Docusign Envelope ID: DD08C203-5A21-46E8-8201-F732BB263CEA

PROJECT PROGRESS REPORT

REPORTING PERIOD[1]: January – December 2025

Signed and endorsed by: DocuSigned by: Ashish Chaturvedi FC837FD25D5E462...

Team Leader, Action for Climate and Environment

Project Summary Information	
Project Title	Sustainable Management and Restoration of Degraded Landscape for Achieving Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) in India.
Project ID	130865
Project Duration	(1 Feb. 2024 – 31 Jan. 2029)
Location	Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Madhya Pradesh
CPD Outcome and Outputs	**Outcome 3:** By 2027, Government of India, state governments, communities, private sector and other actors take informed actions to address climate change, pollution, biodiversity loss and restore ecological integrity through improved knowledge, capacity and mainstreaming of relevant actions across sectoral programmes, policies and plans. **Output 3.2 I**nnovative 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. **Indicator 3.2.1:** Number of people directly benefiting from initiatives to protect environment and promote sustainable use of resources **Indicator 3.2.3:** Terrestrial, coastal, marine, pasturelands and agricultural lands protected and / or restored through improved management practices (hectares)
Gender marker	GEN 2
Implementing Partner	Ministry of Environment Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC)
Total Project Budget (USD)	USD 6,600,000
Donors (funding sources)	GEF

[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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Annual Budget (USD)	USD 853,624
Funds received during the reporting period (USD & INR)	USD 1,369,779 & 123,773,230.44 INR
Expenditure recorded for the reporting period (USD)	471,421.53 USD
Expenditure recorded for the total project (USD)	**597,724.33 USD**
Project Manager name:	**Subrato Paul**

1. Executive Summary

- *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 GoI-GEF-UNDP funded project **"Sustainable Management and Restoration of Degraded Landscapes for Achieving Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) in India"** is strategically aligned with India's commitment to restore 26 million hectares of degraded land by 2030 under the UNCCD. Anchored in Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Madhya Pradesh, the project adopts an ecosystem-based approach to restore degraded agricultural lands, forests, pastures, and water bodies, while contributing to national goals on climate resilience, biodiversity conservation, and sustainable livelihoods. The project focuses on SDG's (1,5,13 & 15). The project employs a three-pronged strategy: (i) mainstreaming LDN principles into national and state policy and planning frameworks, (ii) demonstrating participatory restoration models at the landscape level, and (iii) establishing robust monitoring systems to track and scale LDN outcomes. The project is designed to generate multiple global environmental benefits while contributing to national goals related to land restoration, climate resilience, and sustainable livelihoods.

Project Components:

Component 1: Enabling institutional, strategic frameworks and policies for integrated sustainable land management (SLM) practices and restoration of degraded production landscapes.
Component 2: Implementing and up-scaling landscape-wide integrated sustainable ecosystem management practices to void, reduce and reverse degraded production landscapes
Component 3: Monitoring system for SLM and LDN indicators; gender-mainstreaming, knowledge management, evaluation and project reporting, national outreach; and South-South cooperation

Key Results Achieved

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During the reporting period, the project made strong progress in establishing the scientific, institutional and community-level foundations necessary for achieving its land restoration and livelihood diversification targets. Comprehensive geospatial baselines were completed across all project landscapes, identifying over 1.1 million hectares of degraded agricultural, forest and grassland areas for targeted restoration. A socio-economic survey covering 2,013 households across 100 villages generated detailed insights on vulnerability, livelihoods, land use and existing FPO and SHG networks, providing a robust evidence base for beneficiary targeting, convergence planning and design of gender-responsive interventions. In parallel, the National Steering Committee and State Steering and Landscape Coordination Committees in Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra were operationalised, establishing cross-departmental platforms to validate degraded hotspots, align sectoral priorities and guide the drafting of landscape-specific eco-restoration plans. These plans are expected to translate the geospatial and socio-economic baselines into spatially targeted, ecosystem-based interventions, enable convergence with ongoing government schemes, and directly support the achievement of measurable land restoration and sustainable land management outcomes.

The reporting period also marked the project's initial on-ground engagement with communities through a bamboo nursery management and value-addition training programme in Madhya Pradesh, which trained 45 participants, comprising of 13 women and 32 men. The training enhanced technical capacities, improved confidence and readiness to adopt bamboo-based income opportunities, and represented the project's first tangible contribution toward green livelihood outcomes. Knowledge systems were strengthened through the development and dissemination of four major products, including a gender-focused compendium, an Aravalli landscape compendium and multilingual project brochures, which collectively reached over 215 stakeholders.

Major Challenges

1. Delayed Operationalisation of State Partnerships

Signing of State Letters of Agreement and opening of state-level budget heads progressed slower than anticipated, which prevented transfer of funds to states and delayed mobilisation of State PMUs and initiation of field-level actions.

2. State-Level Coordination Gaps

In Gujarat, delays in constituting the State Steering Committee and aligning line departments deferred validation of degraded hotspot maps and slowed the start of landscape planning. In Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra, staggered establishment of coordination platforms initially limited the pace of cross-sectoral decision-making required for drafting eco-restoration plans.

