

Regional capacity building of COMESA member states in Eastern and Southern Africa for enhanced transparency in Climate Change Monitoring, Reporting and Verification as defined in the Paris Agreement.

Review CEO Endorsement and Make a recommendation

Basic project information

GEF ID

10093

Countries

Regional (Comoros, Eritrea, Seychelles, Zambia)

Project Name

Regional capacity building of COMESA member states in Eastern and Southern Africa for enhanced transparency in Climate Change Monitoring, Reporting and Verification as defined in the Paris Agreement.

Agencies

CI

Date received by PM

12/5/2020

Review completed by PM

4/23/2021

Program Manager

Milena Vasquez

Focal Area

Climate Change

Project Type

FSP

PIF

CEO Endorsement

Part I ? Project Information

Focal area elements

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

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

1/5/2021: Please address comments below:

1. Please change Rio Marker for Adaptation to 1, considering the focus of the project and the countries' NDCs.
2. Under countries please add the four countries that are part of this project: Comoros, Eritrea, Seychelles, and Zambia.

3. Please change Expected Implementation Start date to a time in the future that allows for sufficient time for review, Council circulation and approval. Perhaps it was meant to have been 2021?

4. Please also change Expected Completion Date to a date 60 months after the updated Expected Implementation Start date. Perhaps it was meant to have been 2026?

5. We found the project duration of 60 months to be much longer than most other CBIT projects (on average 3 years). This may be understandable due to the regional nature of the project, but considering the small amount of co-financing, this duration is worrisome as the resources might be stretched too thin to properly manage and execute this project. We recommend considering condensing the project at least to 4 years if possible (and changing the dates and duration respectively if needed).

4/14/2021: Comments above cleared.

5/3/2021: ITS has been able to add the countries.

Agency Response

3/09/2021:

1. Rio Marker updated.

2. We are unable to complete this. The CEO endorsement section of portal is currently marked as Regional with no mention of countries and we cannot add the countries from our end.

3. Start date updated

4. End date updated.

5. While we acknowledge that the project activities can be technically implemented and successfully accomplished within four years (48 months), we propose to retain the 60 months duration. Notably, the project budget already covers four years. The additional 12 Months timeline factors in any unforeseen delays and no-cost extensions that we expect due to the Coronavirus pandemic.

We anticipate that the Coronavirus pandemic may slow down project start-up (e.g., signing agreements; recruitment of project staff and consultants; stakeholder engagement; purchase, and delivery of MRV equipment etc) and affect the pace of project execution especially decision making amongst partner institutions and stakeholder involvement in capacity building activities.

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

1/5/2021: Please address comments below:

1. There should be proportionality between the PMC covered by co-financed amounts and the PMC covered by the GEF funding. Please amend.

4/14/2021: Comment cleared.

Agency Response

3/09/2021:

1. Co-financing from all partners has been revised and co-financing for PMC has been added.

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

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request N/A

Agency Response

Co-financing

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

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

1/5/2021: Yes, co-financing of \$1,400,000 in-kind has been confirmed. Please address comments below:

1. Please add the country to the last entry in Mare of Co-financier (we believe it is Zambia).

2. While co-financing is not a requirement for CBIT projects, we found this level to be quite low considering the scope and duration of the project and as all of it is in-kind. We

note there is no participation in co-financing from the executing or implementing agencies. Please clarify.

4/14/2021: Comments cleared.

Agency Response

3/09/2021:

1. Zambia added in the list of countries.
2. Co-financing letters obtained from all the project partners: CI (IA), COMESA (EA) and RCMRD. The total co-financing has increased from USD 1,400,000 to USD 1,546,000. Revised co-financing letters have been obtained from all countries except Comoros. Due to Covid-19 (no one is going to government offices) coupled with bureaucracy, it has been difficult to get the relevant government official to sign the revised co-finance letter. We confirm that we will continue pursuing the updated co-financing letter from Comoros

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

1/5/2021: Please address comments below:

1. Please add a row for each country as it was approved at PIF and matching the amounts in the letters of endorsement.

4/14/2021: Will ask ITS for help on this.

