

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

Review PIF and Make a recommendation

Basic project information

GEF ID

12080

Countries

Eritrea

Project Name

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

Agencies

UNDP

Date received by PM

9/20/2025

Review completed by PM

Program Manager

Asha Bobb-Semple

Focal Area

Multi Focal Area

Project Type

FSP

GEF-8 PROJECT IDENTIFICATION FORM (PIF) REVIEW SHEET

1. General Project Information / Eligibility

a) Does the project meet the criteria for eligibility for GEF funding?

b) Is the General Project Information table correctly populated?

Secretariat's Comments

4/7/2026

As part of our GEF-wide effort, we are working with agencies to streamline and refine project titles. For this project, we suggest updating the title to: "Promoting Sustainable Land Management to Achieve Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN), Enhance Livelihoods, and Strengthen the Resilience of Farming Communities in the Aylagundet Watershed, Debub Region, Eritrea"

Please note that a new LoE is not required; however, kindly inform the OFP of this change and request agreement by email. Please upload the email to the Portal.

11/11/2025

Cleared.

10/29/2025

Thank you for your comments. Please see follow up comments below.

b) ii) Our view of the project information table does not show AFLOU sector selected, it is still blank. Please see below.

Project Title:	Promoting Sustainable Land Management to Achieve Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN), Enhance Livelihoods, and Strengthen the Resilience of Farming Communities in the Aylagundet Watershed, Debub Region, Eritrea		
Region:	Africa	GEF Project ID:	12080
Country(ies):	Eritrea	Type of Project:	FSP
GEF Agency(ies):	UNDP	GEF Agency ID:	10304
Executing Partner:	Ministry of Land, Water and Environment (MLWE)	Executing Partner Type:	Government
GEF Focal Area (s):	Multi Focal Area	Submission Date :	9/16/2025
Project Sector (CCM Only):			

10/3/2025

Not fully.

a) The project as written/presented is mostly an LD focal area project, with limited evidence of alignment with the BD focal area objectives, although there maybe BD co-benefits. In terms of CCM, we note the potential CCM co-benefits, however while there is some alignment with one Output of the project, there are other outputs which are not eligible. Please see more detailed comments throughout the review sheet for response/revision.

b)

i) Related to the comment above, please include the CCM sector in the project information table.

ii) As the project is not a multi-trust fund project, please change the project type to GEF Trust Fund.

Agency's Comments

Agency Response: 9 April 2026

The Project title has been modified as guided to remove ?Resilience? and now reads as follows:

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

This change has been effected in the PIF submission package including annexes (Pre-SESP Screening and Stakeholder consultation Report).

The GEF-OFP endorsement (email) for the project title amendment has been uploaded to the portal.

UNDP Response: 07-11-2025

b-ii). AFOLU was included in the project summary table but mistakenly not captured in the portal submission.

UNDP Response: 28-10-2025

a) The narrative and justification for the project including the BD and CCM focal areas has been expanded throughout the PIF document. Please see responses to later comments for further details.

b.i) AFOLU was already included as the CCM Project Sector. Although the project includes a smaller renewable energy component in terms of the introduction of solar-powered water pumps, the primary target for measuring avoided GHG is carbon sequestration through AFOLU.

ii) The Project Type section in the project information table has been changed from Multi-Trust Fund to GEF Trust Fund.

2. Project Summary

Does the project summary concisely describe the problem to be addressed, the project objective and the strategies to deliver the GEBs or adaptation benefits and other key expected results?

Secretariat's Comments

10/29/2025

Cleared.

10/3/2025

The Project Summary clearly identifies the core problem (land degradation, soil fertility decline, and water scarcity), the objective (integrated SLM for LDN, livelihoods, and resilience), and the strategies to achieve results (institutional strengthening, SLM practices, capacity building, and knowledge management). The description is comprehensive, however please include the GEBs and other key expected results.

Agency's Comments

UNDP Response: 28-10-2025

GEB contributions and expected results have been added to the Project Summary.

3 Indicative Project Overview

3.1 a) Is the project objective presented as a concise statement and clear?

b) Are the components, outcomes and outputs sound, appropriate and sufficiently clear to achieve the project objective and the core indicators per the stated Theory of Change?

Secretariat's Comments

11/11/2025

Cleared

10/29/2025

Please see follow up comments below.

i) Outputs 2.1.3 and 2.2.4 still make reference to afforestation and cook stoves respectively. As indicated under question 5, these activities are ineligible for GEF financing. Please exclude.

10/3/2025

a) Not fully. Please make the project objective more specific and include the targeted project area.

b) Two important elements seem to be missing from the planned Outputs- i) plans to establish or strengthen integrated land use planning to ensure the enabling environment is conducive to achieving LDN; ii) developing a mechanism to monitor progress at landscape level and which could then be utilized after the project has ended.

Please see additional comments under question 5.

Agency's Comments

UNDP Response: 07-11-2025

3.1 a-i): Reference to afforestation and cookstoves has been removed from the PIF.

Output 2.1.3. Gender inclusive community awareness-raising and training on SLM, sustainable agriculture, ecosystem services and sustainable natural resource use. There is no reference to afforestation in the output or supporting activities.

Output 2.2.4 and related interventions on cook stoves have been removed from the PIF.

