GEF-6 PROJECT IDENTIFICATION FORM (PIF)

PROJECT TYPE: FULL SIZE PROJECT
TYPE OF TRUST FUND: GEF TRUST FUND

PART I: PROJECT INFORMATION

Project Title:	Integrated Watershed Management for improved agro-pastoral livelihoods in the Sepabala sub-catchment.		
Country(ies):	Lesotho	GEF Project ID:	10020
GEF Agency(ies):	UNDP	GEF Agency Project ID:	6081
Other Executing Partner(s):	Ministry of Forestry, Range and Soil Conservation (MFRSC) Ministry of Water (MoW) - *Department of Water Affairs* Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (MAFS) Ministry of Tourism, Environment and Culture (MTEC) - *Department of Environment* Ministry of Local Government and Chieftainship Affairs (MLGCA)	Submission Date:	March 8, 2018
GEF Focal Area(s):	Land Degradation	Project Duration (Months)	48
Integrated Approach Pilot	IAP-Cities ☐ IAP-Commodities ☐ IAP-Food Security ☐	Corporate Program: SGP ☐	
Name of parent program:	n/a	Agency Fee ($)	199,673

A. INDICATIVE FOCAL AREA STRATEGY FRAMEWORK AND OTHER PROGRAM STRATEGIES

Objectives/Programs (Focal Areas, Integrated Approach Pilot, Corporate Programs)	**Trust Fund**	**(in $)**	
		GEF Project Financing	**Co-financing**
LD-1: Maintain or improve flow of agro-ecosystem services to sustain food production and livelihoods	GEF TF	2,101,826	4,650,000
Total Project Cost		**2,101,826**	**4,650,000**

B. INDICATIVE PROJECT DESCRIPTION SUMMARY

Project Objective: To mainstream sustainable rangeland management and restoration into the use of watersheds to combat land degradation, enhance the flow of agroecosystem goods and services and improve the livelihoods of agro-pastoral communities in the Sepabala Watershed in the Lower Senqu Basin.

Project Components	**Financing Type**	**Project Outcomes**	**Project Outputs**	**Trust Fund**	**GEF Project Financing**	**Co-financing**

Component 1: Institutional capacity at national and local levels for integrated watershed management	TA	**Outcome 1**: Landscape restoration plan (including plan for watershed rehabilitation, reforestation and rangeland management) for Sebapala watershed covering 34,500 ha developed to mainstream Sustsinable Land and Water Management (SLWM) principles *Indicator: Integrated landscape restoration plan developed and officially approved*	*Output 1.1: Land and water resource degradation levels in the Sebapala watershed assessed to determine the extent and types of land and ecosystem degradation* *Output 1.2 Integrated Watershed Management Plan which mainstreams SLWM practices developed and operationalisation of the plan supported* *Output 1.3: Community Action Plans for watershed management developed to facilitate community participation in implementation of integrated watershed management*	GEFTF	375,000	1,275,000
	TA	**Outcome 2:** District level technical officers, local authorities, and resource management institutions capacitated (empowered) to implement Watershed Management Plans and enforce rules to prevent land and ecosystem degradation *Indicator: Increase in capacity of key resource management institutions for watershed management (as measured by the UNDP Capacity Scorecard)*	*Output 2.1: Community Council by-laws developed to enforce implementation of Community Action Plans for integrated watershed management* *Output 2.2: Establishment and strengthening of community-level resource user groups (WUAs, Farmers' Associations, Grazing Associations etc.) supported* *Output 2.3: District technical officers, village-level institutions, farmers' associations, and members of the community trained on SLWM practices for application at landscape and farm levels*	GEFTF	156,585	500,000

Component 2: Integrated Watershed Management practices in the Sebapala watershed	TA	**Outcome 3:** Sustainable Land and Water Management (SLWM) technologies implemented in over 34,500 ha of the watershed *Indicator: Area under rehabilitation and improved land use practices by end of project, as indicated by increased grass and tree cover, increased soil water retention capacity, increased soil nutrient content/fertility* - *10,00ha of degraded land under soil and water conservation measures* - *15,000ha of degraded rangelands under rehabilitation* - *8,00ha of farm/agricultural land under SLWM practices* - *1,500ha of riverine land under IWRM and productive water use*	*Output 3.1: Soil and water conservation technologies implemented to combat soil erosion and promote water infiltration, including hillside terracing, stone bunding, gully rehabilitation, grass reseeding and tree planting.* *Output 3.2: Rangeland rehabilitation interventions implemented, including grass reseeding, removal of invasive shrub species, pasture resting, planting of fodder trees, assisted natural regeneration of native species and improved grazing management to promote productivity and vegetative cover* *Output 3.3: SLWM technologies and practices (including climate smart agriculture, organic agriculture, mixed crop-livestock production, agro-forestry, sustainable harvesting of wild species) piloted by land users in selected sites/at farm level to increase agricultural productivity* *Output 3.4: Integrated water resources management (e.g. water harvesting) promoted to augment water supply for community and household food production (e.g. fruit trees)*	GEFTF	1, 375,154	2,403,571
Component 3: Gender mainstreaming, Knowledge Management, and M&E	TA	**Outcome 4:** Lessons learned by the project through gender mainstreaming and participatory M&E are used to promote SLWM in the wider catchment and nationally *Indicator: Ratio of women/ men benefitting from project interventions* *Indicator: Number of lessons on SLWM collated and shared with wider audience at catchment level and nationally*	*Output 4.1: Project gender strategy implemented, monitored, and reported on.* *Output 4.2 Information for adaptive management and learning collated and lessons learned shared, in the wider catchment and nationally, with active participation of key stakeholders and project partners.*	GEFTF	95,000	250,000
			Subtotal	**GEFTF**	**2,001,739**	**4,428,571**
Project Management			**Project Management Cost (PMC)**	**GEFTF**	**100,087**	**221,429**
Total Project Cost					**2,101,826**	**4,650,000**

C. INDICATIVE SOURCES OF CO-FINANCING FOR THE PROJECT BY NAME AND BY TYPE, IF AVAILABLE

Sources of Co-financing	Name of Co-financier	Type of Co-financing	Amount ($)
Government	Ministry of Forestry, Range and Soil Conservation (MFRSC) - Department of Soil and Water Conservation	Grant	2,500,000
Government	Ministry of Tourism, Environment and Conservation (MTEC) - Department of Environment	Grant	500,000
Government	Ministry of Water (MoW) - Department of Water Affairs	Grant	1,000,000
Government	Ministry of Local Government and Chieftainship Affairs (MLGCA)	Grant	450,000
GEF IA	UNDP	Grant	200,000
Total Co-financing			**4,650,000**

D. INDICATIVE TRUST FUND RESOURCES REQUESTED BY AGENCY(IES), COUNTRY(IES) AND THE PROGRAMMING OF FUNDS [a)]

GEF Agency	Trust Fund	Country/	Focal Area	Programming of Funds	(in $)		
					GEF Project Financing (a)	Agency Fee (b)[b)]	Total (c)=a+b
UNDP	GEF TF	Lesotho	Land Degradation	n/a	2,101,826.	199,673	2,301,499
Total GEF Resources					**2,101,826**	**199,673**	**2,301,499**

E. PROJECT PREPARATION GRANT (PPG)

Is Project Preparation Grant requested? **Yes X** No ☐ If no, skip item E.

PPG AMOUNT REQUESTED BY AGENCY(IES), TRUST FUND, COUNTRY(IES) AND THE PROGRAMMING OF FUNDS

Project Preparation Grant amount requested: $100,000					PPG Agency Fee: $9,500		
GEF Agency	Trust Fund	Country/ Regional/Global	Focal Area	Programming of Funds	(in $)		
					PPG (a)	Agency Fee[1] (b)	Total c = a + b
UNDP	GEF TF	Lesotho	Land Degradation	n/a	100,000	9,500	109,500
Total PPG Amount					**100,000**	**9,500**	**109,500**

F. PROJECT'S TARGET CONTRIBUTIONS TO GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS

Provide the expected project targets as appropriate.

Corporate Results	Replenishment Targets	Project Targets
2. Sustainable land management in production systems (agriculture, rangelands, and forest landscapes)	120 million hectares under sustainable land management	*34,500 hectares*

PART II: PROJECT JUSTIFICATION

1. Project Description.

The global environmental and/or adaptation problems, root causes and barriers that need to be addressed

[1] PPG fee percentage follows the percentage of the Agency fee over the GEF Project Financing amount requested.

