GEF-8 PROJECT IDENTIFICATION FORM (PIF)

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General Project Information

Project Title

Promoting Sustainable Land Management to Achieve Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN), Enhance Livelihoods, and Strengthen the Farming Communities in the Aylagundet Watershed, Debub Region, Eritrea

Region	GEF Project ID
Africa	12080
Country(ies)	Type of Project
Eritrea	FSP
GEF Agency(ies):	GEF Agency ID
UNDP	10304
Executing Partner	Executing Partner Type
Ministry of Land, Water and Environment (MLWE)	Government
GEF Focal Area (s)	Submission Date
Multi Focal Area	9/16/2025

Project Sector (CCM Only)

AFOLU

Taxonomy

Transform policy and regulatory environments, Strengthen institutional capacity and decision-making, Convene multi-stakeholder alliances, SMEs, Individuals/Entrepreneurs, Community Based Organization, Academia, Influencing models, Stakeholders, Beneficiaries, Local Communities, Private Sector, Type of Engagement, Information Dissemination, Partnership, Consultation, Participation, Education, Awareness Raising, Public Campaigns, Behavior change, Enabling Activities, Capacity Development, Knowledge Exchange, Knowledge Generation, Learning, Theory of change, Adaptive management, Indicators to measure change, Capacity, Knowledge and Research, Civil Society, Communications, Women groups, Gender Equality, Gender Mainstreaming, Focal Areas, Productive Landscapes, Community Based Natural Resource Mngt, Mainstreaming, Agriculture and agrobiodiversity, Crop Wild Relatives, Plant Genetic Resources, Biomes, Grasslands, Land Degradation, Sustainable Land Management, Restoration and Rehabilitation of Degraded Lands, Ecosystem Approach, Integrated and Cross-sectoral approach, Community-Based Natural Resource Management, Sustainable Livelihoods, Income Generating Activities, Sustainable Agriculture, Sustainable Pasture Management, Sustainable Forest, Improved Soil and Water Management Techniques, Land Degradation Neutrality, Land Productivity, Land Cover and Land cover change, Biodiversity, Species, Protected Areas and Landscapes, Food Security, Climate Change, Climate Change Mitigation, Agriculture, Forestry, and Other Land Use, Energy Efficiency, Renewable Energy, Gender-sensitive indicators, Sex-disaggregated indicators, Gender results areas, Access and control over natural resources, Participation and leadership, Access to benefits and services

Type of Trust Fund	Project Duration (Months)
GET	60
GEF Project Grant: (a)	GEF Project Non-Grant: (b)
8,401,400.00	0.00
Agency Fee(s) Grant: (c)	Agency Fee(s) Non-Grant (d)

798,133.00	0.00
Total GEF Financing: (a+b+c+d) 9,199,533.00	Total Co-financing 30,600,000.00
PPG Amount: (e) 200,000.00	PPG Agency Fee(s): (f) 19,000.00
PPG total amount: (e+f) 219,000.00	Total GEF Resources: (a+b+c+d+e+f) 9,418,533.00
Project Tags CBIT: No NGI: No SGP: No Innovation: No Competitive Window: No	

Project Summary

Provide a brief summary description of the project, including: (i) what is the problem and issues to be addressed? (ii) what are the project objectives, and if the project is intended to be transformative, how will this be achieved? iii), how will this be achieved (approach to deliver on objectives), and (iv) what are the GEBs and/or adaptation benefits, and other key expected results. The purpose of the summary is to provide a short, coherent summary for readers. The explanation and justification of the project should be in section B "project description".(max. 250 words, approximately 1/2 page)

The Aylagundet Watershed in Eritrea's Debub Region holds important conservation value but faces severe land degradation, declining soil fertility, and water scarcity due to unsustainable practices and climate change impacts. With over 60% of the population dependent on smallholder farming, these challenges threaten national food security and livelihoods. To address these challenges, the objective of the project is to promote integrated sustainable land management (SLM) practices that achieve land degradation neutrality (LDN), enhance ecosystem services, improve sustainable livelihoods, and strengthen the resilience of farming communities to environmental, climatic and economic challenges. The objective will be achieved through strengthened institutional and community based natural resource governance including watershed management plans, regulatory mechanisms; enhanced capacity for the implementation of SLM, drought-resilient agriculture and sustainable livelihoods through land restoration and improved management practices such as agroforestry, soil and water conservation, with evidence-based knowledge management informing adaptive management and scaling up. These interventions will result in increased carbon sequestration, gender inclusive community improved livelihoods and resilience with diversified income sources. These investments will benefit 25,830 (12,660 women, 13,170 men) community members and provide global environmental benefits through improved and sustainable management of 11,851 ha of agricultural land, grazing land and forested woodland; restoration of 6294 ha of degraded grazing land while sequestering 1,655,379 mtCO2-e of carbon emissions. The project aligns with Eritrea's Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) commitments under UNCCD, NDCs, and NBSAP, contributing to SDGs 2, 13, and 15, while delivering global environmental benefits in biodiversity, climate change mitigation and land degradation neutrality.

Indicative Project Overview

Project Objective

Promote sustainable land management (SLM) community-based watershed restoration and climate-resilient agricultural practices that achieve land degradation neutrality (LDN), support biodiversity, improve sustainable livelihoods, and strengthen the resilience of farming communities in the Aylagundat Watershed to environmental, climatic and economic challenges.

Project Components

Component 1. Strengthening institutional and community-based governance for SLM and LDN

Component Type	Trust Fund
Technical Assistance	GET
GEF Project Financing ($)	Co-financing ($)
350,000.00	5,803,448.00

Outcome:

Outcome 1.1. Effective institutional and community-based regulatory mechanisms for SLM

Indicators:

a) Number of households involved in the implementation of the Land Reform Proclamation 58/1994

b) Increase in regional public investment in SLM practices

Output:

Output 1.1.1. Zoba-specific operational guidelines and regulations to inform the implementation of Land Reform Proclamation No. 58/1994 in the proposed project area.

Output 1.1.2. SLM, LDN, biodiversity conservation and CCM mainstreamed into regional policy, development planning and budgetary processes

Output 1.1.3. Regional Integrated Land Use Plan developed for Debub that incorporates SLM, LDN, biodiversity conservation and CCM principles.

Output 1.1.4. Gender inclusive community-based land and water management committees established and operational to ensure participatory governance and community-based monitoring

Component 2. Ecosystem restoration and SLM practices

Component Type	Trust Fund
Investment	GET
GEF Project Financing ($)	Co-financing ($)
250,000.00	5,565,389.00

Outcome:

Outcome 2.1. Enhanced capacity for the implementation of SLM, drought-resilient agriculture and sustainable livelihoods in the Aylagundat Watershed.

Indicators: Number of community members incorporating SLM and LDN principles into livelihoods

Output:

Output 2.1.1. A gender-responsive, integrated Watershed Management Plan developed and implemented for the Aylagundat Watershed

Output 2.1.2. Technical capacity for providing relevant SLM and LDN support to target communities built for regional and local service providers, including extension officers, agricultural input suppliers and financial service providers.

Output 2.1.3. Gender inclusive community awareness-raising and training on SLM, sustainable agriculture, ecosystem services and sustainable natural resource use.

Component 2. Ecosystem restoration and SLM practices

Component Type	Trust Fund
Investment	GET
GEF Project Financing ($)	**Co-financing ($)**
6,806,595.00	13,189,655.00

Outcome:

Outcome 2.2. Enhanced livelihoods and food security through improved soil and water conservation in the Aylagundat Watershed.

Indicators:

a) Hectares of grazing land restored and rehabilitated (Core Indicator 3.1)
Target: 6,294 ha

b) Hectares of land under improved management to benefit biodiversity (GEF Indicator 4.1)
Target: 6,300 ha

c) Hectares of land under improved practices (GEF Indicator 4.3) – disaggregated by type of land use
Target: 5,551 ha

d) Carbon sequestered, or emissions avoided in the sector of Agriculture, Forestry, and Other Land Use- (Core Indicator 6) Target: (1,655 mtCO2-e direct)

e) Number of People benefiting from livelihood support investments (Core Indicator 11); Target: 25,834 (49% women)

f) Degree of soil loss reduction in target areas

g) Change in agricultural productivity within target communities

Output:

Output 2.2.1. Degraded ecosystems in the upper watershed restored in combination with soil and water conservation, sustainable grazing management, restoration and community-based enclosure methods.

Output 2.2.2. Sustainable and drought-resilient agricultural and pastoral practices enhanced in the target area.

Output 2.2.3. Gender-responsive, alternative and sustainable livelihood options and value chains expanded in the target area.

Component 3. Knowledge management

Component Type	Trust Fund

Technical Assistance	GET
GEF Project Financing ($)	Co-financing ($)
350,000.00	3,693,103.00

Outcome:

Outcome 3.1. Effective monitoring systems for land health and ecosystem services on LDN and SLM. Indicators:

a) Number of lessons documented and shared

b) Number of institutions (government, research, local authorities) with increased capacity to monitor and report on land health and ecosystem services

Output:

Output 3.1.1. National knowledge exchange programme for SLM, LDN and biodiversity conservation

Output 3.1.2. Long-term plans and agreements developed in collaboration with academic and research institutions for measuring the long-term cost and benefits of SLM approaches across the country

Output 3.1.3. An integrated National system for the monitoring of progress towards Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs)

M&E

Component Type	Trust Fund
Technical Assistance	GET
GEF Project Financing ($)	Co-financing ($)
244,739.00	891,262.00

Outcome:

5.1 Results and impact of interventions tracked, analysed and documented through robust M&E tools and systems, enabling adaptive management to enhance social and environmental outcomes

Indicators: Satisfactory Progress rating for DO, IP, at PIR, MTR and TE in line with UNDP/GEF criteria

Output:

5.1 A gender responsive project M&E plan and a Gender Action Plan which includes gender-specific results implemented with participation of key stakeholders.

5.2. High quality annual PIRs, MTR and TE reports produced timely to inform adaptive management decisions.

Component Balances

Project Components	GEF Project Financing ($)	Co-financing ($)
Component 1. Strengthening institutional and community-based governance for SLM and LDN	350,000.00	5,803,448.00
Component 2. Ecosystem restoration and SLM practices	250,000.00	5,565,389.00
Component 2. Ecosystem restoration and SLM practices	6,806,595.00	13,189,655.00
Component 3. Knowledge management	350,000.00	3,693,103.00
M&E	244,739.00	891,262.00
Subtotal	**8,001,334.00**	**29,142,857.00**
Project Management Cost	400,066.00	1,457,143.00
Total Project Cost ($)	**8,401,400.00**	**30,600,000.00**

Please provide justification

PROJECT OUTLINE

A. PROJECT RATIONALE

Briefly describe the current situation: the global environmental problems and/or climate vulnerabilities that the project will address, the key elements of the system, and underlying drivers of environmental change in the project context, such as population growth, economic development, climate change, sociocultural and political factors, including conflicts, or technological changes. Describe the objective of the project, and the justification for it. (Approximately 3-5 pages) see guidance here

Global significance of Eritrea

The State of Eritrea is situated in the Horn of Africa, bordered by Sudan to the west and north west, the Red Sea to the east, Ethiopia to the south and Djibouti to the south east. Despite its strategic location along the Red Sea trade route and high mineral resources potential[1][1], the country's dependence on rain-fed agriculture, a 30-year-long war with Ethiopia and a history of sanctions until 2018 have contributed to Eritrea being one of the least developed countries in the world. The prolonged period of conflict, recurrent droughts and unsustainable natural resource use have also contributed to severe environmental degradation in Eritrea, with ~36% of the country's land area being barren land or degraded grazing land[2][2]. This poses a major threat to Eritrea's sparse remaining terrestrial ecosystems, which are home to the endangered, *inter alia* African wild ass (*Equus africanus somaliensis*) and Nubian Ibex (*Capra ibex nubiana*), 12 bird species of global importance and 55

endangered tree species[3][3]. Eritrea has also been identified as a centre of origin for several key crop species, including chickpeas, taff, sorghum, sesame and finger-millet[4][4].

