Project Title: *Strengthening Institutional and Technical Capacities of the National Center for Vegetation Cover and Combating Desertification*
Project Number: Atlas: SAU10 – 00141100, **Quantum:** 00129917
Implementing Partner: National Center for Vegetation Cover Development and Combating Desertification (NCVC)
Start Date: 11/12/2022 **LPAC Date:** 19/03/2025 **End Date:** 11/12/2029

Project Substantive Revision

This substantive revision responds to NCVC's request to refine the project's focus on national priorities. The revision aims to strengthen the Centre's support for:

- NCVC's engagement with Multilateral Environmental Agreements, specifically focusing on the UNCCD, UNCBD, and UNFCCC processes (COPs, CRICs, CST, IWG).
- Broadening support for ecosystem conservation projects, shifting the emphasis from tree planting to applied innovation and human resource development.
- Enhancing technical skills and capacity development for national parks, geoparks, forests, and restored lands.
- Supporting the implementation of the COP16 Legacy Programme.

The revision aligns with the original narrative and overall objective of the project—enhancing NCVC's institutional, technical, and technological capacities to fulfil its mandate effectively. This will be achieved by strengthening international cooperation, building capacities in natural resource management, facilitating digital transformation, supporting research and innovation in land degradation, and providing capacity-building for the implementation of the COP16 Legacy Programme.

The revised project structure is as follows:

- **Output 1:** Strengthening International Engagement and Presence
- **Output 2:** Innovation, Community Participation and Human Resources Capabilities in Ecosystem Restoration Projects and Initiatives Advanced
- **Output 3:** Facilitating Digital Enablement, Innovation, and Data Excellence
- **Output 4:** Enhancing Technical Skills and Capacity Development for National Parks, Geoparks, Forests, and Rangelands
- **Output 5:** Supporting the COP16 Legacy Programme

The changes are reflected in:

- **Section 2. Strategy** – now incorporates support for NCVC's international presence, enhanced innovation and human resource capacities, and technical and capacity development for protected ecosystems. It further includes NCVC's engagement in implementing the COP16 Legacy. The changes are also reflected in Section 3, Results and Partnerships.
- **Section 3. Results and Partnerships** – elaborating on the revised outputs and activities.
- **Section 5. Results Framework** – including updated indicators.
- **Section 7. Multi-Year Workplan and Budget** – integrating additional funds required to expand the project's scope.

The revision further extends the project's duration until December 2029. The additional required funding is $20,000,000 bringing the total project budget to $26,328,086.50.

Contributing Outcome (UNSDCF, CPD, RPD):
UNDP CPD 2023 – 2027 Outcome 2: The environment is better protected from degradation, including through sustainable consumption and production, sustainably managing its natural resources, and taking urgent action on climate change.
Indicative Output(s) with Gender Marker[1]:
Output 2.2: Sustainable production and consumption practices supported to generate competitive advantages, increase energy efficiency, prevent environmental degradation, and create green jobs with a focus on strengthening urban resilience and transformation.
Gender Marker 2
Contributing SDGs: 15, 13, 8, 6 and 5

Total resources required:	26,328,086.50 USD	
Total resources allocated:	**UNDP TRAC:**	0 USD
	Donor:	0 USD
	Government:	26,328,086.50 USD
	In-Kind:	0 USD
Unfunded:	0 USD	

Agreed by (signatures):

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)	The National Center for Vegetation Cover Development and Combating Desertification (NCVC)
Nahid Hussein UNDP Resident Representative	**Dr. Khaled bin Abdullah Al-Abdulkader** Chief Executive Officer
Date: 17. April 2025	Date: 17. April. 2025

Ali Alwadei

UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME برنامج الأمم المتحدة الإنمائي KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA المملكة العربية السعودية

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I. Strategy

This substantive project revision is designed to support the National Center for Vegetation Cover Development and Combating Desertification (NCVC) in increasing its institutional, technical, and technological capacities to fulfil its mandate effectively. This will be achieved by strengthening international cooperation, expanding knowledge exchange mechanisms, building technical and scientific capacities in natural resource management, facilitating advanced digital transformation, supporting the capacity development of restored and protected ecosystems, and deepening NCVC's engagement in the implementation of the COP16 Legacy Programme through targeted interventions and strategic partnerships.

The project aligns with national development frameworks, including Vision 2030, the Saudi Green Initiative, the National Environment Strategy, and the Kingdom's commitment to promoting a green transformation and achieving net zero emissions by 2060. It contributes to multiple development, climate, and environmental objectives through improved natural resource governance and large-scale ecosystem restoration, particularly:

- **Healthy ecosystems and water security (SDGs 15, 6)** – ensuring the restoration and conservation of critical landscapes to sustain biodiversity and enhance water availability.
- **Improved livelihoods, economic opportunities, and job creation (SDGs 1, 8)** – fostering sustainable business models, rural employment, and nature-based solutions.
- **Climate change mitigation and adaptation (SDG 13)** – enhancing carbon sequestration, reducing land degradation, and increasing climate resilience.
- **Gender equality and women's empowerment (SDG 5)** – integrating gender-sensitive approaches to ecosystem restoration and sustainable land management.
- **Sustainable cities and communities (SDG 11)** – supporting urban greening initiatives and sustainable land use planning.

The project is aligned with the **UNDP Strategic Plan 2022-2025**, contributing directly to:

- **Signature Solution 4 on Environment**, which integrates nature and environmental protection into national economies and policy frameworks, helping governments manage and value their natural assets.
- **Signature Solution 3 on Resilience**, supporting countries and communities in building resilience to environmental shocks, climate change, disasters, conflicts, and epidemics.

Additionally, the project supports global initiatives, including the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, the UNCCD 2018-2030 Strategic Framework, the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, and the G20 Global Land Initiative. It contributes to global efforts to halt and reverse ecosystem degradation, combat land degradation, desertification, and drought, prevent the destruction of natural habitats, mitigate biodiversity loss, and enhance climate adaptation and resilience.