3. Additional Safeguards Integration Requirements

Updating the Social and Environmental Safeguards Plan following the inclusion of Madhya Pradesh required harmonisation of revised safeguard measures across state workplans, extending preparatory timelines prior to on-ground rollout. The Grievance Redressal Mechanism, while approved at the PSC meeting, is pending state-level operationalisation.

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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 made measurable progress across all components during the reporting period, with implementation advancing in line with the approved Annual Work Plan. Key achievements under each indicator are summarised below, based on evidence generated through national, state and landscape-level activities.

Indicator 1 (GEF Core Indicator 11): Number of direct beneficiaries disaggregated by gender as co-benefit of GEF investment (individual people).

To initiate state-level beneficiary identification, the project conducted planning workshops in Madhya Pradesh (19–21 March 2025; 66 participants – 53 males and 13 females) and Maharashtra (29 May 2025; 125 participants – 65 males and 60 females), which helped define project activities, identify relevant schemes, and outline preliminary beneficiary engagement pathways. These consultations provided the groundwork for mapping potential beneficiaries for inclusive and gender-responsive interventions. In Gujarat, planning activities were delayed owing to coordination constraints. To resolve these gaps and enable progress, the project team met with the Principal Secretary and the PCCF & HoFF in September 2025 in order to expedite on-ground implementation in the state.

Beneficiary mapping progressed through a detailed socio-economic baseline survey undertaken by IDCG across the project landscapes. The survey covered 2,013 households across 100 villages in Banni (513 HHs), Nandurbar (500 HHs), CSN (500 HHs) and Chhindwara (500 HHs), generating granular data on livelihoods, land use, drivers of degradation, migration patterns and community needs. This evidence base directly informs the systematic identification of direct beneficiaries and supports the design of targeted, inclusive and gender-responsive interventions under the indicator.

The results of the beneficiary mapping exercise will inform the field level interventions on eco-restoration of the selected landscapes envisaged to be implemented by the project states in the next three years of project implementation.

Indicator 2 (GEF Core Indicator 3): Area of land restored

A comprehensive baseline study (Feb–Apr 2024) was completed by IDCG, involving geospatial mapping and delineation of priority degraded hotspots across all six project landscapes. This analysis provides the scientific foundation for identifying restoration sites and quantifying the area to be covered under restoration for this indicator. To validate these findings with state institutions, dedicated workshops were held in Madhya Pradesh (2 June 2025) and Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar, Maharashtra (30 June 2025), enabling technical review of hotspot maps, restoration typologies and district-level priorities. In Gujarat, the validation process is still underway due to coordination delays, and consultations are being advanced

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to finalize state-level inputs for confirming restoration areas. In parallel, the engagement of three specialized technical agencies, one in each state, to prepare detailed eco-restoration plans for all six project landscapes is underway. Once finalised, these plans will guide the implementation of restoration practices across the identified project sites contributing towards the achievement of the targets set under the indicator. Further, interventions being undertaken by the national and state governments in the selected project sites shall be depicted as achievements under the target through convergence.

Indicator 3 (GEF Core Indicator 4): Area of landscape under improved practices (excluding protected areas)

Indicators 2 and 3 are closely interlinked, with the progress achieved contributing simultaneously to both indicators – summary in sections above. The geospatial mapping undertaken by IDCG defines the specific areas expected to contribute to this indicator. Progress toward the target will be advanced through implementation of the detailed eco-restoration plans being prepared for each landscape, as well as through convergence with ongoing national and state programmes in the identified areas.

Indicator 4 (GEF Core Indicator 6.1): Carbon sequestered, or emissions avoided over 20 years due to direct project interventions in the AFOLU sector

The progress under this indicator is dependent on the implementation of activities linked to Indicators 2 and 3. As part of baseline mapping to identify priority areas for ecosystem restoration and land degradation management in the project landscapes spatial patterns of vegetation health and carbon sequestration were analyzed using satellite-derived indices mean Normalized Difference Vegetation Index (NDVI). This will set the carbon sequestration at the baseline year.

Outcome 1: Enhanced national, state and district-level enabling frameworks incentivizing SLM practices and supporting participatory multi-sector platforms to avoid, reduce and reverse land degradation, biodiversity loss and climate mitigation.

Indicator 5: Number of government development schemes at district level that have mainstreamed complementary measures for SLM and restoration of degraded landscape.

Progress under this indicator advanced through the establishment of national and state mechanisms to enable SLM integration into district schemes. The National Steering Committee, constituted on 19 October 2024, is providing strategic direction for mainstreaming efforts. At the state level, State Steering Committees and Landscape Coordination Committees were constituted in Madhya Pradesh (5 May 2025) and Maharashtra (11 July 2025), creating the institutional structure required to review proposals and support the integration of SLM measures into development schemes. Mainstreaming into specific schemes is expected to begin in the next reporting cycle.

IDCG completed a policy mapping and analysis covering more than 80 legal and institutional instruments, identifying clear entry points for integrating SLM into major national and state schemes. These findings will be presented in upcoming National and State Steering Committee meetings to support their adoption and integration through existing implementation mechanisms, and will also inform the eco-restoration plans to enable convergence with relevant schemes and programmes.

