



## **Enabling environment at policy, field and market levels for Forest Landscape Restoration (FLR) to achieve Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) in Serbia**

### **Part I: Project Information**

#### **GEF ID**

10814

#### **Project Type**

MSP

#### **Type of Trust Fund**

GET

#### **CBIT/NGI**

CBIT **No**

NGI **No**

#### **Project Title**

Enabling environment at policy, field and market levels for Forest Landscape Restoration (FLR) to achieve Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) in Serbia

#### **Countries**

Serbia

#### **Agency(ies)**

FAO

#### **Other Executing Partner(s)**

Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management (MAFW)

#### **Executing Partner Type**

Government

#### **GEF Focal Area**

Land Degradation

#### **Taxonomy**

Focal Areas, Land Degradation, Sustainable Land Management, Influencing models, Type of Engagement, Stakeholders, Civil Society, Gender results areas, Gender Equality, Gender Mainstreaming, Knowledge Generation, Capacity, Knowledge and Research, Knowledge Exchange, Land Degradation Neutrality, Sustainable Livelihoods, Income Generating Activities, Community-Based Natural Resource Management, Convene multi-stakeholder alliances, Strengthen institutional capacity and decision-making, Communications, Local Communities, Academia, Non-Governmental Organization, Community Based Organization, Partnership, Participation and leadership, Capacity Development, Awareness Raising, Knowledge Generation and Exchange, Beneficiaries, Women groups, Gender-sensitive indicators, Sex-disaggregated indicators, Field Visit, Peer-to-Peer, Seminar, Training, Workshop

**Rio Markers****Climate Change Mitigation**

Climate Change Mitigation 0

**Climate Change Adaptation**

Climate Change Adaptation 0

**Submission Date**

3/2/2021

**Expected Implementation Start**

11/1/2021

**Expected Completion Date**

7/31/2024

**Duration**

36In Months

**Agency Fee(\$)**

70,881.00

**A. FOCAL/NON-FOCAL AREA ELEMENTS**

<b>Objectives/Programs</b>	<b>Focal Area Outcomes</b>	<b>Trust Fund</b>	<b>GEF Amount(\$)</b>	<b>Co-Fin Amount(\$)</b>
LD-1-3	Maintain or improve flows of ecosystem services, including sustaining livelihoods of forest-dependent people through Forest Landscape Restoration (FLR)	GET	373,060.50	1,591,500.00
LD-2-5	Create enabling environments to support scaling up and mainstreaming of SLM and LDN	GET	373,060.50	1,591,500.00
<b>Total Project Cost(\$)</b>			<b>746,121.00</b>	<b>3,183,000.00</b>

**B. Project description summary**

**Project Objective**

To promote FLR and LDN practices for the recovery and restoration of prioritized landscapes that sustain environmental services and food security and establish support mechanisms for achieving and monitoring LDN at the national level.

Project Component	Financing Type	Expected Outcomes	Expected Outputs	Trust Fund	GEF Project Financing(\$)	Confirmed Co-Financing(\$)
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Project Component	Financing Type	Expected Outcomes	Expected Outputs	Trust Fund	GEF Project Financing(\$)	Confirmed Co-Financing(\$)
1. Enabling environment for FLR in support of LDN	Investment	1.1 Enhanced capacity in FLR planning and implementation to achieve LDN	1.1.1 Inter-sectoral expert groups to support FLR implementation established and strengthened	GET	155,200.00	637,000.00
		<i>Indicator: Capacity of FLR/LDN-related institutions enhanced for LDN incorporation into legal frameworks</i>	1.1.2. Baseline assessment of national land use categories & LDN indicators conducted at national level			
			1.1.3. Policy framework and other barriers preventing successful FLR reviewed and policy instruments & incentives for FLR recommendations provided with consideration of gender issues			
			1.1.4 Road map for upscaling of FLR interventions at the national level developed			

Project Component	Financing Type	Expected Outcomes	Expected Outputs	Trust Fund	GEF Project Financing(\$)	Confirmed Co-Financing(\$)
2. Demonstrating LDN through testing of FLR approaches in pilot landscapes	Technical Assistance	<p>2.1 FLR approaches selected for upscaling</p> <p><i>Core Indicator 4: Area of landscapes under sustainable land management in production systems: 37,104 ha under Forest Management Plans</i></p> <p><i>Core Indicator 11: 50 direct beneficiaries with improved access to services for FLR adoption, at least 50% are women.</i></p>	<p>2.1.1 Working group at the local level for participatory FLR implementation established and strengthened</p> <p>2.1.2. Pilot landscapes based on categories with higher impact identified</p> <p>2.1.3 FLR approaches tested on the ground in target municipalities taking into consideration gender issues</p> <p>2.1.4 Experiences on FLR shared and exchanged</p>	GET	346,000.00	1,594,000.00

Project Component	Financing Type	Expected Outcomes	Expected Outputs	Trust Fund	GEF Project Financing(\$)	Confirmed Co-Financing(\$)
3. Knowledge management, monitoring and evaluation and public awareness raising	Investment	3.1 Monitoring and dissemination of lessons learned to support scaling up of FLR to the national level  <i>Indicator: Lessons-learned to support scaling up of FLR to the national level operational disseminated and monitored</i>	3.1.1 Project results monitored and evaluated	GET	201,000.00	797,000.00
Sub Total (\$)					702,200.00	3,028,000.00
<b>Project Management Cost (PMC)</b>						
GET			43,921.00	155,000.00		
Sub Total(\$)			43,921.00	155,000.00		
Total Project Cost(\$)			746,121.00	3,183,000.00		

**C. Sources of Co-financing for the Project by name and by type**

<b>Sources of Co-financing</b>	<b>Name of Co-financier</b>	<b>Type of Co-financing</b>	<b>Investment Mobilized</b>	<b>Amount(\$)</b>
Recipient Country Government	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management (MAFW) - Directorate of Forests (DoF)	Grant	Investment mobilized	400,000.00
Recipient Country Government	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management (MAFW) - Directorate of Forests (DoF)	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	675,000.00
Recipient Country Government	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management (MAFW) - Directorate for Agriculture Land (DAL)	Grant	Investment mobilized	75,000.00
Recipient Country Government	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management (MAFW) - Directorate for Agriculture Land (DAL)	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	100,000.00
Recipient Country Government	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management (MAFW) ? Sector for Rural Development	Grant	Investment mobilized	75,000.00
Recipient Country Government	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management (MAFW) ? Sector for Rural Development	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	100,000.00
Private Sector	Chamber of Forestry Engineers	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	75,000.00
Other	Faculty of Forestry ? Belgrade	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	400,000.00
Other	Institute of Forestry - Belgrade	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	200,000.00
Other	Institute for Lowland Forestry and Environmental Protection ? Novi Sad	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	500,000.00
Recipient Country Government	Municipality of Dimitrovgrad	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	100,000.00



Sources of Co-financing	Name of Co-financier	Type of Co-financing	Investment Mobilized	Amount(\$)
Other	Pokret Gorana	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	100,000.00
GEF Agency	FAO	Grant	Investment mobilized	383,000.00
<b>Total Co-Financing(\$)</b>				<b>3,183,000.00</b>

**Describe how any "Investment Mobilized" was identified**

FAO cofinancing corresponds to the following Technical Cooperation Projects: (i) Project TCP/SRB/3801/C1 which aims to improve forest resilience to climate change and to reduce biodiversity loss by investing in adaptation and mitigation activities; and (ii) Project TCP/SRB/3705 which aims to increase resilience of the agriculture sector to natural disasters and climate change by mapping vulnerabilities and building capacity to reduce such vulnerabilities.

**D. Trust Fund Resources Requested by Agency(ies), Country(ies), Focal Area and the Programming of Funds**

<b>Agency</b>	<b>Trust Fund</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Focal Area</b>	<b>Programming of Funds</b>	<b>Amount(\$)</b>	<b>Fee(\$)</b>
FAO	GET	Serbia	Land Degradation	LD STAR Allocation	746,121	70,881
<b>Total Grant Resources(\$)</b>					<b>746,121.00</b>	<b>70,881.00</b>

**E. Non Grant Instrument**

NON-GRANT INSTRUMENT at CEO Endorsement

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Includes Non grant instruments? **No**

Includes reflow to GEF? **No**

F. Project Preparation Grant (PPG)  
PPG Required **true**

PPG Amount (\$)  
50,000

PPG Agency Fee (\$)  
4,750

Agency	Trust Fund	Country	Focal Area	Programmin g of Funds	Amount(\$)	Fee(\$)
FAO	GET	Serbia	Land Degradatio n	LD STAR Allocation	50,000	4,750
Total Project Costs(\$)					50,000.00	4,750.00

## Core Indicators

**Indicator 4 Area of landscapes under improved practices (hectares; excluding protected areas)**

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
0.00	37104.00	0.00	0.00

**Indicator 4.1 Area of landscapes under improved management to benefit biodiversity (hectares, qualitative assessment, non-certified)**

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)

**Indicator 4.2 Area of landscapes that meets national or international third party certification that incorporates biodiversity considerations (hectares)**

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)

Type/Name of Third Party Certification

**Indicator 4.3 Area of landscapes under sustainable land management in production systems**

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
	37,104.00		

**Indicator 4.4 Area of High Conservation Value Forest (HCVF) loss avoided**

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)

**Documents (Please upload document(s) that justifies the HCVF)**

Title	Submitted
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**Indicator 11 Number of direct beneficiaries disaggregated by gender as co-benefit of GEF investment**

	Number (Expected at PIF)	Number (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Number (Achieved at MTR)	Number (Achieved at TE)
<b>Female</b>		25		
<b>Male</b>		25		
<b>Total</b>	0	50	0	0

Provide additional explanation on targets, other methodologies used, and other focal area specifics (i.e., Aichi targets in BD) including justification where core indicator targets are not provided

## Part II. Project Justification

### 1a. Project Description

#### PROJECT JUSTIFICATION

##### 1a. Project Description.

*Elaborate on: i) the global environmental and/or adaptation problems, root causes and barriers that need to be addressed (systems description); ii) the baseline scenario and any associated baseline projects, iii) the proposed alternative scenario with a description of outcomes and components of the project; iv) alignment with GEF focal area and/or impact program strategies; v) incremental/additional cost reasoning and expected contributions from the baseline, the GEFTF, LDCF, SCCF, and co-financing; vi) global environmental benefits (GEFTF) and/or adaptation benefits (LDCF/SCCF); and vii) innovativeness, sustainability and potential for scaling up. ?*

- i. The global environmental and/or adaptation problems, root causes and barriers that need to be addressed (systems description);

In the modern age, before the 18th and 19th centuries, around 75% of the actual territory of Serbia was covered by forests. Mainly due to demographic reasons, land conversions into agricultural areas, especially grasslands decreased the forest area to almost 15% before the Second World War. In the 60s/70s, as the 'Forest Fund' was established afforestation campaigns took place and the forest in Serbia started to expand again. According to NFI 2008 results, forests in Serbia cover around 30% of the country's total area (Central Serbia 37 % forest cover, Vojvodina 6% of forest cover)[1]<sup>1</sup>. This is considerably less than the 41% projected for 2050 by the LDN goals defined under the Target Setting Program and the national 'Law on Spatial Planning of the Republic of Serbia'.

The forest sector in Serbia produces around 2.3 % of the national GDP. In addition, the growing stock for commercial purpose or available for wood supply has risen considerably from 211 to 352 million m<sup>3</sup> between 2000-2015[2]<sup>2</sup>. Recognising the fact that Serbia is very rich in biological diversity, mainly contained in forest ecosystems; the Republic of Serbia is aware of the unsatisfactory forest state characterised by a high percentage of poor-quality forests, inadequately tended artificially established

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forests, and an insufficient percentage of high-quality and valuable high natural forests. Also, the Republic of Serbia acknowledges that forestry, as a branch of economy with a long tradition is a significant segment of sustainable development of rural areas and the Republic of Serbia in general[3]<sup>3</sup>. In the total territory of the Republic of Serbia 6.47% of the land is degraded (UNCCD default data 2001-2015). This makes it challenging to achieve the LDN priority which is to reach LDN by 2030. A recent global assessment on land degradation[4]<sup>4</sup> shows that for Serbia the returns on taking action against land degradation versus inaction are estimated at 4 USD for every dollar invested in reverting degraded land. These numbers underly the strong economic incentives for bold actions on achieving LDN. The annual cost of land degradation in Serbia is estimated at 254 million USD. This is equal to 7.6% of the country's agricultural GDP. Land degradation in the Republic of Serbia leads to a reduction in the provision of ecosystem services that take different forms ? decline in food availability, soil fertility, carbon sequestration capacity, wood production, groundwater recharge, etc. - with significant social and economic costs to the country[5]<sup>5</sup>. As a solution, restoration of degraded and deforested landscapes has gained recognition at the international level as a way for countries to achieve multiple national and international priorities on mitigating climate change, improving livelihoods, reducing desertification and conserving biodiversity. Restoring degraded and deforested landscapes using the FLR approach is the cost-effective long-term sustainable nature-based solution in the region[6]<sup>6</sup>.

Serbia became a stand-alone sovereign republic in the summer of 2006 after Montenegro voted in a referendum for independence from the Union of Serbia and Montenegro. In recent decades, Serbia has been undergoing a period of post-socialist transition. Ownership frameworks and land use rights have been altered. Land use planning has been identified and established as an efficient instrument for implementing the public policy value framework[7]<sup>7</sup>. As the LDN concept has not been explicitly observed in the planning documents so far, the opportunity for its implementation might be recognized through the development of a new Spatial Plan of the Republic of Serbia and the identification of strategic priorities for the attainment of the SDGs target 15.3. which is to achieve a land degradation neutral world by 2030.

In Serbia, different anthropogenic, as well as natural factors, are putting pressure on increasingly stressed ecosystems. As a consequence, the productive capacity of forests, pastures, and croplands are being reduced and ecosystem services (cultural, regulating, provisioning, supporting services and biodiversity), negatively affected. Ecosystems and the rural population are increasingly feeling the impacts of climate change in the form of extreme climate and weather conditions as well as extreme temperatures and low precipitation.

Land use change or conversion is one of the driving factors. According to the data coming from the LDN Target Setting Report (Corine Land Cover Global estimates), the areas under forests increased by 6.36% during the period 2000-2015. Depopulation in rural areas, abandoning lands and naturally spreading forests due to the lack of cattle breeding are some of the reasons for an increased forest cover in Serbia. Nonetheless, the annual afforestation rate is much lower in comparison to the national afforestation targets. Negative trends were observed in the areas under grasslands, which decreased by 30.09%. Overgrazing in the vicinity of villages is an historical habit due to an aged population that has not been able to take animals to remote pastures. On the other hand, semi-natural grasslands in forested mountain areas are being abandoned, invaded by shrubs which are decreasing the biodiversity and economic value of lands. For the observed period, the biggest increase is observed in the artificial areas (such as cities etc.), which increased by 72.47% covering prior forest and agriculture land.[8]<sup>8</sup>

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Cropland transitions can be spotted in the north of the country whereas grassland transitions are more common in the south-east region.

Even though the forest cover increased within the last 20 years in Serbia, **forest degradation**, along with resulting **habitat loss and fragmentation**, is one of the key environmental problems faced by Serbia at present. Forest degradation on a large scale has resulted in the loss of forest carbon, biodiversity and other key ecosystem goods and services, and has substantially reduced the potential of Serbian forests to act as carbon sinks.<sup>[9]</sup> Between the years 2001 and 2018, 63,280.94 ha of forest were lost in the national territory of Serbia. The tree cover loss in percentage would represent a 1.83% of the whole area<sup>[10]</sup>.

In Serbia, **wildfires** are primarily triggered by droughts, but also due to human causes, which are widespread and regularly occur during the dry summer season and threaten the Serbian territory that is covered by forests. Between 1998 and 2008, 853 forest fires affected an area of 16 357 ha with 258 forest fires counted in 2007 alone, which caused approximately EUR 40 million in damages and burned more than 5,200 ha (Aleksic? et. al., 2009)<sup>[11]</sup>. Between 2000 and 2019 around 855,800 ha of land was burned in Serbia, the strongest **fire** was in October 2012 were 123,205 ha burned in Vojvodina. Specifically in the pilot municipality Srednje-Banatski, 42,225 ha were burned in 2012<sup>[12]</sup>. Fires have been located in Vojvodina, the north of the country as a consequence of crops residues burning after harvesting.

Droughts, insect invasions and the occurrence of forest fires have significantly influenced forest ecosystems in Serbia. Extreme temperature and low precipitation during growing season cause forest dieback even on broadleaves tree species. In the long term, **climate change** may transform entire forest ecosystems, changing its distribution and composition. About 90% of today's beech forests might be outside their bioclimatic niches by the end of the 21st century and around 50% might be located in areas where mass mortality is likely to occur. Rising maximum daily temperatures and increasingly extreme weather events such as erratic rainfalls can translate into flooding and severe droughts. Since 2000 the Republic of Serbia had to face with two prominent extreme climate and weather events the **drought in 2012** (decrease in yields of some crops by 50%, with estimated agricultural production losses of approximately USD 2 billion) and the **floods in 2014**.<sup>[13]</sup> Overall the floods affected some 1.6 million people living in 38 municipalities/cities mostly located in central and western Serbia. Two cities and 17 municipalities were severely impacted<sup>[14]</sup>. The Vojvodina region is highly vulnerable to extreme weather conditions in comparison to other regions<sup>[15]</sup>.

Some of the **natural disturbances** that shape Serbian landscapes comprise biotic and abiotic disorders such as wind erosion and soil salinization that affect lowland arable lands in Vojvodina and water erosion in mountainous parts of Central Serbia. One of the main factors of land degradation in the territory of the Republic of Serbia is soil erosion<sup>[16]</sup>. Aeolian erosion is a significant factor of soil

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degradation in the territory of AP Vojvodina because it leads to the movement of the finest particles from the surface layer of the soil and the reduction of nutrient content.

The indirect or underlying causes of land degradation are linked to lifestyles, economies, and consumption patterns, a complex mixture of demographic, technological, institutional, and socio-cultural factors[17]<sup>17</sup>. In the Serbian context, most of them are related to (i) weak governance at the institutional level, (ii) a poor integral land use planning context, and (iii) unsustainable land management practices.

The Government of Serbia has already developed a series of plans and projects to guide its investments in natural resource management including FLR, but they lack an integrated multisector approach that could form the basis for a more accurate LDN target setting and FLR implementation[18]<sup>18</sup>. Conflicts among different sectoral policies and instruments have systematically hindered the possibility to implement the LDN response hierarchy: avoid, minimize, and eliminate the causes of land degradation. Therefore, additional work is required in order to demonstrate the LDN approach and integrate it into inter-sectoral planning processes to avoid, reduce and reverse land degradation, and enhance responsible and inclusive governance of land and investments.

Weak governance in Serbia has led to insufficient involvement of the local population in decision making on natural resources and lack of cross-sectoral coordination and conflicts among policies, legislation and instruments (especially financial instruments for provision of private and public goods and services/ ecosystem services) regarding FLR and SLM/SFM. One clear example is the fact that several policies in the (agriculture, energy, forestry, environment, renewable energy) sectors have afforestation activities as their main priority but due to lack of coordination between them and their policy goals, they are not benefitting from sectoral approaches or instruments to increase forest cover.

Due to poor integral land use planning at the national and local levels in Serbia, issues such as conflicts in land use tenure, intensive urbanization, industrialization and overexploitation around big cities are very common. A high prevalence of abandoned agricultural land due to lack of working-age population (outmigration and ageing of the population, low level of inclusion of marginal groups, gender issues) and unfavourable economic conditions can be found, especially in central Serbia.

Activities such as uncontrolled application of pesticides and mineral fertilizers, the lack of application of modern agrotechnical measures, and surface coal exploitation are some of the unsustainable land management practices that directly affect land degradation processes in Vojvodina and Central Serbia. Demographic changes in rural Central Serbia are resulting in an over-ageing of the population including private forest owners that are migrating to urban areas. The lack of management strategies and interventions from overaged private forest owners are leading to land use changes and conversions.

