



# Effective Management of Mchinji Ecosystems for Restoration of Upper Bua River Catchment

Review CEO Endorsement and Make a recommendation

## Basic project information

**GEF ID**

11019

**Countries**

Malawi

**Project Name**

Effective Management of Mchinji Ecosystems for Restoration of Upper Bua River Catchment

**Agencies**

UNEP

**Date received by PM**

6/7/2023

**Review completed by PM**

11/6/2023

**Program Manager**

Jurgis Sapijanskas

**Focal Area**

Biodiversity

**Project Type**

MSP

**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

JS 11/2/2023 - Cleared.

JS 10/18/2023

I- Thank you for the responses but the project has not been developed in line with review requests, which never included any ask relative to the reduction of scope to a single small site. There are still no national-level interventions or clear replication/up-scaling strategy in the CEO approval request. The entirety of the project is to take place at a very small scale, with an impact over 36,000 ha. At this late stage of project development no significant design changes are possible, but please strive to expand some key interventions at larger scale than just within the target landscape (e.g. the training of trainers and training institutionalization could be designed to ensure roll out at a larger scale; development of national-level guidelines on how to manage unclearly demarcated and encroached PAs if that is a widespread issue beyond the Mchinji Forest Reserve) and embed concrete elements that would foster replication/upscaling (e.g. identification of replication landscapes and cross-site visits / exchanges) and promote at least indirect impact beyond the sole Mchinji CFR.

A- There is no proportionality between GEF-financed and co-financed PMC: GEF-financed PMC represents close to 10% of GEF project financing, while less than 5% of co-funding devoted to components is allocated to PMC. Please correct.

B- Several tables are off-margin in the portal entry. Please correct.

Other comments cleared.

JS 7/26/2023 -

1- The PIF review sheet requested that, during PPG, key national-level interventions be included in the project and a strong replication / up-scaling strategy be defined. The PIF review sheet indeed noted that, through revisions aimed at streamlining the PIF design to align with the relatively small GEF grant request, the project had also been substantially reduced in scale (a single forest reserve and its surroundings), when the focus on a reduced number of activities and themes should have enabled impact on a more ambitious scale. The overall framing of the project should indeed be to tackle a more general, systemic issue through piloting some work in a well justified location along with a clear replication/ up-scaling strategy and key national-level interventions (e.g. training of trainers for national forest extension services). At the time of PIF approval, the Agency approved the requested change. Yet, none of the requested changes have been made, and the CEO approval request does not include any justification for why. Please revise.

2- Please tag the project with a 2 on the Biodiversity Rio Marker.

Agency Response

**Cleared on 2nd November 2023**

**Response to the 2nd GEF review raised n 18th Oct 2023**

<b>1. Does the project remain aligned with the relevant GEF focal area elements as presented in PIF (as indicated in table A)?</b>
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<p><b>JS 10/18/2023</b></p> <p>Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request</p> <p>1- Thank you for the responses but the project has not been developed in line with review requests, which never included any ask relative to the reduction of scope to a single small site. There are still no national-level interventions or clear replication/up-scaling strategy in the CEO approval request. The entirety of the project is to take place at a very small scale, with an impact over 36,000 ha. At this late stage of project development no significant design changes are possible, but please strive to expand some key interventions at larger scale than just within the target landscape (e.g. the training of trainers and training institutionalization could be designed to ensure roll out at a larger scale; development of national-level guidelines on how to manage unclearly demarcated and encroached PAs if that is a widespread issue beyond the Mchinji Forest Reserve) and embed concrete elements that would foster replication/upscaling (e.g. identification of replication landscapes and cross-site visits / exchanges) and promote at least indirect impact beyond the sole Mchinji CFR.</p>	<p><b>Agency Response</b></p> <p>The project will implement some key interventions at larger scale more than just within the target landscape. These include:</p> <p>a) Under component 1; Law enforcement operations and collaboration among law enforcement agencies. The project will train law enforcement field staff and officers, including participants from similar forest management beats, on investigations, intelligence gathering, ranger-based monitoring and evaluation, prosecution to upscale and sustain law enforcement functions. (See Output 1.2)</p> <p>b) Under component 2: Other capacity building interventions which will include participants from areas beyond the project target site, such as training in agroforestry practices, bee-keeping, marketing skills, extension workers to upscale and sustain IGAs, use of the hardware and software for storage and processing of the experiences and knowledge gained from project implementation (See Output 2.1)</p> <p>c) Under component 3, Knowledge management and learning: There will be cross-site/exchange visits involving many activities of the project. These include: (i). visits to enable upscaling project interventions, (ii) integration into similar government programmes to foster knowledge sharing, learning, and synthesis of experiences, (iii) joint participatory monitoring with both national and district level staff so as to enable learning, (iv) sharing of experiences and integration of project activities into the National Development Plans. (See section 6).</p>
<p>A- There is no proportionality between GEF-financed and co-financed PMC: GEF-financed PMC represents close to 10% of GEF project financing, while less than 5% of co-funding devoted to components is allocated to PMC. Please correct.</p>	<p>The PMC component of co-financing has been revised for proportionality between the GEF-financed and co-financed budgets. (See Table B of the CEO approval request).</p>
<p>B- Several tables are off-margin in the portal entry. Please correct.</p>	<p>This has been corrected in the portal.</p>
<p>Other comments cleared.</p>	

**Response to first GEF review comments raised on 7/26/2023**

<p>JS 7/26/2023 -</p>	<p><b>Response</b></p>
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<p>1- The PIF review sheet requested that, during PPG, key national-level interventions be included in the project and a strong replication / up-scaling strategy be defined. The PIF review sheet indeed noted that, through revisions aimed at streamlining the PIF design to align with the relatively small GEF grant request, the project had also been substantially reduced in scale (a single forest reserve and its surroundings), when the focus on a reduced number of activities and themes should have enabled impact on a more ambitious scale. The overall framing of the project should indeed be to tackle a more general, systemic issue through piloting some work in a well justified location along with a clear replication/ up-scaling strategy and key national-level interventions (e.g. training of trainers for national forest extension services). At the time of PIF approval, the Agency approved the requested change. Yet, none of the requested changes have been made, and the CEO approval request does not include any justification for why. Please revise.</p>	<p>The project design has now been aligned to the PIF review. The project has now been reduced in scope to the Mchinji CFR, with a pilot in village (communal forests) forests. This will provide the desired piloting and learning of lessons as well as training of extension workers for replication and scaling out. The project has therefore been revised to address the PIF review comments.</p>
<p>2- Please tag the project with a 2 on the Biodiversity Rio Marker.</p>	<p>? This has been tagged with a 2 on the Biodiversity Rio Markers in the Portal</p>

**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

JS 11/2/2023 - Cleared.

JS 10/18/2023

0- Please see first comment box.

1- Given the nature of the project, the KM budget still appears disproportionate at close to 15% of GEF component financing. Please consider further reduce the KM budget to free up resource for other activities.

The rest is cleared.

JS 7/26/2023 -

0 - Please see comment in the first comment box and revise table B as needed.

1- The budgeted amount for component 1 is disproportionately small compared to the intended outputs and outcomes (\$86,600 to, among others, build capacity and improve management effectiveness of close to 20,000 ha of forest reserve), while the budget for component 3 on knowledge management is disproportionately too high (close to 34% of the GEF project financing would be for knowledge management and M&E). Please revise the budget allocation to ensure outputs can be delivered in full and ensure cost efficient KM.

2- output 1.2 as reformulated is an outcome, not an output. Please correct.

3- outputs 3.3 and 3.4 are duplicative of outputs 4.1 and 4.2. Please delete 3.3 and 3.4, or 4.1 and 4.2.

4- output 1.3 was not foreseen in the agreed PIF. It would indeed be a useful complement to a project that is otherwise largely focused on enforcement without providing alternatives to degrading practices. However, it is not related to its parent outcome and not integrated in the ToC. If maintained, please explain in the review sheet and in the ToC how these livelihood interventions combine with others to contribute to the delivery of GEBs.

