

Integrated Forest Landscape Management for Strengthening the Northeastern and Eastern Forest Corridors

Review PIF and Make a recommendation

Basic project information

GEF ID

10390

Countries

Thailand

Project Name

Integrated Forest Landscape Management for Strengthening the Northeastern and Eastern Forest Corridors

Agencies

FAO

Date received by PM

10/11/2019

Review completed by PM

4/3/2020

Program Manager

Hannah Fairbank

Focal Area

Biodiversity

Project Type

FSP

PIF

Part I – Project Information

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

October 25, 2019 HF: No. The focus of this project which includes the "promotion of production forestry", "expansion and improvement of production forestry on private land" and "improved management and expansion of collective/community and private sector (FIO) forest plantations on public land" is not eligible under the

GEF-7 programming directions. The strategies described in the PIF-focused on plantations/tree farming- are not eligible and unlikely to result in **Global** Environmental Benefits for biodiversity which is the core of GEF's mission.

November 4, 2019 HF:

1.) Please define "Reserve Forest" in terms of goal of land use and management and approach etc. What is the space/commitment to integrate biodiversity into reserve forest management? And how will this project support the national-level adoption of such mainstreaming? Please respond in review sheet and update PIF with an explanation/definition.

2.) As mentioned below "the project will also support some forest plantation work". Please describe exactly what is planned? What species of trees? Extent of plantations? How will this result in Global Benefits for biodiversity? What is the status of the land targeted for plantations? Is it afforestation? Reforestation? (including, but not limited to, activities: 2.6, 3.2 etc).

March 18, 2020 HF:

1.) Comment cleared.

2.) Thank you for the response. From what I can tell the interventions will be agro-forestry interventions to include native species in plantations, is that correct? Does this mean taking mono-culture plantations and transforming them into diverse, multi-species agroforestry systems that provide connectivity across the landscape? Or something less transformative? It isn't clear how far this intervention will go and to what extent it would actually have a positive impact on globally significant BD in the landscape. Is there a model/evidence in Thailand where this approach will increase the connectivity across the landscape for the globally-important species included in the concept? Trying to better understand what is proposed and the impact pathway. Please explain and revise PIF.

3.) Please further elaborate and clarify expected GEBs for globally significant biodiversity from this project. For example it is unclear how GEB for BD referenced in section 1.a.7. translates into GEBs for globally significant biodiversity: *The benefits of the proposed approach include improved forest form and function through the promotion of diverse native tree species in production areas and by enabling benefit sharing including through clarification of local community tenure rights which will help generate economic benefits for communities from landholdings.*

April 1, 2020:

2.) Thank you for this comprehensive description/explanation. This content should be included in the PIF but I didn't see where it has been included (re-reviewed 1.a.3 but didn't find it as referenced). Please address.

3.) Comment cleared.

Agency Response

The project’s aim is to mainstream biodiversity in forest management – focusing on natural forests (reserve forests)– especially in “forest complexes” of Thailand that harbor globally important biodiversity. The project PIF has been updated to better reflect this. As outlined in the updated PIF, the project will work primarily in 4 forest complexes, which are composed of protected areas and reserve forests. The focus of the project is to mainstream biodiversity conservation concerns primarily in reserve forest management, which are managed by the Royal Forest Department or by communities as community forests. As a part of landscape level management, the project will also support some forest plantation work in the area, that fall within “non-forest land”. Please see breakdown of landuse in proposed areas in Table 1: Land area under four forest complexes in Eastern and North-eastern Thailand (all figures in ha).

Responses to comments on 4 Nov:

1.) Reserved Forests

The following has been added to the PIF to define the meaning of Reserved Forests in Thailand:

According to its mission statement in line with Thailand’s 20-Year Strategic Plan (2017-2036), RFD plays a key role in protecting forests and in achieving a balance between the conservation and sustainable use of forested areas. RFD has over 65 million rai (10.4 million hectares) of Reserved Forest land under its management, representing more than 20% of country’s land area. Reserved Forest land was originally defined (in line with the term used in countries across South Asia) as land reserved, under government ownership, for timber production, and this was essentially formalised in the National Reserved Forest Act of 1964. Since the cancellation of logging concessions in 1989 formally ended the era of timber harvesting in natural forests, the main purpose of RFD’s management of Reserved Forest has been to ensure the conservation and sustainable use of forests and secure the livelihoods that depend on them.

RFD’s main mission on reserved forest land is:

- 1) The prevention and suppression of intrusion, illegal logging and deforestation;
- 2) Promoting economic forest and valuable species of long standing trees;
- 3) Promoting community forest;
- 4) Forest and land distribution management; and
- 5) Increasing green cover. [1]¹

There are sub-categories of Reserved Forests that have different primary objectives, as summarized in the Table below.

A	National Reserved Forest (under RFD management)		
1	Por. Sor. 31	Section 20	To restore degraded forest
2	Por. Sor. 23	Section 16	For livelihood or agriculture and livestock

3	Sor. Tor. Kor. 1 Kor. (STK)	Section 16 bis	Sor. Tor. Kor is a project under the Resolution of Cabinet on 30 June B.E. 2541 (1998) to verify and certify a right of livelihood and utilisation for persons who live in an area before the area was announced to be national reserved forest.
4	Cor. Tor. Chor	Section 16	Cor. Tor. Chor is a project under the National Land Policy Committee (Cor. Tor. Chor) related to community land use. However, the permit title is “Por.Sor.23” because this is issued under Section 16.