UNDP Response: 28-10-2025

a) The project objective has been rephrased to include the target project area and provide the specific main avenues for SLM that the project will be focused on. The revised project objective is:

?Promote sustainable land management (SLM) practices through 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.?

b) An additional output: Regional Integrated Land Use Plan developed for Debub that incorporates SLM, LDN, biodiversity conservation and CCM principles, has been added to Outcome 1.1 to promote a conducive enabling environment in the Debub Region. A community-based monitoring mechanism has been incorporated into Output 1.1.3, which will be implemented through the community-based land and water management committees.

3.2 Are gender dimensions, knowledge management, and monitoring and evaluation included within the project components and appropriately funded?

Secretariat's Comments

10/29/2025

Cleared.

10/8/2025

Not fully.

Under M&E (5.1), please 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).

Agency's Comments

UNDP Response: 28-10-2025

Reference to the Gender Action Plan and its specific gender-result areas has been added to Output 5.1 under M&E.b

3.3 a) Are the components adequately funded?

b) Are the GEF Project Financing and Co-Financing contributions to PMC proportional?

c) Is the PMC equal to or below 5% of the total GEF grant for FSPs or 10% for MSPs? If the requested PMC is above the caps, has an exception (e.g. for regional projects) been sufficiently substantiated?

Secretariat's Comments

11/11/2025

Cleared.

10/29/2025

Investment mobilized is still selected for NUEW. Please correct.

10/8/2025:

Not fully, please see comments below.

i) In-kind is normally classified as 'recurrent expenditure?'. Please request the agency to revise the where in-kind is classified as 'investment mobilized? to 'recurrent expenditures?.

ii) Grant is investment mobilized normally. Please request the agency to revise where grant is classified as 'recurrent expenditures? to 'investment mobilized?.

Agency's Comments

UNDP Response: 07-11-2025

3.3. b): NUEW co-financing was corrected in the previous resubmission from investment mobilised to recurrent expenditure as reflected in the PIF indicative co-financing table as shown below. There may have been an error during portal entry which has been corrected now.

Local Communities	Local Communities/Beneficiaries/Communities' participation in soil and water conservation works	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	4,000,000
Civil Society	National Union of Eritrean Women (NUEW) and National Union of Eritrean Youth and Students (NUEYS)	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	1,000,000
(select)		(select)		
(select)		(select)		
Total Co-financing				30,600,000

UNDP Response: 28-10-2025

All in-kind co-financing allocations are reflected as 'recurrent expenditures?' and all grant co-financing is reflected as 'investment mobilized?.

4 Project Outline

A. Project Rationale

4.1 SITUATION ANALYSIS

a) is the current situation (including global environmental problems, key contextual drivers of environmental degradation, climate vulnerability) clearly and adequately described from a systems perspective?

b) Are the key barriers and enablers identified?

Secretariat's Comments

12/11/2025

Cleared.

11/11/2025

Thank you for your response and comments.

Please note we are fine with the project retaining the CCM focal area alignment as well although small. This can be further assessed/analyzed during the PPG phase and prior to CEO Endorsement.

10/29/2025

Please see follow up comment below.

i) We note the preference to retain the project as multi-focal area which is welcome. However this case the context is missing key information on the global importance of the targeted area for biodiversity. This rationale would have to be provided including an indication of whether or not the targeted area is a KBA or buffers key protected areas etc. including naming these areas.

ii) Please also note interventions in areas designated as HCFV, please refer to the requirements associated with this indicator including naming the forested area and proof of the designation by a third party or evidence that it meets the HCFV criteria. This comment is also related to CI 4.4

10/3/2025

a) Given the barriers and targeted interventions, the background would benefit from additional information on the socio-economic context. What is the current context as it relates to land tenure, private sector stakeholders and value chain development and gender and the relation of these aspects to sustainable land management.

Related to the above, please describe the context of the different stakeholder groups and their expected roles related to project objective and components.

b) Currently the information on the barriers is quite limited to a bullet list. Please provide further details on the barriers outlined.

Agency's Comments

U:UNDP Response: 26-11-2025

Your feedback and guidance is appreciated. The PIF has been updated and project aligned with LD and CCM Focal Areas accordingly. BD Focal Area STAR funds have been allocated to LD.

UNDP Response: 07-11-2025

4.1 a-i) The targeted watershed is not a key biodiversity area and does not have biodiversity of global importance. However, proposed ecosystem restoration and improved management practices generate biodiversity and climate change mitigation co-benefits. Considering this, the project has been refocused on Land degradation focal area instead of multifocal.

4.1 a-ii): After further review the indicator 4.4 has been removed to align with response 4.1 a-i).

UNDP Response: 28-10-2025

Further information on the context of the agricultural sector in Eritrea, challenges facing women with regards to land degradation, land tenure, access to capacity building and their role in the agricultural sector, land tenure systems and general socio-economic drivers of degradation have been added to the Project Rationale section. Additionally, the role of stakeholder groups at the national and regional level has been expanded.

- b) Descriptions for the project barriers have been included in the Project Rationale section. Additionally, policy and institutional, technical, partnership and gender equity enablers for the proposed solution have been added to the Theory of Change discussion in the Project Description.

4.2 JUSTIFICATION FOR PROJECT

a) Is there an indication of why the project approach has been selected over other potential options?

b) Does it ensure resilience to future changes in the drivers?

c) Is there a description of how the GEF alternative will build on ongoing/previous investments (GEF and non-GEF), lessons and experiences in the country/region?

d) are the relevant stakeholders and their roles adequately described?

