



# GEF-6 REQUEST FOR PROJECT ENDORSEMENT/APPROVAL

PROJECT TYPE: **Medium-sized Project**

TYPE OF TRUST FUND: **GEF Trust Fund**

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## PART I: PROJECT INFORMATION

Project Title: Promoting Sustainable Land Management (SLM) in Albania through Integrated Restoration of Ecosystems			
Country(ies):	Albania	GEF Project ID: <sup>1</sup>	9477
GEF Agency(ies):	UNEP	GEF Agency Project ID:	01416
Other Executing Partner(s):	Ministry of Environment, UN Environment Europe Office	Submission Date:	May 3, 2017
GEF Focal Area (s):	Land Degradation	Project Duration (Months)	36
Integrated Approach Pilot	IAP-Cities <input type="checkbox"/> IAP-Commodities <input type="checkbox"/> IAP-Food Security <input type="checkbox"/>	Corporate Program: SGP <input type="checkbox"/>	
Name of Parent Program	NA	Agency Fee (\$)	82,420

### A. FOCAL AREA STRATEGY FRAMEWORK AND OTHER PROGRAM STRATEGIES<sup>2</sup>

Focal Area Objectives/Programs	Focal Area Outcomes	Trust Fund	(in \$)	
			GEF Project Financing	Co-financing
LD-1 Program 1	Agro-ecological Intensification	GEF TF	347,032	4,300,000
LD-3 Program 4	Scaling-up sustainable land management through the Landscape Approach	GEFTF	520,548	5,370,000
<b>Total project costs</b>			<b>867,580</b>	<b>9,670,000</b>

### B. PROJECT DESCRIPTION SUMMARY

<b>Project Objective:</b> Strengthening capacity and skills of national and local government institutions and promoting sustainable land management (SLM) practices in Albania through integrated ecosystem restoration <sup>3</sup>						
Project Components/ Programs	Financing Type <sup>4</sup>	Project Outcomes	Project Outputs	Trust Fund	(in \$)	
					GEF Project Financing	Confirmed Co-financing
1. Strengthened legal and institutional framework and capacity building for SLM	TA	<p><i>1.1 Shift from unsustainable to sustainable land use in agriculture and forestry sectors through</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>New comprehensive law on land management proposed for adoption by the Government</i></li> <li><i>At least one national coordinated multi-sectoral land management strategy designed and submitted for</i></li> </ul>	<p>1.1.1 SLM approaches mainstreamed into revised legal framework and land management planning processes</p> <p>1.1.2 Strengthened Inter-Ministerial Committee to coordinate institutions,</p>	GEFTF	250,000	3,190,000

<sup>1</sup> Project ID number remains the same as the assigned PIF number.

<sup>2</sup> When completing Table A, refer to the excerpts on [GEF 6 Results Frameworks for GETF, LDCF and SCCF](#).

<sup>3</sup> Ecological restoration is the process of assisting the recovery of an ecosystem that has been degraded, damaged or destroyed. It is an intentional activity that initiates or accelerates an ecological pathway - or trajectory through time - towards a reference state. Ecological restoration has as its goal an ecosystem that is resilient and self-sustaining with respect to structure, species composition and function, as well as being integrated into the larger landscape and supporting sustainable livelihoods. Many healthy ecosystems are a product of human endeavors over very long time periods and therefore restoration commonly requires the participation of resource dependent communities. In this respect ecological restoration supports conservation and sustainable development efforts worldwide. ([www.ser.org/resources/resources-detail-view/ecological-restoration-a-means-of-conserving-biodiversity-and-sustaining-livelihoods](http://www.ser.org/resources/resources-detail-view/ecological-restoration-a-means-of-conserving-biodiversity-and-sustaining-livelihoods)). For further review of ecological restoration of farmland and surrounding landscape, see Wade, Mark R, Geoff M Gurr, and Steve D Wratten. "Ecological Restoration of Farmland: Progress and Prospects." *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences* 363.1492 (2008): 831–847. PMC. Web. 14 Apr. 2016. ([www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2610112](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2610112))

<sup>4</sup> Financing type can be either investment or technical assistance.

		<i>approval</i>	engage with local communities, and manage information flows			
		1.2 Capacities and support for SLM strengthened, <i>as measured by</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 9 point increase in the Capacity Development Scorecard for relevant institutions at both the local and national levels (for MoE, MARDWA and other relevant institutions at both local and national levels)<sup>5</sup> (Baseline: 14; Target: 25)</li> <li>• At least 50 farming households trained on SLM practices At least 50 farming households have adopted SLM practices</li> <li>• At least 2 most adequate legal and economic instruments for stimulating investments in land productivity</li> </ul>	1.2.1 Relevant national and municipal resource managers capacitated in land use planning, SLM practices, ecosystem restoration, and use of economic instruments  1.2.2 Local landowners / resource users in Kolonja Municipality trained in and utilizing SLM approaches  1.2.3 Stakeholders in Kolonja Municipality aware of land degradation issues and the importance of SLM approaches			
2. Demonstrating and Scaling-up of SLM Best Practices	TA	2.1 Pressures on natural resources in an area covering at least 21,288 hectares are reduced through the application of SLM activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5 Integrated Land Use Plans, approved and under implementation for 21,288 ha</li> <li>• Increased vegetative cover on at least 120 ha of degraded areas in Mollas, Qender Erseke and Qender Leskovik through SLM-based restoration activities</li> <li>• Increase in the area under SLM (as reported in LD PMAT)</li> </ul>	2.1.1 Integrated land use plans in Kolonja Municipality created  2.1.2 Highly degraded forest, pasture and agricultural lands in Kolonja Municipality restored with SLM demonstrations	GEFTF	538,709	5,600,000
Subtotal					788,709	8,790,000
Project Management Cost (PMC) <sup>6</sup>				GEFTF	78,871	880,000
<b>Total project costs</b>					<b>867,580</b>	<b>9,670,000</b>

### C. CONFIRMED SOURCES OF CO-FINANCING FOR THE PROJECT BY NAME AND BY TYPE

Please include evidence for co-financing for the project with this form.

Sources of Co-financing	Name of Co-financier	Type of Cofinancing	Amount (\$)
Recipient Government	Ministry of Environment (MoE)	In-kind	4,500,000
Recipient Government	Ministry of Environment (MoE)	Grant	3,500,000
Recipient Government	Kolonja Municipality	In-kind	450,000
Recipient Government	Kolonja Municipality	Grant	20,000
Recipient Government	Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and Water Administration (MARDWA)	In-kind	750,000

<sup>5</sup> Capacity Development Scorecard based on [https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/documents/Capacity\\_Development\\_Indicators.pdf](https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/documents/Capacity_Development_Indicators.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> For GEF Project Financing up to \$2 million, PMC could be up to 10% of the subtotal; above \$2 million, PMC could be up to 5% of the subtotal. PMC should be charged proportionately to focal areas based on focal area project financing amount in Table D below.

Others	Faculty of Agriculture and Environment, Agricultural University of Tirana	In-kind	100,000
Others	Faculty of Forestry Sciences, Agricultural University of Tirana	In-kind	100,000
GEF Agency	United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)	In-kind	250,000
<b>Total Co-financing</b>			<b>9,670,000</b>

#### D. TRUST FUND RESOURCES REQUESTED BY AGENCY(IES), COUNTRY(IES) AND THE PROGRAMMING OF FUNDS

GEF Agency	Trust Fund	Country Name/Global	Focal Area	Programming of Funds	(in \$)		
					GEF Project Financing (a)	Agency Fee <sup>a)</sup> (b) <sup>2</sup>	Total (c)=a+b
UNEP	GEFTF	Albania	Land Degradation	NA	867,580	82,420	950,000
<b>Total Grant Resources</b>					<b>867,580</b>	<b>82,420</b>	<b>950,000</b>

a ) Refer to the [Fee Policy for GEF Partner Agencies](#)

#### E. PROJECT'S TARGET CONTRIBUTIONS TO GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS<sup>7</sup>

Provide the expected project targets as appropriate.

Corporate Results	Replenishment Targets	Project Targets
1. Sustainable land management in production systems (agriculture, rangelands and forest landscapes)	120 million hectares under sustainable land management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>21,288 hectares benefitting from the application of SLM approaches</li> <li>86,400 hectares benefitting from capacity building and awareness raising activities during the project implementation</li> </ul>

#### F. DOES THE PROJECT INCLUDE A “NON-GRANT” INSTRUMENT? NO

(If non-grant instruments are used, provide an indicative calendar of expected reflows to your Agency and to the GEF/LDCF/SCCF Trust Fund) in Annex D.

## PART II: PROJECT JUSTIFICATION

### A. DESCRIBE ANY CHANGES IN ALIGNMENT WITH THE PROJECT DESIGN WITH THE ORIGINAL PIF<sup>8</sup>

A.1. *Project Description*. Elaborate on: 1) the global environmental and/or adaptation problems, root causes and barriers that need to be addressed; 2) the baseline scenario or any associated baseline projects, 3) the proposed alternative scenario, GEF focal area<sup>9</sup> strategies, with a brief description of expected outcomes and components of the project, 4) incremental/additional cost reasoning and expected contributions from the baseline, the GEFTF, LDCF, SCCF, and co-financing; 5) global environmental benefits (GEFTF) and/or adaptation benefits (LDCF/SCCF); and 6) innovativeness, sustainability and potential for scaling up.

A number of notable changes have been made to the project design as compared to the PIF document, including the following:

<sup>7</sup> Update the applicable indicators provided at PIF stage. Progress in programming against these targets for the projects per the *Corporate Results Framework* in the [GEF-6 Programming Directions](#), will be aggregated and reported during mid-term and at the conclusion of the replenishment period.

<sup>8</sup> For questions A.1 –A.7 in Part II, if there are no changes since PIF, no need to respond, please enter “NA” after the respective question.

<sup>9</sup> For biodiversity projects, in addition to explaining the project’s consistency with the biodiversity focal area strategy, objectives and programs, please also describe which [Aichi Target\(s\)](#) the project will directly contribute to achieving.

- The project will support the development of 5 integrated land use management plans in order to make more comprehensive plans that will cover the entire areas of the 5 identified pilot demonstration sites in Kolonja Municipality.
- During the PPG phase (more specifically, during the field visit described in Annex Q), the locations of the pilot sites were identified, namely the Mollas, Qender Erseke and Qender Leskovik areas within Kolonja Municipality. Furthermore, areas of Barmash and Novosele were identified as sites where the Integrated Land Use Plans will be developed, together with the three previously mentioned sites. These sites were identified through consultations with Municipal authorities, representatives of farmers' and women's associations, and local NGOs as the most vulnerable to land degradation processes due to reoccurring landslides and erosion in the past decade causing runoff in steep mountainous areas that impacts more populated areas in the foothills, resulting in high economic costs and an existential threat to the local population. The sites have also been previously officially identified as priority rehabilitation areas by the Municipality of Kolonja.
- The direct impact of the project is estimated to cover an area of 21,288 hectares, which will be affected through 3 pilot site demonstrations, 5 integrated land use plans and the adoption of SLM practices by 50 farming households. The indirect impact of the project will cover the entire territory of Kolonja Municipality (86,400 hectares), as the impacts of capacity building and awareness raising activities will cover more than the initially anticipated area of 20,000 hectares.
- The amount of co-financing increased from USD 5.65 million to USD 9.67 million, with USD 20,000 of cash co-financing from Kolonja Municipality.
- Risks and mitigation measures were re-assessed to include detailed responsive measures.
- Albania's UNCCD NAP has been finalized and its objectives are presented in this document, which are in complementarity with the project.

Component Design: Components and Outcomes have remained the same as was originally proposed in the PIF. Two changes were made to the project Outputs to better align them to the existing baseline.

Output at PIF Stage	Output at CEO Endorsement Stage	Explanation
1.1.2 Functioning inter-ministerial committee enabling coordinated approaches to SLM	1.1.2 Strengthening the role of the Interministerial State Committee on Land Protection and Rehabilitation in relation to institutional coordination and partnership building for SLM	As the Interministerial Committee for Land Protection and Rehabilitation has already been established, Output 1.1.2 has been amended to focus on the strengthening of its functions and operations to include SLM approaches, through capacity building and the development of mechanisms for coordination between ministries and other relevant institutions at both the national and local levels with regard to SLM implementation.

### **A.1.1 THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS, ROOT CAUSES AND BARRIERS THAT NEED TO BE ADDRESSED**

#### Overview, Environmental and Socio-economic Context

Land degradation is a significant threat to Albania's socio-economic and environmental well-being, and the project is designed to support the widespread adoption of SLM activities in the country by supporting integrated landscape management planning that balances development needs and environmental services, strengthening and harmonising legal and policy frameworks for land and resource management, building capacity and coordination frameworks to undertake SLM practices, and increasing public awareness on land degradation threats. Moreover, the project will address the different needs and priorities of women and men through moving away from long-standing debates about gender equality in access to land towards the mainstreaming of gender issues to achieve more gender-equitable participation in the processes and institutions that underlie all decision-making about land.

At the site level, the project will demonstrate integrated land use planning and ecosystem restoration approaches that further promote SLM goals in order to showcase these practices for wider replication. Through these activities, the project will

address the key elements of land degradation in Albania in accordance with the objectives of the UNCCD National Action Programme (NAP), including in particular deforestation, improper soil management and inappropriate crop management, and in doing so will reduce the negative impacts of land degradation, including extensive soil erosion and landslides.

The Republic of Albania, located in the Balkan Peninsula in Southeast Europe, has a land surface area of 28,750 km<sup>2</sup>. The country consists of 24.4% agricultural land, 36.6% forest, 14.8% pasture and meadows, and the remaining 24.2% is classified as other, including lakes and waterways areas, rocky and mountainous land, and urban areas. Altitudes range from sea level to 2,751 m at Korabi Mountain in the northeast of the country; 75% of the country is considered mountainous with an average altitude of 708 m<sup>10</sup>. About one quarter of Albania's land is arable; of this, 19% is located in the mountains, 37% in the hills and 44% in the plains. In general, the arable soils situated in the hilly and mountain areas are characterized by thin soil profiles, high acidity, low fertility and a high degree of susceptibility to erosion. Because of the fragility of upland ecosystems, the sustainable management of natural resources in upland areas is critical to improving livelihoods, conserving ecosystem services, and ensuring reliable erosion and flood control to benefit lowland areas of Albania where the population is rising rapidly.

As of 2016, the **population of Albania** was 2,886,026 inhabitants, of which 1,461,326 are men and 1,424,700 are women. The sex ratio of the population of Albania is 102.6 males for every 100 females. Continuing migration of the population away from upland areas has led to abandonment of fields and pasture (it is estimated that there are between 120,000 - 300,000 ha of abandoned agricultural land nationwide that could be suitable for afforestation and or natural regeneration). In recent years, Albania has enjoyed **strong economic growth** (GDP growth rate of approximately 6% over the last decade) and a significant decline in poverty (nearly half Albania's poor were lifted out of poverty between 2002 and 2008)<sup>11</sup>. In 2012, the poverty level increased slightly to 14.3%; in mountainous regions, poverty is consistently much higher (around 30%). The **agricultural sector** provides employment for about 60% of Albania's labour force and **accounts for about 25% of gross domestic product (GDP)**. Albanian women are nearly twice as likely as men to be employed as contributing family workers, i.e. in informal employment or vulnerable jobs, and women spend significantly more time than men in unpaid work. Around 50% of employed women are engaged in agricultural activities. With the transition to a free market economy in the early 1990s, about 470,000 small family farms were created, with holdings averaging about 0.7 ha. Land parcels in upland areas tend to be even smaller, measuring as little as 0.2 ha. Agriculture in Albania remains highly labour intensive and inefficient, with low levels of technological advancement and weak advisory and extension services. Farmers in the productive coastal lowlands are advantaged in terms of marketing, economic opportunity, overall business investment and level of economic activity, whereas in mountain areas where infrastructure is inadequate and marketing opportunities are few, farming is still predominantly at the subsistence level.

The country's livestock sector accounts for nearly 50% of agricultural GDP and is highly dependent on **pastures and forests products**. Albania's forests cover around 1,041,390 ha or 33% of the country's territory, while pastures cover around 400,000 ha or 15%. Approximately 60% (244,000 ha) of the pastures are alpine and sub-alpine pastures and meadows. Forests are critical for the residents **of rural and upland areas**, providing nearly 70% of fuel in winters, building materials, and income from non-timber products such as medicinal plants. Villagers typically manage both agriculture and forestry as part of diverse agro-forestry and silvo-pastoral systems. Within a watershed, villagers typically use the higher and steeper land for forestry (wood supply and erosion prevention) and pasture, and the lower land for agricultural crops.

