

Promotion of Integrated Biodiversity Conservation and Land Degradation Neutrality in Highly Degraded Landscapes of Iraq

Review CEO Endorsement and Make a recommendation

Basic project information

GEF ID

10672

Countries

Iraq

Project Name

Promotion of Integrated Biodiversity Conservation and Land Degradation
Neutrality in Highly Degraded Landscapes of Iraq

Agencies

UNEP

Date received by PM

12/2/2021

Review completed by PM

2/14/2022

Program Manager

Ulrich Apel

Focal Area

Multi Focal Area

Project Type

FSP

PIF
CEO Endorsement

Part I ? Project Information

Focal area elements

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

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

12/13/2021: Yes.

Cleared

Agency Response

Project description summary

2. Is the project structure/design appropriate to achieve the expected outcomes and outputs as in Table B and described in the project document?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

12/13/2021: Not fully.

- Component 1- What are the plans for continued management and financial support of the PAs?

- How is Output 1.1.1 linked to Output 3.1.3? Is it referring to different policies?

- With regard to the level of co-financing for the PMC, please bring it to a proportional level with the overall co-financing.

02/10/2022: Addressed.

02/14/2022: ADDITIONAL COMMENT:

The component M&E is missing the expected outputs and outcomes and also the amount budgeted. As per M&E budget table the GEF portion should be \$85,000. Please request the agency to include the missing information in Table B

03/02/2022: Addressed.

Cleared

Agency Response

02/25/2022

Added the appropriate details in Table B in the CEO Endorsement

1. Responses added under section 6 (page 37) Innovativeness, sustainability, and potential for scaling up.

2. While both outputs refer to the policies and legislations in the same field, Output 1.1.1 focuses on the existing policies and legislations while Output 3.1.3 refers to the new and revised policies and legislations developed under the ICMF established under component 1 for sustainable management to be tested in the project site.

3. PMC was adjusted in the Co-Finance budget to be proportional with the overall Co-Financing. (Increased to 5%)

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

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request n/a

Agency Response

Co-financing

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

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

12/13/2021: Yes.

02/14/2022: However, as Table C shows all co-financing is "in-kind", so no explanation of "how investment mobilized was identified" is necessary, if indeed none is classified as "investment mobilized". Please remove the explanation in this case.

03/02/2022: Addressed.

Cleared

Agency Response

02/25/2022

Explanation removed as requested

GEF Resource Availability

5. Is the financing presented in Table D adequate and does the project demonstrate a cost-effective approach to meet the project objectives?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

12/13/2021: Table D is adequate.

Comments on the budget:

- The budget could not be fully assessed due to the format provided, which is not in line with the GEF budget template as prescribed in the GEF guidelines. Further, the budget attached in Annex E is not fitting into the margins and only partly readable, with many figures are truncated.
- The reviewer noticed that considerable amounts of the grants will be transferred to implementation partners. Please provide further details to what grants entail and how they will be managed/supervised. Please provide those details directly in the budget, e.g. in form of budgetary notes and/or footnotes.
- Additional comments on the budget may be made once it is resubmitted in GEF format.

02/10/2022: Budget table doesn't fit into the margins. We can't read the table in this way, sorry for the inconvenience, please re-format so that it fits in portrait mode.

02/14/2022: ADDITIONAL COMMENTS on the budget:

The budget table under Annex E and the Portal entry's table B do show some differences between components ? please amend so that the figures between Table B and all the budget tables (in Portal, in ProDoc and the one appended to the documents? tab) are identical.

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| - Component 1 in Table B: \$1,047,160 | - Component 1 in Budget table: \$1,025,910 |
| - Component 2 in Table B: \$1,180,221 | - Component 2 in Budget table: \$1,158,971 |
| - Component 3 in Table B: \$1,612,424 | - Component 3 in Budget table: \$1,591,974 |
| - Component 4 in Table B: \$482,222 | - Component 4 in Budget table: \$460,972 |
| - M&E in Table B: \$0 | - M&E in Budget table: \$85,000 |

03/02/2022: Addressed.