The recent changes in the policy environment (such as the adoption of the Community Forestry Bill in 2019, the development of a National Forest Certification system (PEFC) and a National Forest Management Standard (FSC), the revision of Article 7 of the Forestry Act relaxing the requirements related to the harvesting of restricted native timber species on private land, and RFD’s mission to increase green cover) provide significant opportunity for mainstreaming biodiversity into the management of the land under RFD’s mandate. These revised policies all explicitly include a commitment to integrate biodiversity into reserved forest (and private forest) management.

Land tenure in the forest corridors is complex, and requires the project to work on land under various jurisdictions. Some clarifications have been added on page 12 of the PIF.

The project will support and strengthen the implementation of the above-mentioned, recently revised national policies and strategies at the local and national levels. The project will also support national adoption through Component 1 of the project.

2.) The wording of “forest plantation work” above has been revised and clarified. As shown in Table 1 (page 8 of the PIF), approximately 31% or 490,000 of the targeted forest landscape is “reserved forest” land under RFD, 57% or 900,000 ha of the land is protected area under DNP, and 12% or 185,000 ha is under other types of land (public or private). The project will have interventions in land under RFD (reserved forest) as well as other types of land with potential to mainstream biodiversity. The project interventions will be not be to support “plantations” per se, but to increase biodiversity on these various types of land through agroforestry, adding more diverse, native tree species (such as the vulnerable Siamese Rosewood), and providing habitat and corridor area for wildlife (such as the endangered Asian elephant and the vulnerable Great Hornbill). Such area may include:

(i) Reserved forest land under RFD management, community management or under the Forest Industry Organization (FIO), a government enterprise.

(ii) Public or private land under smallholder or Private Forest Producer Associations or Cooperatives management.

Species will include numerous plant and tree species such as economically valuable species (edible plants, ornamental plants, medicinal herbs), as well as globally threatened species including the vulnerable Siamese Rosewood (*Dalbergia cochinchinensis*), the vulnerable *Hopea odorata* and the endangered *Azelia xylocarpa*.

[1] In line with Thailand's 12th National Economic and Social Development Plan 2017-2020 as part of the 20-Year National Strategic Plan, Thailand aims to increase national green area cover to 55%, with 15% to occur within economic/production forests.

Response to Question 2 above:

2) Yes, this is correct. The project's interventions will involve agro-forestry interventions to include diverse native species in plantations and enhance diversity. And yes, the project aims to transform monoculture plantations (and degraded forest areas) into diverse, multi-species agroforestry systems that provide connectivity across the landscape for globally important species (elephants, tigers, gibbons, hornbills – to be analysed more in detail during the PPG phase). These interventions will lead to increased canopy, structure and complexity in the connectivity areas. The project will, thus, also have a positive impact on plant diversity and pollinators, and will contribute to the conservation of globally threatened plant species, including the vulnerable Siamese Rosewood.

These interventions will be combined with other interventions also aimed at increasing connectivity, such as (i) enhanced planning across the landscape, (ii) avoiding further forest loss/conversion by providing incentives for local communities, and (iii) reducing HEC.

DNP and WWF have been tracking elephant routes in the project area, and transition corridors have been established in some areas combined with measures to reduce HEC. These interventions can be replicated and expanded to other areas of the target landscape. The project will work closely with these two organizations to identify and monitor important connectivity areas.

The following information on similar models/examples from Thailand has been added in the PIF, section 1.a.3:

There are several models/examples from Thailand where DNP, RFD, WWF, WCS and local stakeholders have worked on establishing and enhancing biodiversity corridors to enhance connectivity for elephants, tigers and other globally important species between protected areas in forest landscape complexes. The most notable example is the connectivity area between the Western Forest Complex (WEFCOM) and the Kaeng Krachan Forest Complex. (Suksawang et al., 2018), and which this project has consulted.

There are also several models of successful implementation of community forestry and agroforestry that leads to increased canopy and biodiversity on both private and public lands in the buffer zone of protected areas. For example, in Suan Pa District of Trat Province, communities have grown rubber integrated with Siamese rosewood and other, diverse agroforestry species for over 30 years. A biodiversity corridor has been established on 10,000 rai (1,600 ha), and in this area alone there is potential for an additional 20,000 rai (3,200 ha) of forest corridor to enhance connectivity and reduce HEC. In Sakon Nakhon Province, the Impaeng Community Forest Network has demonstrated similar approaches, providing benefits for both biodiversity and local livelihoods in the buffer zone of national parks. The use of local herbs, nutraceuticals, oleo-resins and fruit tree species not only provides economic benefits to local communities, but also enhances habitat for biodiversity, such as birds and pollinators and globally significant wildlife, as well as ecosystem functions.

Furthermore, as highlighted in the PIF (relevant section 1.a.3 has been expanded), an ecological corridor study by the DNP (2012) based on statistical modelling and GIS-based analysis of species distribution and forest patch connectivity identified the Dong Phrayayen-Khao Yai, Eastern and Phanom Dongrak-Pha Tam Forest Complexes as the most critical for effective biodiversity corridors in the country, in terms of forest area and habitat for important wildlife species. Moreover, Phu Phan forest complex has more existing examples of effective biodiversity corridors (5) than any other complex outside the northwest of Thailand. Finally, the study shows that Phanom Dongrak-Pha Tam and Eastern forest complexes contain more than half (five out of eight) of all of Thailand's transboundary biodiversity corridors, making the region of critical importance for efforts to maintain viable populations and transboundary migration routes for key species, such as elephants and tigers, within the Lower Mekong Region. The study highlighted that the design of ecological corridors to connect forest patches is a substantial strategy for biodiversity conservation of the country. It revealed that the most important threat to biodiversity conservation in corridors is forest reserves encroachment. Thus, the study recommended several management actions to address the issue of habitat fragmentation in the corridor areas (which were taken into account in the design of the proposed project). These actions include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Economic incentives for farmer collaboration on wildlife passing on their property, forest plantation, agroforestry;
- Forest plantation in corridors and surrounding areas by the local forest cooperatives;
- Sustainable forest management for timber and forest products;
- Community forest establishment and management for wildlife usage;
- Forest Plantation of Forest Industry Organization (FIO) or private forest plantation: Management for wildlife corridor under Forest Stewardship Council (FSC);
- Outreach and information/knowledge dissemination; and
- Participatory management of human-wildlife conflict.