**Table 1. Structure of forest area in Albania (2015)**

Description of the Area	(ha)	%
Forestry	1,041,390	60
Pasture	505,284	29
Sparse trees in forest land	30,140	2
Unproductive area	165,690	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,742,504</b>	<b>100</b>

<sup>10</sup> Alignment of the national action plan of Albania with the UNCCD NAP and its 10 year strategy Report under the Harmonization of National Action Plan to Combat Desertification in Albania and Preparation of National Report Project, by PSEDA-ILIRIA

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/albania/overview>

### Institutional Context

The **Ministry of Environment (MoE) is the primary body** responsible for environmental issues and forest and pasture management, together with the regional Environmental Agencies and the National Agency on Protected Areas. The Focal Point for UNCCD lies within the Ministry. MoE oversees the development of forestry policy and forestry legislation in order to develop sustainable national forest and pasture management. Law no. 48/2016 established a moratorium on tree logging for trade and private production services, in response to the loss of 17% of forestlands from 2007-2013. The introduction of moratorium is expected to reduce deforestation processes and to increase forested area, diminish land degradation, conserve biodiversity and enhance forest production capacity. Local governments plan and provide wood supplies to local families according to their needs during the cold season. The structures responsible for forests and pastures in municipalities are the administrative body responsible for the forest service and provide stable governance, administration and control of forests and pastures in the administrative territory of the municipality. In 2014, a memorandum of understanding was signed between MoE and the Ministry of Education to include environmental protection in the elementary and secondary student's curricula. The **Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and Water Administration (MARDWA)** is responsible for agricultural development and the management of agricultural land in the country (total amounts to approx. 700,000 ha), as well as water issues related to irrigation and drainage at the state level.

The **Interministerial Committee for Land Protection and Rehabilitation** coordinates work between MARDWA and other relevant institutions and local governments for all activities that are carried out on agricultural land that relate to and affect its protection. The Committee is composed of representatives from line ministries and central national institutions and is headed by MARDWA. The Committee's main objective is to coordinate the work between MARDWA, MoE, other institutions and local government for all the activities that are carried out on agricultural land that relate to and affect its protection. Among the most important activities that are reviewed and coordinated by the Committee are the following: a) improvement of drainage systems and irrigation of agricultural land in designated areas and included in the territory of two or more regions; b) improving anti-erosion measures, through the construction or establishment of anti-erosion works within a certain territory, including afforestation, high water channels, dams, etc.; c) protective measures to improve river banks that pass through the territory of two or more regions; and d) joint activity of two or more ministries in the same area on issues related to agricultural land, etc.

In 2015 a new law on Territorial Reform resulted in the formation of 373 Local Government Units, organized within 61 municipalities, which in turn are organized within 12 Quarks (prefectures). Regional and local level authorities such the **Quark Councils** and **Municipal Councils** are charged with supervising and harmonizing issues related to land and soil management at local levels. As part of the country's decentralization process, 100% of the state forest fund has been transferred to municipal governments for use in forest management, and forest management is now under the local jurisdiction of the 61 municipalities. In addition, as of January 2016, forest staff that used to work for the District Forest Services of MoE has been transferred to the municipalities. **Land Administration Protection (LAP) departments**, which are part of the local government and under the supervision of the State Ministry of Local Government, have been created in the 12 regions and in all municipalities. LAPs regulate all forms of land use, including state and private agricultural land; local and private forests and pastures; state forests; riverside land; village and urban land, and unproductive land. With these and other changes, issues of agriculture and environment are now the responsibility of the newly formed municipalities, which became responsible for the management of forests, pasture land, agricultural land, water and irrigation systems, and urban and rural development. As a result of these changes, the 61 new municipalities face large new challenges and responsibilities, as they manage larger geographic areas and more types of resources than the previous local government structures (communes), and an important challenge in the coming years will be to strengthen the municipalities and their various administrative units, which until a year ago were self-governing and independent from each other. At the same time these changes provide an opportunity to implement co-management approaches for forest, pasture and habitat management at the local level.

In Kolonja Municipality, the **Rural, Environmental, Education Regional Department** manages and monitors issues related to environment and natural resources. The **LAP department** is the municipal level land administration protection

unit and is under the jurisdiction of local government. The LAP department has the responsibility given by the State Ministry of Local Government to regulate all forms of land use, including producing and implementing local strategies and preparing erosion control measures, among others.

The **Faculty of Forestry Sciences, Agricultural University of Tirana**, is the only university providing degree, postgraduate and research programs, training and specialization in agriculture and food. In line with the government strategy for environmental conservation, the Faculty of Forestry is undertaking research to fight and prevent “economically damaging pests”, such as the pine processionary moth (one of the most destructive species to pines and cedars in Southern Europe), which was identified as a national priority by the Government in 2015 and employed over 6,000 seasonal workers as part of this initiative. The Faculty also monitors and reports to the National Environmental Agency on soil erosion and soil monitoring. The **Faculty of Agriculture and Environment, Agricultural University of Tirana**, provides degrees, postgraduate, research and training in the field of biology and biotechnology; including programs and research in the field of environmental biology and environmental conservation. The Faculty also managed the Research Centre of Albanian Flora and Fauna.

### Legal and Policy Context

Environmental protection has become an important priority in the country in the past decade, in part because of requirements to meet EU accession, and the environment gets special attention both in terms of regulatory measures and infrastructure investments. Between 2007-2012, protected areas increased from 10.4% to 15.2% of the national territory, forests and pastures with rehabilitation plans increased by 48%, logging declined by 55%, and erosion/sedimentation was reduced by 200,000 tons. The **Law on Environmental Protection**, adopted in June 2011 and entered into force in January 2013, is a comprehensive framework law that covers a broad range of issues, including, environmental policies, strategies and programs; use and protection of soil, water, air, human building environment, waste, including hazardous waste, and environmental charges and taxes; Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and Strategic Environment Assessment (SEA); permitting; prevention and reduction of environmental pollution, including establishing norms; monitoring and information; control of the state of the environment; duties of State Bodies for the environment; the role of the public; sanctions; and environmental funds. The **Law on the Protection of Agricultural Land** (2004) provides the legal basis for creation and function of a new inspectorate on land protection and land rehabilitation. In addition, this law provided the basis for the establishment of the Interministerial State Committee on Land Protection and identified its mandate as the coordination of work and activities between MARDWA, MoE, other institutions and local government. The **Law on Forestry and Forest Services** provides a wide range of management tools to protect and preserve forest resources and prevent deforestation, while the **Law on Pasture and Grazing Land** gives the legal framework for the pasture and meadows management.

Several strategies and sectorial action plans have been developed and executed since 1992 to address obligations under the UNCCD and EU Acquis. The **National Strategy for Development and Integration (NSDI) 2016-2020** approved by Decision of Council of Ministers no. 348, on 11.5.2016, identifies the key environmental challenges in Albania that include: (i) contamination of water resources (ii) soil erosion as a result of unsustainable forestry, agricultural and pastoral practices (iii) land contamination from abandoned industrial installations, mining enterprises and waste dumps; and (iv) waste management which constitutes to be a major source of pollution. The **National Strategy for the Environment (2016-2020)** is currently in the process of being updated. This document will represent the basis for national planning on objectives related to land protection. The country has also developed the **National Strategy for Rural Development (2014-2020)**, which is the plan and program for objectives pertaining to rural development in Albania. Soil erosion is analysed and evaluated extensively in this document.

### Kolonja Municipality Pilot Area

Kolonja Municipality has been selected as the project site for several reasons. The Municipality is an important component of Albania’s overall agricultural production, yet at the same time it is part of the Vjosa and Seman river basins, which have the highest levels of erosion in the country as a result of large-scale deforestation and extensive over-grazing of pasture areas and flooding, making Kolonja an ideal area in which to evaluate, understand and address the impacts of erosion.

Apart from being very vulnerable to land and soil degradation, the local population is being affected by various social and economic trends elaborated below that exacerbate the area's environmental degradation. Finally, there are a number of existing initiatives in the area that provide opportunities for collaboration and building on previous results, as described in the Baseline section.

Kolonja Municipality is part of the Korce region, which covers an area of 371,100 ha, including 90,909 ha of agricultural land, of which 47,100 ha is arable land. The Korce region produces around 86,000 tons of cereal (12% of Albania's total production), 58,000 tons of wheat (21% of the total production), 19,000 tons of maize (5% of the total production) and 78,700 tons vegetable (8% of total production). Among Albania's twelve regions (Quarks), the Korce region has the 8<sup>th</sup> poorest population in the country, with an estimation of poverty at 12.4%<sup>12</sup>.

Kolonja municipality covers an area of 86,406 ha, consisting primarily of pasture lands (43,238 ha), forests (33,786 ha) and agricultural land (about 8,000 ha). The Kolonja area borders on Greece through the Gramozi Mountains, which contain high faunal diversity characterized by mountainous species. The area has many underground water sources, and significant hydrological flows from high mountain areas to lower residential and agricultural areas. Kolonja had a population of 22,261 as of 2015<sup>13</sup>, residing in two towns and 76 villages ; the **primary economic activities** are agriculture and forestry production. Compared to other areas in the country, Kolonja is a poor, mostly rural area with minimal infrastructure, including few well-maintained roads, unreliable and poorly treated water supplies, and inadequate irrigation and drainage systems. The **unemployment rate** in the Municipality is 27.1%, which is slightly lower than the average nationwide unemployment rate (around 29.3%), although this statistic assumes that most of the rural population qualifies as self-employed. The unemployment rate for young people (age 15-24) is 53% (national average: 52.9%), while the unemployment rate for women is 32.5% (national average 31.4%)<sup>14</sup> Kolonja is an area **rich in forest resources and water resources** (including thermal waters), but their use for economic development and well-being are at low levels today and is frequently unsustainable.

The main source of income for the inhabitants of Kolonja is **agriculture and orchards**, in particular the production of cereals (wheat, corn) and fruit trees (apple). Agricultural land covers approximately 6,357 ha, of which 4,145 ha is devoted to the cultivation of crops and forage plants. Kolonja has 2,303 farms; of this total, 1,420 farms have between 2 to 2.5 ha for crop cultivation<sup>15</sup>. Kolonja produces about 4,000 tons of cereals, 2,300 tons of wheat, 870 tons of maize and 1,200 tons of vegetables. In general, agricultural land in the Kolonja area is highly **fragmented** and there is little cooperation among local farmers in developing markets or value-added processing. For the most part, production is collected by private entrepreneurs for delivery to local and regional markets, but is not processed any further.

Within Kolonja Municipality, three areas have been selected as pilot sites for demonstration activities under the proposed project. In addition to these three sites, two more areas will be part of the project as sites where the total of 5 Integrated Land Use Plans will be made. These five sites are described here.

Mollas Area: As seen in the table below, around 70% of the land in the Mollas area is occupied by pastures/grazing land, while 28% is forests and 2% shrubs. Approximately 4,140 ha within the area has been deforested in recent years and is now either pasture land or abandoned land with high levels of erosion. In some areas, the cutting of forests has been followed by reforestation efforts, primarily with non-native species, and additional reforestation is planned for the area. Most grazing lands in the area have very low productivity as they have been overgrazed. Livestock herders rotate the use of pastures on a seasonal basis, but with little control or coordination among them, and in some cases pastoralists from other municipalities will move into pastures during what would otherwise be their fallow season. The population of the Mollas area was 5,530 in the 2011 census.

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<sup>12</sup> [http://www.instat.gov.al/media/288396/anketa\\_e\\_matjes\\_se\\_nivelit\\_te\\_jeteses\\_\\_2012\\_rishikuar.pdf](http://www.instat.gov.al/media/288396/anketa_e_matjes_se_nivelit_te_jeteses__2012_rishikuar.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> Civil Registry, 2015

<sup>14</sup> National Institute of Statistics [www.instat.gov.al](http://www.instat.gov.al)

<sup>15</sup> Operational Plan for the Local Governance Development, Kolonje Municipality, UNDP-STAR Programme prepared by URI, March 2016



**Table 2:** Distribution of land area and land uses for each village in the Mollas Area (in hectares)

Village	Total Area	Mature Forest	Trunks	Coppice Forest	Coppice	Shrubs	Shrubs	Pastures	Pastures
			Forest Use		Forest Use		Forest Use		Use
			Village		Village		Village		Village
Mollas	38.2	-	-	12.2	12.2	-	-	26	26
Skorovot	199.8	155.9	156	-	-	-	-	43.9	43.9
Qinam	375		-	64.6	80	-	-	310.4	310.4
Vodice	831.4	20.2	20.2	9.7	9.7	-	-	801.5	801.5
Qafzez	520.2	-	-	189.1	219	23.2	23.2	264.8	264.8
Helmes	432.9	-	-	17.5	17.5	-	-	415.4	415.4
Shtike	794.4	171.6	171.6	119.2	149	38	38	435.6	435.6
Pepellash	336	-	-	-	-	33.6	33.6	302.4	302.4
Butke	178.4	7.3	7.3	141.1	171	-	-	-	-
Kozel	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Milec	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Bezhan	335.2	-	-	-	-	-	-	335.2	335.2
Boshonj	79.7	79.7	79.7	-	-	-	-	-	-
Bluz	89.7	-	-	89.7	89.7	-	-	-	-
<b>Total Area</b>	<b>4,140</b>	<b>434.7</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>733.9</b>		<b>94.8</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>2,935.2</b>	<b>-</b>

Qender Erseke Area: The total area of Qender Erseke is 2,746 ha, including 805 ha of forests consisting of 330 ha of mature forests, 431 ha of coppice and 44 ha of shrubs. In addition, the area has 1,898 ha of pasture land and 27 ha of non-productive degraded land and 26 ha of forest. The population of the Qender Erseke Area was 2,673 in the 2011 census.

**Table 3:** Distribution of land area and land uses for each village in the Qender Erseke Area (in hectares)

Village	Total Area	Forest	Category of Forest			Area covered in forest vegetation	Unproductive / degraded land	Pastures
			Mature	Coppice	Shrub			
Bejkove	13.50	13.50	5.50	8.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Borove	181.50	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	190.50
Gjonç	445.65	167.25	0.00	167.25	0.00	0.00	27.00	251.40
Gostivisht	451.20	90.00	46.00	0.00	44.00	0.00	0.00	361.20
Kabash	91.00	91.00	61.00	30.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Kodras	243.15	36.65	36.65	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	206.50
Kreshove	136.38	26.50	0.00	26.50	0.00	0.00	0.00	109.88
Lëngëz	303.95	65.25	19.25	46.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	238.70
Prodan	30.00	2.50	0.00	2.50	0.00	0.00	0.00	27.50
Psar	9.25	3.00	3.00	0.00	0.00	6.25	0.00	0.00
Rehovë	387.00	174.50	76.50	98.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	212.50
Selenicë	18.49	18.49	0.00	18.49	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Starje	211.90	104.00	82.00	22.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	107.90
Taç Lart	183.50	12.00	0.00	12.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	171.50
Taç Poshtë	35.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	15.00	0.00	20.00
Taç Qëndër	4.50	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	4.50	0.00	0.00
<b>Total Area</b>	<b>2745.97</b>	<b>804.64</b>	<b>329.90</b>	<b>430.74</b>	<b>44.00</b>	<b>25.75</b>	<b>27.00</b>	<b>1897.58</b>

**Qender Leskovik Area:** The total area of the Qender Leskovik area is 4,539 ha, including 2,370 ha of forests of which 430 ha is mature forest, 393 hectares are coppice, and 1,548 ha are shrubs. In addition, the area has 1,876 ha of pasture and 245 ha of unproductive/degraded land and 48 ha of empty land. The population of the Qender Leskovik area was 416 in the 2011 census.