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Indicator 6: Number of persons trained as trainers to further build capacities of different stakeholder groups to achieve LDN targets (at least 40% women) - through organization of 35 trainers-of training programmes.

The Centre of Excellence on Sustainable Land Management (COE-SLM) at ICFRE is being strengthened under the project to lead national capacity-building efforts on LDN. The Centre will support the development of scientific tools, promote technology adoption, and facilitate knowledge exchange and training, including the trainers-of-trainers programmes required under this indicator.

The Letter of Agreement with ICFRE has been approved and is in the final stages of signing, after which ICFRE will undertake the training needs assessment of project stakeholders, develop gender-responsive training modules on SLM, and design training-of-trainers courses on SLM and restoration practices as part of the planned capacity-building programme under this indicator.

Indicator 7: Number of SLM resource management units established to demonstrate land restoration practices

Planning and coordination activities were initiated to establish the SLM resource management units under this indicator. State Project Management Units engaged with the agriculture departments to identify ongoing and proposed initiatives that can be aligned with project objectives, ensuring that the units are anchored within existing departmental priorities.

In Madhya Pradesh, a stakeholder consultation was conducted on 02 June 2025 to validate the landscape boundaries identified during the baseline mapping study. Officials from the Agriculture Department actively participated in the process, helping to prioritize target landscapes and select the specific blocks where the SLM resource units will be established. In Gujarat, initial discussions have commenced, and preparations are underway to organize a similar validation meeting in the upcoming quarter. This meeting will focus on finalizing target landscapes and initiating inter-departmental coordination.

A Memorandum of Understanding is proposed with ICAR–KVKs and VVKs in all three states to support implementation of SLM activities under the eco-restoration plans and to identify suitable locations for the resource management units. This is planned for finalisation in the next reporting period.

Indicator 8: Number of persons benefitting from diversified and green livelihood options, disaggregated by gender

The socio-economic baseline survey covering 2,013 households across 100 villages has generated detailed livelihood, income and skills data that identifies community needs and viable green enterprise opportunities in each landscape. This evidence directly supports the targeting of beneficiaries for diversified and green livelihoods under this indicator. Complementing this, the livelihood technical agency to be engaged will undertake institutional mapping and profiling of existing FPOs, SHGs and producer groups, enabling the project to link households identified in the survey with capable local institutions. Together, these two exercises provide the basis for identifying potential beneficiaries and designing location-specific green livelihood interventions that will contribute to the achievement of this indicator.

As an early initiative under this indicator, a three-day bamboo value-addition training was conducted in Chhindwara, Madhya Pradesh (11–13 September 2025), reaching 45 participants (32 men and 13 women). The training strengthened participants' technical skills in crafting bamboo-based utility and

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decorative products and enhanced their understanding of market opportunities, digital promotion and enterprise development.

Indicator 9 (GEF CI 3.1 and 4.1): Area of degraded agricultural land restored and under sustainable management

A comprehensive baseline survey was completed across the selected districts in Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Maharashtra, using spatial analysis, district-level degradation mapping and stakeholder consultations to identify priority degraded agricultural landscapes. Field data collection of 200 sample points per district supported the delineation of degraded areas, including 250,977 ha in Banni, 71,329 ha in Chhindwara, 206,737 ha in Nandurbar and 588,804 ha in Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar. This evidence provides the technical foundation for planning restoration and sustainable land management interventions under this indicator.

To translate these findings into actionable interventions, the process to engage three state-specific technical agencies to prepare detailed eco-restoration plans for agricultural, forest, grassland and wetland ecosystems is in the final stages. These plans will guide implementation by the Agriculture Departments in partnership with ICAR–KVKs, CSWRTI, IARI and other specialised institutes, with MoUs to be formalised in the next reporting period.

Indicator 10 (GEF CI 3.2 & 4.2): Area of degraded grasslands restored and grassland landscape under sustainable management

A baseline survey was completed in the selected districts of Gujarat and Maharashtra, using spatial analysis and field verification to identify priority degraded grassland areas for restoration. The findings provide the technical basis for planning grassland rehabilitation and sustainable management interventions under this indicator.

Building on the same approach used for agricultural land (Indicator 9), the project is in the final stages of engaging three state-specific technical agencies to prepare detailed eco-restoration plans for grassland ecosystems. Grassland restoration as per the eco-restoration plans prepared will be undertaken by the Forest Departments in collaboration with specialised institutions such as the Central Grassland and Fodder Research Institute (CGFRI) and related expert bodies in the next reporting period.

Indicator 11 (GEF CI 4.3): Area of forest landscape under sustainable management

The baseline survey identified degraded forest patches across the selected districts, providing a scientific basis for prioritising areas for restoration and sustainable management under this indicator. Similar to agricultural land and grasslands, the engagement of three technical agencies to prepare eco-restoration plans for all ecosystems, including forests, is in the final stages. Implementation of sustainable forest management practices in the next reporting period will be undertaken by the Forest Departments in partnership with specialised institutions such as ICFRE and other forestry and soil conservation institutes.