However, technical and financial support has so far been disproportionately concentrated in flagship protected areas such as the Khao Yai National Park, while limited attention has been given to biodiversity corridor management outside of the protected areas.

Another successful example is the buffer zone of Kuiburi National Park (in western Thailand), which has not seen much human-wildlife conflict with the local farmers and communities over the last decade. Adding diverse species leads to diverse income so that the communities are financially able to cope with HEC, and creates long-term incentives and solutions to address conflict of agricultural expansion and encroachment in the forest reserve from having sustainable incomes and livelihoods. In Kuiburi, there are three layers of the buffer zone (elephant route):

(1) At the inner buffer, diverse species are grown that are preferred by elephants and other wildlife – pineapple, banana, sugarcane, including small water dam.

(2) At the middle buffer, neutral plants are grown – Eucalyptus, Acacia, Tamarind. Bamboo and diverse plantations, community forests and public plantations that lead to the restoration of ecosystem for wildlife in the middle buffer area, benefiting both people for local products and improving wildlife habitat that connects to the forest complexes.

(3) At the outer buffer, growing species that elephants dislike such as Shameplant as fences along the corridor that are close to private plantations (micro forestry up to 50 rai).

For example, durian monocultures in private plantations in the outer buffer area, which is elephants' preference, had previously faced major losses linked to HEC. Diversifying species helped improve productivity, soil enrichment, and adding diversified seasonal income for farmers.

Response to Question 3 above:

3) The section on GEBs has been revised as follows, to make the GEBs for globally significant biodiversity more explicit.

The project will generate global environmental benefits for globally significant biodiversity in the project area (i) by reducing threats, such as habitat encroachment and human-wildlife conflict, to globally threatened species, and (ii) by enhancing connectivity areas through the implementation of biodiversity corridors and enhanced forest function.

The project aims to reduce habitat encroachment and fragmentation and improve habitat connectivity for threatened and endangered species including but not limited to the Asian elephant, the Indo-Chinese tiger, Pileated and Lar Gibbon, and the Great Hornbill. Identifying and linking fragmented forest areas within project sites will allow for maintenance and extension of critically important habitats and help conserve threatened species and habitats as well as improve conditions in riparian areas. Threatened and globally endangered species that are likely to benefit from this project include:

Mammals:	Asian elephant (<i>Elephas maximus</i>) EN Indo-Chinese tiger (<i>Panthera tigris</i>) EN Pileated Gibbon (<i>Hylobates pileatus</i>) EN Lar Gibbon (<i>Hylobates lar</i>) EN Asiatic black bear (<i>Ursus thibetanus</i>) VU Leopard (<i>Panthera pardus</i>) VU Sambar deer (<i>Rusa unicorn</i>) VU Malayan Sun Bear (<i>Helarctos malayanus</i>) VU Asian Leopard Cat (<i>Prionailurus bengalensis</i>) LC Fishing cat (<i>Prionailurus viverrinus</i>) VU Gaur (<i>Bos gaurus</i>) VU	Reptiles:	Elongated tortoise (<i>Indotestudo elongata</i>) CR Siamese Crocodile (<i>Crocodilus siamensis</i>) CR Spiny Terrapin (<i>Heosemys spinosa</i>) EN Asian box turtle (<i>Cuora amboinensis</i>) VU Asiatic softshell turtle (<i>Amyda cartilaginea</i>) VU Malayan snail-eating turtle (<i>Malayemys subtrijuga</i>) VU
Fish:	Giant Mekong Catfish (<i>Pangasianodon gigas</i>) CR Giant Pangasius (<i>Panagasius sanitwongsei</i>) CR Jullien's Golden Garp (<i>Probarbus jullieni</i>) CR Laotian Shad (<i>Tenualosa thibaudeaui</i>) VU	Birds:	Great Hornbill (<i>Buceros bicornis</i>) VU Pale-capped Pigeon (<i>Columba punicea</i>) VU
Plants:	<i>Dalbergia cochinchinensis</i> VU <i>Hopea odorata</i> VU <i>Afzelia xylocarpa</i> EN		

These global environmental benefits will be realized through the targeted mainstreaming of biodiversity across multiple land uses. Through a focus on areas around and between protected areas, the project will improve the enabling environment and inter-departmental cooperation for biodiversity conservation. It will also build the capacity of community forest networks, smallholder tree growers and forest managers to better enable them to plan, invest and generate sustainable income, while having positive impacts for biodiversity.

A key aspect of the project will be to provide incentives for local communities to preserve and sustainably manage forest areas in the buffer zone of protected areas, in order to address the drivers of environmental degradation and reduce threats to globally significant biodiversity. By promoting diverse native plant species that provide economic benefits to local communities, including high value tree species, herbs and fruit trees, the project will generate benefits both for globally significant biodiversity as well as local livelihoods. Forest form, function, structure (e.g. seral succession of canopy, soil horizon) and complexity of forests and other land uses in the connectivity areas will be improved.