1. Lesotho is located in Southern Africa. It is completely surrounded by South Africa, and has a population of about 2.14 million people, as estimated by the World Bank in 2015. Lesotho's land surface area is roughly 30,055 km² (3 million hectares). It is located on the highest part of the Drakensburg escarpment, with its altitude reaching 3,482 meters above sea level in some places. It lies between longitude 300 South and 290 East, and has a total surface area of 30,648 km^2. Lesotho is divided into four agroecological zones, namely the lowlands, 1500-1800m high; the foothills, 1800-2200m high; the mountains, 2200-3000m high; and the Senqu River valley. The Senqu River valley is the extension of the lowlands into the eastern mountains along the Senqu River, a river system internationally shared between Lesotho, South Africa, Namibia, and Botswana, for which it has great economic importance. Lesotho is primarily a floristic country, which forms the greatest part of the Drakensberg Alpine Centre (DAC), a globally recognized biodiversity hotspot in the Southern Africa Maloti-Drakensberg mountains (Carbutt and Edwards 2005). The Centre is located within the Afro-montane and Afro-alpine vegetation zones, and the mountain area is important for high altitude flora. This area is estimated to host about 1,750 plants species, of which 30% are endemic to the DAC.

2. Lesotho is also home to a unique wetlands system found nowhere else in the world, mostly in the eastern alpine areas (Drakensberg Alfroalpine Heathland). These wetlands support a network of unique high-altitude bogs and sponges and are a key contributor to the water system of the country. These world-renowned special high-altitude wetland habitats contain rare plant and animal species. They are also argued to be a main source of the Southern Africa region's waters and Lesotho's forage resources for livestock. The country is therefore well endowed with water, a resource that is nationally referred to as "white gold." The country's unique ecosystems provide goods and services such as food, medicinal plants, firewood, land, building materials, scenery, and water purification. Despite the richness of its ecosystems and species diversity, Lesotho has struggled to derive significant benefits from its natural resources, with the exception of water resources, which it currently sells to South Africa. Even then, the focus on exporting water has had significant local environmental consequences; the benefits of this trade have not been reinvested into conservation and sustainable management of the water resources, as evidenced by significant land degradation in the river basin.

Ecosystem and land degradation in Lesotho

3. Lesotho's ecosystems are fragile due to its topography, type and pattern of rainfall, erodibility of soils, land use patterns, and prevalence of vulnerable habitats such as bogs and sponges. About 60% of Lesotho's land surface is classified as rangelands, the main use of which is livestock production. Land use patterns are communal in the rangelands and semi-private in cultivated lands. Land degradation in the form of soil erosion is pervasive. Rainwater-induced gully, rill, and sheet erosion are the primary agents of soil loss, and this occurs through sheet erosion in many cultivated fields, and gullies that traverse rangelands and cultivated fields all throughout the country. Over the last 20 years, Lesotho has lost over one hundred thousand (100,000) hectares of arable land, a 25% decrease in land usable for the production of food and fodder. Loss of biological diversity, deterioration of rangelands, and poor crop and animal productivity are other signs of land degradation and the advancement of desertification in Lesotho. Productivity of major crops and animals has significantly declined in recent years due to poor land and rangeland conditions. The Ministry of Forest, Range and Soil Conservation estimates that soil erosion occurs at the rate of 40 tonnes per hectare per year.

4. While Lesotho's topography and climate make it vulnerable to soil erosion, several human activities fast-track the erosion problem, and key among them are over-cultivation, overharvesting and overgrazing, leading often to loss of ground cover. This type of interaction with the environment should hence be understood as resource mining, which has reached and even surpassed its ecological limits.

    a. *Overgrazing as a result of overstocking* - Based on the carrying capacity of 8 hectares/animal unit (AU), research shows that stocking rates in Lesotho range from 40-80%. Overstocking, and the resultant overgrazing, is therefore recognised as one of the key contributing factors for land degradation. According to the 2014 National Range Resources Management Policy (MFLR, 2014), degradation of the natural grazing lands of Lesotho is largely due to changing land use patterns, such as encroachment of cultivation and settlements into rangelands; partial breakdown of traditional seasonal grazing patterns

due to increased stock theft; less mobility of herds as a result of new settlements; loss of authority of traditional chiefs; confusion about authority concerning land use; the Government of Lesotho's policy of discouraging transhumance; the decrease of fallow grazing land, due to a fear of loss of traditional rights of use if not cultivated; uncontrolled burning; and excessive livestock numbers. Poor range management practices have contributed to the spread of alien invasive species (AIS) in the rangelands, which outcompete indigenous plant species, negatively impacting livestock production.

b. *Overcultivation of soils and landscapes* - 80% of Lesotho's population depens on agriculture, and in Lesotho, almost all farming systems are of an extensive type. Some of this cultivation occurs on hillsides which are already prone to erosion, and inappropriate practices are often used, such as ploughing down the slope instead of across it, often due to lack of knowledge and experience. Coupled with the lack of on-farm sustainable land management investments (e.g. no terracing of hillsides), these practices lead to a worsening of erosion and situations often leads to This also holds for the cropping component, dominated by maize cultivation on semi-privatized fields, and for the livestock component of extensive grazing in open access areas. In rural villages, houses with a home garden and/or fruit trees are a clear minority. Home compounds, not farming fields, used to have fences to protect against grazing animals. Trees are seldom seen in conjunction with agricultural fields.

c. *Overharvesting and overuse of natural resources* – As a poor country, Lesotho's poor and rural population depends almost entirely on natural resourcs for livelihoods and survival. For instance, although Lesotho is generally one of the least forested countries in Africa (its vegetation largely being grasslands), trees and shrubs remain important resources to rural communities and provide fuel wood, construction materials, medicines, forage and shelter. Indigenous trees and shrubs comprise the mixed evergreen and deciduous forest patches found in the valleys and gullies of the lowlands and foothills; while stands of trees and scrubby areas can be found in the lower mountain zone up to 2,500m. It is estimated that these native forests cover a mere 34,685 hectares of land, with a total crown cover of 34.14% of the country (FNC).

5. Agricultural production has ultimately declined, contributing further to over-harvesting and over-exploitation of wild resources, food insecurity, rural poverty, and consequently, rural-urban migration, resulting in mushrooming informal settlements around main towns. This situation is bound to continue if left unabated, further exacerbating the country's socio-economic challenges and reducing the nation's resilience to environmental degradation and climate change.

Baseline scenario

6. The National Strategic Development Plan 2012/2013 – 2016/2017 (NSDP), the Long Term Water and Sanitation Strategy, Volume II, Water Sector Programme (2014), and the National Action Programme in Natural Resource Management, Combating Desertification and Mitigating the Effects of Drought as outlined in the National Action Plan (2015) have all identified reversing land degradation and desertification and improved watershed management as important strategic objectives. Integrated land and water resource management programs and investment plans therefore have to address soil erosion and desertification, protect water sources, preserve mountain ecosystems, increase capacity of rangelands, extend appropriate forest cover, and rejuvenate agricultural lands. In 2014, the Ministry of Forestry, Range and Soil Conservation developed a Range Resource Management Policy, which identified several problems as contributing to the current state of rangelands, including: poor legislation enforcement, poor grazing controls, reduction in area of rangelands, uncontrolled wild fires, degraded rangelands, ineffective institutional arrangements, fragmented legal instruments, and outdated range resources management policy and legislation. The main purpose of the 2014 policy is therefore to provide guidance for the development of effective strategies that combat land and vegetation degradation and motivate improved legislation and implementation thereof. Resource use decisions are also made at local levels by elected councils. With the establishment of local councils at village level, the councilors also use the provisions of the Local Government Act of 2007 to make their own bylaws to ensure that they benefit from the utilization of the resources in their territory.

7. One of the key successful solutions to addressing environmental problems in Lesotho has been work on transboundary management of the Orange-Senqu River Basin, and this success is largely attributable to the fact that Lesotho is a major exporter of water from the Senqu River to South Africa, and has also entered collaborative arrangements with the other three basin states that it shares this river with (Botswana, Namibia and South Africa). Over the years, significant investments have been made in understanding the hydrology and ecology of the river basin, leading to specific joint interventions towards its sustainable management. It is through these same processes that land degradation has been identified as one of the major challenges in Lesotho and that an integrated water resources management approach has been recognized as key to ensuring the integrity of this ecosystem.

