



The Freshwater Challenge: Accelerating Restoration and Conservation of Freshwater Ecosystems

Review PIF and Make a recommendation

Basic project information

GEF ID

11833

Countries

Global

Project Name

The Freshwater Challenge: Accelerating Restoration and Conservation of
Freshwater Ecosystems

Agencies

WWF-US

Date received by PM

11/22/2024

Review completed by PM

12/18/2024

Program Manager

Astrid Hillers

Focal Area

International Waters

Project Type

MSP

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(11/26/2024) Yes

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(11/26/2024) Yes, the project is well articulated a key stepping stone to achieve the goals of the freshwater challenge, a country drive initiative lead by 47 national governments and the EU.

Agency's Comments

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

(11/26/2024)

The Project Objective has been formulated and agreed by the partners of the Freshwater Challenge and is clearly formulated and measurable. The project design is focused on four key components that will not only support an indicator framework and applying it with country stakeholders in a number of countries (to be selected during PPG phase) but also fund and empower young professionals and support cross-country learning exchanges.

Agency's Comments

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

Secretariat's Comments(11/26/2024) Yes.

Agency's Comments

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

(11/26/2024) Yes. PMC and M& E costs are below 5 % and grant to co-finance is proportional (2.5 times and 2.4 times respectively).

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

(11/26/2024)

Yes, this is well outlined and barriers identified including taking account for differing interests across water dependent sectors and resulting policy incoherence, lack of assigning adequate value to ecosystems services, and non-coherent metrics to track progress or decline.

Agency's Comments

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

(11/26/2024)

Yes, the project is embedded centrally in the freshwater challenge. Relations to different MEAs are described as well as the roles and experiences of the implementing and executing agencies this will build on and a number of key partners across government, civil society organizations and the private sector and will be involving youth and local communities in the country pilots (to be identified and LOEs to be obtained during the PPG). Future scenarios are based on the IPCC SSPs and in all scenarios the project and the FWC remain important while impacts will necessarily differ.

Agency's Comments

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

(11/26/2024)

Yes, the Theory of change is elaborated and provides a concise overview and justification of the approach taken and assumption embedded addressing metrics, values, policies and needs to understand and embed the views of a range of sectors, ministries and range of civil society stakeholders, including the private sector, gender equality, and empowering youth to be actively engaged. It also provides initial criteria for the selection of countries which are aligned with the ToC.

The project concept emphasizes a systems and whole of society approach which is well aligned with the GEF-8 strategic directions.

1. Please respond to comment below on gender dimensions: On gender: Beyond seeking to achieve gender balance, please ensure that outputs (e.g., 2.1.1, 3.1.1, 3.1.2, 3.2.1, 3.2.2, all outputs under Component 4) also incorporate gender dimensions/are gender-responsive. Under M&E, please note the need to monitor and report on gender-related or gender-specific results.

(12/18/2024)

1. The comment on addressing not only gender balance but incorporate gender dimensions in the listed components and outputs has been addressed. Cleared.

Agency's Comments

WWF GEF Agency Response

12/18/24:

Thank you for this comment. The outputs have been updated to incorporate gender dimensions and gender responsiveness. Specific updates per page include:

- output 2.1.1 has been updated
- output 3.1.1 has been updated
- output 3.1.2 has been updated
- output 3.2.1 has been updated
- output 3.2.2 has been updated
- Component 4 outputs have been updated
- reporting on gender-related and gender specific results has been included in the M&E section.

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(11/26/2024) Yes.

Agency's Comments

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

(11/26/2024)

Yes, the implementing and executing roles are described and mirror the existing structures and functions of the coalition of partners in the Freshwater Challenge.

- WWF is requesting a limited execution role for two outputs on indicator development (8% of the budget) which not only builds on their role and mandate in the Freshwater Challenge but also leverages their expertise in the development of indicators over many years e.g. in the development and application of basin score cards. This arrangement can be supported based on the GEF PM technical review **but has to be reviewed and approved on an exceptional base by GEF management before proceeding.**

- The PIF is very much showing a knowledge, appreciation and commitment to work with and build on past and ongoing work of other organizations and stakeholders and is showing and naming many of these relevant initiatives and partners throughout the project description and in the section of the PIF on collaboration.

- *During project development/PPG* please also liaise with the High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People with which the FWC has many common overall directions and goal. Especially take into account to explore two-way synergies between the HACs Solutions Toolkit and the FWC learning hub.

(12/18/2026)

Re. limited technical role/self-execution: this has been approved by the GEF Manager of Programming who concurred with the PM's assessment that WWF execution of these technical functions will be essential to the project achieving its technical goals.

Agency's Comments

WWF GEF Agency Response

12/18/24:

1. Thank you for noting this. We understand.

3. During project development, the project will engage with the High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People, as recommended.

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

(11/26/2024)

1. While the area of land and ecosystems under improved restoration *or* under improved practices is not known at PIF stage because the case study countries have not been identified yet nevertheless a conservative estimate is expected at PIF stage. This will also aid in showing the support of the project to contribute to achieving the overall FCW targets.

2. The value of the overall CI 7 for shared water ecosystems should be at least set at 1 which is in line with setting sub-indicator 7.1. to 1 at PIF stage.

(12/18/2024)

1. and 2. The explanations are noted and understood. This will be addressed during the PPG phase. Cleared.