#### Agency Response

**Cleared on 2nd November 2023**

#### **Response to the 2nd GEF review raised n 18th Oct 2023**

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request JS 10/18/2023 0- Please see first comment box. 1- Given the nature of the project, the KM budget still appears disproportionate at close to 15% of GEF component financing. Please consider further reduce the KM budget to free up resource for other activities. The rest is cleared.	<b>Agency Response</b> 0. Comments in the first comment box addressed. 1. Communication and awareness raising is an important aspect for this project because we need to create behavioral change. In spite of that, the KM budget has been revised and now represents around 10% of the GEF financing. Additional resources have therefore been appropriated for components 1 and 2. (See Table B and Appendix 1 of the prodoc.)
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#### **Response to first GEF review comments raised on 7/26/2023**

JS 7/26/2023 -	Response
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<p>0 - Please see comment in the first comment box and revise table B as needed.</p>	<p>? Table B has been revised and now reflects pilots of new village forests and income generating projects. The number of activities has now been reduced. The general systemic issue that is now being addressed is effective management of Mchinji CFR with critical focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Development of a Forest Management Plan as a key national level intervention</li> <li>o Capacity development of key extension workers to foster a strong replication/upscaling strategy</li> <li>o capacity development of enforcement agencies to ensure the protection of the CFR once the management plan is developed.</li> </ul>
<p>1- The budgeted amount for component 1 is disproportionately small compared to the intended outputs and outcomes (\$86,600 to, among others, build capacity and improve management effectiveness of close to 20,000 ha of forest reserve), while the budget for component 3 on knowledge management is disproportionately too high (close to 34% of the GEF project financing would be for knowledge management and M&amp;E). Please revise the budget allocation to ensure outputs can be delivered in full and ensure cost efficient KM.</p>	<p>? The budgets have been revised with additional resources allocated to component 1. Component 1 has now been allocated a total of \$370,008. The budget for Component 3 is now \$123,500.</p>
<p>2- output 1.2 as reformulated is an outcome, not an output. Please correct.</p>	<p>? Output 1.2 has been revised to sound like an output and not outcome.</p>
<p>3- outputs 3.3 and 3.4 are duplicative of outputs 4.1 and 4.2. Please delete 3.3 and 3.4, or 4.1 and 4.2.</p>	<p>? These outputs have been deleted accordingly to remove duplication</p>
<p>4- output 1.3 was not foreseen in the agreed PIF. It would indeed be a useful complement to a project that is otherwise largely focused on enforcement without providing alternatives to degrading practices. However, it is not related to its parent outcome and not integrated in the ToC. If maintained, please explain in the review sheet and in the ToC how these livelihood interventions combine with others to contribute to the delivery of GEBs.</p>	<p>? Output 1.3 has been transferred to Component 2.          ? The theory of change has been accordingly revised to accommodate all the changes made.</p>

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 **N/A**

## 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

JS 10/18/2023 - Cleared.

JS 7/26/2023 -

We acknowledge the increase in co-financing from \$6.3 million at PIF stage to close to \$8.2 million. However:

1- We note that there is no longer any co-financing anticipated from the private sector, many anticipated CSO co-financers did not materialize and the amount of investment mobilized (IM) was reduced by 40%. Please justify.

2- Please correct the elaboration on the identification of IM, as in-kind contribution can typically not be categorized as IM:

investment mobilized was defined based on amount of in-kind and grant contribution from the executing ministry, other contributing government institutions, civil society, private sector and other stakeholders active in sustainable land management and conservation initiatives. The different stakeholders were consulted on the monetary value of their contribution using market-value prices for the services they will provide. Where 'investment mobilized' has been indicated, it refers to co-financing that excludes recurrent

Agency Response

Cleared on 18th Oct 2023

**Response to first GEF review comments raised on 7/26/2023**

JS 7/26/2023 -	Response
We acknowledge the increase in co-financing from \$6.3 million at PIF stage to close to \$8.2 million. However:	



<p>1- We note that there is no longer any co-financing anticipated from the private sector, many anticipated CSO co-financers did not materialize and the amount of investment mobilized (IM) was reduced by 40%. Please justify.</p>	<p>? The amount of funding that has been committed includes that from the Wildlife and Environmental Society of Malawi, a civil society organisation in Malawi that has campaigned against environmental degradation, including forest degradation. However, most of the previously identified co-financers at PIF stage have disclosed that their current dire economic situation is not favorable for them to make financial commitments at the moment but with hope to avail it during project implementation.</p>
<p>2- Please correct the elaboration on the identification of IM, as in-kind contribution can typically not be categorized as IM:</p>	<p>? This has been corrected in the CEO ER (see section under Table C) and in the portal</p>

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 JS 7/26/2023 - Cleared.

Agency Response **Cleared**  
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 JS 7/26/2023 - Cleared.

Agency Response **Cleared**  
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  
JS 11/6/2023 - Cleared.

JS 11/2/2023 -

a- Please revise to make sure the core indicators targets reported in the table are aligned with the narrative below. There are currently 14,730 ha reported under core indicator 3 and 13,730 ha under core indicator 4 in the table, which is not consistent with the results framework or the following:

Provide additional explanation on targets, other methodologies used, and other focal area specifics (i.e., Aichi targets in BD) including justification where core indicator targets are not provided. For indicator 1; the project focuses on Mchinji forest reserve which is 19,166 ha large. For indicator 3; the project focuses on customary forest cover of 14,730 hectares. For indicator 4; project focuses on 2,000 ha of landscapes under sustainable management to benefit biodiversity For indicator 6, it was calculated that the mitigation potential of

b- please provide the revised Ex-ACT sheet for core indicator 6

Previous comments cleared.

JS 10/18/2023

A- As this is project funded entirely by the BD focal area, please report the core indicator 4 target under sub indicator 4.1 and not under 4.3 which is related to LD benefits. The project will have to justify how interventions over these 2,000 ha benefit biodiversity.

2- Please note that the targets cannot be revised after CEO approval and that 5 million tCO<sub>2</sub>e do seem to be a strong overestimate given anticipated interventions. The results of EX-ACT are mainly based on the assumption that the project will reforest, from year 1, 14,730ha of very degraded land (with less than 1tC/ha of biomass) and 2,000 ha of cropland. It is unclear that the starting state of the ares targeted for forest restoration are actually all degraded to that very extreme extent. In addition, the surface area (a total of 16,730 ha of reforestation in Ex-ACT) does not correspond to what is reported on core indicator 3 (14,730 ha). Please revise the calculation and consider taking a more conservative approach.

The rest is cleared.

JS 7/26/2023

1- The PIF review sheet requested that PPG:


- explored all possibilities to improve the cost efficiency of the project and increase targets on core indicator 1 and 4. As the Agency acknowledged at PIF approval stage, the approved PIF was very small in scale, when the approved streamlined project design and focus on forest management should have enabled impact on a larger scale.

- provide in the CEO approval the cost assumptions underlying the restoration target.

Yet, the scale of the project has not evolved and the targets have even decreased to a foreseen impact over less than 17,000 ha (even though the decrease might be due to a typo), and no cost assumptions justifying the low cost efficiency of the project in terms of GEB delivery as measured by GEF core indicators is provided.

1a - Please revise to reach an acceptable cost-efficiency or justify thoroughly the proposed targets. In any case, please provide the cost assumptions underlying the restoration target (Core indicator 3).

1b- Please correct what appears to be a typo on core indicator 1. The target has been removed when the improved management effectiveness of the Mchinji forest reserve is still part of the project. Please also provide the include the baseline METT score of the PA in the portal:

Indicator 1 Terrestrial protected areas created or under improved management 

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
1,966.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

Name of the Protected Area	WDPA ID	IUCN Category	Ha (Expected at PIF) ⓘ	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement) ⓘ	Total Ha (Achieved at MTR) ⓘ	Total Ha (Achieved at TE) ⓘ	METT score (Baseline at CEO Endorsement)	METT score (Achieved at MTR)	METT score (Achieved at TE)
Mchinji FR	33183	Protected area with sustainable use of natural resources	1,966.00						

1c: We note annex 15 on the BD tracking tool, but it does not appear to be using the correct template. Please use the GEF-7 template: <https://www.thegef.org/documents/gef-7-and-gef-8-biodiversity-protected-area-tracking-tool>.

2- Thank you for the Ex-Act calculations for the mitigation target. However, the target (close to 5 million tCO<sub>2</sub>eq) seems to overestimate the project impact and we would advise for a more conservative target. The bulk of the mitigation estimate comes from what has been computed as reforestation on degraded land over more than 14,000 ha, which assumes that the project would bring bare lands to a forest state, when the project document rather points to improved management practices of degraded forests:

management of 13,100 ha of Mchinji forest reserve to reduce degradation from medium to low will result into -772,041 tCO<sub>2</sub>e while restoration of 13,730 ha of degraded community forests through natural regeneration will result into -3,354,647 tCO<sub>2</sub>e. Restoration

Depending on the initial state of the community forests and anticipated project activities, please consider modelling the corresponding project mitigation impact in Ex-ACT as improved forest management bringing forest state to a lower level of forest degradation, rather than as "reforestation". This would lead to more realistic mitigation estimates.