8. The government has budgeted a total of M10,106,033.00 for implementing aspects of the UNCCD NAP. The Long-Term Water and Sanitation Strategy estimates that the cost of implementing catchment management between the 2018/19 and 2021/22 financial years will be about M 214,000,000. During the EU's 11th European Development Fund (EDF 11) in Lesotho, for the period 2014-2020, a total of € 78 million will be allocated towards the water sector. The support to Integrated Catchment Management in Lesotho is funded under this window. Although it is unclear how much the Ministry of Forest, Range and Soil Conservation plans to spend towards implementation of the Rangeland Resource Management Policy of 2014, combatting land degradation remains a key component of the Ministry's work, and the flagship programme on Land Rehabilitation is an important delivery mechanism for this, although challenges with the approaches used to implement it remain.

Baseline projects

9. Several programmes and projects form the baseline on which this project will build, presenting a solid building block from which it can take some of the key decisions and approaches a step forward on the ground. These include the following:

    a. *Orange-Senqu River Basin/ORASECOM Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis (TDA) (2013), IWRM Plan (2014) and Strategic Action Programme (2014)* and UNDP-GEF *'Support to the Orange-Senqu River Strategic Action Programme Implementation' (2017-2023)* – Since the signing of the Orange-Senqu River Basin Commission agreement in 2000, several investments have been made to support joint management of the river basin by the four countries that share it (Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia and South Africa). This work has culminated in the preparation of a basin-wide Strategic Action Programme, largely to implement the basin-wide IWRM Plan. Like many, the IWRM Plan, a key strategy document for joint management of the basin, identifies land degradation as a key challenge. As noted in the plan, 'inadequate land management associated mostly with agriculture and mining in parts of the Orange–Senqu River basin has led to loss of wetland storage and aquifer recharge, increased sediment loads, deteriorating water resources quality, increased distribution and abundance of alien invasive plants, loss of biodiversity and lowered land productivity. Opportunities for community-based natural resource management and alternative livelihood options are inadequately considered'. The work carried out under the auspices of ORASECOM has been the most impactful in terms of laying the foundation for understanding the environmental challenges within Lesotho, and providing high quality technical guidance on the type of solutions required to tackle these challenges. This work continues through funding from the GEF and other partners, including GIZ and the EU. A regional UNDP support GEF-financed project was approved in December 2016 to continue this support. The project, titled *'Support to the Orange-Senqu River Strategic Action Programme Implementation',* has started implementation in 2017, and will run until 2023. The GEF has invested $10,815,137, and being an upstream country on the basin, Lesotho has pledged co-financing of $76,201,343 during the same period. $33,333,000 of this has been allocated to 'initiatives promoting sustainable land management practices in the basin ecosystems approach to IWRM planning, removal of invasive species and promotion of rangelands'.
    b. *The EU support to address land erosion through Integrated Catchment Management in Lesotho* – Financed under the EU's €78 million support to Lesotho's water sector between 2014-2020, this support builds on Lesotho's national IWRM Plan and seeks to support the design and implementation of the national IRWM Plan's *Key Focus Area I: Establishment of Catchment Management.* As part of this support, the Department

of Water Affairs has divided the country into 6 catchments and within them 74 sub-catchments, as management units. The technical work being undertaken through this support includes the development of guidelines for ICM planning and capacity building for implementation and monitoring. The proposed project will work in one of the identified sub-catchments.

c. *The Land Rehabilitation Programme* and UNDP-supported GEF-LDCF support to *Reducing Vulnerability from Climate Change in the Foothills, Lowlands and the Lower Senqu River Basin* - The Ministry of Forestry, Range and Soil Conservation (MFRSC) has been implementing a Land Rehabilitation Programme (LRP) since 2007. The targeted outcomes of the LRP include: i) increase the total area of rehabilitated and protected watersheds; ii) increase the area of productive rangelands under appropriate management plans; iii) protect wetlands to enhance the availability and quality of water resources; iv) contribute to the reduction of unemployment and resultant poverty; v) increase honey production; and vi) increase fruit tree production. Currently the Ministry of Forestry is implementing the GEF-LDCF project on *Reducing Vulnerability from Climate Change in the Foothills, Lowlands and the Lower Senqu River Basin*, a 6-year programme that began in 2015, with GEF-LDCF resources totaling $8,398,172 and government co-financing of $27,000,000. This programme promotes adaptation to climate change through rehabilitation of degraded ecosystems and landscapes as an adaptation approach.
d. *FAO-GEF/LDCF project on Strengthening Capacity for Climate Change Adaptation through Support to Integrated Watershed Management Programme in Lesotho* - This 4-year project, financed by GEF-LDCF to the tune of $3,592,694, was approved for implementation in February 2015. The government of Lesotho has pledged co-financing of $ 8,437,000. Its objective is two-fold: 1) to implement sustainable land and water management practices (SLM/W) and resource conservation measures in selected watersheds to reduce vulnerability and enhance adaptive capacity at community level; and (2) to strengthen diversified livelihood strategies focusing on crop, livestock, and agro-forestry systems at community level in selected watersheds in the three most vulnerable livelihood zones. This was the first project outside the water sector to emphasise a watershed management approach to addressing the land degradation problem, although its focus is still on improving resilience and adaptation of the agriculture sector, and it did not benefit from the water sector priorities currently being elaborated in the EU-supported work on Integrated Catchment Management, which is yet to be rolled out.
e. *EU and Swiss Development Corporation-funded FAO Land Cover project (2016)* - The goal of this project is to generate a Land Resources Database (LRD) of Lesotho enriched with existing ancillary spatial data; produce a Land Cover map for Lesotho using a locally generated and adapted legend; provide detailed base information on the Natural Resources conditions and hazards at the national level; and support projects, research and new applications on Natural Resources Management, Risk Management and Agriculture. Through this work, land cover maps have been produced for all the districts, including Quthing, where the proposed project will be implemented.

10. The proposed project will build on this strong baseline to design appropriate interventions at the Sebapala sub-catchment level that directly address land degradation problems in that particular landscape. The PPG process will seek to create strong linkages between these different initiatives at both national and local levels and ensure that the project interventions are complimentary to ongoing work by other partners.

Barriers to be addressed

11. There are, however, key barriers that prevent these solutions from being implemented on the ground and/or leading to the desired outcomes, and these need to be addressed. Two key barriers are observable:

Barrier 1- Lack of implementation and enforcement of existing policies and legislation and limited institutional and technical capacity to coordinate cross-sectoral action to implement environmental initiatives and interventions, including limited capacity to design and implement appropriate policies and programmes

12. According to the Rangeland Resources Management Policy of 2014, among the main causes of the alarming rate of rangelands degradation are outdated and fragmented policies and legislation used to administer and regulate rangeland resources. These policies and legislation cannot effectively respond to current challenges. The rangeland resources sector is comprised of many stakeholders, including government line ministries, local authorities, communities, and nongovernmental organisations. Specific problems contributing to the negative state of affairs were identified as poor legislation enforcement, poor grazing controls, reduction in area of rangelands, uncontrolled wild fires, degraded rangelands, ineffective institutional arrangements, fragmented legal instruments, and outdated range resources management policy and legislation.

13. Legislation relating to range management is weak and ineffective. There are, however, policies and legislative frameworks that, if implemented, can contribute to protection and sustainable use of the rangelands. The practical limitation to existing laws is lack of enforcement. Another problem that affects the productivity of rangelands relates to ineffective institutional arrangements. There is often confusion on authority, roles, and responsibilities among local government structures, which often leads to uncoordinated management of rangelands. The challenge is to harmonize these so as to ensure that the proposed policy is consistent with other existing sectoral laws and policies. Other factors that contribute to poor implementation of environmental legislation include poorly trained personnel, inadequate financial resources, weak administrative and organisational structures, institutional conflicts, scarcity of monitoring equipment, and lack of environmental education and public awareness programmes. The re-centralization of decision-making authority for natural resource management to central government institutions, as opposed to a participatory approach that, for instance, recognizes the role of chiefs and traditional authorities in managing local environmental resources, has led to a culture of looking to government for solutions, and a sense of 'no authority' where competition and conflict ensues, leading to further pressure on the ecosystems and landscapes because rules and laws are not enforced. Government itself has limited capacity to 'be everywhere' and oversee implementation and enforcement. There is therefore a significant gap between what policies and laws proclaim and what actually happens on the ground, and this gap has worsened environmental degradation over time.