International Cooperation and Commitments

The project will enhance NCVC's international engagement and presence by developing and implementing an International Engagement Strategy and Action Plan, along with Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for the International Affairs Department. These efforts will strengthen NCVC's role in global environmental governance and policy dialogues. The project will support NCVC's participation in international forums through direct involvement in conferences abroad, hosting international events in the Kingdom, and facilitating overseas visits for technical departments. Additionally, it will develop targeted international social media campaigns to highlight NCVC's work while promoting the Saudi Green Initiative (SGI) and National Greening Programme (NGP) in relevant global platforms.

To expand NCVC's international partnerships, the project will strengthen relations with global organisations, INGOs, policy centres, and research institutions. This collaboration will facilitate knowledge exchange, support joint initiatives,

and enhance technical cooperation. The identification and engagement of international experts and institutions will further support NCVC's projects and capacity-building efforts.

A key focus will be NCVC's engagement in Multilateral Environmental Processes, particularly the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). The project will provide technical support to national and NCVC negotiating teams, ensuring effective participation in COPs, CRICs, and the Science-Policy Interface (SPI). It will also support NCVC in organising side events, expert panels, and thematic discussions during key global forums, including the Rio Conventions Pavilion. Additionally, NCVC will take part in regional and international meetings and workshops to strengthen its influence in shaping global environmental policies.

A special priority was placed on COP16, hosted by Saudi Arabia in Riyadh in December 2024. The project will support NCVC in leveraging the outcomes of COP16 by strengthening international partnerships, integrating key decisions into national strategies, and advancing commitments made during the conference. Beyond UNCCD, the project will also support NCVC's participation in other multilateral agreements, particularly the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) (COPs, Assessment & Review processes, and thematic conferences) and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), as required. Furthermore, it will facilitate NCVC's participation in international SDG meetings and contribute to national reporting on SDG15.

The project will also integrate Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into NCVC's international efforts. Saudi Arabia's ambitious ecosystem restoration agenda under the Saudi Green Initiative (SGI) provides a strategic opportunity to accelerate SDG progress. The National Greening Programme (NGP) serves as a powerful 'SDG Accelerator', delivering significant environmental, economic, and social benefits. Through its restoration efforts, the project will contribute to healthy ecosystems and water security (SDGs 15, 6), economic growth and job creation (SDG 8), climate change mitigation and adaptation (SDG 13), and gender equality and empowerment (SDG 5) by integrating inclusive approaches to ecosystem restoration.

To support SDG integration, the project will develop an SDG mainstreaming training pack, which includes a tailored basic course for NCVC with both face-to-face sessions and advanced e-learning tutorials. An SDG indicator monitoring framework will be designed to track and consolidate progress on relevant SDG targets. Additionally, a digital SDG monitoring dashboard will be developed to showcase project results, demonstrate the benefits of ecosystem restoration, and facilitate transparent reporting on the Kingdom's contributions to global sustainability goals.

Innovation, Community Participation and Human Resources Capabilities in Ecosystem Restoration Projects and Initiatives Advanced

The project will leverage UNDP's experience in water management and land conservation technologies to explore the integration of the latest technological advancements into ecosystem conservation efforts. Particular focus will be placed on evaluating water-saving and tree-growing technologies to support biodiversity, enhance tree growth and improve survival rates. These efforts aim to improve the viability of restored ecosystems within NCVC-managed areas and nurseries by applying effective land restoration approaches. By prioritising these technologies, the project will work towards developing sustainable models that support ecological balance and contribute to successful tree cultivation in the region.

To enhance the centre's efforts in conserving ecosystems, the project will mobilise international and local experts while developing training programmes to attract new talent. Key initiatives will emphasise expert analysis of innovative environmental technologies and sustainable practices, enhancing land restoration methods. The project will recruit consultants with expertise in ecology, environmental science, sustainable land management, and other technical fields to ensure a proficient workforce. These efforts will support effective project execution and contribute to long-term environmental sustainability. Additionally, the initiative will support the establishment of online programmes for recent graduates, to equip them with crucial skills to contribute to the centre's work.

Community engagement plans will be developed to promote inclusivity by actively involving underrepresented groups, particularly women and youth, in conservation efforts. Empowering these communities fosters ownership and

responsibility for local conservation initiatives, encouraging long-term participation. A detailed plan for community-based co-management of restored ecosystems will be developed, followed by a pilot project to enhance engagement and strengthen resource stewardship over time. Women involvement strategies will promote equal participation in conservation activities, while specific programmes will encourage youth engagement in tree planting and leadership training. These efforts aim to nurture environmental stewardship and long-term participation in reforestation activities.

The project will also place emphasis on developing strategic plans to involve civil society organisations (CSOs) and the private sector in ecosystem restoration initiatives. By fostering collaboration among these groups, the project seeks to establish a structured framework that facilitates community participation and promotes investment in conservation efforts. Such engagement is intended to contribute to sustainable environmental outcomes while ensuring that all stakeholders play a role in restoring and protecting ecosystems critical to biodiversity and the well-being of communities.

Information Technology and Digital Infrastructure

The project aims to strengthen NCVC's IT infrastructure and strategic framework by integrating technological solutions that improve operational efficiency, enhance digital capabilities, and support the Centre's long-term strategic goals. To begin with, a comprehensive needs assessment will be conducted to systematically identify critical gaps in the current system, evaluate existing IT resources, and optimise the technology stack. This process will ensure that IT infrastructure meets NCVC's operational requirements, enhances performance, and aligns with future needs.

To support long-term digital transformation, an enterprise architecture will be developed to provide a structured framework for IT investments, ensuring alignment with NCVC's broader objectives. This architecture will act as a strategic blueprint, guiding the implementation of new digital systems, automation processes, and data integration efforts. The project will also include tailored IT and digital consultancy services, offering comprehensive analysis and structured strategic planning to bridge the gap between NCVC's digital ambitions and their practical implementation. These consultancy efforts will provide informed guidance on system upgrades, security enhancements, and digital transformation strategies.