Indicator 12: Centre of Excellence for South-South Cooperation operational

Establishing Centre of Excellence on Sustainable Land Management (CoE-SLM): Originally announced at COP 14 in 2019, the Centre was officially inaugurated on 20 May 2023 at ICFRE, Dehradun. It serves as a key institutional mechanism to support technical cooperation, knowledge exchange, and regional collaboration on addressing land degradation. During the reporting period, steps were undertaken to initiate the operationalisation of the CoE-SLM.

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During the reporting period, three coordination meetings were held with the Centre of Excellence on Sustainable Land Management (CoE-SLM) to define the scope of collaboration and institutional roles. Based on these consultations, a Letter of Agreement (LoA) outlining ICFRE's responsibilities has been drafted. The LoA has been approved by ICFRE and is in the final stages of being signed.

Once formalized, the LoA will enable the implementation of CoE-SLM activities endorsed by the National Project Steering Committee, including the development of South-South Cooperation proposals, establishment of a GIS laboratory to support land degradation monitoring, and engagement of technical experts for national-level capacity building and knowledge exchange.

Indicator 13: Establishment of a real time dashboard detailing targeted interventions on water, soil and land restored using localized data, as well as mapping and assessment of existing government schemes on land degradation, and financial gap assessment data

As part of the Letter of Agreement (LoA) to be signed, a set of activities has been allocated to the Centre of Excellence on Sustainable Land Management (CoE-SLM), ICFRE. These activities include the development of a real time dashboard detailing targeted interventions on water, soil and land restored using localized data, as well as mapping and assessment of existing government schemes on land degradation, and financial gap assessment data.

Indicator 14: Increase in flow of knowledge and information on best practices, as measured by (a) the cumulative number of visits/downloads of knowledge products on Internet, project's website, and social media platforms, and (b) the number of people (gender disaggregated) reached through dissemination of knowledge products, participation in workshops; (c) number of knowledge products prepared and disseminated by the project.

Under sub-indicator (a), efforts to enhance digital outreach have commenced. While the dedicated project website is still under development and expected to go live by the second quarter of 2026, initial visibility has been established through the publication of the project brochure on the UNDP India website. This marks the beginning of the project's online engagement and download metrics will be monitored regularly following the website launch to track progress.

In line with sub-indicator (b), the project has begun reaching stakeholders through the dissemination of knowledge products and participation in workshops.

During state-level planning workshops held in Madhya Pradesh (17-18 March 2025) and Maharashtra (29 May 2025), Brochures translated into Hindi, Gujarati, and Marathi were shared with participants, reaching a total of 215 individuals, including 134 men and 81 women. This outreach forms the initial step toward achieving the target.

Progress has also been made under sub-indicator (c), with four knowledge products developed and disseminated to date. These include: i) the project brochure (English) (), launched during the Inception Workshop on 31 July 2024 and subsequently translated into three vernacular languages for wider accessibility; ii)) a compendium on the Aravalli Landscape Districts, with a focus on Banaskantha, Gujarat, launched by the Hon'ble Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change on 17 June 2025 to mark the World Day to Combat Desertification.

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a) Indicator and Expenditure Reporting

Output statement	Indicator	Baseline Value	End of the project target	Actuals achieved against target for the indicator[2]	Evidence[3]	Budget as per AWP (USD)	Actual Expenditure (USD)	Remarks (if any)
Project Objective: To achieve land degradation neutrality (LDN) through sustainable ecosystem-based management and restoration of degraded landscapes across	**Indicator 1**: Number of direct beneficiaries disaggregated by gender as co-benefit of GEF investment (individual people)	0	180,000 [Female: 72,000 & Male: 108,000]	-2 state level Planning workshops held with a total of 191 participants (118 male, 73 female)	Minutes of Planning Workshop_Chhindwara GEF7_LDN_Workshop_MoMs Nandurbar.pdf	**853,624** **Component 1 – 372334** **Component 2- 181160** **Component 3 – 190398** **PMC- 89732** **DPC – 20,000**		

[2] Please report cumulative actuals.

[3] 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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agricultural, forest, pastoral lands and surface water bodies.	**Indicator 2:** Area of land restored	0	108,000 ha degraded land restored	Please fill this figure 0	Comprehensive Geospatial Approach Based Report- Banni Grassland, Gujarat.pdf Revised- Geospatial Analysis report- Maharashtra .pdf Revised- Geo spatial analysis- Chhindwara (1).pdf Validation Workshop_ MP_MoM.pdf			

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					Validation Workshop_ Maharashtra .pdf Policy Mapping & Analysis.pdf			
	Indicator 3 *(GEF Core Indicator 4):* Area of landscape under improved practices (excluding protected areas)	0	209,000 ha under improved practices	0				
	Indicator 4 *(GEF Core Indicator 6.1):* Carbon sequestered, or emissions avoided over 20-years due to	0	6,793,648 tCO2eq sequestered or avoided over 20 years due to direct project interventions	0				

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	direct project interventions in the AFOLU sector							
Component 1 Enabling institutional, strategic frameworks and policies for integrated sustainable land management (SLM) practices and restoration of degraded production landscape	**Indicator 5:** Number of government development schemes at district level that have mainstreamed complementary measures for SLM and restoration of degraded landscape.	0	5	0	Policy Mapping & Analysis.pdf O.M. for constitution of NPSC.pdf SSC and LCC Constitution Orders_MP.pdf SSC and LCC_Maharashtra.pdf	**Component 1 – 372,334**	**Component 1: 1,96,549 USD**	
	Indicator 6: Number of persons trained as trainers to further build capacities of different stakeholder	0	700 (through organization of 35 training programmes) [Female -335 & Male -365]	*0*	LOA to be signed with ICFRE			