5/3/2021: Please try again as ITS was able to add the countries under Part I.

5/4/2021: Countries are now included in separate rows. Cleared.

Agency Response

05/04/2021: countries are now included under Part 1 and financing included per country.

3/09/2021:

1. We are unable to complete this. The CEO endorsement section of portal is currently marked as Regional with no mention of countries and we cannot add the countries from our end.

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

1/5/2021: Yes.

Agency Response

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

1/5/2021: Please address comments below:

1. Please provide an explanation below the Core Indicator table for how the number was estimated (explanation/methodology). Please also comment on the reason for the drop from PIF.

2. Thank you for submitting the CBIT Tracking Tool as well. We noted that all of the countries were assessed as having the same baseline capacity and targets. Considering the information in the project document, this does not seem to be the case (particularly on the baseline of capacity). Please review and resubmit. In addition, please make sure it is embedded in the project results framework so that it is not forgotten while the project is implemented.

4/14/2021: Comments cleared.

Agency Response

3/09/2021:

1. **At PIF stage, the target number of beneficiaries was: 1,610** (Men: 1,080; Women: 530). The high number was inclusive of both direct and indirect

project beneficiaries. During PIF development, this number was merely an estimate and thorough stakeholder consultation alongside capacity needs were not yet undertaken.

In the PPG Phase, the number of beneficiaries was revised to **688** (Men: 482; Women: 206). The reason for the reduction was: Botswana's withdrawal from the project.

The revised core indicator target number of beneficiaries only focuses on direct beneficiaries (trainees). During stakeholder consultations, it was agreed that the limited project resources only focuses on direct beneficiaries. This project seeks to build the technical and institutional capacity of the participating countries to fulfill their commitment to the Paris Agreement hence, it was deemed imperative that the project channels resources to key personnel and institutions involved in transparency-related activities in these countries.

The revised target number of beneficiaries was derived through a thorough capacity needs assessment in the target institutions. Additionally, during stakeholder consultation, it was established that the existing staff in the target institutions operating in the key GHG sectors were less than envisioned and since the project will be working with existing staff, this was scaled down.

It was also concluded that for the project activities to have an impact, it will be best to focus on a smaller number of trainees and undertake thorough capacity building activities as opposed to having many beneficiaries and undertake fewer and shallow capacity building activities.

2. Revised wording in **tracking tool**, however when all factors are considered the four target countries have almost same challenges and capacity. Particularly around the capacity of GHG sectors hence the same baseline rating.

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

1/5/2021: Please address comments below:

1. Please provide a table summarizing any changes from PIF and a more thorough explanation for the removal of Botswana.

2. Please revise section 1.1.1 to keep only the most relevant information. For example, Figure 1 is not necessary and neither is the explanation for the underlying causes of climate change and variability. This section could be summarized in one paragraph.

3. Please revise section 1.1.2 to better summarize the key barriers the projects aims to address as they relate to transparency. Please update Table 3 - Zambia has just submitted its first BUR. Please check bullets in this section (they are all appearing as a's in the Portal submission).

4. Overall we felt this assessment was all based on existing studies or analysis and not on work carried out during PPG. Please clarify if there was any information that was gathered during PPG that helped inform the development of this project and its activities, in particular as it relates to prioritization of what seem to be quite large and general barriers.

5. Additionally, table 3 seems incomplete since it references GHG emission profiles but it is not stated in the table. Please review/revise as it will be helpful to have information on the main GHG emitting sectors in each country (i.e. the description mentions the AFOLU sector to be the dominant GHG emitting sector, however it is not clear in this section what % that is for each country).

4/14/2021: Comments cleared.

