

Conservation and sustainable management of wetlands with focus on high-nature value areas in the Prut River basin

Basic Information

GEF ID

10650

Countries

Moldova

Project Title

Conservation and sustainable management of wetlands with focus on high-nature value areas in the Prut River basin

GEF Agency(ies)

UNDP

Agency ID

UNDP: 6551

GEF Focal Area(s)

Multi Focal Area

Program Manager

Ulrich Apel

PIF

Part I – Project Informatic

Focal area elements

1. Is the project/program aligned with the relevant GEF focal area elements in Table A, as defined by the GEF 7 Programming Directions?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

09/09/2020: Yes.

Agency Response

Indicative project/program description summary

2. Are the components in Table B and as described in the PIF sound, appropriate, and sufficiently clear to achieve the project/program objectives and the core indicators?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion 09/09/2020: Yes.

Agency Response

Co-financing

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, with a description on how the breakdown of co-financing was identified and meets the definition of investment mobilized?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

09/09/2020: Yes.

09/23/2020: Discrepancy found:

Please note that in the Table C entries “a project” cannot be the name of the co-financier, please use the name of the entity that provides the co-financing, e.g.: EU, Austrian Development Agency, Cambridge conservation Initiative (please check and select the correct entities).

Currently the following project names are listed instead of names of co-financers:

- EU4Moldova: Focal Regions
- Enhancing Climate Resilience in the Lower Prut Biosphere reserve
- Restoring Danube Delta wetlands and steppe

09/30/2002: Addressed.

Cleared

Agency Response

UNDP Agency Response 29/09/2020 (to GEF Sec comment on 23/09/2020)

We adjusted the co-financier names in the Table C.

GEF Resource Availability

4. Is the proposed GEF financing in Table D (including the Agency fee) in line with GEF policies and guidelines? Are they within

the resources available from (mark all that apply):

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion 09/09/2020: Yes.

Agency Response

The STAR allocation?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion 09/09/2020: Yes.

Agency Response

The focal area allocation?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion 09/09/2020: Yes.

Agency Response

The LDCF under the principle of equitable access

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion 09/09/2020: Yes.

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion n/a

Agency Response

The SCCF (Adaptation or Technology Transfer)?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion n/a

Agency Response

Focal area set-aside?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion n/a

Agency Response

Impact Program Incentive?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion n/a

Agency Response

Project Preparation Grant

5. Is PPG requested in Table E within the allowable cap? Has an exception (e.g. for regional projects) been sufficiently substantiated? (not applicable to PFD)

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion 09/09/2020: Yes.

Agency Response

Core indicators

6. Are the identified core indicators in Table F calculated using the methodology included in the correspondent Guidelines? (GEF/C.54/11/Rev.01)

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion 09/09/2020: Yes.

Agency Response

Project/Program taxonomy

7. Is the project/ program properly tagged with the appropriate keywords as requested in Table G?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion 09/09/2020: Yes.

Agency Response

art II – Project Justification

1. Has the project/program described the global environmental / adaptation problems, including the root causes and barriers that need to be addressed?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

09/09/2020:

- Please clarify why the 2013 Moldova Wetlands Strategy was never formally approved and whether that is a barrier that needs to be addressed by the project.

09/23/2020: Addressed.

Cleared

Agency Response

UNDP Agency Response 17/09/2020 (to GEF Sec comment on 09/09/2020)

Thank you for the comment. The Wetland Strategy was developed in 2013 by the NGO “Biotica” with Ramsar funds. According to the representatives of the Ministry of Agriculture, Regional Development and Environment, the Government decided around that time to limit the number of stand-alone sector strategies, and rather mainstream the provisions and inputs of such strategies into existing official regulations and pieces of legislation. The priorities of the former draft Wetland Strategy have been therefore included in the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan and in several existing laws and regulations. As such, there is no need for reviving a Wetlands Strategy as a separate document, rather the project could focus in a target way on intervening there where most critical gaps exist. Specifically, this project is in line with key ideas of the Strategy which aimed at strengthening the Royal Forest Reserve and upgrading its international destination and with the Law on Protected Areas, and strengthening the management capacity of wetlands in the Prut basin. A note has been added to the PIF accordingly.

2. Is the baseline scenario or any associated baseline projects appropriately described?

2. Is the baseline scenario of any associated baseline projects appropriately described:

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

09/09/2020: Not fully.

