



Building global capacity to increase transparency in the forest sector (CBIT-Forest): accelerating capacity-building, knowledge-sharing and awareness raising

Review CEO Endorsement and Make a recommendation

Basic project information

GEF ID

11308

Countries

Global

Project Name

Building global capacity to increase transparency in the forest sector (CBIT-Forest): accelerating capacity-building, knowledge-sharing and awareness raising

Agencies

FAO

Date received by PM

5/29/2023

Review completed by PM

11/28/2023

Program Manager

Esteban Bermudez Forn

Focal Area

Climate Change

Project Type

MSP

CEO Approval Request

Part I - General Project Information

1. a) Is the Project Information table correctly filled, including specifying adequate executing partners?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

EBF 10/11/2023: Noted. Cleared.

EBF 9/25/2023:

1. Cleared
2. We acknowledge receipt of your direct execution request. Although the text explains FAO's track record, it doesn't justify why FAO should play a dual role as implementer and executor of the project instead of having a different executing partner. Please justify why FAO is the best candidate to execute the project.
3. Cleared

EBF 8/7/2023:

1. The highlighted sections still appear blank in the portal form. Please amend.

General Project Information

Project Information

Project Title:	Building global capacity to increase transparency in the forest sector (CBIT-Forest): accelerating ca knowledge-sharing and awareness raising		
Region:	Global	GEF Project ID:	11308
Country(ies):	Global	Type of Project:	MSP
GEF Agency(ies):	FAO	GEF Agency Project ID:	736742
Project Executing Entity(s):	[REDACTED]	Project Executing Type:	[REDACTED]
GEF Focal Area (s):	Climate Change	Submission Date :	5/29/2023

2. Please forward your request to ebermudezfor@thegef.org
3. Please include the text provided in your response in the portal form.

EBF 7/17/2023: Please address the following comments:

1. Please enter FAO as Executing Partner and GEF Agency as Executing Type.

General Project Information

Project Information

Project Title:	Building global capacity to increase transparency in the forest sector (CBIT-Forest): accelerating ca knowledge-sharing and awareness raising		
Region:	Global	GEF Project ID:	11308
Country(ies):	Global	Type of Project:	MSP
GEF Agency(ies):	FAO	GEF Agency Project ID:	736742
Project Executing Entity(s):	[REDACTED]	Project Executing Type:	[REDACTED]
GEF Focal Area (s):	Climate Change	Submission Date :	5/29/2023

2. As FAO is playing a dual role i.e., both implementing agency and executing entity for this project, please send a request and justification via email for consideration by

the GEF Secretariat.

3. The following section in the Portal entry mainly describes FAO's institutional arrangements for the dual role without clearly justifying why this is needed nor why a third-party executing entity can be considered. Please amend.

Will the GEF Agency play an execution role on this project? Yes

If so, please describe that role here and the justification.

FAO is the GEF Agency for the project and is the main Executing Partner. FAO will nominate two different officers, one as BU (BH), who is accountable for managing to achieve project results and proper use of resources, and to ensure timely submission of reports, as per the Funding Agreement, including project closure; the second officer will serve as the Lead Technical Officer overseeing implementation and ensuring the smooth flow of technical expertise and backstopping. The FAO GEF Coordination Unit, Finance Division and the Office of Evaluation will oversee project execution. These Units are all placed under different lines of management from the Units providing execution functions. Such provision, beside FAO's rigorous internal control framework and corporate risk management, will ensure adequate internal firewalls in compliance with the GEF standard of separation of implementation and execution related functions. The project coordinator will coordinate the new project activities between the NFM and NFM teams from the Forestry Division of the FAO. FAO will also provide project cycle management services as established in the GEF Policy; FAO is responsible for managing the GEF component of the Project and ensuring adherence to GEF and FAO policies and procedures and ensuring the Project meets its objectives and delivers expected outcomes and outputs as established in the Project Document, Work Plan and budget in an efficient and effective manner. Throughout July-September 2022 online consultations at regional and country offices as well as technical experts in HQ took place. In October 2022, a validation workshop of the project framework was done with the FRA and NFM teams.

Agency Response

5 Oct 23

Please, see additional language on FAO's execution role.

5 Sept 23

1. Apologies, the entries were not registered properly. Please, do let us know should the problem persist.

2. The direct execution request has been sent to the indicated address.

3. Copied text:

Justification for FAO execution - Global CBIT Forest GEF ID 11308

|

The "Building global capacity to increase transparency in the forest sector (CBIT-Forest): accelerating capacity-building, knowledge-sharing and awareness raising" was designed to support developing countries to meet the enhanced transparency requirements (ETF) of the Paris Agreement.