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	groups to achieve LDN targets (at least 40% women) - through organization of 35 trainers-of training programmes.							
Component 2: Implementing and up-scaling landscape-wide integrated sustainable ecosystem management practices to avoid, reduce and reverse degraded production landscapes.	**Indicator 7:** Number of SLM resource management units established to demonstrate land restoration practices	0	6 units established (two in each state)	*0*	Letters to Line Departments.pdf	**Component 2-181160**	**Component 2: 110,350 USD**	
	Indicator 8: Number of persons benefitting from diversified and green livelihood options, disaggregated by gender	0	2000 [Female – 760 & Male – 1240]	- Bamboo training held in MP – 13 women and 32 men	Training Completion Report			
	Indicator 9 (GEF CI 3.1 and 4.1):	0	190,000 ha	*0*				

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	Area of degraded agricultural land restored and under sustainable management		1) 76,000 ha of agriculture degraded land restored. 2) 114,000 ha of agriculture land					
	Indicator 10 (GEF CI 3.2 & 4.2): Area of degraded grasslands restored and grassland landscape under sustainable management	0	82,000 ha 1) 32,000 ha of grassland degraded land restored. 2) 50,000 hectares of grassland	*0*				
	Indicator 11 (GEF CI 4.3): Area of forest landscape under sustainable management	0	90,000 ha 1) 45,000 ha of forests land 2) 12,000 ha of productive forest landscape under improved practices 3) 33,000 ha of High Conservation Value Forest	*0*				

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			(HCVF) landscape under improved practices.					
Component 3: Monitoring system for SLM and LDN indicators; gender-mainstreaming, knowledge management, evaluation and project reporting, national outreach; and South-South cooperation.	**Indicator 12:** Centre of Excellence for South-South Cooperation operational	0	1	*0*	Press Release COE Establishment.pdf Sowing Equality, Growing Sustainability.pdf COMPENDIUM OF DISTRICTS IN ARAVALLI LANDSCAPE.pdf SSC and LCC_Maharashtra.pdf Short Film on LDN.mp4	**Component 3 – 190398**	**Component 3 – 9,707 USD**	
	Indicator 13: Establishment of a **real time dashboard** detailing targeted interventions on water, soil and land restored using localized data, as well as mapping and assessment of existing government schemes on land degradation,	0	1	*0*				

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	and financial gap assessment data				Vernacular Project Brochures.pdf			
	Indicator 14: Increase in flow of knowledge and information on best practices, as measured by (a) the cumulative number of visits/downloads of knowledge products on Internet, project's website, and social media platforms, and (b) the number of people (gender disaggregated) reached through dissemination of knowledge products,		a) 20,000 visits/downloads of knowledge products on Internet, project's website, and social media platforms, and (b) at least 20% of the beneficiaries (of whom 50% are women) reached through dissemination of knowledge products, participation in workshops, etc.; (c) 20 knowledge products.					

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	participation in workshops; (c) number of knowledge products prepared and disseminated by the project.							
Monitoring and Evaluation Cost						*USD* **82,000**		
Project Management Cost						**89732 USD**	*USD* **13,034**	
Total AWP Budget and and Actual Expenditure (USD)						**USD 853,624**		
Co-financing Materialized for VFs (USD)								

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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. Change in Project Implementation State

Risk: Karnataka's withdrawal due to high co-finance requirements created a major deviation from the original design. The subsequent process of identifying and confirming an alternate state (Madhya Pradesh) required extensive consultations with three states, delaying agreement finalisation and field-level initiation.

Mitigation Measures:

- Conducted multi-level consultations with state governments and MoEFCC to ensure alignment and secure co-financing commitments.
- NPSC endorsement of Madhya Pradesh (11 February 2024) ensured institutional ownership and restored implementation timelines.

2. Leadership Transitions in MoEFCC (Recurrent / Persistent)

Risk: Changes in senior leadership during the initial implementation phase resulted in additional time being required for familiarisation with project objectives and processes.

Mitigation Measures:

- UNDP and NPMU conducted structured briefings for every leadership transition.
- Senior management review meetings were held to maintain oversight and fast-track pending approvals.
- Regular review meetings with MoEFCC are being held to maintain momentum and ensure continuity in decision-making.

3. Delay in Establishing the Project Management Unit (Recurrent / Operational)

Risk: Delays in convening the NSC meeting required for organogram approval slowed recruitment of the project team at national and state levels, affecting the timing of initial activities.

Mitigation Measures:

- With NSC approval in place, State PMUs have been operationalised and are progressing with implementation.
- The National Project Manager is expected to be engaged soon, with onboarding anticipated in the upcoming period.

5. Delay in Signing State Letters of Agreement (Recurrent / Operational)

Risk: State Letters of Agreement (LoAs), required to operationalise on-ground implementation in the project landscapes, experienced delays due to procedural requirements, election-related restrictions, and the need to complete HACT assessments.