The project target area

The target area falls within the Aylagundat Watershed, situated in the south of the Adi Quala Sub-Zoba, Debub. Within the Aylagundat Watershed, the target area comprises two sub-watersheds with a total area of 12,840.5 ha. The total population of the target area is 25,834 individuals (49% women, 51% men), residing in 5,844 households spread across six kebabis and 31 villages. The Aylagundat Watershed has been classified as a hotspot for land degradation in the country, experiencing notably high levels of degradation between 2000 and 2010 [5][5].

Agro-ecological context in Eritrea

Although agriculture only contributes to ~18% of Eritrea's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), it provides for ~62% of employment, particularly for the country's rural population, which accounts for approximately two-thirds of the total population[6][6]. The major forms of agriculture include small-scale cultivation as well as traditional pastoralism of cattle, sheep, goats and camels, primarily for subsistence use. More than 90% of crop agriculture is rain-fed and includes the cultivation of crops such as sorghum, millet and taff.

Eritrea's agro-ecological systems are influenced by the country's geographic variability and its hot desert or semi-arid climate[7][7]. Topographically, the country ranges from low-lying coastal plains in the east to a central strip of highlands that reaches ~3,000 metres above sea level (masl)[8][8]. Eritrea's climate shows variations spatially and temporally, with average annual temperature ranging from 31˚C in the coastal eastern lowlands, 25˚C in the western lowlands and 21˚C in the central highlands[9][9], being highest in the summer months from May to July. The country's rainfall is erratic and unpredictable, with the western lowlands and central highlands receiving 400–700 mm annually of summer rainfall (June to September), compared with 50–200 mm of winter rainfall (October to March) in the drier eastern lowlands. The average annual temperature in the target area is 25˚C and the average annual rainfall is 500 mm which primarily occurs between June and September.

The project target site falls within the Moist Lowland Zone, which consists of savanna woodland with *Acacia* and other broad-leafed species of trees, as well as bushland. Agriculture is the major driving industry in the region, which focuses on the cultivation of maize, sorghum, pearl millet, taff, groundnuts and pulses and horticultural crops. Approximately 84% of the population in Debub utilises a mixed farming system, which integrates crop cultivation with livestock raising for milk, eggs, meat and honey. Rural communities in the area depend on the surrounding natural ecosystem for water, livestock fodder, fuelwood and non-timber forest products such as medicinal plants.

Despite the importance of agriculture in the target region and the country as a whole, only ~24% of the 2.1 million hectares of arable land in Eritrea is currently cultivated, while only 6% of the 600,000 ha of irrigatable land is currently irrigated[10][10]. Agricultural expansion and productivity are limited by outdated and inadequate agricultural equipment, insufficient technical capacity, land tenure systems which disincentivise investment in agricultural land, diminishing soil quality, climatic hazards such as drought and environmental degradation. A very limited agricultural private sector, linked to limited access to foreign markets and crowding out by the public sector, further constrains potential agricultural growth in the country. The resultant degradation of surrounding ecosystems in particular increases runoff during erratic precipitation events, which reduces aquifer recharge and increases soil erosion. This reduces overall soil quality and the availability of water for farms downstream, directly impacting the productivity of existing and potential agricultural and pastoral lands. Women, who play major roles in agricultural production for most households, are usually the most affected by reductions in agricultural productivity related to degradation[11][11]. Moreover, current agricultural production in the country is insufficient to meet the population's food needs, prompting the importation of more expensive food from other countries.

Drivers of degradation in Eritrea and projected trends

In the Aylagundat Watershed, ~76% of the total land is degraded, consisting of highly degraded cropland with low fertility (27%) and degraded grazing land (49%). This degradation is attributable to the country's naturally steep slopes and shallow soils, as well as multiple interacting climatic and non-climatic drivers.

Climatically, the country is exposed to recurring droughts as well as erratic, intense rainfall events. Over the last 30–60 years there has been an increase in the frequency of these extreme climatic events which, combined with shifts in seasonal rainfall patterns, contribute to escalating land degradation[12][12]. This increase in extreme climatic events is related to a rise in mean annual temperature of 1.7˚C since 1960 and a decrease in precipitation of 25 mm per decade since 1950 across the country[13][13]. These trends, added to the baseline climate of the country, result in several drivers of degradation on agricultural, rangeland and natural ecosystems, summarised below.

- **Severe and prolonged droughts** contribute to natural and agricultural vegetation loss, exposing bare soil and contributing to soil compaction which exacerbates soil erosion. Insufficient water availability from droughts also reduces agricultural productivity, with yield losses in drought years estimated to be 94% for oil crops, 93% for pulses and 77% for cereals[14][14].

- **Intense rainfall events** further accelerate degradation by resulting in erosion and soil removal from impacted areas. Moreover, high runoff rates limit the amount of water that infiltrates into groundwater aquifers and intensifies the impacts of droughts.

- **High temperatures** above a certain threshold increases stress on crops and livestock and promote the increased spread of pests and diseases.

The major direct non-climatic drivers of land degradation include the expansion of settlements and agricultural land, overgrazing of rangelands, inappropriate agricultural practices and excessive fuelwood collection[15]. The expansion of invasive alien species such as prickly pear (*Opuntia ficus indica*) and mesquite (*Prosopis juliflora*) in the highland and riverine forests is also a concern as this results in reduced biodiversity and functioning of natural habitats[16]. How these drivers contribute to land degradation are described below.

- **Expansion of settlements and agricultural land**, leading to the direct transformation and reduction of natural ecosystems and biodiversity. The expansion of agricultural land is also driven by declining production on existing agricultural land.

- **Overgrazing of rangelands**, causing pastoralists to graze their livestock in surrounding areas that are steeper and more prone to degradation and erosion, leading to degradation and the loss of biodiversity.

- **Inappropriate agricultural practices** that are labour intensive and have limited crop and soil care, affecting overall yields. The overuse of agricultural land, as well as the use of manure for fuel instead of fertiliser, has also resulted in substantial deficits in soil nutrients and consequently reduced soil quality on agricultural lands.

- **Excessive fuelwood collection** historically and currently reduces vegetation cover and leads to the burning of animal dung and agricultural residues as an alternative fuel source, reducing manure availability for agricultural fertiliser purposes. Specific tree species may be targeted for fuelwood, thereby changed species compositions within the landscape.

- **Alien invasive plants** which create mono-cultures in the landscape and outcompete native plant species, reducing the overall biodiversity of ecosystems.

The above drivers are, in turn, driven by high rural poverty levels, expanding population numbers and associated demand, inappropriate land tenure systems and a breakdown in the use of traditional agricultural practices[17]. These indirect drivers are described below.

- **Population increase**: The annual population increase is ~2.4%[18], requiring increased agricultural production and natural resource use. This will directly compound settlement and agricultural land expansion, unsustainable fuelwood harvesting, overgrazing and the overuse of agricultural land.

- **Land tenure systems**: Rural land tenure in the highlands of Eritrea consists of the *Diessa* system, whereby land is village-owned and redistributed to village inhabitants every 5–7 years. This system does not promote good land husbandry because it offers little incentive for a farmer to invest in their land in terms of soil fertility and other inputs. This land tenure system also disproportionally benefits men, who are traditionally seen as the heads of households[19].

- **Breakdown of traditional agricultural practices and technical capacity**: Considerable political, social and economic changes in the country have meant that traditional conservation methods have been left

ineffective. The breakdown in traditional practices — many of which, if used properly, are adapted to Eritrea's climate and landscape — has not been replaced with modern alternatives as communities often do not have the technical or financial capacity to adopt these practices. Women in particular often do not have access to technical capacity building through extension services because of cultural norms and other challenges[20][20].

Projected trends suggest an increase in observed climate change impacts and population-driven causes of land degradation. Temperatures are expected to continue rising in the future to 28.5–28.7˚C by 2050 and 29.5–32.1˚C by 2100 under SSP2-4.5 and SSP5-8.5, compared with 27.4˚C in 2014[21][21]. There is more uncertainty regarding changes in precipitation; however, national trends suggest slight increases to 407–419 mm by 2025 and 390–492 mm by 2100 under SSP2-4.5 and SSP5-8.5, compared with 362 mm in 2014[22][22]. Higher rainfall variability is also predicted, increasing the risk of more prolonged and severe droughts in the dry season and more frequent intense rainfall events in the wet season. Based on the 2.4% annual increase and using the population estimate of 3.7 million in 2024, the country's population is estimated to double to ~6.85 million by 2050, which would place more pressure on ecosystems and agricultural systems because of increased demand for food and natural resources. These projected changes in climate and increases in population, in combination with other existing drivers, will likely result in further degradation to Eritrea's agro-ecological systems, with negative repercussions to the resilience of vulnerable communities and biodiversity.

Baseline actions and stakeholders

Land degradation has been recognised as the most critical environmental challenge facing Eritrea. In response, the GoSE has set National Land Degradation Neutrality Targets (2018) and developed the National Action Programme for Eritrea to Combat Desertification and Mitigate the Effects of Drought (NAP of UNCCD, 2002) as well as the Land Reform Proclamation (No.58/1994). The GoSE has also shown commitments to climate change mitigation through its National Adaptation Programme of Action (NAPA, 2007), Third National Communication (NC3, 2021) and Biennial Update Report (BUR I, 2021) under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The conservation of Eritrea's biodiversity is also a priority of the GoSE, demonstrated in its National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP, 2014–2020) and Forestry and Wildlife Conservation and Development Proclamation 155/2006.

Key line ministries within the GoSE and institutions that have mandates relevant to addressing land degradation include: i) the Ministry of Land, Water and Environment (MLWE), responsible for coordinating and monitoring land management, water resources and environmental protection; ii) the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), responsible for maintaining food security by providing services to the agricultural sector; and iii) the Forestry and Wildlife Authority (FWA), an autonomous authority in charge of managing forests and wildlife. These national-level institutions provide strategic and technical guidance and direction for the implementation of development projects within their sectors, with the MLWE and FWA managing resources related to groundwater, forestry and protected areas, while the MoA manages interventions related to agricultural land, water for irrigation and rangelands. At the regional level, Zoba-level authorities and technical experts play a central role in the prioritization of target areas and actions, as well as the coordination and implementation of on-the-ground interventions. Several civil society role players, including the National Union of Eritrean Women (NUEW) and the National Union if Eritrean Youth and Students (NUEYS), may also be involved in development projects and play an important role in ensuring the representation of women and the youth. Additionally, community members often play central and active roles in the implementation of agricultural and

land management interventions within their communities. Further details on the above stakeholders and their potential role in the project are presented in a separate Stakeholder Engagement Summary.