Apart from the Belgrade area, land degradation hot spots are most prevalent in the **Central Banat Districts in Vojvodina**. It is a region of extreme importance for the agriculture sector due to the characteristics of land and soil, which makes them amongst the most fertile in Europe. Halomorphic soils (saltwater springs) are formed under the strong influence of mineralized water, that is, water enriched with easily soluble salts. There are few in the territory of Serbia and they appear most often in Vojvodina[19]<sup>19</sup>. The pilot landscapes located in Central Banat Districts in Vojvodina cover degraded land and forest areas that have been devastated, eroded or salinated. During the stakeholder consultation with representatives of communities, CSO and municipality in Zrenjanin the following information regarding land cover and land degradation issues at the local level was collected:

**Tables and pictures: Land cover, land degradation types, conflict and pressures in pilot site: Vojvodina, Srednje- Banatski, Zrenjanin[20]<sup>20</sup>**



Land cover	Area (hectares or % of the municipality)	Main use
Municipality: Zrenjanin	132 700 ha	Main resources, crops or products from each land cover.
Forests and forest land	Around 6 900 ha	Mostly poplar and black locust, state forests are mainly used for sawlogs and firewood
Agricultural areas	104 990 ha	Main crops are corn, wheat, barley, sunflower?, small and big scale agriculture in place
Grasslands	8 410 ha	Use for local cattle husbandry, and orchards
Other, building	7 600 ha	Same as above
Wetlands and water bodies	4 800 ha	Very big fishery industry, very dense channels and river areas

Land degradation			
Type of degradation	(x) if existing	Importance/ Degree (1-3)	Description
		1=light, 2=moderate, 3=strong	Describe the processes of land degradation: (types and causes) how, where and why degradation is occurring
<b>Forests</b>			
Deforestation or reduction of vegetation cover	x	2	Conversion of wetlands and forest ecosystems into agriculture land due to the establishment of irrigation channels in previous centuries (mostly state-owned areas)
Forest degradation	x	1	Degradation of local forest and agricultural field roads due to intensive wood harvesting
Loss of habitats	x	3	Almost all land use categories have been converted into agriculture land due to intensive agriculture
<b>Agricultural areas</b>			
Fertility and organic matter decline	x	3	Wind erosion due to lack of tree cover, shelterbelts protecting open fields are lacking

Erosion in agricultural areas	x	3	Wind erosion due to lack of tree cover, shelterbelts protecting open fields are lacking
Salinization	x	2	No official data available about area under salty soils
Soil pollution	x	2	Due to intensive agriculture, wild dumps
Excessive use of pesticides	x	3	Due to intensive agriculture
<b>Water</b>			
Water pollution	x	1	Present due to intensive agriculture, wild dumps
<b>Other</b>			
Fires	x	2	Anthropogenic fires
Mining/ Wild dumps	x	2	Existence of old mines for brick production, 22 wild dumps present within the municipality

<b>Conflicts and pressures</b>	
1. Identify key goods and services provided by the forests	<b>Benefits of afforestation:</b> Production of wood and non-wood forest products (ex. honey from black locust); Wind erosion control (avoidance of wind throws in roads, channels and rivers); Hunting especially for birds hunting; Mushrooms production; Tourism and recreation; clean air in Municipality
2. Identify key pressures for forests and land	<b>General land and forest degradation:</b> Soil pollution present due to wild dumps; Profitable agriculture production puts pressure on forest land; Wind erosion due to lack of tree cover (shelterbelts lacking); Conflict between Nature Protections Law and Forest Legislation, problems in achieving consensus on what to afforest (biodiversity conservation issues); Conflict between Forest legislation and Law on Agricultural land creates problems to achieving consensus on change of land use and high fees on afforested land.

The **east part of Central Serbia** is a land, forest and grassland degradation hot spot in the country. Land and soil in the territory of Central Serbia belong to the group of highly acidic soils. The mountainous pilot landscape is an area that covers devastated forest and abundant eroded grasslands. The area is affected by abandoned mines and industrial sites in the surroundings. There is no expectation of a revival of mining in the target area. During the stakeholder consultation with representatives of communities, CSO and municipality in Dimitrovgrad the following information regarding land cover and land degradation issues at the local level was collected:

**Tables and pictures: Land cover and land degradation types in pilot site: Central Serbia, Pirotsky, Dimitrovgrad[21]<sup>21</sup>**

Land cover	Area (hectares or % of the municipality)	Main use
Municipality: Dimitrovgrad	48 319 ha	Main resources, crops or products from each land cover
Forests and forest land	around 20200 ha	Mostly oak, beech, black and white pines, production of wood and non-wood forest products (e.g. honey), private forests are mainly used for fuelwood supply for own consumption
Agricultural areas	8711 ha	Main crops are corn, wheat, barley, oat, buckwheat, small scale agriculture production of food for own cattle breeding
Grasslands	6999 ha	Use for cattle (decreasing number of cattle)
Pasturelands	12338 ha	
Wetlands and water bodies		Very small area



Land degradation			
Type of degradation	(x) if existing	Importance/ Degree (1-3)	Description
		1=light, 2=moderate, 3=strong	Describe the processes of land degradation: (types and causes) how, where and why degradation is occurring
<b>Forests</b>			

Deforestation or reduction of vegetation cover	x	3	Intensive harvesting operations and cattle grazing lead to strong erosion processes in previous centuries (mostly in state and partly in private ownership), partly due to a lack of proper instruments to support diversification of forests utilisation
Forest degradation	x	3	Overharvesting and grazing, but also bad site condition, for example, shallow soils, difficult for natural vegetation to grow (state and private ownership)
Grazing inside the forest	x	1	Reduction of cattle's number due to depopulation trends
Loss of habitats	x	1	Forest degradation and erosion, runoff
<b>Agricultural areas</b>			
Landslides	x	1	
Fires	x	1	Fires in austrian pine stands due to lack of fires prevention roads
<b>Pasturelands</b>			
Decline in productivity	x	3	Low number of cattle cause pasturelands productivity decline and biodiversity decrease in pasture ecosystems; Cattle feeds invasive grass types that negatively affects the ecosystem
Bush encroachment	x	1	Succession of bushes into agriculture land
<b>Water</b>			
Decline in water quantity and quality	x	1	Erosion processes are affecting water quality and quantity, water flow contaminated with mud and soil
<b>Other</b>			
Lack of labor availability	x	2	Due to big depopulation trends and due to lack of financial motivation especially in jobs with strong physical needs
Mining	x	1	Abandoned coal mines have not been re-cultivated (small area with mine tailings)

<b>Conflicts and pressures</b>	
1. Identify key goods and services provided by the forests	<b>Benefits of afforestation:</b> Production of wood and non-wood forest products (ex. honey from black pine); Wind erosion control; Hunting; Mushrooms production; Tourism and recreation; clean air in Municipality



2. Identify key pressures for forests and land	<b>General land and forest degradation:</b> Depopulation/over-ageing of private forest owners leads to uncontrolled cutting while owners are not present or too old; Low number of cattle cause pasturelands productivity decline and biodiversity decrease in pasture ecosystems; Intensive harvesting operations and cattle grazing lead to strong erosion processes in previous centuries
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In order to address land and forest degradation effectively in Serbia and to introduce the LDN approach and methodology at the national as well as sub-national level, the following barriers need to be addressed:

#### **#1a Lack of inter-sectoral coordination and cooperation in securing measures for FLR and LDN achievement**

Several policies and strategies (e.g. Forestry Development Strategy of the Republic of Serbia (2006), National Environmental Protection Programme (2010-2019), National Sustainable Development Strategy (2009), see below) in the agriculture, energy, forestry, environment and energy sectors promote land remediation, erosion control or afforestation activities. Due to missing coordination between policy goals, they are not benefitting from sectoral approaches, procedures or instruments to increase forest cover and afforestation and land remediation activities are therefore being delayed. One heavy burden is the system for re-categorisation of land use categories and land productivity (bonity classes) needed for afforestation processes guided by the Law on Cadaster (2018). Changing categories of land use and land productivity in a given landscape is time consuming, costly and burdensome. In addition, financial instruments cannot be applied without the right re-categorisation and land productivity class.

The spatial planning processes in Serbia do not explicitly include LDN approaches or targets so far. The opportunity for its implementation might be recognized through the development of a new Spatial Plan of the Republic of Serbia and identification of strategic priorities for the attainment of the SDGs, especially SDG target 15.3 (LDN). The LDN incorporation into the legislation is one of the essential steps in its implementation. ?Visibility? of the LDN concept in the Law on Environmental Protection and Law on Land Protection would have major importance, due to the fact that these laws are explicitly related to the issue of land as a living medium, which requires specific legislative, planning and management solutions[22]<sup>22</sup>.

#### **#1b Capacities and knowledge on approaches and techniques to achieve LDN through FLR in research institutions are not sufficient**

In the framework of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration and ECCA30[23]<sup>23</sup>, the Joint FAO/UNECE Forestry in Timbre Section will develop a forest landscape restoration (FLR) study in



Eastern and South-East Europe[24]<sup>24</sup>. Research on FLR approaches for the achievement of LDN is missing at the regional as well as national level. The topic has not been directly addressed in any research institution neither in the forest sector or forest-related sectors. Research on salty soils and their spatial distribution has not been updated for 40 years (soil maps for identification of salty soils from 1971 available). Research on suitability/ productivity of different tree species and crops to survive in salty soils are lacking. Sustainable land management approaches such as the re-cultivation of salty soils with the help of irrigation infrastructure and their effects on improving condition in soils for afforestation have not been sufficiently studied, neither tested. For instance, in the central part of Serbia, research on mapping the bare land and assessing the tree species suitability/ productivity on unproductive serpentine soils is lacking and there is no investigation on ecosystem services that could be improved through afforestation activities. Research on investment in tangible and intangible benefits from forest ecosystems is missing as well. It hinders the establishment of adequate green funds for afforestation with the potential to pay all public goods that forests provide to all citizens.

## **#2 Systematic transfer of technical knowledge and advisory, training and financial support to local stakeholders for LDN achievement through FLR missing**

A systematic exchange among research institutes on academic results is missing and at the same time, systematic transfer of knowledge to professionals and other interested parties is lacking. Research institutions in Serbia do not include FLR and LDN research in their agenda neither special research funds for them exist. Scientific work indirectly related to FLR and LDN is not systematically shared to the forestry experts and other interested stakeholders. The recently established Chamber of Forest Engineers does not include FLR and LDN courses in their postgraduate program that could be offered to any of the forest professional groups. This project could propose the integration of some of the FLR and LDN training activities through the Chamber of Forest Engineers. In cooperation with research institutes, the project should establish links between research results and their further transfer to end-users who can turn results into practical application in the field.

The Forest Law in 2010 established the Budget Fund for Forests of Republic of Serbia and the Budget Fund for forest of Autonomous Province of Vojvodina. These two funds finance the establishment and maintenance of new forests on land which can be afforested or reforested according to the existing Laws, among other activities. As part of the Law, all entrepreneurs and legal entities were mandated to invest 0.25% of their annual income from Budget Funds to activities related to ensuring ecosystem services from forests. The articles related to the latter 0.25% were abolished in 2012 with the Amendments to the Forest Law.

## **#3 Limited coordination, between national monitoring mechanisms, affect countries reporting to UNCCD and to other international commitments**

During the UNCCD COP 12 in 2015 held in Ankara, parties agreed that voluntary LDN targets will be selected by countries themselves and LDN will be mainstreamed into national plans for combating land degradation. Land degradation neutrality is "A state whereby the amount and quality of land resources necessary to support ecosystem functions and services and enhance food security remain stable or increase within specified temporal and spatial scales and ecosystems." (Decision 3/COP.12, UNCCD, 2015a). As per the LDN scientific conceptual framework, the LDN approach aims to counterbalance (within individual land types or landscapes), the expected loss of productive land with the recovery of degraded areas through a set of measures to conserve land resources, maintain the delivery of ecosystem services, and restore and rehabilitate degraded land (UNCCD, 2017).

Serbia, as a signatory of the UNCCD, has committed to set voluntary LDN targets and to monitor key indicators such as (i) land cover & land cover change, (ii) land productivity and (iii) soil organic carbon

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levels. Progress has been made in recent years through the UNCCD, LDN Target Setting Programme and related national monitoring processes. Land protection in Serbia is attained through systematic monitoring of the quality of land resources, by monitoring relevant indicators for land degradation risk assessment, as well as through remediation programs that combat the effects of degradation, whether it is due to natural or anthropogenic induced processes. The Decree on the Systematic Monitoring of Land Quality Program prescribes the methodology for data analyses and the obligation of conducting monitoring on degraded areas. Beside this monitoring mechanism coming from the environmental sector, the main monitoring instrument in the forestry sector at national level is the National Forest Inventory (NFI), which is conducted in 10 years circles. Within the second NFI (2019-2020) financed by GEF fund estimations of land use and land use changes at the national level using a combination of remote sensing and terrestrial data collection have been included.

Forest restoration initiatives require a holistic and participatory approach. To accomplish this, Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) has been proposed as an overarching approach to guide the different organisational levels of the project, combining the various social, economic and environmental challenges under a single guiding holistic methodology to ensure no future net loss of productive land.

#### Current situation related to COVID-19

The national food system and rural economy of Serbia has been affected by COVID-19 in two fundamental ways:

1. While it disrupted food value chains, disrupted logistics, decreased demand and generated markets uncertainties, it also brought alternative business models - e-commerce, a focus on short VC, innovation and collaboration. On balance, it highlighted the importance of resilience and risk management capacities.
2. It strained the livelihoods of rural population, particularly of vulnerable groups such as women, the elderly, informal workers and small holders, due to difficulties in taking advantage of emerging income and market opportunities. As such, COVID-19 highlighted the important role that information flows and inclusive processes and policies represent for vulnerable groups in crisis situations.

Containment measures, notably restrictions of movement, were the governmental measure that most affected producers and food supply chains. They affected not only overall routines of daily life but also governance and production cycles. In retrospect, products predominantly sold on domestic markets experienced a decreased demand due to the temporary closure of green markets and the HoReCa industry, which added to the difficulties in logistics that were experiencing functional value chains. Negative impacts of Covid 19 are mostly recorded for perishable vegetables, strawberries, fresh meat, meat products, fish, milk and dairy products and live young animals (lambs and piglets).

The proposals for program interventions here described are aligned to national development policies and strategies, as well as the UN Framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID19:

1. ?Build back better? - promotion of sustainable, innovative and green development that supports the country's strategic priorities. This includes improvements in policy measures, data collection, communication and support to VC organisation and participation in social

dialogue for rural population. It particularly entails rethinking governance and improving dialogue processes.

2. "Leaving no one behind" which in Serbian context points at the need for inclusive and more equitable recovery response, but also enabling better understanding and targeting the needs for poverty reduction and improved quality of life in rural areas.

### Climate change

The analysis of the local meteorological data [Meteorological yearbook of the Republic Hydrometeorological Service of Serbia (2020)] shows that Climate Change has already impacted Serbia. Both annual average temperature and annual maximum temperature are showing significant increasing trends in the period 1960-2020 (AVG temperature + 0.3 °C per decade and MAX Temperature +0.5°C per decade). Heat waves increased by 20 days annually in the period 2008-2017 period and up to 30 days in lowlands and western parts, and extreme heat waves by 2-3 days per year [Third National Communication, 2020]. The 2017 Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) presented by Serbia estimated that the total damage caused by extreme climate and weather conditions since 2005 exceed 5 billion euros, and that more than 70 percent of the losses are associated with drought and high temperatures.

According to the National Communications and NDC, the most vulnerable sectors in Serbia are agriculture, forestry, hydrology, human health and biodiversity. Average long-term trends in river discharges (excluding large rivers) is negative with significant spatial distribution. These changes are expected to bring problems related to water availability, quality and intensity and frequency of floods and droughts. Forest ecosystems have been significantly affected by droughts, insect invasions and forest fires. In the long run, climate change may transform Serbian forest ecosystems, altering their composition and distribution. Adaptation measures for the forestry sector include (i) the reduction of biotic and abiotic disturbance through building the adaptive capacity of forests (eg. Building fire protection measures, early treatment of pests, management of thinning in conifer plantations, promotion of mixed and uneven aged forests), (ii) selection of adequate tree species, provenances, populations and genotypes that show higher tolerance to altered climate, (iii) introducing the practice of adaptive management of forests, (iv) more intense rehabilitation of degraded lands by afforestation, (v) prevention of erosion and landslides, and (vi) improved water resource management, among others.

Regarding agriculture, climate change is expected to affect the spatial variation in agroclimatic conditions, the conditions for plant breeding and selection suitable varieties, as well as the phenology of plants. Some scenarios predict reductions in yields (eg. Corn, maize and wheat), particularly for agriculture without irrigation. Soil erosion is a problem that affects roughly 80% of the agricultural soil in Serbia. Soil erosion can be exacerbated by climate change, particularly under conditions of extreme rainfall combined with bare soil in steep areas. Adaptation measures for the agriculture sector include (i) improved water management, (ii) breeding of more productive cultivars, (iii) changing cultivation and sowing times in field operations, (iv) introducing and breeding drought and heat resistant cultivars, (v) introducing minimum tillage or reduced soil cultivation. The Second National Communication provides a detailed list of adaptation measures to reduce risk from climate change, to improve the enabling environment, to ensure adequate monitoring and to improve capacity building and awareness.

While Serbian greenhouse gas emissions (67,148 Gg in 2014) are low compared to the World Total (10 million Gg), the country has nonetheless committed to reduce its emissions in accordance to its capabilities, national circumstances and development goals. Serbia committed in its INDC to reduce its emissions by 9.8% by 2030 relative to 1990.

ii. The baseline scenario and any associated baseline projects,

**International baseline scenario: Country's progress or status in setting LDN targets and country's targets associated with regional or global processes for FLR, SFR or SLM. Related initiatives financed by international funds.**

Serbia, as a signatory of the UNCCD, is committed to set and implement measures that meet the global commitments of LDN, and in this way, contribute to goal 15.3 of the SDGs to achieve LDN by 2030. This project will set the ground and contribute to the country's compliance with the LDN Target Setting Programme. Some of the targets of the LDN Target Setting Programme are: (i) to increase the area of national territory under forests to 41.4% by 2050 (Law on the Spatial Plan of the Republic of Serbia) and (ii) to increase the area under forests in the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina to 14.3%.

In December 2019, a regional workshop on Forest Landscape Restoration and the Bonn Challenge in Eastern and South-East Europe took place in Belgrade in order to i) to provide background information about the Bonn Challenge, the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration and ECCA30[25]<sup>25</sup>, and (ii) to gather input for and feedback on a study on forest landscape restoration (FLR) in Eastern and South-East Europe. As this program and study will run in parallel to the project, knowledge and information exchange will take place between both initiatives.

***GEF Support to UNCCD 2018 national reporting process ?Umbrella II (UNEP/GEF, 2018-2019 Serbia)[26]***<sup>26</sup>. This global project aims at enabling country Parties to collect necessary biophysical, socioeconomic data, establish sound reporting and monitoring systems at national level and report against the UNCCD Strategy. Through this project, a document named ?Report on the applied methodology and identification of targets to achieve land degradation neutrality in the Republic of Serbia? was launched in Belgrade in 2019. Global databases, provided by the UNCCD, have been used for the preparation of this report in light of the fact that representative national databases relevant to the implementation of the LDN approach have not yet been established. The results obtained with the use of global databases should be understood as a temporary state, until the time Serbia forms a representative, publicly accessible collection of national data, with the spatial and temporal attributes necessary to determine LDN parameters. In the assessment of the potential for LDN through FLR (project output 1.1.2) embedded in this project, the already existing global database will be supplemented with LDN indicators coming from national databases.

***Contribution of sustainable forest management to a low emission and resilient development in Serbia (FAO/GEF, 2018-2021 Serbia)[27]***<sup>27</sup>. The project strategy aims at strengthening the capacities of actors of the public and private sector to mainstream biodiversity conservation and management of carbon stocks into forest management planning and implementation. Through component 1 of this project, enabling environment for multifunctional sustainable forest management, decision-making capacity of actors in forest policy and management will be improved ensuring that up-to-date information on forestry, biodiversity conservation and carbon stocks is available as well as collected,

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processed and analyzed according to international standards and requirements. A mapping on private forest owners and users will be conducted and data on forest use will be collected (disaggregated by sex and age). This will allow policy-makers to develop strategies that can ensure sustainable use of forests and better livelihoods of owners and users. Based on the SFM guidelines, manuals for forest planners, managers and users at regional and management unit level will be developed to conduct nature value assessment and key biotopes mapping. The collected up-to-date information (forestry, biodiversity, carbon stocks, nature value, key biotopes etc.) will enrich the analysis of the potential for LDN through FLR (project output 1.1.2), specifically supporting the assessment of afforestation methods/practices and options based on land use and land degradation types. The project is currently working on the first phase of the Second National Forest Inventory of Serbia (NFI-2) undertaking an assessment with Collect Earth (CE) through visual interpretation of remote sensing data. Attributes such as land use, land cover and forest types are being collected at the national level in a 1-1km grid. The work on data collection via CE started a few months ago (since then 300 000 plots have been collected) over the whole Serbia and data collection will continue in 2020 and 2021. The collected data will be joined/merged with field data, analyzed, processed and stored in a central database. Furthermore, key stakeholders from public, private, academic sectors and civil society will take an active role in advising the processes and validating the products through a multisectoral coordination platform on SFM. Lessons learned can be drawn from the consultation with researchers and forest managers on best management practices (silvicultural practices, climate-smart forestry) in different forest types in order to support the institutional strengthening to plan and implement FLR/LDN initiatives.

***Enhanced Cross-Sectoral Land Management through Land Use Pressure Reduction and Planning (UNEP/GEF, 2016-2019 Serbia)[28]<sup>28</sup>***. The overall goal of the project is to alleviate the pressure on land as a natural resource from competitive soil uses, through preventing further soil degradation and promoting soil remediation in Serbia. The purpose of the mission is to develop a methodology for the implementation of an Integrated Land Management Framework (ILMF) at the local level including communication and outreach conducted in different regions of Serbia. The executive body for the implementation of the project is the Ministry of Agriculture and Environmental Protection and the Serbian Environmental Protection Agency. Support will be provided by the regional non-governmental network Forestry and Environmental Action (fea). One of the results of this project which is the cadaster of land degradation 'hot spots' and the prioritization of sites for remediation will serve as a baseline for the analysis of the potential for LDN through FLR that will be built upon a LDN baseline assessment at the national level (project output 1.1.2). An enhanced policy framework for integrated land use and natural resources management is another project result that will be contributing to the assessment on prioritization of most effective policy instruments & incentives for FLR (project output 1.1.3).

***Developing the capacities of the Republic of Serbia for an Effective Engagement with the Green Climate Fund (UN Environment/GCF)[29]<sup>29</sup>***. This ongoing project wants to improve the national capacities for cooperation with the GCF, prepare the Country programme and identify the so-called NDA, the national institutional structure for approval of the projects to be submitted to the GCF. The work undertaken in this project is directly contributing to the achievement of project output 1.1.4. It will prepare the ground to prepare the road map for upscaling of FLR interventions at the national level.

