



Conservation and Sustainable Management of Land Resources and High Nature Value Ecosystems in the Aral Sea Basin for Multiple Benefits

Basic Information

GEF ID

10352

Countries

Turkmenistan

Project Title

Conservation and Sustainable Management of Land Resources and High Nature Value Ecosystems in the Aral Sea Basin for Multiple Benefits

GEF Agency(ies)

UNDP

Agency ID

UNDP: 6463

GEF Focal Area(s)

Multi Focal Area

Program Manager

Ulrich Apel

PIF

Part I – Project Informatics

Focal area elements

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

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

10/08/2019 UA: Yes.

However, please replace objective LD-3-4 with LD-1-4. This is a duplicate entry in the portal, which will be removed from the drop down menu shortly.

10/23/2019 UA. Addressed.

Cleared

Agency Response

22Oct2019

Done.

Indicative project/program description summary

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

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

10/08/2019 UA: Mostly.

- Consider renaming component 1 into an activity (in line with components 2 and 3).
- Indicator for outcome 3: "New commitments for replenishment of IFAS secured". While the cooperation with and provision of support to the IFAS is welcomed, it is not the responsibility of a GEF project to secure new commitments for replenishment of IFAS.
- The project is too ambitious for its level of investment. See comments on core indicators. It also includes too many activities which somehow lack focus, especially in the BD component. How will this all be funded if the government's co-financing are only on recurrent activities. Activities such as camera traps, satellite collaring, drones, reintroduction studies, etc. seem more like a wish list than a feasible set of activities that can be funded by the project. The focus of the BD component needs to be further narrowed down to realistic set of activities that improve the most prioritized needs to be met for improved PA management.

10/31/2019 UA: Please discuss with the OFP / project proponents to increase the level of PMC cofinancing. The project has substantial co-financing and this should be also reflected in the level of PMC co-financing which is currently only \$80,000 and thus lower than the GEF portion.

11/04/2019 UA:

The PMC co-financing has been increased.

Cleared

Agency Response

22Oct2019

- Component I modified to "Promoting Land Degradation Neutrality".
- Indicator for Outcome 3 revised as "Support provided to international dialog and cooperation on IFAS"
- With respect to the focus of biodiversity activities under Component 2, and specifically under Output 2.1 relating to PA management, these activities build on strong baseline and co-financing commitments, while also addressing the key needs. We have revised the activities further in the main text to tighten the focus. During the PPG stage it will be identified with further precision what exact elements the project will support under this component, given the co-financing. Nevertheless, we would like to confirm that some of the items mentioned (e.g. camera traps, drones, reintroduction studies) are indeed examples of final products, which are important since they are (1) in line with latest conservation technologies globally, and (2) clearly linked to each particular protected area proposed under the project. During the PPG stage the baseline METTs will be completed for each of the targeted PAs, and a more in-depth capacity needs assessment will be completed in

order to prioritize a narrow and realistic set of activities to most significantly improve PA management. At this stage, we have reviewed the biodiversity component further to make sure that what is proposed is both realistic and is focusing on addressing the most urgent needs of the protected areas.

04Nov2019

The PMC cofinancing has been increased

Co-financing

3. Are the indicative expected amounts, sources and types of co-financing adequately documented and consistent with the requirements of the Co-Financing Policy and Guidelines, with a description on how the breakdown of co-financing was identified and meets the definition of investment mobilized?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

10/08/2019 UA: Mostly.

- Please clarify whether in-kind contribution of various NGOs constitutes "investment mobilized" as per GEF cofinancing policy and guidelines.

10/23/2019 UA. Addressed.

Cleared

Agency Response

22Oct2019

Indeed, confirmed, that this co-financing is considered investment mobilized, as it is grant funding re-oriented to specific purposes by the NGOs to support the implementation of specific project outputs on awareness raising and knowledge management under Component 3. A note has been edited under the co-financing table in the PIF.

GEF Resource Availability

4. Is the proposed GEF financing in Table D (including the Agency fee) in line with GEF policies and guidelines? Are they within the resources available from (mark all that apply):

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

10/08/2019 UA: Yes.

Agency Response

The STAR allocation?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

10/08/2019 UA: Yes.

Agency Response

The focal area allocation?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

10/08/2019 UA: Yes.

Agency Response

The LDCF under the principle of equitable access

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

n/a

Agency Response

The SCCF (Adaptation or Technology Transfer)?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

n/a

Agency Response

Focal area set-aside?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

n/a

Agency Response

Impact Program Incentive?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

n/a

Agency Response

Project Preparation Grant

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

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

10/08/2019 UA: Yes.