Secretariat's Comments

10/29/2025

Thank you for the revisions. The inputs are sufficient for PIF stage.

10/3/2025

- a) No, please include
- b) Please explain how resilience is being considered.
- c) Yes.
- d) No please include.

Agency's Comments

UNDP Response: 28-10-2025

Information on why this approach has been selected has been included in the Project Rationale section.

b) Resilience related project interventions have been made more sustainable and contribution to community and ecosystem resilience has been incorporated into the Theory of change rationale.

d) The main stakeholders and their general roles and mandates have been summarised in the Project Rationale. Additionally, the most relevant stakeholders for each output and their roles have been included in the description of outputs under the Project Description section.

5 B. Project Description

5.1 THEORY OF CHANGE

a) Is there a concise theory of change that describes the project logic, including how the project design elements will contribute to the objective, the expected causal pathways, and the key assumptions underlying these?

b) Are the key outputs of each component defined (where possible)?

Secretariat's Comments

11/11/2025

Cleared.

10/29/2025

Please see follow up comment below.

i) Output 3.1.3- Please consider at PPG to include monitoring against the LDN indicators.

10/3/2025

a) b) Yes. The three components?institutional governance, implementation of SLM practices, and knowledge management?are well aligned with the Theory of Change and effectively address the drivers of degradation. The causal pathways are logical and clearly defined.

However, in addition to comments mentioned under question 3, please see additional comments below for consideration:

i) Output 2.1.1

-The GEF does not support afforestation activities, please exclude from the project description.

-What are the plans to establish seed banks or nurseries for the species to be used in the restoration activities?

ii) Output 2.1.2 & 2.1.3- What are the plans to institutionalize the training so that the sustainable practices are maintained after the project has ended? Is the project making use of training curriculum already developed by similar projects?

iii) Output 2.2.2 activities on solar powered boreholes for water access, this will only be eligible for CCM funding if it involves purchase/installation/operation of solar powered pumps/equipment.

iv) Output 2.2.3

- Are there plans to assist smallholders with access to credit or develop a community based financing mechanism?

- What are the plans for including other actors along the value chain, such as buyers or intermediaries to ensure the products reach the market?
- Business plans under livelihood diversification, could benefit from more detail on market analysis and value-chain sustainability. If not available at this stage, please ensure to include at the CEO Endorsement stage.
- v) Output 2.2.4, biomass based cook stoves are not eligible for CCM. This would need to be excluded unless it will be covered by co-financing.
- vi) Output 3.1.3-A national system of monitoring across MEAs is commendable. Is there currently capacity to monitor against the 3 LDN indicators? If not is there a plan to address this?

Overall the narrative could also be strengthened by showing more explicitly how outputs contribute to GEBs, particularly biodiversity benefits beyond soil and water conservation.

Agency's Comments

UNDP Response: 07-11-2025

5.1.a-i) We have taken note of the recommendation to include monitoring against the LDN indicators at PPG. This will be addressed in developing the project results framework as appropriate.

UNDP Response: 28-10-2025

- i) The exclusion of afforestation is noted and has been removed from the project description. Under Output 2.2.1, two existing nurseries will be expanded and rehabilitated to provide a seed bank and seedlings for restoration activities under the project and potentially future initiatives.
- ii) Extension officers will be capacitated to provide ongoing technical support to the target communities. Moreover, a trainer-farmer approach is envisioned whereby community members will be capacitated to provide further training to all participating community members. This will also be supported by the development of a farmer field school, which will be operational after project implementation and managed by the MoA and Zoba-level authorities. Training curricula will draw from and expand on existing curricula used by similar successful projects in other parts of Eritrea.
- iii) Solar-powered borehole pumps will be introduced and installed by the project under Output 2.2.2. In addition, solar-powered cold storage units will be introduced through Output 2.2.3.
- iv) The introduction of a community-based financing mechanism is not envisioned for the project at this stage. Community members, however, will benefit from capacity building on business management and accessing existing sources of finance. Additionally, financial service providers will be engaged under Output 2.1.2 through technical capacity building on how better to support community members engaged in SLM and LDN practices.

Multiple community actors along the value chain beyond producers are expected to be engaged through Output 2.2.3. There is also the potential of expanding the list of supporting services receiving capacity building under Output 2.1.2. This will be investigated further, validated and expanded on during the PPG phase.

The recommendation for a market analysis and a larger focus on value chain sustainability to support the business plans is noted. A detailed market and value-chain analysis will be undertaken during the PPG phase.

- v) The ineligibility of the cookstoves for CCM is noted and removed from the project grant financing. During PPG, options for engagement with private sector and carbon markets will be

explored to finance update of cookstoves that support the LD-1 focal objective by reducing the impact of a major driver of degradation in the region.

vi) Current capacity to monitor LD indicators will be evaluated during the PPG phase. If current capacity is insufficient, this will be incorporated into Output 3.1.3 as part of the overall national monitoring system.

The contribution of all outputs to GEB focal objectives has been incorporated, where applicable. Specific reference to the linkage between outputs and biodiversity, LD and CCM benefits has also been expanded.

5.2 INCREMENTAL/ADDITIONAL COST REASONING

Is the incremental/additional cost reasoning properly described as per the Guidelines provided in GEF/C.31/12?

Secretariat's Comments

11/11/2025

Cleared.