*Spatial distribution of soil organic carbon stocks in Serbia, Global Symposium on Soil Organic Carbon (FAO, 2017)*<sup>30</sup>. This paper presents the spatial distribution of organic carbon stocks in the soils in the Republic of Serbia. The assessment was based on long-term research data and data from the Soil Information System of Environmental Protection Agency (Vidojević & Manojlović, 2010). Of the total territory of the Republic of Serbia, around 66% is agricultural land and around 32% is forest land (State of Soil in the Republic of Serbia for 2012, 2013). Considering the vital importance of organic carbon for the functioning of ecosystems, its effect on soil structure and soil water capacity, and its role in numerous chemical and physical soil properties, it is important to establish its baseline status in order to be able to monitor its variations over time. The assessment of organic carbon stocks was made in soil layers 0-30 cm and 0-100 cm and it was based on soil type. Carbon stocks above and below ground (metric: soil organic carbon) is one of the three indicators established by the UNCCD scientific conceptual framework for LDN. This study will contribute to the literature for the analysis of the potential for LDN through FLR that will be built upon a LDN baseline assessment at the national level (project output 1.1.2).

#### **National baseline scenario: Institutional enabling environment, policy tools and instruments**

In Serbia, a number of policies, laws and strategies are addressing FLR, SFM, SLM as well as LD:

The legal and institutional framework for land protection has its basis in the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia, which establishes the right of citizens of the Republic to a healthy environment, but also emphasizes their obligation to protect and promote all elements of the environment in accordance with the law. The problem of monitoring, protection and adequate management over land resources is observed in numerous legal and development document of the Republic of Serbia.

***National Environmental Protection Programme (2010-2019):*** Has recognized the importance of **land protection** as a special sectoral activity through:

- ? Establishment of a systemic programme to monitor land quality and establishment of databases on land conditions;
- ? Making a list of sites with the status of particularly vulnerable environmental segments and setting priorities for rehabilitation and remediation in 20% of the territory;
- ? Developing a long-term strategy and action plans and programs for drought, degradation and desertification management;
- ? Reducing the total area of land affected by erosion by 40% through anti-erosion works;
- ? Establishing and updating the cadastre of landslides and unstable slopes, and the similar.

***National Sustainable Development Strategy (2009):*** Recognizes land as one of the most important natural resources, and emphasizes the following strategic sustainable management goals:

- ? Prevention of further land losses, preservation and improvement of its quality, particularly in the context of industrial, mining, energy, transport and other activities;
  - ? Protection against degradation due to land use changes, as well as conservation of agricultural land.
-

***Law on Environmental Protection (Adopted in 2004, latest amendment in 2018):*** Provides for the establishment of a 'Systematic monitoring of Land in the Republic of Serbia'. Different institutional levels of spatial and administrative organisation of the territory of the Republic (autonomous province and local self-government units) provide for continuous environmental control and monitoring. Land protection is attained through the activities of systematic monitoring of land resource quality, by monitoring relevant indicators for land degradation risk assessment, as well as remediation programmes to eliminate the effects of degradation, whether it is due to natural or anthropogenically induced processes.

***Decree on the Systematic Monitoring of Land Quality Programme (2018):*** Was adopted using indicators for assessing land degradation risks and the methodology for the preparation of remediation programmes. The subject Decree defines terminology relevant for the land protection process (land degradation, land degradation processes, areas under risks, etc.).

***Law on Land Protection (2015):*** Defines land as a comprehensive medium and provides for principles of protection of all types of land and soil irrelevant of their use. This Law underlines the application of the 'integrity of land protection' principle, i.e., necessity to integrate land protection through all sectoral policies and harmonize all plans and programmes. Land protection represents a set of measures and actions applied in the course of planning, development, land use, and protection from pollution and degradation, with the aim of preserving and securing all of its functions. The novelty introduced by the Law on Land Protection is a set of documents in the function of land protection: Land protection plan; Annual land protection programme and Land monitoring programme.

***Law on Forests (2010):*** This Law regulates the conservation, protection, planning, cultivation, use and management of forests and forest land on the territory of the Republic of Serbia, including all necessary rules and requirements defining the control over the implementation of provided rules, monitoring, inspection, as well as other issues relevant to forests and forest land and areas.

***Law on State Survey and Cadastre (2009; updated in 2020) and bylaw on cadastral classes and land classification (2014):*** This law regulates, among other things, professional and state administration tasks related to the state diameter, real estate cadastre, line cadastre, basic geodetic works, address register, topographic-cartographic activity, real estate value assessment, geodetic-cadastral information system and National Geospatial Infrastructure data and geodetic works in engineering and technical fields.

The state diameter includes in addition to the cadastral diameter and the diameter in the process of land territory regulation by land consolidation, as well as the topographic diameter, etc. Land (cadastral parcels of agricultural, forestry, construction, water and other land) and various objects are entered in the real estate cadastre. In accordance to the 'bylaw on cadastral classes and land classification (2014)' agriculture and forest land is divided into 8 production classes based on their productivity. The precise definition and land productivity classes are prescribed within above mentioned bylaw in article 43. This law provide automatic transferring of ownership over immovable properties obtained during marriage to both partners, which provides the possibility for Serbia to finally meet SDG targets related to gender equality in land ownership.

***Forestry Development Strategy of the Republic of Serbia (2006):***

- One of the guiding principles of the Forestry Development Strategy of the Republic of Serbia is the following: Increase of forest area and productivity: Efforts should be made to maintain and increase the area covered by forests and their productivity by the ecologically, economically and socially acceptable methods, by reclamation, afforestation and forest cultivation on the abandoned agricultural lands and degraded and treeless lands.

? Based on the strategy, the objective of sustainable development of state forests will be achieved by the clear decisions of the State: to retain and guarantee the forest ownership, to delimit the forest lands, stimulate the consolidation of parcels and establish and update the forest cadastre.

iii. The proposed alternative scenario with a description of outcomes and components of the project;

The **project objective** is to promote FLR and LDN practices for the recovery and restoration of prioritized landscapes that sustain environmental services and food security and to establish support mechanisms for achieving and monitoring LDN at the national level. This project also prepares the ground for an envisaged GCF initiative that will upscale successful FLR practices and contribute to the government's UNCCD commitment to increase forest cover to 41% of in Serbia's national territory (LDN target) by 2050.

Through its three components, the project will promote a scenario for wide adoption of FLR strategies and practices in priority intervention landscapes, applying the LDN hierarchy *avoid - reduce - recover*. Appropriate FLR investments will be selected and adapted to the specific biophysical and socioeconomic situations of the land users through a participatory capacity development process with the range of stakeholders and service providers. Uptake will be promoted and continued in the long term through the development of support mechanisms and incentives, as well as by policy instruments and inter-sectoral planning tools at different levels. Additionally, the impact of these practices on ecosystem services and local livelihoods will be evaluated, monitored and documented to provide a knowledge base for continued support services, scaled-up and country reporting on its LDN achievements.

The **project strategy** will draw upon *UNCCD building blocks for achieving LDN* at the country level<sup>[31]</sup>.

### **LDN target setting approach: the building blocks**

**Leveraging LDN:** LDN target setting is not a stand-alone process; coordination across ministries and sectors involved in land management is essential at national and local levels. In Serbia, LDN issues have been led by the Ministry of Environmental Protection (MEP). In this project MEP and the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management (MAFW) as the project executing entity, will closely work together with the academia and target municipalities, private sector, CSO and local NGOs in an attempt to involve all relevant stakeholders in the LDN process.

**Assessing LDN:** Assessing the current state of land degradation and its drivers is the basis for setting LDN targets, making informed decisions on what action to take, and tracking progress. LDN indicators will be assessed at the national level and at sub-national levels (pilot landscapes). SDG indicator 15.3.1 will be reported through the monitoring of the UNCCD minimum set of sub-indicators (land cover and land cover change, land productivity and SOC). A project monitoring system that will quantify 'gains' and 'profits' in the values of LDN indicators will be established.

**Setting LDN targets & associated measures:** LDN targets define a country's ambitions in terms of combating land degradation. LDN measures comprise a whole range of interventions to *avoid, reduce or reverse* land degradation. The project will support the establishment of a decision support system for LDN target-setting and planning (through the LDN/FLR inter-sectoral expert group) to address degradation and associated impacts such as drought, flooding and vulnerability to climate change giving a special attention to FLR approaches. This project wants to prepare the ground for an envisaged GCF initiative that will upscale successful FLR practices and contribute to the government's UNCCD commitment to increase forest cover to 41% of in Serbia's national territory. It will also undertake an assessment of landscape specific FLR practices and land use systems and will

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demonstrate the application of the LDN approach on the ground within selected landscapes and with the range of actors for further upscaling.

**Achieving LDN:** An enabling environment is a prerequisite for achieving LDN, for integrating the LDN concept into national policies and identifying transformative LDN programmes and projects. The project will mainstream FLR and LDN at national and local levels into policy instruments and strategic territorial planning processes and will develop required support and incentive mechanisms for a shift from unsustainable to sustainable land use and production systems.

### ***Component 1. Enabling environment for FLR in support of LDN***

Component 1 will be achieved through one expected outcome.

#### **Outcome 1.1. Enhanced human and institutional capacity in FLR planning and implementation to achieve LDN**

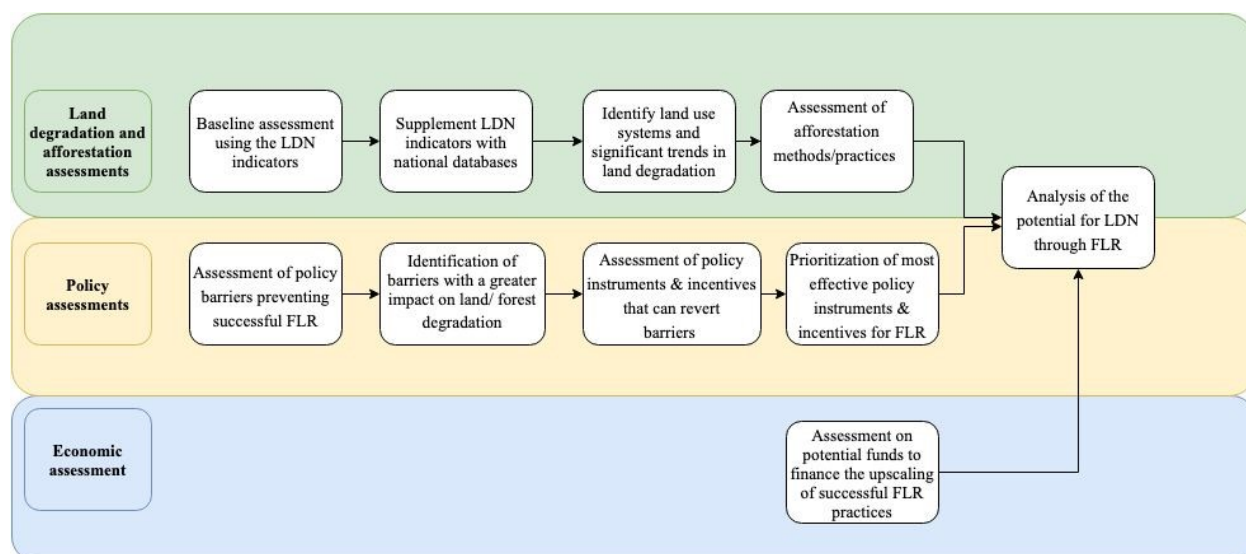
Although the awareness of institutions, organizations, scientific communities, NGOs, private sector and public on combating land and forest degradation, erosion, conserving forests, environment and natural resources, and sustainable land management is quite strong, the culture of coordination and collaboration is very weak. Inter-sectoral as well as multi-stakeholder coordination and cooperation in securing measures for FLR and LDN achievement is lacking in Serbia, due to the problems stated above (LDN missing in integrated spatial planning processes, lack of inter-sectoral FLR approaches, limited coordination, between national monitoring mechanisms). Outcome 1.1 will be achieved by strengthening existing or creating a new LDN/FLR inter-sectoral and multi-stakeholder expert group, that will be responsible for the revision and validation of all the project outputs (1.1.2, 1.1.3 and 1.1.4). This group will establish a decision support system for LDN target-setting and planning to address land and forest degradation giving a special attention to FLR approaches. This expert group should remain active after the finalization of the project to guide the process of FLR upscaling at the national level and to undertake regular monitoring and validation of LDN status reporting in Serbia.

Output 1.1.1. Inter-sectoral, multi-stakeholder expert groups to support FLR implementation for LDN established, strengthened and institutionalized

? Consultative meetings for the central administrative, strategic planners and research institutes of FLR/LDN-related institutions closely linked to the expert working group at local level

? Revision and validation of the existing LDN baseline assessment, afforestation methods/practices assessment and potential for LDN through FLR, as well as assessment of policy instruments & incentives

? Institutionalizing the expert working group through formal approval of mandate and adequate resource allocation building on envisioned DoF co-financing and or defining a resource mobilization strategy to sustain the activities beyond the project



Graphic: Assessment levels: (i) land degradation and afforestation, (ii) policy and (iii) economic assessments to identify the potential for LDN through FLR in Serbia

### Land degradation and afforestation assessments

As per the **LDN baseline assessment**, the project will rely on the existing LDN assessment (with global data) and LDN data indicators already collected at the national level from the Government or other international projects (see details in international baseline and below). This will be done sticking as much as possible to the UNCCD scientific conceptual framework for LDN<sup>[32]</sup>.

Table: Data to supplement LDN baseline assessment, land use systems, land and forest degradation trends and afforestation methods assessments

Initiative	Database	Data
Contribution of sustainable forest management to a low emission and resilient development in Serbia (FAO/GEF, 2018-2021 Serbia)	National Forest Inventory of Serbia (NFI-2)	Up-to-date information (forestry, biodiversity, carbon stocks, nature value, key biotopes etc.)
Enhanced Cross-Sectoral Land Management through Land Use Pressure Reduction and Planning (UNEP/GEF, 2016-2019 Serbia)	Integrated Land Management Framework (ILMF)	Cadaster of land degradation ?hot spots? and prioritized sites for remediation

Spatial distribution of soil organic carbon stocks in Serbia, Global symposium on Soil Organic Carbon (FAO, 2017)	Soil Information System of Environmental Protection Agency	Assessment of organic carbon stocks in soil layers 0-30 cm and 0-100 cm, based on soil type
National Environmental Protection Programme (2010-2019)		Cadaster of landslides and unstable slopes
Decree on the Systematic Monitoring of Land Quality Programme (2018)		Indicators for assessing land degradation risks. Methodology for the preparation of remediation programmes

Table: Default indicators and data sources at the global level

Indicator	Data sources at the global level
Land cover	ESA Climate Change Initiative Land Cover ? 300m resolution data set;
Land productivity	JRC Land Productivity Dynamics ? data set obtained via 15-year time series, SPOT Vegetation NDVI; 1km spatial resolution.
Soil organic carbon	ISRIC SoilGrids ? 250m resolution data set

Following on the current work presented in the document, ?Report on the applied methodology and identification of targets to achieve Land Degradation Neutrality in the Republic of Serbia? the gaps and pending issues regarding the LDN baseline assessment and data will be approached in the project lifetime. The report states as follows: ?Since the Republic of Serbia does not have a publicly available collection of national data, containing spatial and temporal attributes indispensable to determine LDN parameters, global data provided by the UNCCD were used to determine the baseline for the trend of change. The global data used is of a temporary nature, pending the formation of a representative national database relevant to degradation analytics according to the LDN concept. A representative national database should be established based on detailed monitoring, in accordance with a consistent methodology adopted by competent national research institutions?.

The report also emphasizes that, the reasons to use globally determined databases data lays in the fact that currently the data of the Republic of Serbia are not aligned with the spatial and temporal intervals of the LDN methodology which refers to the principle of selection of zero and existing conditions of certain factors. Global data currently represents the unique solution for the application of the LDN methodology and calculation of land degradation level due to following reasons:

Global databases have an adequate spatial and temporal interval for all three LDN indicators on the basis of which the conditions of land resources can be assessed (land use, soil productivity dynamics, soil organic carbon);

Categories related to land use are aligned with the IPCC categories;

Digital format of global databases is adapted to the LDN calculation methodology.

The LD baseline assessment will be complemented with two further studies, (i) land use systems, land and forest degradation trends assessment and (ii) afforestation methods assessment (see graphic below). The project experts will then come up with a comprehensive analysis of the potential for LDN through FLR, considering the policy and economic assessments. The UNCCD scientific conceptual framework will inspire the methodological framework for LDN. In this case, the land use system in focus will be the degraded land and forest land with potential for afforestation. The combination of FLR and LDN approaches is still very new at the global and regional levels. The "Forest Landscape Restoration and the Bonn Challenge in Eastern and South-East Europe"[33]<sup>33</sup> program, the first in the region, will run in parallel to the project. Thereupon, a great opportunity to exchange information, data and experience will arise.

Output 1.1.2. Baseline assessment of national land use categories & LDN indicators conducted at national level

- ? Baseline assessment using the LDN indicators, (including land cover, land productivity and soil organic carbon)
- ? Supplement LDN indicators with national databases
- ? Identify land use systems and significant trends in land degradation
- ? Assessment of afforestation methods/practices and options based on land use and land degradation types
- ? Analysis of the potential for LDN through FLR

### **Policy assessments**

As per the **FLR policy assessment**, first, a study on policy barriers that prevent successful FLR approaches will be undertaken. In Serbia, policy and legislation frameworks related to FLR from different related sectors are weakly coordinated and synchronized. Synchronizing existing legislation or creating initial preconditions for boosting afforestation rates, especially in Vojvodina, could be an example of policy instruments or incentives that can revert barriers with a greater impact on land or forest degradation. Those will be comprehensively identified and prioritized. Of course, decisions will be taken considering that the project aims at building valuable high natural and high quality forests in Serbia. Afforestation species will be identified in a thorough manner.

Output 1.1.3. Policy framework and other barriers preventing successful FLR reviewed and policy instruments & incentives for FLR recommendations provided with consideration of gender issues

- ? Assessment of policy barriers preventing successful FLR including institutional political economy elements
- ? Identification of barriers with a greater impact on land/ forest degradation
- ? Assessment of policy instruments & incentives that can revert barriers with a greater impact on land/ forest degradation
- ? Prioritization of most effective policy instruments & incentives for FLR

### **Economic assessment**

The **economic assessment** will be the final step to come up with a comprehensive analysis of the potential for LDN through FLR. The key output of this project is the road map that will guide through the process of FLR upscaling at the national level.

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The mapping of potential donor(s) and funds available for financing of restoration activities will be the first step in the economic assessment. There are several possibilities of funding, (i) the multilateral funds created at supranational level that require extensive coordination among stakeholders and donors and entails complex procedures, and the (ii) regional funding opportunities that entail the European Regional Development Fund, the European Neighbourhood Instrument, The Danube Transnational Programme or the European Investment Bank. Finally, public domestic financing (derived for revenue, taxes or redistribution of tax revenues for FLR) or private financing at different levels are possible as well. This project wants to prepare the ground for the upscale of successful FLR practices and contribute to the government's UNCCD commitment to increase forest cover to 41% of in Serbia's national territory. For this kind of long-term programme a combination of GCF financing together with public subsidies and private investments would be the perfect combination to achieve the envisaged goal.[34]<sup>34</sup> Areas for FLR activities will be prioritized and will be matched with potential interest of donors or funds by tailoring funding requests to the specific interest or requirements of funding institutions, (e.g. wind belts as wildlife corridors etc). Having the list of priority areas for FLR matched with funding sources the project will come up with the country work programme.

Output 1.1.4. Road map for upscaling of FLR interventions at the national level developed

? Assessment on potential funds to finance the upscaling of successful FLR practices (such as to assist in achieving 41% of forest cover by 2050 (LDN target))

? Development of country work programme for upscaling of FLR based on donor requirements

### ***Component 2. Demonstrating LDN through testing of FLR approaches in pilot landscapes***

Component 2 will be achieved through one expected outcome.

#### **Outcome 2.1 FLR approaches selected for upscaling**

As mentioned above, research and practical application on FLR approaches for the achievement of LDN is missing at the regional level in Eastern and South-East Europe and at the national level. In Serbia research on FLR to achieve LDN has not been directly addressed in any research institution neither in the forest or forest related sectors. Component 2 aims at strengthened the capacities and knowledge on approaches and techniques to achieve LDN through FLR in research institutions and to systematically transfer technical knowledge and advisory, training and financial support to local stakeholders.

Outcome 2.1 will support the establishment of a working group at the local level for participatory FLR implementation that will be responsible for the revision and validation of all the project outputs (1.1.2, 1.1.3 and 1.1.4) and the implementation of pilot activities together with the inter-sectoral expert group at the national level.