Cleared

Agency Response

02/25/2022

Component totals in Table B and in the budget were amended

1. Budget has been reformatted according to the new format and uploaded as Annex E on the portal.

2. We provided further details on the grants and how they will be managed. Notes are in Annex E

Project Preparation Grant

6. Is the status and utilization of the PPG reported in Annex C in the document?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

12/13/2021: Yes.

However, the PPG Table E is not showing the totals. Can this be fixed on your end or does it need to be fixed by IT?

02/10/2022: Addressed.

Cleared

Agency Response

From our end, the PPG table looks ok. this may need to be fixed by IT on your side.

PPG Amount (\$)		PPG Agency Fee (\$)					
150,000		14,249					
GEF Agency	Trust Fund	Country	Focal Area	Programming of Funds	PPG(\$)	Agency Fee(\$)	Total(\$)
UNEP	GET	Iraq	Land Degradation	LD STAR Allocation	91,561.00	8,698.00	100,259.00
UNEP	GET	Iraq	Biodiversity	BD STAR Allocation	58,439.00	5,551.00	63,990.00
Total PPG Amount(\$)					150,000.00	14,249.00	164,249.00

Core indicators

7. Are there changes/adjustments made in the core indicator targets indicated in Table E? Do they remain realistic?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

12/13/2021: Clarification request:

- While the number of PAs has been reduced to 2, the area in ha under indicator 1 remains the same. Please confirm. Also note that the text in the portal still refers to 4 PAs at some places, please correct for consistency.

- The project has selected RIO marker "1" for CCM. If that is the case, please also provide a target for CC-M benefits under indicator 6.1

02/10/2022: Addressed.

Cleared

Agency Response

1. We removed two small KBA sites: Ibn Najm (4,000 ha) and North Ibn Najm (1,789). These two sites lost most of their values and no need for special protection. Therefore, we decided to remove them. The total target reduced to 176,292 ha, so the total reduction is only 5,789 ha only. 2. The texts have been corrected and they are now consistent (2 PAs). 2. We corrected the Rio-CCM to 0.

Part II ? Project Justification

1. Is there a sufficient elaboration on how the global environmental/adaptation problems, including the root causes and barriers, are going to be addressed?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

12/13/2021: Yes.

Cleared

Agency Response

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

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

12/13/2021: Yes.

Cleared

Agency Response

3. Is the proposed alternative scenario as described in PIF/PFD sound and adequate? Is there sufficient clarity on the expected outcomes and components of the project and a description on the project is aiming to achieve them?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

12/13/2021: Yes.

Cleared

Agency Response

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

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

12/13/2021: Yes.

Cleared

Agency Response

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

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

12/13/2021: Yes.

Cleared

Agency Response

6. Is there further and better elaboration on the project's expected contribution to global environmental benefits or adaptation benefits?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

12/13/2021: Yes.

Cleared

Agency Response

7. Is there further and better elaboration to show that the project is innovative and sustainable including the potential for scaling up?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

12/13/2021: Not fully.

- It is not clear from the write up, what mechanisms will be put in place to ensure that the activities of the project are sustained; e.g. the capacity building/ training activities, the SLM approaches to be applied to the landscape; PA management.

02/10/2022: Addressed.

Cleared

Agency Response

1. We improved the sustainability section on page 37 under the " Innovativeness, sustainability, and potential for scaling up" section.

Project Map and Coordinates

Is there an accurate and confirmed geo-referenced information where the project intervention will take place?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

12/13/2021: Yes.

Cleared

Agency Response

Child Project

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

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

n/a

Agency Response

Stakeholders

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

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

12/13/2021: Not fully clear.

While the reviewer understands that stakeholders have been involved as described in the project document, the portal entries do not reflect that. Instead, the portal entries in the stakeholder section only state the intention to engage stakeholders through the use of the word "will". Please update this section in the portal and make cross-references to the respective sections in the project document.

Please also clarify whether a separate stakeholder engagement plan is available.

02/10/2022: Addressed.