10/29/2025

We have noted the inputs, which are primarily how the project intends to coordinate with existing projects.

However we are not seeing a separate incremental reasoning for each project component which should describe the business as usual which exists in country (not only with existing projects) and then the added value of the GEF investment. Please include.

10/3/2025

No please include.

Agency's Comments

UNDP Response: 07-11-2025

5.2: A dedicated subsection has been provided under project description to elaborate on the GEF incremental cost reasoning.

UNDP Response: 28-10-2025

In line with the operational guidelines for incremental cost analysis, incremental cost reasoning narrative has been added to the Theory of Change section in the Project Description, detailing the business-as-usual situation and situation if the project does not receive GEF funding, in the Coordination and cooperation with ingoing initiative and project section to emphasize the incremental benefit of the project in relation to ongoing projects, and under indicative co-financing to highlight the reasoning of the co-financing sources identified.

5.3 IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK

a) Is the institutional setting, including potential executing partners, outlined and a rationale provided?

b) Comments to proposed agency execution support (if agency expects to request exception).

c) is there a description of potential coordination and cooperation with ongoing GEF-financed projects/programs and other bilateral/multilateral initiatives in the project area

d) are the proposed elements to capture and disseminate knowledge and learning outputs and strategic communication adequately described?

Secretariat's Comments

10/6/2025

- a) Yes
- b) N/A
- c) Yes
- d) Yes

Agency's Comments

5.4 a) Are the identified core indicators calculated using the methodology included in the corresponding Guidelines (GEF/C.54/11/Rev.01)?

b) Are the project's indicative targeted contributions to GEBs (measured through core indicators)/adaptation benefits reasonable and achievable?

Secretariat's Comments

12/11/2025

Cleared.

11/11/2025

Thank you for the responses and we note the adjustments made.

However if the project is delivering biodiversity co-benefits, we expect these to be reflected in the Core Indicator sheet. Sub-indicator 4.1 is typically the indicator utilized in this case once the PIF can qualitatively describe the benefit provided to biodiversity through a change in management of the targeted landscape. Reporting on this indicator does not need to only refer to a key biodiversity area.

In addition, OECM sub-indicators can also be reported in other sub-indicators. Please see extract from the GEF-8 Results Framework

Guidelines https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/documents/2022-09/Results_Framework_Guidelines_2022_06_30.pdf

below:

Areas reported under this contextual sub-indicator are also recorded under component sub-indicators of the Core Indicator named Landscapes under improved practices. These sub-indicators capture results in OECMs and beyond, outside of protected areas and in different types of land. Additional supportive GIS files and data may be provided for further clarity.

Type: Outcome indicator, Contextual | **Unit:** Hectare

10/29/2025

Thank you for the revisions. Please see follow up comments below.

- i) Given the plan to retain the \$3M allocation to the BDFFA, please include GEBs (CI 4.1) associated with this FA in particular as it relates to mainstreaming (references Outputs 1..12 and 1.1.3)
- ii) Output 1.1.4 refers to OECMs, however the corresponding core indicator CI 4.4 has not been selected. Please clarify and consider including GEBs.
- iii) We note the small amount included for CI 6 over 20 years, which should be reconsidered at PPG. For now please ensure that the numbers in the CI 6 table align with the Ex-Act values.

10/3/2025

a) Yes

b) Not fully.

i) Please consider setting more ambitious targets for sub-indicators 3.1 (?Area of degraded agricultural lands under restoration,? currently 2,300 ha), 3.3 (?Area of natural grass and woodland under restoration,? currently 700 ha), and 4.3 (?Area of landscapes under sustainable land management in production systems,? currently 3,400 ha), as these seem modest relative to the level of GEF requested grant financing and co-financing.

ii) Please indicate which targets are accounting for the preparation and implementation of the integrated watershed management plan.

iii) Please clarify (e.g., through the Ex-ACT tool- please also upload) how such a high CO₂e estimate was calculated under Indicator 6.1 (?Carbon Sequestered or Emissions Avoided in the AFOLU sector?). Given the relatively modest areas targeted for restoration and SLM practices, the GHG emissions avoided appear to be overestimated.

-Please also include the Anticipated start year of accounting.

Agency's Comments

UNDP Response: 26-11-2025

We would like to appreciate guidance on addressing BD related indicators. We have aligned the project to LD and CCM Focal Areas with BD co-benefits. Core indicator 4.1, has been included with estimated target of 6,300 ha (6,294 ha of grazing land and 6 ha of existing forested woodland) that will be placed under improved management to benefit biodiversity. These estimates will be confirmed during PPG phase.

UNDP Response: 07-11-2025

5.4 b-i): The project is utilising BD STAR resources of about \$3million. Although the project will deliver biodiversity co-benefits, all indicators related to biodiversity have been removed considering that the target landscape is not a key biodiversity area.

5.4 b-ii): After further review, reference to OECMs has been removed from the PIF to avoid double counting given the overlap with SLM interventions.

5.4 b-iii): We have harmonised figures for avoided GHG emissions in the CI table and EX-ACT by reflecting 1,655,379 tCo₂e in the PIF and core indicator reporting sheet.