The new project will build on the experience and results from the "Building global capacity to increase transparency in the forest sector, CBIT-Forest, implemented between 2020-2022 (CBIT-Forest (2020-2022)), which was also executed by FAO. The new project will directly benefit at least 1000 individuals in at least 20 countries. It will focus on enhancing quality, timeliness, accessibility and usability of forest-related data in support of the transparency requirements of the Paris Agreement; developing capacities to work towards open and transparent data at the national, regional and global levels through innovative global composite learning programs combining virtual and in-person training; sharing knowledge as the international momentum builds surrounding forests and transparency; and cementing networks regionally and with new partners such as academia to ensure sustainability and transparency of forest reporting. FAO offers the optimal mix of technical and institutional set up to achieve project objectives with a long-term impact and sustaining results over time due to past lessons learned and ongoing activities related to forest monitoring, including implementing projects, developing platforms and strengthening networks.

FAO has a unique global comparative advantage to improving the quality of forest data, improving access to national authorities, uniquely placed to provide countries and partners with the latest tools and best available sources to generate forest related data and share them transparently and effectively at the national and international levels. FAO also has a convening power, bringing together multiple technical and development partners, with a truly global reach. By executing this global project, FAO will be able to meet countries' expectations for FAO capacity development services.

As GEF Agency and implementing partner, FAO will nominate an interdisciplinary project task force, including a Budget holder (BH), who is accountable for managing project resources. S/he is responsible for timely submission of M&E reports, as per the Funding Agreement. The second officer will serve as the Lead Technical Officer (LTO), overseeing all technical aspects of project implementation and ensuring the smooth flow of technical expertise and backstopping. The FAO GEF Coordination Unit, the Finance Division and the Office of Evaluation will oversee project execution. These units are all placed under different lines of management from the executing units. Such provision, in addition to FAO's rigorous internal control framework will ensure adequate internal firewalls in compliance with the GEF standard of separation of implementation and execution related functions.

1. Please, see amendment in the Portal.
2. During preliminary scoping discussions with the GEFSEC, a different institutional set-up for the second phase of the global forest CBIT project was not discussed. An official request with justification has now been sent.

3. Please, consider the following additional text in the relevant Portal section.

FAO is uniquely placed to execute this global knowledge project, thanks to its in-house technical capacity, global networks and normative work. Furthermore, direct execution by FAO would guarantee the full alignment of the GEF investment with co-financed activities.

Additionally, an independent review of the FAO-CBIT portfolio of work, conducted in July 2021, concluded that:

Collaboration with other agencies has helped accentuate FAO's niche as a lead global technical agency in AFOLU and Forest-related ETF capacity building.

The CBIT projects have involved collaboration with several other actors working in the area of ETF and this has helped bring to the fore FAO's niche as a lead technical agency, building on its years of international work in the AFOLU and Forestry sector, which accounts for 23% of the world's GHG emissions. Through CBIT projects, FAO has been able to move a step forward than just being a technical service provider. FAO's support has been sought in leading specific technical events to address ETF capacity needs in AFOLU sector. As opposed to general training, FAO sees itself as having an added value as a technical agency with the ability to address specific technical capacity areas for the ETF process, and this is how other partners also look at FAO.

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

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

EBF 9/11/2023: Cleared.

EBF 8/7/2023: The change is not reflected in the portal form. For CBIT projects, with climate change as the priority focus, the Rio Marker should be 2 for CCM and 1 for CCA. Please correct.

Rio Markers			
Climate Change Mitigation:	<input type="checkbox"/> No Contribution (0)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Significant Objective (1)	<input type="checkbox"/> Principal Objective (2)
Climate Change Adaptation:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Contribution (0)	<input type="checkbox"/> Significant Objective (1)	<input type="checkbox"/> Principal Objective (2)

EBF 7/17/2023: For CBIT projects, with climate change as the priority focus, the Rio Marker should be 2 for CCM and 1 for CCA. Please adjust accordingly.

Agency Response

5 Sept 23

Please, see amendment in the Portal.

2. Project Summary.

- a) 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?
- b) Does the summary capture the essence of the project, is well written and is it within the max. of 250 words?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

EBF 8/7/2023: Cleared.

EBF 7/17/2023: Please consider adding targets in terms of number of people and countries benefiting from the project in the summary.

Agency Response Please, see additional language in the Portal.

3. Project Description Overview

- 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?
- c) Are gender dimensions, knowledge management, and M&E included within the project components and appropriately funded?
- d) Are the GEF Project Financing and Co-Financing contributions to PMC proportional?
- e) Is the PMC equal to or below 10%? If above 10%, is the justification acceptable?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

EBF 8/7/2023: Cleared.

EBF 7/17/2023: There is a mismatch in the wording of the Components listed in the "Project Description Overview" table and the "Project d description" section. Please check and ensure the Components, Outcomes and Outputs are consistent.