Agency Response

3/09/2021:

1. Table explaining removal of Botswana and the major changes in the PIF included

2. Section 1.1.1 updated

3. Section 1.1.2 revised, Table 3 revised with updated Zambia information

4. During the PPG phase, our stakeholder engagements defined each country context, identified priority areas and appropriate approaches to address capacity gaps. One key thing that emerged was that almost all stakeholders agreed that a balance between national and regional level engagements would create an opportunity for knowledge and experience sharing; given that each country was at different stages in their climate action. We therefore ensured that, while most activities will happen at national level, there will be a regional level platform under COMESA to promote knowledge sharing. We also included opportunities for key people in each country to participate at international policy forums as a way to strengthen their capacity, exposure and networks.

5. The reference to table 3 by the reviewer was inaccurate since the table 3 in the ProDoc refers to general status of the GHGI, UNFCCC reporting and the experts from each country nominated to UNFCCC Expert roster. For clarity, we have edited the description in paragraph 47 (a) which introduces Table 3. Table 3 has been updated.

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

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

1/5/2021: Please address comments below:

1. This section should begin with a summary of COMESA and how it is the baseline for this project's scope, including but also beyond the 4 countries in the project. Otherwise, it is unclear why these 4 different countries have been grouped together in such a project.

2. We note that all four countries have embarked on the preparation of their first BURs (in fact Zambia recently submitted it to the UNFCCC), yet this is not mentioned anywhere. This should be a key baseline for this project and inform of the existing gaps and barriers in these countries to meet the requirements of the enhanced transparency framework, in particular to prepare their Biennial Transparency Reports (also not mentioned anywhere in the project). Please revise accordingly.

3. Overall, there was little information provided on the baseline for information related to adaptation as it relates to these countries NDCs. Please clarify.

4. In the table summarizing the National Initiatives, please include the latest reporting projects for each country (NC and BUR, TNA, etc.). Please also remove any projects that have reached completion or are not as relevant.

5. The description of 'Compliance with UNFCCC and Paris Agreement' remains incomplete and unclear. Please refer to the MPGs and the flexibility provisions offered to developing countries and LDCs and provide a clear picture of what each country aims to achieve in this context.

6. Please check the language in the section on limited scope of stakeholder participation as it mentions Liberia.

7. Please provide details on any regional or national initiatives specifically related to transparency, i.e. are there any bilateral, ICAT/PATPA, or other related initiatives on transparency in these countries?

4/14/2021: Comments cleared.

Agency Response

3/09/2021:

1. Revised to include a brief background of COMESA and the participating countries
2. Baseline section completely revised. Please see Table 3 f Status of GHG Inventory in the project countries for information on the preparation of the BURs
3. Information on adaptation added to the baseline section: (specific text) Regarding adaptation, within the framework of tackling effects of climate change, combating land degradation and enhancing biodiversity conservation and in accordance to its priority actions set (as indicated in NAPA), Eritrea has been implementing different projects with financial and technical support of International partners (GEF, SCCF, AF, LDCF, UNDP, UNICEF). Mitigation efforts are towards reforestation and improvements of agriculture as well as more effective management the environment and natural resources. Although the efforts that have been undertaken by the country are encouraging in addressing the global climate change problems, the progress has been slow in terms of meeting schedules and delivery of the required outputs and outcomes. Eritrea's slow responses to climate change problems will impact human health, Agriculture, Water, Forestry livestock, Marine ecosystem, livelihood of the community and the Natural resources in general.
4. Table summarizing National Initiatives updated.
5. Description of Compliance with UNFCCC and Paris Agreement,

Compliance with UNFCCC and Paris Agreement: The 4 project countries are signatory to the Paris Agreement and will continue to be subject to the transparency requirements under article 13 of the Paris Agreement and the Modalities, Procedures and Guidelines (MPGs) as per the Katowice climate package. This project will support the movement towards then enhanced transparency framework requirements, which will usher in a new reporting regime from the current MRV arrangements ensuring countries submit their final biennial updates by 31st December 2024. The Modalities, Procedures and Guidelines (MPGs) allow for building on and enhancing the transparency arrangements under the Convention, recognizing the special circumstances of the LDCs and SIDS, and implementing the transparency framework in a facilitative, non-intrusive, non-punitive manner, respecting national sovereignty, and avoiding placing undue burden on Parties. The MPGs recognize the importance of facilitating improved reporting and transparency over time; providing flexibility to developing country Parties that need it in the light of their capacities and promoting transparency, accuracy, completeness, consistency and comparability. This project therefore will support capacity building towards readiness for compliance with MPGs for the enhanced transparency framework reporting.

