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PROJECT PROGRESS REPORT

REPORTING PERIOD[1]: January 2025 to December 2025

Signed and endorsed by:

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Ashish Chaturvedi
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Team Leader, Action for Climate and Environment

Project Summary Information	
Project Title	Strengthening Institutional Capacities for Securing Biodiversity Conservation Commitments
Project ID	00127645
Project Duration	(March 2025- March 2030)
Location	Garo Hills landscape of Meghalaya Sathyamangalam landscape of Tamil Nadu
CPD Outcome and Outputs	Output 3.2 Innovative solutions developed, demonstrated and upscaled at national and subnational levels for vulnerable communities and businesses to benefit from sustainable management of natural resources (land, water, air), chemicals and circular economy.
Gender marker	GEN 2
Implementing Partner	National Biodiversity Authority Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change
Total Project Budget (USD)	4,880,000
Donors (funding sources)	GEF Trust Fund
Annual Budget (USD)	USD 559,161
Funds received during the reporting period (USD & INR)	USD 315,287
Expenditure recorded for the reporting period (USD)	USD 5,038
Expenditure recorded for the total project (USD)	USD 5,038
Project Manager name:	Jeyaram Soundrapandi

1. Executive Summary

[1] Periodicity of this project progress report will be determined based on online input; it can be used quarterly, half-yearly, or annually. The minimum requirement for Project Board to meet at least once to review progress and risks is annual - per policy.

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- *Prepare a **standardized and concise project introduction** including the project objective, key outputs, and geographic landscapes **that can be reused** across all progress reports for the project in each reporting cycle.*
- *Provide a **1–2 paragraph summary of key achievements** during the reporting period.*
- *Briefly mention **any major challenges** encountered.*
- *Tip: Keep this section **crisp and high-level, and absolutely results-oriented (NOT activity oriented);** details will follow in later sections.*

The project aims to mainstream biodiversity conservation and its sustainable use and management into village level self-governance institutional planning and budgeting systems in **two high biodiverse landscapes** in India- the Garo Hills landscape of **Meghalaya**, surrounding Nokrek Biosphere Reserve, Balpakram National Park, Siju Wildlife Sanctuary and Baghmara Reserve Forest; and the Sathyamangalam landscape of the **Tamil Nadu** Eastern Ghats surrounding Mudumalai and Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserves.

For mainstreaming biodiversity in the two landscapes, the project will improve multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder coordination and governance mechanisms facilitating biodiversity conservation and sustainable use. Landscape-level plans will be produced to identify areas with potential for actions on biodiversity, ecosystem services, sustainable resource use and socio-economic development. Institutional and technical capacities will be strengthened through mainstreaming biodiversity into capacity development system for rural development. Conservation and sustainable resource use models will be developed and implemented at landscape level. Protected Area management will be strengthened to improve habitat connectivity and enhance community collaboration in joint forest management actions.

To improve blended financing and incentives for biodiversity positive practices in the two landscapes, resource gap will be assessed, and financial solutions and resource mobilisation strategy will be developed. Biodiversity-friendly business enterprise ventures will be established to improve community livelihoods and build support for biodiversity conservation and sustainable use. Lastly, institutional and technical capacities of key stakeholders will be strengthened for implementing new financial instruments.

Project Initiation and Planning: The Project Document was signed by the Resident Representative, UNDP and the Adviser, MoEFCC on 17 March 2025, marking the official start of the project. An orientation workshop was conducted on 23 January 2025 at NBA, Chennai, to familiarize stakeholders, including MoEFCC, NBA, and state governments of Meghalaya and Tamil Nadu, with project objectives, components, indicators, and key aspects of GEF project design and implementation. An AWP and Multi-Year Work Planning (MYWP) workshop was held on 10–11 April 2025 at NBA, Chennai, resulting in draft work plans that mainstream gender considerations across activities.

Gender Integration: Gender-responsive actions were incorporated: Output 1.6 includes training for men and women participation in joint forest patrolling and management actions; Output 2.2 includes a leadership programme on Women in Business with women participants in Self Help Groups covering basic business skills, financial and digital literacy.