Agency Response Wording was amended in page 9, 28 and Annex A1, Annex H (highlighted in green in prodoc).

4. Project Outline

A. Project Rationale

- a) Is the current situation (including global environmental problems, key drivers of environmental degradation, climate vulnerability) clearly and adequately described from a systems perspective and adequately addressed by the project design?
- b) Have the role of stakeholders, incl. the private sector and local actors in the system been

described and how they will contribute to GEBs and/or adaptation benefits and other project outcomes? Is the private sector seen mainly as a stakeholder or as financier?

c) If this is an NGI project, is there a description of how the project and its financial structure are addressing financial barriers?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

EBF 10/11/2023: Noted. Cleared.

EBF 9/25/2023:

2. Please clarify how the barrier "FRA country reports are outdated and/or incomplete" is relevant within the scope of CBIT vis-?-vis Article 13 of the Paris Agreement and why FRA itself cannot address this.

4. Cleared

EBF 8/7/2023:

1. Cleared
2. The barriers still appear in the Project Description section instead of the Project Rationale section. Please move the text from the screenshot below and elaborate based on our previous comment: *"[...] the description of the problems and barriers is unclear (we do find important elements in the baseline, but they are not necessarily specific to the transparency in the Forest sector. Under the section A. Project rationale, please elaborate further in specific paragraphs what are the problems and barriers in the forestry sector in particular as they are essential elements for the justification of the project components and outcomes (ensuring consistency with the TOC)."*

During the formulation of the project, the identified problem was "*Developing countries with low capacity for forest-related data collection, analysis and dissemination processes to meet the enhanced transparency requirements of the Paris Agreement and in line with national priorities*".

The barriers identified to solve the identified problem are the i) lack of user friendly and dynamic tools to collect, analyze and visualize forest-related data, and access relevant freely available remote sensing data and geospatial products to support FRA report, ii) FRA country reports are outdated and/or incomplete, iii) limited active networking among national institutions and international reporting processes to ensure transparent and consistent reporting, iv) national attitudes, traditions and policies, and legislation, as well as organizational structures influencing the degree of data sharing culture; v) insufficient awareness of existing forest-related platforms, resources and tools to support national transparency reporting; vi) insufficient institutional arrangements for NFMS prevents its sustainability; vii) lack of knowledge exchange and south-south cooperation at regional level of national forest-data stakeholders; viii) insufficient systematization of free and easily available knowledge material for transparency practitioners; and iv) reduced means of communication and outreach activities of the project.

The new project presents three complementary and interlinked components that will provide the needed elements to reduce the impact of the barriers.

In order to achieve the first outcome '*Enhanced access and use of best available forest-related data to respond to the transparency requirements*' the new project will facilitate access to best available forest resources data, FAO Global Forest Resources Assessment (FRA) data entry, review, reporting and dissemination platform improved with additional functionalities; ensure the FRA platform contains the most updated, reviewed and validated data for countries and territories of the world to support global forest transparency; and work towards networking, communication and awareness raising with focal points from the different forest-related data collection and reporting processes, to report transparent and consistent forest data.

3. Cleared.
4. Please copy/paste the new information from the agency project document into the portal form.

EBF 7/17/2023: Please address the following comments:

1. In the Project Rationale, it is said that "Under the ETF, Parties are required to submit their first biennial transparency report (BTR) and national inventory report, at the latest by 31 December 2024." Please clarify SIDS and LDCs can submit BTRs at their own discretion.
2. The importance of forests and the ETF to achieve the Paris Agreement objectives is well presented. Nevertheless, the description of the problems and barriers is unclear (we do find important elements in the baseline, but they are not necessarily specific to the transparency in the Forest sector. Under the section A. Project rationale, please elaborate further in specific paragraphs what are the problems and barriers in the forestry sector in particular as they are essential elements for the justification of the project components and outcomes (ensuring consistency with the TOC). We take note of the "barriers" identified under section "B. Project description". You can move these text section "A. Project rationale" and elaborate further.
3. Please summarize in the "Baseline scenario and any associated baseline projects" subsection the main results, lessons learned, and challenges experienced by the

preceding CBIT-Forest 1 (GEF project ID 10071) which justify why a second phase or CBIT-Forest 2 is needed. We note under the component description many details on of the CBIT-Forest 2 build on the CBIT-Forest 1. For the same reason, this justification can fill in the gaps of information that are currently present in the proposal.

4. Please consider including the ongoing relevant national CBIT projects as baseline projects since they can provide useful lessons and benefit from the global forest CBIT project (no need to list all the projects, one paragraph summary would suffice).

Agency Response

5 Oct 23

Please, see additional language in the barriers section.

5 Sept 23

2. The text has been moved into the recommended section.

4. The new information has been copied.

1. Further clarification has been provided. Please, see following sections in the prodoc: rationale (page 13), section 6 (page 34), and section 7 (page 49).

