Social and Environmental Standards (SES) policies and procedures ensure that all projects are designed and implemented to promote sustainability, protect human rights, and effectively manage environmental and social risks. During the PPG phase, a comprehensive SESP will be developed, alongside key frameworks such as the Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF), Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP), and Gender Action Plan (GAP).

The substantial risk rating will be mitigated through targeted measures identified during the PPG phase, informed by assessments conducted by the SES Expert. A comprehensive Environmental and Social Risk Management Plan (ESMP) will also be developed to strengthen risk mitigation and response mechanisms. This will include enhancing stakeholder engagement through capacity-building initiatives and participatory decision-making processes. A robust monitoring and evaluation framework will support adaptive management, allowing for timely adjustments based on stakeholder feedback and emerging risks.

At the PIF stage, in accordance with the Government of Viet Nam?s consultation processes, the UNDP Viet Nam CO liaised with the proposed Implementing Partner, the Department of Climate Change under the Ministry of Agriculture and Environment. While UNDP did not engage directly with stakeholders such as Indigenous Peoples (referred to in Viet Nam as "ethnic minorities"), civil society organisations, or private sector actors at this stage, the Executing Agency held meetings with provincial representatives and community leaders, as outlined above. These preliminary discussions confirmed strong local support, particularly in

Kien Giang Province, the project's target area. Additionally, consultations were held with national and provincial experts, as well as academics.

The development of the PIF has also built upon existing consultation channels established through UNDP?s ongoing programmes and projects in the Mekong Region. These include the Green Climate Fund (GCF)-funded Coastal Resilience Project, the GCF-financed Smallholder Farmer Resilience Project, and the Accelerating Private Sector Engagement in Climate-Resilient and Low-Emission Investment Opportunities in Viet Nam?s Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) project.

Recognising the critical importance of stakeholder engagement, UNDP is committed to ensuring that consultation remains central to the project?s design and implementation. An SEP will be developed during the PPG phase to define roles, responsibilities, and engagement strategies. A Stakeholder Engagement Expert will be part of the PPG Team, ensuring broad and inclusive consultations throughout key stages, including the development of the Results Framework, validation of the draft Theory of Change, and safeguards-related discussions. Particular attention will be given to ensuring that traditionally marginalised stakeholders, including women, youth, persons with disabilities, and ethnic minorities, are actively engaged throughout the process.

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

WL 10/2024: Yes, with suggestions. The project may consider identifying and addressing, besides lack of enabling environment, what policy perverse incentives or other sectoral policies that drive the loss of mangroves etc., what enabling policies are missing especially for the private sector and local communities, and any misalignment of national, subnational and sectoral policies.

WL 04/2025: Cleared.

Agency's Comments

25 March 2025

Thank you for your positive review and constructive suggestions. The team will further assess enabling policy conditions, identifying gaps and opportunities to align project interventions with relevant policies and regulations at the national, subnational, and sectoral levels. These aspects, particularly under Outcomes 1 and 2, will be further refined during the PPG phase to ensure strong policy alignment and impact.

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

WL 10/2024: It?s aligned with CCM 1-4. Please consider, if possible, to identify further sites in order to enhance the cost-effectiveness of proposed interventions.

NN 09/2024: BD 1-2 and 1-3 are indicated under Section C, while the Indicative Focal Area Elements in Annex A indicates only BD 1-3. Please clarify and maintain consistency.

WL 04/2025: Cleared.

Agency's Comments

30 March 2025

CCM 1-4: Please see text explaining the project?s alignment with GEF-8 Programming Strategies on page 54. As well, as suggested, additional sites will be assessed during the PPG phase to maximise cost-effectiveness. This is reflected in the relevant sections of the PIF.

BD 1-2 and BD 1-3: The discrepancy has been corrected to ensure consistency throughout the document. As outlined on page 54 (Alignment with GEF-8 Programming Strategies and Country/Regional Priorities), the project contributes to both Biodiversity (BD) 1-2 and BD 1-3. Additionally, BD 1-2 has been incorporated into the Indicative Focal Area Elements in Annex A.