6. Section on stakeholder participation updated, reference to Liberia

7. There are no other national or regional transparency initiative active currently apart from ICAT and PATPA, which have been added on the list under Global Initiatives.

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

1/5/2021: Please address comments below:

1. While we appreciate the discussion for justifying a combined national and regional approach, we would prefer if this section focused on the chosen alternative scenario, i.e. the project as it has been developed. Please summarize the reasoning and revise section.

2. On the other hand, we note that the descriptions of the different outputs is more detailed in the ProDoc, and some of that details is missing from the Portal submission. Please add.

2. Thank you for providing a theory of change. We note that it is missing key assumptions, enablers and causal pathways (connections). For additional information, please read STAP's primer: https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/council-meeting-documents/EN_GEF_STAP_C.57_Inf.04_Theory%20of%20Change%20Primer_0.pdf

3. Overall, the project is clearly structured; however, we believe it might require additional prioritization as it is currently quite ambitious. For example, under component 1, the project aims to establish focal points of each of the IPCC emissions sectors, but not all of them will be equally prioritized by emission profiles in each country. For example Comoros has prioritized by the table on capacity needs and priorities identified, AFOLU and energy only. In Component 2, the project seems to have prioritized AFOLU, which indeed is very relevant for the counties (except for Seychelles, where energy and waste are more relevant). The project can focus on piloting key sectors or types of climate actions and developing a blueprint for additional scaling up in the future to other sectors/types of actions. At the moment, it is not clear how the project will balance the national priorities and the themes that are relevant at a regional level (and can have a regional focus).

4. Component 1 is focused on the country's NDCs (mitigation contributions). Does it also include adaptation actions? Please clarify.

5. How will component 2 make use of existing training available through FAO, the CGE, etc.?

6. Please clarify how the regional aspects of the project may be able to reach additional countries in COMESA (or exchange with at least those COMESA members that have CBIT projects). This is applicable to all three components.

7. We recommend this project examines the recently launched Caribbean MRV Hub to learn from in the implementation for Component 3.

4/14/2021: Comments cleared.

Agency Response

1. The section has been revised to focus on the chosen alternative scenario
2. We have included the text from the ProDoc that includes the outputs. Theory of change revised to include key assumptions, enablers and causal pathways.
3. Initially the project was to prioritize only AFOLU but due to country consultations feedback during the PPG phase, countries noted the need to include all sectors. They noted that this will help in peer learning but also help sectors be at par in terms of the key aspects such, institutional arrangements, and standardized data collection protocols. During training focal points will be key in ensuring access to data and selection of trainees, all sector focal points will play a role in the capacity building process. The trainings/capacity building will target 25-30 participants per sector. The 25-30 trainees will be resource persons and as part of project sustainability will help train and mentor others within their sectors. From previous experience in Uganda and Kenya this is achievable.
4. Yes, adaptation is covered under output 1.1.2, 1.1.4, 1.1.6 and 1.2.1 which refers to climate actions.
5. The trainings will be delivered by an internationally recognised institution whose curriculum has been benefited from the existing trainings and during assignments, existing training will be used for further research and access to data. From previous approach we used <https://www.aether-uk.com/> and <https://ghginstitute.org/> who are renowned specialists in capacity building and GHGI development. These institutions have a certified curriculum. The FAO and CGE resources will be used as additional resources during capacity development. During the consultant contracting process we will ensure that we reiterate on the need to use wide resources during which will include FAO, CGE and other available resources.
6. COMESA regularly organises training sessions and workshops with members states. Lessons from the 4 participating countries will be valuable during such exchanges. For instance, during the implementation of CBIT Kenya, we were invited to share with other COMESA members states on the process of capacity building for MRVs. The workshop was held in Victoria Falls in Zimbabwe between 27th ? 28th of May 2019 covered fifteen (15) COMESA Member States (Comoros, Ethiopia, Eswatini, Eritrea, DRC, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Malawi, Rwanda, Seychelles, Sudan, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe).