A comprehensive suite of technical support services and capacity-building programmes will be introduced to equip IT personnel with the necessary expertise to adopt emerging technologies and integrate digital methodologies effectively. These training programmes will be designed to build internal technical expertise, enabling NCVC staff to develop proficiency in digital tools, cybersecurity best practices, and data-driven decision-making. This investment in human capital is essential for strengthening NCVC's ability to manage evolving technological demands and ensuring the sustained functionality of IT operations.

Additionally, the project will support the establishment of a dedicated data management team or unit, which will focus on improving data handling, governance, and analytical capabilities across NCVC's departments. This unit will provide structured training, ensuring that data collection processes are efficient and that information is effectively used to inform decision-making and organisational strategies. With expert consulting support, this unit will work towards establishing protocols for data governance, ensuring the accuracy and security of collected information, and integrating data-sharing practices with key stakeholders. Centralised data and analytics platforms will be developed to support NCVC's objectives of improving data integration, accessibility, and governance. Theses platforms will be designed to facilitate structured data collection, storage, and analysis, ensuring that NCVC can make informed, data-driven decisions. It will also enable seamless data-sharing practices both internally and externally, allowing collaboration with research institutions, government agencies, and environmental organisations. Strengthening these data capabilities will enhance NCVC's ability to track project outcomes, monitor key performance indicators, and improve its digital engagement with partners and stakeholders.

Technical, Research and Capacity Development of National Parks

The project will mobilise advisors and consultants to support NCVC in developing guidelines, frameworks, policies, and standards for the sustainable management of national parks, geoparks, forests, and restored lands in accordance with

international standards. These efforts will provide structured guidance to improve conservation practices, enhance governance frameworks, and the effective management of natural resources.

The proposed initiatives focus on collaborating with NCVC staff to design and implement capacity-building programmes tailored to stakeholders involved in managing national parks, geoparks, and forests. Each training session will begin with a capacity assessment to identify specific needs and address skill gaps. Training will include programmes to strengthen ranger capabilities, initiatives for sustainable park management, and workshops to enhance the technical expertise of staff working on terrestrial and mangrove ecosystem restoration. These efforts will ensure that conservation professionals are equipped with the knowledge and skills required to manage and restore critical ecosystems effectively.

The project will also provide technical assistance for the protection and rehabilitation of terrestrial and mangrove ecosystems, ensuring that conservation strategies align with ecological and cultural preservation priorities. This support will extend to preserving natural environments and safeguarding cultural heritage associated with these landscapes. Additionally, efforts will be directed towards developing innovative tools and comprehensive databases that will facilitate detailed forest inventory assessments, biodiversity surveys, and ecosystem management strategies.

To strengthen ongoing monitoring and evaluation efforts, the project will integrate advanced data management and analytical tools to track ecosystem health and sustainability. These resources will enhance NCVC's ability to conduct long-term environmental assessments, monitor conservation outcomes, and refine ecosystem management strategies based on scientific data. By combining technical expertise with structured data systems, the project will contribute to improving the understanding and protection of Saudi Arabia's natural and cultural landscapes.

Support NCVC Engagement in Implementing the COP16 Legacy Programme

The project aims to strengthen NCVC's capacity to design, plan, and implement activities under the Riyadh Drought Resilience Programme. These interventions focus on addressing land and ecosystem degradation, enhancing climate adaptation, and building long-term resilience in the MENA region, the Sahel, the Horn of Africa, and Central Asia. Support will be provided in policy development, programme governance, planning, monitoring and evaluation, financial management, coordination, negotiation, resource mobilisation, and communication. Additionally, the project will facilitate collaboration between national land management structures and key ministries, including planning and budget ministries, to promote the integration of land restoration strategies into national development plans and budgets.

The project will encourage the exchange of knowledge and best practices among stakeholders involved in land and ecosystem restoration in dryland regions. This will contribute to a broader learning agenda, supporting cooperation between NCVC and global, regional, and national agencies working to combat desertification, land degradation, and drought (DLDD). These efforts will be achieved by conducting joint studies on topics related to land and ecosystem restoration, sustainable land and water management, and other relevant areas. Additionally, by organising and participating in international events, policy dialogues, and technical workshops, the project will facilitate discussions on effective strategies and foster partnerships between government agencies, research institutions, and development actors.

Stakeholder engagement will extend beyond traditional research and development organisations to include civil society organisations (CSOs), the private sector, and local communities, with a particular emphasis on youth- and women-led initiatives. Knowledge exchange will also be supported through secondments of experts and practitioners between institutions from different countries and regions. Furthermore, scholarship opportunities will be provided to facilitate student mobility across regions engaged in the project. The project will also conduct communication campaigns at global, regional, national, and local levels to raise awareness on DLDD, climate change, and biodiversity, with a focus on increasing youth engagement and participation.

The project's activities will include:

i. Researching and testing innovative tools to improve NCVC's capacity to monitor land degradation in Saudi Arabia.
ii. Capacity-building initiatives to support the development of plans, strategies, action plans, and monitoring tools for the implementation of the COP16 Legacy Programme.
iii. Organising and participating in training programmes aimed at strengthening technical expertise.
iv. Providing strategic advisory support to NCVC delegations participating in international forums, including the upcoming COP17 in Mongolia.

The implementation of this output will benefit from UNDP's presence and ongoing activities in all countries of the targeted regions. It will also rely on UNDP's presence at regional level through regional hubs that bring technical expertise and network of partners already engaged in the field of DLDD. These regional hubs include UNDP regional hub for the Arab States region in Amman, the UNDP Resilience hub in Nairobi, the UNDP sub-regional hub for West and Central Africa in Dakar, and the UNDP regional hub for Europe and Central Asia in Istanbul. At global level, the project will benefit from UNDP's vast technical expertise and network of partners on land and ecosystem management, biodiversity conservation, climate adaptation, Disaster Risk Reduction and Local Governance, among others, through the different thematic teams that make up the UNDP Global Policy Network.