UNDP Response: 28-10-2025

i) The target for sub-indicators 3.1 has been adjusted to 6,294 ha of degraded grazing land. Core Indicator 4 has been adjusted to 5,557 ha, including 4,845 ha of highly degraded (3,413 ha), and moderately fertile (1,432 ha) and fertile (706 ha) cropland through improved agricultural practices and 6 ha of existing forest. This has been updated in the table and narrative under the Core Indicator section of the PIF, and the Core Indicator Reporting Sheet. The revised values above encompass 92% of the total area for the Aylagundat Watershed (with the remaining 8% including only existing infrastructure such as homes, roads and other structures) and 100% of potential degraded and at risk grassland, forest and agricultural land. The proposed project is focused solely within this watershed area (encompassing 12,840 ha in total) to maximise the integrated watershed management approach and because the watershed is located in an area of very high degradation within the country, making it a priority by the Government of the State of Eritrea to achieve land degradation neutrality. Because the watershed is recognised as being a land degradation hotspot in the country, a greater intensity of funding and interventions is needed

to achieve tangible and long-lasting community and biodiversity benefits. It is also worthy to note that based on WOCAT^[1] and FAO estimates, the cost of restoration or improving management practices in the Debub region of Eritrea is about \$550/ha. This means that total direct investment to restore/improve management of the revised targets of 11,851ha is about \$6.5million.

ii) Core Indicators 3 and 4 will be directly supported by the implementation of the Watershed Management Plan. This has been indicated in the narrative under the Core Indicator section.

iii) The EX-ACT tool used has been uploaded. Given the limited data available at PIF stage, a broad calculation was done. The calculation was based on land use changes of grassland to tropical mountain systems through reforestation and degraded land to annual cropland for other land use changes. Please note the EX-ACT tool uploaded incorporates the updated values for Core Indicators 3 and 4.

[1]

https://wocat.net/documents/1092/Economic_Benefits_and_Costs_of_SLM_technologies.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com

5.5 NGI Only: Is there a justification of financial structure and use of financial instrument with concessionality levels?

Secretariat's CommentsN/A

Agency's Comments

5.6 RISKS

a) Is there a well-articulated assessment of risk and identification of mitigation measures under each relevant risk category?

b) Is the rating provided reflecting the residual risk to the likely achievement of intended outcomes after accounting for the expected implementation of mitigation measures?

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

Secretariat's Comments

11/11/2025

Cleared.

10/3/2025

a) Yes

b) Yes

c) We note that UNDP attached the Environmental and Social Screening Procedure (SESP), and an overall ESS risk is classified as Moderate.

Eritrea is one of the countries listed on the WBG FY26 List of Fragile and Conflict-affected Situations. The project may have potential negative impacts including below.

- i) Border and regional militarization / macro-political risk ? Eritrea has experienced long-standing militarization and periodic tensions with neighbors (Ethiopia, Djibouti). A local watershed could be indirectly affected by wider instability (movement of displaced people, militarized land use, restricted access).
- ii) Local resource competition (water, grazing, cropland) ? Debu and other southern areas face pressure on arable and grazing lands from population growth, livestock pressure and land degradation; these pressures commonly drive local disputes over access to water points, irrigated plots, and communal rangelands. Such competition is a typical source of local conflict in Eritrea and the Horn.
- iii) Weak/unclear land and tenure arrangements ? In Eritrea there are examples of top-down land expropriation and contested tenure (state control vs customary use). Projects that change land use (rehabilitate terraces, fenced enclosures, new irrigation) may re-allocate access and therefore trigger tensions unless customary rights are mapped and respected.
- iv) Climate shocks amplifying conflict risk ? Droughts and variable rainfall increase competition over remaining productive land and water, raising the likelihood of disputes in watersheds reliant on seasonal flows and grazing.
- Please include conflict-related risks as a part of the risks and provide mitigation measures.
 - Please ensure more comprehensive conflict sensitive assessment and analysis, particularly potential negative impacts on vulnerable populations including women, youth and internally displaced populations, are taking place, and risk mitigation and management strategies are embedded in project design during PPG.
 - To promote sustainable land management, it is critical to actively engage with pastoralist groups. Please explore further how the project consults with pastoralist groups to prepare PIF so far, and how the project will engage with pastoralist group during project implementation.

Agency's Comments

UNDP Response: 28-10-2025

Although the WorldBank categorizes Eritrea as a fragile state and conflict affected based on global indicators, Government would not accept to use such language and categorization in project documents.

c). Land tenure management including mapping customary rights will be assessed during PPG and propose appropriate measures to improve inclusive governance.

d). Conflict related risks and mitigation measures, including the development of a conflict risk assessment and analysis during the PPG phase have been added to the Climate, Environmental and Social, and Political and Governance risk categories.

Farming communities in the target area are all sedentary agro-pastoralists, with no purely nomadic pastoralists. There is therefore no risk of additional pastoralist groups being negatively impacted by or excluded from the project. This notwithstanding, additional assessments and consultations will be undertaken during the PPG Phase to ensure there are no risks.

5.7 Qualitative assessment

- a) Does the project intend to be well integrated, durable, and transformative?
- b) Is there potential for innovation and scaling-up?
- c) Will the project contribute to an improved alignment of national policies (policy coherence)?

Secretariat's Comments

10/30/2025

Cleared.

10/3/2025

- a) Please expand on these elements
- b) Please indicate how scale up will be facilitated
- c) Please provide details on how the project will contribute to improved alignment.