Output 2.1.1 Working group at the local level for participatory FLR implementation established, strengthened and institutionalized

- ? Informative meetings for the local administrations from target municipalities and strategic planners of FLR/LDN-related institutions closely linked to the expert working group at national level
- ? Revision and validation of the LDN baseline assessment, afforestation methods/practices assessment and potential for LDN through FLR, as well as assessment of policy instruments & incentives
- ? Institutionalizing the expert working group at local level through formal approval of mandate and adequate resource allocation a DoF co-financing and or defining a resource mobilization strategy to sustain the activities beyond the project

The target municipalities Srednje-banatski in Vojvodina and Pirotsky in Central Serbia were selected during the scoping mission and the preparation of the project document considering the following criteria, (i) degraded land and forests, (ii) land abandonment and (iii) intensive agricultural hotspots. The exact pilot landscapes will be identified during the first year of the project through consultations in Steering Committee meetings and the results of the study reflecting LD at the pilot level (municipal). The pilot landscapes will be selected considering (i) potential for LDN through FLR, (ii) effectiveness of policy instruments & incentives for FLR and (iii) countries priorities identified through their national sustainable development plans and/or land use planning policy/legislation. Finally, LDN and FLR implementation plans in bare lands in Vojvodina, Srednje-banatski and mountainous areas in Central Serbia, Pirotsky will be drafted. These plans will avoid and reduce further land and forest degradation and promote ecosystem restoration and rehabilitation through FLR and sustainable practices and production systems, working as demonstration activities for FLR upscaling.

#### Output 2.1.2. Pilot landscapes based on categories with higher impact identified

- ? Identification of pilot landscapes based on the potential for LDN through FLR and effectiveness of policy instruments & incentives for FLR

In order to achieve this objective, two combined strategies have been defined: a) FLR/LDN management approaches addressing agroforestry, silvopastoral and nurseries related issues, will be tested and implemented through trainings on green business in around 200 ha (involvement of about 50 families) and (b) work plans for specific afforestation activities (which will take place after the lifetime of this GEF7 project) through ?official? agreement at municipality level where land owner(s) commit themselves to provide land for afforestation activities and which clearly specifies where, when and by what means the agreed afforestation activities will be implemented. Once implemented, these FLR/LDN practices will increase biomass, soil organic carbon content and biodiversity, improve water flow and quality, and improve species and systems productivity, thus increasing the resilience of production systems and ecosystems, and reducing the vulnerability of rural livelihoods in the project intervention area. The project will also support the diversification of productive systems by encouraging long-term adoption, productivity increases and better rural livelihoods.

Component 2 will be implemented with a strong gender approach. As mentioned in the gender action plan, the project will ensure that (i) the green business models will meet the practical needs and strategic priorities of women as well as men i.e. will take account of women?s/ men?s specific barriers in contributing to LDN, building on gender analyses and consultations throughout the project and will also create economic opportunities for women as well as men during and after the planning and implementation of FLR activities and (ii) ensure that women land owners commit themselves to provide land for afforestation activities benefitting from ?official? agreements at municipality level. The project will make every effort possible to reach a target of at least 30% women land owners as beneficiaries.

#### Output 2.1.3 FLR approaches tested on the ground in target municipalities taking into consideration gender issues

- ? Testing the ground for future FLR investments in pilot landscapes and local FLR plans developed taking into consideration gender issues
- ? Development of a gender action plan for identifying roles, responsibilities and priorities of women in FLR activities
- ? Introducing alternative practices (green business) in pilot landscapes targeting 50 households (25 women).
- ? Promote implementation of the LDN response hierarchy: avoid, minimize, and eliminate the causes of land degradation

In order to make sure that the experience on FLR in this project are shared and exchanged different activities such as (i) promotion seminars on multiple LDN and FLR benefits will be conducted in the target municipalities with national and local stakeholder representatives (ii) investment in reaching LDN will be increased through CBA analysis and business plans (rural invest vs CBA) and (iii) regional exchanges on LDN and field visits to learn on best practices will be organized.

#### Output 2.1.4 Experiences on FLR documented, shared and exchanged

- ? Experiences, lessons learned and good practices are systematically documented, shared and exchanged throughout the project implementation to advance replication and scaling efforts to the national level as well as regionally
- ? Communication on multiple LDN and FLR benefits
- ? Analyse and increase investment to reach LDN target
- ? Establish / strengthen the partnership to implement the LDN concept

### ***Component 3. Knowledge management, monitoring and evaluation and public awareness rising***

#### **Outcome 3.1 Monitoring and dissemination of lessons learned to support scaling up of FLR to the national level**

1. In addition, GEF incremental financing will support Component 3 which includes the monitoring of changes in the values of LDN indicators to quantify 'gains' and 'profits', conduct of final evaluations, the monitoring of the Global Environmental Benefits, and knowledge management and dissemination following current GEF best practice[35]<sup>35</sup>. A dedicated knowledge management strategy will be developed which will include a harmonized approach to systematically document and share good practices and lessons learned to also further replication and scaling to the national level and regionally. For instance, the documented and validated knowledge management products will be disseminated through a targeted communication and outreach strategy to inform progress made towards LDN and enable the sharing of experiences as well as promoting the uptake of successful

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lessons at local, regional and national levels. The strategy for this component will be to promote an adaptive management of the project through a continuous monitoring and evaluation process that generates and disseminates adequate and timely information on its performance. The communication strategy will identify key audiences for program success, channels for reaching the audiences, timelines for outreach activities linked to programme milestones, and resources for knowledge management and timely updates, such as a DOF website. Additionally, Component 3 will focus on a replication process, scaling and sustainability of actions through the systematization and dissemination of the LDN potentiality assessment, green business workshop results and manuals as well as other project activities.

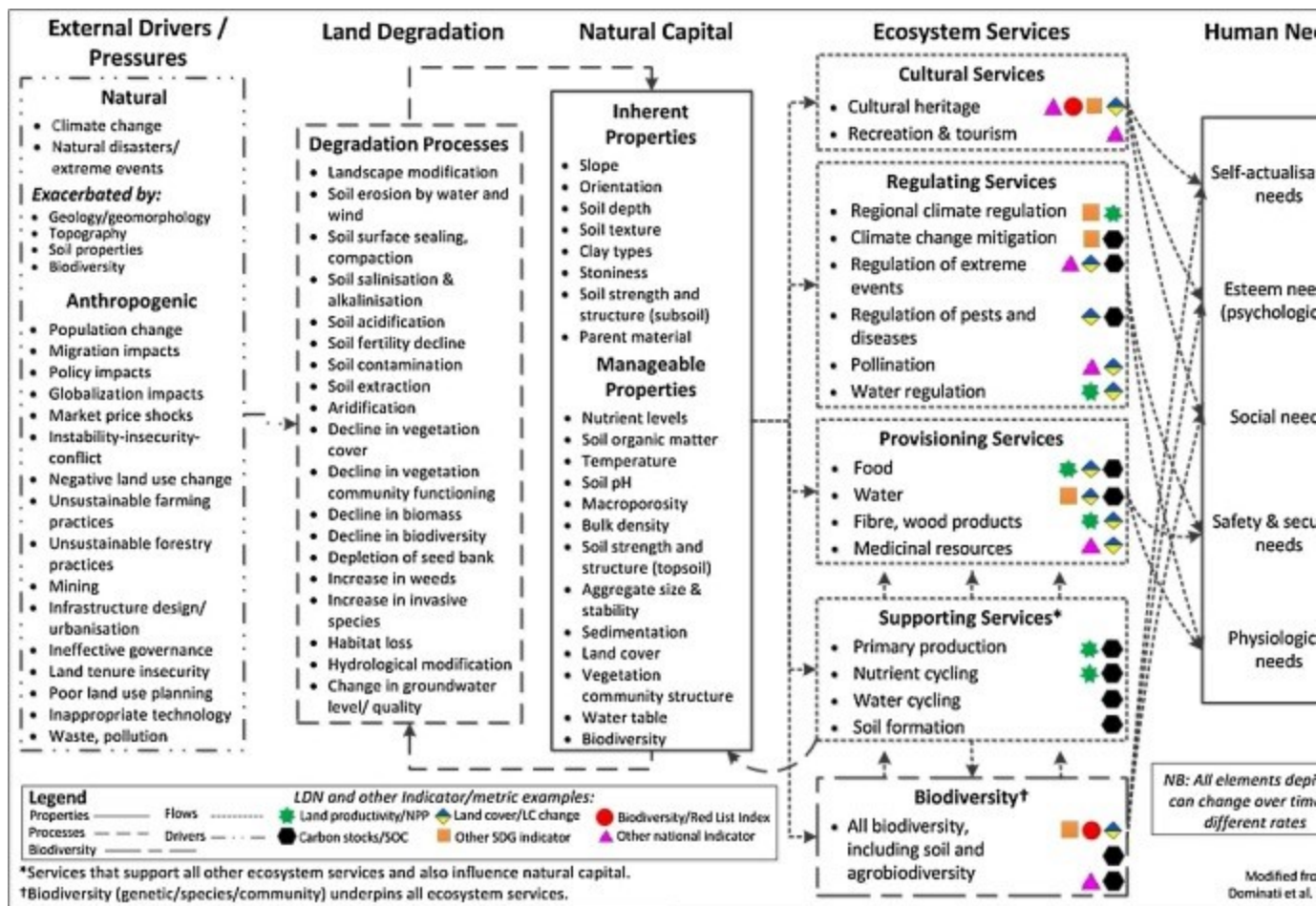
As per the **monitoring system to quantify ?gains? of LDN indicators** it will build on the indicators database established in the LDN baseline assessment and the LDN potentiality analysis. It should be designed in parallel to the development of the initial LD assessment at the national and local levels to establish synergies. Two experts (LDN and M&E experts) will be responsible for the design of the monitoring system to make sure that the methodology is aligned with UNCCDs LDN methodological framework. The quantification of LD ?gains? should only be made during the last year of project implementation as LDN indicators reflect different features of the system. Some like land cover and land use dynamics capture relatively fast changes, while soil organic carbon reflects slower changes. One pertinent time could be the end of the envisaged GCF project that aims at supporting the achievement of LDN target of 41% of forest cover in Serbia through afforestation of at least 250,000 ha (around 150,000 ha in Vojvodina and 100,000 ha in Central Serbia).

One aspect of consideration for the monitoring system is the fact that monitoring LDN requires metrics that are universally applicable and interpretable, and, preferably, quantifiable with available data sets. The figure below shows a mapping of indicators/metrics (coloured symbols) to specific land-based ecosystem services. The three indicators already used for UNCCD reporting and proposed for the SDGs, are a reasonable proxy for change in the land-based natural capital: land cover (metric: physical land cover), land productivity (metric: net primary productivity, NPP) and carbon stocks (metric: soil **organic carbon**, SOC). These indicators should be supplemented by national (or sub-national) level indicators to cover the land-based ecosystem services that are important in each context. Indicators of social and economic impact of LDN should also be included. Progress towards LDN should also be monitored through process indicators that record actions taken along the LDN implementation pathway. Relevant indicators could include, for example, measures of progress in establishing enabling policies and monitoring systems, and interventions such as area of SLM adoption and area of restoration or rehabilitation activities; proportion of catchments with LDN plans.

Finally, it is important to consider that monitoring LDN involves assessing change in the metrics compared with the baseline (t0) values. The framework does not prescribe datasets for the three global indicators. Data for monitoring LDN could be collected by international organizations, national land management bodies, space agencies and research institutions working together to facilitate access to remotely sensed and **ground-based measurements** including citizen science data[36]<sup>36</sup>.

Figure. System description relating the provision of ecosystem services to the land-based natural capital UNCCD, 2018.





#### Output 3.1.1 Project results monitored and evaluated

- ? Monitoring changes in the values of LDN indicators to quantify ?gains? and ?profits?
- ? The assessment of possibilities to achieve LDN goals through FLR
- ? Developing and implementing a knowledge management and communication strategy to report on the progress made towards LDN, at all levels.
- ? Final evaluation

#### iv. Alignment with GEF focal area and/or impact program strategies;

The proposed project is aligned with the GEF Land Degradation focal area: LD-1-3 Maintain or improve flows of ecosystem services, including sustaining livelihoods of forest-dependent people through Forest Landscape Restoration (FLR) and LD-4-5 Create enabling environments to support scaling up and mainstreaming of SLM and LDN.

In regard to LD-1-3, GEF financing will be used to strengthen national and local capacities to develop testing of FLR approaches in pilot landscapes and preparing the ground for future afforestation activities in the country that will maintain and improve ecosystem services. Through LD-4-5 the project will promote FLR and LDN practices, at policy, field and market levels, to improve understanding of drivers and adapted solutions to manage increasing pressures on limited resources and mainstream the LDN hierarchy (avoid, reduce, restore) in national programs, set national targets and monitor progress.

v. Incremental/additional cost reasoning and expected contributions from the baseline, the GEFTE,

LDCF, SCCF, and co-financing;

Overall incremental reasoning:

GEF incremental financing will promote FLR and LDN practices, at policy, field and market levels, through the implementation of an integrated landscape approach for the recovery and restoration of prioritized landscapes. Furthermore, it will help in the establishment of the support mechanisms for achieving and monitoring LDN at the national level. The LD baseline assessments and LDN target-setting are new and complex processes that require GEF support, otherwise MAFW and MEP actions would be dispersed and in some cases contradictory at local level. LDN requires this landscape approach that considers degraded forests/lands and productive lands to deliver adequate results with local participation, FLR methods and SLM tools and planning schemes. MAFW and MEP co-financing is key to accomplish LDN target and support its implementation. Estimated co-financing will be around US\$ 8.25 million, and includes both recurrent and mobilized investment.[37]<sup>37</sup> The incremental reasoning is further detailed below:

### **Component 1. Enabling environment for FLR in support of LDN**

Component 1 will address Barrier #1a described above by strengthening an existing or creating a new inter-sectoral and multi-stakeholder LD/FLR expert group, that will support the collection and management of LD data and will help identify land and forest degradation trends and hotspots with potential of achieving LDN through FLR. The inter-sectoral, multi-stakeholder group will also support the prioritization of most effective policy instruments and incentives for FLR initiatives in the Serbian context (e.g. revise the Serbian system for re-categorization of land use categories). The group will support ongoing efforts to develop a new Spatial Plan for Serbia, to ensure that LDN principles are considered. National and local institutions will be able to understand the synergies between forests, carbon, water, climate change and how local livelihoods are affected or benefited by FLR practices. Finally, financial support for FLR upscaling at the national level will be secured through the development of a country work programme based on donor requirements.

Component 1 will also help overcome Barrier #1b thanks to the presence of academia or representatives of research institutes in the inter-sectoral LD/FLR expert group. These will be responsible for, (i) the validation of study/assessments results on FLR interventions to achieve LDN, (ii) integrating results of the project into faculty curriculum (knowledge sharing), (iii) preparing research agenda based on gaps identified during preparation of FLR initiatives and (iv) and participation in training activities. Strengthening different research areas such as the LDN methodological framework, FLR methods or local concerns such as salty or serpentine soils

productivity, will engage Serbian stakeholders for attaining their national LDN targets as well as regional ECCA30's objectives.

In Component 1, GEF incremental financing will be used to undertake the LD baseline assessments at national and local levels with supplementary data of national databases and the study to identify hotspots with potential of achieving LDN through FLR. The GEF financing will be also used to strengthen inter-institutional coordination, create capacities and support LDN mainstreaming in the enabling environment. Co-financing for this component is estimated at \$2.475.

### **Component 2. Demonstrating LDN through testing of FLR approaches in pilot landscapes**

Component 2 will address Barrier #2 (i) strengthening existing or establishing a new working group at the local level for participatory FLR implementation, (ii) testing FLR approaches on the ground in target municipalities in order to support the achievement of 41% of forest cover by 2050 (testing the ground for future FLR investments in pilot landscapes and introducing alternative practices (green business) in pilot landscapes), and (iii) sharing and exchanging experiences on FLR through regional exchanges on LDN and field visits to learn on best practices. The combination of these three outputs will secure a systematic transfer of technical knowledge and advisory, training and financial support to local stakeholders for LDN achievement. This could be done adopting different approaches. One could be the establishment of links between research results and their further transfer to end users turning results into practical application in the field. Another could be to make members of research institutes or the chamber of forest/hunters participate in the green business trainings in target municipalities.

In Component 2, GEF incremental financing will contribute to generate Global Environmental Benefits in terms of ha of degraded forests or land under SLM practices and in terms carbon sequestration. Co-financing for this component is estimated at \$3.71 million.

### **Component 3. Knowledge management, monitoring and evaluation and public awareness rising**

In addition, GEF incremental financing will support component 3, which includes (i) the conduction of a final evaluation, (ii) monitoring the changes in the values of LDN indicators to quantify 'gains' and 'profits', (iii) the assessment of possibilities to achieve LDN goals through FLR and (iv) communication on the progress made towards LDN, at all levels through a dedicated knowledge management and communication strategy. The combination of these activities and other activities embedded in component 1 and 2, such as the LD baseline assessment at national and local levels will overcome Barrier#3 ensuring a strengthened coordination between national monitoring mechanisms to report UNCCD and other international commitments. MAFW and MEP will co-finance this component through its public financing. Co-financing for this component is estimated at \$1.65 million.

vi. Global environmental benefits (GEFTF) and/or adaptation benefits (LDCF/SCCF); and

The project will generate a range of global environmental benefits in the land degradation focal area with co-benefits related to climate change mitigation through improved land use. The global environmental benefits include:

- Core Indicator 4: 200 ha of area of landscapes under sustainable land management in production systems

- ? Core Indicator 11: 50 direct beneficiaries with improved access to services for FLR adoption, at least 50% are women.

In addition, strengthening of key value-chains will lead to improved income generation opportunities and more diversified livelihoods for around 50 people (of which 30% are women) in the target landscape.

vii. Innovativeness, sustainability, potential for scaling up and system-wide capacity development

### **Innovation**

The project expects to partner and take advantage of the experience of international partners working in the region and will coordinate with the work being carried out under UNECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section. In the selected landscapes, the most cost-effective ways of FLR will be planned. In this way, new approaches to FLR and LDN of disturbed lands and forests will be demonstrated. Community-based approaches to identifying and designing measures to strengthen forest related value chains is new and innovative in Serbia. Another innovative element is to link new restoration methods to the concept of LDN to balance gains and losses within the same land types supported by continuous monitoring of land cover change, land productivity and soil organic carbon at different scales. FLR as a means to achieve and maintain sustainable land use with enhanced social, economic and ecological benefits through functional restoration is innovative in Serbia and in the region. The future landscape is in mind, which is different from the past: restoration is not necessarily 'restoring' what was before, but adapting to new environment, climatic and socio-economic conditions[38]<sup>38</sup>.

### **Sustainability and System-Wide Capacity Development**

The project approach related to FLR/ LDN and scaling up of investments on SLM/SFM will be integrated into national policies and programmes as well as monitoring systems that will ensure its sustainability from an institutional perspective. The project will seek to improve value chains to develop self-sustaining business models that will ensure the sustainability of project investments. To further advance sustainability considerations, the project will apply a system-wide capacity development approach[39]<sup>39</sup> which, together with knowledge management and stakeholder engagement, constitutes a critical element to ensure greater impact, durability[40]<sup>40</sup> and scale of intended results as it maximizes country ownership, commitment and mutual accountability for jointly developed results. System-wide CD means interdependently empowering people, strengthening organizations, institutions, networks, multi-stakeholder processes as well as enhancing the enabling policy environment based on inclusive assessment of country needs and priorities. More specifically, the highly inclusive and participatory CD process aims to strengthen: (i) individual capacities (e.g. awareness, knowledge, skills and competencies), (ii) organizational / institutional / network / multi-stakeholder capacities (e.g. performance of collective action mechanisms, organizations, cross-sectoral, multi-stakeholder processes, vertical and horizontal coordination / collaboration mechanisms across

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national and sub-national levels, network performance) as well (iii) the enabling environment (e.g. implementation and alignment regulatory and policy frameworks, institutional political economy and enhanced political commitment and will). All envisioned capacity enhancement activities will be based on a participatory capacity needs analysis, to define contextualized capacity support activities and define results based on good practice[41]<sup>41</sup>. Organizational and institutional strengthening activities and training activities will apply effective organizational development[42]<sup>42</sup> and learning practices[43]<sup>43</sup> as well as be fully contextualized for SLM and LDN objectives[44]<sup>44</sup>. To further address sustainability considerations, the project will develop a dedicated, aligned and mutually reinforcing capacity enhancement strategy which will include a detailed elaboration of a 'sustainability strategy'. For instance, human and institutional capacity development and training of policy-makers as well as technical staff will further support the sustainability of the project approach and be supported by strengthened capacities at the sub-national level of extension staff and local communities.

## Scaling up

In line with GEF STAP recommended guidance on scaling out, up and deep[45]<sup>45</sup>, the project will prepare the ground to achieve large-scale impact and transformative change in Serbia through operationalizing a combination of FLR and LDN approaches in target landscapes. This project wants to prepare the ground for the upscale of successful FLR practices and contribute to the government's UNCCD commitment to increase forest cover to 41% in Serbia's national territory. Areas for FLR activities will be prioritized and will be matched with potential interest of donors or funds by tailoring funding requests to the specific interest or requirements of funding institutions. Having the list of priority areas for FLR matched with funding sources the project will come up with the country work programme. Once implemented, these FLR/LDN practices will increase biomass, soil organic carbon content and biodiversity, improve water flow and quality, and improve species and systems productivity, thus increasing the resilience of production systems and ecosystems, and reducing the vulnerability of rural livelihoods in the project intervention area. Scaling up to national level of FLR and LDN approaches will be supported by policy and institutional strengthening as well as effective monitoring, knowledge management and capturing of best FLR practices and lessons learned.

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[23] ECCA30 seeks to bring 30 million hectares of degraded and deforested land in Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia into restoration by 2030. ECCA30 will serve as a regional initiative to secure additional commitments and accelerate the implementation of the **Bonn Challenge**, a global restoration goal, the LDN and land and forest-based targets towards achieving the objectives of the Paris Agreement.