Cleared

Agency Response

1. Section 2 (stakeholders) of the CEO endorsement document was updated in reference to page 106 (paragraphs 369-370 as well as Table 15) of the project document. Project document table 15 and item 370 were updated to include the validation workshop. The CEO Endorsement Portal Entry now has an update on how stakeholders were consulted during the PPG phase.

2. The roles of the stakeholders in the project implementation has been defined in the CEO End. Req.'s Stakeholders section. This will be the main guiding documenting in engaging with the stakeholders.

Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

Has the gender analysis been completed? Did the gender analysis identify any gender differences, gaps or opportunities linked to project/program objectives and activities? If so, does the project/program include gender-responsive activities, gender-sensitive indicators and expected results?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

12/13/2021: Yes.

Cleared

Agency Response

Private Sector Engagement

If there is a private sector engagement, is there an elaboration of its role as a financier and/or as a stakeholder?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

12/13/2021: Not fully.

- Information on private sector engagement is quite sparse in the portal and would benefit from more substantive details.

02/10/2022: Addressed.

Cleared

Agency Response

More information on the private sector engagement has been provided.

Risks to Achieving Project Objectives

Has the project elaborated on indicated risks, including climate change, potential social and environmental risks that might prevent the project objectives from being achieved? Were there proposed measures that address these risks at the time of project implementation?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

12/13/2021: Yes.

Cleared

Agency Response

Coordination

Is the institutional arrangement for project implementation fully described? Is there an elaboration on possible coordination with relevant GEF-financed projects and other bilateral/multilateral initiatives in the project area?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

12/13/2021: Not fully clear.

- In the respective coordination section, please briefly describe the exceptional arrangement that is being proposed and also make reference to the exception request by the OFP by referencing the uploaded letter.

- Please clarify the role of all executing partners also in view of the budget implications ("grants to other implementing partners"). So far only IUCN is mentioned.

02/10/2022: Addressed. Program Manager approves exception request.

Cleared

Agency Response

We provided the following paragraph to describe the exceptional case. "1. The Ministry of Environment of Iraq is the governmental institution to provide political and institutional supervision and act as the National Executing Entity/Responsible Partner. The overall responsibility for the project execution and implementation by the Ministry of Environment implies the timely and verifiable attainment of project objectives and outcomes. The Ministry of Environment officially requested UNEP's support functions with regard to project execution with a OFP Letter of Support. This letter has been uploaded to the portal under the title "Appendix 19 - Letter of Support Request for Execution of the Project.pdf".

We provided a description of what each partner will support the project and in which output they will take role under the implementation arrangement section.

Consistency with National Priorities

Has the project described the alignment of the project with identified national strategies and plans or reports and assessments under the relevant conventions?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

12/13/2021: Yes.

Alignment with relevant MEA commitments (LDN targets and Aichi Targets) does not appear to be mentioned.

02/10/2022: Addressed.

Cleared

Agency Response

1. Aichi and LDN targets were added within Section 7 of the CEO Endorsement Document (Page 60).

Knowledge Management

Is the proposed "Knowledge Management Approach" for the project adequately elaborated with a timeline and a set of deliverables?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

12/13/2021: Not fully.

Please elaborate on what is the plan to utilize existing knowledge from previous and ongoing projects.

02/10/2022: Addressed.

Cleared

Agency Response

We expanded the KM section and provide more details on how the existing knowledge of the current project will be utilized within this project.

Environmental and Social Safeguard (ESS)

Are environmental and social risks, impacts and management measures adequately documented at this stage and consistent with requirements set out in SD/PL/03?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

12/13/2021: Yes.

Cleared

Agency Response

Monitoring and Evaluation

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

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

12/13/2021: Not fully clear

- While the M&E budget table is provided in the project document, it is lacking the co-financing figures.

- Further, due to the format of the budget table, the reviewer was not able to check whether the totals for M&E in the M&E table and in the budget table are fully consistent.

02/10/2022: Addressed.

Cleared

Agency Response

We added the cofinance budget in the M&E budget.

We revised the budget format so it is clearer to see how the M&E budget is formulated.