- While key baseline projects are described, please briefly elaborate the baseline scenario on which the GEF project (the proposed alternative scenario) will build on.

09/23/2020: Addressed.

Cleared

Agency Response

UNDP Agency Response 17/09/2020 (to GEF Sec comment on 09/09/2020)

The following paragraph has been inserted right next to Section II 1.a.2 The Key Baseline projects:

Under the baseline scenario, continued degradation of wetlands in Moldova will be expected as a result of water pollution from agriculture, poor waste management and exploitation of oil resources, and incoherent legislation that prioritize conservation and sustainable wetland management. Water pollution due to agriculture, illegal waste deposits and oil exploitation will continue to represent major problems, alongside inefficient enforcement of legal environmental norms, weak collection of pollution charges and weak collection of local taxes on natural resources exploitation. The National Ecological Fund will remain insufficiently capacitated to acknowledge the critical financing needs of wetlands and protected areas; therefore, it would not re-direct funds towards wetland management and reconstruction measures. Contextualization of the key wetland areas of the Prut River Basin into the local development broader landscape will not be enabled by the local development policies and land use plans under the baseline scenario. The PA management system in Moldova will remain inadequate. The Moldsilva protected areas management units will lack technical capacities, basic biodiversity management tools and trained conservation biologists. The Royal Forest Nature Reserve, managed by “Moldsilva” agency will not have an adequate management plan, no key species monitoring system will be in place and no adequate management capacity. The local communities will be unprepared to access the available sources of financing in order to implement sustainable local development measures. For further discussion of the difference between the baseline scenario and the alternative scenario please refer to *Section II.1a5 Incremental cost reasoning*.

3. Does the proposed alternative scenario describe the expected outcomes and components of the project/program?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

09/09/2020: Yes.

Agency Response

4. Is the project/program aligned with focal area and/or Impact Program strategies?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

09/09/2020: Yes.

Agency Response

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

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

09/09/2020: Yes.

Agency Response

6. Are the project's/program's indicative targeted contributions to global environmental benefits (measured through core indicators) reasonable and achievable? Or for adaptation benefits?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

09/09/2020: Yes.

Agency Response

7. Is there potential for innovation, sustainability and scaling up in this project?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

09/09/2020: Yes.

Agency Response

Project/Program Map and Coordinates

Is there a preliminary geo-reference to the project's/program's intended location?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

09/09/2020: Yes.

Agency Response

Stakeholders

Does the PIF/PFD include indicative information on Stakeholders engagement to date? If not, is the justification provided appropriate? Does the PIF/PFD include information about the proposed means of future engagement?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

09/09/2020: Yes.

Agency Response

Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

Is the articulation of gender context and indicative information on the importance and need to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women, adequate?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

09/09/2020: Yes.

Agency Response

Private Sector Engagement

Is the case made for private sector engagement consistent with the proposed approach?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

09/09/2020: Yes.

Agency Response

Risks to Achieving Project Objectives

Does the project/program consider potential major risks, including the consequences of climate change, that might prevent the project objectives from being achieved or may be resulting from project/program implementation, and propose measures that address these risks to be further developed during the project design?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

09/09/2020: Not fully.

- While risks related to COVID-19 is also listed in the risk mitigation table, what is required is a short and concise assessment of the risks and opportunities of the COVID-19 situation and how the project may contribute to green recovery efforts of the GoM. Please consult the GEF Guidelines: "Project Design and Review Considerations in Response to the COVID-19 Crisis and the Mitigation of Future Pandemics" that GEFSEC has sent to all agencies.

09/23/2020: Addressed.

Cleared

Agency Response

UNDP Agency Response 17/09/2020 (to GEF Sec comment on 09/09/2020)

Thank you, the following information has been added to the PIF:

Risk analysis: During the PIF preparation a preliminary risk analysis of the COVID-19 related containment measures on the project outputs have been considered and appropriate mitigation measures have been included in the Risks Section. Possible consequences of the

have been considered and appropriate mitigation measures have been included in the main document. Social consequences of the reinstatement of COVID-19 situation, will be re-assessed in a more detailed manner at PPG stage. Availability of technical expertise of dedicated staff and co-financing will be re-assessed and appropriate interventions will be designed and included in the project document.

