

Climate Adaptive River Basins in Sayaboury

Review CEO Endorsement and Make a recommendation

Basic project information

GEF ID
11573
Countries
Lao PDR
Project Name
Climate Adaptive River Basins in Sayaboury
Agencies
WWF-US
Date received by PM
6/17/2025
Review completed by PM
8/5/2025
Program Manager
Tshewang Dorji
Focal Area
Climate Change
Project Type
FSP

PIF
CEO

Part I - General Project Information

1. a) Is the Project Information table correctly filled, including specifying adequate executing partners?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

8/4/2025; GEFSEC.

Yes

Agency Response

b) Are the Rio Markers for CCM, CCA, BD and LD correctly selected, if applicable?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

8/4/2025; GEFSEC.

Yes

Agency Response

2. Project Summary.

a) Does the project summary concisely describe the problem to be addressed, the project objective and the strategies to deliver the GEBs or adaptation benefits and other key expected outcomes?

b) Does the summary capture the essence of the project and is it within the max. of 250 words?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

8/4/2025; GEFSEC.

Yes

Agency Response

3. Project Description Overview

a) Is the project objective statement concise, clear and measurable?

b) Are the components, outcomes, and outputs sound, appropriate and sufficiently clear to achieve the project objective and the core indicators per the stated Theory of Change?

c) Are gender dimensions, knowledge management, and M&E included within the project components and budgeted for?

d) Are the GEF Project Financing and Co-Financing contributions to PMC proportional?

e) Is the PMC equal to or below 10% (for MSP) or 5% (for FSP)? If above, is the justification acceptable?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

8/4/2025; GEFSEC.

b. Please refer to section under 5.1c

Agency Response

WWF GEF Agency 9/24/2025:

The comments in section 5.1c have been addressed

WWF GEF Agency 8/25/2025:

3b) Thank you for this comment. The PMC amount was calculated at slightly above 5% to allow for the complexity of this project and the engagement of both field staff and central-based staff.

4. Project Outline

A. Project Rationale

- a) Is the current situation (including global environmental problems, key drivers of environmental degradation, climate vulnerability) clearly and adequately described from a systems perspective and adequately addressed by the project design?**
- b) Have the role of stakeholders, incl. the private sector and local actors in the system been described and how they will contribute to GEBs and/or adaptation benefits and other project outcomes? Is the private sector seen mainly as a stakeholder or as financier?**
- c) If this is an NGI project, is there a description of how the project and its financial structure are addressing financial barriers?**

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

9/9/2025: GEFSEC

Thanks.

8/4/2025; GEFSEC.

- b. Please elaborate the role of private sector, if applicable.

Agency Response

WWF GEF Agency 8/25/2025:

4b) Roles for the private sector have now been clearly identified in the Project Rationale section on stakeholders, and in Activities 1.1.4.2; 2.1.2.1; 2.1.2.3. The role of the Private Sector is limited in this province.

5 B. Project Description

- 5.1 a) Is there a concise theory of change (narrative and an optional schematic) that describes the project logic, including how the project design elements are contributing to the objective, the identified causal pathways, the focus and basis (including scientific) of the proposed solutions, how they provide a robust approach? Are underlying key assumptions listed?**
- b) Is there a description of how the GEF alternative will build on ongoing/previous investments (GEF and non-GEF), lessons and experiences in the country/region?**
- c) Are the project components (interventions and activities) described and proposed solutions and critical assumptions and risks properly justified? Is there an indication of why the project approach has been selected over other potential options?**
- d) Incremental/additional cost reasoning: Is the incremental/additional cost reasoning properly described as per the Guidelines provided in GEF/C.31/12? Has the baseline scenario and/or associated baseline projects been described? Is the project incremental reasoning provisioned (including the role of the GEF)? Are the global environmental benefits and/or adaptation benefits identified?**
- e) Other Benefits: Are the socioeconomic benefits resulting from the project at the national and local levels sufficiently described?**
- f) Is the financing presented in the annexed financing table adequate and demonstrate a cost-effective approach to meet the project objectives? Are items charged to the PMC reasonable according to the GEF guidelines?**
- g) How does the project design ensure resilience to future changes in the drivers and adaptive**

management needs and options (as applicable for this FSP/MSP)?

h) Are the relevant stakeholders (including women, private sector, CSO, e.g.) and their roles adequately described within the components?

i) Gender: Does the gender analysis identify any gender differences, gaps or opportunities linked to project/program objectives and activities and have these been taken up in component design and description/s?