Benefits

Are the socioeconomic benefits at the national and local levels sufficiently described resulting from the project? Is there an elaboration on how these benefits translate in supporting the achievement of GEBs or adaptation benefits?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

12/13/2021: Yes.

Cleared

Agency Response

Annexes

Are all the required annexes attached and adequately responded to?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

12/13/2021: Not fully.

- Reviewer could not locate the responses to Council comments (Germany, Canada). Please provide in the Annex.

- Please use a budget template that is in line with GEF requirements and that fits into the portal margins for better readability.

02/10/2022: Addressed.

Cleared

Agency Response

We had addressed the comments but didn't add the responses in Annex B. Now we included a matrix showing how the comments were addressed.

Project Results Framework

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

Has been provided in Annex A.

02/14/2022: Please explicitly reflect the target for GEF Indicator 11 (Number of direct beneficiaries disaggregated by gender) ? so it is aligned with the target found in Core

Indicator Table (5,000 beneficiaries, of them 2,500 women and 2,500 men). This will greatly help with the monitoring in the future.

03/02/2022: Addressed.

Cleared

Agency Response

02/25/2022

The target for indicator 11 was explicitly reflected in the core indicators table and in the logframe

GEF Secretariat comments

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

12/13/2021: Comments at PIF stage have been adequately responded to during the project design.

Cleared

Agency Response

Council comments

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

12/13/2021: Not yet provided.

Agency Response

STAP comments

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

12/13/2021: Yes, provided.

Cleared

Agency Response

Convention Secretariat comments

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request none received

Agency Response

Other Agencies comments

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request none received

Agency Response

CSOs comments

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request none received

Agency Response

Status of PPG utilization

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request Has been provided in Annex C.

Agency Response

Project maps and coordinates

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request Has been provided.

Agency Response

Does the termsheet in Annex F provide finalized financial terms and conditions? Does the termsheet and financial structure address concerns raised at PIF stage and that were pending to be resolved ahead of CEO endorsement? (For NGI Only)

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

n/a

Agency Response

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

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request n/a

Agency Response

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

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request n/a

Agency Response

GEFSEC DECISION

RECOMMENDATION

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

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

12/13/2021: No. Please address comments made in this review.

02/10/2022: No. Please re-format the GEF budget table provided in Annex E so that it fits within the margins of the portal template.

02/14/2022: No. Please address additional comments dated 02/14/2022.

03/02/2022: Yes. Program Manager recommends CEO endorsement.

Review Dates

	Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement	Response to Secretariat comments
First Review	12/13/2021	
Additional Review (as necessary)	2/10/2022	
Additional Review (as necessary)	2/14/2022	
Additional Review (as necessary)	3/2/2022	
Additional Review (as necessary)		

CEO Recommendation

Brief reasoning for CEO Recommendations

The UNEP/GEF project GEF ID 10672 "Promotion of Integrated Biodiversity Conservation and Land Degradation Neutrality in Highly Degraded Landscapes of Iraq" has the objective to strengthen governmental and non-governmental capacities to achieve biodiversity conservation and land degradation neutrality in the Middle Euphrates landscape through integrated landscape management. Based on strengthened policy, legal and regulatory frameworks, the project will expand the network of Protected Areas (PA) by establishing four new protected areas and develop and implement the management plans. The Project will also support Iraq's national Land Degradation Neutrality targets by assessing and surveying key land degradation drivers and developing decision support tools for locally adaptive LDN measures. In addition, the project will demonstrate local measures to enhance water conservation and preventing loss of soil and its fertility. The project will result in improved institutional and technical capacities at the ministerial and governorate level, and increased awareness among stakeholders at all levels on the importance of establishment and management of protected areas, sustainable land use and soil conservation measures. The project will improve management in 176,000 ha of PAs, improve management on 10,000 ha of agricultural area, and benefit 5,000 people.

COVID-19 mitigation measures and adaptive measure are in place and have been described in the risk section of the project document. Further, opportunities for green recovery will be explored in collaboration with the government.