In collaboration with international organisations, the GoSE is currently implementing several GEF and non-GEF projects to address land degradation, prioritising an integrated, sustainable land management (SLM) approach. Three current GEF projects have a focus on addressing land degradation, climate change and biodiversity threats in different areas of Eritrea. These projects are listed below.

- *Restoring degraded forest landscapes and promoting community-based, sustainable, and integrated natural resource management in the Rora Habab Plateau, Nakfa sub-zoba, Northern Red Sea Region of Eritrea (UNDP, GEF ID 9266, 2024–2031, US$8,260,600).*

- *Mainstreaming climate risk considerations in food security and IWRM in Tsilima Plain and upper catchment area (UNDP, GEF ID 6923, 2024–2029, US$9,050,000).*

- *Building Community Based Integrated and Climate Resilient Natural Resources Management and Enhancing Sustainable Livelihood in the South-Eastern Escarpments and Adjacent Coastal Areas of Eritrea (Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), GEF ID 10789, 2023–2030, US$15,680,310).*

Three prominent non-GEF projects currently under implementation aim to facilitate the sustainable enhancement of agricultural production and rural livelihoods across all six of Eritrea's Zobas, including Debub. These non-GEF projects are summarised briefly below.

- *Integrated Agriculture Development Project (IADP, International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), 2021–2027, US$51,641,000).*

- *Drought Resilience and Sustainable Livelihoods Programme – Project V (DRSLPV, African Development Bank (AfDB, 2020–2025, US$19,135,000).*

- *Hand in Hand Eritrea (HiH, FAO, 2021–ongoing).*

The above current projects as well as completed initiatives have demonstrated successful best practices for SLM in Eritrea and have identified several lessons learned and gaps to be considered by future projects. Despite the success of these projects, however, interventions tend to be focused in specific areas or watersheds, and upscaling is still needed to achieve the GoSE's target of national LDN by 2030. Notably, the Aylagundat Watershed is not included within the target area of the above projects, despite it falling within one of the country's land degradation hotspots. Moreover, technical capacity gaps for best practices in SLM and improved agricultural practices still exist at the regional level in Debub. Because of the diversion of financial resources towards other critical national human development challenges, there is insufficient allocation of fiscal budget towards upscaling SLM interventions.

Plausible future narratives

Two major drivers of land degradation can be identified, namely climate change and pressure from population growth. As the project will not directly be able to address the root causes of these drivers, there is a level of uncertainty in their impact on Eritrea's agro-ecological systems in the future. The below narratives aim to capture this uncertainty by describing four possible futures centred around lower or higher levels of each of these two drivers.

Plausible future 1: Slower climate change, slower population growth. Slower rates of climate change may occur from rapid global carbon emission mitigation efforts. This would reduce the potential frequency and severity of droughts and intense rainfall events, therefore slowing the expansion of degraded and eroded land

in upper catchment areas and increasing the production of existing agricultural land. The continued-out migration from rural areas, would likely reduce food and natural resource demands. This would reduce the need for agricultural land or settlement expansion into natural ecosystems, thereby minimising land degradation. This scenario would represent a future with the lowest degree of land degradation.

Plausible future 2: Slower climate change, faster population growth. Faster population growth would increase the demand for agricultural production and natural resources, resulting in faster land degradation from agricultural land expansion, overgrazing and removal of tree species. While slower rates of climate change would mean droughts and intense rainfall events do not contribute as much to land degradation, vegetation loss from population-related drivers would still expose soils to baseline climate hazards.

Plausible future 3: Faster climate change, slower population growth. Faster climate change may result from insufficient global carbon emission mitigation measures. In this scenario, droughts would become more frequent and severe, while intense rainfall events would become more damaging and unpredictable. As a result, vegetation loss would increase, leading to higher rates of land degradation. Moreover, reduced water availability and higher temperatures would reduce agricultural production, with wider ramifications on food security for the country. Although slower population growth and associated resource needs would alleviate this pressure to some degree, land degradation is still expected to show an overall increase because of the compounding impacts of accelerated climate change.

Plausible future 4: Faster climate change, faster population growth. Plausible future 4 represents the worst-case scenario for land degradation in Eritrea, with rapid climate change and high natural resource demand from increased population growth. More frequent and intense climate hazards such as droughts and intense rainfall would be expected, along with increased pressure on natural resources from a larger population. There is a high likelihood that a larger population — combined with reduced agricultural productivity from the impacts of climate change — would negatively impact food security across the country.

Project objective and barriers to the preferred solution

The proposed solution to address the above drivers of land degradation and possible future scenarios is to rapidly and effectively upscale an integrated SLM approach that uses soil and water conservation practices proven to be successful in the country, while simultaneously increasing the climate-resilience of agricultural practices and developing alternative livelihoods that reduce the demand for natural resources. This would need to be accompanied by a behavioural shift across stakeholders at all levels towards preserving ecosystem functioning that can be replicated and are sustained in the long-term. Without this solution, land degradation is likely to continue in the future, reducing ecosystem functioning and biodiversity. The preferred solution is robust to the uncertain futures described above because of a focus on behavioural shifts that promote adaptability and on supporting ecosystems that provide beneficial ecosystem services. Several barriers, however, exist to achieving the above proposed solution and should be addressed as part of a holistic project approach. These barriers are summarised below.

- *Barrier 1: existing land tenure systems do not incentivise long-term SLM practices by communities*. The traditional *Diessa* land tenure system contributes to land degradation be disincentivising investment by farmers into agricultural land[23][23]. To address this, the Land Reform Proclamation (No.58/1994) was developed to replace this with a usufructuary system that awards farmers life-long user rights to agricultural land and has been shown to successfully improve investment by participating farmers. The uptake of the Proclamation nationally, however, has been slow.

- *Barrier 2: limited technical and human capacity at the national and regional level to mainstream SLM and LDN principles.* Despite the GoSE demonstrating its commitment to its Rio Convention obligations, there are still technical capacity gaps at the national level in terms of monitoring Multi-lateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) targets. Moreover, gaps exist regarding local planning for SLM, LDN and biodiversity conservation at the zoba-level. In addition, continued capacity building is constrained that is necessary to ensure extension officers and other community support providers, including agricultural input suppliers and financial service providers, are up to date with the latest national and global best practices.

- *Barrier 3: insufficient community awareness of and technical capacity for SLM.* Techniques used by communities in the target area to improve degraded land have been insufficient and ineffective. This is largely attributable to insufficient training on the most effective application of these techniques, combined with inadequate tools and equipment. In addition, although communities understand the negative impacts of land degradation, there is limited awareness on the role ecosystem services have in reducing degradation as well as the negative impact various anthropogenic activities may have on functioning ecosystems and biodiversity.

- *Barrier 4: limited information and data on SLM, LDN and biodiversity conservation to inform planning and decision-making.* Although there is some information on the state of various parameters relating to land degradation and biodiversity, this data is often fragmented or outdated. There is also a limited evidence base on best practices and lessons learned for SLM, as well as on the costs and benefits of this approach in the Eritrean context.

Given the above proposed solution and barriers that need to be addressed, the objective of the proposed project is to: *Promote sustainable land management (SLM) community-based watershed restoration and climate-resilient agricultural practices that achieve land degradation neutrality (LDN), support biodiversity, improve sustainable livelihoods, and strengthen the resilience of farming communities in the Aylagundat Watershed to environmental, climatic and economic challenges*. The importance of this objective for the country was expressed by relevant stakeholders at the national and regional level — including the MLWE, MoA, FWA and Debub Zoba-level experts — through consultations undertaken during the initial project development phase. The complementarity and synergy of the project with existing initiatives was also validated with design teams of other GEF and non-GEF funded projects.

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[1] Eritrea Ministry of Finance and National Development. 2024. Eritrea – Second voluntary review of progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals.

[2] MoA. 2018. Final country report of the LDN target setting programme in Eritrea.

[3] MLWE. 2015. National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan for Eritrea (2014–2020).

[4] MoA. 2002. The National Action Programme for Eritrea to Combat Desertification and Mitigate the Effects of Drought (NAP).

[5] MoA. 2018. Final country report of the LDN target setting programme in Eritrea.

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B. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Project description

This section asks for a theory of change as part of a joined-up description of the project as a whole. The project description is expected to cover the key elements of good project design in an integrated way. It is also expected to meet the GEF's policy requirements on gender, stakeholders, private sector, and knowledge management and learning (see section D). This section should be a narrative that reads like a joined-up story and not independent elements that answer the guiding questions contained in the PIF guidance document. (Approximately 3-5 pages) see guidance here

Theory of change rationale

The theory of change (ToC) for the proposed project (Figure 1) describes three complementary causal pathways to achieve the project's objective of promoting LDN while supporting biodiversity conservation, improving rural livelihoods and strengthening agricultural systems through SLM. The first causal pathway (Component 1) is intended to develop institutional and community regulatory mechanisms for SLM in Debub by developing guidelines and regulations for the implementation of the revised land tenure system in the target area, mainstreaming SLM and LDN principles into regional policies, plans and budgets, developing a regional Integrated Land Use Plan and establishing community-based land and water management committees. The second causal pathway (Component 2) will focus on collaborating with target communities to implement SLM and drought-resilient agricultural practices that have been successfully implemented in other parts of the country. Interventions under the second causal pathway will be made sustainable in the long term through a strong community capacity building and participation approach to catalyse a behavioural shift towards valuing ecosystems, biodiversity and sustainable agricultural practices. This pathway is expected to have tangible benefits to participating communities by improving their livelihoods and resilience to external shocks such as climate change. The third causal pathway (Component 3) will take successes and lessons under the previous two pathways and disseminate them nationally and regionally, while also having a focus on supporting the development of an evidence base for further investments in SLM across the country. By directly targeting existing anthropogenic drivers of degradation and incorporating approaches that combat the impacts of drought

and erosion, the project is expected to increase the resilience of communities and ecosystems to both climate and non-climate drivers of degradation. Resilience will be further supported by improvements in the provision of ecosystem services, which will, in turn, improve the food security and profitability of agricultural and other livelihoods, thereby further incentivising communities to maintain the introduced interventions that promote ecosystem functioning and biodiversity conservation. Resilience will be further supported by the strengthened enabling environment at the local level that provides strategic technical guidance and management for the long-term operation and maintenance of interventions.

The project's integrated approach that focusses on promoting ecosystem functioning has been selected over approaches that solely consider improving the management of agricultural land because of the wider climate change mitigation benefits from improved carbon sequestration and support for local biodiversity from improved ecosystem functioning and conservation. This additionally aligns closely with current national strategies and priorities to adopt a more integrated land management approach to combating land degradation. The participatory approach of the project, which includes a strong training and capacity building component for communities and local stakeholders, has also been selected over an alternative top-down approach to project design to maximise community ownership and minimise potential negative risks of the proposed solution. This is expected to increase the sustainability of interventions beyond the project's lifespan. The focus of the project on addressing land degradation, while simultaneously improving local biodiversity conservation, increasing carbon sequestration aligns well with GEF focal area objectives and makes the project a strong candidate for GEF funding.