[24] <http://www.fao.org/europe/events/detail-events/en/c/1253667/>

[25] ECCA30 seeks to bring 30 million hectares of degraded and deforested land in Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia into restoration by 2030. ECCA30 will serve as a regional initiative to secure additional commitments and accelerate the implementation of the **Bonn Challenge**, a global restoration goal, the LDN and land and forest-based targets towards achieving the objectives of the Paris Agreement.

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[43] <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i2532e.pdf>

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## **1b. Project Map and Coordinates**

**Please provide geo-referenced information and map where the project interventions will take place.**



Project Title: Enabling a policy environment for Forest Landscape Restoration (FLR) and implementation of an integrated approach to achieve Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) in Serbia

PILOT MUNICIPALITIES: Pirotski & Srednje-Banatski



**Legend**

**Project municipalities**

- Pirotski
- Srednje-Banatski

**Land cover classes**

- No data
- Herbaceous cover
- Tree or shrub cover

- Mosaic tree and shrub/ herbaceous cover
- Mosaic herbaceous cover / tree and shrub
- Shrubland
- Shrubland evergreen
- Shrubland deciduous
- Grassland
- Lichens and mosses
- Sparse tree (<15%)

- Sparse shrub (<15%)
- Sparse herbaceous cover (<15%)
- Urban areas
- Bare areas
- Consolidated bare areas
- Unconsolidated bare areas
- Water bodies
- Permanent snow and ice

### 1c. Child Project?

**If this is a child project under a program, describe how the components contribute to the overall program impact.**

### 2. Stakeholders

**Please provide the Stakeholder Engagement Plan or equivalent assessment.**

*Provide the Stakeholder Engagement Plan or equivalent assessment. In addition, provide a summary on how stakeholders will be consulted in project execution, the means and timing of engagement, how information will be disseminated, and an explanation of any resource requirements throughout the project/program cycle to ensure proper and meaningful stakeholder engagement.*

*Select what role civil society will play in the project:*

*Consulted only;*

*Member of Advisory Body; contractor;*

**Co-financier;**

*Member of project steering committee or equivalent decision-making body;*

**Executor or co-executor;**

*Other (Please explain)*

In addition, provide a summary on how stakeholders will be consulted in project execution, the means and timing of engagement, how information will be disseminated, and an explanation of any resource requirements throughout the project/program cycle to ensure proper and meaningful stakeholder engagement.

Stakeholder (group)	Mandate (or activities) and potential role in Project
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Ministry of Agriculture,  
Forestry and Water  
Management (MAFW) -  
Directorate of Forests  
(DoF)

The **Directorate of Forests is one of the main beneficiaries of the project**. The DoF will lead the project implementation process along with FAO. It will have the **responsibility to create and lead the LDN inter-sectoral expert group** (output 1.1.1.) and to prepare together with the national project coordinator the consultative meetings with relevant stakeholders. The LDN inter-sectoral expert group will build on the existing expert team from the National Centre for Climate Change and Desertification of the University of Belgrade, Faculty of Forestry that elaborated the "Report on the applied methodology and identification of targets to achieve LDN in the Republic of Serbia" with an active participation of the UNCCD Special Working Group for the Implementation of Activities pertaining to LDN. The group will be composed of representatives of administrative and strategic planning units and research institutes, spatial planning unit, directorate for agriculture soils, directorate for forestry, RGZ, etc.

The LDN inter-sectoral expert group will meet at least twice a year during the project lifetime. In the first year of the project, the expert group will revise and validate the methodology of all project relevant assessments (LDN, afforestation and potentiality, policy instruments and incentives) (output 1.1.1.). In the second year, LDN experts will downscale the LDN assessment at the pilot level and identify target municipalities with its pilot landscapes (output 2.1.2). Additionally, FLR approaches will be tested on the ground (output 2.1.3) and lessons learned and good practices systematically documented for replication and scaling (output 2.4.1). The project coordinator together with members of the LDN inter-sectoral expert group will be responsible for supervising the activities and LDN assessments results in the pilot landscapes. In the last year, the group will meet to validate project results and the road map for upscaling of FLR interventions at the national level (output 1.1.4.). This expert group should remain active after the finalization of the project to guide the process of FLR upscaling at the national level and to undertake regular monitoring and validation of LDN status reporting in Serbia (output 3.1.1.).

DoF will support the inter-sectoral expert group in the following items:

- ? Active participation of DoF representatives in inter-sectoral multi-stakeholder expert group
- ? Forest data sharing with LD experts
- ? Support project partners to apply for the Forest Fund
- ? Make recommendations to adapt policies and programmes to support FLR upscaling interventions and to support the achievement of LDN at national level like for example to consider introduction of forest restoration measures into the national Rural Development Plan and IPARD

Furthermore, the DoF will provide co-financing through the Forest Fund.

<p>Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management (MAFW)</p> <p>Directorate for Agriculture Land (DAL)</p>	<p>DAL and all other relevant government entities <b>will be part of the LDN inter-sectoral expert group</b>. They will be involved in extensive consultations to understand their current and potential role in promoting and implementing FLR and LDN, and to address conflicts and barriers, for example with regard to data sharing (output 1.1.2.).</p> <p>DAL will support the inter-sectoral expert group in following items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>? Active participation of DAL representatives in inter-sectoral expert group</li> <li>? Agriculture land data sharing with LDN experts</li> <li>? Make recommendations to adapt policies and programmes to support FLR upscaling interventions and to support the achievement of LDN at national level</li> </ul>
<p>Ministry of Environmental Protection (MEP), notably Sector for Nature Protection and climate changes, and other relevant Ministries</p>	<p>MEP and all other relevant government entities <b>will be part of the LDN inter-sectoral expert group</b>. They will be involved in extensive consultations to understand their current and potential role in promoting and implementing FLR and LDN, and to address conflicts and barriers, for example with regard to data sharing (output 1.1.2.).</p> <p>MEP will support the inter-sectoral expert group in following items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>? Active participation of MEP representatives in inter-sectoral expert group</li> <li>? Environmental and climate data sharing with LDN experts</li> <li>? Responsible for climate vulnerability considerations on degraded land and forests</li> <li>? Support project partners to apply for the Environmental Fund</li> <li>? Make recommendations to adapt policies and programmes and create synergies to support FLR upscaling interventions and to support the achievement of LDN at national level such as reorienting budget flows to small ecological projects for value chains greening and green business initiatives together with the National Employment Services</li> <li>?</li> </ul>

<p>Chamber of Forestry, Hunting Chamber</p>	<p>The Chamber of Forestry and Hunting Chambers <b>will be part of the LDN inter-sectoral expert group</b> and will be an important ally of the project for the dissemination of information through its network of members and partners (output 2.1.4).</p> <p>The Chamber of Forestry and Hunting Chambers will support the inter-sectoral expert group in following items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>? Active participation of Chamber of Forestry in training design for afforestation and agroforestry interventions</li> <li>? Dissemination of results at national level through seminars &amp; information sharing within internal chamber network</li> <li>? Organization of best practice field trips and stakeholder discussion and panels</li> </ul> <p>It will provide co-financing through training and advisory services.</p>
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Academic and research institutes	<p>Academic institutions such as the National Centre for Climate Change and Desertification of the University of Belgrade, Faculty of Forestry and the Environment and Sustainable Development Study Programme of the Singidunum University, <b>will be part of the LDN inter-sectoral expert group.</b></p> <p>Academic institutions are expected to play a key role in the LND/FLR potentiality assessments (national and local) as well as in capacity building, information management and dissemination activities (output 1.1.2. and 2.1.4).</p> <p>Academic and research institutes will support inter-sectoral expert group in following items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>? Active participation in inter-sectoral expert group</li> <li>? Validation of study/assessments results on FLR interventions to achieve LDN</li> <li>? Integrating results of the project into faculty curriculum (knowledge sharing and system-wide capacity development to ensure sustainability)</li> <li>? Preparing research agenda based on gaps identified during preparation of FLR initiatives (for example using participatory research approaches)</li> <li>? Participation in training activities and support in identification of FLR initiatives most likely to be owned by local communities</li> <li>? Make recommendations to adapt policies and programmes to support FLR upscaling interventions through for example inputs for revision of Local Sustainable Strategies</li> </ul>
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<p>The Coordination Body for Gender Equality (CBGE) of the Prime Minister's Office</p>	<p>The Coordination Body for Gender Equality (CBGE) of the Prime Minister's Office is the main body for gender equality of Serbia. It provides technical advice and coordination support on gender equality issues. The Gender Focal Point (GFP) of the project will get in touch with the Coordination Body for Gender Equality to assess possible cooperation with the Body in order to successfully implement the projects Gender Action Plan (GAP).</p> <p>CBGE could support the project activities in following items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Make recommendations to adapt municipal Sustainable Development Strategies that rarely include any gender related issues in order to support the achievement of LDN at national level. This project could support the definition of actions related to LDN with a gender perspective in municipal Sustainable Development Strategies</li> </ul>
<p>Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia</p>	<p>The Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia is a key partner in providing socio-economic data, which will help better in understanding the socio-economic aspects that impact land and forest degradation so that strategies to address them can be developed. The Statistical Office is also a key partner in advancing towards the nationalization and implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The concept of LDN and the SDG 15.3, sub-indicator 15.3.1. (Percentage of degraded land and soil of the total area of land resources) are particularly relevant for this project.</p>

<p>Target municipalities and local communities (in Zrenjanin and Dimitrovgrad), private land and forest owners</p>	<p><b>Target municipalities and local communities will be the main beneficiaries of the project</b> as well as important partners for project implementation at local level. They will be part <b>of the working group at the local level for participatory FLR</b> that will meet at least once a year during the project lifetime and will be composed of local stakeholder such as, spatial planning units, local environmental NGOs, local RGZ, etc.</p> <p>The municipalities and local communities/ landowner(s) will be key in supporting ?official? agreements committing themselves to provide land for afforestation. They will be also the main beneficiaries of the trainings on alternative practices (output 2.1.3).</p> <p>Participants of the working group at the local level for participatory FLR will be involved in all relevant consultations, to contribute their understanding and perspectives on FLR and LDN, land and forest degradation trends, afforestation methods and policy instruments and incentives. The working group will ensure that women and men residing in the pilot areas will be informed and engaged. They will be involved in the validation of strategies, training activities and implementation of FLR and LDN at local level. Furthermore, they will play an important part in disseminating information (output 2.1.3).</p> <p>The local level working group will be closely linked with the national level expert working group to ensure alignment and mutually beneficial leveraging. Local level representation in the national level expert group will be ensured by appointing/assigning two delegates (male and female) from the two target municipalities to participate in the national level expert group.</p>
<p>National/local cadastral offices in Zrenjanin and Dimitrovgrad</p>	<p>The national/local cadastral offices will support the inter-sectoral expert groups at national and local level in the following items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>? Provide spatial data relevant for pilot sites and their national upscaling possibilities</li> <li>? Make recommendations to adapt national legislation for supporting FLR implementation</li> </ul>



State and private forest companies	<p>State and private forest management companies will support the inter-sectoral expert groups at national and local level in the following items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>? Forest data sharing with LDN experts</li> <li>? Support project partners to apply for the Forest Fund</li> <li>? Possible support in implementation of at least one pilot project</li> </ul>
NGOs and civil society organizations	<p>NGOs and civil society organizations in Serbia will provide valuable knowledge about participatory work with local communities, establishment of local public private partnerships and public advocacy as well as trainings for various rural development businesses, especially for women and youth. The most important organizations are hunting and fishing associations, environmental and rural development-oriented NGOs and CSOs. They will be essential to support project implementation at the local level through the following items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>? Organising participatory work with local communities and mobilisation of stakeholders for discussions as well as for capacity building actions, trainings etc.</li> <li>? Participating in all activities concerning increasing benefits from wood and non -wood products by involving marginalised groups in new short value chains (employment creation with new small and mid/scale businesses)</li> <li>? Collecting qualitative data for LDN baseline assessments</li> <li>? Participating in afforestation and nurseries establishment.</li> <li>? Systematically documenting good practices and lessons learned for national replication and up-scaling</li> </ul> <p>The rural development &amp; environmental organisation ?Natura Balkanika? society in Dimitrovgrad, has shown deep interest in supporting the project implementation at the local level. In Zrenjanin, hunting organisations[1] are very much interested in afforestation and represent the strongest support the project can get.</p>

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[1] Hunters are facing several challenges in this region. Due to lack of forest cover, game activity is dangerously low in some parts of their hunting ground and an extreme pressure of agricultural land is systematically destroying forests even on marginal lands and on riparian ecosystems.

**Select what role civil society will play in the project:**

**Consulted only;**

**Member of Advisory Body; Contractor;**

**Co-financier; Yes**

**Member of project steering committee or equivalent decision-making body;**

**Executor or co-executor; Yes**

**Other (Please explain)**

### **3. Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment**

**Provide the gender analysis or equivalent socio-economic assesment.**

The Government of Serbia has demonstrated commitment in supporting gender equality and women's empowerment through different initiatives. For example, the EU Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women welcomed the adoption of the Serbian National Programme of Rural Development 2018-202[1] that promotes rural women access to financial support. However, the Committee considers that gender equality has not been achieved sufficiently in the case of women in rural areas of Serbia. Rural women in Serbia lack access to healthcare, education, formal employment opportunities, retirement and social security schemes, access to land ownership on an equal basis with men, while their participation in decision-making is limited.

#### **i. Analysis of gender roles in the project context**

Forests in Serbia mainly provide firewood, game, opportunities for hunting tourism and also other non-wood forest products, and women in Serbia are active in this areas. A recent study on 'Socio-economic perspectives of sustainable forest management & local development in Serbia' identifies some prevailing gender roles, gaps and opportunities at the national level in the forest sector. These are summarized below.

***The social status of women in rural areas remains low and gender stereotypes persist***

***Finding 1. Engagement of women in Serbian forestry sector remains limited***

Particularly in rural areas where basic social services and infrastructures are poorly developed, the engagement of women in the Serbian forestry sector remains limited due to their responsibilities in household activities. The responsibility carried by rural women in various forests value chains is limited to processing parts of NWFP, while their role in firewood and game meat value chains is minimal. Hunting and cutting of wood is almost completely reserved for men. Very few women lead management of hunting grounds, do game wardens jobs or lead hunting societies (more in Vojvodina, than in the rest of Serbia), but they are regularly highly appreciated and estimated for their work. Processing of meat as much as processing of timber is also the job of men in Serbia, and not just in rural households, but generally throughout the sector. The Serbian society considers that these jobs are too hard for the physical constitution of women. Women gain protagonist at the end of the value chains eventually in the marketing segment or in case of tourism and catering in the gastronomy part. The processing of the majority of non-wood forest products is mainly in women hands, although men are also often involved in processing.

Rural women's roles are mostly limited to the households and farms. They often sell agriculture products on local markets as well. In some cases, women sell wild fruits or eatable greens, while men more often offer mushrooms and medicinal plants in form of herbal mixture. Women walk in the forest for collecting forest products just in company with a man from the family (rarely other women; it is more typical for women returnees from urban areas). Although many rural women drive vehicles, they rarely use their family cars for going alone to forest or anywhere else. Of course, differences exist and reflect the culture, religion and ethnicity of the community. For instance, families that worked abroad have a more emancipated women's population that regularly uses vehicles and agriculture machinery. When it comes to employment in enterprises dealing with forestry, women deal usually with administration and accountancy.

***Project opportunities:***

- ? Green business trainings: Education on forest related businesses and transferring of good practices and experiences of woman leading forest businesses
- ? Knowledge transfer through partnerships and community led initiatives for diversifying income and employment creation based on FLR

*Finding 2.*      *There is a gender gap in technical and professional expertise on forestry and rural development*

Educational gender gaps exist and limit women and girls to select socioeconomic opportunities related to horticulture rather than classical forestry jobs while making them more vulnerable to poverty and marginalization. Women forest engineers however often work in public forest enterprises. For instance, the director for the public enterprise 'Vojvodina', was a woman (replaced in 2019), and in the public forestry enterprise 'Srbija', 18 percent of employees were reported as women[1]. More than half of them have educational qualifications other than forestry and even though some of these women have been appointed as managers none has reached the top levels of the organization in its history. With regard to forestry schools, at the Faculty of Forestry at the University of Belgrade, 57 percent of the student body were male and 42 percent female in the period from 1991 to 2001. In the same period, 63 percent of the graduates were male and 38 percent female. Even though a high percentage of students do not finish their education, there are comparatively more female than male students who drop out. Nevertheless, in environmental institutions from the civil sector, including the forest sector, women are dominant, yet these are mostly located in urban areas.

The security situation in rural areas is considered as potentially risky for a woman and children. This together with bad access to services education for children and entertainment, explains why many women, even if they are graduated in professions which can help them live good in rural areas, are leaving rural areas if not married early.

#### ***Project opportunities:***

- ? Support the establishment of woman organisations and cooperatives
- ? Incentives for women entrepreneurship in forestry and related sectors
- ? Knowledge transfer to women entrepreneurs and investments in new businesses within rural development national and IPARD diversification measures (Axis 3, tourism, artisan processing) and Axis 2 (Technical assistance and LEADER initiatives and organic production and certification, geographic indications protection, establishment of short value chains with emphasis of integrating NWFP in to tourism offer, direct marketing etc.)

#### ***Finding 3. Women have limited access to ownership of land and other property***

Women in rural Serbia face numerous obstacles in the attempt to access their rights and are often deprived of rights due to patriarchal and cultural norms, gender-neutral laws that do not identify gender-specific needs and differences, lack of cooperation between different public sectors, lack of availability of services, as well as insufficient knowledge of their rights. The laws in Serbia do not include special provisions related to rural women, and lack of special measures targeting rural women. The adverse situation of rural women in Serbia was indicated by the CEDAW Committee (Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women) in 2013, which expressed concern related to the inequalities between women living in rural areas and women living in urban areas. Rural development

measures of the Ministry of agriculture, forestry and water management recognize needs of women owners of agriculture households and offer advantage to women applicants in terms and conditions for exercising the right to insert improved rural economic activities through support to non-effective activities in 2019 (15 additional points in scoring pattern).[2] This kind of advantage was exercised from year 2005, when first national measures for rural development were introduced, requiring women to be registered as the owner of the agriculture household to obtain additional points which provoked farmers to register completely or officially lease part of their farms to women members of their families to be able to get advantage. Later registering of more than one household within a family reversed the process. The National Employment Service provided also some incentives for economically empowering rural women and women entrepreneurship. These concerns are especially relevant in the context of living standard and employment, as well as de facto discrimination of rural women in relation to ownership rights over immovable property because of traditional and social patterns favoring men as holders of property.[3]. There is currently no gender-disaggregated data on forestland ownership in Serbia, since something like a farm registry for forests does not exist yet. Nevertheless the currently undergoing GEF 6 project[4], will undertake a mapping on private forest owners and users data on forest use will be collected (disaggregated by sex and age).

***Project opportunities:***

- ? Green business trainings: Include section on land tenure and gender to promote issues such as registration of property on women's names and mandatory joint registration (for both partners' names)
- ? Promotion on forest land use diversification by introduction of forest related primary production activities such as mushroom production in forests, fruit production including planting of wild fruits, rising game, bee production, agroforestry including silvopastoral and other activities etc. in forests owned by women as a way of preventing cutting and degradation and better long-term planning

*Finding 4. There is a significant gender pay gap, and women are overrepresented as unpaid workers.*

Labour contributions of female family members to forestry products value chains is in general unpaid, except in case of 'wild fruits' preserves and gastronomy, if these products are sold through rural tourism and/or through direct marketing.

***Project opportunities:***

- ? Green business trainings: include sections on empowering rural women, social and economic rights and gender equality, entrepreneurship, innovation in the area of agricultural production, forestry and hunting/fishing/NWFP including related processing and services (direct marketing, tourism etc.) as well as forming cooperatives.