3- Please add under the core indicator table in the portal entry an explanation for the targets on core indicator 3, 4 and 11, including how the number of beneficiaries (indicator 11) was derived. We note the explanation for the mitigation target but please see point 2 above.

Agency Response  
Cleared on 6th Nov 2023

Response to the 3rd GEF review raised on 2nd November 2023

<p><b>Core indicators</b>  <b>7. Are there changes/adjustments made in the core indicator targets indicated in Table E? Do they remain realistic?</b>  Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request  <b>JS 11/2/2023 -</b></p> <p>a- Please revise to make sure the core indicators targets reported in the table are aligned with the narrative below. There are currently 14,730 ha reported under core indicator 3 and 13,730 ha under core indicator 4 in the table, which is not consistent with the results framework or the following:</p> <p>b- please provide the revised Ex-ACT sheet for core indicator 6.  Previous comments cleared.</p>	<p>a. The core indicator targets in the table have now been aligned with the narrative that follows.</p> <p>b- the revised Ex-ACT sheet for core indicator 6 has been provided.</p>
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**Response to the 2nd GEF review raised n 18th Oct 2023**

<p>Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request  <b>JS 10/18/2023</b>  A- As this is project funded entirely by the BD focal area, please report the core indicator 4 target under sub indicator 4.1 and not under 4.3 which is related to LD benefits. The project will have to justify how interventions over these 2,000 ha benefit biodiversity.</p>	<p><b>Agency Response</b>  The project intervention to improve management of 2000 ha has been revised and moved to core indicator 4.1. These 2,000 ha will benefit biodiversity through bee-keeping; agroforestry; fruit tree grafting, commercial tree nurseries and permaculture as described in section 1.3 of the CEO approval request. In addition, there is also Area of new village forests established and under improved management to benefit biodiversity worth 11,730 ha. Therefore, the total area to benefit biodiversity is now equal to 13,730 ha, as it had been envisaged in the PIF.</p>
<p>2- Please note that the targets cannot be revised after CEO approval and that 5 million tCO<sub>2</sub>e do seem to be a strong overestimate given anticipated interventions. The results of EX-ACT are mainly based on the assumption that the project will reforest, from year 1, 14,730ha of very degraded land (with less than 1tC/ha of biomass) and 2,000 ha of cropland. It is unclear that the starting state of the areas targeted for forest restoration are actually all degraded to that very extreme extent. In addition, the surface area (a total of 16,730 ha of reforestation in Ex-ACT) does not correspond to what is reported on core indicator 3 (14,730 ha). Please revise the calculation and consider taking a more conservative approach. The rest is cleared.</p>	<p>The Ex-Act computation has been revised and it is now anticipated that the project will sequester up to -1,046,590 tCO<sub>2</sub>e over a 20-year horizon.</p>

**Response to first GEF review comments raised on 7/26/2023**

JS 7/26/2023	<b>Response</b>
1- The PIF review sheet requested that PPG: - explored all possibilities to improve the cost efficiency of the project and increase targets on core indicator 1 and 4. As the Agency acknowledged at PIF approval stage, the approved PIF was very small in scale, when the approved streamlined project design and focus on forest management should have enabled impact on a larger scale.	? The number of activities has been reduced. Component 1 has now been allocated more resources

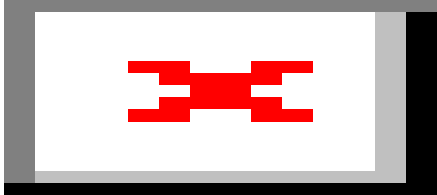

- provide in the CEO approval the cost assumptions underlying the restoration target.

? The restoration activities will focus on assisted natural regeneration in village forest areas, trees on farm and agroforestry. This is underpinned by the following assumptions i.e. that there will be multi-stakeholder participation, as it will contribute to (a) equitable access to and control of productive assets and resources; (b) increased participation and leadership in decision-making processes by these groups; and (c) equitable sharing of economic benefits coming from the sustainable forest management. the assumptions have been captured in the results framework.

?

<p>Yet, the scale of the project has not evolved and the targets have even decreased to a foreseen impact over less than 17,000 ha (even though the decrease might be due to a typo), and no cost assumptions justifying the low cost efficiency of the project in terms of GEB delivery as measured by GEF core indicators is provided.</p>	<p>? This error in the Portal has been corrected. The cost assumptions for the IGAs and village forests, as presented in the response above, are given in the CEO ER under the respective sections in Component 2.</p>
<p>1a - Please revise to reach an acceptable cost-efficiency or justify thoroughly the proposed targets. In any case, please provide the cost assumptions underlying the restoration target (Core indicator 3).</p>	<p>? The number of activities has been reduced. The cost efficiency of the restoration targets has been provided in Output 2.2. However, this is expected to be implemented in a participatory approach by a private sector/civil society organisation with a stern eye on cost efficiency. See Output 2.2.</p>
<p>1b- Please correct what appears to be a typo on core indicator 1. The target has been removed when the improved management effectiveness of the Mchinji forest reserve is still part of the project.</p> <div> </div>	<p>? This has been corrected in the portal.</p>



<p>Please also provide the include the baseline METT score of the PA in the portal:</p> 	<p>? The 19,166 ha at CEO ER has been added and the METT score of 18 has been included in the portal and the Tracking tool has been uploaded in the portal</p>
<p>1c: We note annex 15 on the BD tracking tool, but it does not appear to be using the correct template. Please use the GEF-7 template: <a href="https://www.thegef.org/documents/gef-7-and-gef-8-biodiversity-protected-area-tracking-tool">https://www.thegef.org/documents/gef-7-and-gef-8-biodiversity-protected-area-tracking-tool</a>.</p>	<p>? The correct template has now been used.</p>
<p>2- Thank you for the Ex-Act calculations for the mitigation target. However, the target (close to 5 million tCO2eq) seems to overestimate the project impact and we would advise for a more conservative target. The bulk of the mitigation estimate comes from what has been computed as reforestation on degraded land over more than 14,000 ha, which assumes that the project would bring bare lands to a forest state, when the project document rather points to improved management practices of degraded forests:</p>  <p>Depending on the initial state of the community forests and anticipated project activities, please consider modelling the corresponding project mitigation impact in Ex-ACT as improved forest management bringing forest state to a lower level of forest degradation, rather than as "reforestation". This would lead to more realistic mitigation estimates.</p>	<p>? We have again looked at this and believe that with the current state of the community forests, over a 20-year horizon for which the ex-act computation has been made, approximately 4.8 million tons of carbon sank is rather realistic. However, we will revisit this concern again at project inception to settle on a formally acceptable target.</p>
<p>3- Please add under the core indicator table in the portal entry an explanation for the targets on core indicator 3, 4 and 11, including how the number of beneficiaries (indicator 11) was derived. We note the explanation for the mitigation target but please see point 2 above.</p>	<p>? Explanations for the targets have been added under the core indicator table</p>

**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

JS 10/18/2023 - Cleared.

JS 7/26/2023-

1- We note the addition, as requested at PIF stage, of a more robust root cause analysis. However, several items presented as root causes are rather proximate factors or barriers (e.g. funding; data; staffing), the development of some items do not seem related either to root causes of forest degradation or to the title of their section (e.g. influence of politics; professional negligence) and it is unclear what is meant by low staff "compliment". Please revise to a smaller set of well defined root causes.

2- Please confirm the GEF project will not support eviction and remove the last column of table 1.

3- The barriers to be addressed are identical to that of PIF stage when the project has been modified to include livelihood interventions. Since, as stated later in the alternative scenario "poverty and weak livelihoods [were identified] as one of the driving factors to deforestation". Please revise the barrier analysis accordingly.

Agency Response

Cleared on 18th Oct 2023

**Response to first GEF review comments raised on 7/26/2023**

JS 7/26/2023-	response
1- We note the addition, as requested at PIF stage, of a more robust root cause analysis. However, several items presented as root causes are rather proximate factors or barriers (e.g. funding; data; staffing), the development of some items do not seem related either to root causes of forest degradation or to the title of their section (e.g. influence of politics; professional negligence) and it is unclear what is meant by low staff "compliment". Please revise to a smaller set of well defined root causes.	? This section was revised. Proximate factors were removed. The number of root causes was also reduced.