**Table 4.** Distribution of land area and land uses for each village in the Qender Leskovik Area (in hectares)

Village	Total area	Forest fund	Forest category			Forest Vegetation	Unp. / Degraded	Empty land	Pasture
			Mature	Coppice	Shrubs				
Cerckë	280.27	217.13	0.00	0.00	217.13	0.00	0.00	0.00	63.14
Gërmenj	35.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	35.00
Gjerakarë	27.50	27.50	0.00	27.50	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Glinë	140.47	135.47	0.00	85.47	50.00	0.00	5.00	0.00	0.00
Kovaçisht	337.52	94.31	41.00	53.31	0.00	0.00	13.76	0.00	229.45
Lashovë	152.06	141.86	57.36	84.50	0.00	0.00	10.20	0.00	0.00
Leskovik	971.50	592.55	179.70	0.00	412.85	0.00	34.88	0.00	344.07
Peshtan	780.96	86.99	25.75	0.00	61.24	0.00	54.75	0.00	639.22
Pobickë	117.58	65.61	43.55	0.00	22.06	0.00	4.31	0.00	47.66
Podë	620.62	414.93	0.00	41.75	373.18	0.00	10.75	48.25	194.94
Radanj	668.49	373.17	82.32	7.92	282.93	0.00	97.20	0.00	198.12
Radat	97.98	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	97.98
Radovë	97.50	83.00	0.00	0.00	83.00	0.00	14.50	0.00	0.00
Vrëpckë	163.75	137.72	0.00	92.54	45.18	0.00	0.00	0.00	26.03
<b>Total Area</b>	<b>4,539.45</b>	<b>2,370.24</b>	<b>429.68</b>	<b>392.99</b>	<b>1,547.57</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>245.35</b>	<b>48.25</b>	<b>1,875.61</b>

**Barmash Area:** The total area of the Barmash commune is 8,835 ha, including 3,387 ha of forests of which 2521 ha is mature forest, 529 hectares are coppice, and 335 ha are shrubs. In addition, the area has 99 ha of pasture and 375 ha of empty land. The population of the Barmash area was 876 in the 2011 census.

**Table 5.** Distribution of land area and land uses for each village in the Barmash Area (in hectares)

Village	Total area	Urban	Agriculture	Forest Category			Forest Vegetation	Empty land	Pasture
				Mature	Coppice	Shrubs			
Barmash	1452.42	2.27	33.45	244.51	65.51	59.37	1036.59	4.54	6.18
Leshnjë	367.24	0.90	62.81	104.05	35.41	31.94	84.33	46.42	1.37
Shalës	735.47	2.86	47.58	453.21	31.23	0.76	160.77	19.34	19.73
Gozhdorazhd	1039.09	3.34	97.28	363.00	76.83	41.03	395.98	55.53	6.09
Sanjollas	1718.67	2.45	100.13	516.68	50.37	57.13	940.69	40.77	10.46
Kamnik	295.30	3.63	45.74	119.38	34.48	62.59	9.12	15.34	5.01
Bënjëz	1050.50	1.49	25.81	393.96	70.80	55.72	425.96	66.19	10.57
Radimisht	703.68	2.25	69.52	134.89	15.30	7.34	458.53	3.82	12.03
Arrëz	645.26	3.00	141.64	139.78	76.52	1.91	186.63	85.51	10.26
Rajan	827.38	3.36	73.12	52.37	73.32	17.58	552.76	37.42	17.45
<b>Total Area</b>	<b>8835.00</b>	<b>25.56</b>	<b>697.07</b>	<b>2521.85</b>	<b>529.77</b>	<b>335.37</b>	<b>4251.36</b>	<b>374.87</b>	<b>99.14</b>

**Novosele Area:** The total area of the Novosele commune is 1,028 ha, including 380 ha of forests of which 326 ha is mature forest, and 54 hectares are coppice. The area has 423 ha of Forest vegetation and 130 ha of empty land. The population of the Novosele area was 335 in the 2011 census.

**Table 6.** Distribution of land area and land uses for each village in the Novosele Area (in hectares)

Village	Total area	Urban	Agriculture	Forest Category			Forest Vegetation	Empty land	Pasture
				Mature	Coppice	Shrubs			
Novoselë	94.06	0.32	5.28	28.24	11.26	0.00	29.95	19.01	0.00
Mesickë	175.78	0.03	14.34	37.28	9.62	0.00	113.24	1.27	0.00
Kagjinas	117.27	0.05	13.10	52.48	5.66	0.00	27.30	18.68	0.00
Zharkan	92.74	0.23	0.68	45.58	1.06	0.00	32.96	12.23	0.00
Piskal	73.39	0.21	9.71	35.01	2.19	0.00	15.47	10.80	0.00
Vitisht	73.94	0.02	0.15	9.56	1.40	0.00	35.66	27.15	0.00
Shijan	125.35	0.16	25.67	27.27	9.96	0.00	58.27	4.03	0.00
Kaduç	52.13	0.11	17.18	3.06	4.36	0.00	2.98	24.45	0.00
Ndërrmarr	141.79	0.17	6.44	47.49	4.28	0.00	82.71	0.71	0.00
Mbreshtan	81.53	0.27	0.45	40.09	4.33	0.00	24.47	11.93	0.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>1028.00</b>	<b>1.57</b>	<b>93.01</b>	<b>326.06</b>	<b>54.10</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>423.01</b>	<b>130.24</b>	<b>0.00</b>

### Land Degradation Processes and Threats

Albania's dependency on the agriculture and forestry sectors for social and economic development, combined with the ongoing degradation of fundamental ecosystem services in agricultural, pasture and forest lands, demonstrate the crucial importance of Sustainable Land Management (SLM) for the country. Despite the economic and environmental importance of soil resources for the country, Albania's challenges related to soil management have largely been neglected for years, with serious repercussions on soil quality. Soil erosion, including surface erosion, coastal erosion, riverbank erosion, transportation of silt and impoverishment of soil fertility, with soil losses estimated to be at an average of 16.4 t/ha annually (2010). An evaluation of the potential erosion risk in Albania estimated that 24% of land is under high risk of erosion, 59% is moderate and 17% is under low risk of erosion, with approximately 100,000 ha of agricultural land in the process of desertification caused by poor vegetation cover. Salinization due to the accumulation of soluble salts (Na, Mg and Ca) on or near the surface of the soil, which results in completely unproductive soil, is another important problem in Albania, which already has about 12,000 ha of saline soils (of which 2,000 ha are considered highly saline). Albania also has approximately 70,000 ha of unproductive "acid soils", with pH values between 3.5-6.5, which require remediation in order to be productive again. Soil compaction has increased greatly with the adoption of mechanized agriculture, and now affects most agricultural lands. Other trends include declines in the area of surface soils rich in organic matter (285,000 ha or 42% of agricultural land have suffered from the loss of soil organic matter); and declines in soil nutrients, with annual losses of three essential nutrients (NPK<sup>16</sup>) of 69,609 tons, or 40% greater than the amount of fertilizer currently used (the cost to farmers to increase fertilizer use to replace the nutrients lost by erosion is estimated at USD 98 million<sup>17</sup>). Overall, Albania is among the most affected countries in Europe in terms of the extent and intensity of land degradation, and economic losses stemming from the effects of erosion and compaction of arable land amount to USD 138.2 million per year or about 5.5% of agricultural GDP.

Kolonja Municipality is particularly affected by soil erosion due to its topography, the intensive nature of the agricultural and forestry production in the area, and its vulnerability to declining water quantity and quality as a result of land degradation and poor water management systems for irrigation and drainage. Albania's UNCCD NAP (2016) and the National Strategy on Rural Development 2014-2020<sup>18</sup> identified the areas most affected by soil erosion, one of which is Kolonja Municipality, where extensive erosion has taken place, related to topographic and geological factors as well as deforestation, overgrazing and unsustainable agricultural practices. About 3,000 ha of land in the municipality of Kolonja (300 ha of agricultural land, 1,700 ha of pasture land and 1,000 ha of forest) are under pressure from soil erosion and

<sup>16</sup> Nitrogen, Phosphorus and Potassium

<sup>17</sup> Economic losses from soil degradation in agricultural areas in Albania Agim BINAJ1, Pirro VEIZI1, Enkeleida BEQIRAJ2, Fran GJOKA1, Elian KASA1 1 Agricultural University of Tirana, Tirana, Albania

<sup>18</sup> Decision of the Council of Ministers no. 709, dated 29.10.2014 "On approval of the National Strategy for Agriculture and Rural Development 2014-2020" Official Journal no. 169, year 2014, pg. 8483

landslides. The average rate of soil erosion is about 20 ton/ha/year but in some areas the figure is higher, especially where soil erosion is combined with landslides. Land degradation directly impacts the local population in Kolonja Municipality due to reduced soil fertility and plant productivity as well as reduced grazing capacity and the degradation of forested areas. Furthermore, land degradation, especially landslides, affect water irrigation and drainage system, including local and national roads. Forests in the area are highly degraded, and although a partial forest management plan has been developed, it only includes 26 out of the 75 villages.

There are a number of significant causes of land degradation in Albania, all of which are factors in the degradation of ecosystem services and functions in Kolonja Municipality:

Unsustainable agricultural practices: Albania's Common Country Assessment (2004) identified unsustainable land use practices as a primary national environment and development concern, and concluded that unsustainable management practices in forest, agriculture, and water sectors are the main drivers of land degradation. Inadequate farming techniques, including inappropriate tillage, encroachment on marginal lands, inappropriate technologies/methodologies used for crop production, failure to rotate crops, low and unbalanced use of organic and mineral fertilizers, and ineffective measures for plant protection all contribute to the degradation of agricultural land. Decreases in soil organic matter in arable lands are related to the widely applied practice in Albania of burning of stubbles. When possible, farmers have attempted to offset declines in soil productivity through the increased application of fertilizers; as of 2012, fertilizer use per ha of arable land had increased to 90.9 kg per ha<sup>19</sup>.

Overgrazing: Inefficient grazing management, particular overgrazing of marginal lands that are prone to erosion, is common throughout Albania, including in the pasture and agricultural areas of Kolonja Municipality. In Kolonja, a very high number of livestock from farms within the district and from neighbouring districts are grazed in the area, particularly in summer as the climatic conditions make this area favourable for grazing. This overgrazing has led to significant soil erosion and declines in soil quality, and in some areas has resulted in the abandonment of grazing lands entirely.

Deforestation and Forest Degradation: The degradation and destruction of forests is considered a major environmental problem in Albania. According to Global Forest Watch, over the past 13 years tree cover in Albania has declined by 32,760 ha. Forests have been affected by unsustainable harvest levels and harvesting practices, including illegal logging for fuel wood and construction; pests and disease, and forest fires. In Kolonja Municipality, illegal logging over the past 20 years has greatly degraded forest ecosystems, due to two primary causes: 1) harvesting of wood by the rural population as it is their main fuel source for cooking and heating, as well as for agricultural purposes and construction materials; and 2) illegal logging driven by commercial interests. In general, wood harvesting in the area is carried out according to immediate needs, without any planning or sustainability. Forest fires also are a widespread problem, in part because of the traditional practice of burning pasturelands to promote "grass regeneration", and large wildfires have occurred repeatedly over the past several decades. Overall, poor forestry management in the Kolonja area has led to significant deforestation, resulting in high levels of erosion, and in areas such as the Vjosa-Seman river basin, in more intensive flooding of downstream rivers.

Degradation of Hydrological Systems: Poor water management, including unregulated river bed dredging and control of flood irrigation, is degrading the ecosystem services and functions of lakes, rivers and streams. Compounding the poor management of water resources, deforestation and land/soil degradation are compromising the capacity of natural hydrological systems to provide, maintain, and regulate critical functions and services, including resilience to climate variability and natural hazards (e.g. regulating floods, ensuring water supply). Upstream land degradation reduces the capacity of hydrologic systems to retain water and regulate water flows, and increases sedimentation and siltation downstream that reduces the water storage capacity of water bodies. This results in excessive runoff during the rainy season, reduced capacity to retain excessive water flows during the rainy season (increasing the threat of flood damage to agricultural production and human infrastructure), and reduced capacity to store water for the dry season.

Climate change: Albania is considered as one of the most vulnerable countries to climate change in East Europe and Central

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<sup>19</sup> WB data on fertilisers <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/AG.CON.FERT.ZS>

Asia, due to high exposure to extreme weather events (droughts, heat spells, flooding), high sensitivity (great reliance on hydropower and irrigation, a large share of population living in low elevation coastal zones), and low adaptive capacity (income inequality, GDP per capita and institutional capacity). Drought is already a common phenomenon in Albania, with significant negative impacts on agriculture, forestry and water management. Temperature increases of 1.7 to 2.3 degrees Celsius are expected by the mid-century, along with decreases in precipitation (-6.9 to -5.3% by 2050), which will increase fire risk in forest and pasture areas and of drought impacts on agriculture, and increase the challenge of producing crops without causing degradation of soils and water resources.

Flooding: Some areas in Albania are occasionally suffering from flooding, especially during November-April period of the year as result of heavy rainfall and malfunction of drainage systems. Therefore, agricultural soils are flooded and lead to the tendency of logged soils and unproductivity. The regions of Torovic, Zadrimë, Terbuf, Roskovec, Maliq, Korce, etc., are the most affected.

## **Barriers**

In response to these threats, the long-term solution is to strengthen the capacities and skills of national and local government institutions and other stakeholders in Albania to undertake SLM approaches. However, a number of barriers are preventing the adoption of effective SLM approaches, including conflicting and poorly harmonized laws and regulations pertaining to land and resource management, high dependence on agricultural and forestry production in the local and national economies that leads to overuse of land and natural resources, and a lack of experience, capacities and resources needed to tackle these issues.

Weak legal and institutional frameworks to support sustainable land management and limited capacity and awareness among resource managers and landowners on implementing SLM approaches: In Albania, legislation at the central and local (municipal) levels is typically not harmonized. With the country's recent decentralization process, this problem has become more acute as the new duties of municipalities related to natural resource management require new legislation at the local level and revisions at the central level. Moreover, many of the laws and regulations on land management that have been enacted since 1991 are "reactive" and narrowly focused, and thus fail to provide an integrated and comprehensive framework for land management that addresses land use planning, reforms, protections, tenure, transactions and other elements. Existing laws on land reform, land tenure and land transactions, all of which remain unchanged since 1991 and fail to reflect the current administrative structures or to address current threats to forest and agricultural resources, need to be revised, coordinated and consolidated into one comprehensive law and associated by-laws. In addition, although sound legal frameworks protecting women's rights to own property are in place in Albania, longstanding customs and traditions continue to favour male property ownership, which may exclude some family members from exercising influence over the use and disposition of family land. Effective implementation of SLM approaches requires coordination not only between levels of government but among ministries and other agencies representing different sectors. In this regard, responsibility for land and resource management in Albania is dispersed across many institutions, sectors and levels of government, with very few cooperation mechanisms between the responsible ministries and institutions, and poor coordination of policies, strategies and plans for land management and conservation. For example, the Ministry of European Integration develops strategies and programs on harmonizing national legislation with the EU Legal Framework, while each line Ministry follows its own strategic program. As a result, most programs related to sustainable management of land and resources fail to address priority issues or achieve effective results.

Although institutional reforms in the forest sector were implemented under the World Bank supported Improved Natural Resources Management Project, Albania's national decentralization strategy has subsequently transferred most responsibilities for forest management to local governments, without yet providing increased staffing and staff training, legislation to support local government management, and budget and resource allocations to municipalities. Thus, resource managers at the local level in Albania continue to have extremely limited experience, knowledge, resources and capacity in applying sustainable land management practices, even as local and state-level governments are now tasked with leading efforts to address environmental issues and the management of forest, agricultural and water resources. At the same time, demographic and socio-economic trends have reduced the experience and abilities of Albania's agricultural labour forces to manage land and natural resources. The lack of opportunities in most rural communities and subsequent out migration

has changed the age structure, and thus the level of experience, of farm holders throughout the country. In 2012, only 1% of farmers were under 25 years old, while 33% of farmers were over 65 years old. And while approximately 1/3 of farm holders have a background in agricultural education, these are likely to be older farmers who attended agricultural vocational high schools<sup>20</sup>. Furthermore, women only constitute 6.5% of the total number of farm managers, and only male gender roles are associated with tasks that involve control over agricultural assets, mobility and decision-making, which results in reduced access to, and control over, agricultural assets and decision-making for women.<sup>21</sup> As a result of these trends, the capacity of farmers to effectively manage land and natural resources, and to adopt new SLM approaches, is quite limited. Finally, the low awareness among natural resource managers and farmers on the importance of SLM approaches, and the lack of experience and understanding of participatory approaches and opportunities in land management in the context of democracy, decentralization and open markets, has led to continued neglect of soil management and contributed to the failure to integrate the management of agro-ecosystems at the landscape level.

Inadequate land use planning processes and limited demonstrations of SLM practices in Albania: Many strategies and plans are undertaken in Albania concerning issues of land protection and land degradation and desertification, but the steps/actions proposed by different strategies and plans frequently differ in terms of both priorities and activities. As a result, sectorial policies are often conflicting, the most pressing needs are often not incorporated into planning processes, and proposed strategies and plans often do not result in actual implementation. In addition, there are very few successful models or demonstrations in Albania of the sustainable use of resources that produce positive economic returns and provide effective conservation of land and natural resources from degradation processes. Furthermore, there is an overarching issue in Albania in terms of very limited experience and knowledge of best practices in areas such as ecosystem rehabilitation, water harvesting, and uses of nitrogen fixing trees/shrubs, as well as a lack of experience and knowledge on integrated approaches that address more than one of the mentioned SLM interventions at the same time.