j) Are the proposed elements to capture and disseminate knowledge and learning outputs and strategic communication adequately described?

k) Policy Coherence: Have any policies, regulations or subsidies been identified that could counteract the intended project outcomes and how will that be addressed?

l) Transformation and/or innovation: Is the project going to be transformative or innovative? Does it explain scaling up opportunities?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

9/11/2025: GEFSEC:

Cleared with thanks

8/4/2025; GEFSEC.

c. Please provide more detailed information on the types of proposed intervention under component 2 and 3. It will be befitting to include activities related to village forest management plan preparation and implementation under component 3 to be moved to component 2. Please adjust this budget and activities accordingly.

Also, under current Activity 3.1.2.2, please provide details on the how the support will be provided.

h. Please explore the role of private sector in the project

Agency Response

WWF GEF Agency 8/25/2025:

c) More information has been provided on activities, including providing details of how the support will be provided under Activity 3.1.1.2 as requested. However it is our opinion that it does not make sense to shift VFMP activities from Component 3 to Component 2. The Outcome of Component 2 is about Water Security, whereas the Outcome of Component 3 is about Community Resilience including through Community-Based Natural Resource Management Approaches. While improved management of some village forest may have some small impact on hydrology (actually quite complex and difficult to predict) and this may in turn translate into some contribution to water security, the more important lens through which to consider Village Forests are as a Natural Resource Managed directly by the Communities that supports their resilience in several different ways. This includes through provisioning of goods for both subsistence and income including timber for house construction and repair, and non-timber forest products for income and for food and medicine (important when crop yields may be reduced by floods or droughts, and disease outbreaks may increase with changing climate). The village forests also provide habitat for birds, bats and insects that act as pollinators for agricultural crops and provide natural biological pest control to nearby agricultural fields, supporting resilience of agricultural systems. These livelihood resilience supporting benefits of village forests far outweigh their water security value and therefore it seems more logical to keep VFMP activities in Component 3. The forests which are more important for hydrological function of the rivers are the upper watershed

forests which are largely State managed protection forests and/or protected areas. Activities in relation to these forests are indeed included in Component 2.

h) Roles for the private sector have now been identified in the project Rationale section on Stakeholders, and in Activities 1.1.4.2; 2.1.2.1; 2.1.2.3;

5.2 Institutional Arrangements and Coordination with Ongoing Initiatives and Project

a) Are the institutional arrangements, including potential executing partners, outlined on regional, national/local levels and a rationale provided? Has an organogram and/or funds flow diagram been included?

b) Comment on proposed agency execution support (if agency expects to request exception). Is GEF in support of the request?

c) Is there a description of coordination and cooperation with ongoing GEF and non-GEF financed projects/programs (such as government and/or other bilateral/multilateral supported initiatives in the project area, e.g.).

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

9/11/2025: GEFSEC:

Thanks and cleared with understanding that under a) community representative will be part of the PSC.

b) Also, please clarify, if the WWF-Lao is part of the WWF-international or WWF-US. If the WWF-Laos is part of the WWF-International, please select (No) under the "Will the GEF Agency play an execution role on this project?" as WWF-Lao is not the GEF Agency.

8/4/2025; GEFSEC.

a. Please provide composition of the PSC. We encourage to include representative of community to be on the PSC

b. Please remove the request for self-execution from the CEO endorsement document package. The request is not aligned with the policy amendment approved by the Council at its 69th meeting (Annex III page 14: https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/documents/2025-05/EN_GEF_C.69.12_Policy%20Amendments%20to%20Streamline%20the%20GEF%20Project%20Cycle-May%202025.pdf). Any proposed change in execution arrangement must follow current GEF policy and any relevant guidance from the GEF Secretariat available at the time of such proposals.

c. Please provide description of the ADB and World Bank funded project that is mentioned in the other parts of the document

Agency Response

WWF GEF Agency 9/24/2025:

Thank you for this comment. WWF Laos is a separate entity from WWF US, it is part of WWF International and will be marked as "no" for self execution.

