

Transforming Policy and Investment through Improving Ecosystem Management and Restoration of Degraded Drylands of Dedoplistskaro Biosphere Reserve in Georgia to Generate Multiple Environmental and Socio-Economic Benefits

Review PIF and Make a recommendation

Basic project information

GEF ID

11141

Countries

Georgia

Project Name

Transforming Policy and Investment through Improving Ecosystem Management and Restoration of Degraded Drylands of Dedoplistskaro Biosphere Reserve in Georgia to Generate Multiple Environmental and Socio-Economic Benefits

Agencies

UNEP

Date received by PM

4/12/2023

Review completed by PM

4/21/2023

Program Manager

Ulrich Apel

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

04/20/2023: Yes.

Cleared

Agency's Comments

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

04/20/2023: Not fully.

Please also include the project objective as stated in the indicative project overview.

05/15/2023: Addressed.

Cleared

Agency's Comments

5/15/23:

The summary has been revised and the project objective has been included.

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

04/20/2023: Not fully.

- While the Indicative Project Overview is presented with clear and focused components, outcomes, and outputs, the text of PIF throughout doesn't correspond well to the indicative project overview. The text is unfocused, not specific, and not well connected to the project objective, its components, outcomes, and outputs. The PIF needs to be substantially re-written to better align with what the project is striving to do and needs to better explain the rationale, justification for this specific project, with a clear and coherent approach instead of text that appears to be coming from the previously submitted EOI for Ecosystem Restoration.

- For example: "The approach that will deliver the main objective of the project will involve seeking innovative financial mechanisms (feasibility study for the establishment of an environmental fund for the development of the Dedoplistskaro Biosphere Reserve), cross-sectoral policy instruments (development of a cross-sectoral toolkit for ecosystem restoration and conservation), diffusion through restoration and biodiversity related national networks, and practical knowledge-based applications (development of wildfires and forest fires local information system; piloting of drone technologies into climate-smart irrigation for drylands etc.)." Where is that mentioned in the project overview? Please

focus the explanations in the PIF on the outputs/outcomes of the project as stated in the table B, otherwise it will confuse the reader.

- Please include a Theory of Change in the portal PIF. Reference has been made to an Annex H, which the reviewer could not locate.

05/15/2023: Addressed.

Cleared

Agency's Comments

5/15/23:

- (1) Project overview and project rationale have been redrafted.
- (2) The ToC has been expanded and the graphic representation has been included.

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

Secretariat's Comments

04/20/2023: Yes. However, the gender and knowledge management dimension are described in generic terms, please include some specificity with regard to the project area: Dedoplistskaro Biosphere Reserve.

Please also specify women and gender experts' engagement in the following Outputs: 1.1.5; 2.1.5; 2.2.1; 2.2.3; and 3.1.5.

05/15/2023: Addressed.

Cleared

Agency's Comments

5/15/23:

Done: gender related specificity with regard to the project area (Dedoplistskaro Biosphere Reserve) is included.

We added specific descriptions in the project description to clarify how women and gender experts will participate in Outputs: 1.1.5; 2.1.5; 2.2.1; 2.2.3; and 3.1.5.

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

04/20/2023: Yes.

Cleared

Agency's Comments

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

04/20/2023: Not fully.

- "ecosystems in the project area are vulnerable to climatic variations" - what is meant with "variations"?

- The same things are termed differently, e.g. root-causes / drivers. Barriers/enablers are not described.

- There is no clear description of the problems in the project area and how, exactly, the project will address these problems. (As mentioned above the reviewer could not locate the Theory of Change).

05/15/2023: Adequately addressed.

Cleared

Agency's Comments

5/15/23:

We re-wrote this section and removed confusing statements,

- Theory of Change has been included and the description has been revised.

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

04/20/2023: Not fully.

a) and b) needs to better described.

c) needs to be elaborated on.

d) it is well noted that the project includes information on stakeholders consulted during PIF design. The project should provide some additional information on the stakeholder consultations during project development, and indicate that intent in the PIF.

05/15/2023: Addressed.

Cleared

Agency's Comments

5/15/23:

Done: needs and interests are re-elaborated, and better described.

Stakeholder section has been revised.

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

04/20/2023: Not fully.

- a) ToC is missing, see comment above. In the ToC, it will be important to outline how the activities in the selected biosphere reserve will lead to transformative change in policies and investment (and what type of investment).

- Some text still stems from the submitted EOI for the Ecosystem Restoration IP. It needs to be brought fully in line with this PIF. There needs to be a coherent narrative so that the reader understands what the project is about, which problems it will address and how, and what the focus is. The component description reads more like a list of keywords. There are all kinds of activities listed from beekeeping, to eco-tourism, water management, ecosystem restoration, etc.

- Some sentences 'hang in the air', e.g. "the proposed project will use innovative financial mechanism (establishment of environmental fund for development of the Dedoplistskaro Biosphere Reserve) and diffusion through restoration and biodiversity related national networks, and practical knowledge-based applications." or "The project will not explicitly work towards changes in land tenure, though, where necessary it may advocate for any land tenure policies that might be relevant".

05/15/2023: Addressed.

Cleared

Agency's Comments

5/15/23:

Done: Theory of Change has been included in the body of the text.

The Project Description section of the PIF has been revised.