Moreover, as mentioned in the activities' description, this output will be achieved through strategic partnerships with regional and international knowledge and research institutions, as well as development organizations engaged in land restoration and ecosystem resilience. South – South cooperation is important to ensure that the communication and transfer of information to local stakeholders is attuned to their needs and understanding. Knowledge management and innovative technologies will particularly focus on vulnerable groups (young people, women, people with disabilities, IDPs and refugees, IPLCs).

UNDP has well-established relationships with governments in all the countries in the target regions, as well as most of the main regional multilateral organizations and with many relevant actors from civil society and the private sector. Catalyzing collaboration with and between partners at regional, national and local levels is a key aspect of the project.

II. Results

Expected Results

The goal of the project is to increase the institutional, technical, and technological capacities of the National Center for Vegetation Cover Development and Combating Desertification (NCVC) to effectively fulfil its mandate. This will be achieved by strengthening international cooperation, enhancing technical capacities in natural resource management, facilitating digital transformation, supporting the implementation of the National Greening Programme under the Saudi Green Initiative, and integrating the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into national ecosystem restoration efforts. A gender-sensitive approach will be adopted to ensure that both men and women contribute to and benefit from project activities.

To achieve this goal, the project will contribute to the achievement of the following outputs:

- **Output 1:** International Engagement and Presence Strengthened
- **Output 2:** Innovation, Community Participation and Human Resources Capabilities in Ecosystem Restoration Projects and Initiatives Advanced
- **Output 3:** Digital Enablement, Innovation, and Data Excellence Facilitated
- **Output 4:** Technical Skills and Capacity Development for National Parks, Geoparks, Forests, and Rangelands Enhanced
- **Output 5:** COP16 Legacy Programme operationalized

Output 1: International Engagement and Presence Strengthened

Activity 1.1: Strengthen NCVC's international engagement by developing an International Engagement Strategy, Action Plan, and Standard Operating Procedures for the International Affairs Department.

Activity 1.2: Provide technical support to establish bilateral partnerships with international organisations, policy and research centres, and the private sector. Promote NCVC's work at international forums and conferences to enhance global visibility.

Activity 1.3: Design and implement international workshops and a training programme in cooperation with international entities in developed and dryland countries;

Activity 1.4: Support NCVC's engagement in Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs), with a focus on UNCCD processes (COPs, CRICs, SPI), CBD, and UNFCCC. Provide technical support to NCVC and national negotiating teams, participate in COP deliberations, organise side events, and contribute to regional and international meetings and workshops.

Activity 1.5: Provide technical support to integrate the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into NCVC's ecosystem restoration projects. Develop an SDGs mainstreaming training pack, an SDG indicator monitoring framework, and a digital dashboard to track and consolidate progress towards SDG targets.

Output 2: Innovation, Community Participation and Human Resources Capabilities in Ecosystem Restoration Projects and Initiatives Advanced

Activity 2.1: Analyse innovative technologies for ecosystem conservation, including water-saving and tree-growing technologies, to improve the efficacy of ecosystem restoration projects.

Activity 2.2: Develop a partnership and engagement plan with civil society organisations (CSOs) and private sector entities in Saudi Arabia to support land protection and restoration efforts.

Activity 2.3: Develop a community participation plan, including a co-management framework for restored and expanded ecosystems. The plan will outline strategies to enhance the involvement of women and youth in NCVC's projects and include a pilot initiative.

Activity 2.4: Establish training programmes focused on Saudi land restoration to strengthen staff expertise and attract new talent. These programmes will provide targeted training to equip participants with the knowledge and practical skills needed to support NCVC's activities.

Activity 2.5: Mobilise experts and local resources to provide strategic advice, technical support, and research for policy development, legislation, standard operating procedures, regulatory frameworks, and backstopping activities. Support technical departments in addressing emerging needs.

Output 3: Digital Enablement, Innovation and Data Excellence Facilitated

Activity 3.1: Strengthen NCVC's IT infrastructure and strategic framework by integrating technological solutions and industry best practices. Conduct a needs assessment to identify critical gaps and optimise the technology stack for improved performance. Develop an enterprise architecture aligned with NCVC's strategic objectives.

Activity 3.2: Enhance NCVC's IT and digital capabilities through advanced training and strategic advisory services, focusing on IT efficiency and workflow optimisation. Emphasise innovation, long-term sustainability, and adaptability to digital advancements.

Activity 3.3: Establish a dedicated unit to strengthen data management capacity through training, professional development, and participation in key projects. Collaborate with expert consultants to improve data governance and support informed decision-making.

Activity 3.4: Pilot emerging technologies, including AI, geoprocessing, and cartographic data applications. Develop centralised GIS data and analytics platforms to enhance environmental management and data integration.

Output 4: Technical Skills and Capacity Development of National Parks, Geoparks, Forests and Rangelands Enhanced

Activity 4.1: Conduct an in-depth analysis to identify key policy, legislative, and institutional gaps. Develop or update policies, guidelines, and strategies for biodiversity, forestry, rangelands, national parks, and tree nursery conservation.

Activity 4.2: Design and implement capacity-building programmes on the sustainable management of natural resources, including vegetation, soils, carbon sinks, water, and biodiversity. Provide training, develop learning tools, and establish policies and guidelines for forests, national parks, and rangelands.

Activity 4.3: Provide technical assistance to safeguard and rehabilitate terrestrial and mangrove ecosystems, including natural and cultural heritage. Develop tools and databases for forest inventory, biodiversity surveys, and ecosystem management and monitoring.

Activity 4.4: Analyse and implement pilot projects that utilise innovative solutions aimed at promoting sustainable land use across NCVC estates, particularly focusing on national parks, forests, rangelands, and restored lands.

Output 5: COP16 Legacy Programme Operationalized

Activity 5.1: Develop, test, validate, and disseminate effective tools and methodologies for monitoring land degradation. Measure and model the biophysical and socioeconomic externalities of land restoration and degradation.