## **A.1.2. THE BASELINE SCENARIO AND ANY ASSOCIATED PROJECTS**

### **Baseline Scenario**

The Government of Albania supports sustainable management practices for forests and water resources and the application of environmentally friendly agricultural production methods. The government prioritizes recovering, conserving and enhancing ecosystems that depend on agriculture and forestry. Albania became a Party of the UNCCD on 2000 April 27 after its accession on December 1999. MoE and MARDWA together are responsible for implementation of the UNCCD in Albania, and the two institutions have experience in collaborating on activities related to land protection. In 2014 the government initiated the preparation of the NAP to Protect Land and Combat Land Degradation and preparation of a 10-Year Strategy.

The baseline scenario for this proposed GEF project was re-assessed during the PPG phase and further elaborated as presented below.

MoE, through the National Inspectorate of Environment and Forests, works on capacity building and operational management of the new forest management units that will be created in each municipality as a part of the new administrative reform. To assist municipalities in their reforestation programs, MoE estimates that the Regional Development Fund will transfer USD 814,567 in 2016 to the entire 61 municipalities exclusively for reforestation. To assist the State Inspectorate of Environment and Forests in the identification of any offense in the forest fund with regard to the new moratorium on logging, a national project to monitor with cameras the main timber transport axes started its implementation in May 2016. The budget of MoE for 2016 for tackling forest and land management issues has increased by 49% compared to the budget of 2015, amounting to USD 1,245,237. In addition, MoE is currently providing co-finance and implementing a number of relevant projects, including the following:

The Payment for Environmental Services Project (World Bank and SIDA, 2015-2019, USD 18.17 mil., including

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<sup>20</sup> Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and Water Administration Republic of Albania Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 Under Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) 28 May 2015

<sup>21</sup> Gender, agriculture and rural development in Albania, FAO, 2016

country contribution of USD 1,241,848 for 2016) aims to support sustainable practices in land management and development of monetary and non-monetary benefits for communities in project areas, mostly situated in the rural part of Albania. The project has four components that focus on forest and pasture inventories and registration, development of an information system, and presentation of the concept for payment for environmental services. In Kolonja Municipality, the PES project has developed Land Markets by improving and updating the land registration system, computerizing the land registration process to establish a land market, and improving land security, with the goal of facilitating more efficient and sustainable use of agricultural land. With the support of MARDWA through ARDA (Agency of Rural Development), local farmers are being encouraged to develop their capacities through preparing IPARD<sup>22</sup>-like grant applications.

The project Technical Assistance for Institution Building of the Ministry of Environment in Enforcing Environmental and Climate Acquis (IPA, 2015-2017, USD 1,931,280, including a country contribution of USD 124,810 for 2016) is designed to support the Ministry of Environment in enhancing its capacity to build and implement a sound sector strategy; to implement and enforce environmental and Climate Change legislation through increasing effectiveness of environmental and climate change strategy implementation by building and implementing a sector plan, as well as transposition and implementation of priority EU Environmental and Climate Change Acquis; strengthening the Environmental Inspectorate for effective law enforcement and prosecution services for violations of environmental requirements as well as transposing the EU Environmental Crime Directive; ensuring that the Environmental Protection Agency functions effectively at both national and regional levels; and supporting public awareness (public officials and public at large) and driving behavioural changes as regards Environment and Climate Change.

The project Support for Minimizing Waste and Promoting 3Rs in Albania (JICA, 2014-2017, USD 1,699,180, including a country contribution of USD 90,666 for 2016) is focused on promoting a 3R framework in the sustainable management of solid waste at the local level, and ensuring scaling up nationwide. The project supports MoE capacities to develop the 3R policy framework, and local government plans to implement the Strategy on Waste Management and Action Plan in Albania.

The project Adaptation to Climate Change in Western Balkans (GIZ 2012-2018, USD 3.78 mil., including a country contribution of USD 109,455 for 2016) supports five countries, namely Albania, Macedonia, Montenegro, Kosovo and Serbia, in capacity building, advisory services and procurement of equipment related to climate change adaptation. There are five project components, namely establishment of a regional system for early prediction of floods in Drin Basin, develop national strategies for adaptation to climate change, formulation and implementation of flood and drought management plans at the municipal level, regional cooperation on integrated water resources management (IWRM), and integration of strategies for adaptation to climate change in urban planning.

Through the Decision of the Council of Ministers no. 91 on 10 February 2016, MARDWA through the Agency of Rural Development, has established a programme to support farmers and land users in improving the technology used for agricultural production, livestock and agro-processing, in order to increase their capacity for land management and access to grants and loans given by the banks and other EU programmes. The overall budget of the Grant Scheme is EUR 8,270,000, consisting of EUR 6,200,000 in EU contribution and EUR 2,070,000<sup>23</sup> in national contributions. MARDWA is also currently implementing a number of relevant projects, including the following:

The project Flood Recovery: Agriculture and Economic Development (IPA 2014-2020, USD 7.69 mil, including a country contribution of USD 767,820) aims to assist in recovery after disasters through the provision of compensation and investment grants to farmers and farm households and agribusinesses, and to strengthen the agricultural services to the sectors in need.

Country Programming Network (FAO 2015-2017, USD 6.65 mil., including a country contribution of USD 456,399 for 2016) was developed to promote priorities identified for collaboration between FAO and the Government of

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<sup>22</sup> With the Rural Development component of the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance - IPA, countries are assisted through a particular instrument called IPARD - Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance in Rural Development.

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.azhbr.gov.al/skemat-ipard-like>

Albania as well as specific outcomes to be achieved during the period 2015-2017. The formulation of the CPF involved iterative review of national priorities for food security, agriculture and rural development programmes in the Republic of Albania, and has included several consultative and assessment missions of FAO to the country.

Water Resources and Irrigation project (World Bank 2014-2018, USD 45 mil., including country contribution of USD 734,749 for 2016) aims to (a) establish the strategic framework to manage water resources at the national level and at the level of the Drin-Buna and Semani River basins; and (b) improve, in a sustainable manner, the performance of selected irrigation systems.

Finally, through the government's Regional Development Fund Program, Kolonja Municipality began implementation in late 2016 of a Forestation Programme with a budget USD 300,000. This program is part of a grant of approx. USD 3.1 million to be used for reforestation and for increasing green areas in public spaces, which also includes investment in public services (roads, revitalization of the city, water irrigation systems, sanitation, educational facilities, etc.).

### **Related Projects**

A number of projects and initiatives that have been and continue to be implemented in Albania are relevant to the proposed GEF project. In relation to the original PIF, two additional relevant projects were identified.

The Italian Government is supporting implementation of the Delegated Cooperation: support to indirect Centralized Management (ICM) of IPA funds (2013-2017, USD 815,630). The project objective is to i) strengthen the participation of the Embassy of Italy/Development Cooperation Office in Tirana in the framework of the initiatives related to IPA programming; and ii) ensure the financial resources committed for the implementation of the initiative "Strengthening national capacity in nature protection - Preparation for Natura 2000 network (SECCS Measure 2). This project is relevant due to its component on strengthening the capacities of MoE as the major project beneficiary.

In October 2015, a large landslide devastated part of the city of Erseke in Kolonja Municipality. Such landslides occur regularly in the area, and the local population has invested in planting trees by themselves for several years, although these activities are ad-hoc. Kolonja Municipality has received a donation from the Republic of Slovenia to improve the situation through a Forestation Project (2016-2018, USD 320,025), that will establish a green belt corridor and reforest areas above and in the city, with the primary goals of (i) minimising land erosion; (ii) revitalizing the degraded area and creating habitat; and (iii) greening of the city and surrounding areas, thereby reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and improving air quality.

Implementation of the above-mentioned projects has contributed to raising awareness on the issue of land degradation. However, the application of different measures to protect degraded areas from land erosion and further degradation are still insufficient and not adequately tackled in Kolonja Municipality.

### **A.1.3. THE PROPOSED ALTERNATIVE SCENARIO AND GEF FOCAL AREA STRATEGIES, WITH A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF EXPECTED OUTCOMES AND COMPONENTS OF THE PROJECT**

The Government of Albania is requesting GEF support through this project to remove the existing barriers to strengthen the capacities and skills of national and local government institutions and other stakeholders in Albania to undertake SLM approaches. The goal of the project is to enhance Albania's institutional and legislative environment to effectively mitigate the causes and negative impacts of land degradation through SLM practices.

The project aims to achieve its objective through two main components and several project outcomes. In relation to the PIF, the project components and activities were elaborated in more detail.

**Component 1 - Strengthened legal and institutional framework and capacity building for SLM:** Component 1 will establish an enabling legal and institutional framework on SLM where existing regulations on land/soil management will be strengthened through development of a new comprehensive law on land management and the capacities of local and national institutions to implement SLM approaches will be enhanced and integrated into overall land use planning and



management.

Outcome 1.1 Shift from unsustainable to sustainable land use in agriculture and forestry sectors: This outcome will result in the creation of a new comprehensive land management law and relevant by-laws through revising the existing legal and policy framework responsible for land management and planning and ensuring that mainstreaming of SLM is a requirement in updated policies and regulations. This will consequently lead to development of new multi-sectoral strategies, including strategies on coordination with agricultural and forestry sectors, rural development, water management, etc. Furthermore, to ensure that the work of all relevant institutions tackling land/soil management is coordinated, the project will build the capacities of the Interministerial State Committee on Land Protection and Rehabilitation in order to facilitate the development of coordinated strategies and programmes on land management.

This outcome will be achieved through the following two outputs:

Output 1.1.1 SLM approaches mainstreamed into revised legal framework and land management planning processes: The project will support a full review of relevant legislation with the primary purpose of seeking opportunities to strengthen and harmonise the existing legal framework in order to provide for the adoption of integrated, gender-sensitive and cross-sectorial approaches that mainstream SLM practices and principles. Following this review, existing laws on land reform, land transactions and pastures enacted since 2004, including the *Law on the Creation and Function of Structures on Land Management and Protection*; the *Law on Protection of Agriculture* (which ensures the legal basis for creation and function of a new inspectorate on land protection and land rehabilitation), the *Law on Pastures*; and other relevant legal acts will be revised, coordinated and consolidated into a comprehensive new land management law and associated by-laws in order to enable effective management of natural resources at the local level. This new land management law also will be in line with other important state environmental and social provisions connected to land management, including national policies on nature protection, climate change and equal opportunities, which will enable the benefits of using SLM approaches to be applied to the everyday implementation of policies and practices across many sectors. The new law will ensure a comprehensive approach to land management in order to allow coordination between different sectors, to allow and promote application of SLM. In addition, priorities identified in the current NAP to Protect Land and Combat Land Degradation will be integrated into the changes proposed for the new land management law and into multi-sectorial strategies including ‘National Strategy for Development and Integration’, ‘National Strategy for Rural development’ and ‘National Strategy for the Environment’. These strategies usually cover five years period and monitored and reviewed each year. This integration will enable Albania to reflect the priorities for sustainable land management to relevant sectoral policies and priorities (e.g. rural development, agriculture, water resources).

Output 1.1.2 Strengthened Inter-Ministerial Committee to coordinate institutions, engage with local communities, and manage information flows: The capacities of the Committee will be strengthened so that it can: better coordinate the work on land management undertaken by different institutions such as MARDWA, MoE and other relevant national and local authorities; mainstream SLM approaches into national and local programs and strategies across sectors; and facilitate information sharing on SLM practices and the monitoring of projects and activities on SLM in order to measure Albania’s progress and to consolidate and share lessons learned on SLM best practices. Although institutional responsibilities for environmental management are defined broadly by environmental laws, many responsibilities overlap in the area of soil and land management, and the project will support efforts by the Committee to clarify responsibilities in areas related to SLM. The Committee is formed by representatives of all relevant ministries that will through the work of the Committee coordinate the inclusion of the land management in planning and implementation within different sectors. The Committee has a mandate to formulate decisions on multi-sectoral coordination among relevant authorities and to lead the way in developing and coordinating implementation of multi-sectoral strategies. The project will organize meetings and workshops to facilitate the work of the Committee and to provide capacity building for Committee members in carrying out their duties, and also will organize field visits for Committee members to facilitate engagement with local communities. The project also will help to develop mechanisms for gathering and sharing information between Committee members as well as other relevant institutions at both the local and national levels, including other committees such as the Interministerial Committee on Climate Change and the Management Committee of Protected Areas for Shelegur Regional Natural Park. Finally, the project will support the work of the Committee in developing / revising national policies in sectors relevant to land management.

Outcome 1.2 Capacities and support for SLM strengthened: The capacity building activities under this outcome will be focused on two aspects – national and local land resource managers, and land users/owners at the local level. Activities under this outcome will also ensure that all stakeholders are fully aware of the needs and benefits of SLM approaches. As a result of these activities, at least 50 farming households in Kolonja Municipality will adopt sustainable agricultural/forestry practices, and the capacities and awareness related to SLM among relevant key stakeholders at both the national and local level will have been increased.

This outcome will be achieved through the following three outputs:

Output 1.2.1 Relevant national and municipal resource managers capacitated in land use planning, SLM practices, ecosystem restoration, and use of economic instruments: Under this output, the project will carry out an assessment of institutional capacities both at the national and local levels to identify the needs and challenges of all relevant stakeholders in adopting SLM approaches, including in particular enhancing water efficiency and soil fertility, prevention of soil degradation through integrated soil fertility management, and conservation agriculture. Based on the results of the assessment, training programs will be designed and conducted for local and national resource managers in SLM approaches in order to build their capacities and facilitate knowledge and technology transfer, with a focus on public participation, monitoring, assessment and knowledge management, support for learning by doing strategies for land use and management, and with special consideration to gender equality and minority rights as well as traditional knowledge. In particular, the project will support efforts to strengthen capacities to incorporate SLM practices and principles into the land management responsibilities that are currently being transferred from national to local authorities under the country's Decentralization Strategy for Territorial Reform, building on the government's existing efforts to transfer knowledge, experience and technical information from national resource managers to local resource managers. AS part of this process, the project will also support the integration of traditional management practices into decision making processes and management practices. Resource managers in Kolonja Municipality will benefit from capacity building in developing sustainable land planning strategies and action plans; in the design, replication and scaling-up of SLM best practices; in the development and implementation of integrated approaches to land restoration within local land-use action plans; and in using appropriate and sustainable economic instruments such as valuation of natural resource assets and ecosystem services when creating development strategies and local action plans.

The project will also identify and address information gaps for carrying out SLM approaches, and build institutional capacities at local and national levels to generate and manage information and data related to SLM, including land suitability analyses, land designation systems, degradation analysis, information on farming/ranching, forestry, pastures, etc., as well as capacity to analyse, visualize, and utilize data collected under the project. Furthermore, the project will create synergies with on-going initiatives on environmental information, and will specifically address the environmental information flow from the national to the local level. In addition, capacity development support will be provided to local and national resource managers on gender sensitization and mainstreaming, including gender training for staff within extension services and from Agricultural Technical Transfer Centres, and in taking the necessary measures during project implementation to ensure that women's access to land and land rights is improved and not hindered.

Finally, in order to support the efforts of local level resource managers to implement new laws and regulations relevant to SLM, the project will identify and develop the most adequate legal and economic instruments for stimulating investments in land productivity in order to ensure sustainability of SLM approaches developed under the project so that they will continue after project closure. One key priority will be developing programs under the ongoing IPARD-II (Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance in Rural Development) to incentivize adoption of SLM practices at local scale.

Output 1.2.2 Local landowners / resource users in Kolonja Municipality trained in and utilizing SLM approaches: One of the purposes of the project is to stimulate public participation and ownership on the issue of land degradation through the participation of local farmers in project activities. Therefore, working throughout Kolonja Municipality, the project will work with Community Service Organizations (CSOs) to strengthen the capacities of local farmers to enable their participation in the development and implementation of SLM approaches. Activities under this output will begin by assessing the existing capacities of farmers and identifying priority training needs. 50 farming households will be selected

in the area based on the condition of their land; i.e. plots will be chosen where at least 50% of the land is degraded, and that are at least 1 hectare in size (Technology adoption is a process starting with awareness, assessment, acceptance, learning and usage. The farmers at the first two stages will consider SLM as risky. Farmers who have large farm sizes tend to have more flexibility to 'risk' for testing new methods. and based on the willingness of the farmers to participate in piloting SLM methods. The project also will encourage landowners of smaller plots to make a cooperative in order to become one of the 50 selected households. Another factor in selecting households will be their willingness and ability to participate in trainings and to adopt SLM practices; in addition, at least 30% of the selected households will include women farmers. The training will increase farmers' general knowledge on SLM approaches, needs and benefits, and will provide training and technical guidance to farmers to undertake on-the-ground SLM interventions such as conservation agriculture, reforestation, and sustainable drainage system on their own land. Training workshops and field sessions will be undertaken by local associations with the support of national and international experts on SLM. Training programs and materials will be gender sensitized and included in the education curricula in the local schools, with the possibility for scaling up and replication. The Faculties of 'Forestry Sciences' and 'Agriculture and Environment' of Agricultural University of Tirana will contribute to the development of the educational content on SLM. The replication of the efforts will be facilitated through the capacity building under Output 1.2.1. sharing of farmers' experience under Output 1.2.3, but also the entire project set up that allows for sharing of knowledge and technology transfer within municipalities and from the national to local level.