Enablers

Policy and institutional: The achievement of desired outcomes in the Aylagundet Watershed Project is enabled by a combination of institutional, community, technical, financial, and social factors. Strong government ownership and alignment with Eritrea's LDN targets, NBSAP, and Land Reform Proclamation No. 58/1994 provide the policy foundation for implementation. Integrating SLM and biodiversity into regional development plans ensures long-term institutional support. Community-based land and water management committees, including women and pastoralists, foster participatory governance and local ownership.

Technical enablers include proven SLM measures terracing, agroforestry, water harvesting, rotational grazing, and restoration of 6,294 ha of degraded land which enhance ecosystem services and resilience.

Partnerships: Financially, the project leverages over USD 30 million in co-financing and promotes diversified livelihoods such as beekeeping and dairy value chains. to reduce ecosystem pressures. Knowledge and learning are strengthened through partnerships with Hamelmalo Agricultural College and the National Agricultural Research Institute, ensuring adaptive management and scaling of best practices.

Gender equity is a cross-cutting enabler, with women representing 45 % of beneficiaries and 30 % of leadership roles. Together, these enablers create the conditions for effective, inclusive, and sustainable land restoration, climate resilience, and livelihood transformation in the Debub Region of Eritrea.

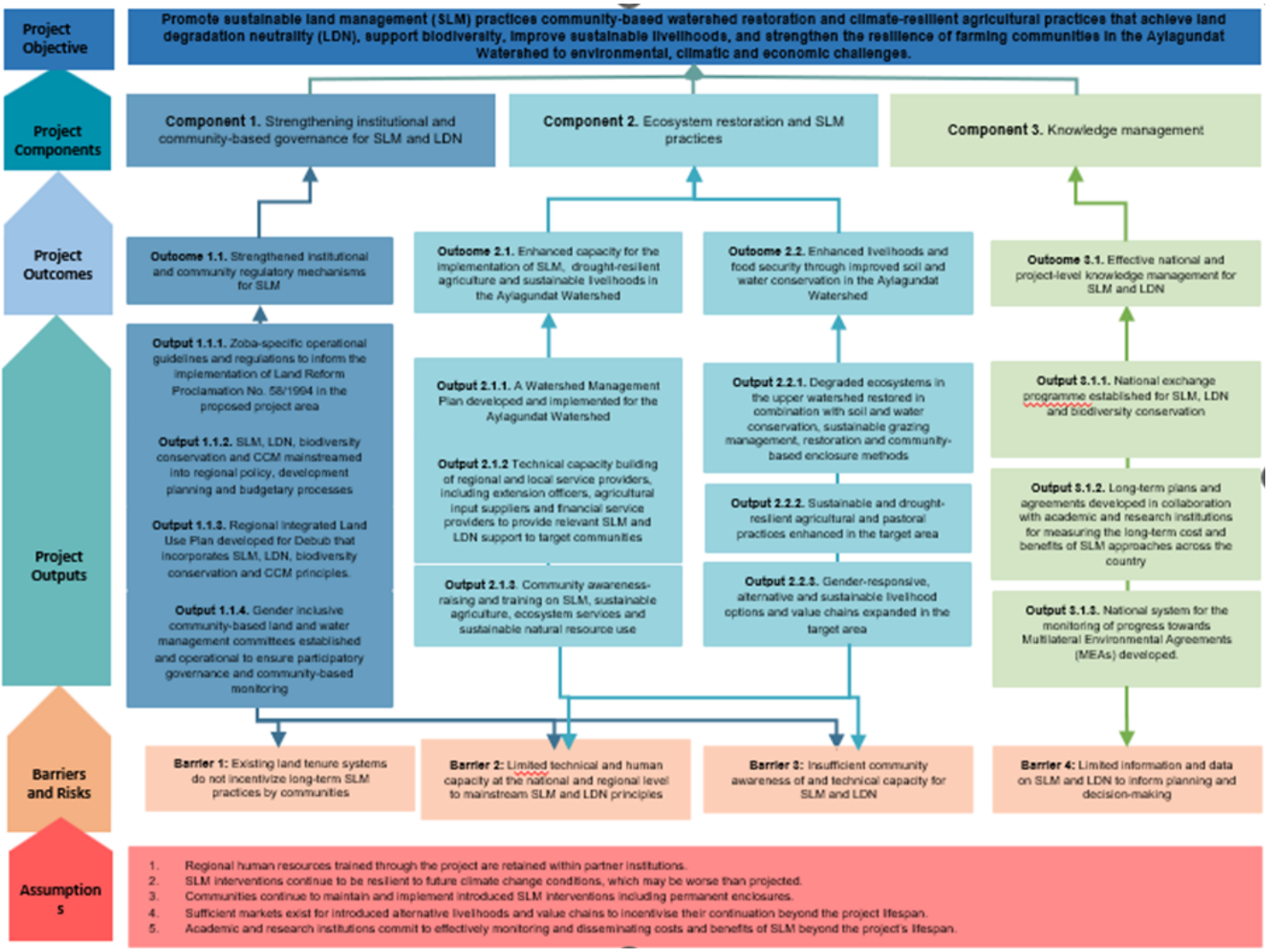

Figure 1. Theory of Change diagram.

Several assumptions will need to be met for the proposed project's objectives and outcomes to be sustainable and successful in the long term. These are listed below and will be expanded during the PPG phase.

- Regional human resources trained through the project are retained within partner institutions.
- SLM interventions continue to be resilient to future climate change conditions, which may be worse than projected.
- Communities continue to maintain and implement introduced SLM interventions including permanent enclosures.
- Sufficient markets exist for introduced alternative livelihoods and value chains to incentivise their continuation beyond the project lifespan.
- Academic and research institutions commit to effectively monitoring and disseminating costs and benefits of SLM beyond the project's lifespan.

Description of project outputs

Component 1. Strengthening institutional and community-based governance for SLM and LDN

Outcome 1.1. Strengthened institutional and community regulatory mechanisms for SLM

Output 1.1.1. Zoba-specific operational guidelines and regulations to inform the implementation of Land Reform Proclamation No. 58/1994 in the proposed project area

Output 1.1.1 aims to increase investment of farmers in cropland within the target area by accelerating the zoba-level implementation of the Land Reform Proclamation No. 58/1994, which promotes an usufructuary land tenure approach whereby individuals are given life-long land user rights of state-owned rural land around their home village. This output will replicate the *Sustainable Land Management Pilot* project's (SIP SLM Pilot Project, GEF ID 2979) development of regulations and standards for land redistribution of agricultural lands by developing zoba-specific operational guidelines and regulations in Debub, with the target project site being used as an initial pilot site for implementation. Overall, the Land Department within the MWLE will play a central role in the implementation of this output, which will contribute towards the GEB LD-1 focal objective by incentivizing improved land management by participating farmers.

Output 1.1.2. SLM, LDN, biodiversity conservation and CCM mainstreamed into regional policy, development planning and budgetary processes

The mainstreaming of SLM, LDN, biodiversity conservation and CCM principles into relevant policy, development planning and budgetary processes will be strengthened, working closely with national and regional decision-makers and technical experts across the environmental management, energy, water resource management and agriculture sectors. Output 1.1.2 will draw on lessons learned and best practices from the SIP SLM Pilot Project and will include a gap analysis of existing regional policies and development plans regarding SLM and LDN. Output 1.1.2 is expected to improve planning and regulatory frameworks that increase the overall investment in SLM and LDN interventions within Debub and potentially other zobas as well, thereby increasing the replicability of these practices beyond the target area. The implementation of this output will include strong collaboration with Zoba- and local-level representatives, as well as coordination with MWLE and MoA. By mainstreaming LDN and biodiversity into regional policies, this output is expected to contribute towards the GEB BD-1.4, LD-4 and CCM-1.4 focal objectives.

Output 1.1.3. Regional Integrated Land Use Plan developed for Debub that incorporates SLM, LDN, biodiversity conservation and CCM principles.

Under Output 1.1.3, an Integrated Land Use Plan (ILUP) will be developed for the Debub Zoba, outlining medium- and long-term strategies and goals relating to sustainable and resilient land use planning. Specifically, the ILUP will incorporate best practices for SLM, LDN, biodiversity conservation and protected area development, and CCM principles to promote these approaches within development planning across the region. The ILUP will additionally be developed to align with key national strategies and plans, including the NBSAP, National LDN Targets, NAP to Combat Desertification and Mitigate and Effects of Drought, Land Reform Proclamation 58/1994 and NC3. The IUP will be developed in close collaboration with Zoba-level experts, authorities and decision-makers, as well as national line ministries including MLWE, MoA, Ministry of Local Government and FWA. Output 1.1.3 will directly support the GEB DB-1.4 and LD-4 focal objectives.

Output 1.1.4. Gender inclusive community-based land and water management committees established and operational to ensure participatory governance and community-based monitoring

Under Output 1.1.4, communities will be engaged with to establish and implement community-based land and water committees within the target area. The objective of these committees will be to ensure committee members have ownership of on-the-ground SLM interventions planned under Outcome 2.2, as well as other initiatives relating to land, water and natural resource use in the Aylagundat Watershed. These committees will

be empowered to contribute to larger dialogues regarding land and water use with public institutions, ensuring community concerns and needs are considered, and play an important role in the participatory governance and management of community use of these resources.

The management committees will contribute to governance of community-based permanent enclosures that promote biodiversity protection and conservation. Management committees will also be closely involved in the long-term maintenance of introduced communal SLM interventions and equipment to support the sustainability of these interventions beyond the project lifespan. Moreover, the committees will be capacitated to lead and implement community-based monitoring of project interventions and landscape-level results, using a monitoring mechanism developed in participation with community members and technical experts, including from the zoba-level, MLWE, MoA and academic institutions. Land and water committees will be formulated to be gender inclusive, ensuring equal representation of women and men. Through community-based governance, Output 1.1.4 will therefore contribute to the GEB BD-1.2 and LD-1.

Component 2. Ecosystem restoration and SLM practices

Outcome 2.1. Enhanced capacity for the implementation of SLM, drought-resilient agriculture and sustainable livelihoods in the Aylagundat Watershed that promotes biodiversity conservation and CCM

Output 2.1.1. A gender-responsive, integrated Watershed Management Plan developed and implemented for the Aylagundat Watershed

An integrated Watershed Management Plan (WMP) will be developed for the Aylagundat Watershed directly building on the Integrated Agriculture Development Project's (IADP's) approach in other watersheds across Eritrea. The focus of the WMP will be to outline short and medium-term plans for SLM and biodiversity conservation interventions within the watershed and provide guidelines and protocols for their implementation and maintenance. The WMP will be developed to be gender-responsive and participatory through close collaboration with Zoba-level authorities and technical experts as well as community leaders, representatives, and land and water management committees within the Aylagundat Watershed.

Output 2.1.2. Technical capacity for providing relevant SLM and LDN support to target communities built for regional and local service providers, including extension officers, agricultural input suppliers and financial service providers

Under Output 2.1.2, regional- and local-level service providers, including agricultural input suppliers, financial service providers in the private sector as well as agricultural extension officers in Debub, will receive up-to-date technical capacity building on supporting the implementation of SLM, soil and water management and restoration techniques, improved and sustainable agricultural practices and promoting natural resource use for biodiversity conservation. The approach will draw on interventions undertaken in the SIP SLM Pilot Project and include the development of a training curriculum that addresses specific capacity gaps, delivered via a series of participatory workshops. The MWLE and MoA will play a technical guidance and execution role in the output, while specific private sector service provider role-players will be identified during the PPG phase.