Barrier 2 – Lack of practical skills and knowledge among land users to directly address local level environmental challenges, leading to limited investments in Sustainable Land Management

14. The many decades of weak implementation of practical interventions and lack of involvement of local communities and land users in designing and implementing solutions has resulted in a significant vacuum of knowledge among technicians and land users. Where there has been implementation of working solutions, the approach to implementation has been weak, leading often to limited participation of stakeholders, and in some cases divisions among communities who participated and those who did not, partly due to the wrong incentives being used. Interventions have therefore not always been accompanied by strong approaches to knowledge building and awareness raising on the value of the interventions being rolled out, and the benefits of these to the landscape and people, beyond their implementation. There is therefore a lack of up-take, ownership, and institutionalization of best practices that local communities and land users can adopt and own and further contextualize as appropriate, beyond project interventions. As a result, there has been minimal if not completely absent investments in improving the quality of ecosystems and landscapes (SLM) by the average land user. Lack of government investments in addressing land and ecosystem degradation has also left communities convinced that there are no solutions to the majority of the environmental challenges they face, and that many are natural and therefore irreversible. This is particularly the case in parts of the country where there have not been any development projects addressing key environmental problems, and where people have not witnessed real tangible benefits from these interventions at either individual, community or landscape levels.

Barrier 3 – Weak knowledge systems, leading to limited learning from past experiences to inform apdaptive management and upscaling of successful solutions

15. Lesotho has had decades of interventions to address environmental problems, yet there is limited learning from past experiences, and for this reason the situation is worsening. This knowledge gap is largely created a lack of

systems and deliberate actions to capture knowledge and experiences and not only widely share them with other parts of the country that grapple with the same challenges, but also a lack of bottom-up systems to make this possible. So while there are have been successful local level actions that could easily be adopted in neighbouring localities, there is limited cross-learning between communities, land-user groups, decision-making authorities and institutions, even those operating within the same localities (e.g. district councils). This is worsened by the almost complete lack of presence of technical government institutions outside of the capital, Maseru. The transfer of authority over land and natural resource governance from the traditional leaders to central government instutitions in the 1960s had led to further disintegration of local level knowledge systems and weaking of the resilience of local institutions, and therefore communities.

16. The preferred **long-term solution** is to reduce threats to Lesotho's landscapes, ecosystems, and biodiversity and to ensure that the country and people of Lesotho benefit from the conservation, use, and sustainable management of these resources. International environmental conventions, including the UNCCD and its 10-Year Strategy, and subsequent scientific guidance designed to further guide implementation, provide an important basis for this, if well localized to respond to Lesotho's own challenges. Building Lesotho's long-term capacity at all levels to effectively develop locally relevant strategies and implement them will provide the right incentives for an overall improved and sound management of Lesotho's environment and contribute to addressing the pressing poverty-environment challenges the country currently faces.

17. Following the guidance of the Water Sector Programme on catchment management as a key approach to addressing the land and ecosystem degradation problems, the objective of this project is, therefore, to mainstream sustainable rangeland management and restoration into the use of watersheds to combat land degradation and improve the livelihoods of agro-pastoral communities.

The proposed alternative scenario, GEF focal area strategies, with a brief description of expected outcomes and components of the project

18. The proposed alternative scenario is to fully support Lesotho's aspirations, expressed through the UNCCD NAP and all the other key national policy and strategy documents discussed above. The project will do so through design of a responsive to the land degradation problem around the GEF 6 Land Degradation Focal Area Strategy, LD-1: *Maintain or improve flow of agro-ecosystem services to sustain food production and livelihoods,* with a focus on Program 1: *Agro-ecological Intensification*, specifically targeting the outcome 'integrated watershed management, including wetlands where SLM interventions can improve hydrological functions and services for agro-ecosystem productivity,' as outlined in the GEF 6 Strategy. The objetive of the project is to *mainstream sustainable rangeland management and restoration into the use of watersheds to combat land degradation, enhance the flow of agroecosystem goods and services and improve the livelihoods of agro-pastoral communities in the Sepabala Watershed in the Lower Senqu Basin'.*

19. The project interventions will be organised under 3 complimentary Components: Component 1: *Institutional capacity at national and local levels for integrated watershed management*; Component 2: *Integrated Watershed Management practices in the Sebapala watershed*; and Component 3: *Gender mainstreaming, Knowledge Management, and M&E.*

Component 1: Institutional capacity at national and local levels for integrated watershed management

20. This component is designed to address the challenges described under 'barrier 1,' relating to institutional capacity to plan, design, and implement responses to identified land degradation challenges. Under this component, the project will support capacity building of all key stakeholders to participate in watershed management planning and implementation, with a view to facilitating the development of technical skills and knowledge to identify problems at watershed level, design appropriate responses, and implement and enforce protocols, agreements and actions agreed at local resource management levels. The component is organized into two main outcomes:

21. Outcome 1: *Landscape restoration plan (including plan for watershed rehabilitation, reforestation and rangeland management) for Sebapala watershed covering 34,500 ha developed to mainstream Sustsinable Land and Water Management (SLWM) principles.* The work under this outcome will result in the development of a restoration plan for the Sepabala catchment (sub-catchment #54 in the map in Annex 2, at the bottom lower corner of the country).

22. The Outputs to be pursued under Outcome 1 are as follows:

    Output 1.1: Land and water resource degradation levels in the Sebapala watershed assessed to determine the extent and types of land and ecosystem degradation
    Output 1.2 Integrated Watershed Management Plan which mainstreams SLWM practices developed and operationalisation of the plan supported
    Output 1.3: Community Action Plans for watershed management developed to facilitate community participation in implementation of integrated watershed management

23. Outcome 2: *District level technical officers, local authorities, and resource management institutions capacitated (empowered) to implement Watershed Management Plans and enforce rules to prevent land and ecosystem degradation.* This outcome will focus on training of stakeholders to be able to implement watershed management interventions to be planned under Outcome 1 and establishment of protocols, rules, and laws that complement these interventions to ensure that monitoring and enforcement accompany implementation and to build sustainability into local level processes, particularly in light of the limited central level capacity to carry out these functions. The key goal here is to empower district level structures and local land users, including community institutions and local authorities, to not only participate in designing responses for local level environmental problems, but to also take ownership of ensuring that their investments are sustained and bear fruit. In theory, district councils are empowered to lead in managing local resources, but many lack the capacity to design the appropriate solutions and implement them, so the training will provide the knowledge and skills to carry out this function and meaningfully engage with technical officers from the competent institutions in the planning processes. The district council will also be supported to develop by-laws that will facilitate the creation of an enabling environment for community level actions (e.g. Community Action Plans) to succeed. Practical training on SLWM practices will seek to impart skills and knowledge and promote transfer and adoption of ecosystem restoration and livelihoods techniques to be deployed in Component 2, with a particular focus on (i) sustainable water use, micro-irrigation and water harvesting; (ii) construction and maintenance of soil and water conservation interventions and infrastructure; (iii) sapling planting and tree management; and (iv) improved crop-livestock management practices, poultry farming and apiculture (bee-keeping). The Outputs under this outcome include:

    Output 2.1: Community Council by-laws developed to enforce implementation of Community Action Plans for integrated watershed management
    Output 2.2: Establishment and strengthening of community-level resource user groups (WUAs, Farmers' Associations, Grazing Associations etc.) supported
    Output 2.3: District technical officers, village-level institutions, farmers' associations, and members of the community trained on SLWM practices for application at landscape and farm levels

24. At the end of the project, it is expected that through this component, the local land users and decision-makers will be in a better position to recognize the land degradation challenges in their locality, collectively explore solutions and implement and monitor their impacts, enforce local-level rules and protocols for bringing these challenges under control, and recognize the importance of a better managed environment for their livelihoods and well-being. They will have concrete tools and practical skills to better respond to challenges and manage uncertainties.