Based on already established exchange modalities, lessons from this regional project will continue being shared.

7. During implementation of Component 3, this project will examine and learn from the recently launched Caribbean MRV Hub. This has been captured under the narrative under Component 3 to ensure it is undertaken.

Caribbean Hub is also captured under the Regional Initiatives section in both the ProDoc and CEO-E request (Part II)

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

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

1/5/2021: Yes.

Agency Response

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

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

1/5/2021: Yes.

Agency Response

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

1/5/2021: No, the table lists benefits that are not Global Environmental Benefits per the GEF's definition. Please revise and provide a short summary of how this project by building capacity for transparency in climate change information and tracking of progress can lead to Global Environmental Benefits (mitigation) and adaptation benefits.

4/14/2021: Comments cleared.

Agency Response Revised. The main GEB is, Increased adoption of innovative technologies and management practices for GHG emission reduction and carbon sequestration

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

1/5/2021: Yes.

Agency Response

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

1/5/2021: Yes, this is a multi-country capacity-building project.

Agency Response

Child Project

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

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

N/A

Agency Response

Stakeholders

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

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

1/5/2021: Yes.

Agency Response

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

1/5/2021: Yes.

5/3/2021: A gender analysis and gender action plan has been included in the project document, but it important that further information and references are included in section on gender in the portal. Please ask the agency to more clearly indicate that a gender analysis has been carried out and also provide some overall summary of findings and the identified gender responsive measures including references to gender indicators included in the results framework/gender action plan.

5/4/2021: Cleared.

Agency Response 05/04/2021: A summary of the gender analysis and gender action plan included in the portal.

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

1/5/2021: Please consider if private sector may be involved in the development and collection of data (for example energy and transport).

4/14/2021: Comments cleared.

Agency Response Private Sector section revised. The private sector plays an integral role in transitioning countries towards a resilient and low carbon pathway. It is therefore imperative that the private sector actively participates in this project. Examples of key roles played by the private sector may include:

- a) Providing innovative technologies, products and services needed to facilitate transition to low carbon pathways.
- b) Providing resources and funds necessary to finance the transition, beyond what the public sector can provide.

c) Important actors in the transition, as organisations responsible for emissions, as well as organisations that are vulnerable to the effects of climate change.

It is expected that private sector partners will be engaged during Implementation Phase. During the PPG phase, the project explored the potential private sector actors in the 4 countries. Examples of areas where the private sector will be involved in this project include:

- ? Determining country specific indicators for tracking NDCs and for the MRV system developed
- ? Participate in trainings on GHG and MRV system
- ? Operationalization and management of the GHG tracking system
- ? Co-financing

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

1/5/2021: The climate risk screening has not been rated. It says "Rating to be assigned by the CI-GEF/GCF Project Agency" Please check and update. It should also be summarized/referred to in this section.

4/14/2021: Comment not cleared. An updated climate risk screening with the below information was not uploaded. Please add paragraph below to the Risks section in the Portal as well.

4/22/2021: Comment cleared.

Agency Response

CI-GEF 04/22

The following documents have been uploaded separately: (a) the Climate and disaster Screening which provides the climate risk rating and (b) the Safeguards screening analysis and results report which provides findings of the screening process and a summary of project risk categorization, safeguards triggered, and mitigation plans required.