Output 2.1.3. Gender inclusive community awareness-raising and training on SLM, restoration, sustainable agriculture, ecosystem services and sustainable natural resource use.

Communities within the target area will be engaged through an awareness-raising and capacity building programme, covering aspects such as i) the benefits of SLM, biodiversity conservation, sustainable agriculture and alternative livelihoods; ii) business management and accessing finance; and iii) women empowerment. This awareness raising will aim to trigger a behavioural shift towards better resource management and watershed management practices within the target communities that promotes biodiversity conservation within the watershed. The programme will upskill farmers to effectively implement SLM and resilient agricultural

practices that promote soil and water conservation, as well as introduced alternative livelihoods that more sustainably use natural resources and support increased local biodiversity. This will take the form of introducing a farmer field school (FFS) in the target area, following best practices and lessons learned from projects such as the IADP. Specific elements to be incorporated in the capacity building will include, *inter alia*: i) the operation and maintenance of equipment and infrastructure; ii) soil conservation techniques; iii) water conservation practices; iv) drought-resilient crop species and seed varietals; v) agronomic practices; vi) crop timing; and vii) sustainable livestock grazing.

Capacity building for implementing more effective SLM interventions will also include a farmer-trainer approach, drawing on lessons learned from the Tem Sesiabun Gorado model[1][24]. Farmer champions will be identified in participation with the community to act as community trainers and capacitated through a training curriculum, enabling them to disseminate training to other community members. Both the awareness-raising programme and capacity building through the FFS and farmer-trainer approach will be done in collaboration with the MoA, MLWE and FWA, as well as Zoba-level technical experts. The awareness-raising and capacity building will be designed to account for the specific barriers and needs of women, the youth, elderly, the disabled and people from vulnerable groups to maximise inclusivity.

Outcome 2.2. Enhanced livelihoods and food security through improved soil and water conservation in the Aylagundat Watershed

Output 2.2.1. Degraded ecosystems in the upper watershed restored in combination with soil and water conservation, sustainable grazing management, restoration and community-based enclosure methods

Building on the capacity building undertaken in Output 2.1.2 and Output 2.1.3, degraded ecosystems in the upper watershed of the target area will be restored using soil and water conservation, restoration and community-based enclosure establishment and management techniques. Soil and water conservation techniques will be implemented first on identified degraded hillsides and will include terracing, soil bunds, micro-basins and check dams. These techniques have been used successfully in multiple complementary projects in other parts of Eritrea, including IADP, DRSLP V and "*Mainstreaming climate risk considerations in food security and IWRM in Tsilima Plain and upper catchment area*". The construction of these soil and water conservation measures will have a strong community participation element by involving community members trained under Output 2.1.1 combined with a Cash for Work approach. The MoA as well as Zoba-level technical experts and engineers will assist in supervising construction.

Following the stabilisation of upper watershed slopes using terracing and soil bunds, restoration will be undertaken through the establishment of permanent enclosures and the planting of native, multi-use tree and shrub species. Enclosures are widely used in Eritrea to limit or restrict human activity and livestock grazing, with permanent enclosures reflecting areas where no livestock grazing, tree cutting or farming settlements are allowed to take place for an unlimited period of time. The identification of areas for permanent enclosures will involve detailed engagements with communities and will prioritise steep areas that are highly degraded, both to maximise restoration benefits and minimise short-term livelihood losses from restricted grazing. To ensure community buy-in in the long term and maximise benefits, activities that do not encourage land degradation, including fodder cut and carry, dry wood collection, the sustainable collection of wild fruits and traditional medicines, and the placement of beehives, will be allowed within the enclosures. In combination with the enclosures, and using community participation, native, multi-use tree seedlings will be planted on degraded hillslopes, supported by the rehabilitation of two existing nurseries within the target site that will provide a seed bank and seedlings for restoration activities. The introduction of a diverse mix of indigenous, multi-use tree species, combined with passive restoration through the use of enclosures, is expected to increase floral diversity and subsequently faunal diversity as ecosystem functioning improves and degradation drivers in the enclosures

is removed. Restoration activities and the rehabilitation of the nurseries will be supported by technical guidance from MWLE and FWA. Through soil and water conservation, restoration and the creating of permanent enclosures, Output 2.2.1 is expected to considerably increase the biodiversity and carbon sequestration potential of ecosystems in the upper reaches of the Aylagundat Watershed, thereby contributing directly to the LD-1 and LD2 focal objectives with BD-1.2, BD-1.3 and CCM-1.4 co-benefits.

Output 2.2.2. Sustainable and drought-resilient agricultural and pastoral practices enhanced in the target area

The capacity building of farmers undertaken in Output 2.1.3 will be supported by the introduction or enhancement of supporting equipment and infrastructure for improved soil and water conservation and access, as well as agricultural production on croplands. This will include the introduction of solar-powered borehole pumps and equipment to improve water availability, benefiting from expected improved groundwater infiltration under Output 2.2.1. Additionally, drip irrigation systems will be introduced to selected agricultural plots, in combination with water conservation practices such as soil mulching and intercropping. Agricultural land categorised as highly or moderately degraded will be prioritised for the distribution of drip irrigation infrastructure, ensuring at least an equal representation of women-led households. Working with the MoA and the National Agriculture Research Institute, seeds of drought-resilient crops will be introduced to target communities to promote resilience of crops to projected climate change impacts and promote agricultural production. Through improved agricultural practices Output 2.2.2 will support LD-1, while the introduction of solar-powered borehole pumps will contribute to CCM-1.1.

Output 2.2.3. Gender-responsive, alternative and sustainable livelihood options and value chains expanded in the target area

Value-addition practices for crop and livestock production as well as sustainable alternative livelihoods options will be introduced and strengthened within the target community. This approach will aim to maximise the economic output of existing agricultural land and replace practices that contribute to land degradation or biodiversity reduction. Targeted livelihoods will be based on recommendations and targets identified by stakeholders such as the MoA and by initiatives such as the *Hand in Hand* initiative. Potential livelihoods and value-addition practices include, *inter alia*, dairy, meat and leather products, poultry production, year-long crop production through the introduction of potatoes and other cold season crops, fruit preserves, groundnut production and beekeeping. Output 2.2.3 will first develop business plans in collaboration with participating communities to maximise the market access of introduced livelihoods, with a focus on supporting women participation. Equipment and machinery required for the effective implementation will also be introduced to communities and existing community associations, including solar-powered cold storage facilities to promote the preservation of livelihood products and increase their marketability outside of Debub, including in Asmara. The MoA will play an important role in implementing and providing technical guidance for Output 2.2.3, which will directly contribute to the GEB BD-1.2 and LD-1 focal objectives through improved natural resource use, as well as CCM 1.1 through the introduction of solar-powered cold storage units.

Component 3. Knowledge management

Outcome 3.1. Effective national and project-level knowledge management for SLM and LDN

Output 3.1.1. National exchange programme established for SLM, LDN and biodiversity conservation

The proposed project will establish a national knowledge exchange programme to promote SLM, LDN, improved agricultural practices and biodiversity conservation learning across Eritrea. Specifically, the knowledge exchange programme will bring major public, private and international stakeholders implementing SLM intervention across Eritrea together in annual workshops to share lessons learned, best practices and innovations. The workshop will also include participants from neighbouring countries to share additional lessons and innovations from other countries, and to disseminate best practices in Eritrea to the larger Horn of

Africa region. Lessons generated from the knowledge exchange programme — as well as from monitoring undertaken in Output 3.1.2 and 3.1.3 — will be shared on regional and global platforms, such as UNDP's Nature Hub and the GEF's IW: LEARN platforms.

Output 3.1.2. Long-term plans and agreements developed in collaboration with academic and research institutions for measuring the long-term cost and benefits of SLM approaches across the country

Output 3.1.2 will involve collaborating with academic and research institutions — including the National Agriculture Research Institute and Hamelmalo Agriculture College — to improve monitoring of the costs and benefits of SLM interventions in the long term, including for the proposed project. This will involve developing a detailed framework for what would be required in terms of data, stakeholder roles and responsibilities and scope. In addition, the proposed project would provide bursaries for post-graduate students to undertake thesis studies around topics focused on SLM monitoring and cost-benefit analyses. By expanding the evidence base for SLM, Output 3.1.2 aims to incentivise and catalyse future public and private investment for these interventions and promote their further upscaling and replication across the country.

Output 3.1.3. National system for the monitoring of progress towards Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) developed

The proposed project will work with relevant line ministries, research institutions and academia to develop or enhance a national system for monitoring SLM, LDN, biodiversity and CCM indicators and targets within the country that contribute towards its Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs). Specifically, monitored MEAs that will be prioritised are those relating to the four themes captured in the Rio Markers, namely biodiversity, desertification, climate change mitigation and adaptation. The output will allow the GoSE to better report progress towards its international commitments under the Rio Conventions and better understand achievements, opportunities, gaps and needs towards further progress. This will be done by establishing and training an MEA Monitoring and Reporting Unit and providing digital and software equipment to support monitoring activities. By supporting the tracking of MEA progress, Output 3.1.3 will contribute towards focal CCM objective.

The project will ensure that gender-specific results, including the implementation of the Gender Action Plan (to be developed) are tracked and reported in PIRs, MTR and TE).

GEF Incremental cost reasoning

Baseline Scenario: Without GEF support, the Government of Eritrea and partners (e.g. IFAD's IADP, AfDB's DRSLP-V, and FAO's Hand-in-Hand initiative) would continue implementing localized, sector-specific land and water management activities with limited geographic and institutional coverage. These programs focus mainly on agricultural productivity and livelihood security, but lack resources for integrated watershed management and restoration, biodiversity conservation, and carbon-sequestration measures. Data gaps, fragmented planning, and weak coordination would persist, resulting in continued land degradation, biodiversity loss, and declining ecosystem services in the Aylagundet watershed.

GEF Alternative Scenario: GEF financing of USD 8.4 million catalyzes a transformative, integrated landscape approach that complements USD 30.6 million in co-financing. The GEF increment introduces: i) Ecosystem restoration and conservation measures on 6,294 ha of degraded land and improved management of 5,557 ha under SLM, directly reducing erosion and increasing carbon sequestration potential of ecosystems; ii) Strengthens biodiversity mainstreaming and community-based natural resources governance which increases community adoption of nature-based solution; iii) Policy and institutional strengthening, embedding SLM, LDN, and biodiversity mainstreaming in regional planning, capacities and budgets; and iv) Knowledge and monitoring systems for MEA reporting and national learning on SLM and biodiversity, ensuring increased investments and wider replication and scaling. These deliver global environmental benefits (GEBs) under the

LD-1, BD-1, and CCM-1 focal objectives—restoring ecosystems, conserving biodiversity, and sequestering ~1,655,379 tCo2e.

Incremental Value: GEF funds bridge critical gaps by i) Integrating ecosystem-based approaches within agricultural and pastoral systems; ii) Strengthening management capacities and institutional coordination across ministries (MLWE, MoA, FWA) and building community governance capacity; iii) Enabling gender-responsive livelihoods, alternative income options; iv) Establishing the national MEA Monitoring Unit to institutionalize tracking of Rio Convention targets.