Mitigation Measures:

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- HACT assessments for all states have now been completed. Project budget accounts have been opened in Madhya Pradesh and are under process in the remaining states.
- Draft LoAs have been shared with Madhya Pradesh, and discussions with other states are being advanced.
- A review meeting chaired by the Inspector General of Forests was held to facilitate timely completion of LoAs and expedite state-level preparations.

6. Coordination-Related Delays in Gujarat (New / Emerging)
Risk: Initial delays in state-level coordination in Gujarat slowed early planning and stakeholder engagement.
Mitigation Measures:

- High-level meetings with the Principal Secretary and PCCF & HoFF are being held to streamline communication and expedite state-level processes.
- Follow-up engagements with departments are being conducted to maintain momentum.

7. Start-Up Delays Affecting Initial Field Implementation (Recurrent)
Risk: The cumulative effect of onboarding processes, leadership transitions, procedural approvals, and LoA-related timelines contributed to slower-than-planned initiation of on-ground activities.
Mitigation Measures:

- National Steering and State Steering Committees (in Madhya Pradesh & Maharashtra) have been constituted to provide direction for implementation.
- Orientation and planning workshops have been conducted to accelerate beneficiary identification, convergence planning, and field preparation.
- Baseline studies, policy analysis, and socio-economic surveys are being progressed to ensure technical groundwork continues while administrative processes are completed.

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 project was assessed as substantial risk under the Social and Environmental Screening Procedure (SESP) during the Project Preparation Grant (PPG) phase, given the landscape-level nature of interventions, engagement with tribal people and vulnerable communities, and the potential for social, livelihood, gender, and environmental impacts.

During the reporting period, the shift in project landscape from Karnataka to Madhya Pradesh required a reassessment of the existing risk profile to reflect the revised socio-environmental and institutional context. In this regard, one national and one international

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consultant have been onboarded to strengthen the project's SES instruments, including conducting **the Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA), and updating the Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF) and Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP).** Draft revisions have been prepared, and **state-level validation consultations are planned in the next reporting period** prior to finalization and disclosure.

A **Gender Action Plan (GAP)** developed during the PPG phase continues to guide gender-responsive implementation and targeted measures for women's participation and access to project benefits.

The project-level **Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM) has been formalized** in the reporting year and is designed to function through a **tiered structure**, with the **Project Management Unit (PMU) as the first channel for grievance intake and resolution**, followed by escalation to the **district and state levels**, and finally to the **national level**, as required. This structure is intended to ensure timely, accessible, and transparent resolution of concerns raised by project-affected stakeholders, including marginalized groups. Operationalization of the GRM, including dissemination, capacity-building, and integration with state-level processes, will be completed in the next reporting period. **No SES-related grievances have been reported during the current reporting period** through the GRM or other reporting mechanisms.

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.

- COMPENDIUM OF DISTRICTS IN ARAVALLI LANDSCAPE.pdf,
- Vernacular Project Brochure

6. Partnerships

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

During the reporting period, the project advanced key institutional partnerships essential for technical delivery and field implementation. A major partnership being formalised is with the Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education (ICFRE) through a Letter of Agreement (LoA), which has been approved by ICFRE and is in the final stages of signing. Under this partnership, an amount of INR 1,42,25,000 (approximately USD 170,000) will be transferred to ICFRE to support activities of the Centre of Excellence on Sustainable Land Management (CoE-SLM), including training needs assessment, development of SLM training modules, capacity-building programmes, and strengthening of national knowledge systems.

At the state level, preparations are underway to establish partnerships with the ICAR Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs) and Van Vigyan Kendras (VVKs) across the three project states. These partnerships will support the implementation of eco-restoration activities, demonstration of

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sustainable land management practices, and establishment of SLM resource management units under the project. Formalisation of these arrangements is expected in the next reporting period.

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

Lessons Learned

- Early alignment between national and state institutions is essential, as delays in leadership approvals and procedural steps slowed initiation of activities.
- Orientation and planning workshops helped strengthen state ownership and clarify roles, improving readiness for implementation.
- Multi-department coordination requires sustained follow-up to keep processes such as LoA finalisation and PMU operationalisation on track.
- Updating SES instruments due to changes in project geography shows the need to initiate safeguards and FPIC-related processes early.
- Baseline assessments, policy mapping and socio-economic surveys provided critical analytical foundations for convergence and must align with state planning cycles.

Way Forward

- Complete State LoAs, operationalise PMUs and onboard the National Project Manager to enable full-scale rollout.
- Finalise and disclose updated ESMF, ESIA and SEP following state-level consultations, including FPIC planning.
- Engage and mobilise three technical agencies to prepare ecosystem-specific eco-restoration plans.
- Operationalise the partnership with ICFRE after LoA signing to begin training, capacity building and knowledge activities.
- Formalise MoUs with KVKs and VVKs across the three states to support on-ground SLM demonstrations.

Key Issues to be addressed in the next reporting period

Formalising the State LoAs and sustaining strong coordination with state departments will be critical to maintaining momentum as the project transitions into full implementation. Planning for the next cycle must align with the updated safeguard instruments, including the revised SESP and FPIC requirements. As on-ground restoration and livelihood activities commence, regular monitoring will be essential to ensure quality delivery, compliance with SES standards, and timely course correction throughout the year.