Activity 5.2: Strengthen the capacities of national institutions involved in land restoration and Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) target implementation. Support the effective design, planning, implementation, and scaling up of a regional and global engagement strategy within the Riyadh Drought Global Partnerships.

Activity 5.3: Facilitate the exchange of knowledge and best practices among stakeholders from arid countries and regions engaged in land and ecosystem restoration in dryland contexts. Contribute to the learning agenda and knowledge-sharing between NCVC and global, regional, and national agencies combatting desertification, land degradation, and drought (DLDD).

III. Project Management

Cost Efficiency and Effectiveness

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has committed additional USD 20 million (making the total contribution under this project to USD 26,328,086.50) to support the delivery of the project's expected results and outputs. A high-level team of technical specialists and advisors will be at the core of project implementation, ensuring the effective execution of activities. The project will recruit an international Project Manager and Chief Technical Advisor, who will lead technical coordination and strategic planning. Where feasible, operational and administrative costs will be minimised by engaging part-time technical advisors and consultants, with priority given to leveraging national expertise when possible. The project will adhere to cost-efficiency principles by following the least-cost approach to achieving its objectives, in line with UNDP POPP guidelines on activity norms and cost benchmarks.

The NCVC headquarters will host the project office as part of the Government's in-kind contribution. This will facilitate close coordination with national institutions and key stakeholders. Project oversight will be led by the Project Board, which will ensure that activities remain aligned with the intended objectives, timelines, and budgetary allocations. Regular monitoring will assess effectiveness, efficiency, and overall progress, identifying any challenges requiring corrective actions. Additionally, the project will document lessons learned from design and implementation to enhance management practices.

Each output will have a clearly defined budget ceiling, monitored regularly to ensure alignment with planned activities and delivery targets. Any proposed changes to the output-level budgets—whether reallocations across outputs or significant deviations from planned expenditures—must be submitted for review and approval by the Project Board. This ensures transparency, accountability, and strategic alignment with the project's overall objectives.

A mid-term review will be conducted to evaluate progress and identify areas for improvement, ensuring that necessary adjustments are made to optimise implementation. The insights gained will support the effective execution of the second half of the project, which is set to conclude in December 2029. This process will reinforce best practices and address any operational challenges to enhance project outcomes.

Project Management

The project will be implemented in line with standard UNDP procedures and in accordance with UNDP Programme and Operations Policies and Procedures (POPPs). The National Center for Vegetation Cover Development and Combating Desertification (NCVC) will serve as the Implementing Partner (IP), overseeing project activities, while UNDP Saudi Arabia and according to Country Support Letter of Agreement will provide project management, technical advisory, and support services for activity implementation. UNDP Saudi Arabia will also be responsible for conducting the audit, mid-term review, and final evaluation of the project. Additionally, the project will benefit from the support of the UNDP Regional Hub for Arab States and other specialised units, including the Nature Hub and the Global Policy Centre on Resilient Ecosystems and Desertification.

UNDP will develop and submit an annual work plan for NCVC's approval, detailing the budget, resource forecast, activity descriptions, indicators, and deliverable acceptance criteria. The UNDP management team will also prepare and submit Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), project management plans, and a governance model for NCVC's approval, ensuring clear operational guidelines and accountability in project execution.

Governance and Management Arrangements

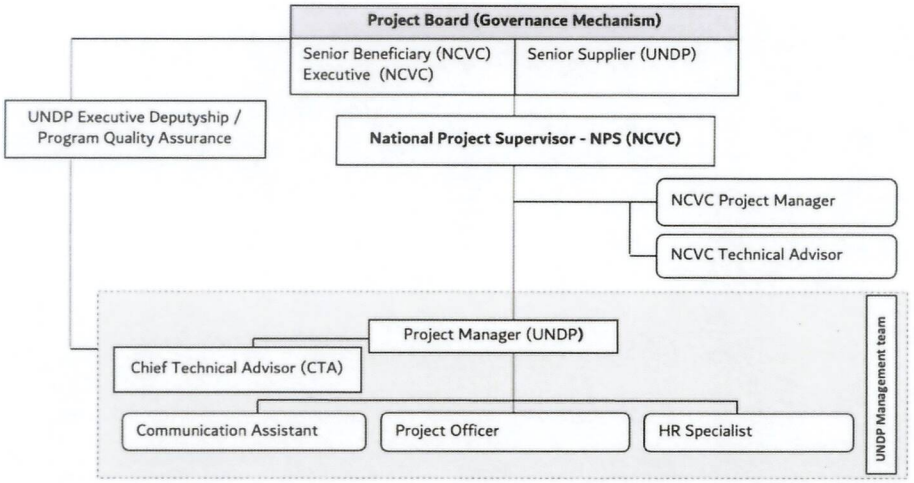
The project will follow the modality of UNDP National Implementation modality (NIM) with full country office support to NIM, whereby the NCVC will serve as Implementing Partner with overall responsibility and oversight of project workplans and intended results, and with UNDP Saudi Arabia Country Office providing Country Office Support Services for activities under the project on cost recovery basis, including procurement and recruitment activities, as well advisory support services from UNDP Regional Hub for Arab States, and other activities noted in Annual Workplans. The NCVC

will provide office space, furniture, stationery and local logistics as needed to facilitate the implementation of the project activities. The project management structure will consist of the Project Board, Project Assurance, and the Project Management Team as in the diagram below. The Project Board will consist of:

- Executive: individual representing the project ownership to chair the group. The Executive is ultimately responsible for the project, supported by the Senior Beneficiary and Senior Supplier. The Executive's role is to ensure that the project is focused throughout its life cycle on achieving its objectives and delivering outputs that will contribute to higher level outcomes. The Executive will ensure that the project gives value for money, ensuring a cost-conscious approach to the project, balancing the demands of beneficiary and supplier.
- Senior Supplier: individual or group representing the interests of the parties concerned which provide technical expertise to the project. The Senior Supplier's primary function within the Board is to provide guidance regarding the technical feasibility of the project. The Senior Supplier role must have the authority to commit or acquire resources required. UNDP - Representative (or as delegated)
- Senior Beneficiary: individual or group of individuals representing the interests of those who will ultimately benefit from the project. The Senior Beneficiary's primary function within the Board is to ensure the realization of project results from the perspective of project beneficiaries. The role represents the interests of all those who will benefit from the project, or those for whom the deliverables resulting from activities will achieve specific output targets. The Senior Beneficiary role monitors progress against targets and quality criteria.