Output 1.2.3 Stakeholders in Kolonja Municipality aware of land degradation issues and the importance of SLM approaches: This output will be achieved through several clusters of activities: development of a project communication strategy, implementation of a local public awareness campaign, and establishment of a local platform that will engage the local and national stakeholders and serve as a local medium for information and experience sharing. public awareness campaign and dissemination activities, which will be coordinated by the local platform/communication office, will be based on the project communication strategy, which will be developed in the first year of the project duration.

Public awareness campaign for SLM will be designed based on gap assessments and will target 1) small-scale farmers and users of affected degraded lands in Kolonja Municipality, with a possibility to scale up the scope of the campaign to other municipalities and/or the national level, 2) resource managers and other government officials in Kolonja responsible for issues of land / soil management, and 3) the wider public. The key messages of the public awareness campaign will be developed under the project communication strategy. While the project communication strategy will have nation-wide communications goals, the focus of the public campaign will be Kolonja municipality. The campaign will focus on sharing through TV, radio, newspapers and online media. The project will also develop a communication strategy focused on increasing understanding of land degradation issues and impacts, the benefits of SLM approaches in increasing production and income, the low cost of SLM-related agricultural and forest practices, SLM best practices to be implemented on the ground level, and sharing the results of activities undertaken within the project targeted at both local and national stakeholders. Public awareness campaign, dissemination of best practices and lessons learned, and organization of workshops will be coordinated by a local communication platform that will be established by the project. This communication platform will provide different services for the farmers in different forms: one-to-one (one expert – one farmer), village meetings and workshops, and use of mass media. The local communication platform will be established in the Municipality in the form of an office that will serve as an information check point, a location for organizing regular participatory and informative workshops on SLM practices, and means for sharing of information and experiences during project implementation that will involve local stakeholders and occasionally also the national stakeholder to ensure a two-ways communication between national and local stakeholders throughout the project implementation. The platform will engage both local NGOs, farmers associations and women's associations, but will be coordinated by a designated Municipal representative that will serve as a focal point for communication activities. National and local level reporting workshops will be held involving local and national stakeholders exchanging information regarding project implementation; these workshops will serve as an opportunity for farmers to speak to decision makers in order to influence policy and decision making to suit local needs. Furthermore, the Forestry and Agriculture Faculty of the Agricultural University of Tirana will support the delivery of the Output 1.2.3. The University will support the Project team in development and execution of the project communication strategy, the public awareness campaign and dissemination of lessons learned. If deemed beneficial for the local population, the project will develop online tools to support the public awareness campaign (incl. websites, social media, etc.).

Lessons learned, including a summary of the policy framework and a special chapter dedicated to mainstreaming gender into SLM approaches, will be compiled in a user friendly handbook that will be distributed to key stakeholders nationally in an effort to support the work of staff responsible for land management and to clarify local roles and responsibilities. The handbook will contain information on essential laws and regulations, and instruction in a user-friendly language, and useful interpretations of regulations will be prepared for the local population. Finally, communication channels will be scrutinized and monitored to ensure that information about SLM approaches and other project activities reach women. Proactive measures to address barriers to full engagement of women in SLM will be taken and innovative methods to enable women's access to information will be used, including Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). Moreover, local women leaders that can mobilize and inform female members of the community will be identified and particular attention will be dedicated to the geographical and spatial location of training and meetings so as to ensure women's attendance.

**Component 2 - Demonstrating and Scaling-up of SLM Best Practices:** Component 2 will lead to scaling-up of SLM best practices by wider application of innovative SLM tools and practices in Kolonja Municipality. At least 120 ha of land owned by local government authorities where significant degradation has occurred due to illegal logging (by local residents and commercial interests), as well as overgrazing and unsustainable agricultural practices, will be rehabilitated. In addition, Integrated Land Use Plans will be developed and implemented covering an area of 21,288 ha in five areas within the municipality.

Outcome 2.1 Pressures on natural resources in an area covering at least 20,000 hectares are reduced through the application of SLM activities

This outcome will be achieved through the following two outputs:

Output 2.1.1 Integrated land use plans in Kolonja Municipality created: The project will support the Municipality in developing five Integrated Land Use Plans in Kolonja for the Mollas (4,140), Qender Erseke (2,746), Barmash (8,835 ha) Novosele (1,028 ha) and Qender Leskovik (4,539) areas (covering a total area of 21,288 hectares) that will respond to new institutional responsibilities resulting from the decentralization processes, and integrate all existing sectorial plans for forest, pasture, agriculture and protected areas management. A technical advisory working group that includes representatives from MoE, MARDWA, Kolonja Municipality, on-going relevant projects such as the World Bank's Environmental Services Project, and local NGOs working on rural development, forestry and pasture management issues, will be established by the project to support the development and implementation of the five Integrated Land Use Plans. The working group also will ensure careful documentation of the process to revise the plans, the collecting of best practices and lessons learned from developing and implementing the plans, and the dissemination of these findings to other municipalities in order to facilitate replication throughout the country. The project will integrate traditional knowledge / management practices into the Land Use Plans. The Faculty of Agriculture and Environment will provide expert knowledge in integrating the SLM best practices into the land use plans.

Output 2.1.2 Highly degraded forest, pasture and agricultural lands in Kolonja Municipality restored with SLM demonstrations: The project will undertake three small-scale projects for sustainable management and ecosystem restoration of approximately 120 ha<sup>24</sup> of highly degraded/vulnerable sites on government-owned lands at three sites within Kolonja Municipality (Mollas, Qender Erseke and Qender Leskovik, all of which are within the areas where the Integrated Land Use Management Plans will be developed under Output 2.1.1). Approximately 40 ha will be rehabilitated in each of the areas using SLM best practices. The three designated areas comprise degraded forestland, pasture, and agricultural land, and will best showcase rehabilitation techniques and best SLM practices. The main aim of the rehabilitation processes is to address the soil exhaustion in the areas that have been overgrazed and deforested and to solve the issues with landslides where soil erosion has been the main issue. Rehabilitation plans detailing the measures to be undertaken for each of the three pilot sites will be developed in consultation with the local authorities and resource owners/users. These efforts will mainly focus on soil erosion control measures, as a majority of the land is severely affected by soil and water erosion; the remaining parts of the land are affected by overgrazing and deforestation, which also contribute to vulnerability

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<sup>24</sup> The number of hectares is approximate; the Project Steering Committee at its first meeting will confirm the borders of the pilot sites to be rehabilitated.

from soil and water erosion. The soil erosion sites will be rehabilitated with reforestation and terracing, as well as gully stabilization where water flows are strong, and the agricultural value of the land will be maintained through crop diversification, together with biological control and restrictions on chemical inputs. In areas subject to overgrazing, rotational grazing systems will be established for local farmers, while areas affected by deforestation will be reforested. Furthermore, the project will engage a group of experts that will coordinate the rehabilitation of the three sites, while engaging local stakeholders and farmers, local community representatives and relevant private sector representatives. The process will be overseen by the MoE and MARDWA with special consulting assistance of the Faculty of Agriculture and Environment and the Faculty of Forestry Sciences.

In addition, natural regeneration of vegetative cover will be supported by the establishment of water harvesting structures and the planting of shrubs and trees as well as local grass species. Regeneration areas will be demarcated and protected with fencing (to protect it during the 7-10 years required for full regeneration). After one year, cut-and-carry grass for stall feeding can be partially supplied, providing a small benefit to the farmers. Good participation by and involvement of land users is fundamental for the effective closure of any areas, since land use rights in this area are mainly open access rather than individual. These interventions will support the natural regeneration process described in the paragraph above. A study on the potential use of nitrogen fixing trees/shrubs for the area will be carried out. On non-vegetated sites, nitrogen-fixing plants (plants which grow and thrive in harsh, low-fertility conditions) begin the cycling of nutrients by mining and accumulating available nutrients. As more nutrients enter the biological system and vegetative cover is established, conditions for other non-nitrogen fixing species become favourable. The project will support planting of nitrogen fixing trees/shrubs as a part of the rehabilitation process. Areas impacted by land degradation as well as areas where SLM practices have reduced or eliminated land degradation will be identified and mapped, and the impacts of land degradation processes on ecosystem services in these areas will be assessed and compared. This mapping of degradation and conservation areas will provide key information for decision making on where investments can best be made and which SLM practices have the best potential to spread.

In order to increase the replication of these SLM measures beyond the participating farmers, visits to demonstration sites will be organized for other farmers who experience similar challenges in order to further build-up their knowledge and capacity to adopt SLM technologies and farming practices. Lessons learned from the SLM practices from both the 50 farms and the three rehabilitated sites will inform the development of the five Integrated Land Use Plans; will be integrated into farmer training programs at the local levels as well as educational curricula, and will provide guidance for the development of the new national land management law.

#### **A.1.4 THE INCREMENTAL / ADDITIONAL COST REASONING AND EXPECTED CONTRIBUTIONS FROM THE BASELINE, THE GEFTF, LDCE, SCCF, AND CO-FINANCING**

The incremental cost reasoning was fully elaborated in the PIF detailing the scenarios with and without the GEF funding. In sum, GEF funds will serve as catalyst to develop a coherent and coordinated approach to reduce pressures on land as a natural resource from competing land uses in forestry and pasture, through the reversal of land degradation and development of instruments and mechanisms for integrated land use management and SLM issues. More specifically, the GEF investment will facilitate strengthened policy, legal and regulatory frameworks that will harmonise state and municipal legislation and mandates considering the new institutional reforms, as well as the reduction of pressures on natural resources in the pilot area by mainstreaming SLM principles into integrated land use plans.

GEF TF support in the amount of USD 867,580, together with co-financing of USD 9,670,000, will jointly support the objectives and the outcomes of the project. The co-financing of the project by project partners has been increased from USD 5.65 million in the PIF phase to USD 9.67 million, consisting of USD 6.15 million (in-kind) and USD 3.52 million (grant). Ministries within the Government of Republic of Albania, the Kolonja Municipality, two academic institutions, and UN Environment will provide co-financing for the project. Co-finance by the Government and other donors will be mostly provided in-kind, except for grants of USD 3.5 million from the MoE and USD 20,000 from the Municipality of Kolonja. UN Environment will provide in-kind assistance through coordination and technical advice from its divisions and regional and national offices. UN Environment will seek to ensure good cooperation with national governments and experts and to involve a range of other national and international actors and resources, including CSOs and private sector,

in the project execution to build partnerships and to continue the good practice of networking and bringing additional value into every environmental action in the country.

### A.1.5 GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS

Justification for the GEF grant is based on the clear and substantial global benefits arising directly from the project outcomes. Most relevant benefits were elaborated in the PIF. However, a more detailed elaboration with specific details as per the revised logical framework is elaborated in the table below.

**Table 5. Summary of Incremental Reasoning**

Summary of baseline scenario	Summary of GEF scenario	Increment
<b>Component 1: Strengthened legal and institutional framework and capacity building for SLM</b>		
<p><b>Baseline:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Lack of harmonised legislation between central and local (municipal) levels</li> <li>▪ Many of the laws and regulations on land management that have been enacted since 1991 are “reactive” and narrowly focused</li> <li>▪ Responsibility for land and resource management is dispersed and poorly delineated</li> <li>▪ Many strategies and plans exist in Albania concerning issues of land protection and land degradation and desertification, but the steps/actions proposed by different strategies and plans frequently differ in terms of both priorities and activities</li> </ul> <p><b>Possible results:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The existing legislative framework will not support the integration of SLM approaches into relevant laws and regulations</li> <li>▪ Local authorities responsible for land management are not capacitated to manage land resources in accordance with SLM</li> <li>▪ SLM is not identified as a priority action in relevant plans and strategies</li> <li>▪ Financing mechanisms for investment in SLM practices will not exist</li> <li>▪ Natural resource managers and farmers will remain unaware of the importance of soil conservation and of SLM approaches</li> <li>▪ Farmers will not have the capacity or experience to implement SLM approaches</li> <li>▪ Business as usual will lead to continued degradation of land and natural resources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A review of relevant legislation will have identified opportunities to strengthen and harmonize the existing legal framework in order to provide for the adoption of integrated and cross-sectorial approaches that mainstream SLM practices and principles</li> <li>▪ Existing laws and regulations on land management will be revised, coordinated and consolidated into a comprehensive framework set that will enable effective management of land resources by municipalities</li> <li>▪ Municipalities will have new laws implemented and regulations and developed capacities to address land degradation, including legal and economic instruments for stipulating investment in land productivity</li> <li>▪ Institutional capacities to develop policies and programs on national and local level to support SLM will be enhanced</li> <li>▪ Training programs on land degradation will have been provided to local farmers and land users in Kolonja Municipality</li> <li>▪ Public awareness of SLM issues will have been increased among small-scale farmers and users of affected degraded land in Kolonja, resources managers and other government officials, and the wider public</li> </ul>	<p><b>Local/national benefits:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Relevant legislation related to land management revised</li> <li>▪ Capacities of national and local relevant authority representatives on SLM policies and practices built</li> <li>▪ Capacities of local land users/ owners in Kolonja Municipality built to be scaled up and replicated in other municipalities</li> <li>▪ Awareness of both resource users / owners and wider public on the benefits of gender sensitive SLM</li> <li>▪ New economic instruments result in increased financing for SLM-related measures</li> </ul> <p><b>Global benefits:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Increased knowledge and awareness of SLM best practices</li> <li>▪ Raised awareness on mainstreaming gender into SLM</li> <li>▪ 86,400 hectares in Kolonja Municipality under increased protection from land degradation as the result of capacity building and awareness raising activities</li> <li>▪ Adoption of SLM practices by 50 farming households</li> <li>▪ Contribution to achievement of targets under SDG 15: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 15.3 - By 2030, combat desertification, restore degraded land and soil, including land affected by desertification, drought and floods, and strive to achieve a land-degradation neutral world</li> <li>▪ 15.9 - By 2020, integrate ecosystem and biodiversity values into national and local planning, development processes, poverty reduction strategies and accounts</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Component 2: Demonstrating and Scaling-up of SLM Best Practices</b>		
<p><b>Baseline:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Albania will continue to have few successful models or demonstrations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The Municipality of Kolonja will be managing development and conservation within the</li> </ul>	<p><b>Local/national benefits:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Five integrated land use plans developed and under implementation in Kolonja</li> </ul>

Summary of baseline scenario	Summary of GEF scenario	Increment
<p>of the sustainable use of resources that produce positive economic returns and provide effective protection from land degradation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Extremely limited experience, knowledge, resources and capacity at the local level in applying SLM practices</li> <li>▪ The capacities of the agricultural labour force will continue to decline due to aging, migration, and a lack of opportunities for education and training of new entrants</li> </ul> <p><b>Possible results:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Albania will have no experience with or models of local-level integrated land use plans</li> <li>▪ SLM practices will rarely take place on the ground in the country</li> <li>▪ Resources owners/users will have little experience and knowledge on implementing SLM practices</li> </ul>	<p>framework of integrated land use planning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Demonstrations of sustainable management and ecosystem restoration of highly degraded / vulnerable sites will have restored site ecosystem services and developed and showcased SLM best practices</li> <li>▪ Farmers from other sites / regions will have visited the demonstration sites and learned lessons and best practices to apply on their own lands</li> </ul>	<p>Municipality</p> <p><b>Global benefits:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Application of SLM best practices in Albania contribute to global SLM objectives</li> <li>▪ 120 ha of degraded land in Kolonja Municipality has been rehabilitated</li> <li>▪ 21,288 ha in Kolonja Municipality benefitting from pilot site demonstrations and integrated land use planning</li> <li>▪ Contribution to achievement of targets under SDG 15: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 15.3 By 2030, combat desertification, restore degraded land and soil, including land affected by desertification, drought and floods, and strive to achieve a land-degradation neutral world</li> <li>▪ 15.9 By 2020, integrate ecosystem and biodiversity values into national and local planning, development processes, poverty reduction strategies and accounts</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

The project will contribute to global environmental benefits primarily through reduced soil erosion, reduced risk of land degradation, and improved land and soil health. Adoption of SLM practices that will reduce land degradation and secure ecosystem services over an area covering at least 21,288 ha in the targeted municipality will help to reduce the main threats to ecosystem functions and services in Albania by reducing land degradation due to overgrazing, illegal and unsustainable levels of forest cutting, poor agricultural practices, and uncontrolled use of water resources. Finally, improved land management in mountainous areas has also been identified (in the Mediterranean Action Plan) as a key factor in controlling run-off into the Adriatic Sea and thereby helping to conserve coastal and marine ecosystems. It is expected that through mobilization of resources meant to support the project goals, the implementation of the UNCCD 10-Year Strategy will be strengthened, especially by creating synergies with the on-going UNCCD NAP alignment process in Albania, and by utilizing its respective outcomes. The project's components support the operational objectives of the UNCCD 10-Year Strategy and the Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) target. The LDN strategy for Albania has not been established yet, but contribution to reaching the LDN target will be nevertheless obtained through mid-term evaluation results, which will be reported to the UNCCD.