Overall, the project will increase the area of landscapes (1.365m ha) under improved management to benefit biodiversity and people, seek to increase the area under national or international third-party certification and reduce the area of habitat loss for globally significant biodiversity in the project area.

Whilst mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions is not a targeted activity of the project, there will be global co-benefits generated through the sequestering of and the avoidance of emissions, and soil and water conservation and enhancements from the Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use sector as well as on ensuring sustainable land management.

Response to April 1 comment:

2.) Thank you. There was a mistake in the heading numbering in the PIF, which has now been corrected. The added information appears in section 1.a.3 (Baseline Scenario) and is highlighted in purple.

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

October 25, 2019 HF: The components in Table B may result in the promotion/enhancement of production/plantation forestry but are not clearly linked to the production of Global Environmental Benefits for biodiversity. Please see below for comment on core indicators.

- 4, November 4, 2019 HF: 1.) Please note that the revised PIF still contains reporting on indicator 3: area of land restored. Ecosystem restoration (including forest restoration, restoration of production lands etc) is not in the GEF-7 for BD strategy (outside of Impact Programs) including forest and grasslands restoration and restoration of agricultural and formerly productive lands etc (could consider use of LD STAR or marginal adjustment for activities that would be eligible for LD) without targeted application with clear BD GEB justification. In addition, given the estimated costs of (tropical) forest restoration it is unclear how this project, with a modest level of resources allocated to technical assistance (TA), would be able to effectively restore and maintain 50,000 hectares of forest. Please dramatically reduce the target and justify, or remove forest restoration activities.

- 2.) The PIF contains SFM Certification (in areas identified in 1.4) of Forest Industry Organization (FIO) forests promote environmental and social benefits. (Target: 10,000 ha of SFM certification)? (output 2.6) What exactly is the certification that will be pursued (FSC, national-level, other?) What are the BD criteria, requirements, measures within the certification? What activities will be undertaken for certification (e.g. capacity building, other)? What is the current status of these forests?

- 3.) Activities 1.4, 1.5, 3.1 all refer to the development of guidance or guidelines for different aspects of forest management. Given the significant number of guidelines and technical guidance already out there (some of which has been produced by FAO previously, and CBD) please describe what exactly is planned and if it is the development of new guidelines/guidance please explain why the project wouldn't just be supporting the implementation of available guidance/guidelines rather than producing new guidelines/guidance.

- 4.) Output 3.2: Province-level Private Forest Producer Associations or Cooperatives (PFPA or PFPCs) strengthened and a) are applying biodiversity standards and principles in the expansion and improvement of forest management in priority areas and b) developing market linkages between associations and national/international actors. Are these certified forests? Improved management areas?

March 16, 2020 HF:

- 1.) The linkage between the main threat of agricultural conversion to the forest corridors and the primary focus of the project on SFM isn't completely clear. Please explain.
- 2.) Comment cleared.
- 3.) Comment cleared.
- 4.) At CEO endorsement request please include a full demonstration/explanation of how Output 3.2 has been designed to contribute to the conservation of globally-significant biodiversity in target landscapes, including where it sits/how it contributes to the Theory Of Change and how those contributions will be managed and measured. Comment cleared.

April 1, 2020 HF:

Comments cleared.

Agency Response

Please see above.

Responses to 4 Nov 2019 comments:

1.) The Core Indicator 3 target, and activities related to forest restoration, have been removed. The project will primarily support interventions to **ensure the preservation and conservation of existing reserved forest land and to enhance biodiversity** in reserved forest and other land categories of the forest landscapes. Since the main threat to the forest corridors is still the conversion/encroachment of forest areas to agriculture, the primary focus of the project will be to address some of the underlying causes and barriers to sustainable forest management.

2.) Under Output 2.6, the project will promote SFM certifications in reserved forest and other public land. Both FSC and PEFC certification are available to forest managers in Thailand, and both of these standards incorporate strong biodiversity principles and criteria. The criteria include, among others, the availability of information on species biodiversity found in the managed forest, and the existence of guidance and measures for conserving and protecting forest biodiversity, especially rare and/or extinct species. The project will promote the use of these standards, including the national certification standard being developed for endorsement by PEFC, among FIO forests, smallholders, community forest groups and private forest owners, through institutional support to RFD as the government agency responsible for SFM, and capacity building to forest managers to understand and apply the management approaches required to comply with the biodiversity principles under these standards.

3.) Output 1.5 has been removed to avoid overlap with 3.1. Output 3.1 has been clarified. Indeed, existing RFD guidelines will be used and improved, including the “Thailand Criteria and Indicators for Sustainable Management of Planted Forests and Community Forests”, as well as FSC and PEFC certification standards. Activity 1.4 will also build on existing guidance within RFD and DNP as well as national and international best practice. However, specific guidelines need to be developed that incorporate recent policy changes and opportunities for integrated forest management. The guidelines also need to be field tested through implementation in the project areas.

4.) Output 3.2: This output is related to private production forest areas under Private Forest Producer Associations or Cooperatives management. The biodiversity standards and principles will be incorporated through SFM certification or other means, such as improved management plans. The exact mechanisms will be identified in more detail during the project preparation.