Agency Response

Core indicators

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

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

10/08/2019 UA: Clarification required.

- The project targets 950,000 ha of landscapes for improved management, including 600,000 ha of landscapes for biodiversity benefits. Please note that in GEF-7 targets are for direct results that can be fully attributed to the GEF project. It is unclear how a project of that scope can directly improve management of 950,000 ha of landscapes.

- The project targets 50,000 ha of pastures under restoration. It is unclear how a project of this scope and with this level of investment can directly achieve restoration of this area.

- The project has indicated Rio Marker 0 for CC-M; however, it includes activities that will generate carbon benefits. Please revise the Rio Marker and use standard tools to estimate the carbon benefit and enter the target in the core indicator target table.

10/23/2019 UA. Adequately addressed.

Cleared

Agency Response

22Oct2019

Thank you, we take note of the “direct impact focus” under GEF7. It is important to note that the project target and core indicator values take into consideration the government’s impressive project co-financing. As outlined in the PIF section on co-financing, the Government of Turkmenistan has committed significant resources to initiatives that are fully aligned with and supportive of the project’s objective. Although per GEF guidelines these must be termed “recurrent expenditure” because they were not mobilized specifically in relation to this project concept, these are in fact one-time large-scale government investment programs that target the very issues the project aims to tackle, and the project outputs have been designed carefully in close collaboration with the national partners. Therefore, with the synergistic efforts of the government co-financing and the GEF funding, achieving the proposed targets is expected to be reasonable. Nonetheless, based on an in-depth review of the specific geographic areas the project will be targeting, and the specific project outputs, the figure of 950,000 ha has been revised to 760,000. This figure seems large due to the fact that the two targeted provinces cover more than 16,000,000 ha, and outside of the main population centers, the population density is very low in the vast swathes of desert ecosystems. Therefore implementing biodiversity-friendly management measures requires a lower level of investment than in many other countries and regions, due to lower transaction costs associated with participatory planning and approval procedures. As indicated in the notes for the Core Indicators table, 600,000 ha will be addressed in terms of the implementation of biodiversity friendly measures outside of protected areas. This figure is drawn from the fact that there is 657,357 ha of targeted KBAs area outside of protected areas, and the project aims to secure another 50,000 ha of KBA under formal protection, therefore leaving approximately 600,000 of landscape outside of PAs that needs to be managed in biodiversity-sensitive ways. In addition, under Output 1.3 the project aims to improve water management systems to improve efficiency, reduce salinization, and maintain ecological flows over 100,000 ha of irrigated land in 4 priority districts (25,000 ha per district, to be confirmed at PPG stage). Beyond this, the project aims to reduce degradation of 10,000 ha of arable land, and (under Output 1.4)

catalyze the restoration of 50,000 ha of pastureland. Within the two target provinces approximately 12.8 million hectares are classified as pastureland, so the restoration of 50,000 ha should be feasible under the project, with the given amount of co-financing. However, it should be noted that the project will not be restoring this area through proactive measures such as planting grasses or desert shrubs, but rather through ensuring that these areas are managed sustainably (e.g. through improved pasture rotation, leaving degraded areas to restore while using alternative pasture), thereby facilitating natural regeneration.

With respect to carbon benefits, we have changed the Rio Marker to “1” and included an estimate of carbon benefits, calculated with the help of the FAO Exact tool.

Project/Program taxonomy

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

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

10/08/2019 UA: Yes.

Agency Response

art II – Project Justification

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

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

10/08/2019 UA: Yes, however not fully adequate.

- Barrier 1 is questionable. The way it is presented, it would mean that all previous work on SLM in Turkmenistan by various projects including GEF, and through the CACILM partnership platform, has had no effect. Please present the existing baseline for SLM and water management and identify what the remaining barriers and gaps are.

10/23/2019 UA. Addressed.

Cleared

Agency Response

22Oct2019

Content has been added recognizing the preliminary work completed, including the CACILM project efforts, and more specifically identifying the remaining gaps, particularly in terms of more widespread dissemination and scaling-up of SLM practices, especially in Dashoguz and Lebap provinces, which contain the most degraded land in Turkmenistan.

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

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

10/08/2019 UA: Yes.

Agency Response

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

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

10/08/2019 UA: Not fully.