WWF GEF Agency 8/25/2025:

- a) Thank you for this comment. The project steering committee composition has been included in the main text of the CEO endorsement request. For further details on the project steering committee, please see the annex on the project steering committee terms of reference. WWF-Laos regularly engages with communities in the region and will identify community representation on the project steering committee that would be appropriate during implementation.
- b) Thank you for this comment. The WWF GEF Agency does not view this as a proposed change as, at PIF stage, there was no indication that the execution arrangements would be reevaluated after the PIF was approved with a Co-execution structure of WWF- Laos and the Department of Water Resources. The project was developed over the past eight months following the PIF execution structure and institutional arrangements that were approved. A letter from the Government of Laos has been provided at PIF stage to support the request for WWF-Laos to act with partial execution of the project.
- c) Details of the ADB project have now been provided in this section. The WB project referred to was included in reference to the baseline, but is ending in 2025, so will no longer be ongoing when this project is launched and so there will be no coordination with this project.

5.3 Core indicators

- a) Are the identified core indicators calculated using the methodology and adhering to the overarching principles included in the corresponding Guidelines (GEF/C.62/Inf.12/Rev.01)?**
- b) Are the project's targeted contributions to GEBs (measured through core indicators and additional listed outcome indicators) /adaptation benefits reasonable and achievable?**
- Are the GEF Climate Change adaptation indicators and sub-indicators for LDCF and SCCF properly documented?**

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

9/11/2025: GEFSEC:

Cleared with thanks.

8/4/2025; GEFSEC.

- a. Please clarify or re-instate the core indicator # for the direct beneficiaries as approved during the PIF
- b. Please review and update the sub-indicators

Agency Response

WWF GEF Agency 8/25/2025:

- a) The number of total beneficiaries in the PIF was based on the initial estimate of population size in suggested target communities. During the PPG phase further discussions with local authorities led to some changes in the final selection of target communities. The revised number of total beneficiaries is based on the actual populations of the agreed target communities, and are the feasible numbers of beneficiaries the project can include.
- b) The Sub Indicators are reflecting feasible targets and the project has reviewed these, including representation of males and females in government in the target districts.

5.4 Risks

- a) Is there a well-articulated assessment of risk to outcomes and identification of mitigation measures under each relevant risk category? Are mitigation measures clearly identified and realistic? Is there any omission?
- b) Is the rating provided reflecting the residual risk to the likely achievement of intended outcomes after accounting for the expected implementation of mitigation measures?
- c) Are environmental and social risks, impacts and management measures adequately assessed and rated and consistent with requirements set out in SD/PL/03?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

9/11/2025: GEFSEC:

8/4/2025; GEFSEC.

It is acknowledged that the WWF Environmental and Social Safeguards - Risk Categorization Memorandum has been provided but is not assessed how the level of risk was assessed. Clearly indicate how the level of risk was determined, as this is not evident from the matrix provided. Develop and present a matrix aligned with each Minimum Standard (MS) of the GEF Environmental and Social Safeguards Standards (ESSS). If you chooses to use your matrix, it is good as far as it addresses/matches GEF's MS. Also, the matrix should include how each level of risk is assessed and include the corresponding grievance mechanism. Some of this information is already contained in the Environmental and Social Management Framework & Process Framework & Indigenous Peoples Planning Framework; however, it should be reorganized and presented in a systematic matrix format as indicated.

Agency Response

WWF GEF Agency 8/25/2025:

We have included a paragraph in the ESMF that explains the risk categorization. We have also adjusted the table 8 on page 55 and included an extra table on the previous page with the environmental risks according to the environmental standards. This categorization is based on the risk screening done with WWF's ESSF risk screening tool, a document that consists of a detailed set of questions per standard to appropriately assess the risks and define the mitigation measures required to meet the standards. This screening tool is confidential, because it can have sensitive information.

5.5 For NGI Only: Is there a justification of the financial structure and of the use of financial instrument with concessionality levels?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

Agency Response

6 C. Alignment with GEF-8 Programming Strategies and Country/Regional Priorities

6.1 a) Is the project adequately aligned with Focal Area objectives, and/or the LDCF/SCCF strategy?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

9/11/2025: GEFSEC:

Cleared with thanks

8/4/2025; GEFSEC.

Please remove the reference to the GEF-7 Climate Change Adaptation strategy

Agency Response

WWF GEF Agency 8/25/2025:

Thank you for this comment, this reference has been removed

6.2 Is the project alignment/coherent with country and regional priorities, policies, strategies and plans (including those related to the MEAs and to relevant sectors).

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

9/11/2025: GEFSEC:

This information on how it relates to National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) under the UNFCCC unclear. Please clarify

8/4/2025; GEFSEC.

Please explain how the project is contributing to NAPs. If not, please revise the information entry into the meta data sheet.