For question 1:

1) As explained in the PIF (section 1.a.1.), agricultural expansion is the leading cause of forest loss in the four target forest complexes. A key rationale of the project is that, if local communities are better able to benefit from the forest buffer zones adjacent to the forest complexes (community forests and other public and private

forested land), this will provide economic incentives for them to conserve these forested areas (i.e., not to encroach further into protected forest areas through agricultural expansion). Such economic benefits will be further discussed in close consultations with stakeholders in PPG phase, and are envisioned to include planting of high-value tree species, herbs and fruit trees, and other NTFPs, including beekeeping, etc. As explained above, this community forestry/agroforestry approach has been successfully demonstrated in areas within the target landscape, such as in Sakon Nakhon and Trat Provinces.

In addition to reducing agricultural expansion, the project will help to enhance connectivity and forest function in the corridor areas by increasing biodiversity and tree/plant cover on existing agricultural and forest land.

Sustainable forest management in the context of this project encompasses approaches balancing economic development and household well-being with biodiversity conservation through means including community forestry, diverse agroforestry, buffer zone management, participatory zonation, demarcation and enforcement and improved usufruct rights, integrated land-use management and decision making.

Please also refer to the explanation above (and expanded section 1.a.3 in the PIF) on the corridor study conducted by DNP, which recommends (among others) the following management actions:

- Economic incentives for farmer collaboration on wildlife passing on their property, forest plantation, agroforestry;
- Forest plantation in corridors and surrounding areas by the local forest cooperatives;
- Sustainable forest management for timber and forest products;
- Community forest establishment and management for wildlife usage;
- Forest Plantation of Forest Industry Organization (FIO) or private forest plantation: Management for wildlife corridor under Forest Stewardship Council (FSC);
- Outreach and information/knowledge dissemination; and
- Participatory management of human-wildlife conflict.

For question 4:

4) Well noted, this will be provided at CEO endorsement request.

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

October 25, 2019 HF: Strong co-financing provided overall, though couldn't the private sector be expected to contribute investment mobilized for plantation forestry?

November 4, 2019 HF: Comment cleared. Although not required, could consider a co-financing contribution to the PMC for this project.

Agency Response

Two enterprises have been identified as possible cofinance worth 2.6 million USD. We expect to mobilize stronger private sector cofinance during project design stage.

Cofinance for PMC will be worked out during full proposal development.

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

October 25, 2019 HF: Yes.

Agency Response

The STAR allocation?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

October 25, 2019 HF: Yes.

Agency Response

The focal area allocation?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

October 25, 2019 HF: Yes.

Agency Response

The LDCF under the principle of equitable access

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

NA

Agency Response

The SCCF (Adaptation or Technology Transfer)?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

NA

Agency Response

Focal area set-aside?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

NA

Agency Response

Impact Program Incentive?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

NA

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

October 25, 2019 HF: 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

October 25, 2019 HF: Unclear. Please see Part II #6 below.

November 7, 2019 HF: Thank you for revisions to core indicator 4, 6 and 11. Those are cleared. Please address issue with target for indicator 3 (restoration) previously flagged (either dramatically reduce or eliminate).

March 18, 2020 HF: Comment cleared.

Please provide specific **indicative** indicators that will be used to monitor biodiversity impacts (outcomes/proxies) in the target forest complexes.

April 1, 2020 HF: Please address comment above (and following) in PPG and CER stage: Please provide specific indicators that will be used to monitor biodiversity impacts (outcomes/proxies) in the target forest complexes.

Agency Response

Core indicators 4.1 and 4.2 have been filled, along with CCM Co-Benefits under 6, and socioeconomic under 11.

Please see above. The target for Core Indicator 3 has been removed and PIF adjusted accordingly.

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

October 25, 2019 HF: Yes.

Agency Response

Part 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

October 25, 2019 HF: This is a somewhat limited treatment of the root causes of biodiversity loss and barrier that need to be addressed in the region. I would imagine the drivers of biodiversity loss are prolific and require analysis/treatment if they are to be effectively addressed (for instance HWC resulting in retaliatory actions?)

Wildlife poaching/trafficking give the proximity to the Cambodia border and Bangkok? etc). The barriers identified are certainly relevant yet oriented closely/specifically to the proposed project activities rather than providing a broader view of the challenge to the region and setting up a strong theory of change for biodiversity conservation results via the project.

November 7, 2019: Comment cleared.

Agency Response

Key threats to biodiversity in forest complexes have been identified as forest loss/encroachment – forest area in forest reserves changing to agricultural and settlement areas; Illegal wildlife poaching and trade of wildlife (including cross-border trade); unsustainable non timber - forest products collection; high numbers of domestic animal raising; and infrastructure development (highways, road, dam, etc.) . Human wildlife conflict also remains a key threat to both humans and the retaliation and poaching, such as of elephant ivory.

The following text has also been added to the PIF

A study by the Economy and Environment Program for Southeast Asia (2011) in and around the Khao Ang Rui Nai Wildlife Sanctuary in the Eastern Forest Complex (EFC) suggests that human-elephant conflicts (HECs) cost local households approximately USD 1,200 annually in 2011, or more than 20 % of average household income in this relatively impoverished area. HECs lead not only to crop and infrastructure damage but also to loss of life and injuries for both humans and elephants. The EFC, encompassing several national parks, wildlife sanctuaries, forest parks, community forests and production landscapes, is one of the worst-affected areas by HECs in Thailand (Jarungrattanapong et al., 2017). Women and the poor are particularly vulnerable due to their greater involvement in and dependency on agricultural activities (van de Water and Matteson, 2018). Consequently, there are significant tensions between local communities and conservation efforts within the EFC. The incidence of HWCs in the EFC is expected to increase significantly due to the combination of the recovering Asian elephant population and growing pressure on land for agricultural expansion and infrastructure development. This raises a need to strengthen the EFC as a wildlife corridor for long-ranging species like elephant and tiger by ensuring its connectivity within the complex and with the neighboring Phanom Dongrak-Pha Tam and Dong Phrayayen-Khao Yai Forest Complexes and adjacent protected areas in Cambodia. Considering the significantly higher rates of forest cover loss observed in Cambodia and Lao PDR along their borders with Thailand (GFW, 2019), the existing biodiversity corridors provided by the three forest complexes function as a critical transboundary refuge for many threatened and endangered species. Improving habitat connectivity within and between these forest complexes would, therefore, also have regional and indeed global significance for biodiversity conservation.