We confirm that the Safeguards Screening Tool; The Climate and disaster Screening Tool and the Safeguards screening analysis and results report in the ProDoc are up to date.

We have added the climate risk paragraph to the risk section in the ProDoc and CEO-E request. We have also added Climate variability as a risk and provided a mitigation measure.

CI-GEF 03/15/2021:

The climate risk rating updated. *The rating has now been captured in the Climate Risk and Related Disaster Screening Form accordingly. Please see below.*

Moderate risk: The project areas are projected to experience increased temperatures, variable precipitation and sea-level rise which could lead to more intense tropical cyclones and storm surges, landslides, flooding, drought, desertification, land degradation, coral bleaching, loss of biodiversity, climate-sensitive diseases, and water and food insecurity. All the project countries have limited adaptive capacity (financial and technical) to respond to climate change. The project is specifically designed to strengthen the institutional and technical capacity of the project beneficiaries, as well as identified a number of mitigation measures for the implementation phase so as to ensure that the project achieves its objectives and outputs.

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

1/5/2021: Please address comments below:

1. Vital Signs is listed as a project partner, yet based on the diagram it appears it will be the way in which the funding is provided to the executing partner, COMESA. We are unsure as to the role of Vital Signs and its relationship to CI. If they are the same organization, then the project would not be aligned with GEF implementation and execution policies. Please clarify.
2. Please add information as to how this project will coordinate with existing initiatives in the country, with other CBIT projects in the region and the wider CBIT network through the platform, and other regional initiatives relevant to transparency.

4/14/2021: Comment 1 above is still not fully addressed. Considering that Vital Signs will receive and execute the funds, then the description for the role of COMESA seems to be incorrect. Further, Vital Signs should be added as Executing Agency under Part I and in this section its role should be so clarified. Please confirm that there is the necessary separation between CI and Vital Signs/Africa Field Division to be in line with GEF Policies and Guidelines on separation of implementation and execution functions. Otherwise, the request for additional execution support would have to come from the GEF OFPs with proper justification and subject to GEF approval. If there any any questions on this, GEF suggests a meeting with GPU and PPO staff.

4/23/2021: Ok the answer below clarifies Vital Signs role.

Agency Response

CI-GEF 4/22/2021

Vital Signs has not been added to Part 1 because it is not an Executing Agency (EA). COMESA is the Executing Agency (EA). Vital Signs is a delivery partner playing a critical role in administering the funds on behalf of COMESA. Funds flow through Vital Signs to ensure financial accountability and reporting given the capacity and bureaucratic challenges at COMESA and the participating countries. Vital Signs will also provide operational and technical support to the EA (COMESA) through its CBIT expertise. CI confirms that there is clear segregation of duties between CI-GEF and Vital Signs/Africa Field Division. Please find attached the Segregation of Duties Policy. Additionally, the agreement that will be signed between CI-GEF and the Vital Signs/Africa Field Division clearly defines the duties of these divisions and mandates segregation of duties.

1. We would like to note that despite COMESA having a Climate Change Unit, they have limited technical and human capacity to implement this regional CBIT project. Funds flow through Vital Signs to ensure accountability given the capacity challenges at COMESA and the participating countries. Vital Signs will also provide operational support to the EA.

While Vital Signs is now part of CI, it is a distinct unit within the Africa Field Division that is responsible for conservation science. The Vital Signs Monitoring Programme (www.vitalsigns.org) was established in partnership with the Earth Institute at Columbia University and the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research in South Africa. While set up as a programme to collect and integrate data on agriculture, ecosystems, and livelihoods; it has now emerged as a bigger conservation science programme that develops decision support tools for countries in Africa. Recently, the Vital Signs has supported the CBIT Kenya, Uganda, and Rwanda programs as an execution support partner and applied its science skills and experience to provide guidance in the development of national GHG inventories and online climate platforms. Moreover, one of the tools, *Trends.Earth*, developed with

support from the GEF is now a prominent carbon emissions determination tool for the AFOLU sector. It is this technical knowledge and expertise that Vital Signs will bring to this project.