Also, under the meta data sheet, please amend reference to Challenge Programme, as this is not funded under the Challenge Program

Agency Response

WWF GEF Agency 9/24/2025:

Thank you for this comment. This reference to the NAP has been removed.

WWF GEF Agency 8/25/2025:

Thank you for this comment, the information in meta data sheet revised

6.3 For projects aiming to generate biodiversity benefits (regardless of what the source of the resources is - i.e., BD, CC or LD), does the project clearly identify which of the 23 targets of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework the project contributes to and how it contributes to the identified target(s)?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

Agency Response

7 D. Policy Requirements

7.1 Are the Policy Requirement sections completed?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

8/4/2025; GEFSEC.

Yes

Agency Response

7.2 Is the Gender Action Plan uploaded?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

9/11/2025; GEFSEC:

Thanks

8/4/2025; GEFSEC

Please upload the Gender Action Plan and Analysis

Agency Response

WWF GEF Agency 8/25/2025:

The gender analysis and gender action plan developed for this project have been uploaded as a separate document.

7.3 Is the stakeholder engagement plan uploaded?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request 8/4/2025; GEFSEC.

Agency Response

7.4 Have the required applicable safeguards documents been uploaded?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

8/4/2025; GEFSEC.

In relation to the Supporting document "Environmental and Social Management Framework & Process Framework & Indigenous Peoples Planning Framework",

- please include the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and ILO Convention 169, as the guiding policies/conventions that underpin the GEF's ESS

- For policy coherence, avoid using only the term "local communities." Instead, consistently use "Indigenous Peoples and local communities" in accordance with the GEF's ESS terminology

Agency Response

WWF GEF Agency 8/25/2025:

- We have included reference to the ILO Convention 169 and UNDRIP in the following sections; 1) the standard on Indigenous Peoples (IP), 2) Table 2: Gaps between Lao legal frameworks and WWF's SIPP, 3) the Process Framework, and 4) the IPPF.

- We have adjusted the project document and the ESMF, including Indigenous Peoples (IP) where only "local communities" was used so that it is in line with GEF language.

8 Annexes

Annex A: Financing Tables

**8.1 GEF Financing Table and Focal Area Elements: Is the proposed GEF financing (including the Agency fee) in line with GEF policies and guidelines? Are they within the resources available from (mark all that apply):
STAR allocation?**

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

8/4/2025; GEFSEC.

Yes

Agency Response

Focal Area allocation?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

Agency Response

LDCF under the principle of equitable access?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

8/4/2025; GEFSEC.

Yes

Agency Response

SCCF A (SIDS)?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

Agency Response

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

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

Agency Response

Focal Area Set Aside?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

Agency Response

8.2 Project Preparation Grant (PPG)

a) Is the use of PPG attached in Annex: Status of Utilization of Project Preparation Grant (PPG) properly itemized according to the guidelines?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request8/4/2025; GEFSEC.

Agency Response

8.3 Source of Funds

Does the sources of funds table match with the amounts in the OFP's LOE?

Note: the table only captures sources of funds from the country's STAR allocation

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

Agency Response

8.4 Confirmed co-financing for the project, by name and type: Are the amounts, sources, and types of co-financing adequately documented and consistent with the requirements of the Co-Financing Policy and Guidelines?

e.g. Have letters of co-finance been submitted, correctly classified as investment mobilized or in-kind/recurring expenditures? If investment mobilized: is there an explanation below the table to describe the nature of co-finance? If letters are not in English, is a translation provided?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

Agency Response

Annex B: Endorsements

8.5 a) If ? and only if - this is a global or regional project for which not all country-based interventions were known at PIF stage and, therefore, not all LOEs provided:

Has the project been endorsed by the GEF OFP/s of all GEF eligible participating countries and has the OFP name and position been checked against the GEF database at the time of submission?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

Agency Response

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

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

Agency Response

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

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

Agency Response

Annex C: Project Results Framework

8.6 a) Have the GEF core indicators been included?

b) Have SMART indicators been used; are means of verification well thought out; do the targets correspond/are appropriate in view of total project financing (too high? Too low?)

c) Are all relevant indicators sex disaggregated?

d) Is the Project Results Framework included in the Project Document pasted in the Template?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

8/4/2025; GEFSEC.

Yes

Agency Response

Annex E: Project map and coordinates

8.7 Have geographic coordinates of project locations been entered in the dedicated table? Are relevant illustrative maps included?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

8/4/2025; GEFSEC.