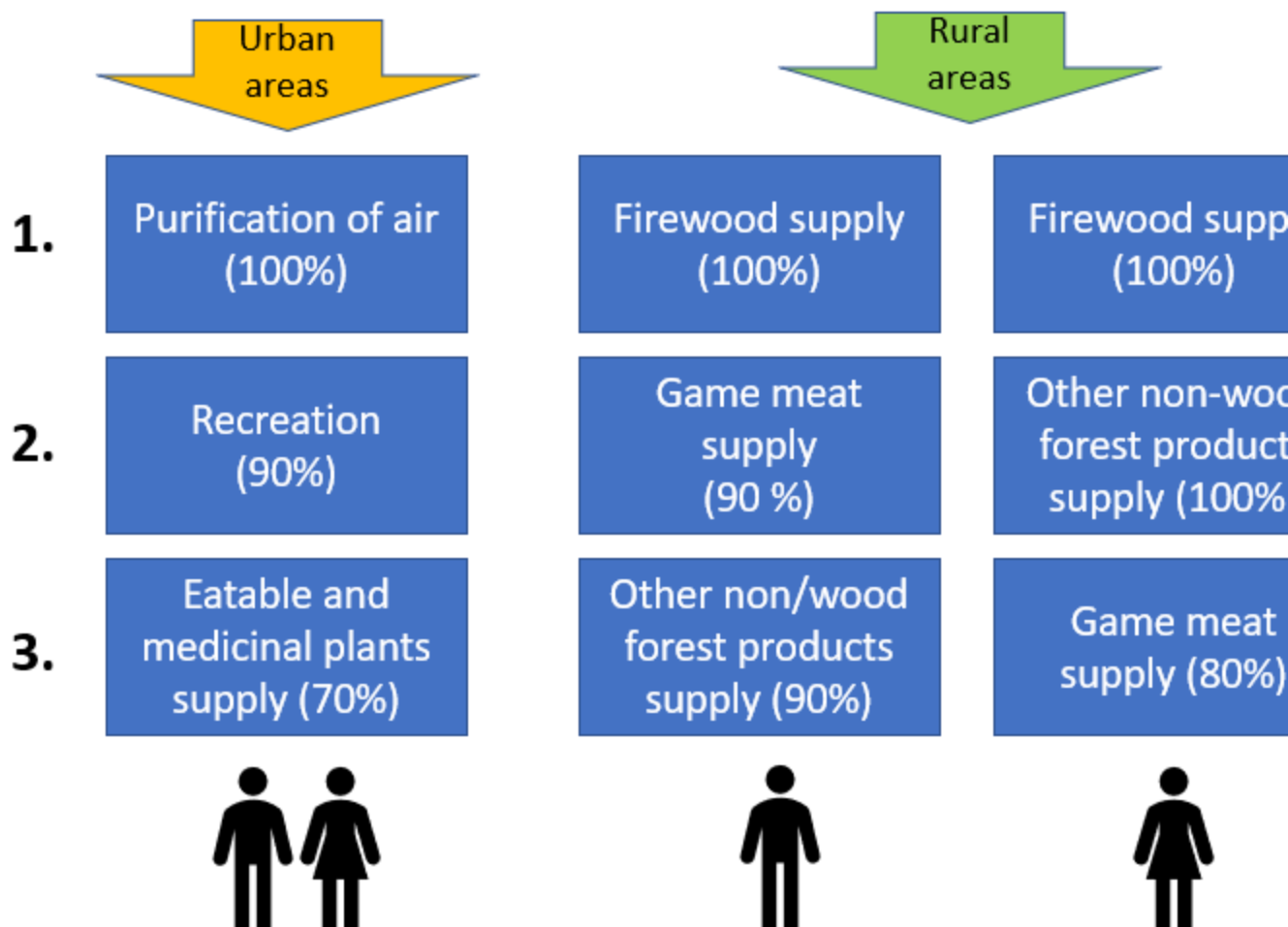
- ? Provide financial and other necessary support aimed at employment and self-employment of rural women
- ? Promote higher participation of women in all levels of government, especially at the local level

*Finding 5. Men and women in rural Serbia have different perceptions of the traditional benefits of forests*

A small survey on perceptions of traditional benefits of forests in rural Serbia was developed for the study 'Socio-economic perspectives of sustainable forest management & local development in Serbia' released in May of this year.

The results of the survey conclude that men and women in rural Serbia have different perceptions of the traditional benefits of forests, in the case of men game meat is the second most important forest benefit after firewood supply and for women it is 'wild fruits' (category of other non-wood forest product) after firewood supply. **Projects component 2 includes one activity with trainings on green business for introducing alternative practices in pilot landscapes. This activity is targeted at women and men having in mind that as the results of the preliminary gender assessment suggests social status of women in rural areas remains low and gender stereotypes persist.**

Based on the above preliminary gender analysis at this time, the Project has identified the following opportunities to contribute to: (i) closing gender gaps in access to and control over natural resources and (ii) improving women's participation and decision-making.



Percentage of total number of respondents which have ranked certain forest benefits at first 3 places (*ad-hoc* quick assessment of perceptions)

Closing gender gaps in access to and control over natural resources	<p>Support the establishment of woman organisations and cooperatives</p> <p>Knowledge transfer through partnerships and community led initiatives for diversifying income and employment creation based on FLR</p> <p>Incentives for women entrepreneurship in forestry and related sectors</p> <p>Green business trainings:</p> <p>Include section on land tenure and gender to promote issues such as registration of property on women's names and mandatory joint registration (for both partners' name)</p>
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Improving women's participation and decision-making	<p>Promotion on forest land use diversification by introduction of forest related primary production activities such as mushroom production in forests, fruit production including planting of wild fruits, rising game, bee production, agroforestry including silvopastoral and other activities etc. in forests owned by women</p> <p>Knowledge transfer to women entrepreneurs and investments in new businesses</p> <p>Green business trainings:</p> <p>Education on forest related businesses and transferring of good practices and experiences of woman leading forest businesses</p>
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ii. Gender-responsive project indicators included in the log-frame:

- ? At least 50% women should be part of the national LDN inter-sectoral expert group
- ? At least 50% women should be part of the working group at the local level for participatory FLR
- ? At least 50% women land owners of degraded lands should commit themselves to provide land for afforestation activities benefitting from ?official? agreements at municipality level
- ? At least 50% women should participate in the green business training
- ? At least 50% women should participate in (local/regional) study tours

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[1]Time for action Changing the gender situation in forestry, Report of the team of specialists on gender and forestry, FAO, 2006

[2] ?Official gazete of RS?, No. 54/2019

[3]

[https://www.undp.org/content/dam/unct/serbia/docs/Publications/Situation%20of%20rural%20women%20in%20Serbia\\_ENG\\_final.pdf](https://www.undp.org/content/dam/unct/serbia/docs/Publications/Situation%20of%20rural%20women%20in%20Serbia_ENG_final.pdf)



[4] Contribution of sustainable forest management to a low emission and resilient development in Serbia, FAO/GEF, 2018-2021 Serbia

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[1] The CEDAW Committee Report 2019

**Does the project expect to include any gender-responsive measures to address gender gaps or promote gender equality and women empowerment?**

Yes

**Closing gender gaps in access to and control over natural resources; Yes**

**Improving women's participation and decision making Yes**

**Generating socio-economic benefits or services or women**

**Will the project's results framework or logical framework include gender-sensitive indicators?**

Yes

#### **4. Private sector engagement**

**Elaborate on private sector engagement in the project, if any**

To encourage private investments in LDN measures (via implementing FLR), (i) ?official? agreements at municipality level signed by land owners that commit themselves to provide land for afforestation activities and (ii) green business models will be elaborated for 2 pilot areas in Srednje Banatski/ Vojvodina and Pirotski/ Central Serbia. The capacities of the stakeholders from the private sector involved in forest and land use related activities and production and sales of forest related products will be increased via trainings, consultation, workshops and provision of knowledge materials on LDN/FLR. A set of user-friendly manuals and informational products will be prepared on alternative practices (agroforestry, silvopastoral and nurseries), measures and technologies to be used by local land/forest owners, agricultural cooperatives and women entrepreneurs.

Engagement of private sector will ensure sustainability to the project results and support replication of successful LDN approaches in other regions of Serbia.

Private sector involvement (namely small-holder farmers/ nurseries) in the selected landscapes will be sought and encouraged to add value to their forest related products and link the producers to markets.

Some examples of private sector engagement in this project could be the following:

- ? Organic products certification and GI protection (PDO, PGI and TSG)
- ? Branding of local forests related products emphasising SFM and SLM
- ? Rehabilitation of artisan processing using raw materials from forests
- ? Establishment of partnerships with local marketing channels such as tourism and service by engaging with supply chains of wild fruits, game meat, mushrooms and other forest and forestland related products processed and with added value through women running local processing and packaging businesses, tourism services etc.

As mentioned above, to achieve LDN, it will also be important to create stable revenues from forest related products and to introduce sustainable supply chains for wild fruits, game meat etc.

## 5. Risks to Achieving Project Objectives

**Elaborate on indicated risks, including climate change, potential social and environmental risks that might prevent the project objectives from being achieved, and, if possible, the proposed measures that address these risks at the time of project implementation.(table format acceptable):**

Risk	Level	Management Strategy
Lack of close cooperation between key institutional stakeholders, as well as among local stakeholders such as the public administrations and public enterprises for forestry	High	The LDN/FLR inter-sectoral, multi-stakeholder expert group at the national level (output 1.1.1.) and the working group at the local level for participatory FLR (output 2.1.1.) will make sure that a close cooperation between key institutional stakeholders, as well as among local stakeholders will take place. They will enable effective and coordinated cooperation and communication among ministries, chambers, research institutes (national) and NGOs, civil society (public forestry enterprises), municipalities and land owners (local) in order to achieve LDN common goals.
Lack of interest of local forest or land owners to sign FLR implementation agreement	Medium	Detailed planning with comprehensive data and stakeholder analysis on pilot sites should provide a good overview about potential sites for intervention and interested stakeholders that can create sustainable agreements for FLR implementation on a long-term basis.
Low technical capacity in operationalizing LDN at national and local level halting the project's progress	Medium	Trainings on green business (FLR/LDN management practices) based on effective learning practices for strengthening value chains will be conducted in the pilot municipalities. Additionally, manuals for all 3 mentioned topics (agroforestry, silvopastoral and nurseries) targeting women will be developed (outcome 2.1.3). Also through output 2.1.4 (i) promotion seminars on multiple LDN and FLR benefits will be conducted in the target municipalities with national and local stakeholder representatives. Finally, regional exchanges on LDN and field visits to learn on best practices will be organized. At the national level FLR/LDN related institutions will celebrate consultative meetings for the revision and validation of all the project outputs (1.1.2, 1.1.3 and 1.1.4)
Lack of political support to LDN	Medium	The interest and support from Serbia has been manifested through the various ongoing projects and programmes investing in LDN (UNCCD Umbrella II, Cross-Sectoral Land Management etc?, see international baseline scenario). Furthermore, political will and support to LDN is reflected in the LDN target setting programme. Lastly, this project ensures Government participation in its activities and trainings.

Climate change	Medium	<p>Climate change is expected to affect the forest sector in Serbia. Forest composition, structure and distribution will change in response to changes in temperature and precipitation. Increased temperatures combined with more intense and frequent droughts may also increase the risk of forest fires. Forest Management Plans will account for future changes in climate in their design.</p> <p>The project will closely collaborate with ?The Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan? project funded by the European Union to address climate vulnerability considerations on degraded land and forests and to include climate related data in the LDN baseline assessment. For this, the project will coordinate with the Ministry of Environmental Protection.</p> <p>Also LDN and FLR measures will increase biomass, soil organic carbon content and biodiversity, improve water flow and quality, and improve species and systems productivity, thus increasing the resilience of production systems and ecosystems, and reducing the vulnerability of rural livelihoods to climate change impacts.</p>
Lack of up to date spatial data and information regarding FLR and LDN for the local level assessment	Medium	<p>The digital cadaster in Serbia is about to be finished. Recently adopted INSPIRE directive obliges all public institutions the sharing of own spatial and other information with other public institution. Project analysis can provide up to date actual land use information in the field. Project can establish close cooperation and procedures with necessary public institution for future interventions regarding FLR ? LDN in other municipalities in Serbia. Gender disaggregated data related to forestry sector in Serbia are not available. The project will start creating these data.</p>

<p>Prevalence and eventual increase of COVID 19 pandemic in the country affecting project planning and execution.</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>The proposed project will work within the framework of COVID-19 Socio Economic Response Plan for Serbia, which provides a series of recommendations for the country to address the short and long term challenges created by the pandemic. The Plan focuses on 6 areas: Health, Social Protection, Jobs, Employment and Small Medium Size Enterprises, Macro economy and international cooperation, Resilience, Environment and Climate Change. The project will support implementation of recommendations within the context resilience, environment and climate change.</p> <p>In addition, lessons learnt from other programs and projects implemented in the country by the project's executors and implementation agency under COVID 19 restrictions contribute to better planning, as well as to the identification and implementation of appropriate risk-mitigation measures and remote tools and methodologies in order to reach project beneficiaries, including carrying out face-to-face activities.</p> <p>The project directly supports the small-holder families (up to 4 ha) to improve their livelihoods through</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Selecting agroforestry and artisan processing best practices ? growing and processing medicinal and aromatic plants, mushroom and wild fruits, best suited to territory and stakeholders preferences</li> <li>2. Silvopastoral systems for growing livestock, game and bees and development of attached short value chains for services and products</li> <li>3. Nurseries growing and restoration services provision</li> </ol>
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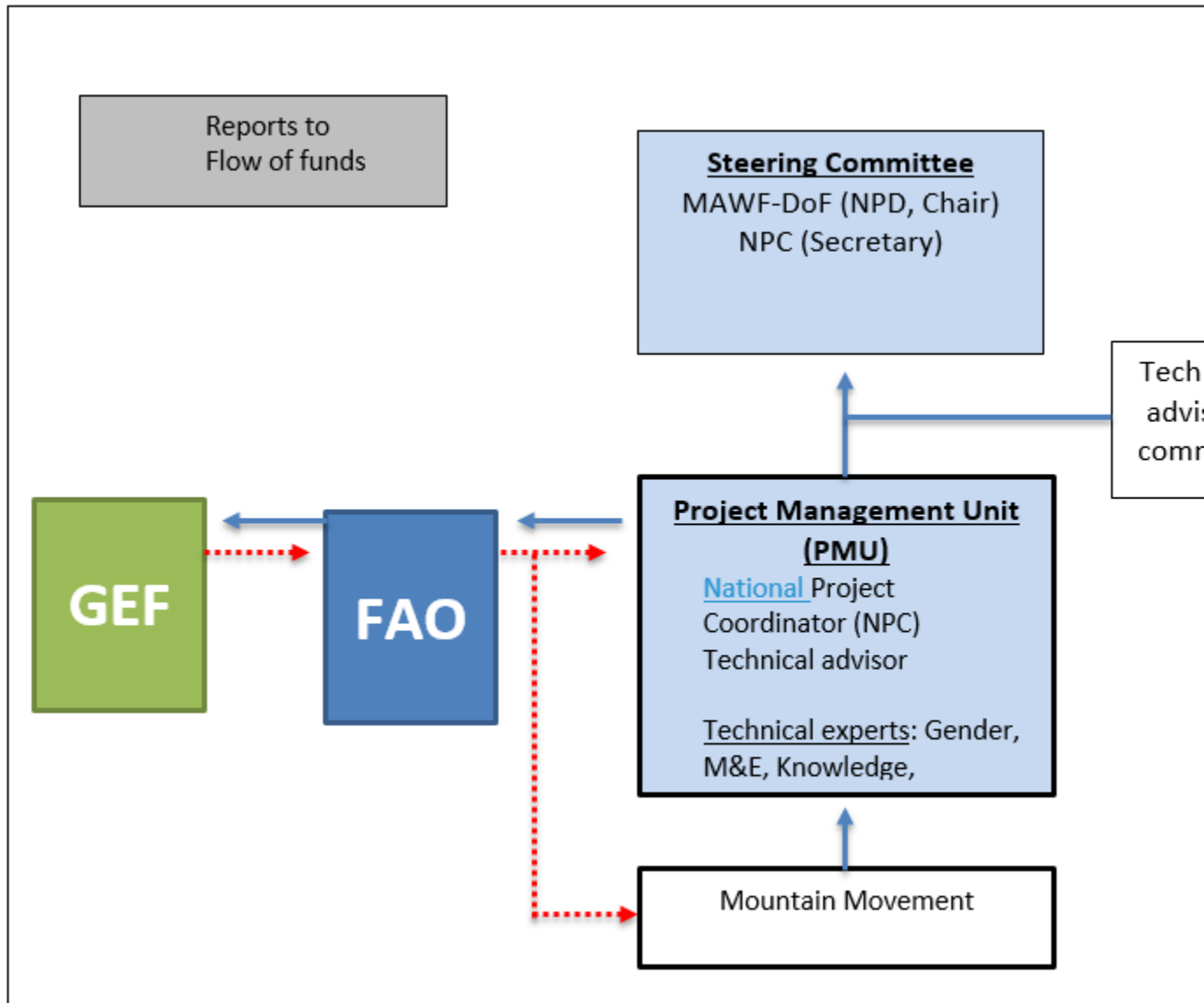
## 6. Institutional Arrangement and Coordination

**Describe the institutional arrangement for project implementation. Elaborate on the planned coordination with other relevant GEF-financed projects and other initiatives.**

### 6.a Institutional arrangements for project implementation.

The project will be executed by the Ministry of Agriculture Forestry and Water (MAFW) through its Directorate of Forests (DoF), as the relevant agency in charge of forests in Serbia. Execution will be supported by the Institute of Forestry at the national and local levels, and by the Mountain Movement of Serbia (Pokret Gorana Srbije) at the local level. Funds will be transferred to these organizations via Letters of Agreement.

The project organization structure is as follows:



**National Project Director.** The Ministry of will designate a National Project Director (NPD) who will be located in the MAFW-DOF. The NPD will be responsible for coordinating the activities with all the national bodies related to the different project components, as well as with the project partners. He/She will also be responsible for guiding the National Project Coordinator (see below) on the government policies and priorities. The NPD will chair the Project Steering Committee which will be the main governing body of the project.

**Project Steering Committee (PSC).** The PSC will endorse Annual Work Plans and Budgets on a yearly basis and will provide strategic guidance to the Project Management Unit (PMU) and to all executing partners. The PSC will be comprised of representatives from the MAFW-DoF (Chair), the Ministry of Environmental Protection, AP Vojvodina, the Nature Protection Agency of Serbia, the

Institute of Forestry (Belgrade), and FAO. The members of the PSC will each assure the role of a Focal Point for the project in their respective agencies. Hence, the project will have a Focal Point in each concerned institution. As Focal Points in their agency, the concerned PSC members will:

technically oversee activities in their sector;

ensure a fluid two-way exchange of information and knowledge between their agency and the project;

facilitate coordination and links between the project activities and the work plan of their agency; and

facilitate the provision of co-financing to the project.

The National Project Coordinator (see below) will be the Secretary to the PSC. The PSC will meet at least once per year to ensure: i) Oversight and assurance of technical quality of outputs; ii) Close linkages between the project and other ongoing projects and programmes relevant to the project; iii) Timely availability and effectiveness of co-financing support; iv) Sustainability of key project outcomes, including up-scaling and replication; v) Effective coordination of government partner work under this project; vi) Endorsement of the six-monthly Project Progress and Financial Reports, the Annual Work Plan and Budget; vii) Making by consensus, management recommendations when guidance is required by the National Project Coordinator of the PMU.

**Project Management Unit.** A Project Management Unit (PMU) will be funded by the GEF. The main functions of the PMU are, following the guidance of the Project Steering Committee, to ensure overall efficient management, coordination, implementation and monitoring of the project through the effective implementation of the annual work plans and budgets (AWP/Bs). The PMU will be composed of a National Project Coordinator (NPC) who will work full-time for the project lifetime. In addition, the PMU will include an LDN expert, Knowledge Management, Institutional and Capacity Development expert, Administrative staff, finance officer, and M&E specialist.

**National Project Coordinator (NPC).** Given the size and timing of the proposed project, the Coordinator of Project GEFID 9089 will act as National Project Coordinator (NPC). The NPC will be in charge of coordinating daily implementation with the Institute of Forestry and other participating entities, within the framework delineated by the PSC. S/he will be responsible, among others, for:

coordination with relevant initiatives;

ensuring a high level of collaboration among participating institutions and organizations at the national and local levels;

ensuring compliance with all provisions during the implementation, including on timely reporting and financial management;

coordination and close monitoring of the implementation of project activities;

tracking the project's progress and ensuring timely delivery of inputs and outputs;

providing technical support and assessing the outputs of the project national consultants hired with GEF funds, as well as the products generated in the implementation of the project,;

monitoring financial resources and accounting to ensure accuracy and reliability of financial reports;

ensuring timely preparation and submission of requests for funds, financial and progress reports to FAO as per reporting requirements;

- implementing and managing the project's monitoring and communications plans;
- organizing project workshops and meetings to monitor progress and preparing the Annual Budget and Work Plan;
- submitting the six-monthly Project Progress Reports (PPRs) with the AWP/B to the PSC and FAO;
- preparing the first draft of the Project Implementation Review (PIR);
- supporting the organization of the mid-term and final evaluations in close coordination with the FAO Independent Office of Evaluation (OED);
- inform the PSC and FAO of any delays and difficulties as they arise during the implementation to ensure timely corrective measure and support.

#### FAO's role as implementing agency

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) will be the GEF Implementing Agency (IA) for the Project, providing project cycle management and support services as established in the GEF Policy. As the GEF IA, FAO holds overall accountability and responsibility to the GEF for delivery of the results. In the IA role, FAO will utilize the GEF fees to deploy a Project Task Force, (PTF) a management and consultative body established for each FAO project that consists of designated FAO staff possessing the appropriate authority and skills mix to ensure effective technical, operational and administrative project management throughout the project cycle, consisting of at least three different actors within the organization to support the project, these are:

- the Budget Holder (BH), is accountable for managing to achieve project and proper use of resources and will provide oversight of day-to-day project execution;
- the Lead Technical Officer (LTO), drawn from across FAO will provide oversight/support to the project's technical work in coordination with government representatives participating in the Project Steering Committee;
- the Funding Liaison Officer (FLO) within FAO will monitor and support the project cycle to ensure that the project is being carried out and reporting done in accordance with agreed standards and requirements.

FAO responsibilities, as GEF Implementing Agency, will include:  
Administrate funds from GEF in accordance with the rules and procedures of FAO;

Transfer funds to executing partners

Oversee project implementation in accordance with the project document, work plans, budgets, agreements with co-financiers, Operational Partners Agreement(s) and other rules and procedures of FAO;

Provide technical guidance to ensure that appropriate technical quality is applied to all activities concerned;

Conduct at least one supervision mission per year; and



Reporting to the GEF Secretariat and Evaluation Office, through the annual Project Implementation Review, the Terminal Evaluation and the Project Closure Report;

Financial reporting to the GEF Trustee.

## 6.b Financial Management

### **Financial management**

Financial management in relation to the GEF resources directly managed by FAO will be carried out in accordance with FAO's rules and procedures as outlined below.