<p>2- Please confirm the GEF project will not support eviction and remove the last column of table 1.</p>	<p>? No, the project will not support eviction of persons from the CFR or even in the communal or village forests. See the Appendix 10 - SRIF. Currently, there are no settlements in either the CFR or the communal forests. However, towards achieving forest protection, only eligible activities e.g. firewood collection, collection of fiber, etc will be allowed in the CFR after development of the Management Plan and establishment of an enforcement unit. ? However, we failed to locate the table 1 referred to in the comment.</p>
<p>3- The barriers to be addressed are identical to that of PIF stage when the project has been modified to include livelihood interventions. Since, as stated later in the alternative scenario "poverty and weak livelihoods [were identified] as one of the driving factors to deforestation". Please revise the barrier analysis accordingly.</p>	<p>? The barrier analysis was revised to include IGAs</p>

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

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

JS 10/18/2023 - Cleared.

JS 7/26/2023-

The PIF review sheet requested, at the time of PIF approval, that the CEO approval request:

- provide the timelines and the budget of the projects cited in the baseline
- provide additional information on the UNDP-supported Bua River Restoration and Management Plan and how this GEF project relates to it. In particular, provide the resulting prioritization map of the UNDP-supported Bua River Restoration and Management Plan and explain how the project interventions relate to it.
- clarify for the projects / programs that are overlapping in interventions and/or target sites (e.g. USAID MCHF), how complementarity and added-value will be ensured.

However, the baseline is identical to that of PIF stage, except for the additional reference to "two ongoing projects: Climate smart public works programme and Bua River Ecosystem Management Plan Project (BREMP))" with no details.

1 - Please address the comments above that were made at PIF stage for PPG.

2- Please provide more information on the Climate smart public works programme and the Bua River Ecosystem Management Plan Project (BREMP) to clarify the increment provided by this GEF project.

3- Please clarify what steps have been taken during PPG to coordinate with GEF ID 10411 - AfDB -Malawi-climate resilient and sustainable capture fisheries, aquaculture development and watershed management project, and GEF ID 10254 - FAO - Transforming landscapes and livelihoods: A cross-sector approach to accelerate restoration of Malawi's Miombo and Mopane woodlands for sustainable forest and biodiversity management.

Agency Response

Cleared on 18th Oct 2023

Response to first GEF review comments raised on 7/26/2023

JS 7/26/2023-	response
The PIF review sheet requested, at the time of PIF approval, that the CEO approval request:	
- provide the timelines and the budget of the projects cited in the baseline	? Additional information about these projects has been provided: budgets, timelines, duration, implementing institution etc
- provide additional information on the UNDP-supported Bua River Restoration and Management Plan and how this GEF project relates to it. In particular, provide the resulting prioritization map of the UNDP-supported Bua River Restoration and Management Plan and explain how the project interventions relate to it.	? Additional Information has been provided on this UNDP project on Bua river restoration
-clarify for the projects / programs that are overlapping in interventions and/or target sites (e.g. USAID MCHF), how complementarity and added-value will be ensured.	? Information has been provided on how this project will compliment/upscale the other projects cited in the proposal
However, the baseline is identical to that of PIF stage, except for the additional reference to "two ongoing projects: Climate smart public works programme and Bua River Ecosystem Management Plan Project (BREMP))" with no details.	? Details of the Climate smart public works programme and Bua River Ecosystem Management Plan Project (BREMP) have been provided
1 - Please address the comments above that were made at PIF stage for PPG.	? These have been addressed accordingly

2- Please provide more information on the Climate smart public works programme and the Bua River Ecosystem Management Plan Project (BREMP) to clarify the increment provided by this GEF project.	? Details of the Climate smart public works programme and Bua River Ecosystem Management Plan Project (BREMP) have been provided
3- Please clarify what steps have been taken during PPG to coordinate with GEF ID 10411 - AfDB -Malawi-climate resilient and sustainable capture fisheries, aquaculture development and watershed management project, and GEF ID 10254 - FAO - Transforming landscapes and livelihoods: A cross-sector approach to accelerate restoration of Malawi's Miombo and Mopane woodlands for sustainable forest and biodiversity management.	? Some information presented in this proposal was obtained from these two projects. We have also explained, in the revised proposal, how this project will collaborate with the two

**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

JS 11/2/2023 - Cleared.

JS 10/18/2023 -

1-Please see first comment box and revise as necessary the alternative scenario.

Other previous comments are cleared.

JS 7/26/2023-

1- Please see comments in the first two comment boxes of this review sheet and revise as needed the alternative scenario.

2- In the alternative scenario in the portal entry, the establishment of a Collaborative Forest Management is still part of the project when other parts state that it has been removed due to insufficient budget. Please clarify and revise as necessary to ensure consistency:

forest interventions and provision of forest extension services. Collaborative Forest Management (CFM) mechanism will be established with full participation of key stakeholders including strong community involvement.

**Output 1.1: Forest management plan for Mchinji forest reserve is developed and implemented**

3- The refurbishing of district forestry offices is not an incremental cost to deliver GEBs and is thus not eligible for GEF funding. Please delete from the alternative scenario and the budget.

4- Output 2.3: Please clarify what is meant by "red list assessment" in the context of the project and what the project intends to do in relation to it. Red list assessments are estimate of extinction risk. While regional, including national, red list assessment exist and can have added-value, the merits of carrying out red list assessment at the project's small scale is unclear. Are there so many species that are endemic to the Mchinji District? Or, rather than carrying out new red list assessments, is the purpose of this output to build capacity to use existing red list assessment to define conservation priorities?

Agency Response


**Cleared on 2nd November 2023**

**Response to the 2nd GEF review raised n 18th Oct 2023**

<p>Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion          JS 10/18/2023 -          1-Please see first comment box and revise as necessary the alternative scenario.          Other previous comments are cleared.</p>	<p><b>Agency Response</b></p> <p>The alternative scenario has been revised based on the review comments in the first comment box above.</p>
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**Response to first GEF review comments raised on 7/26/2023**

<p><b>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?</b></p>	
<p>Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion          JS 7/26/2023-</p>	
<p>1- Please see comments in the first two comment boxes of this review sheet and revise as needed the alternative scenario.</p>	<p><b>Response</b></p> <p>? This section has been revised accordingly</p>

<p>2- In the alternative scenario in the portal entry, the establishment of a Collaborative Forest Management is still part of the project when other parts state that it has been removed due to insufficient budget. Please clarify and revise as necessary to ensure consistency:</p> <div style="text-align: center; border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;">  </div>	<p>? Referenc es to CFM have been removed</p>
<p>3- The refurbishing of district forestry offices is not an incremental cost to deliver GEBs and is thus not eligible for GEF funding. Please delete from the alternative scenario and the budget.</p>	<p>? This has been removed from the revised proposal</p>
<p>4- Output 2.3: Please clarify what is meant by "red list assessment" in the context of the project and what the project intends to do in relation to it. Red list assessments are estimate of extinction risk. While regional, including national, red list assessment exist and can have added-value, the merits of carrying out red list assessment at the project's small scale is unclear. Are there so many species that are endemic to the Mchinji District? Or, rather than carrying out new red list assessments, is the purpose of this output to build capacity to use existing red list assessment to define conservation priorities?</p>	<p>? Red list assessment has been removed to reduce activities and be more focused</p>

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

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

JS 7/26/2023- Cleared.

Agency Response **cleared**

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

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

JS 10/18/2023 - Cleared.

JS 7/26/2023-

1- This section will be revisited once comments in the first comment box and comments on the baseline are addressed.


2- Please explain why this section mentions the elaboration of three forest management plans for different forest reserves, when only one seems to be targeted:

With GEF support, assessments of the value of forests and their ecosystem services will be conducted which will provide a basis for raising awareness on the value of biodiversity and ecosystem services, and the economic contribution which will provide material for make a business case for biodiversity conservation. This assessment will also provide a basis for the development of **3 forest management plans** for the forest reserves which are important for guiding their conservation and sustainable use. With GEF support their will be enhanced protection of the forest reserves through updating of maps and boundaries including promotion of surveillance and increased patrols. This will result in restoration of respect for laws and regulations and

Agency Response

Cleared on 18th Oct 2023

Response to first GEF review comments raised on 7/26/2023

<p><b>5. Is the incremental reasoning, contribution from the baseline, and co-financing clearly elaborated?</b></p>	
<p>Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request</p>	
<p>JS 7/26/2023-</p>	<p><b>Response</b></p>
<p>1- This section will be revisited once comments in the first comment box and comments on the baseline are addressed.</p>	<p>? comment s in the first comment box and comments on the baseline have been handled</p>
<p>2- Please explain why this section mentions the elaboration of <u>three</u> forest management plans for different forest reserves, when only one seems to be targeted:</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin: 10px 0;">  </div>	<p>? We have now only retained one management plan-that of Mchinji Forest Reserve</p>

**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

JS 10/18/2023- Cleared.