Agency's Comments

WWF GEF Agency Response

12/18/24:

1. Thank you for this comment. The project plans to contribute to Core Indicators 3 and 4. Calculating estimates for target hectares is not possible at this time as the target countries have not yet been selected. Additionally, the majority of the Freshwater Challenge country members are still in the process of setting their national km and hectare targets for freshwater ecosystem restoration and protection. During the project preparation phase, countries will be identified based on the criteria listed in the project description, including for example, regional balance; inclusion of LDCs and SIDS; evidence of active commitment to FWC operationalization; relevant co-finance from the country; and evidence of commitment to transboundary collaboration. During the PPG phase, the project will work with identified countries to set up targets for CI 3 and 4, to be included in the CEO ER document.

2. Thank you for this note. The project will have a target of at least 1 for this CI, but given the portal doesn't allow text to be entered as "TBD", instead a specific water body must be selected to auto-populate the "1" in the portal. Therefore the indicator is showing as "0". The target and relevant water body/bodies will be included during PPG phase based on further consultations and project strategy development.

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) 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 (11/26/2024) Yes. ESS risks have been screened and rated as C/low.

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 (11/26/2024) Yes, scale -up and policy coherence are directly addressed in the project design and goals.

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 (11/26/2024) Yes

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(11/26/2024) Yes, this is a global project and the intention to build on national commitment and plans across MEAs and in the context of river basin management plans is clearly outlined. While the case study countries will be selected during PPG there is full confidence in the approach and the alignment with national policies and plans.

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(11/26/2024) The project clearly addresses the 30830 target of the GBF.

Agency's Comments

7 D. Policy Requirements

7.1 Is the Policy Requirements section completed?

Secretariat's Comments(11/26/2024) Yes.

Agency's Comments

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

Secretariat's Comments

(11/26/2024) Dates for the the stakeholder consultations with countries and private sector partners dates are provided but a list of stakeholders (names/titles and dates) **should be uploaded in the portal.**

(12/18/2024) Yes, this is uploaded and accessible in the portal. Addressed.

Agency's Comments

WWF GEF Agency Response

12/18/24:

A table including country and private sector partner names/titles and dates has been uploaded to the roadmap section as an excel.

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(11/26/2024) Yes

Agency's Comments

Focal Area allocation?

Secretariat's Comments(11/26/2024) Yes.

Agency's Comments

LDCF under the principle of equitable access?

Secretariat's CommentsNA

Agency's Comments

SCCF A (SIDS)?

Secretariat's CommentsNA

Agency's Comments

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

Secretariat's CommentsNA

Agency's Comments

Focal Area Set Aside?

Secretariat's CommentsNA

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(11/26/2024) 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

(11/26/2024) Co-finance is credible and is expected to substantially increase during one the case study countries have been identified.

1. Please spell out acronyms in the co-finance table

Agency's Comments

WWF GEF Agency Response

12/18/24:

Thank you for this comment. The co-finance table has been updated to spell out the acronyms.

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
(11/26/2024)

This is a global project and country case studies have not been identified (while initial country selection criteria have been provided). Yet, there will be GEF financed activities on specific countries (see outputs 2.1.2. ? 2.2.1. ? 3.2.1. ? 3.2.2. ? 4.1.2. ? 4.2.2.) ? therefore, LoEs signed by the OFPs from the participant Countries are required by the time of CEO Endorsement at the latest.

(12/18/2024) Thanks for confirming that this requirement has been noted. Cleared.

Agency's Comments
WWF GEF Agency Response

12/18/24:

During project development, LOEs from the participant countries will be obtained and submitted.

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

Secretariat's CommentsNo - See above comment

Agency's Comments
WWF GEF Agency Response

12/18/24:

During project development, LOEs from the participant countries will be obtained and submitted.

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

Secretariat's CommentsSee earlier comment

Agency's Comments
WWF GEF Agency Response

12/18/24:

During project development, LOEs from the participant countries will be obtained and submitted.

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 NA

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(11/26/2024) This is global project and no countries/ecosystems identified yet. 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(11/26/2024) 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(11/26/2024) Yes.

Agency's Comments

Annex F: Taxonomy Worksheet

8.9 Is the project properly tagged with the appropriate keywords?

Secretariat's Comments(11/26/2024) 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 CommentsNA

Agency's Comments

9 GEFSEC Decision

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

Secretariat's Comments

As discussed it would be useful to add/strengthen a few elements in the PIF/budget before formal review.

(11/26/2024) Please address the few comments and resubmit.

(12/18/2024) The comments have been addressed. The MSP PIF is technically cleared and recommended for CEO approval.

Agency's Comments

WWF GEF Agency 11/26/2024

Thank you for the comment. As discussed, the budget and narrative has been strengthened.

The additional comments have been addressed as well.

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

Secretariat's Comments

- *During project development/PPG* please also liaise with the High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People with which the FWC has many common overall directions and goal. Especially take into account to explore two-way synergies between the HACs Solutions Toolkit and the FWC learning hub.

- Please periodically liaise with the IW STAP member during project development to make sure STAP is aware and provide constructive inputs during the project design and not only close to endorsement of the project.

- LOEs for these case study countries need to be obtained before endorsement.

Agency's Comments

WWF GEF Agency Response

12/18/24:

Thank you for this comment

1) During project development, the project will engage with the High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People, as recommended.

2) Throughout project development, the project will liaise with the IW STAP member to coordinate and gather constructive inputs.

3) During project development, LOEs from the participant countries will be obtained and submitted.

Review Dates

	PIF Review	Agency Response
First Review	11/26/2024	12/18/2024
Additional Review (as necessary)		
Additional Review (as necessary)		
Additional Review (as necessary)		
Additional Review (as necessary)		