Component 2: Integrated Watershed Management practices in the Sebapala watershed

25. In response to 'barrier 2', this component will support local stakeholders with practical skills, tools and capacity to implement physical interventions on the ground in degraded landscapes to avoid, reduce, and reverse land

degradation within the Sebapala catchment. Technical support will be coordinated by the Department of Soil and Water Conservation within the Ministry of Forestry, Range and Soil Conservation, with direct support from other key institutions such as the Department of Water Affairs (DWA) and the Department of Environment, and with close collaboration with district level authorities and decision-making structures. This component will target farmers and other land and natural resource users and their associations and groups, and seek to impart the relevant skills by demonstrating locally relevant SLWM practices that will directly address land and ecosystem degradation problems and can be employed at farm and landscape levels to increase the productivity of production landscapes and ecosystems for improved livelihoods. This component will be made up of one outcome: *Outcome 3 - Sustainable Land and Water Management (SLWM) technologies implemented in over 34,500 ha of the watershed*, designed to support implementation of a variety of interventions across the landscape, covering 34,500 hectares of different landscape and ecosystem types including farmland, grazing lands/rangelands, hillsides, riverine environments, and other degraded landscapes that will be identified and mapped during the PPG process. The following outputs will be pursued under this component/outcome:

Output 3.1: Soil and water conservation technologies implemented to combat soil erosion and promote water infiltration, including hillside terracing, stone bunding, gully rehabilitation, grass reseeding and tree planting.
Output 3.2: Rangeland rehabilitation interventions implemented, including grass reseeding, removal of invasive shrub species, pasture resting, planting of fodder trees, assisted natural regeneration of native species and improved grazing management to promote productivity and vegetative cover
Output 3.3: SLWM technologies and practices (including climate smart agriculture, organic agriculture, mixed crop-livestock production, agro-forestry, sustainable harvesting of wild species) piloted by land users in selected sites/at farm level to increase agricultural productivity
Output 3.4: Integrated water resources management (e.g. water harvesting) promoted to augment water supply for community and household food production (e.g. fruit trees)

26. This component is key for demonstrating practical skills to local land users and communities that can directly tackle land and ecosystem degradation problems, improving the productivity of ecosystems and landscapes for livestock and people's livelihoods, and building the resilience of these landscapes against shocks and disasters such as droughts and floods.

Component 3: Gender mainstreaming, Knowledge Management and M&E

27. This component will address the challenges described under 'barrier 3' and complement the other components and support the development and implementation of a gender strategy and action plan to ensure that women, poor men, youth, and other marginalized groups are empowered to become active agents, participants and beneficiaries of the project interventions. Another key aspect of this component is that it will put in place a system for collecting, packaging and sharing information and knowledge about the practices promoted by the project, the processes involved in these, and the short and medium-term results from implementation of the project activities. This knowledge and information will be shared with district and community level authorities to further guide future programming around similar issues and widely disseminated to the rest of the district and catchment. A strategy will also be put in place to feed this information back to higher level structures within key ministries to inform the design of similar programmes across the country. The component will be guided by one outcome, indicated below, with two outputs:

28. Outcome 4: *Lessons learned by the project through gender mainstreaming and participatory M&E are used to promote SLWM in the wider catchment and nationally*

Output 4.1: Project gender strategy implemented, monitored, and reported.
Output 4.2 Information for adaptive management and learning collated and lessons learned shared in the wider catchment and nationally with active participation of key stakeholders and project partners.

29. By the end of the project, it is expected that local land users and other key decision-making stakeholders within the Quthing district, and in particular the Sebapala sub-catchment, will be better skilled and more knowledgeable

on practical solutions to the different types of land degradation challenges they are faced with, and how to tackle them at farm and landscape levels. A key goal is to facilitate the uptake of these SLWM practices by the district authorities to ensure that these are budgeted for, that they make up the solutions that district authorities roll out in response to land degradation in their localities, and that central level authorities also invest resources that target these same challenges and promote the proven solutions.

Incremental cost reasoning and expected contributions from the baseline, the GEFTF and co-financing and the global environmental benefits

30. The GEF increment, expected contributions from the baseline, and the global environmental benefits generated from the GEF financing, are described in detail in the table in Annex 1. In summary, the GEF funds will facilitate the key process of 'actioning' or operationalizing the integrated catchment management approach in Lesotho. This will be the first initiative to be implemented following the ICM guidelines recently developed through the EU support. ICM or watershed management approach will be 'put to the test' and bring together stakeholders around this framework, at a sub-catchment level. The key aspect of this work is the design and planning phase, where central level institutions, in particular MFRSC, MoW, MFAS, the MTEC and the MLGCA will come together with local level structures (i.e. District Council, Community Councils and other local authorities) and land users and communities at the sub-catchment level. The current approach to planning and designing of solutions remains sectoral and limited to the MFRSC, and therefore fails to have a multi-disciplinary and multi-sectoral approach to addressing land degradation. The proposed ICM approach facilitates a process that views land and water degradation problems as inseparable, and this is key for the success of any initiative that seeks to address land degradation in the Leostho context, because the most pernicious type of land degradation is linked to water resources. While ICM or watershed management as an approach is not new, in the Lesotho context it has never been applied before and while the water resources management sector has been interacting with ICM issues for some time, the enabling environment has never caught up. The high level decision to adopt ICM as a water management approach therefore presents tangible opportunities for the solutions to the land degradation problem to be devised at the most appropriate level (the catchment or watershed) and for the specific ecosystem degradation problems to be well understood before solutions are crafted. Work to be undertaken under component 1 of the project therefore presents a new and unique opportunity for Lesotho to move away from 'blanket' approaches and solutions to land degradation towards more context-specific and locally-relevant responses that are based on science and evidence. Most importantly, this initiative presents a concrete opportunity for an empowerment of both land users and local level authorities (e.g. district council and chieftaincies) to directly participate in defining the problems and crafting solutions to them jointly with the technical institutions that will lead the process. This key for ensuring sustainability and ownership of solutions at the local level, and for facilitating knowledge, skills and capacity building and sowing the seeds for increased investments in sustainable land management and environmental stewardship. Both components 2 and 3 are key for supporting local-level knowledge creation, skills sharing and capacity building for local land users, communities and authorities for sustainable management of natural resources.

31. Summary of global environmental benefits:
    - Up to 14,957 people in the Sebapala sub-catchment supported directly and indirectly to take up sustainable land and water management practices.
    - Up to 34,500 hectares of land integrating sustainable land and water management interventions, leading to increased productivity of rangelands, increased tree and vegetative cover, improved soil and water retention capacity and improved soil fertility.
    - Increase resilience of ecosystems and landscapes against droughts and floods due to reduced surface water run off and soil erosion.

32. Beyond the benefits outlined above and in the table below, the support from the GEF project will contribute to Lesotho's realization of the following SDGs: 1 – No Poverty, 3 – Good Health and Well- being, 6 – Clean Water and Sanitation, 13 – Climate Action, and 15 – Life on Land, among others.

Innovation, sustainability and potential for scaling up

33. With the decision to adopt ICM as an approach, the land management sector has a strong opportunity to address land and ecosystem degradation with a comprehensive approach that links these two sectors (land and water), that has a defined geographical management unit (a watershed), and that designs solutions based on a comprehensive and scientific understanding of the environmental dynamics in that defined geographic unit. In practice, this has not been tried in the Lesotho context, as most interventions have been designed around a broad understanding of the 6 main catchments, which are large, and therefore have failed to appreciate the details and dynamics of what occurs within such basins and the potential for differences across the basin scales. Dividing the 6 catchments into a further 74 sub-catchments provides an opportunity for a finer scale understanding of the environmental stresses, and therefore design of appropriate and locally-relevant interventions and solutions for them.

34. The innovation in this project is rooted in this newly adopted ICM approach. Through this project, it will be the first time that an integrated watershed management project will be implemented, following the guidance from the recent EU-supported programme on ICM. It will also, for the first time, facilitate an opportunity for the MFRSC, a land management instititons, to lead the process of implementing integrated watershed management as an entry point to addressing land degradation. The sub-catchment management plan or watershed management plan, which is essence a landscape restoration plan, will be developed, and this presents a good opportunity to 'pilot' or 'test' the EU/DWA proposed approach and guidelines for developing these ICM plans, and to learn from that process to inform and guide similar exercises in the future. A successful implementation of this project will generate significant lessons and evidence to catalyse future wider uptake and adoption beyond the Sebapala sub-catchment, within the broader Quthing District. Building the capacity of the district council and community councils in the area is therefore important catalyst for promoting both upscaling and ensuring sustainability of future investments. Empowering local communities and land users through practical knowledge and skills and building their capacity to take up and adopt sustainable land use practices is also key to sustainability and scaling up.

35. The potential for scaling up this work is significant, not only within the other sub-catchments in the Lower Senqu catchment, but in the rest of the country, as it will entail a strong 'how-to' approach to catchment management and present a clearer picture of what is required to create a more comprehensive approach to addressing land and ecosystem degradation in the Lesotho context.

2. Stakeholders. Will project design include the participation of relevant stakeholders from civil society and indigenous people? (yes ☒ /no☐) If yes, identify key stakeholders and briefly describe how they will be engaged in project design/preparation.

36. The table below lists some of the stakeholders and their expected role in the project. A more detailed stakeholder analysis will be conducted during the PPG phase and their different roles and contributions clarified and agreed. A stakeholder engagement plan will be prepared during the PPG to guide a participatory process of project implementation.