8. Annexures

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

S.no.	**Description** Enter a brief description of the risk which should include future events and cause. Risks identified through HACT, PCAT, SES, Private Sector due diligence and other assessments should be included	**Risk Category** Social and environmental, financial, operational, organizational, political, regulatory, strategic, other sub-categories	**Likelihood and Impact** Describe the potential effect on the project if the future event were to occur. Enter likelihood based on 1-5 scale (1 = not likely; 5 = expected) Enter impact based on 1-5 scale (1= negligible; 5 = extreme) Based on Likelihood and Impact, use the risk matrix to identify the Risk Level (High, Substantial, Moderate, or Low)	**Risk Treatment / Management Measures** What actions have been taken/ will be taken to manage the risk	**Risk Owner** The person or entity with the responsibility to manage the risk
1.	Lack of ownership and support of different levels	Operational	Overlapping mandates of central government	Project Steering Committee to promptly review and decide on	Project Manager

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	of government institutions could obstruct project implementation		units and challenges in cooperation during project preparation indicate that there is a risk of non-cooperation due to institutional mandate and other factors. **MODERATE** L = 3 I = 3	any such issues arising during implementation	
2.	Government staff turnover may impede project implementation : inexperienced staff may therefore have to lead on some activities	Operational	Regular staff turnover is a normal feature of the Government of India civil service. Consequently, staff that have gained knowledge, played important coordination roles, or taken part training activities may be transferred to a role that does not allow their experience to be gainfully applied. The project would then have to repeat such orientation and training with replacement staff. **LOW** L = 3 I = 1	The project generally aims to build capacity within the government agencies involved in landscape conservation and related issues and will train staff from each competent authority as well as other related agencies. This will increase the depth of experience and skills available both for the project and future work.	Project Manager

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3.	Complex fund flow mechanisms and low capacity to disburse project fund efficiently	Operational	Government mechanism for the receipt, disbursement and accounting of international funds are bureaucratic and inefficient, carrying the risk of substantial delays and possible failures in implementations . **SUBSTANTIAL** L = 3 I = 4	Measures will be taken to ensure efficient fund flows and transfers. Project Steering Committee to promptly review and propose solutions to any significant problems or delays impacting disbursement and progress of planned activities.	Project Manager
4.	Local districts and community associations might not have the capacity to implement project activities successfully, and monitor the impacts leading to ill-adapted management decisions and poor accountability to the beneficiaries	Strategic	The project will support activities with local communities, community associations and local institutions at project sites. These might not be fully capacitated to discharge project activities. Lack of capacity to implement these activities could limit success of project activities or result in unintended negative consequences. Existing marginalization dynamics may	• In order to reinforce the capacities of the duty-bearers to conduct the project effectively and meet their obligations, output 1.4 and output 1.5 are specifically dedicated to capacity-building. These activities will be complemented by specific capacity-building activities on Safeguards Management, Gender equity, FPIC implementation and Stakeholder Engagement, as planned in the ESMF's capacity building section.	Project Manager

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			also affect the ability from duty-bearers to fully account for gender-based conflict and adequately respond to potential grievances raised by women on the project sites. **MODERATE** L= 2 I= 3	• Alignment of national priorities and coordination of agricultural policy between the national and the local level will be key. The project steering committee will be in-charge of ensuring this alignment. It is key that that local authorities at the district level are empowered in safeguards management, as planned in the ESMF, to make sure that the SES policy is adequately applied. • The PMU will include professionals with expertise in administrative, social as well as technical aspects of the project. This will include both a Gender expert and a Safeguard expert to support the PMU. Thematic experts will provide technical inputs and support the project management unit in building capacities of agencies and individuals tasked with project	

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				implementation in SES. The support of consultants working on monitoring and evaluation and safeguards will be needed, but the CO will prioritize the integration of competencies within the PMU and/or at the CO level in order to ensure continuous quality of support. Project staff will be supported on a continual basis through training and refresher courses, and hand-holding during the initial part of the project, by the Safeguard officer / consultant. • These measures will ensure that technical staff and implementing partners are well equipped to effectively and efficiently discharge their duties and that project management and administration are handled professionally and meet both GEF and UNDP standards and requirements.	
5.	Risk that targeted	Operational	The project will target certain	Consultations during the PPG covered	Project Manager

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	communities are not motivated to participate in sustainable livelihood activities that support restoration		communities in key areas of the project landscape to conduct livelihood diversification activities, landscape restoration and other activities. Some communities may not wish to participate if they feel that their access to natural resources may be affected. **MODERATE** L = 3 I = 3	various communities in the project landscapes, including assessment of their level and potential for engagement. To counter the risk of low participation, the project has followed a participatory and consultative process, including FPIC with the concerned communities, and any activity will only be conducted with the full agreement of the communities.	
6.	The project relies on participatory approaches. However, because of existing marginalization dynamics locally, the project could exclude both tribal peoples and women from adequately participating to the multi-stakeholder platform to be established (output 1.3) and the subsequent development	Social	Project demonstrations will take place in Gujarat, Karnataka and Maharashtra. Project landscapes are inhabited by tribal communities some of who might not have stable land rights arrangements and who suffer from marginalization dynamics. Agriculture is the main occupation of these communities, and it is key that they are	• During PPG, extensive consultations were conducted in all districts. The PPG team, who received a Safeguard introduction training, conducted consultations at the community level, including with Tribal peoples and women. The selection of target project intervention sites has been based on ecological and technical criteria as well as community/IP agreements	Project Manager