The Board is responsible for making consensus basis management decisions for the project when guidance is required by the Project Manager and Coordinator, including recommendation for approval of project revisions. Project reviews by the Board are made at quarterly basis during the running of a project, or at milestones when raised by the Project Manager and Coordinator. Project tolerances (i.e. constraints in terms of time and budget) will be agreed upon by the Board during the first meeting. The Board is consulted by the Project Manager for decisions when tolerances have been exceeded. Project Assurance supports the Project Board by carrying out objective and independent project oversight and monitoring functions. This role ensures appropriate project management milestones are managed and completed. A UNDP Programme Analyst will hold the Project Assurance role for the UNDP Board member.

Project Governance:



The NCVC Technical and Management team will include on permanent basis:

- **National Project Supervisor (NCVC)** serves as the signatory and key decision-maker for the project, responsible for ensuring alignment with NCVC's objectives and approving deliverables at the National Project Supervisor level.
- **Technical Advisor (NCVC)** will support the National Project Supervisor by providing technical assistance to the project, ensuring alignment with NCVC departments and priorities.
- **Project Manager (NCVC)** will support the National Project Supervisor in daily administrative tasks and act as the primary focal point for the project.

The UNDP Project Management Team will include:

- **Project Manager** with a minimum of 13 years of experience in managing large-scale development projects. Responsible for implementing and monitoring project activities, guiding the project team, SMEs, and consultants, and escalating risks and issues to the NPS and Board. Works closely with the UNDP Executive Deputyship to ensure alignment with programme quality standards and compliance with UNDP implementation modalities.
- **International Chief Technical Advisor (CTA)** with a minimum of 10 years of experience in drought and climate resilience, ecosystem restoration, capacity building, and multilateral environmental processes. Reports to the Project Manager and provides technical supervision, guidance, and support to SMEs and consultants; establishes quality control and peer review mechanisms; and offers strategic guidance with a particular focus on the COP16 Legacy implementation.
- **Project Officers** supporting sub-workstream coordination, focusing on training and workshop organization, assisting with administrative and procurement tasks, managing day-to-day administrative operations, and reviewing documents and draft reports.
- **Human Resource Specialist** managing all HR functions, including expert sourcing, recruitment, onboarding, payroll, and staff welfare.
- **Communication Assistant** responsible for internal and external communications and producing quarterly project updates.

The UNDP technical consultants will be advised and assisted by the following subject matter experts:

- Digital Leader with a minimum of 10 years of experience.
- International Cooperation Expert with 15 years of experience.
- Multilateral Environmental Expert with 15 years of experience.
- SDGs and Ecosystem Restoration Experts with 10 years of experience.

The technical team will be supported by temporary advisors and consultants, recruited as needed for project activities such as capacity building, research, technical and policy development.

IV. Results Framework

Intended Outcome as stated in the UNSDCF/Country [or Regional] Programme Results and Resource Framework:
'The environment is better protected from degradation, including through sustainable consumption and production, sustainably managing its natural resources, and taking urgent action on climate change'

Outcome indicators as stated in the Country Programme [or Regional] Results and Resources Framework, including baseline and targets:
Indicators: CO2 emissions from fuel combustion for electricity and heating per total electricity output (MtCO2/TWh) Baseline: (2018): 1.4, Target HDI (2030) > 1

Applicable Output(s) from the UNDP Strategic Plan:

Digitalisation: Structural transformation accelerated, particularly green, inclusive and digital transitions.
Strategic innovation: Empowering governments and communities to enhance the performance of entire systems, making them adaptive and resilient

Project title and Quantum Project Number:
00129917- Strengthening Institutional and Technical Capacities of the National Center for Vegetation Cover and Combating Desertification

EXPECTED OUTPUTS	OUTPUT INDICATORS	DATA SOURCE	BASELINE		TARGETS (by frequency of data collection)					DATA COLLECTION METHODS & RISKS
			Value	Year	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	
OUTPUT 1 International Engagement and Presence Strengthened	**1.1** Number of international partnerships and cooperation agreements	NCVC official reports	0	2025	1	2	3	1	1	Data collection Methods: Project progress reports; mid-term evaluation report; terminal evaluation report. Risk: Lack of partner engagement, delays in agreement finalization.
	1.2 Number of international forums and working groups	Event participation records, international conference reports	0	2025	2	2	2	1	1	Data collection Methods: Project progress reports; mid-term evaluation report; terminal evaluation report. Risk: Unreported participation, inconsistent event documentation.
OUTPUT 2 Innovation, Community Participation and Human Resources Capabilities in Ecosystem Restoration Projects	**2.1** Number of projects supported by innovative technologies	Research papers, innovation pilot project reports, technical validation documents	0	2025	0	1	1	1	0	Data collection Methods: Project progress reports; mid-term evaluation report; terminal evaluation report.
	2.2 Number of CSOs and private sector entities engagement plans	Stakeholder engagement reports, project implementation reports	0	2025	2	2	0	0	0	Data collection Methods: Project progress reports; mid-term evaluation report; terminal evaluation report. Risk: Governance challenges.