#### **A.1.6 INNOVATION, SUSTAINABILITY AND POTENTIAL FOR SCALING UP**

**Scaling up:** Throughout the project, a collaboration scheme is envisioned between the experts engaged during project implementation, local government institutions and departments, the central government, NGOs, and direct beneficiaries, which will help assist in mainstreaming approaches and capacities to diverse stakeholders. Several of the project outputs will help to upgrade the country's land use management capacities and processes, especially through a learning by doing strategy where SLM practices and new technical approaches and capacities will be transferred to other local government units, for example in activities under Output 1.2.1 for the training of national and local resource managers and the building of institutional capacities to generate and manage information related to SLM. Furthermore, lessons learned from the activities of the project will be compiled in a user friendly handbook that will be distributed to key stakeholders nationally in an effort to support the work of staff responsible for land management and to clarify local roles and responsibilities. The local platform in Kolonja will serve to sustain project outcomes and both national and local workshops will be organized to ensure the scaling up throughout the country. Scaling up will be also ensured through developing and demonstrating innovative tools and practices for SLM at the targets sites, and then mainstreaming these tools and practices into new and revised laws and regulations so that they apply broadly to all affected areas in the country. Additionally, the project will

provide training for end-users such as farmers and land owners to be able to individually adopt SLM practices. Finally, the project will facilitate incorporation of best practices in the educational system and school curricula through collection of lessons learned from both the experiences of the 50 farm households applying SLM practices and the lessons learned from rehabilitating the three sites in Kolonja. The inclusion of lessons learned will be facilitated by the Interministerial Committee when designing the multi-sectoral strategies.

**Sustainability:** Overall, the project will empower stakeholders to take more ownership/responsibility for natural resources management, for example through clarifying institutional responsibilities among key agencies and improving coordination through the Inter-Ministerial Committee, and by empowering communities and local stakeholders to take part in decision making processes on integrated land use plans and SLM demonstrations through participatory processes. The project's design seeks to optimize prospects for achieving sustainability in four key areas: environmental, institutional, social and financial. *Environmental sustainability* will be supported by promoting SLM practices to rehabilitate degraded land at demonstration sites, and then integrating the most successful practices into the policy and regulatory frameworks across different sectors, including lessons learned from the 50 farm households, trainings and feedback received from both local and national resource managers on SLM. The resource owners and users will be trained to apply SLM practices, which are ensured through the supportive regulatory framework on national level. The new law on land management will support SLM approaches, while the new multi-sectoral strategies will ensure that these approaches are mainstreamed across sectors. *Institutional sustainability* will be secured through training programs for local and national institutional stakeholders, supporting them to identify opportunities for mainstreaming SLM into Albania's regulatory and policy frameworks and operations, and by supporting the work of the Interministerial Committee on Land Protection and Rehabilitation to coordinate institutional mandates and actions on sustainable land management and to increase institutional participation mechanisms and capacity building to integrate currently fragmented approaches to land use planning and management. *Social sustainability* will be achieved through ensuring that local land owners and farmers are proactively involved in the project and benefit from SLM demonstrations, including training of resource users in land use planning and SLM practices, participation of local residents in rehabilitation programs for degraded lands, and awareness raising activities on the importance of SLM approaches, targeting small-sale farmers, resource managers and the general public in Kolonja Municipality. Finally, *Financial sustainability* will be ensured through supporting the Municipality of Kolonja in identifying optimal legal and economic incentives to stimulate investments in soil conservation and land productivity after the project closure. The stimulation of investments will be initiated through seeking and mobilizing local resources that may see opportunities in investment in production on land locally (agriculture, farming, etc.), where partnership principles can be applied between the private sector and local government or local land owners.

**Innovativeness:** Project activities will aim to strengthen Albania's legal and institutional framework related to land planning and management at both the local and national levels, where capacity building and the application of SLM approaches will be undertaken. The revision of the existing laws and regulations and development of a new comprehensive law on land management using lessons learned from practice represents an important innovation for the dispersed and vague regulatory framework in Albania. Furthermore, the expansion of the role of the Interministerial Committee to engage directly with the local communities is also an important innovation. The demonstration and scaling-up of SLM practices through rehabilitation of the three sites and the 50 farm households accepting SLM all constitute new approaches in land planning and management in Albania. The development of Integrated Land Use Plans is another innovative mechanism for mainstreaming SLM in land planning and management at the local level in the country. In addition, stimulating local resource mobilization under Output 1.2.1 will be both innovative and a key contribution to the sustainability of project interventions. Finally, through project interventions, new data, knowledge products, research and culture of cooperation will be developed.

**A.2. CHILD PROJECT?** *If this is a child project under a program, describe how the components contribute to the overall program impact.*

N/A

**A.3. STAKEHOLDERS.** Identify key stakeholders and elaborate on how the key stakeholders engagement is incorporated in the preparation and implementation of the project. Do they include civil society organizations (yes  /no )



)? and indigenous peoples (yes  /no )? <sup>25</sup>

During the PPG phase, stakeholders were identified and consulted to facilitate their participation in the project preparation and implementation. A field visit was organized in Kolonja Municipality on 29-30 August 2016, which included representatives of the local coordinating entity, the Municipality, the Ministry of Environment, academia and local NGOs. During this visit, one of the suggested pilot sites was visited. During the PPG validation meeting in December 2016, all relevant stakeholder groups were present to assess and approve the proposed project, and to make suggestions on improving the project framework. Since all stakeholders were actively involved in the drafting of the project during the entire PPG phase, the validation meeting merely confirmed the project document was on track and in accordance with national and local level strategic priorities.

The main conclusions related to the project from stakeholder consultations during the PPG phase include the following:

- The project will be linked to establishing Albania's LDN target (possibilities to benefit from the Global Support Programme in early 2017)
- The project needs to be built upon other similar projects and initiatives
- The Ministry of Urban Development should be included in the list of stakeholders
- The project workplan should be amended to extend the duration of Outputs 1.1.1 and 2.1.2 to one year in total
- The project should develop guidelines on how to manage, but also how to design and structure, necessary frameworks for natural resources management for local authorities
- The project should also build the capacities of CSOs
- In accordance with their capacities, all stakeholders should aim to provide relevant data to support the development of the project baseline
- Nomination of focal points in front of each institution present during the Kick-Off meeting

During the PPG phase, the Capacity Development Scorecard (see Annex O) was used to assess the capacities of key stakeholders that will be participating in implementation of the project to effectively and sustainably manage land and soil resources, namely the Ministry of Environment, the Municipality of Kolonja and its LAPs, the Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and Water Administration, and the newly established Interministerial Committee on Land Protection. The scorecard showed a score of 31.1%, clearly demonstrating that the capacities of the main actors need to be improved. As a result, the project strategy proposes training of national authorities as well as local resource managers and users on relevant land management approaches.

**Table 6:** Roles of different stakeholders in Project Implementation

Stakeholder	Role in Project Implementation
Kolonja Municipal Administration (with its Rural, Environmental, Education Regional Department)	The Kolonja Municipal Administration is one of the two primary partners for the project, and will be responsible for creating the enabling conditions for implementation of all project activities at the local scale. The Administration will ensure that the pilot sites are available for demonstration activities and that local resource managers and users are available for training. The Administration also will participate in the technical advisory group.
Ministry of Environment (MoE)	MoE is one of the two primary partners for the project, and will be responsible for creating the enabling conditions for implementation of all project activities at the national scale. MoE also will take the lead in facilitating the revision of relevant laws and in mainstreaming SLM approaches into multi-sectorial regulations. MoE will support the work of the Interministerial Committee, and it will participate in the technical advisory group.
Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and Water Administration	MARDWA will support and assist the design of SLM demonstrations and capacity building at the local level in Kolonja. It will also assist MoE in providing high-level support to the revision of relevant laws and the mainstreaming the SLM approaches into multi-sectorial regulations. MARDWA will support the work of the Interministerial Committee, and it will participate in the

<sup>25</sup> As per the GEF-6 Corporate Results Framework in the GEF Programming Directions and GEF-6 Gender Core Indicators in the Gender Equality Action Plan, provide information on these specific indicators on stakeholders (including civil society organization and indigenous peoples) and gender.

Stakeholder	Role in Project Implementation
(MARDWA)	technical advisory group.
Ministry of Urban Development	The Ministry is responsible for a) ensuring sustainable economic and social development by defining a vision for the future development of the country while considering strategic development alternatives; and b) the coordination of horizontal and vertical national and local planning and stakeholders, which ensures that planning instruments are adopted with cross-sectorial approval and are designed to harmonize public and private, national and local interests. The Ministry is currently working on the development of the National General Urban Plan that will include the recommendations of this project.
Land Administration Protection (LAP) departments	The local LAP departments in Kolonja Municipality will support and assist the design of the integrated land use plans and field-level activities at the project demonstration sites, as well as take part in the training on SLM approaches.
National Agency of Protected Areas (NAPA) – Korce Region	NAPA will support and assist with the design of the integrated land use plans in Kolonja Municipality and with the design and implementation of the demonstration projects, as well as take part in the training on SLM approaches.
Interministerial State Committee on Land Protection	The Committee will provide guidance on project activities related to strengthening coordinated approaches to SLM. The capacities of the Committee will be strengthened in order to enable it to better coordinate work undertaken by different relevant institutions (MoE, MARDWA, etc.), to facilitate information sharing on SLM practices, and to monitor projects and activities on SLM in Albania for documentation of new lessons learned and for reporting on SLM innovations.
National Environmental Agency (NEA)	NEA gathers relevant information on environment from different institutions; with regard to land management, the Agency collects information on soil erosion and monitoring. The Agency will support monitoring and evaluation of land degradation processes in order to support the proposed project.
Faculty of Agriculture and Environment, Agricultural University of Tirana	The Faculty will provide expert knowledge for the purpose of developing the comprehensive Integrated Land Use plans, as well as knowledge and guidance on demonstrating and scaling up SLM Best Practices. The Faculty will also contribute to awareness raising activities, and to the development of educational content on SLM.
Faculty of Forestry Sciences, Agricultural University of Tirana	The Faculty is contracted by the Government of Albania to monitor and report on soil erosion and soil monitoring to the National Environmental Agency. The Faculty also will contribute to the project's awareness raising activities and to the development of educational content on SLM.
INCA (Institute for Nature Conservation in Albania)	This NGO will participate in the technical advisory group to develop the land use plans in Kolonja, will take part in the training of local community representatives through providing expert assistance, and will assist in replicating the training results to other contexts in order to scale up the project outcomes.
Forestry Associations	Forestry Associations will take part in the demonstration projects through participating in the rehabilitation of degraded land. In addition, they will receive training in SLM approaches and will take part in using economic instruments that mobilize locally available resources to ensure investment in soil conservation.
Kolonja Women's Association	The association will take the lead in developing the baseline gender analysis that will serve as the starting point for tailoring project activities to benefit vulnerable and disadvantage groups through the use of SLM best practices. The association also will participate in designing the integrated land use plans, and in identifying representatives of vulnerable groups to take part in the local training on SLM.
Local farmers and farmer associations	Farmers are the ultimate beneficiaries of the project, and will take part in the demonstration projects through rehabilitation of degraded land; will be trained in SLM approaches; and will take part in using economic instruments that mobilize locally available resources to ensure investment in soil conservation. Through the project, up to 50 local farming households will adopt SLM practices in their everyday operations.
Private sector	The private sector will be involved in project implementation through using economic instruments that mobilize locally available resources to ensure investment in soil conservation.

**A.4. GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT.** Elaborate on how gender equality and women's empowerment issues are mainstreamed into the project implementation and monitoring, taking into account the differences, needs, roles and priorities of women and men. In addition, 1) did the project conduct a gender analysis during project preparation (yes  /no )?; 2) did the project incorporate a gender responsive project results framework, including sex-

disaggregated indicators (yes  /no ); and 3) what is the share of women and men direct beneficiaries (women X%, men X%)?<sup>26</sup>

Albania has a total population of around 2.82 million people (2011), of which 49.9% are women. Families in Albania are still based on a traditional patriarchal organization and a stereotypical understanding of gender roles. In the vast majority of cases, women decide jointly with their husband regarding their use of own money (83%) (by comparison, only 50% of men decide jointly with their wife on how to spend their own cash earnings), as well as decisions regarding health care, household purchases and visits to family or relatives. Girls account for 48.8% of those who complete elementary education, 51% of secondary school graduates, and 64% of university graduates<sup>27</sup>. Women constitute 43.9% of the total number of those employed; the female-to-male employment ratio is thus 0.78 (2012). The employment rate for working age women is 49.5%, whereas for men it is 63.2 %.

The representation of women in decision-making in the public sector shows some signs of improvement. In the National Parliament in 2005, women held a mere 7% of seats, but introduction of quota requirements in Albanian legislation in 2008 almost tripled their representation to 20% in 2013. The Council of Ministers in 2005 only had one woman Minister out of 14 (7.1%) and 6 Deputy Ministers out of 32 (18.8%); in 2013, women held 30% of Ministers and 34.7% of Deputy Ministers were women. In Local Government, women represent 0% of regional council chairs, 16.6% of the municipal council chairs, and 1.9% of the commune chairs. As of 2010, women held 12.2% of seats in local government councils and headed 7 out of 384 local government units (constituting only 1.82% of mayors). In the judicial system, women represent 22.2% of the Constitutional Court members, and 30.7% of the Supreme Court; there are no women in the High Council of Justice. The rate of female employment in the public administration is encouraging (58.7%), but the level of women's participation in leadership positions hardly reflects a balanced participation (24.3% of the highest managerial positions).

The proposed project is consistent with the GEF Policy on Gender Mainstreaming (PL/SD/02. May 1, 2012), and is also in line with the UNCCD, which recognizes the important role of women in achieving the objectives of the Convention: "Decisions 21/COP.9, 11/COP.8, 15/COP.5, 15/COP.4, 15/COP.3 and 13/COP.2 deal with the need to ensure a better gender balance and representation of all relevant disciplines, and of all individuals with expertise on desertification, land degradation and drought". Gender relations between women and men in Albania play a key role in the access to environmental resources, control of the resources, and the goods and services they provide. The same is true for representation of vulnerable groups and ethnic or religious minorities. In order to ensure that there are no disproportionate negative impacts to women or other disadvantaged or vulnerable groups, appropriate involvement of all social groups will be ensured during the project's implementation.

In the inception phase of the project all relevant vulnerable groups and ethnic and religious minorities will be identified, as well as gender equality considerations, in order to ensure their equitable involvement throughout the project implementation. Vulnerable groups and ethnic minorities will be invited to every national consultation, workshop and training, and the project implementation team will be gender balanced. Key indicators for gender equality considerations and involvement of ethnic/religious minorities and vulnerable groups will include their active participation during project implementation, such as: the percentage of women present at stakeholder meetings (especially local meetings that will not take place in the capital Tirana); and the number of ethnic/religious minorities involved in drafting of government documents, public hearings, trainings etc. All documents (national plans, strategies and rehabilitation plans, etc.) developed in all project components will consider gender mainstreaming and inclusion and representation of all ethnic and religious groups found in the region on implementation.

The likely mechanisms for gender mainstreaming in the project based on UN Environment Gender Policy will be:

- Ensuring gender balance when representing different sectors and conducting activities of the project;
- Optimising entrepreneurial and decision-making opportunities for women through promoting gender parity in recruitment;

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<sup>26</sup> Same as footnote 8 above.