The GEF increment therefore, transforms fragmented local actions into a coordinated ILM program that synergistically advances climate-resilience, nature-based solutions and LDN to generate lasting global environmental benefits while strengthening livelihoods and institutional capacities.

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[1] Topfer Muller Gabner. 2020. The Tem Sesiabun Gorado Model: A farmer-led knowledge diffusion approach to promote sustainable agriculture in northern Benin.

Coordination and Cooperation with Ongoing Initiatives and Project.

Does the GEF Agency expect to play an execution role on this project?

If so, please describe that role here. Also, please add a short explanation to describe cooperation with ongoing initiatives and projects, including potential for co-location and/or sharing of expertise/staffing

The project will be implemented using the National Implementation Modality (NIM). The UNDP Implementing Partner (IP)/GEF Executing Entity will be the MLWE, working closely with the Ministry of Local Government, MoA, FWA and authorities at the Debub Zoba level as potential Responsible Parties. Day to day management of the project will be undertaken by a Project Management Unit (PMU), which will report to the IP and a National Project Steering Committee.

Several key ongoing projects have been identified with strong linkages to the proposed project (Table 1). These projects have potential to provide co-financing, opportunities for replication or complementarity, or best practices and lessons learned.

The proposed project will therefore build on the results of these ongoing projects and similar projects that have been completed, thereby maximising the potential impact of each project through the incremental scaling up of complementary and related interventions.

Table 1. Potential synergies between ongoing initiatives and the proposed project.

Project	Synergies and potential collaboration with proposed project
Restoring degraded forest landscapes and promoting community-based, sustainable, and integrated natural resource management in the Rora Habab Plateau, Nakfa sub-zoba, Northern Red Sea Region of Eritrea (UNDP, 2024–2031, US$8,260,600)	• Outputs 3.1.2 and 3.1.3 will benefit from this project's system to monitor the impacts and benefits of restoration on landscapes, ecosystems and biodiversity. • Lessons learned and best practices from this project's capacity building of extension agencies and restoration interventions will inform Outcomes 2.1 and 2.2. • There is potential for Output 3.1.1 to build on or collaborate with the project's strategy for upscaling lessons learned across Zobas.

Mainstreaming climate risk considerations in food security and IWRM in Tsilima Plain and upper catchment area (UNDP, 2024–2029, US$9,050,000)	• Capacity building for extension services under this project is complementary to Outcome 2.1. • Output 3.1.1 will build on this project's communication strategy and strategy for scaling up lesson learned and informing decision-making at the national level.
Building Community Based Integrated and Climate Resilient Natural Resources Management and Enhancing Sustainable Livelihood in the South-Eastern Escarpments and Adjacent Coastal Areas of Eritrea (FAO, 2023–2030, US$15,680,310)	• Outcome 1.1 will benefit from mechanisms for cross-sectoral national and subnational coordination and decision-making programming for climate change adaptation, SLM and biodiversity conservation. • The proposed project will replicate and build on capacity building for extension services and the use of farmer field schools through Outcome 2.1.
Integrated Agriculture Development Project (IFAD), 2021–2027, US$51,641,000)	• Output 2.1.1 will replicate this project's development and implementation of Watershed Management Plans. • Outcome 2.1 will learn from and replicate this project's approach to extension service capacity building and the development of FFSs. • Best practices and lessons learned from this project's agricultural interventions will inform interventions under Output 2.2.2.
Drought Resilience and Sustainable Livelihoods Programme – Project V (AfDB, 2020–2025, US$19,135,000).	• Outputs 2.2.1 and 2.2.2 will use similar rainwater harvesting, irrigation and soil and water conservation measures implemented by this project. • This project's approach to household agricultural packages and agro processing and value addition equipment may be replicated under Output 2.2.3.
Hand in Hand Eritrea (HiH, FAO, 2021–ongoing)	• Outputs 2.2.2 and 2.2.3 will learn from the investment potential analyses undertaken by HiH and consider methods for introducing high potential crops in the target area, including potatoes.

Core Indicators

Indicator 3 Area of land and ecosystems under restoration

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
6294	0	0	0

Indicator 3.1 Area of degraded agricultural lands under restoration

Disaggregation Type	Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
Rangeland and pasture	6,294.00			

Indicator 3.2 Area of forest and forest land under restoration

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

Indicator 3.3 Area of natural grass and woodland under restoration

Disaggregation Type	Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
Woodlands				

Indicator 3.4 Area of wetlands (including estuaries, mangroves) under restoration

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

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)
11851	0	0	0

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)
6,300.00			

Indicator 4.2 Area of landscapes under third-party certification incorporating biodiversity considerations

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)
5,551.00			

Indicator 4.4 Area of High Conservation Value or other forest loss avoided

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

Indicator 4.5 Terrestrial OECMs supported

Name of the OECMs	WDPA-ID	Total Ha (Expected at PIF)	Total Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Total Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Total Ha (Achieved at TE)

Documents (Document(s) that justifies the HCVF)

Title

Indicator 6 Greenhouse Gas Emissions Mitigated

Total Target Benefit	(At PIF)	(At CEO Endorsement)	(Achieved at MTR)	(Achieved at TE)
Expected metric tons of CO_2e (direct)	1655379	0	0	0
Expected metric tons of CO_2e (indirect)	0	0	0	0

Indicator 6.1 Carbon Sequestered or Emissions Avoided in the AFOLU (Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use) sector

Total Target Benefit	(At PIF)	(At CEO Endorsement)	(Achieved at MTR)	(Achieved at TE)
Expected metric tons of CO_2e (direct)	1,655,379			
Expected metric tons of CO_2e (indirect)				
Anticipated start year of accounting	2027			
Duration of accounting	20			

Indicator 6.2 Emissions Avoided Outside AFOLU (Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use) Sector

Total Target Benefit	(At PIF)	(At CEO Endorsement)	(Achieved at MTR)	(Achieved at TE)
Expected metric tons of CO_2e (direct)				
Expected metric tons of CO_2e (indirect)				
Anticipated start year of accounting				
Duration of accounting				

Indicator 6.3 Energy Saved (Use this sub-indicator in addition to the sub-indicator 6.2 if applicable)

Total Target Benefit	Energy (MJ) (At PIF)	Energy (MJ) (At CEO Endorsement)	Energy (MJ) (Achieved at MTR)	Energy (MJ) (Achieved at TE)
Target Energy Saved (MJ)				

Indicator 6.4 Increase in Installed Renewable Energy Capacity per Technology (Use this sub-indicator in addition to the sub-indicator 6.2 if applicable)

Technology	Capacity (MW) (Expected at PIF)	Capacity (MW) (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Capacity (MW) (Achieved at MTR)	Capacity (MW) (Achieved at TE)

Indicator 11 People benefiting from GEF-financed investments

	Number (Expected at PIF)	Number (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Number (Achieved at MTR)	Number (Achieved at TE)
Female	12,660			
Male	13,170			
Total	**25,830**	**0**	0	**0**

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

Core Indicator 3: The area of land to be restored was taken as 6,294 ha of degraded grazing land (Sub-indicator 3.1) to be placed under restoration practices.

Core Indicator 4: The area of land placed under improved practices includes 6,294 ha of grazing land, 6 ha of woodland (CI 4.1) and 5,551 ha (3,419 ha highly degraded; 1,432 ha -moderately fertile and 706 ha-fertile) cropland through improved agricultural practices (Sub-indicator 4.3). The combined total area of landscape under improved practices is therefore 11,851 ha.

Core Indicator 6: Greenhouse gas emissions were calculated from carbon sequestered in the Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use (AFOLU) sector (Sub-indicator 6.5), based on the hectares of grassland to be restored and degraded cropland to be better managed. Using the FAO EX-ACT (V9.4.2) tool (Annex J), a change of land use of 6,294 ha through forest restoration was estimated to amount to 1,289 mtCO2-e sequestered. Additionally, carbon sequestered from improved agricultural practices was calculated as 357 mtCO2-e. Together these values of carbon sequestration were estimated as 1,655,379 mtCO2-e.

Core Indicator 11: According to Debub Zoba-level experts, the total population of the target area is 25,830, with the whole population expected to benefit from SLM in the watershed, awareness raising

The achievement of targets under Core Indicator 3 and 4 will be supported by the development of the integrated Watershed Management Plan under Output 2.1.1.

Key Risks

	Rating	Explanation of risk and mitigation measures
CONTEXT		
Climate	Moderate	Risk: Although the interventions will be designed to be inherently resilient to climate change impacts, climate events such as droughts or intense rainfall events may disrupt implementation, or damage agricultural land or restored ecosystems before they are rehabilitated. Additionally, climate hazards may increase local competition for land, water and other resources, leading to local conflict and disputes. Mitigation: Timelines for on-the-ground interventions will have buffers to allow for flexibility to avoid short-term forecasted climate hazards that may impact the project and prevent delays. In addition, planting will be undertaken in the wet season to reduce the risk of droughts impacting early-stage plant growth; while terracing and check dams will be constructed outside of the peak wet season to avoid damage from rainfall events. The introduction of improved irrigation and boreholes in downstream areas prior to rehabilitation of agricultural land will assist in mitigating the impacts of droughts on agricultural production. This will also assist in reducing potential local conflict resulting from these climate hazards impacting natural resource availability.
Environmental and Social	Moderate	Risk: The most vulnerable groups (women, the youth, the elderly, and people with disabilities) are excluded and do not receive benefits form the project. Permanent enclosures and the construction of terraces may limit existing livelihoods by restricting certain activities in target areas, potentially triggering local tensions and conflict over land ownership and use. Moreover, project interventions in natural areas and agricultural land may result in further

		degradation of landscapes. Mitigation: A pre-SESP has been developed to identify potential ESS risks. This will assist in informing the direction for further assessments at the PPG phase, which will include the development of a Stakeholder Engagement Plan (including a Grievance Redress Mechanism), Environmental and Social Management Framework/Plan and Gender Action Plan. Moreover, project interventions have been designed to be inclusive of all vulnerable groups. These vulnerable groups will be included in project decision-making with through a detailed stakeholder engagement process during the PPG phase. In addition, a comprehensive conflict risk assessment and analysis will be undertaken during the PPG phase which will assist in identifying potential local conflicts related to project activities and changes in land tenure arrangements and propose appropriate mitigation measures. SLM interventions to be used by the project have been demonstrated by similar projects to have positive rather than negative impacts on ecosystems and biodiversity. Moreover, on-the-ground SLM interventions will specifically target already-degraded areas, minimizing the impact on existing biodiversity or natural areas. This will also limit the potential negative impacts of restricting community activities in certain areas, which will be further mitigated through the introduction of alternative livelihood practices to replace ones that contribute to degradation. Improved water infiltration through terracing, check dams and micro-basins will support groundwater recharge and water availability in downstream agricultural areas, minimising the impact of introduced water extraction and irrigation infrastructure.
Political and Governance	Low	Risk: Limited cross-sectoral coordination between national line ministries may delay implementation. The GoSE may focus more on other security or humanitarian challenges in the country (for example conflict). Although tensions have reduced over recent years, instability related to border and regional militarization and conflict with neighbouring countries may result in the displacement of project beneficiaries or restricted access to certain areas, delaying or impacting project interventions. Mitigation: Relevant line institutions (including the MLWE, MoA, Ministry of Local Government, FWA and Zoba-level representatives) will have representatives on the National Project Steering Committee. These institutions have already shown buy-in and long-term commitment to the project. The project team will remain updated on potential national emergencies that may draw GoSE commitment away from the project and will plan contingency activities where necessary. Working with national stakeholders, the project team will remain up to date on potential conflicts and tensions that may affect project interventions and adjust timeframes and contingency plans accordingly. A detailed comprehensive conflict risk assessment and analysis will be undertaken during the PPG phase, particularly focussing on the potential negative impacts of local and national conflict on the most vulnerable groups, including women, the youth and internally displaced persons in relation to project interventions.