2. Coordination section updated.

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

1/5/2021: Yes.

Agency Response

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

1/5/2021: Yes, but please address comments below:

1. Please provide a list of deliverables with a budget and timeline.
2. Also comment on how the KM approach will have an overall impact on the project. Consider the unique regional nature of this project with LDCs and with other countries in COMESA.

4/14/2021: Comments cleared.

Agency Response

1. KM deliverables: budget and timeline included.
2. This project will generate, store, and disseminate information related to climate transparency at national, regional, and global levels. The regional nature of this project provides visibility and a bigger platform to reach a wider audience hence promotes this project's sustainability. For instance, countries party to this project may obtain partnership and funding opportunities to implement transparency related activities during project life and/or after project life. The knowledge management approach in this project will encourage other COMESA member states to join the regional MRV framework that will be created by this project hence improve transparency over time at national and regional level in approximately 19 COMESA countries. Additionally, over

time, the capacity of COMESA will be built to support its member states to comply with Article 13 of the Paris Agreement.

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

1/5/2021: Yes.

Agency Response

Monitoring and Evaluation

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

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

1/5/2021: Yes.

Agency Response

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

1/5/2021: Yes.

Agency Response

Annexes

Are all the required annexes attached and adequately responded to?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

1/5/2021: Please see below. In addition, we have a few questions regarding the budget:

- Usually rent and operational costs are covered by the partner executing agencies, not the GEF, so we do not believe those direct costs are appropriate.
- The grant to COMESA to pay for a computer server seems to fall better under equipment. Please also clarify how will this equipment be maintained after the GEF project?
- Please provide additional clarifications for the the 1) grant to RCMRD, 2) travel of Vital Signs to COP, 3) In-house consultants.

4/14/2021: Please copy-paste budget to the relevant Annex in the Portal. Further, address following comments:

- There is too much overlap in the budget between PMC, M&E and project budget activities. We note that the PMC should aim to cover all execution costs: usually a project manager/coordinator and finance officer, as well as financial audits, other project management activities, and some direct costs associated with execution. In this case, we see 8 different staff roles supported by the PMC (and therefore, require additional funds from the project components). Ideally, project management and technical activities/roles should be able to be separated. And in the few cases where a staff needs to carry out project component activities and project management activities, this is specified in the TOR (for example the coordinator based at COMESA). Please revise to minimize overlap.
- At this time we do not support using GEF funds for carbon offsets as we do not have policies or guidelines for them. Please remove/cover with co-financing.
- The resources for Vital Signs to travel to COP still appear in the budget. Please remove.

4/23/2021: Budget has been pasted in. Cleared.

- Budget has been adjusted with greater separation between budget lines as requested. PM notes that beyond the PMC, funding from project components will support specific activities to be carried out by the Coordinator and Finance Officer from the project as explained in the TORs. Considering this is a CBIT project with limited grant co-financing, it has been assessed as appropriate.
- Carbon offsets costs have been removed. Cleared. We appreciate explanation from agency and direct agency to discuss issue for future reference with GEF Secretariat.
- Travel to COP budget has been removed. Cleared.

Agency Response

CI-GEF 4/22/2021

Budget copied and pasted into the portal.

CI agrees with the comments by the GEF. The budget and PMU description have been revised to better differentiate between the roles that will support project management activities and execution, and the roles that are solely providing technical inputs to the components.

CI removed this cost. However, please note that in the new GMFS there is a requirement that we embed sustainability practices through our procurement and operations, and this is a step forward in assuring that CI and the GEF commit to its mission of becoming more sustainable through not only delivery of sustainable impacts through its projects, but also through its operations.

Vital Signs travel to COP has been removed

CI-GEF 03/15/2021:

1. The GEF budget template includes a category called other operating costs. The GEF Guidelines do not explicitly prohibit rent and operational costs being charged to the project budget. Costs that are directly related to the delivery of the project have been allocated through a methodology that is based on the Level of Effort for operations and rent. The Government focal point offices? rent and operations costs are provided as in-kind co-financing.
2. COMESA will take up the operation of the equipment through the Climate Change Unit as part of the sustainability of the project.