UNDP together with the Ministry of Agriculture, Regional Development and Environment have adaptive management capacities and possibilities to ensure COVID-19 related mitigation measures and effectiveness of the proposed overall project implementation and stakeholders engagement. The PPG stage will include consultations with a wide range of stakeholders in as much as possible, and the Stakeholders Engagement Plan will entail dedicated measures aimed at enabling the participation of all stakeholders in the project implementation, with appropriate mitigation measures in case of COVID-19 restrictions, including ways to reach out to the most marginalised groups.

Opportunity analysis: In response to the Government's COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Plan (approved on 13th of March 2020 by the Prime Minister), the United Nations in Moldova has developed a Response and Recovery Plan with a 12-18 months horizon, based on the UN Framework and with the support of different development partners. The Response and Recovery Plan has highlighted the amplified vulnerabilities and widening inequalities during the COVID-19, and the existing critical capacity gaps that are hampering adequate responses, focusing largely on health equipment in the short term. The medium term recovery opportunities that this proposed project will support, are aligned with UNDP portfolio "Beyond recovery Towards 2030" and with the integrated UN System in Moldova's support to COVID-19 response under the "Economic Response and Recovery" pillar, both of which include integration of environment-friendly technologies, stimulating green innovation and circular economy and supporting smallholders access financing. The project is fully aligned with the medium post COVID 19 recovery opportunities by supporting communities recovery through facilitation of green and sustainable entrepreneurship and small holder farms' accessing of affordable financing for sustainable natural resources management, promoting rural entrepreneurship including women entrepreneurship, and supporting environmental friendly and safe local eco-tourism and other biodiversity friendly alternative income leveraging activities. In the long term the project will support the green recovery efforts by enabling strengthened natural and livelihoods resilience and protecting and restoring the natural capital and wetland ecosystem services in the Prut basin.

A new mitigation measures has been inserted in the Risk Section / Table and the paragraphs reads as follows: *In addition, the project will work with the Local Action Group Lower Prut and local communities' representatives as well as with Moldova's Association of Inbound Tourism (ANTRIM) and with line ministries (the ministry of Agriculture, Regional Development and Environment and the Ministry of Health) to develop Safe Tourism standards, that will be applied by the project initially in the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve (to be explored during the PPG). The same paragraph was introduced under Section 3.1.2.*

Coordination

**Is the institutional arrangement for project/program coordination including management, monitoring and evaluation outlined?
Is there a description of possible coordination with relevant GEF-financed projects/programs and other bilateral/multilateral initiatives in the project/program area?**

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

09/09/2020: Yes.

Agency Response

Consistency with National Priorities

Has the project/program cited alignment with any of the recipient country's national strategies and plans or reports and assessments under relevant conventions?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

09/09/2020: Yes.

Agency Response

Knowledge Management

Is the proposed "knowledge management (KM) approach" in line with GEF requirements to foster learning and sharing from relevant projects/programs, initiatives and evaluations; and contribute to the project's/program's overall impact and sustainability?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

09/09/2020: Yes.

Agency Response

Environmental and Social Safeguard (ESS)

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

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

09/09/2020: Yes.

However, please clarify whether the ESS supporting documents are public or for official use only?

09/23/2020: Addressed.

Cleared

Agency Response

UNDP Agency Response 17/09/2020 (to GEF Sec comment on 09/09/2020)

The SESP will be shared be shared with the GEF Secretariat through Portal and via email.

art III – Country Endorsements

Has the project/program been endorsed by the country's GEF Operational Focal Point and has the name and position been checked against the GEF data base?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

09/09/2020: Yes. However, in the portal template the name of the PFP is listed instead of the OFP, Mr. Ion Lica. Please correct.

09/23/2020: Has been corrected.

Cleared

Agency Response

UNDP Agency Response 17/09/2020 (to GEF Sec comment on 09/09/2020)

Corrected.

Termsheet, reflow table and agency capacity in NGI Projects

Does the project provide sufficient detail in Annex A (indicative termsheet) 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 in Annex B to assess the project capacity of generating reflows? If not, please provide comments. After reading the questionnaire in Annex C, is the Partner Agency eligible to administer concessional finance? If not, please provide comments.

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

n/a

Agency Response

EFSEC DECISION

RECOMMENDATION

Is the PIF/PFD recommended for technical clearance? Is the PPG (if requested) being recommended for clearance?

Is the PIF/PIB recommended for technical clearance? Is the PIF (if requested) being recommended for clearance?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

09/09/2020: No. Please address comments made in this review.