The presentation of the "long-term solution" and the following two paragraphs that describe the project's strategy and approach project should outline a simple and concise theory of change. As currently presented, the strategy focuses on the KBAs and appears to narrow the focus to conservation of high value ecosystems; however, as the project concepts mentions, the integration of the SLM and BD components is key. The coherence between the the project's objective, the root causes and barriers, and the proposed activities that address these barriers and achieve the project's objective should be improved. This can be done, e.g. through better emphasizing the linkages between component 1 and 2 (and to a certain extent also to component 3) and a overarching focus on the landscape approach for the Aral Sea basin and how the components interlink within this landscape. This is mentioned in the PIF, but can be further elaborated and highlighted.

10/23/2019 UA. Addressed.

Cleared

Agency Response

22Oct2019

Paragraph added to the Long Term Solution section further emphasizing the project's theory of change, and the interlinkages of the components in terms of taking an integrated landscape approach.

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

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

10/08/2019 UA: Yes. However, in the section on alignment with GEF focal area, the table also refers to BD mainstreaming. It is not clear is the project activities really address mainstreaming, it is also not listed in Table A as an objective. Please clarify.

10/23/2019 UA. Addressed and corrected.

Cleared

Agency Response

22Oct2019

This appears to have been an artefact from an earlier version of the PIF. The row on mainstreaming has been removed from the table in the section on the alignment with GEF priorities.

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

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

10/08/2019 UA: Yes. However, in the capacity development and knowledge management part, please also include how the project will build on and collaborate with existing knowledge management platforms and partnerships to exchange knowledge and share experience.

10/23/2019 UA. Addressed.

Cleared

Agency Response

22Oct2019

Bullet point added in the CD/KM section highlighting the fact that the project will have direct communication and cooperation with ongoing regional initiatives and knowledge management platforms, including CACILM, WOCAT, and CAREC, in order to exchange and share good practices and lessons, especially relating to SLM in arid ecosystems.

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

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

10/08/2019 UA: Clarification required.

As mentioned above:

- The project targets 950,000 ha of landscapes for improved management, including 600,000 ha of landscapes for biodiversity benefits. Please note that in GEF-7 targets are for direct results that can be fully attributed to the GEF project. It is unclear how a project of that scope can directly improve management of 950,000 ha of landscapes.
- The project targets 50,000 ha of pastures under restoration. It is unclear how a project of this scope and with this level of investment can directly achieve restoration of this area.
- Moreover, both hectare targets are in contrast to the moderate number of beneficiaries targeted.

10/23/2019 UA. Clarification provided and accepted at this stage. Update expected at CEO endorsement stage.

Cleared

Agency Response

22Oct2019

As discussed above. The number of beneficiaries targeted is estimated conservatively, because this figure depends significantly on specifically which target districts are selected during the PPG phase.

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

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

10/08/2019 UA: Yes, there is potential. However, the sustainability section is described in a rather generic way. This stems also from the fact that the Theory of Change (ToC) is not fully elaborated yet. Based on a clearer ToC, the strategy for achieving sustainability and upscaling will also be clearer. There is also no mention of any policy elements in scaling up. It would seem that if the country sets LDN targets at national level that this could provide an appropriate framework for scaling up?

The proponents may wish to consult STAPs advisory paper on sustainability of project outcomes: GEF/STAP/C.56/Inf.04: Achieving More Enduring Outcomes from GEF Investment. In this context, note the collaboration with multi-stakeholder platforms and the inclusion of sustainability.

10/23/2019 UA. Addressed.

Cleared

Agency Response

22Oct2019

A line has been added to the section on sustainability stating that to support sustainability the project will help establish a multi-sectoral technical working group for ongoing coordination of integrated landscape management. Additional reflections have been added in relation to the project's catalytic role. The STAP guidance on this point has been further reviewed, and referenced as appropriate at the PIF stage. Additional work will be completed to fully address all aspects of sustainability and catalytic role during the PPG phase, during which the project will be fully elaborated.

Project/Program Map and Coordinates

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

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

10/08/2019 UA: Yes.

Agency Response**Stakeholders**

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

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

10/08/2019 UA: Yes.

Agency Response

Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

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

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

10/08/2019 UA: not fully. Please clarify if the project will also include activities improving women's participation and decision making - the box is currently not ticked.)

10/23/2019 UA. Addressed and selected.

Cleared

Agency Response

22Oct2019

Updated with respective box checked.

Private Sector Engagement

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

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

10/08/2019 UA: Yes.

Agency Response**Risks**

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

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

10/08/2019 UA: Yes.

10/23/2019 UA: One additional risk specific to the context in Turkmenistan has been added. This is, however, not considered "a potential major risk, [...], that might prevent the project objectives from being achieved...."

Please remove and note the review comment in the coordination section.

10/24/2019 UA: Addressed as per response below.