Organization	**Responsibility**
Ministry of Forest, Range and Soil Conservation – Department of Soil and Water Conservation	This is the lead agency for project implementation. MFLR is also the national focal point for UNCCD and is therefore tasked with implementing the National Action Programme on Natural Resource Management, Combating Desertification and Mitigating the Effects of Drought. As the Implementing Partner for the project, MFLR will coordinate the involvement and participation of all the other relevant institutions to implement interventions under the project.
Ministry of Water Affairs – Department of Water Affairs	The Department of Water Affairs is responsible for providing policy and operational direction in the management of the country's water resources. As the institution currently working on plans to roll out the Integrated Catchment Management approach throughout the country, the DWA will be key in providing technical direction and guidance to the incorporation of ICM guidelines into the design and implementation of the project. Technical

	officers from DWA are expected to have a direct role in the preparation of watershed management plans and training other stakeholders on the principles of this approach.
Ministry of Tourism, Environment and Culture - Department of Environment	The DoE is also the GEF Operational Focal Point and so has the overall responsibility of ensuring that the GEF resources are allocated towards key national priority issues in line with the GEF rules.
Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security	As the technical institution responsible for food security and agriculture issues, MAFS is an important stakeholder for any initiative that involves management of land and natural resources, since this forms the backbone of rural livelihoods in the Lesotho context. In this project MAFS will play a key role in providing guidance and contributing to the design of both component 1 and 2, and in bringing the ministry's perspective and vision for agricultural development and food security to the watershed level. The participation of MAFS will also strengthen the ministry's capacity and understanding of the direct linkages between agricultural productivity, food security and healthy ecosystems and ensure that this institution contributes to designing and implementing solutions that promote healthier ecosystems and landscapes for improved agro-pastoral livelihoods.
Quthing District Council and Community Councils	The Quthing District Council is the local administrative authority of the area where the project will be implemented, and will therefore play the role of Responsible Party in executing many of the local level activities under the project and make final decisions on behalf of the locality (e.g. development and enforcement of by-laws). It is therefore a key partner in the design and implementation of the project.
Village Grazing Schemes and Grazing Associations, Water User Associations	These groups and others like them form an important target group for the design, implementation, monitoring, and awareness raising and knowledge-sharing aspects of the project. As groups that both contribute to the environmental challenges that the project will address and are also negatively affected by the impacts of a degraded environment, they need to be empowered to recognize the problems and participate in solving them.
Traditional Authorities/Chiefs	Historically, chiefs were responsible for guiding members of the community on the use of land and other natural resources and making decisions on how these could be used and under what circumstances and protocols. Although this is no longer the case, Chiefs still hold significant political authority at the local level, and so bringing them into the process to work closely with District Councils on the affairs of governing natural resources will be an important step in ensuring that implementation of local level programmes is sustained, particularly at village levels and even more so beyond the life of the project.
UNDP	GEF Implementing Agency (IA)
Civil Society Organizations	These organizations implement relevant project activities, e.g. community mobilization, organization, advocacy, awareness raising, education and outreach, and community empowerment.
Communities and community groups e.g. women's groups, herd boys	Custodians, harvesters, users, and traditional knowledge holders are the primary beneficiaries of the project.

3. Gender Considerations. Are gender considerations taken into account? (yes ☒ /no☐). If yes, briefly describe how gender considerations will be mainstreamed into project preparation, taken into account the differences, needs, roles and priorities of men and women.

37. Access to and control over natural resources always has a gender dynamic to it, and so do the costs and benefits of interacting with the environment and natural resources. In the context of Lesotho, where land degradation is widespread and has obvious direct impacts on people's ability to make a living, the costs of a less productive environment are significant. This is compounded by the fact that more than 50% of the country's population is already poor. Poverty is particularly acute among women and female-headed households, and inequality between the sexes is largely rooted in tradition and a culture of patriarchy. The constitution of Lesotho guarantees the right to equality and non-discrimination on the basis of sex; however, customary laws are exempted from this constitutional guarantee. The removal by law of minor status for women in 2006 improved the position of Basotho women but the traditional culture still holds strong. In practice, customary law can undermine civil law, so whilst legislation attempts to increase rights for women, traditional beliefs reduce the impact of these laws.

38. It goes without saying, then, that the impacts of degraded landscapes and ecosystems on particular groups, in particular unmarried women and female-headed households, are significant. Participation in decision-making regarding the governance and use of land and natural resources also remains a challenge, with women generally lagging behind in decision-making, but to some extent carrying the burden of implementing many of the activities that involve unpaid work.

39. Using UNDP and GEF guidance on mainstreaming gender into project design and implementation, the PPG will carry out a gender analysis/assessment to ensure that the design of the full proposal fully takes into consideration the gender dynamics of natural resources governance in the Lesotho context, and fully integrates this context where the project will be implemented. The full project document and CEO Endorsement will include a full gender action plan, ensure that the Project Results Framework has clear gender-disaggregated indicators and targets, and ensure that the M&E plan and budget include activities and items that contribute directly to the implementation of the gender action plan. By the end of the project, it is expected that women, youth and poor men will be better empowered with knowledge, tools, and skills gained through training and capacity building, as well as direct participation in interventions on the ground, and can later adopt these to benefit themselves as individuals and as members of the community.

4. Risks.

40. The table below shows the possible major risks to the project and proposed measures for managing and mitigating the risks. These will be further refined during the PPG.

Possible Risks	Probability	Significance	Proposed Risk Management Measures
The project's physical interventions - harvesting of alien invasive species, reforestation and soil and water conservation activities (e.g. gully rehabilitation) lead more environmental damage (e.g. removal of native vegetation species) or introduces new invasive/non-native species	I = 2 P = 2	Moderate	This is a landscape restoration project to combat land and ecosystem degradation. The exact landscape restoration interventions will be identified during the PPG but may include planting of new trees in areas that have been degraded/denuded as a method of stabilizing hillsides and slopes to reduce soil and water erosion. The project design will ensure more sustaianable options are prioritised over risky ones. For instance, reforestation activities will seek to prioritise the use of native tree species over non-native ones, and where there's a need to use non-native ones, appropriate risk mitigation measures will be put in place to ensure close monitoring of the impacts of such species on the environment.
Physical restoration activities (e.g. tree planting) are affected by unfavourable environmental and climatic conditions, including shocks and stressors such as droughts and floods.	I=2 P=2	Moderate	The project is designed to support the development of Lesotho's institutional capacity and enabling environment to tackle the extensive land degradation problems in the country. This includes building resilience against the impacts of climatic change, including risks and disasters that may worsen under climate change conditions. The project will therefore build plans and mitigation measures to appropriately respond to these potential shocks and stresses into the design of interventions.
Lack of coordination between the different stakeholders (national government agencies and district local authorities and community institutions).	I=2 P=2	Moderate	This project will support the development of community action plans, by-laws at district levels, and landscape restoration/watershed management plans for coordinated action by the different stakeholders and institutions. In principle, this should

			facilitate more cooperation and collaboration, and reduce the tendency for sectoral approaches to solving problems. Collectively, these tools and systems should improve coordination, led by the relevant government institutions and local authorities as appropriate, to ensure that they facilitate a functional operating environment.
Beneficiaries lack the capacity to meaningfully participate in the design and implementation of project interventions.	I=3 P=3	High	Many of the communities are illiterate and poor, and therefore not always able to engage with formal policies and planning processes. Their capacity to engage on issues therefore needs to be built. The project will build the capacity of right-holds to claim their rights and to ensure that they meaningfully participate in the implementation of project interventions.
Climate change may undermine the NRM, conservation and livelihood improvement objectives of the project. Climate change in Lesotho is expected to exacerbate existing environmental stresses such as drought, land degradation and loss of biodiversity and thus undermine sustainable development efforts. The Senqu river valley lowlands are the most vulnerable to climate change with a population of mostly peasant subsistence farmers, livestock farmers and destitute households with no means. These changes are expected to become apparent around mid-century.	I=3 P=2	Moderate	As a landscape restoration initiaitive, the project is designed to contribute to the resilience of both natural resource-dependent livelohoods as well as the natural landscapes and ecosystems themselves. The project will therefore build practical skills and knowledge for understanding of environmental dynamics (and degradation) and designing solutions for addressing environmental degradation and adapting livelihood practices to the changes in the environment and those imposed by climate change and variability. With better awareness and understanding of the climate-ecological dynamics and interactions, and with improved knowledge and skills for responding to these dynamics, communities and land users stand a better chance of building resilience and adjusting land use practices to better respond to the negative impacts of change.