- Please also check all uploaded documents. It appears that incorrect document prefixes have been used; please correct.

09/23/2020: No. Please address outstanding issue with co-financing table.

09/30/2020: Yes. Program Manager recommends CEO approval. All comments have been addressed.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Additional recommendations to be considered by Agency at the time of CEO endorsement/approval.

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

Review Dates

| | PIF Review | Agency Response |
|---|-------------------|------------------------|
| First Review | 9/9/2020 | |
| Additional Review (as necessary) | 9/23/2020 | |
| Additional Review (as necessary) | 9/30/2020 | |
| Additional Review (as necessary) | | |

PIF Recommendation to CEO

Brief reasoning for recommendations to CEO for PIF Approval

The project "Conservation and sustainable management of wetlands with focus on high-nature value areas in the Prut River basin" has the objective to achieve ecological integrity of key floodplain wetlands ensuring positive status of biodiversity, land and water resources, and ecosystem services. The long term solution for the sustainable development and conservation of the high value wetland ecosystems in Moldova includes promotion of effective wetlands management models, aligned with Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) principles, as well as supporting and securing sustainable and resilient livelihoods for local resources users whose daily existence depend greatly on the integrity and productivity of these high value wetland ecosystems.

The project's Theory of Change is that multiple benefits of ecosystems resilience and healthy watersheds can be unlocked when key wetlands, lakes and riparian zones are managed effectively, and adequately contextualized in the surrounding landscape and aligned with IWRM principles . The project's four components are closely aligned and linked to facilitate an enabling environment that provides for effective wetlands protection and management based on an integrated river basin management approach that ensures the continuity of wetland ecosystem services sustaining livelihoods. For an integrated landscape approach, an adequate policy, legal and financing framework must support multiple types of management measures.

The project will bring 30,000 ha of terrestrial protected areas under improved management, restore 6,000 ha of wetlands, and mitigate 280,000 t CO₂eq of carbon. It will directly benefit 40,000 project participants, half of which are women.

Note on COVID-19:

Risk analysis: During the PIF preparation a preliminary risk analysis of the COVID-19 related containment measures on the project outputs have been considered and appropriate mitigation measures have been included in the Risks Section. Possible consequences of the reinstatement of COVID-19 situation, will be re-assessed in a more detailed manner at PPG stage. Availability of technical expertise of dedicated staff and co-financing will be re-assessed and appropriate interventions will be designed and included in the project document. UNDP together with the Ministry of Agriculture, Regional Development and Environment have adaptive management capacities and possibilities to ensure COVID-19 related mitigation measures and effectiveness of the proposed overall project implementation and stakeholders engagement. The PPG stage will include consultations with a wide range of stakeholders in as much as possible, and the Stakeholders Engagement Plan will entail dedicated measures aimed at enabling the participation of all stakeholders in the project implementation, with appropriate mitigation measures in case of COVID-19 restrictions, including ways to reach out to the most marginalized groups.

Opportunity analysis: In response to the Government's COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Plan (approved on 13th of March 2020 by the Prime Minister) the United Nations in Moldova has developed a Response and Recovery Plan with a 12-18 months horizon based on the

Prime Minister), the United Nations in Moldova has developed a response and recovery plan with a 12-18 months horizon, based on the UN Framework and with the support of different development partners. The Response and Recovery Plan has highlighted the amplified vulnerabilities and widening inequalities during the COVID-19, and the existing critical capacity gaps that are hampering adequate

responses, focusing largely on health equipment in the short term. The medium term recovery opportunities that this proposed project will support, are aligned with UNDP portfolio “Beyond recovery Towards 2030” and with the integrated UN System in Moldova’s support to COVID-19 response under the “Economic Response and Recovery” pillar, including: integration of environment-friendly technologies, stimulating green innovation and circular economy and supporting smallholders access financing. The project is fully aligned with the medium post COVID 19 recovery opportunities by supporting communities recovery through facilitation of green and sustainable entrepreneurship and small holder farms’ accessing of affordable financing for sustainable natural resources management, promoting rural entrepreneurship including women entrepreneurship, and supporting environmental friendly and safe local eco-tourism and other biodiversity friendly alternative income leveraging activities. In the long term the project will support the green recovery efforts by enabling strengthened natural and livelihoods resilience and protecting and restoring the natural capital and wetland ecosystem services in the Prut basin.