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	of Integrated land-management (ILM) plans (output 2.2)		adequately consulted as per FPIC guidelines. The Panchayat (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 also known as PESA, was enacted to enable tribal self-rule in these areas. PESA gives special powers to the Gram Sabhas in scheduled areas especially for the management of natural resources. Similarly, under the Biological Diversity Act, 2002, the Panchayat can constitute a biodiversity management committee which will decide on matters related to access to bio-resources and traditional knowledge. Likewise, there are gender disparities in the target districts that need to be identified and considered in project design. There is a risk that these	following consultation and consent. • The Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF) outlines all steps required in order to ensure full compliance with SES requirement during project implementation. In accordance with the ESMF an environmental and social impact assessment (ESIA) will be carried out at project inception to assess this and all other environmental and social risks. The ESIA will be immediately followed by an Environmental and Social Management Plan (ESMP) including targeted management plans. The ESIA process will draw upon the ESMF to assess the associated impacts, and to inform the specific management measures outlined in the ensuing Management Plans. • One of these targeted plans will	

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			consultations might not fully capture or reflect views of women and girls including indigenous groups. **SUBSTANTIAL** L = 3 I = 4	be the Indigenous Peoples Planning Framework (IPPF), which may be referred to as "Social Inclusion Planning Framework", to be designed before any of the outputs potentially affecting Tribal peoples (namely, 1.3, 1.5 and 2.2) may commence. This IPPF will include guidelines for conducting the FPIC Process. • Another targeted plan is the Gender Action Plan, which has been designed during PPG and provides guidance to mainstream gender throughout the project, and to ensure full and effective participation of women. • A gender-responsive and socially inclusive Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP) was designed during PPG • FPIC provisions are included in the Prodoc (i.e.1.5.2) and will apply, as per the IPPF, to all relevant outputs. • The Project Management Unit	

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				(PMU) will include a full time Safeguard expert and a full time Gender expert • As stated in the ESMF, the project will establish a Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM)	
7.	Gender-Based Violence is a prominent issue in the project landscapes – the support to women livelihoods may exacerbate GBV within the community if they create power struggles at the household or village level	Social	Women's vulnerability to violence is related to their general vulnerability in socio-economic systems. The project will provide support to women's livelihoods. In some cases (i.e. the Meghwal community in Kachchh), the women will be the primary recipients of the livelihood support. However, this support could foster changes in social dynamics, which in turn could lead to a temporary increase in GBV. **MODERATE** L = 3 I = 3	• To address the risk of Gender-based Violence, the project will establish a process in the Stakeholder Response Mechanism to record GBV cases and related complaints and decide how to respond in collaboration with local CSOs and existing institutional mechanisms in place (if any) • In line with national policies as well as UNDP and GEF guidelines, the project will adopt the following principles in its day-to-day management: a. Demonstrate gender responsiveness in all interactions with project stakeholders;	Project Manager

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				b. No use of language or behaviour denoting bias and disrespect for any individual based on gender or ethnicity; c. Avoid gender stereotyping in project documents, and communication outputs; d. Support zero tolerance for sexual harassment, gender-based violence and/or sexual exploitation and abuse of men, women, girls and boys that may occur in connection with any of its supported activities. • The project will organise a training for the PMU on gender-integrated planning and project implementation and on risks related to gender inequalities including Gender-based Violence.	

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8.	The landscapes are highly vulnerable to climate change. Landscape level eco-restoration plans could increase communities' vulnerability	Environmental	Climate change could result in increased frequency and/or severity of extreme climatic events or natural hazards that could impede project impact in medium and long term Gujarat bears a high risk for river flood, coastal flood, landslide, cyclone, water scarcity, extreme heat, wild fire ; a medium risk for urban flood, earthquake and tsunami Maharashtra bears a high risk for urban flood, coastal flood, landslide, cyclone, extreme heat, wild fire ; a medium risk for river flood, earthquake, water scarcity, and tsunami Karnataka bears a high risk for urban flood, river floods, landslides, cyclones,	• The climate adaptation approach is meant to ensure the sustainability of this system and of the whole landscape, taking into account broader environmental and social constraints. • Stakeholder consultations and ESIA will be key to determine local techniques and practices and informed by local planning and landscape management approaches. This is meant to ensure sustainable use of resources and avoid adverse impacts on ecosystems and people's livelihoods. • Technical expertise will be required to design the measures with training to the farmers + Exchange visits planned in the projects. Technical experts will need to make sure that the measures are in line with India's disaster management planning system	Project Manager

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			extreme heat, water scarcity, wild fire ; a medium risk for coastal flood, earthquake, and tsunami **MODERATE** L= 2 I= 3	• The project will work to strengthen institutional capacities to ensure effective and efficient management of agricultural land, grasslands and forest lands in regard to climate change	