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Governance and Implementation: NPSC meeting convened on 25 July 2025 under Additional Secretary Shri Amandeep Garg, approving the project management structure, AWP of 2025-26, and adopting DP modality for reimbursing expenditure till govt transfers funds to NBA. National level Inception workshop was held in Meghalaya (Shillong) and landscape level in Tura. NBA has commissioned WII to conduct a baseline to identify initial areas for intervention. A delivery of USD 25,000 would be shown through DP modality.

2. Progress Review

a) Narrative Reporting

- *Highlight concrete **output-wise (Outcome-wise in case of Vertical Funds) results** to maintain a logical flow. This should be linked to the indicators as outlined in the project results framework in the project document and as per the activities mentioned in the approved AWP.*
- *Include progress towards **gender equality and women's empowerment** in the reporting period. If applicable, highlight achievements in digitalization and innovation.*

The Project Document was signed by the Resident Representative, UNDP and the Adviser, MoEFCC on 17 March 2025, marking the official start of the project. An orientation workshop was conducted on 23 January 2025 at NBA, Chennai, to familiarize stakeholders,including Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC), National Biodiversity Authority (NBA), and the state governments of Meghalaya and Tamil Nadu with the project objectives, components, indicators, and key aspects of GEF project design and implementation. An Annual Work Planning (AWP) and Multi-Year Work Planning (MYWP) workshop with all key stakeholders was held on 10–11 April 2025 at NBA, Chennai. This workshop resulted in draft work plans that mainstream gender considerations across activities, underscoring the project's commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment from the outset.During both the orientation and AWP workshops, the importance of integrating gender into all project components and activities was emphasized.

However, progress against specific project output indicators cannot yet be reported, as PMU is being established and funds transfer from the Ministry has yet to take place. The project activities have been delayed due to unforeseen challenges including postponement of the inception workshop owing to delays in opening bank accounts, slow financial disbursement, and lengthy government procedures.

a) Indicator and Expenditure Reporting

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Output statement	Indicator	Baseline Value	End of the project target	Actuals achieved against target for the indicator	Evidence[2]	Budget as per AWP (USD)	Actual Expenditure (USD)	Remarks (if any)
Output 1.1 Functional multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder coordination and governance mechanisms facilitate biodiversity conservation and sustainable use in two multiple use landscapes	Indicator 1.1 All 8 multi-stakeholder coordination mechanisms in place, capacitated and meeting at agreed intervals in States & Landscapes, and at District Level	*0*	*8*	*NA*	*NA*	81,366	5,038	
Output 1.2	Indicator 1.2	*0*	*2*	*NA*	*NA*	122,607	*NA*	

[2] Means of verification will require evidence, links, reference, photos, transcripts from exit interviews, feedback surveys, call center reports, phone verification, etc. All methods and means used to collect and report on the results should be described, and links prepared for future reference, spot checking, and verification by independent teams when necessary. It also means that the same expectation will apply when third-party monitors are used.

If the data source involved meetings, then details of meeting participants and matters discussed and agreed actions should be documented as part of the evidence/data source.

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Landscape-level plans identify areas with potential for actions on biodiversity, ecosystem services, sustainable resource use and socio-economic development	Participatory landscape plan at 1:30,000 scale in place for each of two target landscapes, indicating target areas for land use change to enhance connectivity and wildlife movement corridors, and maximise biodiversity-compatible livelihoods							
Output 1.3 Institutional and technical capacities strengthened through mainstreaming biodiversity into capacity developm	Indicator 1.3 Training programme rolled out with 445 beneficiary villages, with report backs from the Biodivers	*0*	*1*	*NA*	*NA*	34,791	*NA*	

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ent system for rural developm ent	ity Manage ment Committ ees (BMC) of the relevant Village Employm ent Councils (Meghala ya) and Gram Panchaya ts (Tamil Nadu) on completi on of People's Biodivers ity Registers and integrati on of biodivers ity actions into develop ment plans							
Output 1.4 Mainstre aming biodiversi ty and sustainab le natural resources into local, block and district-level rural developm	Indicator 1.4 40 village or Gram Panchaya t develop ment plans with costed and spatially defined	*0*	*40*	*NA*	*NA*	57,500	*NA*	