JS 7/26/2023- Please see comments on the core indicators and the scale of the project, and revise as needed.

Agency Response

Cleared on 18th Oct 2023



**Response to first GEF review comments raised on 7/26/2023**

<b>6. Is there further and better elaboration on the project's expected contribution to global environmental benefits or adaptation benefits?</b>	
Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request	<b>Response</b>
JS 7/26/2023- Please see comments on the core indicators and the scale of the project, and revise as needed.	? The comments on the core indicators and the scale of the project have been addressed in the sections above

**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

JS 10/18/2023 - Cleared

JS 7/26/2023-

1- This section still describes CFM as part of the project. Please ensure the document is consistent:


Innovation: Collaborative Forest Management (CFM) mechanism is not yet a widespread practice in Malawi, and the methodologies of establishing the Integrated Management Effectiveness Tool (IMET) to track Protected Area Management Effectiveness (PAME) and to inform management decisions will be applied for the first time in the Buzi Basin landscape. The equipment, activities and intervention strategies that are proposed for adoption by the

2- On sustainability, please clarify in this section and throughout the description of the alternative scenario, plans to institutionalize the trainings and capacity building modules that will developed through this project.

Agency Response

Cleared on 18th Oct 2023

**Response to first GEF review comments raised on 7/26/2023**

<b>7. Is there further and better elaboration to show that the project is innovative and sustainable including the potential for scaling up?</b>	
Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request	
JS 7/26/2023-	<b>Response</b>
1- This section still describes CFM as part of the project. Please ensure the document is consistent: 	CFM has been removed

2- On sustainability, please clarify in this section and throughout the description of the alternative scenario, plans to institutionalize the trainings and capacity building modules that will developed through this project.

? We have added activities on sustainability, and these include establishing and training extension champions to upscale and sustain activities.  
? Training of Trainers (ToT) sessions have also been included

### 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

JS 11/13/2023 - Cleared.

JS 11/8/2023 -

•In the Geo location, please provide the latitude and Longitude in decimal degree format only. I.e., decimal degrees: +40.446, -79.982. The accepted format for the geospatial platform is decimal degrees.

Location Name	Latitude	Longitude	Geo Name ID	Location & Activity Description
Malawi Central region	-13°40'32.05	32°51'26.35		

JS 7/26/2023 - We note the map and coordinates provided in the annex CEO approval request template.

Please paste coordinates in the portal entry and/or please consider inserting the geographic location of the site directly under the dedicated ?GEO Location? data entry field in the portal.

Agency Response

**Response to the 3rd GEF review raised on 8th November 2023**

<p><b>Project Map and Coordinates</b>  <b>Is there an accurate and confirmed geo-referenced information where the project intervention will take place?</b>          Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request          JS 11/8/2023 -          ? In the Geo location, please provide the latitude and Longitude in decimal degree format only. I.e., decimal degrees: +40.446, -79.982. The accepted format for the geospatial platform is decimal degrees.</p>	<p>The Geo location, the latitude and Longitude have now been provided in the decimal degree format, as requested. -13.67557, 32.85732</p>
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**Response to first GEF review comments raised on 7/26/2023**

<p>JS 7/26/2023 - We note the map and coordinates provided in the annex CEO approval request template.          Please paste coordinates in the portal entry and/or please consider inserting the geographic location of the site directly under the dedicated ?GEO Location? data entry field in the portal.</p>	<p>? the map and coordinates have been added the portal accordingly.</p>
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**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 **N/A**

**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

JS 11/2/2023 - Cleared.

JS 10/18/2023 -

Please remove stakeholder email and phone contacts from the portal entry and project document that will become public:

Cell No	Email Address
0995549338	<a href="mailto:mvuladyna@gmail.com">mvuladyna@gmail.com</a>
0882439606	<a href="mailto:vitulihangah@gmail.com">vitulihangah@gmail.com</a>

Contact no	Position
0990655985	Chairlady
0997863241	Secretary
0999092994	Chair
0991325730	Secretary

Previous comment cleared.

JS 7/26/2023 - WE note the attached stakeholder analysis and engagement plan. However, please provide a more detailed report and synthesis of the consultation undertaken during PPG.

Agency Response

**Cleared on 6th Nov 2023**

**Cleared on 2nd November 2023**

**Response to the 2nd GEF review raised n 18th Oct 2023**

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request JS 10/18/2023 - Please remove stakeholder email and phone contacts from the portal entry and project document that will become public: Previous comment cleared.	<b>Agency Response</b> The emails and telephone contacts of the stakeholders contacted have been removed.
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**Response to first GEF review comments raised on 7/26/2023**

JS 7/26/2023 - WE note the attached stakeholder analysis and engagement plan. However, please provide a more detailed report and synthesis of the consultation undertaken during PPG.	? The stakeholder analysis and engagement plan has been revised to include the list of stakeholders consulted and the dates of meetings. Synthesis of the discussions has been included in the revised stakeholder analysis and engagement plan
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## 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

JS 10/18/2023 - Cleared. We note the detailed information provided in annex 11.

JS 7/26/2023 -

1- We note the attached gender analysis and action plan. However, the text in the portal entry is mostly generic, reporting only national level information, when the project is focused on a very specific target geography. The attached gender analysis mentions that focus groups were convened but very little information is provided on them and on how they have informed the project development. Please explain what has been done during PPG to analyze gender dynamics in the targeted geographical context or, if not, please justify why and clarify plans to do so in the early phase of implementation.

2- The project has integrated gender perspectives in many of the project's activities, including in monitoring and reporting. Given this, Please reflect the budget for carrying out the activities identified in the Gender Action Plan. This will facilitate tracking and reporting on results.

### Agency Response

**Cleared on 18th Oct 2023**

**Response to first GEF review comments raised on 7/26/2023**

JS 7/26/2023 -	
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<p>1- We note the attached gender analysis and action plan. However, the text in the portal entry is mostly generic, reporting only national level information, when the project is focused on a very specific target geography. The attached gender analysis mentions that focus groups were convened but very little information is provided on them and on how they have informed the project development. Please explain what has been done during PPG to analyze gender dynamics in the targeted geographical context or, if not, please justify why and clarify plans to do so in the early phase of implementation.</p>	<p>? The gender analysis and action plan has been revised to include the list of stakeholders consulted and the dates of meetings. Synthesis of the discussions has also been included in the revised analysis and action plan</p>
<p>2- The project has integrated gender perspectives in many of the project's activities, including in monitoring and reporting. Given this, Please reflect the budget for carrying out the activities identified in the Gender Action Plan. This will facilitate tracking and reporting on results.</p>	<p>? Some of the gender actions are already mainstreamed in the other activities, along with their budgets. Those gender actions not mainstreamed have been allocated budgets</p>

### 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

Cleared.

Agency Response **Cleared**

### 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

JS 10/18/2023 - Cleared.

At the time of PIF approval, the PIF review sheet requested that, at CEO approval stage, be provided:

- a thorough climate risk assessment and mitigation measures. Please see related STAP guidance (

<https://stapgef.org/sites/default/files/publications/Climate%20Risk%20Screening%20web%20posting.pdf>).

This may include:

- a.) Outlining the key aspects of the climate change projections/scenarios at the project location (or as close to it with data available), which are relevant for the type of intervention being financed (e.g. changes in temperatures, rainfalls, increased flooding, sea level rise, saltwater acquirer contamination, increased soil erosion, etc).
- b.) Time horizon if feasible/data available (e.g. up to 2050). Please refer to list of examples from STAP guidance.
- c.) Listing key potential hazards for the project that are related to the aspects of the climate scenarios listed above (describe how the climate scenarios identified above are likely to affect the project, during 2020-2050).
- d.) Describing plans for climate change risk mitigation measures.

- a strategy or action framework for the COVID-19 pandemic. This should include an analysis of emergent risks and opportunities relative to specific context for the project. Please refer to "Project Design and Review Considerations in Response to the COVID-19 Crisis and the Mitigation of Future Pandemics" (<https://www.thegef.org/documents/project-design-and-review-considerations-response-covid-19-crisis-and-mitigation-future>) and revise the COVID risk analysis and/or other parts of the CEO approval request accordingly.

Please provide.