Agency's Comments

UNDP Response: 28-10-2025

a) By taking a watershed-level sustainable land management approach, the project intends to be integrated across multiple sectors (e.g. agriculture, environment and water) and levels (national, regional and local). An ecosystem-centred approach and a focus on capacity building of multiple stakeholders is intended to ensure the sustainability of project interventions, supported by strong community participation to promote project ownership in the long-term. By focusing on promoting ecosystem services and sustainable livelihoods, the project is aimed at creating a positive feedback whereby sustainable approaches that have been shown to be successful and that promote ecosystem functioning supports agricultural and livelihood productivity, thereby incentivizing community members to conserve ecosystem function and biodiversity in the long term. Although the project is envisioned to be transformative and innovative in the target area, it will draw on proven national and international best practices.

b). Although the project itself is intended to scale up successful best practices used by projects in other parts of the country, several elements will promote further scaling up of project interventions. By mainstreaming SLM, LDN and biodiversity conservation into regional policy, development planning and budgetary processes (Output 1.1.2), the project will promote the further implementation of similar interventions in different parts of the Debub Zoba. Guidelines and regulations for the implementation of the Land Reform Proclamation No. 58/1994 will further expand the implementation of the revised land tenure system across the Debub Zoba, which has been shown to encourage investment in agricultural land and better land management within communities. At the national level, the national knowledge exchange programme for SLM, LDN and biodiversity conservation will disseminate best practices and lessons learned for these interventions across Eritrea, promoting their successful uptake by future projects. Moreover, collaborative plans to improve the measuring of the long-term costs and benefits of SLM approaches will build the understanding of business case for similar interventions across the country.

c) The project will directly contribute to the improved alignment and implementation of the Land Reform Proclamation 58/1994 in the proposed area and zoba as a whole. Moreover, the mainstreaming of SLM, LDN and biodiversity conservation into regional policies will assist them in alignment with national priorities and strategies outlined in the country's National LDN targets, NBSAP and UNCCD.

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

6.1 Is the project adequately aligned with focal area and integrated program strategies and objectives, and/or adaptation priorities?

Secretariat's Comments

1/26/2026

Cleared

11/11/2025

Cleared.

Please note we are fine with the project retaining the CCM focal area alignment as well although small. This can be further assessed/analyzed during the PPG phase and prior to CEO Endorsement.

Please reallocate the BD financing allocation to the LDFA and retain the CCM financing allocation. See Annex A.

10/29/2025

Thank you for the inputs.

Please see follow up comments on BD alignment under Question 5.4.

10/3/2025

Not fully.

i) Demonstrated alignment with the BD-1 is not strong as the narrative is significantly aligned with the LD FA with potential BD co-benefits. Specifically, there are no clear strategies on biodiversity mainstreaming or increasing protected area coverage by designating protected areas or improving the management of existing protected areas. There are also very limited GEBs associated with BD. Please consider and revise the narrative to include BD as a co-benefit, or strengthen the BD elements.

ii) In terms of alignment with the CCM focal area. We note potential co-benefits for climate mitigation, however similar to BD, the project as currently described, does not demonstrate a strong alignment with the CCM focal area objectives. (see comments under Question 5).

iii) Please also consider alignment with LD 1.4

Agency's Comments

UNDP Response: 26-11-2025

Thank you for the guidance. BD financing has been allocated to LD programming and changes made to Annex A accordingly.

UNDP Response: 07-11-2025

6 c -i). This has been addressed. The project has been aligned with LD focal area with BD and CCM co-benefits to fit within the project rationale situation analysis.

UNDP Response: 28-10-2025

i) BD elements in the project description have been emphasized, including the specific BD focal objectives relevant outputs will contribute to. These biodiversity benefits include the restoration of indigenous ecosystems in degraded areas and improved community-based management of natural resource use through land and water management committees. Regional biodiversity mainstreaming has been included in Output 1.1.2. There are no protected areas currently or planned in the target area; however, avenues for this, or alternative community-based protected areas beyond the use of permanent enclosures such as Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures, will be investigated during the PPG phase.

ii) The specific CCM focal area objectives that several outputs will contribute to have been highlighted in the project description. These include carbon sequestration through the restoration of degraded landscapes (2.2.1), the installation of solar-powered borehole pumps and associated equipment and solar-powered cold storage units (Output 2.2.2 and 2.2.3), and contributions to the country achieving its Convention agreements through a national monitoring system (Output 3.1.3).

iii) LD1.4 has been included through mainstreaming regional policies, development planning and budgetary processes through Output 1.1.2.

6.2 Is the project alignment/coherent with country and regional priorities, policies, strategies and plans (including those related to the MEAs and to relevant sectors)

Secretariat's Comments

10/3/2025

Yes

Agency's Comments

6.3 For projects aiming to generate biodiversity benefits (regardless of what the source of the resources is - i.e. BD, CC or LD), does the project clearly identify which of the 23 targets of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework the project contributes to and how it contributes to the identified target(s)?

Secretariat's Comments

10/3/2025

Yes

Agency's Comments

7 D. Policy Requirements

7.1 Is the Policy Requirements section completed?

Secretariat's Comments

10/29/2025

Yes

Agency's Comments

7.2 Is a list of stakeholders consulted during PIF development, including dates of these consultations, provided?

Secretariat's Comments

11/11/2025

Cleared.

10/3/2025

Not fully.

Beyond mentioning consultations with the National Union of Eritrean Women (NUEW) and the National Union of Eritrean Youth and Students (NUEYS), please detail other CSOs and local community representatives and highlight their expected roles in the project.