and Initiatives Advanced	**2.3** Number of community-based co-management pilots	Co-management evaluation plans	0	2025	0	1	1	0	0	Data collection Methods: Project progress reports; mid-term evaluation report; terminal evaluation report.
	2.4 Number of team specialists recruited	UNDP Reports	0	2025	11	11	11	11	11	Data collection Methods: Project progress reports; mid-term evaluation report; terminal evaluation report.
OUTPUT 3 Digital Enablement, Innovation and Data Excellence Facilitated	**3.1** Number of staff trained in digital processes and other areas	NCVC IT department progress reports	0	2025	10	30	40	0	0	Data collection Methods: Project progress reports; mid-term evaluation report; terminal evaluation report. Risk: Cybersecurity vulnerabilities, delays in implementation.
	3.2 Number of digital tools or platforms developed	Platform reports, system deployment logs, user adoption analytics	0	2025	2	2	2	0	0	Data collection Methods: Project progress reports; mid-term evaluation report; terminal evaluation report.
	3.3 Number of Digital Interventions	Consultant reports	0	2025	12	12	12	6	4	Data collection Methods: Project progress reports; mid-term evaluation report; terminal evaluation report.
OUTPUT 4 Technical Skills and Capacity Development of National Parks, Geoparks, Forests and Rangelands Enhanced	**4.1** Number of policies, legislative, guidelines or strategic frameworks developed/updated	Consultant reports	0	2025	4	4	2	2	2	Data collection Methods: Project progress reports; mid-term evaluation report; terminal evaluation report. Risk: Difficulty in finding policy and legal experts.
	4.2 Number of trainings and capacity-building programmes	Training completion reports	0	2025	2	2	2	0	0	Data collection Methods: Project progress reports; mid-term evaluation report; terminal evaluation report. Risk: Limited retention of knowledge, low participation rates.
OUTPUT 5 COP16 Legacy Programme Operationalized	**5.1** Number of tools and models for land degradation monitoring	Research findings, technical reports, monitoring methodologies	0	2025	0	1	1	0	0	Data collection Methods: Project progress reports; mid-term evaluation report; terminal evaluation report. Risk: Lack of standardized methodologies, data inconsistencies.
	5.2 Number of capacity-building initiatives and strategies developed	Stakeholder engagement reports, project implementation reports	0	2025	2	2	2	0	0	Data collection Methods: Project progress reports; mid-term evaluation report; terminal evaluation report.
	5.3 Number of knowledge-sharing and collaboration activities	Institutional support reports, inter-agency agreements, implementation plans	0	2025	1	1	1	0	0	Data collection Methods: Project progress reports; mid-term evaluation report; terminal evaluation report. Risk: Bureaucratic delays, weak inter-agency coordination.

V. Multi-Year Work Plan for the Substantive Project Revision

All anticipated programmatic and operational costs to support the project, including development effectiveness and implementation support arrangements, need to be identified, estimated and fully costed in the project budget under the relevant output(s). This includes activities that directly support the project, such as communication, human resources, procurement, finance, audit, policy advisory, quality assurance, reporting, management, etc. All services which are directly related to the project need to be disclosed transparently in the project substantial revision.

Expected Outputs	Planned Activities	Responsible Party	Planned Budget			Planned Budget by Year					Total Amount
			Funding Source	Budget Item	Quantum Tasks	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	
Output 1: International Engagement and Presence Strengthened	Activity 1.1: Strengthen NCVC's international engagement by developing an International Engagement Strategy, Action Plan, and Standard Operating Procedures for the International Affairs Department. Activity 1.2: Provide technical support to establish bilateral partnerships with international organisations, policy and research centres, and the private sector. Promote NCVC's work at international forums and conferences to enhance global visibility. Activity 1.3: Design and implement international workshops and a training programme in cooperation with international entities in developed and dryland countries; Activity 1.4: Support NCVC's engagement in Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs), with a focus on UNCCD processes (COPs, CRICs, SPI), CBD, and UNFCCC. Provide technical support to NCVC and national negotiating teams, participate in COP deliberations, organise side events, and contribute to regional and international meetings and workshops. Activity 1.5: Provide technical support to integrate the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into NCVC's ecosystem restoration projects. Develop an SDGs mainstreaming training pack, an SDG indicator monitoring framework, and a digital dashboard to track and consolidate progress towards SDG targets.	NCVC/UNDP	GOVT	71200 - International Consultants	Activity 1.1: Consulting Services	920,000	675,000	310,000	60,000	0	**1,965,000**
				72100 - Contractual Services-Companies	Activity 1.2: Capacity Building & Contractual Services	50,000	50,000	0	0	0	**100,000**
				74500 - Miscellaneous Expenses	Activity 1.3: Travel & Miscellaneous Costs	2,500	2,500	2,500	0	0	**7,500**
	Sub-total Output 1					972,500	727,500	312,500	60,000	0	**2,072,500**
Output 2: Innovation, Community Participation and Human Resources Capabilities in Ecosystem Restoration	Activity 2.1: Analyse innovative technologies for ecosystem conservation, including water-saving and tree-growing technologies, to improve the efficacy of ecosystem restoration projects. Activity 2.2: Develop a partnership and engagement plan with civil society organisations (CSOs) and private sector entities in Saudi Arabia to support land protection and restoration efforts. Activity 2.3: Develop a community participation plan, including a co-management framework for restored and expanded ecosystems. The plan will outline strategies to enhance the involvement of	NCVC/UNDP	GOVT	71200 - International Consultants	Activity 2.1: Consulting Services	1,500,000	1,500,000	1,000,000	1,000,000	600,000	**5,600,000**
				71501 - Labour cost - UN Volunteers		86,000	86,000	86,000	86,000	86,000	**430,000**