Agency Response

Cleared on 18th Oct 2023

**Response to first GEF review comments raised on 7/26/2023**

At the time of PIF approval, the PIF review sheet requested that, at CEO approval stage, be provided:	
- a thorough climate risk assessment and mitigation measures. Please see related STAP guidance ( <a href="https://stapgef.org/sites/default/files/publications/Climate%20Risk%20Screening%20web%20posting.pdf">https://stapgef.org/sites/default/files/publications/Climate%20Risk%20Screening%20web%20posting.pdf</a> ).	? A climate assessment has now been provided as Appendix 19.
This may include:	

<p>a.) Outlining the key aspects of the climate change projections/scenarios at the project location (or as close to it with data available), which are relevant for the type of intervention being financed (e.g. changes in temperatures, rainfalls, increased flooding, sea level rise, saltwater acquirer contamination, increased soil erosion, etc).</p>	<p>? Relevant literature about climate change in Malawi and Mchinji was done. The results have been included in the proposal</p>
<p>b.) Time horizon if feasible/data available (e.g. up to 2050). Please refer to list of examples from STAP guidance.</p>	<p>? Currently, there are no projections specifically for Mchinji. We have presented the national projections.</p>
<p>c.) Listing key potential hazards for the project that are related to the aspects of the climate scenarios listed above (describe how the climate scenarios identified above are likely to affect the project, during 2020-2050).</p>	<p>? Potential hazards have been listed and this was mainly based on literature review. The impacts of these hazards on the project have also been described</p>
<p>d.) Describing plans for climate change risk mitigation measures.</p>	<p>Mitigation measures for each impact have been included in the proposal</p>



- a strategy or action framework for the COVID-19 pandemic. This should include an analysis of emergent risks and opportunities relative to specific context for the project. Please refer to "Project Design and Review Considerations in Response to the COVID-19 Crisis and the Mitigation of Future Pandemics" (<https://www.thegef.org/documents/project-design-and-review-considerations-response-covid-19-crisis-and-mitigation-future>) and revise the COVID risk analysis and/or other parts of the CEO approval request accordingly. Please provide.

? Mitigation measures to contain COVID-19 have been articulated in the proposal

### 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

Cleared.

Agency Response **Cleared**

**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

Cleared.

Agency Response **Cleared**

**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

JS 10/18/2023 - Cleared.

JS 8/15/2023

Please provide a timeline for the implementation of KM&L and communications activities (i.e. Appendix 5 which was not attached with the submission).

Agency Response

**Cleared on 18th Oct 2023**

**Response to first GEF review comments raised on 7/26/2023**

JS 8/15/2023	
Please provide a timeline for the implementation of KM&L and communications activities (i.e. Appendix 5 which was not attached with the submission).	? This has been done in Appendix 6 on deliverables and we have included timelines in column 4 and has been uploaded in the portal

**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

**JS 10/18/2023 - Cleared.**

JS 7/28/2023 - We note the attached SRIF and the fact that the project has been rated medium risk compared to low risk at PIF stage.

1- Please confirm the GEF project will not support eviction (see question further up).

2- Please provide the environmental and social risk assessment (ESIA) and risk management plan (ESMP) including addressing risks related to economic displacement at this CEO Approval stage or confirm that they will be conducted at the early stage of the project implementation.

Agency Response

**Cleared on 18th Oct 2023**

**Response to first GEF review comments raised on 7/26/2023**

JS 7/28/2023 - We note the attached SRIF and the fact that the project has been rated medium risk compared to low risk at PIF stage.	
1- Please confirm the GEF project will not support eviction (see question further up).	No, the project will not support eviction of persons from the CFR or even in the communal or village forests. See Appendix 10 - SRIF. Currently, there are no settlements in either the CFR or the communal forests. However, towards achieving forest protection, only eligible activities e.g., firewood collection, collection of fiber, etc will be allowed in the CFR after development of the Management Plan and establishment of an enforcement unit.
2- Please provide the environmental and social risk assessment (ESIA) and risk management plan (ESMP) including addressing risks related to economic displacement at this CEO Approval stage or confirm that they will be conducted at the early stage of the project implementation.	? This will be conducted at the early stage of the project implementation

## 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

JS 11/2/2023 - Cleared

JS 10/18/2023

The budget has not been revised in the M&E section of the portal entry. Please correct:

Publication of Lessons Learnt and other project documents	EAD (PMU), PSC	4,420	23,000	Annually, part of Semi-annual reports & Project Final Report
<b>Total M&amp;E Plan Budget</b>		<b>92,320</b>	<b>633,062</b>	


JS 7/26/2023

1- The proposed M&E budget is well above the indicative threshold of 5% of the GEF-funded part of project financing (i.e. ca. \$42,000), when there does not seem to be particular M&E challenges in this project. Part of the reason for this is that some items are not related to M&E but rather to PMC or KM (e.g. publication of lessons learnt, PSC meetings). Please revise the M&E budget.

Agency Response

Cleared on 2nd November 2023

**Response to the 2nd GEF review raised n 18th Oct 2023**

<p>Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request JS 10/18/2023 The budget has not been revised in the M&amp;E section of the portal entry. Please correct:</p> 	<p><b>Agency Response</b></p> <p>The M&amp;E budget in the portal entry has been revised.</p>
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**Response to first GEF review comments raised on 7/26/2023**

<p>JS 7/26/2023</p> <p>1- The proposed M&amp;E budget is well above the indicative threshold of 5% of the GEF-funded part of project financing (i.e. ca. \$42, 000), when there does not seem to be particular M&amp;E challenges in this project. Part of the reason for this is that some item are not related to M&amp;E but rather to PMC or KM (e.g. publication of lessons learnt, PSC meetings). Please revise the M&amp;E budget.</p>	<p>? The whole budget has been revised. The new budget puts M &amp;E at 5 % of the total</p>
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**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

Cleared.

Agency Response **Cleared**

Annexes

Are all the required annexes attached and adequately responded to?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

JS 11/2/2023 - Cleared. We note Appendix 18 on the justification of purchase of a vehicle and approve on an exceptional basis.

JS 10/18/2023

2b - The consultancy for the development of the M&E system should be included in the M&E budget not component 3 while Inception workshop and planning meeting should be captured by the PMC, not M&E, please correct:

1202	Develop a communication strategy			10,000		10,000
1202	Develop an M&E system			10,000		10,000
<b>Meetings/Conferences</b>						
3301	Project Inception Workshop					10,000
3302	Project Steering/Technical Working group meetings	25,000	0	0		2,000
3303	Annual Review and Planning meetings	29,000	0	0		4,000

All other comments Cleared. We note Appendix 18 on the justification of purchase of a vehicle and approve on an exceptional basis.

JS 7/26/2023

1- We failed to locate the Agency project document and some of the announced annexes in the portal entry (e.g. annex 10 on PMU ToR) in this submission. Please provide these annexes. Please also provide the ProDoc or confirm that the CEO approval request template will be use by the Agency in its internal process.

2. Budget:

2a. The total per component differs in table E and in table B (e.g. component 2 is \$326,608 in the former and 349,826 in the latter, PNC also differs). Please revise to ensure consistency.

2b Please see comment in the first comment box on the insufficient budget allocated to component 1, and the comment in the M&E comment box on the fact that the proposed M&E budget is well above indicative threshold. Please revise accordingly.

2c We note the letter to justify the procurement of \$72,000 worth of motor vehicles. However, as per guidelines, the use of GEF funds to acquire vehicles is permitted only financing only under restricted conditions and should instead generally be covered by co-financed amounts. Please justify that the vehicle cannot be funded through co-finance when there is more than \$1 million of anticipated grant co-financing. Please also explain to what institutions and for what exact use the different vehicles would be granted.

2c. The refurbishing of district forestry offices is not an incremental cost to deliver GEBs and is thus not eligible for GEF funding. Please delete from the alternative scenario and the budget.

2d. Please clarify to what correspond the \$15,000 of infrastructure and \$10,600 of office equipment

2e. The project document (Figure) 9 mentions that the PMU will include a "social worker" in addition to the project manager and the administrative assistant. Yet, no "social worker" appears in the budget. Please clarify.

2f. Audit costs should be covered by PMC, not by project components. Please revise.