2. Barriers are available in the prodoc Part II, item 3. Proposed alternative scenario with a brief description of expected outcomes and components of the project and the project's Theory of Change (page 19, 20) and then in all the component description.

In the Portal, the barriers section has been moved from section B to section A. Furthermore, the TOC diagramme has been updated to integrate additional reasoning with respect to barriers.

3. As requested, information of CBIT-Forest 1 has been added in the referred section page 17 in the prodoc.

4. As requested, information related to national CBIT has been added in page 17.

5 B. Project Description

5.1 a) Is there a concise theory of change (narrative and an optional schematic) that describes the project logic, including how the project design elements are contributing to the objective, the identified causal pathways, the thrust and basis (including scientific) of the proposed solutions, how they provide a robust solution and listing the key assumptions underlying these?

- b) 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?**
- c) Are the project components (interventions and activities) described and proposed solutions and critical assumptions and risks are properly justified? Is there an indication of why the project approach has been selected over other potential options?**
- d) Incremental/additional cost reasoning: Is the incremental/additional cost reasoning properly described as per the Guidelines provided in GEF/C.31/12? Has the baseline scenario and/or associated baseline projects been described? Is the project incremental reasoning provisioned (including the role of the GEF)? Are the global environmental benefits and/or adaptation benefits identified?**
- e) Other Benefits: Are the socioeconomic benefits resulting from the project at the national and local levels sufficiently described?**
- f) Is the financing presented in the annexed financing table adequate and demonstrate a cost-effective approach to meet the project objectives? Are items charged to the PMC reasonable according to the GEF guidelines?**
- g) How does the project design ensure resilience to future changes in the drivers and adaptive management needs and options (as applicable for this MSP)?**
- h) Are the relevant stakeholders (including women, private sector, CSO, e.g.) and their roles adequately described within the components?**
- i) Gender: Does the gender analysis identify any gender differences, gaps or opportunities linked to project/program objectives and activities and have these been taken up in component description/s?**
- j) Are the proposed elements to capture and disseminate knowledge and learning outputs and strategic communication adequately described?**
- k) Policy Coherence: Have any policies, regulations or subsidies been identified that could counteract the intended project outcomes and how will that be addressed?**
- l) Transformation and/or innovation: Is the project going to be transformative or innovative? Does it explain scaling up opportunities?**

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

EBF 9/25/2023:

3. Cleared

5.1. Cleared.

5.2. Cleared.

5.3. Cleared.

EBF 8/7/2023:

1. Cleared

2. Cleared

3. Thank you for the clarification. Please include a short paragraph in Component 2 explaining how the project will benefit countries at different levels.
4. Thank you for the clarification.
5. In response to your comments and changes:
 1. When referring to "mainstream FAO work within the context of the FRA process", does this imply that the GEF grant will finance other FRA process-related activities? If so, please provide a clear explanation in the portal form.
 2. Although GEF policies or guidelines do not require it, to provide clarity in this matter, please provide an activity or output-based budget of the project (in Excel format) and indicate which of these activities or outputs will finance FRA-related processes. This budget should allow us to conclude the share of the budget that will finance FRA processes.
 3. The CBIT-AFOLU+ has already been submitted to the GEF and received its first round of comments (refer to project GEF ID 11316). Please update the project document, as it still refers to this project as "to be submitted" and ensure the comments that were provided to CBIT-AFOLU+ in terms of coordination with the current project are well reflected. Provide any updates, if necessary.

EBF 7/17/2023: Please address the following comments:

1. Coordination across sectors or institutions is said to be among the top-3 recurrent categories of issues in preparing national GHG inventories. Nevertheless, in the project components description we don't see clearly how this issue is addressed (the output 1.3 doesn't explicitly consider a coordination). Please clarify.
2. Regarding Component 2, please clarify if the indicator of success relates to at least 20 new countries or if it refers to 20 of the countries mentioned in Output 2.3.
3. Also related to Component 2, will all the countries benefit from the project at the same level, or will there be different proposed activities according to the specific situation of the beneficiary countries (such as countries including quantifiable targets for the forest sector in their NDC, those only mentioning forest and the others with any consideration of the forest sector)? In that case, which activities will be supported for which country situation?
4. Regarding the incremental cost reasoning of the project, the added and specific value of the project and the need for GEF support through the CBIT is not clear. You specify that "The FAO-GEF project will provide support to upgrade the already existing FRA reporting and dissemination platform". Isn't it a normal mandate of FRA?
 You also specify that "While CBIT-Forest focuses exclusively on Capacity- Building related to forestry data collection, the activities of CBIT-AFOLU include Capacity-Building on ETF and MPGs to develop and strengthen institutional arrangements,

and to comply with ETF reporting requirements?. Does it mean that the CBIT Forest doesn't include Capacity-Building on ETF?