To accurately reflect this alignment, the USD 708,544 from the BD STAR Allocation has been distributed 70% to BD 1-2 and 30% to BD 1-3, resulting in USD 495,980.80 allocated to BD 1-2 and USD 212,563.20 to BD 1-3.

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

WL 10/2024: Yes.

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

WL 10/2024: Yes

Agency's Comments

7 D. Policy Requirements

7.1 Is the Policy Requirements section completed?

Secretariat's Comments

WL 10/2024: Yes

Agency's Comments

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

Secretariat's Comments

WL 10/2024: Yes

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

WL 10/2024: Yes

Agency's Comments

Focal Area allocation?

Secretariat's Comments

NN 09/2024: Overall, the cost effectiveness of the project should be improved for the proposed BD and LDD CI targets, which are very small. The proposed programming of funds provides very little LD focal area programming, in the amount of USD 127,864. Please consider flexibility option to program STAR so that the appropriate programming of funds can be proposed.

WL 04/2025: Cleared.

Agency's Comments

30 March 2025

Thank you for your comment. The project takes full advantage of the flexibility provided under GEF-8 to programme LD STAR resources toward BD and CC objectives.

This integrated programming approach reflects the cross-cutting nature of the project and is aligned with the GEF-8 guidance, as detailed in the section ?Alignment with GEF-8 Programming...? on page 54 of the PIF. While the standalone LD allocation appears limited (USD 127,864), the design ensures that LD objectives are adequately addressed through activities and co-benefits across the BD and CC focal areas.

Therefore, the current allocation reflects the strategic use of STAR flexibility rather than a direct increase in LD-specific funding.

LDCF under the principle of equitable access?

Secretariat's CommentsN/A

Agency's Comments

SCCF A (SIDS)?

Secretariat's CommentsN/A

Agency's Comments

SCCF B (Tech Transfer, Innovation, Private Sector)?

Secretariat's CommentsN/A

Agency's Comments

Focal Area Set Aside?

Secretariat's CommentsN/A

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

WL 10/2024: Yes

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

NN 09/2024: There is only in-kind co-financing indicated. Please identify "Investment" category of co-financing.

WL 4/2025: cleared, to be confirmed by GEFPO after technical clearance.

Agency's Comments

30 March 2025

Thank you for your comment. The Co-financing table has been revised, and the Investment Mobilized category has been corrected accurately.

Annex B: Endorsements

8.4 Has the project been endorsed by the country?s(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

WL 10/2024: Yes.

GEFPO 10/2024: The amounts in table Sources of Funds in Portal don't match those in the same table in LoE - please ask either get a new LoE or to adjust the table in Portal accordingly.

below.

Source of Funds	GEF Agency	Focal Area Source	Amount (in US$)				
			GEF Project Financing	GEF Project Financing Agency Fee	Project Preparation Grant (PPG)	Project Preparation Grant (PPG) Agency Fee	Total
GEFTF	UNDP	BD STAR Allocation	2,666,570	253,324	114,252	10,854	3,045,000
GEFTF	UNDP	CC Star Allocation	708,544	67,312	35,748	3,396	815,000
GEFTF	UNDP	LD Star Allocation	127,854	12,146	-	-	140,000
Total GEF Resources:			**3,502,968**	**332,782**	**150,000**	**14,250**	**4,000,000**

The STAR resources indicated above are being endorsed for the project listed above and submitted by the GEF Agency via the GEF Portal.

Sincerely,

Nguyen Duc Thuan

Sources of Funds for Country Star Allocation

GEF Agency	Trust Fund	Country/ Regional/ Global	Focal Area	Sources of Funds	Total($)
UNDP	GET	Viet Nam	Biodiversity	BD STAR Allocation	815,000.00
UNDP	GET	Viet Nam	Climate Change	CC STAR Allocation	3,045,000.00
UNDP	GET	Viet Nam	Land Degradation	LD STAR Allocation	140,000.00
				Total GEF Resources($)	4,000,000.00

WL 2025/04: Cleared.