Agency Response

**Cleared on 2nd November 2023**

**Response to the 2nd GEF review raised n 18th Oct 2023**

<p>Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request          JS 10/18/2023          2b - The consultancy for the development of the M&amp;E system should be included in the M&amp;E budget not component 3 while Inception workshop and planning meeting should be captured by the PMC, not M&amp;E, please correct:           All other comments Cleared. We note Appendix 18 on the justification of purchase of a vehicle and approve on an exceptional basis.</p>	<p><b>Agency Response</b></p> <p>The consultancy for the development of the M&amp;E system has been included in the M&amp;E budget while Inception workshop and planning meeting has now been captured under PMC.</p> <p>We appreciate the approval for a project vehicle!</p>
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**Response to first GEF review comments raised on 7/26/2023**

<p><b>Annexes</b></p>	
<p><b>Are all the required annexes attached and adequately responded to?</b></p>	
<p>Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request</p>	
<p>JS 7/26/2023</p>	

<p>1- We failed to locate the Agency project document and some of the announced annexes in the portal entry (e.g. annex 10 on PMU ToR) in this submission. Please provide these annexes. Please also provide the ProDoc or confirm that the CEO approval request template will be use by the Agency in its internal process.</p>	<p>? the Agency project document and all the announced annexes have now been uploaded in the portal</p>
<p>2. Budget:</p>	
<p>2a. The total per component differs in table E and in table B (e.g. component 2 is \$326,608 in the former and 349,826 in the latter, PNC also differs). Please revise to ensure consistency.</p>	<p>? This has been corrected. The totals per component are now similar to those presented in the table</p>
<p>2b Please see comment in the first comment box on the insufficient budget allocated to component 1, and the comment in the M&amp;E comment box on the fact that the proposed M&amp;E budget is well above indicative threshold. Please revise accordingly.</p>	<p>? The budget has been revised with more resources allocated to component 1</p>
<p>2c We note the letter to justify the procurement of \$72,000 worth of motor vehicles. However, as per guidelines, the use of GEF funds to acquire vehicles is permitted only financing only under restricted conditions and should instead generally be covered by co-financed amounts. Please justify that the vehicle cannot be funded through co-finance when there is more than \$1 million of anticipated grant co-financing. Please also explain to what institutions and for what exact use the different vehicles would be granted.</p>	<p>? We appreciate the guidance of the GEF on this. We are however anxious to get the project deliverables achieved, in good time and to the full extent. Given the condition of the few vehicles in the ministry, and the fact that they are also committed to the projects or departments that purchased them, it would not be advisable to put the fate of the project in such a situation. Moreover, given the prevailing economic situation, all the co-financiers have intimated that it will be impossible for them to contribute a cash pool to purchase a project vehicle. We therefore request that GEF meets this cost so that we can deliver this project in good time and to the full extent. Only one vehicle is being requested for, which will be used by the project management team.</p>
<p>2c. The refurbishing of district forestry offices is not an incremental cost to deliver GEBs and is thus not eligible for GEF funding. Please delete from the alternative scenario and the budget.</p>	<p>? This has been removed from the proposal</p>
<p>2d. Please clarify to what correspond the \$15,000 of infrastructure and \$10,600 of office equipment</p>	<p>Infrastructure has been removed. Office equipment includes furniture, printer, photocopier, laptops, phones</p>
<p>2e. The project document (Figure) 9 mentions that the PMU will include a "social worker" in addition to the project manager and the administrative assistant. Yet, no "social worker" appears in the budget. Please clarify.</p>	<p>? Given the level of funds available for this project, the position of social worker has been removed from the PMU</p>
<p>2f. Audit costs should be covered by PMC, not by project components. Please revise.</p>	<p>? We agree with this and now audit costs have been transferred to PMC</p>

**Project Results Framework**

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

JS 11/2/2023 - Cleared

JS 10/18/2023

1- Cleared

2 has not been not been addressed. Please address in the portal entry by adding explicitly the core indicators in the RF.

2a. move core indicator 6 (climate mitigation) to a headline indicator of the RF, instead of an indicator under outcome 1. Component 2 is indeed also to contribute to climate mitigation.

2b. Include core indicator 3 and 4 explicitly under component 2. They are currently only implicitly referenced.

In particular, there is a total of 14,730ha + 5,000ha= targeted for restoration in the RF, when only 14,730 ha are reported under core indicator 3. Please explain or correct to avoid double counting in the RF:

<p>14,730 ha of forests and communal lands in the Mchinji forest system restored</p>	<p>3000 ha of customary forests restored through afforestation/reforestation and natural regeneration</p>	<p>3000 ha of customary forests restored through afforestation/reforestation and natural regeneration</p>
<p>2,000 ha of communal lands restored through natural regeneration</p>	<p>2,000 ha of communal lands restored through natural regeneration</p>	

2c: There are 50,000 beneficiaries according to core indicator 11 but only 7,000 are targeted in the RF. Please correct:



7000 (Female = 3,740, Male = 23,260) directly benefit from the GEF investment in the project

3- Ground truthing or remote sensing has not been added in the portal entry. Please correct.

JS 7/26/2023

1. Please provide the baseline METT score in the RF ,which according to annex 15 is 16%. 80% has an end of project target seems quite high, please consider revising to a more realistic target. Please also ensure consistency in the final METT score target throughout the RF:

Project Objective	Objective level Indicators	Baseline	Targets and Monitoring Milestones		M
			Mid-Point Target	End of project Target	
Effective management of Mchinji forest and supporting local government institutions and communities to enhance conservation and sustainable use of forest resources to maintain	Level of effectiveness in the management of Mchinji Central Forest Reserve	Mchinji FR management has not been tracked for efficiency and effectiveness. Management effectiveness score = 0	Mchinji FR is fairly managed. Management effectiveness score = 30%	Mchinji is under efficient and effective management. Management effectiveness score = 80%	-
		Forestry extension officers have only basic capacity and not proficient in forest management and extension	At least 40% of forestry extension officers are proficient and actively implementing forest management plan and providing forestry extension services	At least 80% of forestry extension officers are proficient and actively implementing forest management plan and providing forestry extension services, enhancing management effectiveness to a METT score of $\geq 50$	

- 2- Please ensure all GEF core indicators are explicitly included in the RF.

2a. move core indicator 6 (climate mitigation) to a headline indicator of the RF, instead of an indicator under outcome 1. Component 2 is indeed also to contribute to climate mitigation.

2b. Include core indicator 3 and 4 explicitly under component 2. They are currently only implicitly referenced .

3. Please clarify to what correspond the 6,000 ha of restored forest in the objective level indicators compared to what is reported under GEF core

indicators, and make sure that there is no double counting/reporting compared to the surface area reported under component 2:

Forest maintenance and ecological services for communities	Area of local and community level forests restored and actively providing biodiversity and ecosystem goods and services	A total of over 600 ha of forested communal lands around Mchinji FR are currently highly degraded	4000 ha of forests and communal lands in the Mchinji forest system restored	6000 ha of forests and communal lands in the Mchinji forest system restored	– End of project report – PIR reports – M & E reports – Minutes of meetings – Restoration plans	<b>Risks:</b> - Potential delay in the approval of forest management strategies and plans would delay their operationalization - Lack of consensus of roles and responsibilities
	Percentage of government	Few (%) government	50% of government	100% of government	– Meeting minutes	

As such, there is little effort to promote establishment of new village forest areas	8,000 ha of customary forests restored through afforestation/reforestation and natural regeneration	14,730 ha of customary forests restored through afforestation/reforestation and natural regeneration	– en – – –
In addition, there is little effort to promote natural regeneration in the communal lands	1,000 ha of communal lands restored through afforestation/reforestation and natural regeneration	2,000 ha of communal lands restored through afforestation/reforestation and natural regeneration	– en – – –

In addition, means of verification for these 6,000 ha do not include any ground truthing or remote sensing, please correct.

### Agency Response

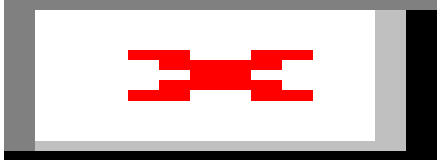
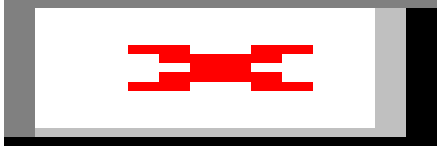
**Cleared on 2nd November 2023**

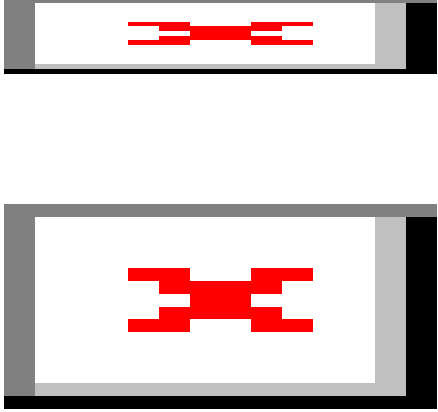
### Response to the 2nd GEF review raised on 18th Oct 2023

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request JS 10/18/2023 1- Cleared	<b>Agency Response</b>
2 has not been not been addressed. Please address in the portal entry by adding explicitly the core indicators in the RF.	<b>Cleared</b> The portal entry has been corrected. The core indicators have been explicitly indicated in the Results Framework.
2a. move core indicator 6 (climate mitigation) to a headline indicator of the RF, instead of an indicator under outcome 1. Component 2 is indeed also to contribute to climate mitigation.	Core indicator 6 has been moved and included as one of the headline indicators. (See Results Framework)