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ent planning and budgeting	biodiversity priority actions integrated into them, with report on resources mobilized and local capacity developed (including women).							
Output 1.5 Conservation and sustainable resource use models developed and implemented at landscape level	Output Indicator: 40 reports from champion village clusters (through Gram Panchayats or Village Councils12) on implementation of biodiversity priority actions contained in local development plans, and their	*0*	*40*	*NA*	*NA*	*0*	*NA*	

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	results in terms of project targets and landscape plan							
Output 1.6: Strengthened Protected Area management to improve habitat connectivity and enhance community collaboration in joint forest management actions	Output Indicator: Report by each of the two Forest Departments (with GHADC in Meghalaya) on achievement of joint forest management actions, protocols developed, community training completed and results achieved in relation to project targets and landscape plans, as well as updated	*0*	*2*	*NA*	*NA*	65,000	*NA*	

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	Reserve Forest working plans with biodiversity goals incorporated.							
Output 2.1: Resource gap assessed, and financial solutions and resource mobilisation strategy developed for landscape and local plans	Output Indicator: Report from each landscape on landscape-level and champion village-level resource gap analyses & mobilization strategies, as well as progress in terms of tracking tool	*0*	*2*	*NA*	*NA*	*30,000*	*NA*	
Output 2.2: Establish biodiversity-friendly business enterprise ventures to improve	Output Indicator: At least six livelihoods report with detailed feasibility study, governance	*0*	*2*	*NA*	*NA*	*55,000*	*NA*	

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community livelihoods and build support for biodiversity conservation and sustainable use	structure, capacity development needs, business plan and report on incubation support, marketing and buyer agreements							
Output 2.3: Institutional and technical capacities of key stakeholders strengthened for implementing new financial instruments	Output Indicator: Curriculum materials and reports on training conducted through the six project District administrations, and the two State Biodiversity Boards, as well as results in tracking public biodiversity expenditure	*0*	*1*	*NA*	*NA*	*10,000*	*NA*	

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Output 3.1: Improved capacity and tools for convergence of planning at local level to support analysis, synthesis and integration for improved decision-making in support of biodiversity outcomes	Output Indicator: All relevant material uploaded to National Biodiversity Authority digital platform and, central Ministry of Panchayati Raj e-gram swaraj portal	*0*	*2*	*NA*	*NA*	*20,000*	*NA*	
Output 3.2: Communication strategy developed and implemented in project landscapes to enhance awareness and support biodiversity mainstreaming in development planning	Output Indicator: Report on media strategies and campaigns at State and landscape level for public awareness on importance of biodiversity conservation, including One Health	*0*	*1*	*NA*	*NA*	*2000*	*NA*	

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	messaging							
Output 3.3: Results from project sites documented and disseminated, learning and experiences shared in national and international forums	Output Indicator: Archive of media products including lessons learnt products (short documents with photos or video clips) from 40 champion village clusters, knowledge exchange reports, documentaries showcasing results in and capturing learning from project landscapes, policy guidance notes, and slideshow presentations for conferences	0	40	*NA*	*NA*	*0*	*NA*	
Output 3.4: Replicatio	Output Indicator:	*0*	*1*	*NA*	*NA*	*0*	*NA*	

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n of best practices at regional and national level in India	Strategies for replication at State and national levels, including content for State Biodiversity Boards learning programme and national conference, with policy guidance notes where relevant							
Monitoring and Evaluation Cost						*31,000*		
Project Management Cost						*49,897*		
Total AWP Budget and and Actual Expenditure (USD)						*559,161*	5,038	
Co-financing Materialized for VFs (USD)								

3. Challenges encountered, project risks and mitigation measures

- *Define key challenges and risks noted/materialized, whether new/recurrent/persistent.*
- *Describe new risks identified and propose ways to correct a course of action and agreed with responsible members to address these and the timelines. Describe if escalation is required for Project Board or other mechanisms. Update the project risk register accordingly.*
- *Latest version of Offline* ***Project Risk register must be attached as an annex*** *to the report.*

1. Risk: There is a risk of complex fund flow mechanisms and low capacity to disburse project funds efficiently.
Cause: Government mechanisms for the receipt, disbursement and accounting of international funds are bureaucratic and inefficient
Impact: This will carry the risk of substantial delays and possible failures in implementation. Due to this, the project implementation got delayed with the inception meeting held in October 2025 after 7 months of signing of the ProDoc.