<sup>27</sup> Women and Men in Albania, 2013

- Assessing impacts of the project for men and for women;
- Training to scale up the involvement of women in land use planning and management.

Specific activities of the project that will support gender equality and the empowerment of women and other vulnerable groups are: 1.1.1.3, 1.2.1.2, 1.2.1.3, 1.2.2.1, 1.2.2.2, 1.2.2.3, 1.2.3.1, 1.2.3.3, 2.1.2.2 and 2.1.2.4 (see Table 5 for details).

Project activities will endeavour to ensure preservation of women’s knowledge and to prevent the overuse of local and traditional knowledge (in the sense of abusing it without any palpable benefit directly to the local communities). With assistance from the stakeholders, bottom-up development of local and traditional environmental knowledge will be supported, taking into consideration gender equity in natural resource management, research, planning and decision-making at all levels. In this context, the project also will consider the active participation of different social classes while ensuring that benefits from interventions accrue to both men and women. All relevant information on women’s knowledge and survival strategies in rural and local community areas and their expertise in respective fields will be documented.

Project activities and stakeholders shall empower and assist women in their role as local natural resource managers and identify strategies to help rural women achieve sustainable livelihoods, while allocating adequate technical and financial resources to support women directly in natural resource management and the control of environmental degradation. Working with relevant CSOs, the project will support, strengthen and involve women’s organizations and networks working on environmental issues, with the aim of sharing awareness on both the importance of nature preservation and the importance of women to achieving that objective. These activities will serve as a promotion of the recognition of gender-differentiated roles, skills and practices in the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources (biodiversity, water resources, etc.), having in mind these roles may vary from place to place and change over time. Enhancing awareness-raising on women’s roles in land management and nature protection will lead to the fostering of gender sensitivity through training courses in the natural resources sectors and beyond.

**A.5 RISKS.** *Elaborate on indicated risks, including climate change, potential social and environmental risks that might prevent objectives from being achieved, and, if possible, the proposed measures that address these risks at the time of project implementation:*

The risks for project implementation were re-assessed during the PPG phase, along with mitigation measures for each identified risk, and are presented in Table 8.

**Table 7.** Identified risks and mitigation measures

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Risk Level</b>	<b>Risk Mitigation Strategy</b>
Unclear mandates of institutions, including departments, sectors and groups within these institutions, resulting in uncoordinated and ineffective implementation of SLM measures	<b>Medium</b>	The project will support a full review of the relevant legislation with the primary purpose of seeking opportunities to strengthen and harmonise the existing legal framework and to clarify institutional mandates and responsibilities. In addition, the mandates of local institutions to manage and support SLM practices and principles, as part of the country’s Decentralization Strategy to transfer management responsibilities to local authorities, will be clarified and/or strengthened as necessary.
Insufficient knowledge about modern technologies and technical approaches, such as GIS, remote sensing, computer modelling, environmental valuation, cost-benefit analysis, and social impact assessment, prevents stakeholders from successfully developing land use plans and effectively implementing SLM practices, including lack of prepared technical staff in municipalities	<b>Medium</b>	Institutional capacities will be built to generate and manage information related to SLM, including for example the results of land sustainability analyses, the operation of a land designation system, technical analyses of degradation processes, etc. The transfer of competencies from central to local governments will be followed by capacity building and knowledge and technology transfer on SLM approaches, including strategies for enhancing water efficiency and soil fertility, preventing soil degradation through integrated soil fertility management, and conservation agriculture, among others. Training components on avoiding / reversing land degradation will be developed and implemented for use by local farmers and land users in Kolonja Municipality. A needs assessment for capacity building will be conducted before designing the training activities.
Unclear roles for stakeholders in the	<b>Low</b>	Apart from the capacity building workshops and other training for both

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Risk Level</b>	<b>Risk Mitigation Strategy</b>
execution of the project may result in lack of commitment / buy-in from local communities in Kolonja and therefore may result in the failure of demonstration projects		national level representatives and local authorities and resource managers and users, the project will undertake an awareness raising activity targeted at small-scale farmers and local resource managers and government officials, as well as the general public in Kolonja Municipality, to clarify the opportunities and potential roles of various stakeholder groups and thereby increase the potential for successful demonstration projects.
Resistance to change of local and traditional practices	<b>Medium</b>	The local farmers and land users will be trained in SLM best practices through a proactive tailored training that will work together with the farmers to identify best practices. Furthermore, the project will work on raising awareness of the local population on benefits of the SLM.
Climate change impacts (e.g. increased flooding; more severe droughts; forest fires) may negatively affect project activities for ecosystem restoration and effective SLM practices	<b>Medium</b>	Integrated land use plans will include hazard mitigation measures to minimize the impacts of droughts (e.g. through better water management and adoption of drought tolerant crops), to reduce the risk of forest fires (through education and improved enforcement regarding the intentional setting of fires), and to reduce the threat of flooding (through improved land management and retention / restoration of vegetative cover).
Overgrazing of the rehabilitated land at the pilot sites in Kolonja	<b>Low</b>	The areas that are to be rehabilitated will be fenced once the reforestation is undertaken as per the rehabilitation plans that are to be developed in order to mitigate any possible negative effects of overgrazing.

**A.6. INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENT AND COORDINATION.** Describe the institutional arrangement for project implementation. Elaborate on the planned coordination with other relevant GEF-financed projects and other initiatives.

The institutional arrangements for project implementation are the following:

**UN Environment's Ecosystems Division** is the Implementing Agency (IA) of the *Global Environment Facility (GEF)*, with following roles:

- Providing consistent and regular Project oversight to ensure that GEF policies and criteria are adhered to and that the project meets its objectives and achieves expected outcomes
- Performing the liaison function between the project and the GEF Secretariat
- Regularly monitoring project progress and performance and rating progress towards meeting project objectives, project execution progress, quality of project monitoring and evaluation, and risk
- Ensuring that both GEF and UN Environment guidelines and standards are applied and met (technical, fiduciary, M&E)
- Ensure technical quality of products, outputs and deliverables
- Ensuring timely disbursement/sub-allotment to executing agencies, based on agreed legal documents
- Approve budget revision, certify fund availability and transfer funds
- Providing technical support and assessment of the execution of the Project
- Providing guidance if requested to main TORs/MOUs and subcontracts issued by the project
- Follow-up with EA for progress, equipment, financial and audit reports
- Certify project operational completion

**UN Environment's Europe Office** is the Executing Agency (EA) of the project, as requested by the national government in the Project Endorsement Letter dated 16 June 2016. Through offices in Geneva and Vienna, its main responsibilities will include:

- Overseeing that the project is executed according to the agreed workplan, budget and reporting tasks
- Organize and participate in the Steering Committee meetings
- Signing the relevant Legal Instrument to allow disbursement of funding
- Addressing and rectifying any issues or inconsistencies raised by the IA
- Support compilation and submission of progress, financial and audit reporting to IA

also:

- Take responsibility for the execution of the project in accordance with the project objectives, activities and budget
- Deliver the outputs and demonstrate its best efforts in achieving the project outcomes
- Notify IA in writing if there is need for modification to the agreed implementation plan and budget, and to seek approval
- Address and rectify any issues raised by IA with respect to project execution in a timely manner
- Report to IA and comply with the administrative and financial procedures
- Managing the financial resources and processing all financial transaction relating to sub-allotments
- Preparing sub-project documents using appropriate legal instruments
- Preparing all annual/year-end project revisions
- Organizing and facilitating inception workshops and consultative meetings
- Assessing project risks in the field, monitoring a risk management plan
- Coordinate project execution with Ministry of Environment, based on a to-be-signed MoUs

This GEF project is in line with the UN Environment's Medium-Term Strategy (MTS) 2018-2021 and UN Environment's Programme of Work (PoW) 2018-2019, in particular with MTS Subprogramme 3: Healthy and Productive Ecosystems, which aims to support countries to manage marine and terrestrial ecosystems through an integrated approach to maintain and restore their long-term functioning and the supply of ecosystem services and goods. Two major planned outcomes of this Subprogramme include: 1) health and productivity of marine, freshwater and terrestrial ecosystems are institutionalized in education, monitoring and cross-sector and transboundary collaboration frameworks at national and international levels; and 2) policymakers in the public and private sector test the inclusion of the health and productivity of ecosystems in economic decision-making.

UN Environment Europe Office has so far successfully worked in the Western Balkan region on projects on land degradation, including in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republic of Serbia. UN Environment Europe Office has been developing National Action Plans for Combating Land Degradation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republic of Serbia, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Montenegro.

The **Ministry of Environment (MoE)** on behalf of the Government of Albania will provide the political and institutional supervision for the overall project activities as implementing partners. The Ministry's main responsibilities will include:

- Coordinate project activities;
- Provide technical expertise through its personnel and networks;
- Provide guidance and coordination to other stakeholders;
- Facilitate access to sites and locations;
- Engage in and support to data sampling and analysis;
- Address logistical issues, e.g. through organization of meetings and provision of relevant facilities;
- Support project management and regular project reporting;

MoE, which is responsible for UNCCD implementation at the national level, will appoint a **Project Director**, who will serve as the liaison person between the Vienna Office/PMU and MoE and will ensure proper coordination of the project within national institutions. The Project Director will facilitate as necessary the work of the PMU and project execution with the partners and will ensure that the project fits into the national development and reform agenda. The Project Director will support resource mobilization as necessary, and will discuss and agree with the PMU the project technical and financial reports before they are sent to UN Environment.

A **Project Steering Committee (PSC)** will provide overall guidance and strategic direction and oversight to project management and will approve all final outputs and deliverables of the project. The PSC will be multi-disciplinary and multi-sectorial in fields related to nature protection, forestry and land use planning. The PSC will include representatives of relevant Governmental institutions of Albania, including, but not limited to the current ministries responsible for environmental and nature protection issues in the country – the Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and Water Administration, and environmental funds. Membership will also include UN Environment representatives, representatives from Kolonja Municipality, as well as the GEF OFP and UNCCD NFP. The PSC will

represent all relevant stakeholders at the state level, which is important for a comprehensive national approach and execution of this project. The PSC will meet at least twice a year to review project progress, provide direction and guidance, and assist in project implementation, as well as provide synergies with other complementing initiatives and on-going projects. UNEP EA and PMU will service as secretariat of the PSC. Furthermore, the PSC will decide at its first meeting on the engagement of the local coordination entities. Additional details on the composition and roles and responsibilities of the PSC are provided in Appendix 7.

A **Scientific Advisory Board (SAB)** will be composed of representatives of prominent academic and scientific institutions who will follow the project progress and offer expert advice as appropriate during the implementation of activities that require exceptional scientific insight. The SAB will include, but not be limited to, the National Agency for Environment, Faculty of Agriculture and Environment, Faculty of Forestry Sciences, Institute for Nature Conservation in Albania and a number of national and international nature protection organizations, such as IUCN.

#### Other Project collaborators

Partner organizations from Albania will be involved in the project to provide expertise in land use planning and management, knowledge and information management, regular updates on environmental management in the country, staff time and experience in guiding and advancing the activities' implementation, supporting the project with robust field data on environmental issues at stake, linking with stakeholders, including at local level for project implementation and for receiving stakeholders input and feedback. They will include Municipality of Kolonja, farmers' and woman's' associations, NGOs, local communities, among others.

Private sector organizations, NGOs and research institutions working in the area of nature conservation will be involved in the project through providing the outputs related to biodiversity management and networking, as well as contributing to fundraising. Exact partner organizations will be identified for each project component at the initial stages of the project implementation, but are to include especially economic-interest stakeholders.

National and international consultancy services will be called in as required for specific tasks, such as needs assessments, development of the indicator framework, capacity building and training for key stakeholders, and design of delivery models and financing mechanisms. Consulting services will be procured in accordance with applicable UN Environment/GEF rules and regulations.

The Project Management Unit (PMU) will consist of a Project Coordinator from UNEP/ROE, an Administrative and Financial Assistant, and locally recruited staff in the country. The PMU roles will be to implement project outputs, monitoring and reporting, liaison with project partners, acting as the Secretariat to the Steering Committee, and ensuring project execution and all technical aspects of project implementation. In order to ensure proper coordination of the project, MoE (specifically the UNCCD Focal Point) will appoint a Project Director who serves as the liaison person between the Vienna Office/PMU and MoE. The Project Director will facilitate as necessary the work of PMU and project execution with the partners and will ensure that the project fits into the national development agenda. The PMU and the Project Director will discuss and agree on the project technical and financial reports before they are sent to UNEP.

The PSC is in charge of the project oversight and overall guidance. It will meet at least on a semi-annual basis or according to the project's needs. Participation in PSC meetings will be possible also via video link or Skype, and decisions and consultations might also take place in email exchange form.

#### Planned coordination with other relevant GEF-financed projects and other initiatives

The PIF identified the most relevant projects this GEF project will build upon. Changes in relation to the information provided in the PIF are the following;

- With support from the WB-GEF project Harmonization of National Action Plan to Combat Desertification in Albania and Preparation of National Report, Albania recently finalized the alignment of its National Action Programme under the UNCCD. The main objective of the WB-GEF project is the adoption of the NAP with the

UNCCD 10-Year Strategy; in addition, the project aims to strengthen human and scientific capacity for NAP alignment; establish and strengthen the policy and institutional framework for NAP alignment and implementation; and establish the finance and technology framework for NAP implementation. The NAP project is providing baseline information on the national status for implementation of UNCCD commitments.

- The WB-GEF Environmental Services Project (2015-on-going) will result in (i) improved land use management (IPARD-like agro-environmental measures) (ii) introducing payments for ecosystem services and (iii) institutional and implementation support and monitoring. The two projects will coordinate their efforts in order to maximize results and the impact of improved land use management in Albania.
- The WB-GEF Natural Resources Development Project (2005-2010) is no longer relevant as the project implementation period has ended.
- The Government of the Republic of Slovenia has given a donation to Kolonja Municipality to undertake reforestation and establishment of green corridors in order to reduce the risks and impacts of landslides. This proposed GEF project will coordinate with the Slovenian-supported project with regard to the rehabilitation of degraded land, and will ensure that there is no duplication of efforts between the two projects.
- Furthermore, the project will coordinate with the ongoing GIZ projects in the region to achieve sustainability (including projects Rural development through integrated forest and water resources management in Southeast Europe, Support to agriculture and rural economic development in disadvantaged mountainous areas and Support to agriculture and rural development).

**A.7 BENEFITS.** *Describe the socioeconomic benefits to be delivered by the project at the national and local levels. How do these benefits translate in supporting the achievement of global environment benefits (GEF Trust Fund) or adaptation benefits (LDCF/SCCF)?*

The project will assist and benefit Albania through:

1. Strengthened capacities of national and local relevant authority representatives on SLM policies and practices;
2. Improving legislation related to land management and planning;
3. Development of pilot integrated land use plans in Kolonja Municipality to be replicated in other municipalities;
4. Rehabilitation of demonstration sites with degraded land in Kolonja Municipality amounting to 120 ha; Integrated Land Use Plans covering 21,288 ha and 50 farm households embracing SLM approaches, and 86,400 ha impacted through trainings and awareness raising;
5. Strengthened capacities of local land users/owners in Kolonja Municipality, which will be scaled up and replicated in other municipalities;
6. Raised awareness of both resource users/owners and wider public on the benefits of gender sensitive SLM.

The project design assumed environmental and economic benefits in terms of reduced degradation of land and natural resources and restoration of degraded lands arising through physical investment, development of new strategies, capacity building, awareness raising and training. The project will also support activities to assist communities in and around degraded lands in understanding and developing sustainable revenue generation through the application of SLM approaches. Through the rehabilitation of the three pilot sites and stakeholder capacity enhancement activities (including the training done with 50 farm households), the project will generate significant mutual economic and environmental benefits by: (i) creating the opportunity for generating more sustainable work possibilities from better utilization of land resources, particularly in relation to farming and agriculture; (ii) securing conservation of soil and related ecosystem values; and (iii) conservation and improved planning and management of land and degraded land that requires rehabilitation with use of SLM innovative techniques and best practices.