**Financial Records.** FAO shall maintain a separate account in United States dollars for the project's GEF resources showing all income and expenditures. FAO shall administer the project in accordance with its regulations, rules and directives.

**Financial Reports.** The BH shall prepare quarterly project expenditure accounts and final accounts for the project, showing amount budgeted for the year, amount expended since the beginning of the year, and separately, the un-liquidated obligations as follows: i) Details of project expenditures on outcome-by-outcome basis, reported in line with Project Budget as at 30 June and 31 December each year; ii) Final accounts on completion of the Project on a component-by-component and outcome-by-outcome basis, reported in line with the Project Budget; iii) A final statement of account in line with FAO Oracle Project budget codes, reflecting actual final expenditures under the Project, when all obligations have been liquidated.

Financial reports for submission to the donor (GEF) will be prepared in accordance with the provisions in the GEF Financial Procedures Agreement and submitted by the FAO Finance Division.

**Responsibility for Cost Overruns.** As regards resources directly managed by FAO, the BH shall utilize the GEF project funds in strict compliance with the Project Budget and the approved AWP/Bs. The BH can make variations provided that the total allocated for each budgeted project component is not exceeded and the reallocation of funds does not impact the achievement of any project output as per the project Results Framework. At least once a year, the BH will submit a budget revision for approval of the LTO and the FAO/GEF Coordination Unit through FPMIS. Cost overruns shall be the sole responsibility of the BH.

Under no circumstances can expenditures exceed the approved total project budget or be approved beyond the NTE date of the project. Any over-expenditure is the responsibility of the BH.

**Audit.** The project shall be subject to the internal and external auditing procedures provided for in FAO financial regulations, rules and directives and in keeping with the Financial Procedures Agreement between the GEF Trustee and FAO.

**The audit regime at FAO** consists of an external audit provided by the Auditor-General (or persons exercising an equivalent function) of a member nation appointed by the Governing Bodies of the Organization and reporting directly to them, and an internal audit function headed by the FAO Inspector-General who reports directly to the Director-General. This function operates as an integral part of the Organization under policies established by senior management, and furthermore has a reporting line to the governing bodies. Both functions are required under the Basic Texts of FAO which establish a framework for the terms of reference of each. Internal audits of imprest accounts, records, bank reconciliation and asset verification take place at FAO field and liaison offices on a cyclical basis. During implementation, assurance activities are organized by FAO to determine whether the progress has been made and whether funds were used for their intended purpose, in accordance with the work plan and relevant rules and regulations. This may include, but is not limited to, monitoring missions, spot checks, quarterly progress and annual implementation reviews, and audits on the resources received from FAO.

**Procurement.** Careful procurement planning is necessary for securing goods, services and works in a timely manner, on a 'Best Value for Money' basis. It requires analysis of needs and constraints, including forecast of the reasonable timeframe required to execute the procurement process.

Procurement and delivery of inputs by FAO in technical cooperation projects will follow FAO's rules and regulations for the procurement of supplies, equipment and services (i.e. Manual Sections 502 and 507). Manual Section 502: 'Procurement of Goods, Works and Services' establishes the principles and procedures that apply to procurement of all goods, works and services on behalf of the Organization, in all offices and in all locations, with the exception of the procurement actions described in Procurement Not Governed by Manual Section 502. Manual Section 507 establishes the principles and rules that govern the use of Letters of Agreement (LoA) by FAO for the timely acquisition of services from eligible entities in a transparent and impartial manner, taking into consideration economy and efficiency to achieve an optimum combination of expected whole life costs and benefits. As per the guidance in FAO's Project Cycle Guide, the BH will draw up an annual procurement plan for major items, which will be the basis of requests for procurement actions during implementation. The first procurement plan will be prepared at the time of project start-up, if not sooner, in close consultation with the NPC and LTO. The plan will include a description of the goods, works, or services to be procured, estimated budget and source of funding, schedule of procurement activities and proposed method of procurement. In situations where exact information is not yet available, the procurement plan should at least contain reasonable projections that will be corrected as information becomes available.

The procurement plan shall be updated every quarter and submitted to FAO BH and LTO for clearance.

#### 6.c Coordination with other relevant GEF-financed projects and other initiatives.

Contribution of Sustainable Forest Management to a Low Emission and Resilient Development (GEFID 9089). The objective of the project is to contribute to the conservation of biodiversity and climate change mitigation through the promotion of multifunctional sustainable forest management in productive forest landscapes. The proposed project will be intimately link to the activities carried out under GEFID 9089 particularly as it seeks to strengthen the enabling environment to support the mobilization of larger investments for the forestry sector. This includes upcoming operations related to

the Green Climate Fund and government efforts to mobilize resources from the EU Neighborhood Funds normally available for Serbia. The proposed project will build on the information, dialogue, and tools developed in the GEFID 9089.

Enhanced Cross-Sectoral Land Management through Land Use Pressure Reduction and Planning (GEFID 5822). The goal of this project is the development of instruments and mechanisms for integrated land use management, remediation, and capacity development to reduce pressures on land as a natural resource from competing land uses in the wider landscape and to support reversal of land degradation. The proposed project will also build on the lessons learned from GEFID 5822, particularly at the local level.

The proposed project will also take advantage of knowledge products developed for the GEF Drylands program related to stakeholder engagement and knowledge management exchange. These efforts are aligned with STAO guidelines for the implementation of the "Scientific Framework for LDN". The proposed project will support reporting efforts to the UNCCD.

GEF Global CBIT forestry program (GEFID 10071), which seeks to strengthen institutional and technical capacities of developing countries through a coordinated global and national forest-related data collection, analysis and dissemination process, to meet the enhanced transparency requirements of the Paris Agreement and contribute with information necessary to track progress made in implementing and achieving the nationally determined contributions. The proposed project will report on data collected at the local level and will take advantage of the network under CBIT to disseminate information and learn from efforts regarding transparency in the forest sector in Serbia.

## **7. Consistency with National Priorities**

**Describe the consistency of the project with national strategies and plans or reports and assessments under relevant conventions from below:**

NAPAs, NAPs, ASGM NAPs, MIAs, NBSAPs, NCs, TNAs, NCSAs, NIPs, PRSPs, NPFE, BURs, INDCs, etc.

The proposed project is aligned with the following national priorities:

**UNCCD: LDN Target Setting Process (TSP, 2019):** Report on the applied methodology and identification of targets to achieve land degradation neutrality in the republic of Serbia

The LDN TSP report recognizes afforestation (especially in Vojvodina) as one of the main instruments to achieving LDN in Serbia. The proposed project will test the conditions to implement afforestation for one

municipality in Vojvodina, which can be letter up scaled on whole Vojvodina region. The proposed project will directly contribute to the following national priorities to achieve Land Degradation Neutrality by 2030:

- ? Reaching land degradation neutrality in the territory of the Republic of Serbia by 2030;
- ? Recognising elements and targets of land degradation neutrality in legislation, spatial-planning and strategic documents;
- ? Improvement, restoration and rehabilitation of degraded areas, implementation of measures of sustainable land management in the Republic of Serbia;
- ? Establishment and development of sustainable, systematic land monitoring according to determined national environmental indicators: land use changes; soil organic carbon; land productivity; land erosion;
- ? Establishment of appropriate, detailed national databases for the territory of the Republic of Serbia, for the implementation of the LDN methodology;
- ? Raising public awareness and the role of education in combating land degradation and droughts.

In addition, the project will contribute directly to the following targets to achieve LDN by 2030:

- ? To increase the area of national territory under forests to 41.4% by 2050 (Law on the Spatial Plan of the Republic of Serbia);
- ? To increase the area under forests in the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina to 14.3% (in relation to the total area of the territory of the AP), primarily by applying the system of forest protection belts<sup>2,3</sup>;
- ? To increase the level of forest cover in areas under bare and degraded soil, in mountainous areas south of the Sava and Danube Rivers, in the area of 100,000 ha by 2030 so as to control erosion and torrential processes<sup>4</sup>;
- ? To maintain the determined positive trend of land degradation neutrality, applying appropriate measures and activities, through spatial and planning documentation.

#### National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plan (NBSAP) under UNCBD

Serbia submitted its National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan in 2011. The proposed project directly supports the implementation of objective 1.1 "Enable the Republic of Serbia's extinction threatened species and ecological communities to survive and thrive in their natural habitats and retain their genetic

diversity and potential for evolutionary development. Restore biological diversity in degraded areas??. Activities related to afforestation of salty soils and reforestation on degraded lands in central Serbia directly fit into the main objectives of the Serbian NBSAP.

#### - National Communications (NC) under UNFCCC

Serbia submitted two National Communication Reports to the UNFCCC. The First NC (FNC) was reported in 2010 and Second NC (SNC) was submitted in 2017. The SNC defines two points which can be in close correlation with the proposed project results. The first one is the creation of the 'Framework for better implementation of the process of afforestation among various stakeholder groups' and second one is related to 'Increasing the forest area (in particular protective and urban forests/parks)'.

#### Biennial Update Report (BUR) under UNFCCC

Serbia submitted the first BUR document in 2016 and in this report they pointed out lack of forest production as one of the biggest challenges. This project can produce positive effects on BUR recommendation for increasing productivity in Serbian forests by increasing forest cover with afforestation measures proposed in both pilot regions.

### **8. Knowledge Management**

**Elaborate the "Knowledge Management Approach" for the project, including a budget, key deliverables and a timeline, and explain how it will contribute to the project's overall impact.**

Following current GEF best practice and based in the dedicated knowledge management strategy to be developed during year one of implementation, the proposed project will develop a set of manuals and media products that describe the improved practices, measures and technologies, for use by extension workers and producers (Component 2). These products will systematically document lessons learnt, share validated technical options developed under Component 2. It will also strengthen existing local networks for sharing lessons with national, regional and international partners.

The activities implemented under component 3 - Effective Knowledge Management (KM) through Result Based Management (RBM), Monitoring and Evaluation - will result in elaboration of Knowledge Management System for sharing project results and replicating tested methodologies in other municipalities and regions across the country. KM system will contribute to scale-up and replicate using various types of knowledge products produced including thematic case studies, evaluation and learning reports and briefs; strategic papers, educational and informational materials in printed and digital forms.

In order to achieve this outcome the following will be delivered and/or implemented by the project team: Result Based Management (RBM) system of the project will promote adaptive management through capturing key results of the project activities; a Gender-Sensitive Project Monitoring & Evaluation Plan and a relevant system will be developed and updated each year; Project Mid-term review and Final Evaluation will be conducted; A Communication Strategy and A Knowledge Management Strategy (supported with annual work plans) will be developed and implemented for information and knowledge-sharing with other regions and dissemination and replication of verified data and tested methodologies.

The project's broad participation process, involving relevant policy making, research, extension and education institutions, will ensure that knowledge is shared efficiently within the country. MAFW-DOF will be an important partner for lesson sharing and knowledge management. Internationally, FAO's relevant platforms (FRA, COFO, Mountain Partnership, Pastoralist Hub, and others) will be used for lessons sharing.

## **9. Monitoring and Evaluation**

### **Describe the budgeted M and E plan**

The monitoring and evaluation of progress in achieving the results and objectives of the project will be based on targets and indicators in the Project Results Framework (Annex A). Project monitoring and the evaluation activities are budgeted at USD 81,280 (see Monitoring & Evaluation Summary below). Monitoring and evaluation activities will follow FAO and GEF policies and guidelines for monitoring and evaluation. The monitoring and evaluation system will also facilitate learning and replication of the project's results and lessons in relation to the integrated management of natural resources.

### **Oversight and monitoring responsibilities**

The monitoring and evaluation roles and responsibilities specifically described in the Monitoring and Evaluation table (see Table 5 below) will be undertaken through: (i) day-to-day monitoring and project progress supervision missions (PIU); (ii) technical monitoring of indicators to measure a reduction in land degradation (PIU and LTU in coordination with partners); and (iii) monitoring and supervision missions (FAO).

At the beginning of the implementation of the GEF project, the PIU will establish a system to monitor the project's progress. Participatory mechanisms and methodologies to support the monitoring and evaluation of performance indicators and outputs will be developed. During the project inception workshop, the tasks

of monitoring and evaluation will include: (i) presentation and explanation (if needed) of the project's Results Framework with all project stakeholders; (ii) review of monitoring and evaluation indicators and their baselines; (iii) preparation of draft clauses that will be required for inclusion in consultant contracts, to ensure compliance with the monitoring and evaluation reporting functions (if applicable); and (iv) clarification of the division of monitoring and evaluation tasks among the different stakeholders in the project. The M&E and Communications Expert will prepare a draft monitoring and evaluation matrix that will be discussed and agreed upon by all stakeholders during the inception workshop. The M&E matrix will be a management tool for the NPC and the Project Partners to: i) six-monthly monitor the achievement of output indicators; ii) annually monitor the achievement of outcome indicators; iii) clearly define responsibilities and verification means; iv) select a method to process the indicators and data.

The **M&E Plan** will be prepared by the M&E and Communication Specialist together with local communities in the three first months of the PY1 and validated with the PSC. The M&E Plan will be based on the M&E summary table and the M&E Matrix and will include: i) the updated results framework, with clear indicators per year; ii) updated baseline, if needed, and selected tools for data collection (including sample definition); iii) narrative of the monitoring strategy, including roles and responsibilities for data collection and processing, reporting flows, monitoring matrix, and brief analysis of who, when and how will each indicator be measured. Responsibility of project activities may or may not coincide with data collection responsibility; iv) updated implementation arrangements, if needed; v) inclusion of data collection and monitoring strategy to be included in the final evaluation; vi) calendar of evaluation workshops, including self-evaluation techniques.

The day-to-day monitoring of the project's implementation will be the responsibility of the NPC and will be driven by the preparation and implementation of an AWP/B followed up through six-monthly PPRs. The preparation of the AWP/B and six-monthly PPRs will represent the product of a unified planning process between main project stakeholders. As tools for results-based management (RBM), the AWP/B will identify the actions proposed for the coming project year and provide the necessary details on output and outcome targets to be achieved, and the PPRs will report on the monitoring of the implementation of actions and the achievement of output and outcome targets. Specific inputs to the AWP/B and the PPRs will be prepared based on participatory planning and progress review with all stakeholders and coordinated and facilitated through project planning and progress review workshops. These contributions will be consolidated by the NPC in the draft AWP/B and the PPRs.

An annual project progress review and planning meeting should be held with the participation of the project partners to finalize the AWP/B and the PPRs. Once finalized, the AWP/B and the PPRs will be submitted to the FAO LTO for technical clearance, and to the Project Steering Committee for revision and approval. The AWP/B will be developed in a manner consistent with the Project Results Framework to ensure adequate fulfillment and monitoring of project outputs and outcomes.

Following the approval of the Project, the PY1 AWP/B will be adjusted (either reduced or expanded in time) to synchronize it with the annual reporting calendar. In subsequent years, the AWP/Bs will follow an annual preparation and reporting cycle.

## **Reporting schedule**

Specific reports that will be prepared under the monitoring and evaluation program are: (i) Project inception report; (ii) Annual Work Plan and Budget (AWP/B); (iii) Project Progress Reports (PPRs); (iv) Annual Project Implementation Review (PIR); (v) Technical reports; (vi) Co-financing reports; and (vii) Terminal Report. In addition, the GEF-7 Core Indicator Worksheet will be completed and will be used to compare progress of Project Core Indicator 4: 'Area of landscapes under improved practices', as well as Project Core Indicator 11: 'Number of direct beneficiaries disaggregated by gender as co-benefit of GEF investment' with the baseline established during the preparation of the project

**Project Inception Report.** After FAO internal approval of the project, an inception workshop will be held. Immediately after the workshop, the NPC will prepare a project inception report in consultation with the Budget Holder. The report will include a narrative on the institutional roles and responsibilities and coordinating action of project partners, progress to date on project establishment and start-up activities and an update of any changed external conditions that may affect project implementation. It will also include a detailed first year AWP/B and the M&E Matrix. The draft inception report will be circulated to FAO, the PSC and for review and comments before its finalization, no later than three months after project start-up. The report will be cleared by the FAO BH, LTO and the FAO/GEF Coordination Unit. The BH will upload it in FPMIS.

**Annual Work Plan and Budget(s) (AWP/Bs).** The NPC will present a draft AWP/B to the PSC no later than 10 December of each year. The AWP/B should include detailed activities to be implemented by project Outcomes and Outputs and divided into monthly timeframes and targets and milestone dates for Output and Outcome indicators to be achieved during the year. A detailed project budget for the activities to be implemented during the year should also be included together with all monitoring and supervision activities required during the year. The NPC will circulate the draft AWP/B to NPD and the FAO, and will consolidate and submit these comments. The AWP/B will be reviewed by the PSC and the PIU will incorporate any comments. The final AWP/B will be sent to the PSC for approval and to FAO for final no-objection. The BH will upload the AWP/Bs in FPMIS



**Project Progress Reports (PPR).** The PPRs are used to identify constraints, problems or bottlenecks that impede timely implementation and take appropriate remedial action. These are maintained in FAO's field program management system. PPRs will be prepared based on the systematic monitoring of output and outcome indicators identified in the Project Results Framework (Annex A), AWP/B and M&E Plan. Each semester the National Project Coordinator (NPC) will prepare a draft PPR, and will collect and consolidate any comments from the FAO PTF. The NPC will submit the final PPRs to the Budget Holder every six months, prior to 10 June (covering the period between January and June) and before 10 December (covering the period between July and December). The July-December report should be accompanied by the updated AWP/B for the following Project Year (PY) for review and no-objection by the FAO PTF. The Budget Holder has the responsibility to coordinate the preparation and finalization of the PPR, in consultation with the PIU, LTO and the FLO. After LTO, BH and FLO clearance, the FLO will ensure that project progress reports are uploaded in FPMIS in a timely manner.

**Annual Project Implementation Review (PIR).** The NPC, under the supervision of the LTO and BH and in coordination with the national project partners, will prepare a draft annual PIR report covering the period July (the previous year) through June (current year) no later than July 1st every year. The LTO will finalize the PIR and will submit it to the FAO-GEF Coordination Unit for review by July 10th. The FAO-GEF Coordination Unit, the LTO, and the BH will discuss the PIR and the ratings. The LTO is responsible for conducting the final review and providing the technical clearance to the PIR(s). The LTO will submit the final version of the PIR to the FAO-GEF Coordination Unit for final approval. The FAO-GEF Coordination Unit will then submit the PIR(s) to the GEF Secretariat and the GEF Independent Evaluation Office as part of the Annual Monitoring Review of the FAO-GEF portfolio. The PIR will be uploaded to FPMIS by the FAO-GEF Coordination Unit

**Technical reports.** The technical reports will be prepared as part of the project outputs and will document and disseminate lessons learned. Drafts of all technical reports must be submitted by the Project Coordinator to the PSC and the Budget Holder, which in turn will be shared with the LTO for review and approval and to the FAO-GEF Coordination Unit for information and comments before finalization and publication. Copies of the technical reports will be distributed to the Liaison Committee and the PSC and other project stakeholders, as appropriate. These reports will be uploaded in FAO FPMIS by the BH.

**Co-financing reports.** The NPC will be responsible for collecting the required information and reporting on in-kind and cash co-financing provided by all the project cofinanciers and eventual other new partners not foreseen in the Project Document. Every year, the NPC will submit the report to the Budget Holder before July 10th covering the period July (the previous year) through June (current year). This information will be used in the PIRs.

**Core Indicators worksheet.** In compliance with GEF policies and procedures, at project mid-term and completion, Agencies report achieved results against the core indicators and sub-indicators used at CEO Endorsement/ Approval.

The GEF evaluation policy foresees that all medium and large size projects require a separate **terminal evaluation**. Such evaluation provides: i) accountability on results, processes, and performance; ii) recommendations to improve the sustainability of the results achieved and iii) lessons learned as an evidence-base for decision-making to be shared with all stakeholders (government, execution agency, other national partners, the GEF and FAO) to improve the performance of future projects.

The BH will be responsible to contact the Regional Evaluation Specialist (RES) within six months prior to the actual completion date (NTE date). The RES will manage the decentralized independent terminal evaluation of this project under the guidance and support of OED and will be responsible for quality assurance. Independent external evaluators will conduct the terminal evaluation of the project taking into account the "GEF Guidelines for GEF Agencies in Conducting Terminal Evaluation for Full-sized Projects." FAO Office of Evaluation (OED) will provide technical assistance throughout the evaluation process, via the OED Decentralized Evaluation Support team – in particular, it will also give quality assurance feedback on: selection of the external evaluators, Terms of Reference of the evaluation, draft and final report. OED will be responsible for the quality assessment of the terminal evaluation report, including the GEF ratings.

After the completion of the terminal evaluation, the BH will be responsible to prepare the management response to the evaluation within 4 weeks and share it with national partners, GEF OFP, OED and the FAO-GEF CU.

**Final Report.** Within two months prior to the project's completion date, the Project Coordinator will submit to the PSC and the Budget Holder a draft final report. The main purpose of the final report is to give guidance to authorities (ministerial or senior government level) on the policy decisions required for the follow-up of the Project, and to provide the donor with information on how the funds were utilized. Therefore, the terminal report is a concise account of the main products, results, conclusions and recommendations of the Project, without unnecessary background, narrative or technical details. The target readership consists of persons who are not necessarily technical specialists but who need to understand the policy implications of technical findings and needs for ensuring sustainability of project results. Work is assessed, lessons learned are summarized, and recommendations are expressed in terms of their application to the integrated landscape management in the three pilot sites, as well as in practical execution terms. This report will specifically include the findings of the final evaluation. A project evaluation meeting will be

held to discuss the draft final report with the PSC before completion by the Project Coordinator and approval by the BH, LTO, and FAO-GEF Coordination Unit

### Monitoring and Evaluation summary

Table 5. Summary of the main monitoring and evaluation reports, parties responsible for their publication and time frames.