5. Coordination. Outline the coordination with other relevant GEF-financed and other initiatives.

41. Lesotho is currently implementing the following ongoing and planned projects which this project will coordinate with:

- *GEF ID 9054* (UNDP) - *Support to the Orange-Senqu River Strategic Action Programme Implementation*. Strengthening joint management capacity for the basin-wide IWRM implementation and demonstrating environmental and socioeconomic benefits of an ecosystem-based approach to water resources management through the implementation of SAP priority actions in the Orange-Senqu River basin.
- *GEF ID 5075* (UNDP) - *Reducing Vulnerability from Climate Change in the Foothills, Lowlands and the Lower Senqu River Basin*. This project is being implemented in an adjacent district and the potential for cross-learning and lesson-sharing will be further explored during the PPG stage.
- *GEF ID 5124* (FAO) - *Strengthening Capacity for Climate Change Adaptation through Support to Integrated Watershed Management Programme in Lesotho*. Project Objectives: (1) to implement sustainable land and water management practices (SLM/W) and resource conservation measures in selected watersheds to reduce vulnerability and enhance adaptive capacity at community levels; and (2) to strengthen diversified livelihood strategies focusing on crop, livestock and agro-forestry systems at community level in selected watersheds in the three most vulnerable livelihood zones.

- *GEF ID 6926* (UNEP) - *Strengthening Climate Services in Lesotho for Climate Resilient Development and Adaptation to Climate Change.* This project aims to strengthen the climate monitoring capabilities, early warning systems and human resources in Lesotho in order to effectively address climate impacts and better plan adaptation to climate change.
- *GEF ID 4453* (IFAD) - *Adaptation of Small-scale Agriculture (LASAP)* - To increase the resilience of small-scale agriculture to climate change impacts by promoting climate-proofed investments for agriculture-based development, as well as by enhancing the resilience of agricultural productivity under increased climate variability.

42. The UNDP-supported projects have a strong focus on supporting landscape and ecosystem resilience. GEF ID 5075, for instance, is supporting the rehabilitation of degraded rangelands and therefore reducing the impacts of overgrazing on the landscape and river ecosystem to promote natural regeneration and recovery. GEF ID 9054 will support implementation of strategic actions agreed by the member states sharing the river basin, one of which is to address land and ecosystem degradation, the impacts of which affect the hydrology of the Orange-Senqu River system.

43. Further analysis on how this project can benefit from and contribute to the learning and interventions from these ongoing GEF projects will be further explored during the PPG.

A.6. Consistency with National Priorities. Is the project consistent with the National strategies and plans or reports and assessments under relevant conventions? (yes ☒ /no ☐). If yes, which ones and how: NAPAs, NAPs, ASGM NAPs, MIAs, NBSAPs, NCs, TNAs, NCSAs, NIPs, PRSPs, NPFE, BURs, etc.

44. As already discussed under section A.1 of this document, this project is in line with national development and environmental management priorities set by the GOL under various policy documents such as V2020, National Strategy for Development Planning (NSDP), UNCCD NAP (2015), NBSAP, Environment Act 2008, Biodiversity Resources Management Draft Bill of 2016, National Range Resources Management Policy of 2014, and the Long Term Water and Sanitation Strategy, Volume II, Water Sector Programme (2014), which also reflects the regional transboundary river basin management priorities set at the level of the Orange-Senqu River Basin Commission (ORASECOM). These policy and legal pronouncements outline Lesotho's vision and commitment towards sustainable use and management of the country's natural resources, and key strategies for tackling land and ecosystem degradation challenges faced by the country and its people. The project will support the mainstreaming of sustainable land and water management practices into the use and management of landscapes, using the watershed as a management unit. It is expected that this project will generate valuable lessons, technical guidance, tools, and approaches to strengthen these policies so as to promote ecosystem and landscape approaches to address environmental problems.

45. The UNCCD NAP (2015) specifically points out the following four Strategic Objectives and 5 operational objectives as the basis for strengthening coordination and arriving at partnerships to support various activities to be undertaken for successful implementation for the UNCCD in Lesotho. The four strategic objectives and the accompanying operational areas are: 1) To improve the living conditions of affected populations *(People living in areas affected by DLDD to have an improved and more diversified livelihood base and to benefit from income generated from SLM; Affected populations' socio-economic and environmental vulnerability to climate change, climate variability and drought is reduced)*; 2) To improve the condition of affected ecosystems *(Land productivity and other ecosystem goods and services in affected areas are enhanced in a sustainable manner contributing to improved livelihoods; The vulnerability of affected ecosystems to climate change, climate variability and drought is reduced)*; 3) To generate global benefits through effective implementation of the UNCCD *(SLM and combating desertification/land degradation contribute to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and the mitigation of climate change)*; and 5) To mobilize resources to support implementation of the Convention through building effective partnerships between national and international actors *(Increased financial, technical and technological resources are made available to affected developing country Parties; Enabling policy environments are improved for UNCCD implementation at all levels).*

46. The 2014 Range Resources Management Policy also has four key objectives, and these are supported by several strategies. The objectives are: to develop strategies for proper management of rangeland resources; to promote an integrated approach to planning and management of rangeland resources; to develop appropriate policy and strategies for rehabilitation and possible restoration of lost rangeland resources; and to promote effective stakeholder participation in the planning and implementation of rangeland management programmes.

A.7. Knowledge Management. Outline the knowledge management approach for the project, including, if any, plans for the project to learn from other relevant projects and initiatives, to assess and document in a user-friendly form, and share these experiences and expertise with relevant stakeholders.

47. This project will generate a significant amount of new information and knowledge, including tools for implementing integrated watershed management as an approach to combating land and ecosystem degradation. While work to address land degradation is not new to Lesotho, using integrated watershed management as the primary approach to addressing the problem has not been tried outside of the water sector, and it has certainly not been institutionalized. This project will therefore pilot this approach and seek to facilitate a learning process that will lead to a recognition of the value of bringing this water sector approach to the work of the Ministry of Forest and Land Reclamation, and reduce the sectoral nature of the work of these two ministries, particularly as their key concerns should be tackled in an integrated manner. The knowledge to be gained from this project will be key in informing future programming, beyond the life of this project. Component 3, Outcome 4 of the project will specifically address knowledge management, communication, and awareness-raising issues and ensure that participation and beneficiation from the project interventions is comprehensive and particularly includes marginalized groups.

PART III: APPROVAL/ENDORSEMENT BY GEF OPERATIONAL FOCAL POINT(S) AND GEF AGENCY(IES)

A. RECORD OF ENDORSEMENT[2] OF GEF OPERATIONAL FOCAL POINT (S) ON BEHALF OF THE GOVERNMENT(S): (Please attach the Operational Focal Point endorsement letter(s) with this template. For SGP, use this SGP OFP endorsement letter).

NAME	POSITION	MINISTRY	DATE *(MM/dd/yyyy)*
Mr. Stanley Damane	GEF Operational Focal Point	**ENVIRONMENT, KINGDOM OF LESOTHO**	**22 FEBRUARY 2018**

B. GEF AGENCY(IES) CERTIFICATION

This request has been prepared in accordance with GEF policies[3] and procedures and meets the GEF criteria for project identification and preparation under GEF-6.

Agency Coordinator, Agency name	Signature	Date *(MM/dd/yyyy)*	Project Contact Person	Telephone	Email
Adriana Dinu, UNDP-GEF Executive Coordinator		03/09/2018	Phemo K. Kgomotso, UNDP Technical Advisor	251-912-503309	phemo.kgomotso@undp.org

[2] For regional and/or global projects in which participating countries are identified, OFP endorsement letters from these countries are required even though there may not be a STAR allocation associated with the project.
[3] GEF policies encompass all managed trust funds, namely: GEFTF, LDCF, and SCCF

ANNEX 1: DESCRIPTION OF THE BUSINESS AS USUAL, THE GEF ALTERNATIVE AND THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS TO BE DERIVED FROM THE GEF INCREMENT