**A.8. KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT.** *Elaborate on the knowledge management approach for the project, including, if any, plans for the project to learn from other relevant projects and initiatives (e.g. participate in trainings, conferences, stakeholder exchanges, virtual networks, project twinning) and plans for the project to assess and document in a user-friendly form (e.g. lessons learned briefs, engaging websites, guidebooks based on experience) and share these experiences and expertise (e.g. participate in community of practices, organize seminars, trainings and conferences) with relevant stakeholders.*



The proposed project will seek to learn from, and utilise lessons learned and best practices from, several recent and on-going initiatives, including: the data and priorities established in the National Action Programme (NAP) to Protect Land and Combat Land Degradation; data and information on degraded areas, and lessons learned on reforestation and forest management, from the MoE Carbon Sequestration Project; and models established for forest and pasture management plans (CFPMPs), as well as lessons learned on utilizing GIS in management planning, clarifying user rights prior to implementation of on-the-ground activities, and undertaking extensive community participatory processes and supporting communal natural resource management, from the WB-GEF Natural Resources Development Project. In addition, the project will seek to collaborate with the UNDP-GEF project “Establishing Albania’s Environmental Information Management and Monitoring System aligned with the global environmental reporting” in collecting environmental information relevant to the UNCCD and in applying such information to strengthen the implementation of sustainable land management programs on the ground. Lessons learned on sustainable land management stemming from this project’s interventions will be shared with the relevant stakeholders during trainings and public awareness activities, and reports will be elaborated and sent out with the conclusions and suggestions to relevant government bodies. Furthermore, lessons learned of several of the project outputs such as pilot projects will be scaled up and replicated at other sites in the country. The project will establish a platform for disseminating information and experiences during the project’s implementation.

## **B. DESCRIPTION OF THE CONSISTENCY OF THE PROJECT WITH:**

**B.1 CONSISTENCY WITH NATIONAL PRIORITIES.** *Describe the consistency of the project with national strategies and plans or reports and assessments under relevant conventions such as NAPAs, NAPs, ASGM NAPs, MIAs, NBSAPs, NCs, TNAs, NCSAs, NIPs, PRSPs, NPFE, BURs, etc.:*

In relation to the information in the PIF, the following has been changed:

- The Republic of Albania’s National Strategy for Development and Integration (NSDI), 2016-2020, which represents the main national policy document that harmonizes social and economic development strategies, as well integration into the European Union and the achievement of Millennium Development Goals, has been adopted.
- The project to revise Albania’s UNCCD NAP to Protect Land and Combat Land Degradation has been finalized. The NAP project was aimed at evaluation of the national system of indicators for monitoring of soil erosion and providing the necessary data.

Through mobilization of resources meant to support the project goals, the implementation of the UNCCD 10-Year Strategy will be strengthened, especially by creating synergies with the on-going UNCCD NAP alignment process in Albania, and by utilizing its respective outcomes. The project’s components support the operational objectives of the UNCCD 10-Year Strategy and the Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) target. The LDN strategy for Albania has not been established yet, but contribution to reaching the LDN target will be nevertheless obtained through mid-term evaluation results, which will be reported to the UNCCD.

The NAP has identified a number of priority objectives regarding the protection of land, including: 1) harmonization and strengthening of policies at national and local level for land degradation protection and measures; 2) increased financial resources for land management; 3) growth of national consciousness and education of society and institutions for the role and the importance of protecting the soil from erosion; 4) rehabilitation through forestation and reforestation of burned forests and rehabilitation of pasture forage and tree planting to 15% of the forest and pasture surface until 2020; 5) ensure the traditional rights of use / ownership of forests, and setting mechanisms to reduce illegal logging and trading of timber, and fire preventions; 6) pasture improvement for up to 80% of the planned surface; 7) building capacity for the sustainable management and improved functioning of the forest and pasture fund; 8) provide financial mechanisms to improve the status of forests and development of the forest sector; and 9) continue the process of transferring forests and pastures to local government bodies as a step towards the transition of full rights to communities, a process which increase the role of local governments in planning and resource management. The proposed project is in line with all of these objectives as set out in the NAP.

In addition, the NAP identified specific needs for institutional training and creation of a national database for timely warning and taking protective measures against erosion, including the following actions:

- Develop a national program and training module for the central institutions on the acknowledgment and management of the phenomenon of erosion;
- Organizing and planning a national training program and integration of this program in the national plan for the protection of soil from erosion and degradation;
- Organization of awareness and educational campaigns to protect the soil from erosion and degradation;
- Integration of educational programs at schools of all levels of issues by erosion and soil degradation.

Finally, the project is in line with the new United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) (2017-2021), and will contribute to the following UNDAF priorities: Support the implementation of environment policies and strengthen the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources, with a specific focus on the poor and (female) farmers;

- Enhance local capacities for sustainable forest management, taking into consideration the needs of poor households regarding bio-fuels;
- Assist in the formulation of action plans regarding land degradation and deforestation;
- Support ministries and departments to incorporate sustainability and low emission measures into sector policies, strategies, and regulations.

### **C. DESCRIBE THE BUDGETED M&E PLAN:**

The monitoring and evaluation process is expected to be a key component of each component within the project, based on a three-year implementation plan. Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) will be conducted utilising the results-based management approach. The Results Framework provides performance and impact indicators for project implementation along with corresponding means of verification. M&E will be an on-going process and is based on the following strategic directions:

The monitoring and evaluation process will be participatory, consultative and aimed at ensuring delivery of project outputs and achievement of associated defined targets. Evaluation will be based on the status of implementation, through identification of gaps, and the measurement of impacts and level of success in the application of best practices.

UN Environment will be responsible for managing the mid-term review/evaluation and the terminal evaluation. The Project Management Unit and partners will participate actively in the process.

The project will be reviewed or evaluated at mid-term. The purpose of the Mid-Term Review (MTR) or Mid-Term Evaluation (MTE) is to provide an independent assessment of project performance at mid-term, to analyse whether the project is on track, what problems and challenges the project is encountering, and which corrective actions are required so that the project can achieve its intended outcomes by project completion in the most efficient and sustainable way. In addition, it will verify information gathered through the GEF tracking tools.

The Project Steering Committee will participate in the MTR or MTE and develop a management response to the evaluation recommendations along with an implementation plan. It is the responsibility of the UN Environment Task Manager to monitor whether the agreed recommendations are being implemented. An MTR is managed by the UN Environment Task Manager. An MTE is managed by the Evaluation Office of UN Environment. The Evaluation Office of UN Environment will determine whether an MTE is required or an MTR is sufficient.

In line with UN Environment Evaluation Policy and the GEF's Monitoring and Evaluation Policy, the project will be subject to a Terminal Evaluation (TE). The Evaluation Office will be responsible for the Terminal Evaluation and will liaise with the Task Manager and Executing Agency(ies) throughout the process. The Terminal Evaluation will provide an independent assessment of project performance (in terms of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency), and determine the likelihood of impact and sustainability. It will have two primary purposes:

- to provide evidence of results to meet accountability requirements, and
- to promote learning, feedback, and knowledge sharing through results and lessons learned among UN Environment, the GEF, executing partners and other stakeholders.

The direct costs of the evaluation will be charged against the project evaluation budget. The Terminal Evaluation will be initiated no earlier than six months prior to the operational completion of project activities and, if a follow-on phase of the project is envisaged, should be completed prior to completion of the project and the submission of the follow-on proposal. Terminal Evaluation must be initiated no later than six months after operational completion.

The draft Terminal Evaluation report will be sent by the Evaluation Office to project stakeholders for comments. Formal comments on the report will be shared by the Evaluation Office in an open and transparent manner. The project performance will be assessed against standard evaluation criteria using a six point rating scheme. The final determination of project ratings will be made by the Evaluation Office when the report is finalised and further reviewed by the GEF Independent Evaluation Office upon submission. The evaluation report will be publicly disclosed and may be followed by a recommendation compliance process.

The M&E plan includes an inception workshop and report, project implementation reviews, quarterly and annual review reports, and mid-term and final evaluations. The M&E plan for the project will be presented and finalized in an Inception report following a collective fine-tuning of indicators, means of verification, and the full definition of implementation arrangements related to executing partners and project staff.


The GEF tracking tool LD-PMAT is attached as Annex J. The LD-PMAT will be updated at mid-term and at the end of the project and will be made available to the GEF Secretariat along with the project PIR report. As mentioned above, the MTR and TE will verify the information of the tracking tool.

A detailed monitoring and evaluation plan has been provided in Annex G, including the indicative budget and time frame for its implementation.

**PART III: CERTIFICATION BY GEF PARTNER AGENCY(IES)**

**A. GEF Agency(ies) certification**

**This request has been prepared in accordance with GEF policies<sup>28</sup> and procedures and meets the GEF criteria for CEO endorsement under GEF-6.**

<b>Agency Coordinator, Agency Name</b>	<b>Signature</b>	<b>Date (MM/dd/yyyy)</b>	<b>Project Contact Person</b>	<b>Telephone</b>	<b>Email Address</b>
Ms. Kelly West UN Environment/GEF Coordinator Portfolio Manager Corporate Services Division UN Environment		May 3, 2017	Ersin Esen Task Manager	+41-22-917 8196	Ersin.Esen@unep. org

<sup>28</sup> GEF policies encompass all managed trust funds, namely: GEFTF, LDCF, and SCCF  
GEF6 CEO Endorsement /Approval LD Albania – April 2017

## ANNEX A: PROJECT RESULTS FRAMEWORK

Project Outcomes	Outcome Indicators	Baseline	Targets and Monitoring Milestones	Means of Verification	Assumptions & Risks
<b>Component 1: Strengthened legal and institutional framework and capacity building for SLM</b>					
Outcome 1.1 Shift from unsustainable to sustainable land use in agriculture and forestry sectors	New comprehensive law on land management proposed for adoption by the Government  At least one national coordinated multi-sectoral land management strategy designed and submitted for approval	Existing legal framework is “reactive” and does not provide a comprehensive framework for land management that addresses land use planning, reforms, protections, tenure, transactions and other elements  Land management is not effectively integrated across sectors, and existing land management plans and strategies frequently differ in terms of priorities and activities	MT: Relevant legislation to identify opportunities to strengthen and harmonise existing legal framework reviewed  ET: New land management law adopted by the Government  MT: Capacity building of the Interministerial Committee to strengthen its capacity and mandate to develop and coordinate implementation of multi-sectoral strategies  ET: Multi-sectoral management strategy approved by the Government	Project records on the submission of the new comprehensive law on land management proposed for adoption by the Government  Reports from the meetings and workshops on capacity building of the Committee  Project records on the submission of the multi-sectoral land management strategy to the Government	Mandates of institutions, including departments, sectors and groups in these institutions, are clarified to support coordinated and effective implementation of SLM measures
Outcome 1.2 Capacities and support for SLM strengthened	Increase in 9 points for capacity of (for MoE, MARDWA and other relevant institutions at both local and national levels) in the Development Scorecard  At least 50 farming households <b>trained</b> on SLM practices At least 50 farming households	Capacity Development Scorecard (for MoE, MARDWA and other relevant institutions at both local and national levels): <b>14</b>  0 farming households are trained to adopt	Capacity Development Scorecard: - MT: <b>20</b> - ET: <b>25</b>  MT: At least 30 farming households <b>trained</b> on SLM practices	Capacity Development Scorecard  Project records on training and capacity development ( ♂ and ♀ )  Awareness campaign plan	Mandates of institutions, including departments, sectors and groups in these institutions, are clarified to support coordinated and effective implementation

Project Outcomes	Outcome Indicators	Baseline	Targets and Monitoring Milestones	Means of Verification	Assumptions & Risks
	have adopted SLM practices	sustainable agricultural/forest practices  Awareness / understanding of SLM best practices and benefits is very low in Kolonja Municipality	ET: At least 50 farming households have adopted SLM practices  MT: Local communication platform engaging local NGOs, farmers associations and women's associations and local and state authorities	Published handbook with lessons learned  Reports from project meetings with local and national stakeholders	of SLM measures  Knowledge about modern technologies and technical approaches, such as GIS, remote sensing, computer modelling, environmental valuation, cost benefit analysis and social impact assessment, is successfully built upon
<p><b>Outputs</b></p> <p>1.1.1 SLM approaches mainstreamed into revised legal framework and land management planning processes</p> <p>1.1.2 Strengthened Inter-Ministerial Committee to coordinate institutions, engage with local communities, and manage information flows</p> <p>1.2.1 Relevant national and municipal resource managers capacitated in land use planning, SLM practices, ecosystem restoration, and use of economic instruments</p> <p>1.2.2 Local landowners / resource users in Kolonja Municipality trained in and utilizing SLM approaches</p> <p>1.2.3 Stakeholders in Kolonja Municipality aware of land degradation issues and the importance of SLM approaches</p>					
<p><b>Component 2: Demonstrating and Scaling-up of SLM Best Practices</b></p>					

Project Outcomes	Outcome Indicators	Baseline	Targets and Monitoring Milestones	Means of Verification	Assumptions & Risks
Outcome 2.1 Pressures on natural resources in an area covering at least 21,288 hectares are reduced through the application of SLM activities	No. of Integrated Land Use Plans, approved and under implementation for 21,288 ha  Increased vegetative cover on at least 120 hectares of degraded areas in Mollas, Qender Erseke and Qender Leskovik through SLM-based restoration activities  Increase in the area under SLM (as reported in LD PMAT)	Land use and management is carried out in an ad hoc manner with little coordination between ministries / sectors  On-going degradation of forests, pastures and agricultural lands in Kolonja Municipality  0 hectares of land under SLM	MT: 5 integrated Land Use Plans developed, covering an area of 21,288 ha.  ET:5 Integrated Land Use Plans under implementation  ET: Increased vegetative cover on at least 120 hectares of degraded areas in Mollas, Qender Erseke and Qender Leskovik through SLM-based restoration activities  ET: 21,288 hectares	Records on consultations with the relevant government officials on development of land use management plans  Rehabilitation plans  Updated LD-PMAT	Knowledge about modern technologies and technical approaches, such as GIS, remote sensing, computer modelling, environmental valuation, cost benefit analysis and social impact assessment is successfully built upon
<b>Outputs</b>					
2.1.1 Integrated land use plans in Kolonja Municipality created					
2.1.2 Highly degraded forest, pasture and agricultural lands in Kolonja Municipality restored with SLM demonstrations					

**ANNEX B: RESPONSES TO PROJECT REVIEWS** (from GEF Secretariat and GEF Agencies, and Responses to Comments from Council at work program inclusion and the Convention Secretariat and STAP at PIF).

This section will be filled when we receive any comments at the endorsement stage.

<b>GEF secretariat comments</b>	<b>Response</b>
At final CEO approval it is expected that the fully developed project document outlines the projects link to Albania's Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) target, if any, as well as its link to implementing the LDN target.	The LDN strategy for Albania has not been established yet. The project's contribution to reaching the LDN target will nevertheless be measured as part of the results of the mid-term evaluation, which will be reported to the UNCCD.



**ANNEX C: STATUS OF IMPLEMENTATION OF PROJECT PREPARATION ACTIVITIES AND THE USE OF FUNDS<sup>29</sup>**

A. Provide detailed funding amount of the PPG activities financing status in the table below:

PPG Grant Approved at PIF: USD <b>45,662</b>			
<i>Project Preparation Activities Implemented</i>	<i>GEF/LDCF/SCCF Amount (\$)</i>		
	<i>Budgeted Amount</i>	<i>Amount Spent To date</i>	<i>Amount Committed</i>
Draft ToR and recruit necessary national and international consultants to initiate work on PPG	12,500	12,500	-
Organize a project kick off meeting, inviting all the relevant national stakeholders to present the project and main components of the work plan	5,000	5,000	-
Undertake consultations and assessments as foreseen in the PIF, through desk/field studies and stakeholder involvement	10,500	10,500	-
Development of first draft of project documented in UNEP format	5,000	5,000	-
Organize at least 3 consultative meetings with relevant national and international stakeholders that will actively participate in project implementation	12,662	12,662	-
Further development and finalization of the full project document	-	-	-
Preparation of all other supporting documents and annexes required, and completion of activities under the PPG	-	-	-
Finalization for Full Size Project CEO approval/endorsement request document in line with approved Project Identification Form (PIF)	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>45,662</b>	<b>45,662</b>	-

**PLEASE REFER TO ANNEX Q – DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF PPG ACTIVITIES FOR AN OVERVIEW OF THE PPG PHASE**

<sup>29</sup> If at CEO Endorsement, the PPG activities have not been completed and there is a balance of unspent fund, Agencies can continue to undertake the activities up to one year of project start. No later than one year from start of project implementation, Agencies should report this table to the GEF Secretariat on the completion of PPG activities and the amount spent for the activities. Agencies should also report closing of PPG to Trustee in its Quarterly Report.

**ANNEX D: CALENDAR OF EXPECTED REFLOWS (if non-grant instrument is used)**

Provide a calendar of expected reflows to the GEF/LDCF/SCCF Trust Funds or to your Agency (and/or revolving fund that will be set up)

N/A