Over the past four years authorities have recorded eight cases of elephant poaching, which resulted in the deaths of 10 animals.¹ In 2012-13 Thailand came under significant international pressure over its domestic ivory market. Thailand was identified by the CITES Secretariat as a country of primary concern over its domestic ivory trade, and was requested to submit a National Ivory Action Plan (NIAP), to strengthen control of the trade, and to introduce measures to combat the illegal trade in ivory. Thai authorities also worked with the NGO TRAFFIC to legally purchase ivory from several markets, test it and determine its origin. The ivory tested was overwhelmingly of African origin. The critical role of Thailand in global illegal ivory markets is as a conduit for African products, not as a source of material. This

project is therefore not expected to address the root causes of tiger and elephant poaching, but instead to focus on the threats to populations, particularly of elephants, through HWC prompted by habitat fragmentation and lack of viable national and transboundary wildlife corridors

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

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

October 25, 2019 HF: Described baseline and associated projects have technical relevance but are mostly in western/other geographies whereas project sites are in the east. Despite the historically lower donor investment the eastern forest complex in production forestry the area is important from a biodiversity conservation standpoint but the PIF includes little if any discussion of current/past conservation investment in the area (including in the Dong Phayayen-Khao Yai/Phanom Dongrak-Pha Tam Forest complexes) of which there must be/have been some.

November 4, 2019 HF: Previous comment cleared.

1.) The baseline scenario outlines several policies that incentivize deforestation including the designation of recently deforested land as 'degraded' and therefore suitable for agriculture, and that crop production in forest allotments is allowed while maintaining 20% forest cover. Please describe how this project is engaging at the national level to shift these incentives for long-term positive impact.

March 18, 2020 HF: Comment cleared.

Agency Response

The work on Dong Phayayen etc are noted under baseline section of the PIF.

Response to 4 Nov Comments

1.) With regard to current policies/practices that incentivize deforestation: Under Output 1.2 on policy development (page 16), reference has been added on “disincentivizing deforestation”. Furthermore, it is expected that through the recent changes in the policy environment (such as the adoption of the Community Forestry Bill in 2019, the development of a National Forest Certification system (PEFC) and a National Forest Management Standard (FSC), the revision of Article 7 of the Forestry Act relaxing the requirements related to the harvesting of restricted native timber species on private land, and RFD’s mission to increase green cover), some of the root causes of forest degradation and barriers to sustainable forest management will be addressed, and incentives will be provided for local communities to preserve and sustainably manage these forest areas.

With regard to crop production that is allowed in forest allotments while maintaining 20% forest cover: This refers to land that is currently already used for agriculture or rubber plantations or already degraded forest, not to intact forest areas.

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

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

October 25, 2019 HF: While land-use planning, conservation and connectivity of bufferzone areas between parks, community-based conservation approaches-including community forest management/enterprise & sustainable use and reduction of HWC could all be eligible activities under GEF-7 BD entry points, the emphasis of this PIF, and the core set of activities/partners and indicators selected focus on production and plantation forestry, some on private lands, all of which is not eligible for GEF-7 BD focal area resources. The eastern forest complex is an important area for biodiversity conservation which hasn't historically had the focus/support it could use. If a revision of this PIF is undertaken it would have to shift its focus considerably to produce Global Environmental Benefits for Biodiversity, take the approaches mentioned above-or other eligible approaches based on a strong theory of change-and work with execution agencies and partners who have the commensurate skill sets and organizational missions to achieve the intended biodiversity conservation impacts.

November 4, 2019 HF: Comment cleared. See comments on specific activities.

Agency Response

The PIF has been re-worked.

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

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

October 25, 2019 HF: See Part I #1 above.

November 4, 2019 HF: See above.

Agency Response

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

October 25, 2019 HF: See #3 above.

November 4, 2019 HF: Comment Cleared.

Agency Response

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

October 25, 2019 HF: Please note that the project has selected indicators and set targets for indicators that are would not capture biodiversity outcomes/impacts- including indicators #3 on restoration (not broadly BD eligible/focused) and #4.3 (focused on LD/production hectares-not BD). If this project were to be reworked/revised selection to be eligible for BD STAR resources then setting targets for BD indicators would be required (indicators focused on protected areas, or 4.1, 4.2 or 4.4). Finally given the land management/hectares outcomes of the project should set a GHG emission reduction target as well.

November 7, 2019 HF: Comments above cleared, but:

Please see outstanding issue with target for core indicator 3.

Given the project's objectives, it is very unlikely that the project will contribute to CC-A 100% (Rio Marker for Adaptation = 2), please revise accordingly.

Climate Change Adaptation Marker

The activity contributes to

- climate change adaptation objective is explicitly indicated in the activity documentation; **and**
- activity contains specific measures targeting the definition .