This ambiguity can be found in other places of the project description (for instance ?This output (1.3) will strengthen the critical communication needed for the FRA 2025 global process??.

In this section and in the project description in general, please clearly establish the added value of each component of the project as compared to FRA's mandate and the AFOLU-CBIT project and confirm GEF resources will not be used to support FRA activities. This has to be crystal clear for the approval of the project.

Agency Response

5 Sept 23

3. See additional language under component 2 description.

5. 1. The GEF grant will not finance mainstream FRA process-related activities. These are fully covered by other investments FAO and member states commit to the process of data collection. Instead, the GEF grant will overcome the critical gap between FRA-generated data and ETF reporting.

5.2 Please, note that the project budget table includes output specific columns.

5.3 The amendment has been made and language updated.

1. More details were added on how the outputs of this project is contributing to overcoming barriers identified by the 2021 UNFCCC survey: see prodoc page 23 (output 1.3), page 25 (output 2.1), page 27 (output 2.3).

2. As described in the prodoc page 25, the indicator at outcome level is the following:
Indicators of success: Number of countries benefiting from data sharing, capacity-building and knowledge exchange activities (target: At least 20). The same information is available in the log frame. The target does not refer to output 2.3.

3. Countries will indeed benefit in different ways from proposed project activities. For example, under output 2.1 the project will work with countries towards open data; under output 2.2 it will work with countries through capacity-building activities to support data collection and analysis of forest-related data; under output 2.3 it will work with countries through the networks to facilitate technical discussions, knowledge, and lessons learned sharing.

4.a The project will not cover costs, nor deliver activities that are mainstream FAO work within the context of the FRA process. However, the project will add value to the FRA 2025 process. For detailed information, please see Part II item 5 (page 32-33)

Incremental/additional cost reasoning and expected contributions from the baseline, the GEFTF, LDCF, SCCF, and co-financing.

4.b CBIT-Forest 2 will contribute considerably to ETF capacity building. Please check section Incremental/additional cost reasoning and expected contributions from the baseline, the GEFTF, LDCF, SCCF, and co-financing (page 32-33).

4.c No, mainstream FRA related work will not be covered by the GEF investment. CBIT-Forest 2 is adding incremental value to the FRA 2025 process. Please see the Part II item 5 (page 32-33) Incremental/additional cost reasoning and expected contributions from the baseline, the GEFTF, LDCF, SCCF, and co-financing . Further information is also available on page 19 of the prodoc.

4.d This is well understood. We have provided additional information in Part II item 5 (page 33) Incremental/additional cost reasoning and expected contributions from the baseline, the GEFTF, LDCF, SCCF, and co-financing. More details are also available on page 19 of the prodoc.

5.2 Institutional Arrangements and Coordination with Ongoing Initiatives and Project.

a) Are the institutional arrangements, including potential executing partners, outlined on regional, national/local levels and a rationale provided? Has an organogram and/or funds flow diagram been included?

b) Comment on proposed agency execution support (if agency expects to request exception). Is GEF in support of the request?

c) Is there a description of coordination and cooperation with ongoing GEF and non-GEF financed projects/programs (such as government and/or other bilateral/multilateral supported initiatives in the project area, e.g.).

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

EBF 8/7/2023: Cleared.

EBF 7/17/2023: Would it be relevant to include if the CBIT-Forest 2 project will coordinate with ongoing national CBIT projects with a scope relevant to the forest sector? Please clarify.

Agency Response The agency fully concurs, and this is what happen in the first phase. We have added a relevant paragraph in page 17 of the prodoc.

5.3 Core indicators

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 targeted contributions to GEBs (measured through core indicators)/adaptation benefits reasonable and achievable? Are the GEF Climate Change adaptation indicators and sub-indicators for LDCF and SCCF properly documented?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

EBF 8/7/2023: Cleared

EBF 7/17/2023: Please explain the methodological approach and underlying logic to justify target levels for Core Indicator 11 in the text section, as highlighted in the image below:

Indicator 11 People benefiting from GEF-financed investments

[View](#)

Explain the methodological approach and underlying logic to justify target levels for Core and Sub-Indicators (max. 250 words, approximately 1/2 page)

Agency Response As requested, we have added in the prodoc Annex A1: Project Results Framework information that described how this figure was estimated (see page 59).

5.4 Risks

- a) **Are climate and other main risks relevant to the project identified and adequately described? Are mitigation measures outlined and realistic? Is there any omission?**
- b) **Are the key risks that might affect implementation and adequately rated?**
- c) **Are environmental and social risks, impacts and management measures adequately screened and rated and consistent with requirements set out in SD/PL/03?**

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

EBF 8/7/2023: Cleared

EBF 7/17/2023: Please describe the corresponding mitigation measures for each risk that has been identified.