Cleared

Agency Response

24Oct2019

The comment from the latest review sheet has been addressed, and the risk removed.

Coordination

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

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

10/08/2019 UA: Yes, however:

- The PIF mentions that: "in the preparation of the project the GEF OFP and MAEP have approached UNDP for support of selected support services.....". As per GEF guidelines, please provide a letter signed by the OFP to that effect listing the support services and providing justification for the requested support. Such letter can also be provided at CEO endorsement stage; in that case, please remove the text from the PIF.
- Project Board (PB): "In case of consensus cannot be reached within the PB, the final decision will rest with the UNDP". Statement not in line with distinct implementing/executing functions of agencies.
- Coordination with other projects/programs: On SLM, please explore potential cooperation with ongoing GEF International Waters focal area initiatives in the Aral Sea basin, CACILM and the GEF-7 Sustainable Drylands Impact Program, as appropriate.

10/23/2019 UA. Addressed as per agency response below.

As the agency is well aware of, the implementation and execution roles on GEF projects are meant to be separate as per GEF policy and guidelines. The GEFSEC will analyze any requests for dual role playing by an agency at the time of CEO endorsement and only approve those cases that it deems warranted on an "exceptional" basis, based on country requests. We strongly encourage the project proponents to look at third party options as a preferred way forward. We also strongly encourage the agency to discuss any and all options for project execution that do not include the government with the GEFSEC early in the PPG phase. The technical clearance of this PIF in no way endorses or encourages any alternative execution arrangement.

Cleared

Agency Response

22Oct2019

The discussion on the execution support needs has been removed from the PIF for now. A risk has been added on Government project capacities, further to be explored during the PPG stage.

- The respective content related to the Project Board has been removed.
- Additional discussion has been included further recognizing the potential for coordination and cooperation between the proposed project and ongoing GEF International Waters focal area initiatives in the Aral Sea basin, CACILM and the GEF-7 Sustainable Drylands Impact Program

Consistency with National Priorities

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

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

10/08/2019 UA: Yes.

As of today, Turkmenistan has not committed to set voluntary targets under the UNCCD target setting program. It is there fore welcomed that the project will support the country to do so. Please note that countries setting voluntary targets, are eligible for support from the Global Mechanism (GM) of the UNCCD and can send a letter of interest via the UNCCD National Focal Point Institution to LDNtargetsetting@unccd.int

10/23/2019 UA. Comment has been noted by the agency.

Cleared

Agency Response

22Oct2019

Noted in PIF that the project will support the country to seek UNCCD support for LDN target setting as well, potentially with a letter from the focal point institution during the PPG phase.

Knowledge Management

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

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

10/08/2019 UA: Not fully. While the project describes its internal KM approach, it doesn't describe on how it may benefit from and contribute to regional platforms, ongoing programs and partnerships. In this context, a collaboration with CACILM, WOCAT, CAREC etc. may be explored.

10/23/2019 UA. Addressed.

Cleared

Agency Response

22Oct2019

Additional information and clarification have been added explaining how the project will benefit from and contribute to regional platforms.

art III – Country Endorsements

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

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

10/08/2019 UA: The version of the OFP endorsement letter that was submitted is not signed by the OFP, only by the Political Focal Point (PFP). Please check and submit a letter signed by the OFP.

10/23/2019 UA. Corrected and uploaded to portal.

Cleared

Agency Response

22Oct2019

Corrected letter resubmitted..

Termsheet, reflow table and agency capacity in NGI Projects

Does the project provide sufficient detail in Annex A (indicative termsheet) to take a decision on the following selection criteria: co-financing ratios, financial terms and conditions, and financial additionality? If not, please provide comments. Does the project provide a detailed reflow table in Annex B to assess the project capacity of generating reflows? If not, please provide comments. After reading the questionnaire in Annex C, is the Partner Agency eligible to administer concessional finance? If not, please provide comments.

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

n/a

Agency Response**EFSEC DECISION****RECOMMENDATION**

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

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

10/08/2019 UA: No. Please address comments made in this review.

10/23/2019 UA: No. Please address comment is the risk section.

10/31/2019 UA: No. One remaining issue is the level of PMC co-financing. Please check box 2 (comments to table B).

11/04/2019 UA: Yes. Program Manager recommends CEO clearance.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

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

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

/iew Dates

	PIF Review	Agency Response
First Review	10/8/2019	
Additional Review (as necessary)	10/23/2019	
Additional Review (as necessary)	10/31/2019	
Additional Review (as necessary)	11/4/2019	
Additional Review (as necessary)		