Projects and Initiatives Advanced	women and youth in NCVC's projects and include a pilot initiative. Activity 2.4: Establish training programmes focused on Saudi land restoration to strengthen staff expertise and attract new talent. These programmes will provide targeted training to equip participants with the knowledge and practical skills needed to support NCVC's activities. Activity 2.5: Mobilise experts and local resources to provide strategic advice, technical support, and research for policy development, legislation, standard operating procedures, regulatory frameworks, and backstopping activities. Support technical departments in addressing emerging needs.			71205 - International Consultants Expenses - Short-Term Technical Contractors		60,000	110,000	110,000	0	0	**280,000**
				71501 - Labour cost - UN Volunteers	Activity 2.2: Capacity Building & Contractual Services	0	200,000	200,000	0	0	**400,000**
	Sub-total Output 2					1,646,000	1,896,000	1,396,000	1,086,000	686,000	**6,710,000**
Output 3: Digital Enablement, Innovation, and Data Excellence Facilitated	Activity 3.1: Strengthen NCVC's IT infrastructure and strategic framework by integrating technological solutions and industry best practices. Conduct a needs assessment to identify critical gaps and optimise the technology stack for improved performance. Develop an enterprise architecture aligned with NCVC's strategic objectives. Activity 3.2: Enhance NCVC's IT and digital capabilities through advanced training and strategic advisory services, focusing on IT efficiency and workflow optimisation. Emphasise innovation, long-term sustainability, and adaptability to digital advancements. Activity 3.3: Establish a dedicated unit to strengthen data management capacity through training, professional development, and participation in key projects. Collaborate with expert consultants to improve data governance and support informed decision-making. Activity 3.4: Pilot emerging technologies, including AI, geoprocessing, and cartographic data applications. Develop centralised GIS data and analytics platforms to enhance environmental management and data integration.	NCVC/UNDP	GOVT	71200 - International Consultants	Activity 3.1: Consulting Services	408,000	528,000	400,000	0	0	**1,336,000**
				72100 - Contractual Services-Companies	Activity 3.2: Capacity Building & Contractual Services	40,000	40,000	40,000	0	0	**120,000**
	Sub-total Output 3					448,000	568,000	440,000	0	0	**1,456,000**
Output 4: Technical Skills and Capacity Development for National Parks, Geoparks, Forests, and Rangelands Enhanced	Activity 4.1: Conduct an in-depth analysis to identify key policy, legislative, and institutional gaps. Develop or update policies, guidelines, and strategies for biodiversity, forestry, rangelands, national parks, and tree nursery conservation. Activity 4.2: Design and implement capacity-building programmes on the sustainable management of natural resources, including vegetation, soils, carbon sinks, water, and biodiversity. Provide training, develop learning tools, and establish policies and guidelines for forests, national parks, and rangelands. Activity 4.3: Provide technical assistance to safeguard and rehabilitate terrestrial and mangrove ecosystems, including natural and cultural heritage. Develop tools and databases for forest inventory, biodiversity surveys, and ecosystem management and	NCVC/UNDP	GOVT	71205 - International Consultants Expenses - Short-Term Technical Contractors	Activity 4.1: Consulting Services	200,000	240,000	180,000	0	0	**620,000**
				71475 - Labour Cost - National Personnel Services Agreement		100,000	125,000	125,000	125,000	125,000	**600,000**
				71200 - International Consultants		0	120,000	120,000	120,000	0	**360,000**

	monitoring. Activity 4.4: Analyse and implement pilot projects that utilise innovative solutions aimed at promoting sustainable land use across NCVC estates, particularly focusing on national parks, forests, rangelands, and restored lands.			74500 - Miscellaneous Expenses	Activity 4.2: Travel & Miscellaneous Costs	3,000	3,000	3,000	0	0	**9,000**
	Sub-total Output 4					303,000	488,000	428,000	245,000	125,000	**1,589,000**
Output 5: COP16 Legacy Programme operationalized	Activity 5.1: Develop, test, validate, and disseminate effective tools and methodologies for monitoring land degradation. Measure and model the biophysical and socioeconomic externalities of land restoration and degradation. Activity 5.2: Strengthen the capacities of national institutions involved in land restoration and Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) target implementation. Support the effective design, planning, implementation, and scaling up of a regional and global engagement strategy within the Riyadh Drought Global Partnerships. Activity 5.3: Facilitate the exchange of knowledge and best practices among stakeholders from arid countries and regions engaged in land and ecosystem restoration in dryland contexts. Contribute to the learning agenda and knowledge-sharing between NCVC and global, regional, and national agencies combatting desertification, land degradation, and drought (DLDD).	NCVC/UNDP	GOVT	71501 - Labour cost - UN Volunteers	Activity 5.1: Consulting Services	95,000	95,000	0	0	0	**190,000**
				71200 - International Consultants		340,000	272,000	272,000	0	0	**884,000**
				72100 - Contractual Services-Companies	Activity 5.2: Capacity Building & Contractual Services	1,535,000	1,650,000	1,296,674	0	0	**4,481,674**
	Sub-total Output 5					1,970,000	2,017,000	1,568,674	0	0	**5,555,674**
Project Management	Medical Insurance	NCVC	GOVT	72100 - Contractual Services-Companies	PM - Project Management	60,000	60,000	60,000	60,000	40,000	**280,000**
	Travel Missions, Equipment, Laptops, Licences and other expenses			72100 - Contractual Services-Companies		140,000	80,000	80,000	50,000	34,000	**384,000**
	Sub-total Project Management					200,000	140,000	140,000	110,000	74,000	**664,000**
Evaluation		NCVC/UNDP	GOVT	74100 - Professional Services	PM - Project Management	0	0	25000	0	25000	**50,000**
Audit		UNDP	GOVT	74100 - Professional Services		10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	**50,000**
	Subtotal					10,000	10,000	35,000	10,000	35,000	**100,000**
Project Total						5,549,500	5,846,500	4,320,174	1,511,000	920,000	**18,147,174**
Direct Project Costs (7%)		UNDP	GOVT	75105 - Facilities and Administration - Implementation		388,465	409,255	302,412.18	105,770	64,400	**1,270,302.18**
General Management Support (3%)		UNDP	GOVT	75105 - Facilities and Administration - Implementation		178,138.95	187,672.65	138,677.59	48,503.10	29,532	**582,524.29**
TOTAL						**6,116,104**	**6,443,428**	**4,761,264**	**1,665,273**	**1,013,932**	**20,000,000**

VI. Annexes

- Schedule of Payment
- Previous Project Document

Annex 1: Schedule of Payment

Date	Amount	Contributor
Upon Signature	$ 7,000,000	NCVC
2026	$ 7,000,000	
2027	$ 4,000,000	
2028	$ 2,000,000	
Total	**$ 20,000,000**	