Definition of adaptation: It intends to reduce the vulnerability of human or natural systems to the impacts of climate change and climate-related risks, by maintaining or increasing adaptive capacity and resilience. This encompasses a range of activities from information and knowledge generation, to capacity development, planning and the implementation of climate change adaptation actions.

March 18, 2020 HF: Comment cleared.

Agency Response

Indicators 4.1 and 4.2 have been added.

Indicator 6 has been filled and the ExAct calculation sheet has been uploaded on the GEF Portal.

Responses to 4 Nov Comments

Please see above. The target for Core Indicator 3 has been removed and PIF adjusted accordingly. Rio Marker has been adjusted.

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

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

October 25, 2019 HF: Would be reviewed for a revised future draft of the PIF if it were to be eligible under the GEF-7 programming directions.

November 7, 2019 HF: Yes. There is strong potential for this project to have sustained impacts at scale (particularly via effective KM and demonstration) because of the policy and institutionalization approaches it focuses on.

Agency Response

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

October 25, 2019 HF: Would be reviewed for a revised future draft of the PIF if it were to be eligible under the GEF-7 programming directions.

November 7, 2019 HF: Yes, map provided. At CEO endorsement stage please include a clear, legible map of project area and project sites and geo-reference data.

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

October 25, 2019 HF: Would be reviewed for a revised future draft of the PIF if it were to be eligible under the GEF-7 programming directions.

November 7, 2019 HF: Yes. In the Stakeholder table please write out the name of the stakeholder (group) with the acronym in parenthesis for each.

April 1, 2020 HF: Comments cleared.

Agency Response

Response to 7 Nov Comment

Acronyms have been spelled out.

Some additional information on stakeholder consultations has been added in section 2. Consultations have been held during the project identification phase with key agencies at national, provincial and local levels, as well as with civil society organizations and community networks.

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

October 25, 2019 HF: Would be reviewed for a revised future draft of the PIF if it were to be eligible under the GEF-7 programming directions.

November 7, 2019 HF: Yes.

April 08, 2020: Although the PIF includes plans to address gender, it does not address the specific gender context/gender dimensions of the sector and project. Please provide an overview of the gender context and dimensions of the project.

April 10, 2020: Comment cleared.

Agency Response

10/04/2020

Thank you. Section 3 on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in the PIF has been expanded to include additional information on the gender context and dimensions of the project.

Private Sector Engagement

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

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

October 25, 2019 HF: Would be reviewed for a revised future draft of the PIF if it were to be eligible under the GEF-7 programming directions.

November 4, 2019 HF: Yes. Though several places the PIF refers to the tourism and fisheries sectors (as well as forestry). If the project proposes to work with these sectors this needs to be made clear in the PIF. If not, please revise.

March 18, 2020 HF: Comments cleared.

Agency Response

Response to 4 Nov comment

Reference to mainstreaming biodiversity across fisheries and tourism sector has been removed. The primary focus will indeed be on mainstreaming biodiversity in the forestry sector (and related agriculture sector).

Aquaculture/fisheries/tourism value chains are still mentioned as potential options for sustainable biodiversity utilization and rural income generation in reserved forest areas (Output 2.2). This will be further assessed during PPG.

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

October 25, 2019 HF: Would be reviewed for a revised future draft of the PIF if it were to be eligible under the GEF-7 programming directions.

April 9, 2020 HF:

1. The included “Project Risk Certification” – gives this project a “low” risk rating, whereas the section 5 of the PIF show moderate risk for issues such as “Resistance towards biodiversity conservation in areas outside of protected areas” and “Limited impact from the sustainable utilization of biodiversity benefits to incentivize behavior change at the local level”. The low overall rating seems inconsistent with the moderate risk of many of the anticipated risks as presented. Please address.
2. Although indigenous peoples is tagged in the PIF, IPs aren't addressed anywhere in the risk section. Please address/rectify.
3. Please provide the completed FAO’s Environmental and Social Risk Identification – Screening Checklist.

April 10, 2020: All comments cleared.

Agency Response

10/04/2020

1. Section 5. Risks and the Risk Certification have been revised accordingly. The risk certification was under review at time of PIF submission and the project has been reclassified ‘moderate risk’. The risks will be further analysed at PPG stage, and the Agency will make sure that any potential adverse environmental and social impacts will be duly identified and mitigation measures included in the CEO Endorsement package.
2. An explanation has been added in Section 5. Risks. Although self-identifying indigenous peoples in Thailand are mostly located in the Western and Northern parts of the country, a more detailed analysis and consultations by a social safeguards expert will be conducted during PPG, and the project will ensure that free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) is applied for any indigenous communities in the target area.

3. The revised screening checklist has been uploaded to the Portal.

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

October 25, 2019 HF: Would be reviewed for a revised future draft of the PIF if it were to be eligible under the GEF-7 programming directions.

November 7, 2019 HF: Yes.

April 8, 2020: Section 6.) Coordination of the PIF includes FAO playing an execution role in this project. The implementation and execution roles on GEF projects are meant to be separate per GEF policy and guidelines. Please remove all references to FAO playing an execution role in this project.

April 10, 2020: Comment cleared.

Agency Response

10/04/2020

Section 6. Coordination has been revised accordingly. FAO is the GEF Implementing Agency for this project. The Royal Forest Department (RFD) under the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MoNRE) is the Lead Executing Agency.

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

October 25, 2019 HF: Would be reviewed for a revised future draft of the PIF if it were to be eligible under the GEF-7 programming directions.