Agency's Comments

UNDP Response: 28-10-2025

In addition to NUEW and NUEYS, initial engagements before PIF development included consultations with community representatives from six administrative Kebebi within the target area. This, along with the expected roles of the above CSOs and communities, has been added to the Stakeholder Consultation Report and will be elaborated on during PPG phase to inform CEO ER.

8 Annexes

Annex A: Financing Tables

8.1 Is the proposed GEF financing (including the Agency fee) in line with GEF policies and guidelines? Are they within the resources available from (mark all that apply):

STAR allocation?

Secretariat's Comments

1/26/2025

Cleared

12/11/2025

Thank you.

However if the BD financing has been reallocated to LD, there should be no BD allocation included in the Financing table or the PPG Table as is currently featured in the portal submission. See extracts below. Please amend.

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	Biodiversity	BD STAR Allocation: BD-1	Grant	3,411,928	324,133	3,736,061.00
UNDP	GET	Eritrea	Climate Change	CC STAR Allocation: CCM-1-1	Grant	792,103	75,250	867,353.00
UNDP	GET	Eritrea	Climate Change	CC STAR Allocation: CCM-1-4	Grant	858,111	81,521	939,632.00
UNDP	GET	Eritrea	Land Degradation	LD STAR Allocation: LD-1	Grant	1,602,844	152,270	1,755,114.00
UNDP	GET	Eritrea	Land Degradation	LD STAR Allocation: LD-2	Grant	1,602,844	152,270	1,755,114.00
UNDP	GET	Eritrea	Land Degradation	LD STAR Allocation: LD-4	Grant	133,570	12,689	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 (\$) ⓘ 200,000
PPG Agency Fee (\$) 19,000

GEF Agency	Trust Fund	Country/ Regional/ Global	Focal Area	Programming of Funds ⓘ	Grant / Non-Grant	PPG(\$)	Agency Fee(\$)	Total PPG Funding(\$)
UNDP	GET	Eritrea	Biodiversity	BD STAR Allocation: BD-1	Grant	81,223	7,716	88,939.00
UNDP	GET	Eritrea	Climate Change	CC STAR Allocation: CCM-1-1	Grant	18,856	1,791	20,647.00
UNDP	GET	Eritrea	Climate Change	CC STAR Allocation: CCM-1-4	Grant	20,427	1,941	22,368.00
UNDP	GET	Eritrea	Land Degradation	LD STAR Allocation: LD-1	Grant	38,157	3,625	41,782.00
UNDP	GET	Eritrea	Land Degradation	LD STAR Allocation: LD-2	Grant	38,157	3,625	41,782.00
UNDP	GET	Eritrea	Land Degradation	LD STAR Allocation: LD-4	Grant	3,180	302	3,482.00
Total PPG Amount						200,000.00	19,000.00	219,000.00

11/11/2025

See follow up comment under 'Focal Area Allocation'

10/3/2025

Yes

Agency's Comments

UNDP Response, 23 January 2026:

BD Financing has been removed from the GEF Financing Table and PPG Table as instructed.

UNDP Response: 26-11-2025

Thank you for the guidance. BD financing has been allocated to LD programming and changes made to Annex A accordingly.

Focal Area allocation?

Secretariat's Comments

12/11/2025

See comment above.

11/11/2025

Given the change mentioned above in the review sheet, please ensure the Financing tables are adjusted accordingly.

We are fine with the project retaining the CCM focal area alignment as well although small. This can be further assessed/analyzed during the PPG phase and prior to CEO Endorsement. Please reallocate the BD financing to the LDFA.

10/29/2025

Thank you for the inputs.

10/3/2025

Yes

However please see comment above on alignment with the BDFA in relation to the intended allocation to this focal area.

Agency's Comments

UNDP Response: 26-11-2025

Alignment with CCM Focal Area has been retained to maintain the project as multifocal area. The mitigation potential will be further assessed/analyzed during the PPG phase and confirm actual targets prior to CEO Endorsement.

Financing tables have been adjusted and updated accordingly in line with the guidance provided on allocating BD Focal Area financing to LD programming.

UNDP Response: 28-10-2025

The contribution of the project to the CCM and BD focal areas has been strengthened. Please see previous responses to Secretariat comments 5.1 and 6.1 for further details.

BD-1 ? ?Enhance conservation and restoration of terrestrial, freshwater, and marine ecosystems? in several measurable ways. The project contributes to BD-1 through: Restoring degraded ecosystems: 6294 ha of degraded grazing lands and natural woodlands will be actively restored using soil and water conservation, afforestation, and community-based enclosures.

Improving ecosystem management: A further 5557 ha of landscape will be brought under improved SLM and biodiversity-friendly management practices.

Re-establishing native vegetation through permanent enclosures, assisted natural regeneration, and planting of multi-use native tree and shrub species.

In addition, the project contributes to BD by mainstreaming biodiversity into land-use planning- SLM and LDN principles are being integrated into regional development plans, policies, and budgets, ensuring biodiversity conservation is embedded in long-term land governance.

As noted in the PIF, the project contributes to at least seven GBF targets aligned with BD-1, Target 1: Integrated land-use planning and spatial restoration in the watershed.

Target 2: Restoration of degraded ecosystems.

Target 5: Reduction of land-use-driven biodiversity loss.

Target 9 & 10: Sustainable use of biodiversity in agriculture and forestry systems.