Yes

Agency Response

Annex G: GEF Budget template

8.8 a) Is the GEF budget template attached and appropriately filled out incl. items such as the executing partner for each budget line?

b) Are the activities / expenditures reasonably and accurately charged to the three identified sources (Components, M&E and PMC)?

c) Are TORs for key project staff funded by GEF grant and/or co-finance attached?

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

10/6/2025: GEFSEC:

Thanks

9/11/2025: GEFSEC:

- After reading the TOR's of the project personnel, it was observe that there is no reason to have a Project Coordinator (\$371,000) + a Technical Specialist (\$523,248) when in most projects one position can cover managerial and technical responsibilities. It is typically not advised to add multiple layers of management inside the PMU from a value-for-money perspective. Please combine the position.

- Similarly, the same comment as above applies to these two positions: Finance Coordinator Specialist + Project Support / Administrative Officer. Please combine the position.

8/4/2025; GEFSEC.

- Please adjust the format of the budget presentation.

- A national project coordinator and a technical specialist are being charged across components. Per Guidelines, the costs associated with the project's execution have to be covered by the GEF portion and the co-financing portion allocated to PMC. To review this allocation, please share/upload the TORs for these positions.

Agency Response

WWF GEF Agency 9/24/2025:

Thank you for this comment. The Technical Specialist position has been removed from the PMU, with new terms of reference uploaded to the portal for the Project Coordinator. Some of the funding that was previously allocated for the Technical Specialist has been reallocated to allow the hiring of consultants that will provide necessary technical expertise that has been identified as necessary for project interventions including nature-based solutions, flood

management, watershed monitoring, and early warning systems and instead funding for additional experts. Additional funding has been reallocated to the cost of pilot activities under component 2.

We understand the concern around having two separate support staff positions for the management of the project, however, the WWF Laos Country Director has advised that a project of this funding size and with 18 project sites will require a Project Support / Administrative Officer as well as a Financial Specialist. This is necessary because the Project Support / Administrative Officer will need to be in the field (sayaboury) coordinating across the many villages and project sites, whereas the Finance Specialist will sit in Vientiane and be responsible for managing procurement and tender processes for the partners who will assist in execution.

WWF GEF Agency 8/25/2025:

The budget has been adjusted in the portal view. Additionally, the TORs for PMU positions were uploaded as Annex 6 in the roadmap section. These TORs clarify the technical roles for each of these positions and need for project funding from components. Please let us know if you are unable to view this separate document.

Annex H: NGI Relevant Annexes

8.9 a) Does the project provide sufficient detail (indicative term sheet) to assess the following criteria: co-financing ratios, financial terms and conditions, and financial additionality? If not, please provide comments.

b) Does the project provide a detailed reflow table to assess the project capacity of generating reflows? If not, please provide comments.

c) Is the Agency eligible to administer concessional finance? If not, please provide comments.

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

10/6/2025: GEFSEC:

Thanks

Agency Response

ANNEX I Response;

WWF GEF Agency 9/24/2025:

thank you for this comment, the portal seems to have repeated an earlier section here although the only text the agency added into the Annex I box is responses to comments from Germany and CBD, we have removed the text and re-Entered it with hopes this solves the issue, please note there is no way for us to see the PDF that is generated by the portal, so it is unknown if the portal has regenerated that text below this section again.

Additional Annexes

9. GEFSEC DECISION

9.1.GEFSEC Recommendation

Is the project recommended for approval

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

10/6/2025: GEFSEC:

Recommended for approval

9/11/2025: GEFSEC:

Please address the outstanding comments,

Under Annex I:

Thanks for addressing the comments from Germany and the CBD Secretariat were. However, the comments follows 14 pages of project?s narrative. Please remove/amend

8/4/2025; GEFSEC.

On Annex I: there are two comment that need to be acknowledge or addressed, one by the Council Member from Germany and another by the CBD Secretariat. Please response in the Annex I.

Please address the above comments

9.2 Additional Comments to be considered by the Agency during the inception and implementation phase

Secretariat comment at CEO Endorsement Request

9.3 Review Dates

	CEO Approval	Response to Secretariat comments
First Review	8/4/2025	8/26/2025
Additional Review (as necessary)	9/11/2025	9/29/2025
Additional Review (as necessary)	10/6/2025	
Additional Review (as necessary)		
Additional Review (as necessary)		