INNOVATION

Institutional and Policy	Low	Risk: Project interventions do not align with existing or planned policies or strategies. Mitigation: The project has been designed to specifically contribute to targets and priorities in major national policies or strategies. Indeed, the project will support the capacity of the GoSE to achieve and monitor its MEAs that inform many of its principal policies and strategies. The project is therefore not expected to contradict any existing policies or strategies within the country.
Technological	Low	Risk: The required expertise for the design of the project during PPG and implementation of the project is not secured or is delayed. Mitigation: The project will draw on the expertise of UNDP and MLWE to identify relevant international and national expertise to assist with project design and implementation.
Financial and Business Model	Low	Risk: Sanctions may impact the cost and ease of procurement for goods from outside the country. Budget allocations may be insufficient to achieve project goals. Mitigation: The budget will be designed to accommodate for local prices as well as minor fluctuations in inflation rates or costs during the PPG phase. Where possible goods will be sourced locally or regionally to manage costs.
EXECUTION		
Capacity	Moderate	Risk: Project partners do not have the technical or human capacity to implement and sustain project activities. Mitigation: Technical capacity building for stakeholders — specifically regional representatives who will be involved in project implementation on the ground — will receive capacity building through Outcomes 1.1 and 2.1. Outcome 3.1 will assist national institutions in engaging with and monitoring MEAs that the project will contribute to, incentivising and capacitating ongoing commitment to their implementation and maintenance. In addition, buy-in and commitment from other stakeholders including community members will support commitments to project sustainability.
Fiduciary	Moderate	Risk: Project funds are not properly managed or there is a delay in the mobilisation of co-finance. Challenges with procurement in the country may also result in delays. Mitigation: GEF and UNDP fund guidelines will be adhered to with regard to fund management. UNDP will provide expertise and guidance to MLWE to facilitate procurement processes.
Stakeholder	Low	Risk: Interest in the project by target communities may diminish over time. Mitigation: The project concept has been developed according to the site-specific needs and priorities of target stakeholders. Communities will be engaged in detail during the PPG phase to ensure and refine community buy-in. The project has also been designed with a strong awareness-raising and capacity building component.

Other		N/A

Overall Risk Rating	Moderate	The overall risk rating for the project is Moderate Further assessments will be undertaken during PPG to determine level of social and environmental safeguards and appropriate mitigation measures to deliver positive outcomes for people and nature.

C. ALIGNMENT WITH GEF-8 PROGRAMMING STRATEGIES AND COUNTRY/REGIONAL PRIORITIES

Describe how the proposed interventions are aligned with GEF- 8 programming strategies and country and regional priorities, including how these country strategies and plans relate to the multilateral environmental agreements.

Confirm if any country policies that might contradict with intended outcomes of the project have been identified, and how the project will address this.

For projects aiming to generate biodiversity benefits (regardless of what the source of the resources is - i.e., BD, CC or LD), please identify which of the 23 targets of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework the project contributes to and explain how. (max. 500 words, approximately 1 page)

The proposed project will contribute to SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), SDG 13 (Climate Action) and SDG 15 (Life on Land). GEF focal areas to be targeted include Land Degradation (LD) with additional benefits for Biodiversity (BD) and Climate Change Mitigation (CCM).

Outcome 2.2 will directly support the two GEF-8 LD focal area objectives LD-1 and LD-2 through improved agricultural land management, soil and water conservation, restoration and community-based enclosure practices in the upper watershed, and alternative livelihoods and practices. as that reduce land degradation. The above approaches will reduce anthropogenic drivers of degradation while reversing current degradation. LD-4 and BD-4 will also be supported through the mainstreaming of SLM, LDN and biodiversity conservation into regional policies and development processes (Output 1.1.2). Outcome 2.2 will also contribute to BD-1.2 and BD-1.3 through the implementation of permanent enclosures and active restoration of native plant species in degraded lands. In addition, community awareness-raising regarding biodiversity conservation and the introduction of alternative livelihood options that minimise the unsustainable use of natural resources will further support the conservation of natural ecosystems and the sustainable use of biodiversity (BD-1.2). The GEF-8's CCM focal area objective CCM-1.1 will be supported by the introduction of solar-powered borehole pumps and solar-powered cold storage units (Outputs 2.2.2 and 2.2.3) and CCM-1.4 through the use of nature-based solutions that improve carbon sequestration (Output 2.2.1). Through these outputs, the project will also contribute towards eight targets under the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, namely Target 1, Target 2, Target 5, Target 9, Target 10, Target 21 and Target 22.

The proposed project is closely aligned with several national policies, strategies and plans (Table 2). Specific alignment with these and other national priorities will be elaborated on during the PPG phase, particularly the NBSAP, which is currently being revised.

Table 2. Proposed project alignment with key policies, plans, strategies and proclamations.

Policy, plan, strategy or proclamation	**Proposed project alignment and/or contribution**
National LDN Targets (2018)	The project aligns closely with Eritrea's Land Degradation Neutrality Targets and will contribute to LDN being achieved by 2030 nationally and at the Debub Zoba level.
NAP for Eritrea to Combat Desertification and Mitigate the Effects of Drought (2002)	The project aligns directly with i) improving knowledge; ii) empowering people and institutions; iii) reducing poverty; and iv) directly arresting land degradation.

BUR I 2021	Outcome 2.2 will contribute to Action 8 (Program of Dissemination of improved traditional biomass stove) and Action 12 (Forest Management and silvicultural activities).
Land Reform Proclamation (No.58/1994)	Output 1.1.1 will directly promote the implementation of this Proclamation in the Debub region.
NBSAP 2014–2020	The project will support: i) the rehabilitation of degraded terrestrial ecosystems; and ii) the conservation and sustainable use of the agrobiodiversity resources whilst ensuring the socially-fair distribution of benefits from national agro biodiversity resources.
Forest and Wildlife Conservation and Development Proclamation No. 155/2006	The proposed project will support the conservation of indigenous species, reforestation of degraded areas and promoting the awareness and participation of rural communities for conservation and the sustainable management of forests.

D. POLICY REQUIREMENTS

Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment:

We confirm that gender dimensions relevant to the project have been addressed as per GEF Policy and are clearly articulated in the Project Description (Section B).

Yes

Stakeholder Engagement

We confirm that key stakeholders were consulted during PIF development as required per GEF policy, their relevant roles to project outcomes and plan to develop a Stakeholder Engagement Plan before CEO endorsement has been clearly articulated in the Project Description (Section B).

Yes

Were the following stakeholders consulted during project identification phase:

Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities: Yes

Civil Society Organizations: Yes

Private Sector: No

Provide a brief summary and list of names and dates of consultations

During the preparation of the preliminary concept of the project, representatives of local communities, community elders and local farmers were consulted to determine their priorities. In addition, several civil society organisations (CSOs), including local representatives and members of the National Union of Eritrean Women (NUEW) and the National Union if Eritrean Youth and Students (NUEYS), were also consulted. Following this, an in-country mission was undertaken during the PIF stage in Asmara, Eritrea, from 12 to 16 May 2025. Key informant interviews were held with relevant stakeholders including line ministries, Zoba-level technical experts and international organisations, and aimed to: i) validate and expand the existing country and site-level context regarding land degradation; ii) identify existing projects or initiatives in the country and target sites to determine opportunities for complementary or upscaling; and iii) identify potential interventions that inform the design of the project. The stakeholders engaged with, dates of the consultations and expected relation of the stakeholder to the project are presented in Table 3, with a more detailed summary provided as a separate Stakeholder Engagement Summary.

Table 3. Summary of stakeholders consulted during the PIF stage of project development.

Date/Stakeholder	Expected role of the stakeholder in the project
National-level government institution	
12 May 2025: Ministry of Land, Water and Environment (MLWE), including GEF Focal Point, Water Resources Department and Land Department representatives	The MLWE will be the Implementing Partner for the proposed project and play a central role in project implementation and coordination. The MLWE will provide national expertise on the Land Reform Proclamation through the Land Department as well as introducing boreholes through the Water Resources department. Representatives from the MLWE will also benefit from the introduction of national systems for monitoring MEA targets.
13 May 2025: Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), including Natural Resource and Irrigation Development Division, Agricultural Extensions Department and Crops and Livestock Development representatives	The MoA will likely have representation on the Project Steering Committee and be a Responsible Party. They will provide expertise on sustainable agriculture and SLM interventions under the project. Representatives from the MoA will also benefit from capacity building for alignment with Rio Conventions and the introduction of national systems for monitoring MEA targets.
13 May 2025: Forestry and Wildlife Authority (FWA)	The FWA will likely have representation on the Project Steering Committee and be a Responsible Party. They will provide expertise on restoration activities and nursery upkeep, including the selection of appropriate native tree species for restoration.
Regional-level representatives	
15 May 2025: Zoba-level agricultural and environmental experts	Zoba-level experts will be heavily involved in the selection of specific sites, setting priorities, engaging with communities and implementing project activities on the ground. Technical experts will benefit from the development of a WMP for Aylagundat as well as technical capacity building under Output 2.1.2.
International organizations	
15 May 2025: International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)	IFAD is involved in developing similar projects in Eritrea, which provide potential for complementarities, lessons learned and co-finance.
16 May 2025: African Development Bank (AfDB)	Similarly to IFAD, Projects currently implemented by AfDB have the potential to provide complementarities, lessons learned and co-finance.

(Please upload to the portal documents tab any stakeholder engagement plan or assessments that have been done during the PIF development phase.)

Private Sector

Will there be private sector engagement in the project?

Yes

And if so, has its role been described and justified in the section B project description?

Yes

Environmental and Social Safeguard (ESS) Risks

We confirm that we have provided indicative information regarding Environmental and Social risks associated with the proposed project or program and any measures to address such risks and impacts (this information should be presented in Annex D).