Agency Response Please, note that the language has been slightly amended to more clearly communicate the proposed mitigation measures.

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

6.1 Is the project adequately aligned with Focal Area objectives, and/or LDCF/SCCF strategy?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request EBF 7/17/2023: Cleared.

Agency Response

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 comment at CEO Endorsement Request EBF 7/17/2023: Cleared.

Agency Response

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 comment at CEO Endorsement Request N/A

Agency Response

7 D. Policy Requirements

7.1 Are the Policy Requirement sections completed?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request EBF 7/17/2023: Yes, cleared.

Agency Response

7.2 Is the Gender Action Plan uploaded?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request EBF 7/17/2023: Yes, cleared.

Agency Response

7.3 Is the stakeholder engagement plan uploaded?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request
EBF 8/7/2023: Cleared

EBF 7/17/2023: Please upload the stakeholder engagement plan.

Agency Response

Please, note that the stakeholder engagement plan is in the prodoc, under Annex I2: Stakeholder Engagement Matrix, Grievance Redress Mechanism and Disclosure on page 66. We have extracted as separate document and uploaded in the Portal as a separate word document.

8 Annexes

Annex A: Financing Tables

8.1 GEF Financing Table and Focal Area Elements: 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 comment at CEO Endorsement Request N/A

Agency Response

Focal Area allocation?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request N/A

Agency Response

LDCF under the principle of equitable access?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request N/A

Agency Response

SCCF A (SIDS)?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request N/A

Agency Response

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

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request N/A

Agency Response

Focal Area Set Aside?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request EBF 7/17/2023: Yes, cleared.

Agency Response

8.2 Project Preparation Grant (PPG)

a) Is PPG reimbursement requested and if so, is it within the eligible cap of USD 50,000?

b) Is the use of PPG attached in Annex: Status of Utilization of Project Preparation Grant (PPG) properly itemized according to the guidelines?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request EBF 7/17/2023: PPG is not requested. Cleared.

Agency Response

8.3 Source of Funds

Does the sources of funds table match with the OFP's LOE? Note: the table only captures sources of funds from the country's STAR allocation

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request EBF 7/17/2023: N/A This is a global project doesn't have a LOE.

Agency Response

8.4 Confirmed co-financing for the project, by name and type: Are the amounts, sources, and types of co-financing adequately documented and consistent with the requirements of the Co-Financing Policy and Guidelines? e.g. Have letters of co-finance been submitted, correctly classified as investment mobilized or in-kind/recurring expenditures? If investment mobilized: is there an explanation below the table to describe the nature of co-finance? If letters are not in English, is a translation provided?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request EBF 7/17/2023: Cleared.

Agency Response

Annex B: Endorsements

8.5 a) Has the project been endorsed by the GEF OFP/s of all GEF eligible participating countries and has the OFP name and position been checked against the GEF database at the time of submission?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request EBF 7/17/2023: N/A This is a global project and doesn't have a LOE.

Agency Response

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

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request EBF 7/17/2023: N/A This is a global project and doesn't have a LOE.

Agency Response

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

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request EBF 7/17/2023: N/A This is a global project and doesn't have a LOE.

Agency Response

8.6 For NGI projects (which may not require LoEs), has the Agency informed the OFP(s) of the project before the PIF submission?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request EBF 7/17/2023: N/A

Agency Response

Annex C: Project Results Framework

8.7 a) Have the GEF core indicators been included?

b) Have SMART indicators been used; are means of verification well thought out; do the targets correspond/are appropriate in view of the budget (too high? Too low?)

c) Are all relevant indicators sex disaggregated?

d) Is the Project Results Framework included in the Project Document pasted in the Template?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

EBF 8/7/2023: Cleared

EBF 7/17/2023: In line with a previous comment, please specify if the indicator for Outcome 2 refers to new countries or countries that already work with the Improved National Forest Monitoring Systems.

Agency Response

The indicator of outcome 2: Number of countries benefiting from data sharing, capacity-building and knowledge exchange activities= target 20 countries. Information is provided in the Annex A1: Project Results Framework on page 57.

Annex E: Project map and coordinates

8.8 Are geo-referenced information and maps provided indicating where the project interventions will take place ?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

EBF 8/7/2023: Cleared

EBF 7/17/2023: In Annex E, on Project Map and Coordinates, please consider inserting the geographic location of the site directly under the dedicated data entry field. This includes the Location Name, Latitude and Longitude. Please include the geographic location of any physical project activity (such as event or knowledge sharing activity), to ensure the project is visible on the map.

Agency Response

This is a global project, and therefore no geographic coordinates can be shared. In order to locate the project on a map, we suggest to add the coordinates of Rome, where the project coordination unit will be located.

These are: 41.88319-12.48925.