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Mitigation Measure: DP modality has been approved by the NPSC for 2025-26 activities. Since the opening of accounts by the states and establishing financial flow formally shall take a lot of time, the direct payment has been taken up and the payments for the inception workshop has been processed through DP. Further measures will be taken to ensure efficient fund flows and transfers.

2. Risk: There is a risk that lack of ownership and support of different levels of government institutions could obstruct project implementation
Cause: This is due to overlapping mandates of central government units and challenges during project preparation
Impact: Likely impact the project implementation from not receiving enough support and cooperation from agencies.
Mitigation measure: Project Steering Committee to promptly review and address such issues to improve the ownership and support of different levels of government institutions

4. Social and Environmental Standards (SES) Reporting (Applicable for moderate, substantial, and high risk projects)

- *Describe the SES risks (existing and new) identified for the project via the SESP.*
- *Has the SESP been updated during the reporting period? If yes, provide a brief description of new risks added and proposed mitigation measures.*
- *Provide an update on the SES risk assessment and management plans recommended as per the SESP.*
- *Provide an update on the Grievance Redressal Mechanism (GRM) under the project*
- *Has any issue been reported under the project during the reporting period through GRM or any other reporting mechanism? Provide status update.*

The Social and Environmental Screening Procedure (SESP) for the project was completed during the design stage, identifying a total of 10 social and environmental risks with an overall risk significance rated as "substantial". These risks span multiple programming principles, including human rights, gender equality and women's empowerment, and accountability, and trigger seven out of the eight UNDP project-level Social and Environmental Standards, excluding only the standard on community health, safety, and security. No new high-level SES risks were identified during the reporting period.
To ensure effective management of the identified risks, several safeguard instruments and management plans were developed during project design and continue to guide implementation. These include the Gender Action Plan (GAP), Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP), Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF), and the Social Inclusion Planning Framework (SIPF). These instruments collectively provide the framework for managing gender, social inclusion, stakeholder engagement, and environmental risks throughout the project lifecycle.

In line with the substantial risk classification, the project is required to undertake an Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) in the project landscapes of Tamil

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Nadu and Meghalaya. Initiation of the ESIA has been delayed due to the National Implementation Modality, as key preparatory steps such as detailed activity-level screening, assessments, and formulation of management measures are contingent upon government approvals. The ESIA is expected to be initiated in Q1 2026. As a key outcome of the ESIA, Environmental and Social Management Plans (ESMPs) will be developed, including landscape wise Resettlement Action Plan, Livelihood Action Plan, and Social Inclusion Plan, as applicable.

With regard to Grievance Redressal, the project-level Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM) was formally endorsed during the first National Project Steering Committee (PSC) Meeting held on 25 July 2025 to ensure accessible and timely resolution of grievances in both States. The GRM structure provides for grievances at the community level to be addressed by the State Project Management Unit (SPMU) at the level of the District Collector / Divisional Forest Officer (DFO). Grievances requiring escalation or broader review may be addressed by the State Project Steering Committee and the PSC respectively.

5. Communications and Visibility

Please provide URLs specific to this project (for example, project websites, social media sites, media coverage, etc.) as far as this is applicable. Note that some of these links would be the evidence and data sources for point no. 3 above.

NA

6. Partnerships

Provide details of new partnerships (financial/non-financial) realized during the reporting period.

NA

7. Lessons Learned and Way Forward

Document any lessons that will be applied to address challenges or improve the implementation pace. Outline any good practices, as applicable. Based on the above, mention key issues which need to be addressed/prioritized for next reporting period

There have been significant delays in establishing the fund flow mechanism for the project, primarily due to the complexities of the full NIM modality. For future projects, adopting a NIM+CO support modality is recommended to help alleviate these challenges and enable more timely project implementation.

<u>Way Forward:</u>

NBA has to release funds to the States

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States have to set up coordination mechansims

8. Annexures

*Provide **CO SharePoint/public website links** to the sources of evidence.*

Risk register: Risk Register - BD.xlsx