Summary of Baseline/ Business As Usual Scenario	Summary of the GEF alternative	The GEF Increment - Link to Global Environmental Benefits
In the baseline situation, there is limited coordination between the institutions tasked with managing natural resources and in particular those addressing the problem of land degradation in Lesotho. The current approach is sectoral and does not view the challenge in a comprehensive and integrated manner. While the mandates of each of these institutions, in particular the Ministry of Forestry, Range and Soil Conservation ((MFRSC), the Ministry of Water (MoW), Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (MFAS), and the Ministry of Tourism, Environment and Culture (MTEC) indeed require them to take deliberate steps to address land degradation as an environmental challenge, the failure to collaborate at planning and implementation stages not only reduces the impact of the individual investments made by each, but also leads to inffeciencies and limited results at the local level, and does not significantly contribute to learning and uptake by local-level stakeholders in the affected landscapes. The opportunity for adopting an intergrated catchment management (ICM) approach for managing all of Lesotho's landscapes, presented by the water sector, is a step in the right direction, because it recognizes that managing land and water resources should be not be approached separately. ICM recognises the catchment as the appropriate organising unit for understanding and managing biophysical processes in a context that includes social, economic and political considerations, and guides communities towards and agreed vision of sustainable resource management in their catchment. Despite the recognition of ICM as an appropriate approach to managing Lesotho's land and water resources, ICM still remains a water sector approach, and the interactions between the water and land management sectors in Lesotho remain limited. The rolloing out of ICM is viewed as a water sector activity. Under this scenario, responses to land degradation will remain fragmented and with little impact where it mattes most (i.e. at the land use level and in productions landscapes where degradation occurs).	Under the GEF alternative, as described under Component 1, the ICM or watershed management approach will be 'put to the test' and bring together stakeholders around this framework, at a sub-catchment level. The key aspect of this work is the design and planning phase, where central level institutions, in particular MFRSC, MoW, MFAS, the MTEC and the MLGCA will come together with local level structures (i.e. District Council, Community Councils and other local authorities) and land users and communities at the sub-catchment level. Component 1 will facilitate a participatory process of defining the land or catchment degradation problem in this particular sub-catchment *(Output 1 - degradation assessment)*, and collectively design solutions *(Output 2 -watershed management plan)* and outline how the biophysical processes shaping the catchment dynamics will be managed, and integrates all the social, economic and political considerations to devise a locally-appropriate solution that can be collectively owned by all resource-users and managers at the local, regional and national levels, and responds to the local environmental, social, political and economic context. This component will aso facilitate the crafting of context-specific local-level plans *(Output 3 – Community Action Plans)* that will serve as a guide for 'how to' do integrated watershed management for application by the different land user groups at the local level, and which can be monitored for results and impact. This approach will therefore facilitated a more collaborative and integrated approach to addressing the problem of land degradation, in a manner that makes sense to the land users and communities of the Sebapala sub-catchment, and most importantly can be owned, implemented and monitored by local level stakeholders, in a bottom-up approach.	The GEF funds will facilitate the key process of 'actioning' or operationalizing the integrated catchment management approach. This will be the first initiative to be implemented following the ICM guidelines recently developed through the EU support. A coordinated approach to addressing land and ecosystem degradation, one that includes all stakeholders, especially land users and local authorities, in decision-making and identification and design of solutions, is likely to be more effective at addressing the problem. An inclusive approach will likely succeed at triggering behavioural change among the land users and facilitate empowerment and ownership among them to adopt more responsible human-enviroment interactions that will eventually lead to an adoption of more sustainable natural resource use and management practices. An empowerment of both land users and local level authorities (e.g. district council and chieftaincies) to directly manage their local resources has been proven to lead to increased investments in sustainable land management and environmental stewardship. Only under these enabling conditions can local people actively adopt practices that lead to environmental conservation and take deliberate steps to rehabilitate degraded ecosysems and landscapes. The processes to be facilitated under component 1 are therefore key to building a foundation towards sustaianing the results of the entire project.

Under the baseline scenario, local land users and communities continue to mine the resources - over-harvest natural resources, over-cultivate land, including unsuitable areas such as hillsides and overgraze rangelands, leading in some cases near total collapse of ecosystems. The impacts are significant, with productivity declining, and livelihoods strategies collapsing, increasing poverty and vulnerability to shocks and disasters such as droughts, floods and diseases. With Lesotho's high levels of poverty, part of the challenge is the lack of options and the other part is lack of practical knowledge and skills for more informed decision-making towards tackling the land degradation problems. Over decades, land users have been 'left alone' and in many cases their historical relationship and interaction with land and other natural resources altered by the collapse of knowledge systems and ownership and governance arrangements that somewhat discredited the traditional knowledge systems or took them out of use. Yet at the same time, modern systems of knowledge and natural resource governance have failed to take control of the situation, and in effect left a 'gap' where neither traditional systems or modern ones operated, leading to 'chaotic' situation where land and resource degradation was allowed to take over, with no one at the local level taking ownership of the problem, and central level structures failing to carry out their mandate of resource protection. With the lack of practical skills and knowledge by land users, more and more unsustainable approaches have taken over, coupled with an abandonment of ecosystems and landscapes that collapse (e.g. agricultural land). In principle, land users lack the knowledge and resources to invest in rehabilitating and restoring these ecosytems and landscapes, as that knowledge has hardly been shared with them, for them to see the direct benefits. If this situation persists, the environmental degradation will get worse, resulting in more poverty, rural-urban migration and increased vulnerability of people and livelihoods towards shocks and stresses.	The GEF investment will therefore directly contribute to increased capacity, knowledge and skills of land users to adopt sustainable natural resources use and management practices. Under component 2, more sustainable land and water management approaches directly lead to a rehabilitation and restoration of degraded ecosystems and landscapes, and increase their productivity, will be demonstrated to local land users and communities. This will be done through practical demonstrations across over 34,500 ha to improve the maintenance and enhancement of ecosystem functioning, integrity, and resilience. The estimated total population of Quthing District is 67,431, and consists of several Community Councils which will form the organizing point for project interventions. The Sebapala sub-catchment falls within the Tosing Community Council, which has an estimated population of about 14,957. By reaching the entire sub-catchment,	The benefits will accrue to local communities because improved soil quality and ground cover will lead to increased water infiltration and reduced run off, as well as a decrease in soil erosion. These benefits include: i) improved water quality; ii) increased groundwater recharge; iii) reduced surface water runoff during intense rainfall events; and iv) mitigated impact of extreme weather events and natural disasters. The combined effect of improved soil and vegetation cover will also increase rangeland productivity. In addition, rehabilitation of degraded rangeland and wetland ecosystems would increase the potential for local communities to increase or diversify household income by supporting alternative livelihoods generated by ecosystem goods and services. The development of sustainable alternative livelihoods would reduce the pressure placed on natural resources by traditional livelihood practices such as agriculture, thereby increasing the climate resilience of vulnerable communities in Lesotho. Strengthening the livelihood assets on which communities depend – such as rangelands – safeguards household income as households are less prone to, and in a better position to recover from, shocks and stressors such as droughts and floods.

Under the baseline scenario, there is limited awareness raining, knowledge sharing and learning from past experiences to promote upscaling and widespread adoption of good practices. This is largely because there is a lack of systematic collection, analysis, packaging and dissemination of knowledge and experiences to other sections of the population and parts of the country. At higher planning and decision-making structures, this gap also persists, where evidence-based strategies area lacking and therefore policies and decisions remain un-actionable because they have not been translated into guidelines and tools that can be easily shared with land users and communities, particularly where central level technical institutions lack the resources and capacity to go to the local level, where the problems are, and directly interact with land users. The top-down approach has often failed to facilitate participation and ownership of solutions at the local level, or to integrate traditional decision-making structures into the design, implementation and monitoring of these programmes. There are no M&E systems to track whether progress is being made towards agreed targets, and so in many cases there is also a knowledge gap about what actually works where and under what conditions. Being among the poorest among society, women, who tend to also disproportionately bear the costs of environmental degradation, are often left behind where solutions are designed and therefore benefits gained.	Under the GEF alternative, a knowledge management system will be established and used to capture lessons and experiences, as well as results. Activities planned under component 3 will create an important platform for lessons to be shared with other parts of the wider catchment and nationally, by linking local-level implementation with decision-making structures within the district and other platforms at regional and national levels through the ministries and technical institutions involved in project implementation. Resource user-groups and land users will be targeted as direct beneficiaries of these awareness-raising and knowledge-sharing activities, to promote individual and community level uptake and adoption of successful practices. This component will also facilitate the development of gender mainstreaming strategy to ensure that the project adopts a fully-inclusive approach to the design and implementation of project intervention.	Closing the knowledge gap and raising awareness about not only the negative impacts of particular land use practices but about what can also work to reverse and address environmental problems, is key to changing the behavior of land users, and also promoting uptake and adoption of the good and sustainable practices. A more inclusive approach, one that ‘leaves no one behind’, especially women, poor men and youth, is likely to generate more opportunities for equitable benefit generation and sharing.

ANNEX 2: MAP OF LESOTHO'S 74 SUB-CATCHMENTS