<p>2b. Include core indicator 3 and 4 explicitly under component 2. They are currently only implicitly referenced .</p> <p>In particular, there is a total of 14,730ha + 5,000ha= targeted for restoration in the RF, when only 14,730 ha are reported under core indicator 3. Please explain or correct to avoid double counting in the RF:</p>	<p>Core indicators 3 and 4 have now been explicitly included under Component 2.</p> <p>The total area under communal lands that is 16,730 ha composed of 11,730ha of village forests, 3,00ha for restoration and 2,000ha that will benefit biodiversity through bee-keeping; agroforestry; fruit tree grafting, commercial tree nurseries and permaculture</p>
<p>2c: There are 50,000 beneficiaries according to core indicator 11 but only 7,000 are targeted in the RF. Please correct:</p>	<p>The number of beneficiaries has been corrected in the CEO ER, the RF and the ProDoc</p>
<p>3- Ground truthing or remote sensing has not been added in the portal entry. Please correct.</p>	<p>This comment is not clear. We are not aware of an entry in the portal that requires Ground truthing or remote sensing. Further guidance is requested.</p>

**Response to first GEF review comments raised on 7/26/2023**

<p><b>Project Results Framework</b></p>		
<p>Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request</p>		
<p>JS 7/26/2023</p>		
<p>1. Please provide the baseline METT score in the RF ,which according to annex 15 is 16%. 80% has a end of project target seems quite high, please consider revising to a more realistic target. Please also ensure consistency in the final METT score target throughout the RF:</p> <div style="text-align: center;">      </div>	<p>? The METT score has been revised and consistently stated across. This is now 18% as the baseline and 60% as the target at project end.</p>	
<p>2- Please ensure all GEF core indicators are explicitly included in the RF.</p>	<p>? This has been done</p>	

2a. move core indicator 6 (climate mitigation) to a headline indicator of the RF, instead of an indicator under outcome 1. Component 2 is indeed also to contribute to climate mitigation.	? This has been done
2b. Include core indicator 3 and 4 explicitly under component 2. They are currently only implicitly referenced .	? This has been done
<p>3. Please clarify to what correspond the 6,000 ha of restored forest in the objective level indicators compared to what is reported under GEF core indicators, and make sure that there is no double counting/reporting compared to the surface area reported under component 2:</p> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div>	<p>? This was an error. The right figure is 60,000ha which is the area of the currently degraded communal forest land for which we will target at restoring 14,730ha (25%) by the end of the project.</p> <p>? This error has been corrected in the results framework</p>
In addition, means of verification for these 6,000 ha do not include any ground truthing or remote sensing, please correct.	? Ground truthing and remote sensing have now been included as a means of verification

**GEF Secretariat comments**

**Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request**

JS 10/18/2023 - Cleared but see comment in the first comment box.

JS 7/26/2023 - The portal entry indicates that responses to requests for PPG are included in a separate file, but we failed to find the corresponding file. Please provide.

**Agency Response**

**Cleared on 18th Oct 2023**

**Response to first GEF review comments raised on 7/26/2023**

A table of Response to Secretariat Comment at PIF that needed attention during the PPG phase has been uploaded or attached but it is also included here below.

**Response to Secretariat Comment at PIF that needed attention during the PPG phase**

Secretariat Comment at PIF	Response
<p>Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion JS 6/17/2022 Cleared. We note the substantial revision of the project and the welcomed thematic streamlining. However, the entirety of the project seem to also have been substantially reduced in scale (a single forest reserve and its surroundings) when the reduced number of activities and the thematically refocused project should enable impact on a more ambitious scale. The overall framing of the project should indeed be to tackle a more general, systemic issue through piloting some work in a well justified location along with a clear replication/ up-scaling strategy and key national-level interventions (e.g. training of trainers for national forest extension services). During PPG please thus work on including key national-level interventions (some seem included but the log-frame and the description of the alternative scenario are not sufficiently clear on the scale of the interventions) and defining a strong replication / upscaling strategy.</p>	<p>During PPG, we interventions. We also made th the alternative so the scale of the i We also have de scaling strategy.</p>
<p>Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion JS 6/14/2022 - Cleared. The attached Ex-ACT calculation are noted. During PPG, please: - explore all possibilities to improve the cost efficiency of the project and increase targets on core indicator 1 and 4. The project indeed remains very small in scale. Given the now streamlined project design and focus on forest management, impact in this area should be achievable on a larger scale. - refine the Ex-Act calculation to ensure consistency with the other core indicator targets, and include the underlying assumptions in the CEO approval request under table F. Ex-ACT calculations currently do not account for the improved management in the Mchinji Forest Reserve, - provide in the CEO approval the cost assumptions underlying the restoration target.</p>	<p>- During PPG, We explored al efficiency of the We refined targ we refined the l consistency with included the und approval request</p>
<p>b: According to the WDPA under the ID 33183, the Mchinji forest reserve is 19,166 ha. The PIF also states that forest reserves in the Mchinji district cover 21, 385 ha. Please confirm or correct the 300ha reported in the portal entry and make sure to correct, if needed, the WDPA entry as part of the PPG, or project implementation at the latest.</p>	<p>The WDPA ID a have been added is 19, 166 ha. Th 19, 166 ha.</p>
<p>Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion JS 6/14/2022 - Cleared. During PPG, please reconsider the tags (eg. Sustainable Pasture management no longer seems to be part of the project).</p>	<p>Sustainable Past tagged off</p>
<p>Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion JS 6/14/2022 - Cleared. During PPG, please: - develop a clear problem statement, including root cause, threats and barriers, with a more general scope than a single forest reserve. This section is indeed now entirely focused on the Mchinji Forest Reserve. The overall framing of the project should be to tackle a more general, systemic issue (e.g. forest degradation) through piloting some work in a well justified location along with a clear replication, up-scaling strategy and, to the extent possible, national-level interventions. - better justify the relevance of the targeted sites with regards to biodiversity of global significance.</p>	<p>During the PPG, problem stateme barriers, with a r</p>
<p>Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion JS 6/16/2022 - Cleared. The response that specific women groups will be identified during the PPG stage is well noted. Please also engage with gender specialists during PPG.</p>	<p>This output has l The specific wor the PPG stage</p>

1- Please confirm in the PIF that a gender analysis will be carried out during PPG and a gender action plan or equivalent will be developed.	The project has a gender analysis and a gender act provided
d.) Describing plans for climate change risk assessment and mitigation measures during PPG. ( <a href="https://stagef.org/sites/default/files/publications/Climate%20Risk%20Screening%20web%20posting.pdf">https://stagef.org/sites/default/files/publications/Climate%20Risk%20Screening%20web%20posting.pdf</a> )	The project has Risks and Their revised according screening has be

**Council comments**

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request NA

Agency Response **N/A**

**STAP comments**

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request NA

Agency Response **N/A**

**Convention Secretariat comments**

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request NA

Agency Response **N/A**

**Other Agencies comments**

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request NA

Agency Response **N/A**

**CSOs comments**

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request NA

Agency Response **N/A**

**Status of PPG utilization**

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request Cleared.

Agency Response **Cleared**  
**Project maps and coordinates**

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request See comments above in similar comment box.

Agency Response

### **Response to the 3rd GEF review raised on 8th November 2023**

The Geo location, the latitude and Longitude have now been provided in the decimal degree format, as requested.

### **Response to first GEF review comments raised on 7/26/2023**

See comments above in similar comment box.	? Info on the project maps has been uploaded into the portal
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**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

Agency Response

**N/A**

**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

Agency Response **N/A**

**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

Agency Response **N/A**

**GEFSEC DECISION**

**RECOMMENDATION**

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

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

JS 11/13/2023 - The project is recommended for clearance.

JS 11/8/2023 - Please address the only remaining comment (geo location) and resubmit.

JS 10/18/2023 - Not at this stage. Please address the comments included in this review sheet and resubmit.

JS 7/27/2023 - Not at this stage. Please address the comments included in this review sheet and resubmit.

**Review Dates**

	<b>Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement</b>	<b>Response to Secretariat comments</b>
<b>First Review</b>	7/27/2023	7/26/2023
<b>Additional Review (as necessary)</b>	10/18/2023	10/18/2023
<b>Additional Review (as necessary)</b>	11/2/2023	11/2/2023
<b>Additional Review (as necessary)</b>	11/8/2023	
<b>Additional Review (as necessary)</b>	11/13/2023	

**CEO Recommendation**

**Brief reasoning for CEO Recommendations**