The purchase of the computer server will be made following the standard procurement processes, however the actual delivery of the server to COMESA will be via an in-kind grant, which does not include the transfer of cash, rather goods or services. Thus, the rationale for including this under grants.

3. The RCMRD is a premier center for training in surveying, mapping and remote sensing and offers advisory services on problems relating to resource surveying and mapping to the governments of the 20 Member States. Except for Eritrea, the project

participating countries are members of RCMRD. The grant to RCMRD will be to undertake demonstrative training and assessment activities mainly under Component 1 and 2; as indicated in Appendix II - and specifically focusing on demonstratively building capacity for GHG assessments in the AFOLU and other IPCC sectors. RCMRD will work closely with GHGI/MRV consultants.

Travel of Vital Signs to COP: This item has been re-allocated in the budget and travel for Vital Signs staff to attend the COP will be covered with other resources. In-house consultants: these are Vital Signs in-house technical experts that are providing targeted support and deliverables to the project implementation.

Project Results Framework

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

1/5/2021: Please address comments below:

1. The framework provided does not include any information related to a mid-project target. Please provide.
2. Also, the table/framework provided has expected outcomes and indicators as headings in two columns. It is unclear what this means. We recommend aligning each of the outcomes with the outputs clearly, and indicating what the indicators are (for all countries it should be the same) and what the targets are.

4/14/2021: Comments cleared.

Agency Response

1. At midterm the progress will be reported based on the achievement towards end of project target. Capacity building is a continuous and gradual process therefore no explicit target has been set for the midterm. The project achievements (progress, numbers and challenges) will be reported in PIR and used for corrective measures through adaptive management.
2. The Outcomes have their respective outcome indicators while last column refers to outputs and their respective indicators. The Outcomes, outputs and indicators are applicable to all the 4 countries.

General comment: CI is unable to delete attachments from the portal. We have included revised documents to address this comment, There is one titled "CEO Endorsement Letter" which is a CEO Endorsement Request. There is another one that is listed as a Child MSP CEO Approval document, but this is not a child project. Please review and edit as necessary.

GEF Secretariat comments

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request N/A

Agency Response

Council comments

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request Yes comments from Germany have been addressed.

Agency Response

STAP comments

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request N/A

Agency Response

Convention Secretariat comments

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request N/A

Agency Response

Other Agencies comments

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request N/A

Agency Response

CSOs comments

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request N/A

Agency Response

Status of PPG utilization

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request 1/5/2021: Yes

Agency Response

Project maps and coordinates

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

1/5/2021: Yes

5/3/2021: In addition to the project coordinates please upload Maps in the Portal.

5/4/2021: Map has been added.

Agency Response 05/04/2021: Map included in the portal

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

N/A

Agency Response

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

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request N/A

Agency Response

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

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

Agency Response

GEFSEC DECISION

RECOMMENDATION

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

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

1/5/2021: Please address comments. In addition, please review uploaded documents. There is one titled "CEO Endorsement Letter" which is a CEO Endorsement Request. There is another one that is listed as a Child MSP CEO Approval document, but this is not a child project. Please review and edit as necessary.

4/14/2021: Please address remaining comments. Noted on the removal of incorrect documents.

5/3/2021: Please address remaining three comments on gender, countries in Table D, and project maps.

5/4/2021: All comments have been addressed. PM recommends endorsement.

Review Dates

	Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement	Response to Secretariat comments
First Review	1/5/2021	
Additional Review (as necessary)	4/14/2021	
Additional Review (as necessary)	4/23/2021	
Additional Review (as necessary)	5/3/2021	
Additional Review (as necessary)	5/4/2021	

CEO Recommendation

Brief reasoning for CEO Recommendations