Agency's Comments

30 March 2025

Thank you for identifying this oversight. A new LOE has been secured from the Executing Agency, the Ministry of Agriculture and Environment. To ensure alignment with the Source of Funds for Country STAR Allocation in the GEF Portal, the BD STAR Allocation and CC STAR Allocation have been reversed accordingly.

Please find attached the corrected LOE, dated 19 March 2025.

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

Secretariat's Comments

WL 10/2024: Yes.

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

WL 10/2024: Yes.

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 CommentsN/A

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

WL 10/2024: Yes.

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

WL 10/2024: Yes.

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

WL 10/2024: Yes.

WL 04/2025: Based on the revised GHG calculations, it may be necessary to change Rio Marker for CCM to significant.

WL 08/2025: cleared.

Agency's Comments

5 May 2025

Thank you. Climate change mitigation Rio Marker is set as ?Significant Objective 1? (or ?RM = 1?) in Annex E, GEF Portal and the PIF.

Annex F: Taxonomy Worksheet

8.9 Is the project properly tagged with the appropriate keywords?

Secretariat's Comments

WL 10/2024: Yes.

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 CommentsN/A

Agency's Comments

9 GEFSEC Decision

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

Secretariat's Comments

WL 10/2024: Not yet, please address comments in review sheet and resubmit.

WL 04/2025: Not yet, please address comments in review sheet and resubmit.

WL 08/2025: Not yet, please address comments in review sheet and resubmit.

Agency's Comments

5 May 2025

All the comments are addressed.

30 March 2025

Please see responses above and corresponding adjustments to the PIF.

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

Secretariat's Comments

GEFPO 10/2024: When developing the gender action plan, please consider budgeting the activities and include monitoring and reporting gender-related results. Please reflect relevant gender indicators in the results framework.

WL 06/2025: please coordinate and seek synergy with the implementing and executing agencies of GEF Project 11943 which promotes sustainable fisheries in the same region.

WL/UA 09/2025:
1. All of the GHG mitigated under Core Indicator 6 should categorized under 6.1 (AFOLU sector).
2. The target under Core Indicator 3.2 should categorized under 3.4 (mangroves). Please also explore if the target could be more ambitious (> 30 ha).
3. Regarding coastal ecosystem restoration, please explore collaboration opportunities with the Ecosystems Restoration IP, especially with the child projects in Vietnam and Cambodia. Collaboration could be through joining relevant communities of practice, knowledge management and exchange of best practices.
4. Regarding supporting Youth groups (Output 3.2), please identify youth-led activities to be implemented by the project and assign a budget accordingly (during PPG phase)

Agency's Comments

11 September 2025

A reference is made to FAO implemented project GEF ID 11943 by detailing the collaboration during the PPG stage. Information is added on PIF page 47, under ?Complementarity with existing projects and programmes?

28 August 2025

The FAO project in question (GEF 11943) is currently at an early stage of revising its logframe in response to GEF Secretariat comments. UNDP Viet Nam has already engaged with the FAO team to explore potential synergies, including sharing our draft PIF for their review. We have also briefed the Department of Climate Change (DCC) and the GEF Operational Focal Point in Viet Nam to seek their guidance on ensuring complementarity between the two initiatives.

Given the shared thematic and geographic scope, we envisage opportunities to build synergies during the implementation phase, particularly in relation to knowledge exchange, stakeholder engagement, and alignment of activities in the target areas.

We will continue to coordinate closely with FAO as their project design advances, and will seek to identify practical collaboration mechanisms during the PPG stage to avoid duplication and maximise impact.

30 March 2025

Thank you for the suggestion. A detailed budget for each activity will be integrated in the Gender Action Plan and include provisions for monitoring and reporting gender-related results.

It will be ensured that relevant gender indicators are reflected in the results framework to support comprehensive tracking of project impacts.

Review Dates

	PIF Review	Agency Response
First Review	**4/17/2025**	**3/30/2025**
Additional Review (as necessary)	**8/4/2025**	**5/5/2025**
Additional Review (as necessary)	**9/4/2025**	**8/28/2025**
Additional Review (as necessary)	**9/11/2025**	**9/11/2025**
Additional Review (as necessary)		