Yes

Overall Project/Program Risk Classification

PIF	CEO Endorsement/Approval	MTR	TE
Medium/Moderate			

E. OTHER REQUIREMENTS

Knowledge management

We confirm that an approach to Knowledge Management and Learning has been clearly described in the Project Description (Section B)

Yes

ANNEX A: FINANCING TABLES

GEF Financing Table

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

GEF Agency	Trust Fund	Country/ Regional/ Global	Focal Area	Programming of Funds	Grant / Non-Grant	GEF Project Grant($)	Agency Fee($)	Total GEF Financing ($)
UNDP	GET	Eritrea	Land Degradation	LD STAR Allocation: LD-1	Grant	5,014,772.00	476,403.00	5,491,175.00
UNDP	GET	Eritrea	Climate Change	CC STAR Allocation: CCM-1-1	Grant	792,103.00	75,250.00	867,353.00
UNDP	GET	Eritrea	Climate Change	CC STAR Allocation: CCM-1-4	Grant	858,111.00	81,521.00	939,632.00
UNDP	GET	Eritrea	Land Degradation	LD STAR Allocation: LD-2	Grant	1,602,844.00	152,270.00	1,755,114.00
UNDP	GET	Eritrea	Land Degradation	LD STAR Allocation: LD-4	Grant	133,570.00	12,689.00	146,259.00
Total GEF Resources ($)						**8,401,400.00**	**798,133.00**	**9,199,533.00**

Project Preparation Grant (PPG)

Is Project Preparation Grant requested?

true

PPG Amount ($)

200000

PPG Agency Fee ($)

19000

GEF Agency	Trust Fund	Country/ Regional/ Global	Focal Area	Programming of Funds	Grant / Non-Grant	PPG($)	Agency Fee($)	Total PPG Funding($)

UNDP	GET	Eritrea	Land Degradation	LD STAR Allocation: LD-1	Grant	119,380.00	11,341.00	130,721.00
UNDP	GET	Eritrea	Climate Change	CC STAR Allocation: CCM-1-1	Grant	18,856.00	1,791.00	20,647.00
UNDP	GET	Eritrea	Climate Change	CC STAR Allocation: CCM-1-4	Grant	20,427.00	1,941.00	22,368.00
UNDP	GET	Eritrea	Land Degradation	LD STAR Allocation: LD-2	Grant	38,157.00	3,625.00	41,782.00
UNDP	GET	Eritrea	Land Degradation	LD STAR Allocation: LD-4	Grant	3,180.00	302.00	3,482.00
Total PPG Amount ($)						**200,000.00**	**19,000.00**	**219,000.00**

Please provide justification

Sources of Funds for Country Star Allocation

GEF Agency	Trust Fund	Country/ Regional/ Global	Focal Area	Sources of Funds	Total($)
UNDP	GET	Eritrea	Climate Change	CC STAR Allocation	1,850,000.00
UNDP	GET	Eritrea	Biodiversity	BD STAR Allocation	3,825,000.00
UNDP	GET	Eritrea	Land Degradation	LD STAR Allocation	3,743,533.00
Total GEF Resources					**9,418,533.00**

Indicative Focal Area Elements

Programming Directions	Trust Fund	GEF Project Financing($)	Co-financing($)
LD-1	GET	5,014,772.00	18141710
CCM-1-1	GET	792,103.00	2961769
CCM-1-4	GET	858,111.00	3208583
LD-2	GET	1,602,844.00	5804250
LD-4	GET	133,570.00	483688

Total Project Cost		**8,401,400.00**	**30,600,000.00**

Indicative Co-financing

Sources of Co-financing	Name of Co-financier	Type of Co-financing	Investment Mobilized	Amount($)
GEF Agency	UNDP	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	100000
GEF Agency	UNDP	Grant	Investment mobilized	500000
Recipient Country Government	Government of the State of Eritrea	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	25000000
Others	Local Communities/Beneficiaries	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	4000000
Civil Society Organization	NUEW	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	1000000
Total Co-financing				**30,600,000.00**

Describe how any "Investment Mobilized" was identified

The mobilized investment was identified and determined through discussions at the senior management level between UNDP and the government, to ensure UNDP's effective contribution to the project's implementation by providing $500,000 in cash to support Programme activities, Monitoring and Evaluation as well as Project Management costs. Co-financing is expected from a range of stakeholder groups including the public sector, CSOs and beneficiary communities. This co-finance has been selected to maximise the potential scope of the project, and promote further buy-in and ownership by key project stakeholders.

ANNEX B: ENDORSEMENTS

GEF Agency(ies) Certification

GEF Agency Type	Name	Date	Project Contact Person	Phone	Email
GEF Agency Coordinator	UNDP	9/15/2025	Nancy Bennet		nancy.bennet@undp.org
Project Coordinator	UNDP	9/15/2025	Onesimus Muhwezi		onesimus.muhwezi@undp.org

Record of Endorsement of GEF Operational Focal Point (s) on Behalf of the Government(s):

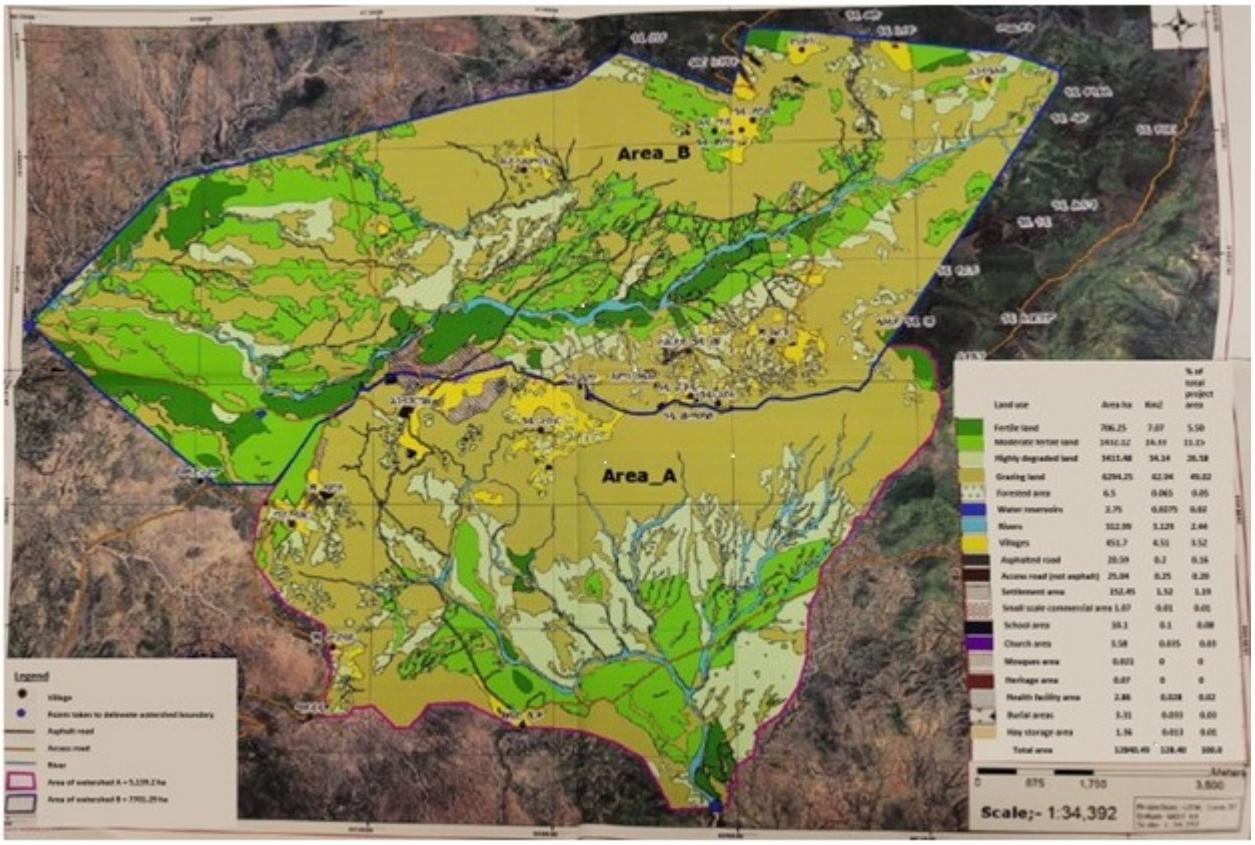
Name	Position	Ministry	Date (MM/DD/YYYY)
Kibrom Asmerom	Acting Director General, Department of Environment	Ministry of Land, Water, and Environment	9/9/2025

ANNEX C: PROJECT LOCATION

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

No.	Specific name	Degrees decimal (N)	Degrees decimal (E)	Elevation (m)
1	Connecting river between Tsaeda qelay and Fiqya Cheqemte	14.595062	38.715804	1,469
2	Mai-Tsebri bridge	14.573226	38.693673	1,456
3	Wala Adrosom	14.547831	38.724562	1,512
4	Tip of Adikotoyo	14.614674	38.827592	2,034
5	Adi-mai Mecheqat	14.612066	38.847037	2,044
6	Daero Kunat	14.616946	38.807923	2,062
7	Kudo Himbasha mislal Feres	14.608901	38.779212	1,952
8	Adi-Begio	14.613656	38.787787	2,116
9	Duero Kunat (Italian cemetery)	14.606709	38.80511	2,109
10	Adi Wolo church	14.616032	38.818398	2,047
11	Upper Geza Keren Endabora	14.568066	38.82863	1,824
12	Geza-Hamle	14.547607	38.733966	1,540
13	Adi qolaqul environs	14.609051	38.854959	1,863

Map of Eritrea showing the location of the target area within the Debub Zoba



Map of the target area showing details of land use

ANNEX D: ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL SAFEGUARDS SCREEN AND RATING

(PIF level) Attach agency safeguard screen form including rating of risk types and overall risk rating.

Title
Eritrea SLM PIF_pre-SESP_08 April 2026

ANNEX E: RIO MARKERS

Climate Change Mitigation	Climate Change Adaptation	Biodiversity	Land Degradation
No Contribution 0	No Contribution 0	No Contribution 0	Principal Objective 2

ANNEX F: TAXONOMY WORKSHEET

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Influencing Models			
	Transform policy and regulatory environments		
	Strengthen institutional capacity and decision-making		
	Convene multi-stakeholder alliances		

Stakeholders			
	Private Sector		
		SMEs	
		Individuals/Entrepreneurs	
	Beneficiaries		
	Local Communities		
	Civil Society		
		Community Based Organization	
		Academia	
	Type of Engagement		
		Information Dissemination	
		Partnership	
		Consultation	
		Participation	
	Communications		
		Awareness Raising	
		Education	
		Public Campaigns	
		Behavior Change	
Capacity, Knowledge and Research			
	Enabling Activities		
	Capacity Development		
	Knowledge Generation and Exchange		
	Learning		
		Theory of Change	
		Adaptive Management	
		Indicators to Measure Change	
	Knowledge and Learning		
		Knowledge Management	
		Capacity Development	
		Learning	
	Stakeholder Engagement Plan		
Gender Equality			
	Gender Mainstreaming		
		Beneficiaries	
		Women groups	
		Sex-disaggregated indicators	
		Gender-sensitive indicators	
	Gender results areas		
		Access and control over natural resources	
		Participation and leadership	
		Access to benefits and	
		Capacity development services	
		Awareness raising	
Focal Area/Theme			

	Land Degradation		
		Sustainable Land Management	
			Restoration and Rehabilitation of Degraded Lands
			Ecosystem Approach
			Integrated and Cross-sectoral approach
			Community-Based NRM
			Sustainable Livelihoods
			Income Generating Activities
			Sustainable Agriculture
			Sustainable Pasture Management
			Sustainable Forest/Woodland Management
			Improved Soil and Water Management Techniques
		Land Degradation Neutrality	
			Land Productivity
			Land Cover and Land cover change
	Climate Change		
		Climate Change Mitigation	
			Agriculture, Forestry, and other Land Use