November 7, 2019 HF: Yes.

Agency Response

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

October 25, 2019 HF: Would be reviewed for a revised future draft of the PIF if it were to be eligible under the GEF-7 programming directions.

November 7, 2019 HF: Yes.

Agency Response

Part 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

October 5, 2019 HF: Please note that although the endorsement letter is signed by the former OFP it is valid for the PIF (as the OFP who signed it was OFP at the time of submission of the project), please ensure the current OFP is still supportive of this project PIF-particularly if it is heavily revised/redrafted.

November 7, 2019 HF: See above. Please confirm.

March 18, 2020 HF: Comment cleared.

Agency Response

We confirm that the new OFP is aware of and supports the revised PIF. A confirmation meeting was held on 17th October.

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

NA

Agency Response

GEFSEC 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

October 25, 2019: No. Please see comments above. If this PIF is to be resubmitted it would need to be substantially revised with a considerable pivot in approaches and partners.

While land-use planning, conservation and connectivity of bufferzone areas between parks, community-based conservation approaches-including community forest management/enterprise & sustainable use and reduction of HWC could all be eligible activities under GEF-7 BD entry points, the emphasis of this PIF, and the core set of activities/partners and indicators selected focus on production and plantation forestry, some on private lands, all of which is not eligible for GEF-7 BD focal area resources. The eastern forest complex is an important area for biodiversity conservation which hasn't historically had the focus/support it could use. If a revision of

this PIF is undertaken it would have to shift its focus considerably to produce Global Environmental Benefits for Biodiversity, take the approaches mentioned above- or other eligible approaches based on a strong theory of change-and work with execution agencies and partners who have the commensurate skill sets and organizational missions to achieve the intended biodiversity conservation impacts.

November 7, 2019 HF: No, not at this time. Please revise per comments in review sheet.

April 1, 2020 HF: Nearly there, but no, not at this time. Please revised per comments in review sheet by integrating response to GEF comment 2 from the first box of the review sheet into the PIF (section 1.a.3 or the like). Thank you!

April 3, 2020 HF: Yes, this project is recommended for clearance.

April 8, 2020: Please address additional comments on gender dimensions, environmental/social risks and coordination/institutional arrangements.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

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

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

- 1.) At CEO endorsement stage please include a clear, legible map of project area and project sites and geo-reference data.
- 2.) At CEO endorsement request please include a full demonstration/explanation of how Output 3.2 has been designed to contribute to the conservation of globally-significant biodiversity in target landscapes, including where it sits/how it contributes to the Theory Of Change and how those contributions will be managed and measured. Comment cleared.
- 3.) Please address the following comment during PPG and in the CER: Please provide specific indicators that will be used to monitor biodiversity impacts (outcomes/proxies) in the target forest complexes.

Review Dates

PIF Review

Agency Response

	PIF Review	Agency Response
First Review		
Additional Review (as necessary)		

PIF Recommendation to CEO

Brief reasoning for recommendations to CEO for PIF Approval

This project proposes to strengthen the conservation of globally significant biological diversity in Thailand’s forests, outside of protected areas, with a focus on four landscape complexes in northeastern and eastern Thailand, building on existing experiences and best practices in the country and incorporating tools and techniques developed by FAO. The project will also consider the effects of climate change on biodiversity and local livelihoods as changing precipitation patterns, and extreme weather events are expected to exacerbate biodiversity loss and pose challenges including reducing food security, which, in turn, places additional pressure on biodiversity and livelihoods.

While the forests in the proposed project area provide critical refuge for many threatened and endangered species, the mid to long term prognosis for these species and related habitats is poor given the high levels of encroachment and fragmentation, unsustainable land use practices, human wildlife conflicts and illegal logging. To compound this situation, climate change is exacerbating environmental pressures affecting both biodiversity and socio-economic well-being. This project proposes an alternative scenario that involves mitigating the barriers to integrated forest landscape management which will enable more coordinated and participatory approaches to address land degradation and watershed management issues by improving forest and land management at critical corridor locations around and between the protected areas. Accordingly, the objective of the project is to strengthen the conservation of globally significant biodiversity in four landscape complexes of Northeastern and Eastern Thailand through improved management of forests between and around protected areas.

The project comprises the following four components: 1.) Policy, planning and institutional framework for improved forest landscape management; 2.) Biodiversity objectives mainstreamed into managed natural forests outside protected areas; 3.) Biodiversity objectives mainstreamed into management of private land in forest complexes; and 4.) Project management, coordination and knowledge management.

The project is innovative in two ways: First, the integration of social and economic values of biodiversity into land-use planning and management across production landscapes for enhancing habitat connectivity and local biodiversity benefits outside of protected areas is a relatively new concept in Thailand; and Second, the project's approach involves an innovative attempt to mainstream biodiversity across vital sectors, notably forestry and agriculture at the landscape level. The project also presents a significant opportunity to scale up its approach and activities into adjacent wildlife corridors in Cambodia and Lao PDR to establish transboundary partnerships to expand the eastern wildlife corridor over the three countries. Institutional capacity developed as a result of the project will be mobilized for scaling up impacts beyond the project area. One of the main outcomes of this project is to establish the sustainability and capacity of a functional inter-sectoral landscape committee and by involving multiple stakeholders and ensuring incentives for their involvement is also expected to strengthen sustainability of the project.

Project results include: 1,365,000 hectares of landscapes under improved practices outside of protected areas; 1,781,089 metric tons of CO₂e (direct) and 25,000 direct beneficiaries.