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

04/20/2023: Not fully.

Please elaborate briefly on the incremental reasoning when describing the baseline investments.

05/15/2023: Addressed.

Cleared

Agency's Comments

5/15/23:

A baseline scenario describing a future without the project intervention has been included.

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

04/20/2023: Not fully.

a) The executing partner in LoE only includes one partner (the Regional Environmental Centre for the Caucasus), while in Portal part I there is one additional partner (Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia) ? this can either amended by a new LoE or by modifying the executing Partner in Portal accordingly.

b) Reviewer cannot see the answer to the questions on agency execution role? Does this mean "no"?

c) yes.

d) yes.

05/15/2023: Addressed and clarified.

Cleared

Agency's Comments

5/15/23:

Done: appropriate amendments are now inserted.

- We corrected the EA as REC and removed MEPA.
- UNEP will not take any execution role in the project.

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

04/20/2023: Not fully.

- The indicator targets are relatively low for the total investment, including co-finance. What is the size of the biosphere reserve? How have the 20,000 ha of improved management been derived at?

05/15/2023: Addressed and clarified.

Cleared

Agency's Comments

5/15/23:

- Size of the biosphere reserve is about 250,000 ha. However, this area corresponds to the total territory of Dedoplistskaro Municipality which amalgamates not only natural ecosystems (natural forests and grasslands) but also lands under human settlements, croplands, intensive pasturelands, waters and industrial sites.

As 20,000 ha under improved management? was already agreed with key stakeholders at PIF preparation period, it would not be reasonable to change this indicator at this stage. Though, Indicator for 20,000 ha under improved management? could be increased at PPG stage in consultation with stakeholders.

- Proposed 20,000 ha of improved management is envisaged to be implemented on degraded (dry) forest lands (10,000 ha), while restoration of pastures will be held on 10,000 ha. Methods and instruments for both types of restoration are provided in the PIF text (e.g, in section on ?how Drivers of environmental degradation will be addressed?).

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

Secretariat's Comments n/a

Agency's Comments

5.6 RISKS

a) Are climate risks and other main risks relevant to the project described and addressed within the project concept design?

b) Are the key risks that might affect the project preparation and implementation phases identified and adequately rated?

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

04/20/2023: Yes.

Cleared

Agency's Comments

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

04/20/2023: Will be assessed when the project is resubmitted and comments in this review have been addressed.

05/15/2023: The resubmission includes now the main elements of a well integrated, durable and transformative project design, including potential for scaling up and innovation, and considerations of policy coherence.

Cleared

Agency's Comments

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

04/20/2023: Yes.

Cleared

Agency's Comments

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

04/20/2023: Yes.

Cleared

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

04/20/2023: No.

Please elaborate.

05/15/2023: Addressed.

Cleared

Agency's Comments

05/15/2023

Done: elaborated and included.

7 D. Policy Requirements

7.1 Is the Policy Requirements section completed?

Secretariat's Comments

04/20/2023: Yes.

Cleared

Agency's Comments

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

Secretariat's Comments

04/20/2023: Yes.

However, it is well noted that the project includes information on stakeholders consulted during PIF design. The project should provide some additional information on the stakeholder consultations during project development, and indicate that intent in the PIF.

05/15/2023: Addressed.

Cleared

Agency's Comments

05/15/2023

Done: additional information is provided.

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

04/20/2023: Yes.

Cleared

Agency's Comments

Focal Area allocation?

Secretariat's Comments

04/20/2023: Yes.

Cleared

Agency's Comments

LDCF under the principle of equitable access?

Secretariat's Comments n/a

Agency's Comments

SCCF A (SIDS)?

Secretariat's Comments n/a

Agency's Comments

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

Secretariat's Comments n/a

Agency's Comments

Focal Area Set Aside?

Secretariat's Comments n/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

04/20/2023: Yes.

Cleared

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

04/20/2023: Yes.

Cleared

Agency's Comments

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

04/20/2023: Yes.

Please note , however, that in the Letter of Endorsement, the executing partner only includes one partner (the Regional Environmental Centre for the Caucasus), while in Portal there is one additional partner (Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia) ? this can either amended by providing a new LoE or by modifying the executing Partner in Portal accordingly.

05/15/2023: Addressed.

Cleared

Agency's Comments

05/15/2023

The REC has been kept as the EA.

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

Secretariat's Comments

04/20/2023: Yes.

Cleared

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

04/20/2023: Yes.

Cleared

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

04/20/2023: Yes.

Cleared

Agency's Comments

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

04/20/2023: Yes.

Cleared

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

04/20/2023: Yes.

Cleared

Agency's Comments

Annex F: Taxonomy Worksheet

8.9 Is the project properly tagged with the appropriate keywords?

Secretariat's Comments

04/20/2023: Yes.

Cleared

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 Comments n/a

Agency's Comments

9 GEFSEC Decision

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

Secretariat's Comments

04/20/2023: No. Please address the comments made in this review.

05/15/2023: Yes. Program Manager recommends CEO clearance.

Agency's Comments

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

Secretariat's Comments

Agency's Comments

Review Dates

PIF Review

Agency Response

First Review

4/20/2023

Additional Review (as necessary)

5/15/2023

Additional Review (as necessary)

Additional Review (as necessary)

Additional Review (as necessary)