Additionally, a map of the world has been added.

Annex F: Environmental and Social Safeguards Screen and Rating

8.9 Have safeguard screening document and/or other ESS document(s) attached and been uploaded to the GEF Portal?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

EBF 10/18/2023: The ESS screening checklist was uploaded by the Agency to Annex F.

Cleared.

Regarding Annex G, please refer to our comment in the next section.

EBF 10/13/2023: Please upload the environmental and social safeguards screening in Annex F.

ANNEX F: ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL SAFEGUARDS SCREENING AND RATING

Attach agency safeguard screening/assessment report(s), including ratings of risk types and overall project classification as well as any management plans or measures to address identified risks and impacts.

Title

[Envi and Social Risk Level Certificate](#)

ANNEX G: BUDGET TABLE

Please upload the budget table here. ⓘ

Title

[Project Budget CBIT Forest V5](#)

EBF 7/17/2023: Yes, cleared.

Agency Response

16 October 2023

Please, note that the screening checklist has been uploaded. Note that none of the trigger questions were selected, and therefore no second-level questions needed to be filled out.

However, the project budget table was already uploaded (the one underlined in the screenshot above), and therefore, we kindly inquire what further action is requested from the Agency's end.

Annex G: GEF Budget template

8.10 a) Is the GEF budget template attached and appropriately filled out incl. items such as the executing partner for each budget line?

b) Are the activities / expenditures reasonably and accurately charged to the three identified sources (Components, M&E and PMC)?

c) Are TORs for key project staff funded by GEF grant and/or co-finance attached?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

EBF 12/1/2023: The budget table is now visible in the Portal form. Cleared.

EBF 11/30/2023: Please paste the budget in the Portal form. The budget should be visible in the CEO Approval Portal form, as it will be posted once the project is CEO-approved. If have problems pasting the file so it becomes visible in the Portal, please ask ITS for help.

ANNEX G: BUDGET TABLE

Please upload the budget table here. 

Title

budget global CBIT 

Please explain any aspects of the budget as needed here

EBF 11/06/2023:

1. We take note that the salary of the Chief Technical Advisor (CTA) has been reduced to \$202,800. However, when reading the Terms of Reference of the CTA and the Project Coordinator in Annex N of the Agency Project Document, there is overlap between both positions, namely:
 - Both positions involve overseeing aspects of project implementation and reporting. The Project Coordinator tracks the project's progress, ensures timely delivery of inputs and outputs, and prepares various reports including Project Progress Reports and Project Implementation Review. The CTA also supervises project staff and consultants, leads project activities, and ensures effective reporting to the Budget Holder and Lead Technical Officer.
 - Both roles require communication and coordination with various stakeholders. The Project Coordinator participates in collaborative meetings with project partners and the Project Steering Committee, represents the project, and maintains communications with the FAO. The CTA maintains communications with government institutions, development partners, FAO, and international consultants. Both positions involve building working relationships with national and international partners.
 - Both positions support capacity development activities. The Project Coordinator oversees the mobilization of project inputs and may support the organization of capacity development initiatives. The CTA ensures capacity development activities supporting government institutions and national organizations, provides policy advice, and assists governments in mainstreaming cross-cutting themes relevant to the project.

In light of the above and based on our overarching concern that these two positions represent more than 18% (before it was 20%) of the total project financing, we kindly request you (1) to clarify or solve the overlap between both positions and (2) you either reduce these costs even more or provide additional co-financing to cover them.

2. When uploading a new version of the budget, please include the Excel version in the documents section for ease of review.

EBF 10/18/2023:

1. Thank you for your explanation. However, the GEF Secretariat remains firm on its concern regarding the salary of the Project Coordinator and the Chief Technical Advisor, representing more than 20% of the total project financing. We appreciate the level of co-financing provided for these positions thus far, but in order for the project to be cleared for further processing, we kindly request that you either reduce these costs or provide additional co-financing to cover them.

2. We note that the project budget is now visible in the portal form. If update the budget, please ensure you upload it to Annex G and ensure it is visible in the portal form.

EBF 10/13/2023:

1. Going back to the comment on 7/17/2023, the salary of the Project Manager and the Chief Technical Advisor still represents 20% of the total project financing. This is way above the average costs we have observed in other MSPs. The TORs do not do justice to these costs. Please revise or cover the extra costs with co-financing resources.
2. Please copy the budget table in the portal form as part of Annex G so the PPO team of the GEF can review it.

EBF 9/25/2023:

2. Terms of reference for the Project Coordinator and Chief Technical Adviser (CTA) are provided in Annex N of the Agency project document. Cleared.
4. Cleared.