Target 21 & 22: Inclusive, participatory management with gender equality and community empowerment.

LDCF under the principle of equitable access?

Secretariat's CommentsN/A

Agency's Comments

SCCF A (SIDS)?

Secretariat's CommentsN/A

Agency's Comments

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

Secretariat's CommentsN/A

Agency's Comments

Focal Area Set Aside?

Secretariat's CommentsN/A

Agency's Comments

8.2 Is the PPG requested within the allowable cap (per size of project)? If requested, has an exception (e.g. for regional projects) been sufficiently substantiated?

Secretariat's Comments

10/29/2025

Yes

Agency's Comments

8.3 Are the indicative expected amounts, sources and types of co-financing adequately documented and consistent with the requirements of the Co-Financing Policy and Guidelines?

Secretariat's Comments

11/11/2025

Cleared

10/29/2025

See comment under question 3 re co-financing.

Agency's Comments

UNDP Response: 07-11-2025

This has been addressed. The error could have been at portal entry considering that this had been addressed in previous resubmission.

Annex B: Endorsements

8.4 Has the project been endorsed by the country? (ies) GEF OFP and has the OFP at the time of PIF submission name and position been checked against the GEF database?

Secretariat's Comments

10/3/2025

Yes

Agency's Comments

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

Secretariat's Comments

10/3/2025

Yes

Agency's Comments

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

Secretariat's Comments

10/3/2025

Yes

Agency's Comments

8.5 For NGI projects (which may not require LoEs), has the Agency informed the OFP(s) of the project to be submitted?

Secretariat's Comments N/A

Agency's Comments

Annex C: Project Location

8.6 Is there preliminary georeferenced information and a map of the project's intended location?

Secretariat's Comments

10/29/2025

Cleared.

10/3/2025

No please include in the portal version.

Agency's Comments

UNDP Response: 28-10-2025

The project location map and corresponding site coordinates have been uploaded to the portal. Coordinates will be refined during PPG.

Annex D: Safeguards Screen and Rating

8.7 If there are safeguard screening documents or other ESS documents prepared, have these been uploaded to the GEF Portal?

Secretariat's Comments

10/3/2025

Yes

Agency's Comments

Annex E: Rio Markers

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

Secretariat's Comments

10/29/2025

Cleared.

10/3/2025

Not fully. Given the comments above on alignment and GEBs for BD, there is no clear justification for selecting '2' for the BD focal area.

Agency's Comments

UNDP Response: 28-10-2025

The BD rationale has been strengthened in the project narrative. However, given the greater emphasis of land degradation in the project, the Rio Marker has been changed to 1.

Annex F: Taxonomy Worksheet

8.9 Is the project properly tagged with the appropriate keywords?

Secretariat's Comments

10/3/2025

Yes

Agency's Comments

Annex G: NGI Relevant Annexes

8.10 Does the project provide sufficient detail (indicative term sheet) to take a decision on the following selection criteria: co-financing ratios, financial terms and conditions, and financial additionality? If not, please provide comments. Does the project provide a detailed reflow table to assess the project capacity of generating reflows? If not, please provide comments. Is the Partner Agency eligible to administer concessional finance? If not, please provide comments.

Secretariat's CommentsN/A

Agency's Comments

9 GEFSEC Decision

9.1 Is the PIF and PPG (if requested) recommended for technical clearance?

Secretariat's Comments

4/7/2026

Follow up comment to be addressed- change in project title, removing the word 'resilience'

1/26/2025

Cleared.

12/11/2025

Not at this time. Please address the comments above.

11/11/2025

Not at this time, please address the comments above.

10/30/2025

Not at this time, please address the comments above.

10/8/2025

Not at this time, please address the comments above.

Agency's Comments

UNDP Response: 23-1-2026

We appreciate your positive feedback and guidance on the way forward. The review comments have been addressed as appropriate to facilitate PIF approval.

UNDP Response: 20-11-2025

We appreciate your positive feedback and guidance on the way forward. The review comments have been addressed as appropriate to facilitate PIF approval.

UNDP Response: 07-11-2025

We appreciate your continued support in ensuring that quality PIF delivers benefits for people and the planet. Review comments have been addressed as appropriate.

We would like to advise that previous round highlights have been removed from the PIF to facilitate the next level of clearance.

UNDP Response: 28-10-2025

We would like to appreciate the comprehensive review comments and guidance provided to enhance quality of the PIF and deliver benefits for people and the planet. We have provided adequate response to comments and look forward to the approval of the PIF. We remain available for any additional clarification that may be required to facilitate decision making.

9.2 Additional Comments to be considered by the Agency at the time of CEO Endorsement/ Approval

Secretariat's Comments

10/8/2025

Please see comments for consideration during the PPG phase.

i) Please add in Section 9.2 of the Review Sheet: Agency is requested to clarify through indicators and the Gender Action Plan how gender-responsive and gender-inclusive (especially as referred to in some project outputs) will be operationalized and measured.

Agency's Comments

The requirement for gender-specific indicators and a comprehensive Gender Action Plan during the PPG phase is noted.

Review Dates

	PIF Review	Agency Response
First Review	10/8/2025	10/8/2025
Additional Review (as necessary)	10/30/2025	11/25/2025
Additional Review (as necessary)	11/11/2025	
Additional Review (as necessary)	12/11/2025	
Additional Review (as necessary)	1/26/2026	