M&E Activity	Responsible parties	Time frame/ Periodicity	Budget
Inception workshop in Belgrade	NPC; FAO Representation in Serbia (with support from the LTO and FAO-GEF Coordination Unit)	Within two months of project startup	USD 4,000
Inception workshops in project Municipalities	NPC; FAO Representation in Serbia (with support from the LTO and FAO-GEF Coordination Unit),	Within two months of project startup	USD 2,400 (Budgeted under stakeholder meetings, Comp. 1)
Project Inception Report	NPC, M&E Expert, BH	Within one month after the workshop	PMU
Closing Workshop	NPC; BH (with support from the LTO and FAO-GEF Coordination Unit),	Two months before project closing	US 4,000
Field-based impact monitoring	NPC; project partners, local organizations	Continuous	USD 10,000 (Implicit in agreement with executing partners)

M&E Activity	Responsible parties	Time frame/ Periodicity	Budget
Supervision visits and rating of progress in PPRs and PIRs	NPC; FAO-GEF Coordination Unit may participate in the visits if needed.	Annual, or as needed	FAO visits will be borne by GEF agency fees  Project Coordination visits shall be borne by the project's travel budget: USD 18,000 over 3 years
Project Progress Reports (PPRs)	NPC, BH with stakeholder contributions and other participating institutions	Six-monthly	NPC and FAO staff time
Project Implementation Review (PIR)	Drafted by the NPC, with the supervision of the LTO and BH. Approved and submitted to GEF by the FAO-GEF Coordination Unit	Annual	FAO staff time financed through GEF agency fees.  PIU time covered by the project budget.
Co-financing reports	PMU with input from other co-financiers	Annual	NPC staff time
Technical reports	NPC; FAO (LTO, BH)	As needed	Project budget and GEF Agency fees
Final Evaluation	The BH will be responsible to contact the Regional Evaluation Specialist (RES) within six months prior to the actual completion date (NTE date). The RES will manage the decentralized independent terminal evaluation of this project under the guidance and support of OED.	Within six months prior to the actual completion date (NTE date).	USD 40,000
Terminal Report	NPC; FAO (BH, LTO, FAO-GEF Coordination Unit, Business Development and Resource Mobilization (PSR) Reporting Unit)	Two months prior to the end of the project.	USD 6,800 (Paid by agency fee)
<b>Total budget</b>			<b>USD 85,280</b>

#### 10. Benefits

**Describe the socioeconomic benefits to be delivered by the project at the national and local levels, as appropriate. How do these benefits translate in supporting the achievement of global environment benefits (GEF Trust Fund) or adaptation benefits (LDCF/SCCF)?**

The proposed project is being developed in parallel with a GCF proposal focusing on Forest Landscape Restoration (FLR). The proposed project will test FLR activities to be upscaled by the GCF proposal. The pilot area (200 ha) is a rough estimate of potential areas for piloting the FLR approach in the two target municipalities, and will reach a target of 50 households to be involved for the 200 ha. The FLR approaches tested in these 200 ha will be shared and applied within the framework of a follow-up GCF project currently under development, where more than 20,000 ha of degraded and deforested landscapes are planned to be restored. The latter hectares will be accounted for in the GCF project.

The first socioeconomic benefit to be generated by this GEF-FAO project is the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women especially for creating new employment opportunities within the forestry sector and establishment of the new green short value chains which can provide adding value to primary forest products out of degraded lands which will normally require years of investments before creating any output (keeping interest for involvement of women in FLR on low level).

In the second place, the increase and diversification of household incomes will be another socioeconomic benefit to be generated. This will also provide possibility for women to help decreasing the pressure on forests which is regularly occurring due to their simple one-way utilization for firewood. This includes female-headed households and single women households which often sell right for cutting forests just because they are not able to utilize timber, obtaining extremely low income, often through cutting forest which is not enough mature to bring highest possible income.

On a tertiary basis, this project should bring about an increase of income at regional level as well as at sectoral level (green business), as another socioeconomic benefit. Income sources from LDN can be created cooperatively with the Government, as well as local Governments.

## 11. Environmental and Social Safeguard (ESS) Risks

Provide information on the identified environmental and social risks and potential impacts associated with the project/program based on your organization's ESS systems and procedures

### Overall Project/Program Risk Classification \*

PIF	CEO Endorsement/Approval	MTR	TE
Low			

#### Measures to address identified risks and impacts

Elaborate on the types and risk classifications/ratings of any identified environmental and social risks and impacts (considering the GEF ESS Minimum Standards) and any measures undertaken as well as planned management measures to address these risks during implementation.

In line with FAO's Environmental and Social Safeguards, the project was evaluated against environmental and social risks and is rated as low risk given its nature (i.e. creating enabling conditions to upscale FLR in Serbia) and its size. Kindly refer to the Risk Certification and ESS screening attached below.

#### Supporting Documents

Upload available ESS supporting documents.

Title	Module	Submitted
FAO ES Screening Checklist Serbia LDN	CEO Endorsement ESS	
Risk certification	CEO Endorsement ESS	

**ANNEX A: PROJECT RESULTS FRAMEWORK (either copy and paste here the framework from the Agency document, or provide reference to the page in the project document where the framework could be found).**

Results chain	Indicators	Baseline	Mid-term target	Final target	Means of verification	Assumptions
<b>Objective:</b> To promote FLR and LDN practices for the recovery and restoration of prioritized landscapes that sustain environmental security and establish support mechanisms for achieving and monitoring LDN at the national level.						
<b>Component 1: Enabling environment for FLR in support of LDN</b>						
<u>Outcome 1.1: Enhanced capacity in FLR planning and implementation to achieve LDN</u>	Capacity of FLR/LDN-related institutions enhanced for LDN incorporation into legal frameworks	Capacity of FLR/LDN-related institutions insufficient for LDN incorporation into legal frameworks	Capacity of FLR/LDN-related institutions for LDN incorporation into legal framework increased	Capacity of FLR/LDN-related institutions for LDN incorporation into legal framework increased and strengthened	Minutes of inter-sectoral expert group meetings  Plans for LDN incorporation into legal framework	FLR/LDN-related institutions keep interest and are willing to cooperate and to incorporate the LDN concept into legal frameworks and to support <u>FLR planning and implementation</u>
<b>Output 1.1.1:</b> Inter-sectoral expert groups to support FLR implementation established and strengthened	Inter-sectoral expert group to support FLR implementation established  Capacity of inter-sectoral expert group to support FLR implementation at local and central level raised through several meetings with national and international LDN experts	Inter-sectoral expert group to support FLR implementation not existing at national level  Capacity of inter-sectoral expert group to support FLR implementation not sufficient	Inter-sectoral expert group to support FLR implementation at national level established	Inter-sectoral expert group to support FLR implementation at national level established and strengthened  At least 20 people raised their capacity for FLR implementation to achieve LDN (at least 10 women)	Minutes from the inter-sectoral expert group meetings  List of participants attending expert group meeting  Qualitative survey of participants about functioning of the intersectoral expert working group	FLR/LDN-related institutions keep interest and are willing to cooperate and to support <u>FLR planning and implementation</u>

Output 1.1.2: Baseline assessment of national land use categories & LDN indicators conducted at national level	National baseline assessment study based on land use categories & LDN indicators conducted	National baseline assessment study based on land use categories and LDN indicators only existing with global databases	National baseline assessment study based on land use categories and LDN indicators conducted and supplemented with LDN indicators from national databases	National baseline assessment study based on land use categories and LDN indicators conducted and supplemented with LDN indicators from national databases and results validated	National baseline assessment study based on land use categories and LDN indicators accepted by the steering committee of the project  National baseline assessment study based on land use categories and LDN indicators available on project web page	All databases and spatial data are easily accessible to the international and national experts.
Output 1.1.3: Policy frameworks and other barriers preventing successful FLR such as institutional political economy reviewed and policy instruments & incentives for FLR recommendations provided with consideration of gender issues	Draft of policy framework recommendation created  Report on all barriers preventing FLR and strategy for their removal prepared  Report on proposal for policy instruments and incentives taking in consideration gender issues for FLR proposed	Information on policy frameworks and other barriers preventing successful FLR and policy instruments & incentives for FLR taking in consideration gender issue not existing	Progress report on policy framework and other barriers preventing successful FLR and policy instruments & incentives for FLR prepared and positively evaluated	Recommendations document available	Draft report of policy framework recommendation prepared  Report on all barriers preventing FLR and strategy for their removal prepared  Report on proposal for policy instruments and incentives taking into consideration gender issue for FLR prepared	LR/LDN-related institutions keep interest and are willing to cooperate and to prepare integrated and coordinated policy proposals for FLR to achieve LDN



Output 1.1.4: Road map for upscaling of FLR interventions at the national level developed	Road map for upscaling of FLR interventions at the national level developed	Road map for upscaling of FLR interventions at the national level not existing	Progress report on road map for upscaling of FLR interventions at the national level accepted by Steering committee	Road map for upscaling of FLR interventions at the national level verified	Final report on road map for upscaling of FLR interventions at the national level submitted	FLR/LDN-related institutions keep interest and are willing to cooperate and to prepare the road map for upscaling FLR interventions the national level
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## Component 2: Demonstrating LDN through testing of FLR approaches in pilot landscapes

Outcome 2.1: FLR approaches selected for upscaling	FLR approaches with potential for upscaling to achieve LDNselected	FLR approaches with potential for upscaling not selected	Progress report on FLR approaches with potential for upscaling prepared	FLR approaches with potential for upscaling in both pilot regions tested	FLR approaches agreed and available for implementation	Readiness of all parties willing to cooperate and to implement FLR approaches checked and barriers removed
-	Number of direct beneficiaries from project related investments	0	50 families	50 families	Monitoring reports	Project beneficiaries willing to provide in-kind cofinancing to implement project activities
-	Number of hectares under Forest Management Plans	0	35,715 ha of forest in Dmitrovgrad under FMP  1,392 ha of forests in Zrenanjin under FMP	35,715 ha of forest in Dmitrovgrad under FMP  1,392 ha of forests in Zrenanjin under FMP	Published FMP	FLR/LDN-related institutions keep interest and are willing to cooperate and to support FLR planning and implementation

Output 2.1.1: Working group at the local level for participatory FLR implementation established and strengthened	Working group at local level to support FLR implementation established  Capacity of the working group at local level for FLR implementation support raised through several meetings with national and international FLR-LDN experts	Working group at local level to support FLR implementation not existing at local level	Working group at local level to support FLR implementation in one pilot area established  Capacity of working group at local level in one pilot area raised	Working group at local level to support FLR implementation in both pilot areas established  At least 50 people raised their capacity for FLR implementation to achieve LDN (at least 20 women)	Minutes from working group meetings at local level  List of participants attending expert group meeting	Working group members at local level keen interest and are willing to cooperate and to support FLR - LDN implementation
Output 2.1.2: Pilot landscapes based on categories with higher impact identified	Pilot landscapes in both pilot areas with higher LD impact identified	Pilot landscapes in both pilot areas with higher LD impact not identified	Pilot landscapes in at least one pilot area with higher LD impact identified	Pilot landscapes in both pilot areas with higher LD impact identified	Report on LD impact for both pilot area  Minutes from local stakeholders meetings	Readiness of all local stakeholders, willing to cooperate on landscapes where LD impact is higher checked
Output 2.1.3: FLR approaches tested on the ground in target municipalities taking into consideration gender issues	FLR approaches tested (at least 10 official agreements with land owners for afforestation, 9 green business trainings on 200 ha) on the ground in target municipalities taking into consideration gender issues	FLR approaches not existing	FLR approaches tested (at least 5 official agreements with land owners for afforestation, 4 green business trainings on 100 ha) on the ground in target municipalities taking into consideration gender issues	FLR approaches tested (at least 10 official agreements with land owners for afforestation, 9 green business trainings on 200 ha) on the ground in target municipalities taking into consideration gender issues	Official agreements  Reports from the training  Training survey report  Training materials  Pictures from the training	Sufficient interest of local stakeholders raised for FLR and LDN implementation

2.1.4 Experiences on FLR shared and exchanged	Experiences on FLR and LDN shared and exchanged through two seminars in pilot areas & regional seminars	Experiences on FLR and LDN not existing	Experiences on FLR and LDN shared and exchanged through one seminar in first pilot area & one regional seminars	Experiences on FLR and LDN shared and exchanged through two seminars in pilot areas & two regional seminars	Reports from the seminars  Seminar survey report  Seminar materials  Pictures from the seminars	Sufficient interest from local community and beyond raised for FLR and LDN implementation
<b>Component 3: Knowledge management, monitoring and evaluation and public awareness raising</b>						
<u>Outcome 3.1:</u> Monitoring and dissemination of lessons learned to support scaling up of FLR to the national level	Lessons-learned to support scaling up of FLR to the national level operational disseminated and monitored	Lessons-learned to support scaling up of FLR from previous projects analyzed	Implementation of project based on expected results and lessons learned	Project delivers expected results and shares lessons learned	Final report on project results monitoring and evaluation	FLR/LDN-related institutions support M&E processes, and are committed to continuous learning and exchange of knowledge on LDN

Output 3.1.1: Project results monitored and evaluated	Monitoring and evaluation system operational  Monitoring system to determine changes in the values of LDN indicators	Reports on project monitoring and evaluation not existing  Monitoring system to determine changes in the values of LDN indicators not existing  Knowledge management and communications strategy developed	Monitoring and dissemination (with at least one seminars for local and national stakeholders ) of lessons learned to support scaling up of FLR to the national level  Progress report on project results monitoring and evaluation prepared  Project results recorded knowledge management activities	Monitoring and dissemination (with two seminars for local and national stakeholders) of lessons learned to support scaling up of FLR to the national level  Final report on project results monitoring and evaluation verified  Monitoring system to determine changes in the values of LD indicators in place  Project results broadcast through communications activities (DOF website, media engagement when appropriate)	Reports from the seminar  Seminar survey report  Materials for Seminar  Pictures from the Seminar  Report on LDN monitoring system  DOF Website
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**ANNEX B: RESPONSES TO PROJECT REVIEWS (from GEF Secretariat and GEF Agencies, and Responses to Comments from Council at work program inclusion and the Convention Secretariat and STAP at PIF).**

N/A

**ANNEX C: Status of Utilization of Project Preparation Grant (PPG).  
(Provide detailed funding amount of the PPG activities financing status  
in the table below:**

<i>Project Preparation Activities Implemented</i>	<i>GETF/LDCF/SCCF Amount (\$)</i>		
	<i>Budgeted Amount</i>	<i>Amount Spent To date</i>	<i>Amount Committed</i>
Drafting and editing of project document	20,000	23,000	0
Analysis of LDN and FLR	10,000	10,000	0
Analysis of selected communities	10,000	10,000	0
Stakeholder meetings	5,000	5,000	0

Travel	5,000	2,000	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>50,000</b>	<b>50,000</b>	<b>0</b>

#### **ANNEX D: Project Map(s) and Coordinates**

**Please attach the geographical location of the project area, if possible.**

Project Title: Enabling a policy environment for Forest Landscape Restoration (FLR) and implementation of an integrated approach to achieve Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) in Serbia

PILOT MUNICIPALITIES: Pirotski & Srednje-Banatski



Legend

**Project municipalities**

- Pirotski
- Srednje-Banatski

**Land cover classes**

- No data
- Herbaceous cover
- Tree or shrub cover

- Mosaic tree and shrub/ herbaceous cover
- Mosaic herbaceous cover / tree and shrub
- Shrubland
- Shrubland evergreen
- Shrubland deciduous
- Grassland
- Lichens and mosses
- Sparse tree (<15%)

- Sparse shrub (<15%)
- Sparse herbaceous cover (<15%)
- Urban areas
- Bare areas
- Consolidated bare areas
- Unconsolidated bare areas
- Water bodies
- Permanent snow and ice

## ANNEX E: Project Budget Table

**Please attach a project budget table.**

### Proposed Project Budget

Description	Unit	No. of units	Cost per unit	Outcome				Total	Year		
				1.1	2.1	3.1	PM C		1	2	3
<b>Professional services</b>											
							0	0	0		0
Subtotal professional services				0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>5570 International Consultants</b>											
Sub-total international Consultants				0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>National consultants</b>											
PMU - Tech advisor	Month	36	2,000	18,000	18,000	18,000	18,000	72,000	24,000	24,000	24,000
NC - Climate finance	Month	6	2,500	15,000				15,000	7,500	7,500	
NC - GCF upscaling	Month	6	2,500	15,000				15,000	7,500	7,500	
NC - Gender action plan	Month	36	1,500		54,000			54,000	18,000	18,000	18,000
NC - Financ/Env economis	Month	6	2,000		12,000			12,000	6,000	6,000	
NC - M&E expert	Month	36	1,500			54,000		54,000	18,000	18,000	18,000
NC - LDN expert	Month	36	1,500			54,000		54,000	18,000	18,000	18,000
NC - Comms consultant	Month	18	1,500			27,000		27,000	9,000	9,000	9,000
Sub-total national Consultants				48,000	84,000	153,000	18,000	303,000	108,000	108,000	87,000
5570 Sub-total Consultants				48,000	84,000	153,000	18,000	303,000	108,000	108,000	87,000
<b>5650 Contracts</b>											

Determine priority landscapes for FLR	Lumpsu m	1	60,000	60,000				60,000	60,000		
Prioritization of policy instruments and incentives for FLR	Lumpsu m	1	40,000	40,000				40,000	40,000		
Identification of pilot landscapes based on potential for FLR	Lumpsu m	2	20,000		40,000			40,000	40,000		
Trainings to launch business support, strengthen value chains	Site	2	95,000		190,000			190,000	95,000	95,000	
Implementation of best practices	Lumpsu m	1	20,000		20,000			20,000	10,000	10,000	
Final Evaluation	Lumpsu m	1	40,000			40,000		40,000			40,000
5650 Sub-total Contracts				100,000	250,000	40,000	0	390,000	245,000	105,000	40,000
<b>5900 Travel Weeks</b>											
PMU - travel (meetings and supervision)	Annual	3	4,800				14,400	14,400	14,400		
5900 Sub-total travel				0	0	0	14,400	14,400	14,400	0	0
<b>5020 Training and workshops</b>											
Stakeholder meetings	Worksh op	6	1,200	7,200				7,200	2,400	2,400	2,400
Gov workshops/train ings	Worksh op	4	1,500		6,000			6,000	2,000	2,000	2,000
Local workshops (identify pilot sites)	Worksh op	2	2,500		5,000			5,000	1,667	1,667	1,667
Local workshops - FLR investments	Worksh op	10	100		1,000			1,000	333	333	333
Inception Workshop (Belgrade)	Worksh op	1	4,000			4,000		4,000	4,000		
Final Workshop	Worksh op	1	4,000			4,000		4,000			4,000
5020 Sub-total training				7,200	12,000	8,000	0	27,200	10,400	6,400	10,400



<b>6000 Expendable procurement</b>											
Office supplies	Lumpsum	3	540				1,621	1,621	540	540	540
Office equipment	Lumpsum	1	9,900				9,900	9,900			9,900
6000 Sub-total expendable procurement				0	0	0	11,521	11,521	540	540	10,440
<b>6100 Non-expendable procurement</b>											
6100 Sub-total non-expendable procurement				0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>6300 GOE budget</b>											
Contingencies	Lumpsum	0	0				0	0	0	0	0
6300 Sub-total GOE budget				0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>				155,200	346,000	201,000	43,921	746,121	378,340	219,940	147,840

746,121

Component	Budget
Comp. 1	155,200
Comp. 2	346,000
Comp. 3	201,000
Subtotal Components	702,200
PMC	43,921
Total	746,121

#### ANNEX F: (For NGI only) Termsheet

Instructions. Please submit an finalized termsheet in this section. The NGI Program Call for Proposals provided a template in Annex A of the Call for Proposals that can be used

by the Agency. Agencies can use their own termsheets but must add sections on Currency Risk, Co-financing Ratio and Financial Additionality as defined in the template provided in Annex A of the Call for proposals. Termsheets submitted at CEO endorsement stage should include final terms and conditions of the financing.

**ANNEX G: (For NGI only) Reflows**

Instructions. Please submit a reflows table as provided in Annex B of the NGI Program Call for Proposals and the Trustee excel sheet for reflows (as provided by the Secretariat or the Trustee) in the Document Section of the CEO endorsement. The Agency is required to quantify any expected financial return/gains/interests earned on non-grant instruments that will be transferred to the GEF Trust Fund as noted in the Guidelines on the Project and Program Cycle Policy. Partner Agencies will be required to comply with the reflows procedures established in their respective Financial Procedures Agreement with the GEF Trustee. Agencies are welcomed to provide assumptions that explain expected financial reflow schedules.

N/A

**ANNEX H: (For NGI only) Agency Capacity to generate reflows**

Instructions. The GEF Agency submitting the CEO endorsement request is required to respond to any questions raised as part of the PIF review process that required clarifications on the Agency Capacity to manage reflows. This Annex seeks to demonstrate Agencies' capacity and eligibility to administer NGI resources as established in the Guidelines on the Project and Program Cycle Policy, GEF/C.52/Inf.06/Rev.01, June 9, 2017 (Annex 5).

N/A