EBF 8/7/2023:

1. We note that the salary of the Project Coordinator has been reduced to 4.7% of the project budget. Cleared.
2. Considering that the Project Coordinator is paid by M&E (USD 40,887) in addition to PMC (USD 52,744), please provide the terms of reference detailing the responsibilities and deliverables, including M&E-related activities, that are expected from this position.
3. Cleared
4. The subtotal for Component 3 in the Project Description Overview is USD 403,277, while the subtotal in the amended budget is USD 403,093. Please review and correct.

EBF 7/17/2023: Please address the following comments:

1. In the budget, the monthly cost of the Project Coordinator and Forestry Officer are very high. The cost of the Project Coordinator alone represents 20% of the total project budget. Please clarify.
2. The Project Coordinator is mainly charged through the components while it should be charged to the PMC. Please rectify the budget accordingly.
3. The 'General Expenses and Printing' and most likely the 'Interpretation services' (unless well justified) should also be charged to the PMC. Please rectify the budget accordingly.

Agency Response

13 November 2023

Please, note that the PC and CTA have complementary roles and responsibilities. The PC has a managerial role, whereas the CTA has a technical role only. Yet, collaboration will be needed on deliverables of the project. The TORs have been amended to better reflect the focus of both roles. Updated TORs are found in Annex N of the project document.

Furthermore, kindly note that the weight of the cost of both the PC and CTA combined is 14.8% of the total GEF grant (against 18%). Co-financing is covering the cost of the project coordinator's and the Chief Technical Advisor's times and contributions to project delivery already, and FAO will continue to monitor opportunities to finance global capacity building work and therefore discuss and map co-financing opportunities with resource partners.

27 October 2023

Please, note that the GEF grant allocated to cover the CTA cost has been sensibly reduced to accommodate the concern raised above. This reduction has budget implications and therefore some amendments were made in the table B (components 2 and 3) and project budget. An updated budget table has been uploaded.

16 October 2023

1. Please, note that this global normative project, which relies on the mobilisation of FAO's partnerships, expertise and networks, does require a staff position for technical coordination (CTA) and project management (project coordinator). The level budgeted for is P3, and the related budgeted cost is within the UN System brackets for this mid-level professional category. Furthermore, do note that the CTA and project coordinator's cost is already co-financed to the tune of USD97,458 for the full duration of the project, which equals 6 months of a total 36 month project duration. Due to the fact that this is a technical assistance project that focuses mainly on capacity building, knowledge management and learning, does explain why the relative weight of the HR on the project's budget is higher than regular investment projects.

2. Please, note that the budget is uploaded using the portal form.

5 Sept 23

2. TORs have been provided as Annex N in the project document.

4. The budget error has been corrected.

The budget was amended to respond to these concerns.

1. Monthly salaries are within the brackets of the UN System salary scale for P3 level staff.

2. The cost of the Project Coordinator has been reduced and this profile will only cover PM tasks and Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting tasks. Therefore, the cost of this profile is entirely budgeted under the M&E and PMC budgets. The Chief Technical Advisor will cover all technical tasks. This has been clearly separated out in the budget table.

3. Interpretation services have been eliminated from the budget.

Annex H: NGI Relevant Annexes

8.11 a) 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.

b) Does the project provide a detailed reflow table to assess the project capacity of generating reflows? If not, please provide comments.

c) Is the Agency eligible to administer concessional finance? If not, please provide comments.

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request N/A

Agency Response

Additional Annexes

9. GEFSEC DECISION

9.1.GEFSEC Recommendation Is the project recommended for approval

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

EBF 12/1/2023: The PM recommends the project for further processing.

EBF 11/30/2023: Please address the comment dated 11/30/2023 related and resubmit.

EBF 11/06/2023: Please address the comments dated 11/06/2023 (which are highlighted in orange) and resubmit.

EBF 10/18/2023: Please address the comments dated 10/13/2023 (which are highlighted in green) and resubmit.

EBF 10/13/2023: Please address the comments dated 10/13/2023 (which are highlighted in light purple) and resubmit.

EBF 9/25/2023: Please address the comments above and resubmit. Please ensure all the changes are reflected in the agency project document and the portal form and highlight those changes (in both documents) **in light blue** for ease of reference.

EBF 8/7/2023: Please address the comments above and resubmit. As a general comment, please ensure all the changes are reflected in the agency project document and the portal form and highlight those changes (in both documents) **in yellow** for ease of reference.

EBF 7/17/2023: Please address the comments above.

**** Please highlight **in green** the changes made on the portal version of the CEO approval document for ease of reference. ****

9.2 Additional Comments to be considered by the Agency during the inception and implementation phase

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

9.3 Review Dates

	1SMSP CEO Approval	Response to Secretariat comments
First Review	7/17/2023	
Additional Review (as necessary)	8/7/2023	
Additional Review (as necessary)	9/25/2023	
Additional Review (as necessary)	10/11/2023	
Additional Review (as necessary)	12/1/2023	