

LESOTHO



COUNTRY PROGRAMME STRATEGY OPERATIONAL PHASE 8 2024 - 2028



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Table 1 OP8 Financial Resources - SGP Country Programme (estimated US\$)

Total SGP Grants to date since Country Programme start date (2008)	USD 3,515,258
OP8 GEF Core Funds	USD 500,000 TBC
OP8 GEF STAR Funds	USD 900,000
Other funds (secured)	USD 100,000
Other funds (expected/to be mobilized)	USD 120,000



1. INTRODUCTION

The Eighth Operational Phase of the Small Grants Programme (SGP OP8) builds on 30 years of successful experience in empowering local civil society organizations (CSOs) and community-based organizations (CBOs) in designing and leading community driven initiatives that have enhanced household wellbeing, increased awareness, and resilience regarding environmental threats, and generated global environmental benefits. With economic development pressures intensifying in many parts of the developing world and the associated rising inequalities, local communities, particularly vulnerable and disadvantaged groups are becoming increasingly marginalized, unable to cope with threats associated with ecosystem degradation, biodiversity loss and climate change. Lessons learned and experience gained in previous SGP Operational Phases have demonstrated that integrated, landscape-seascape approaches are effective in mobilizing multiple stakeholder collaboration, linking local CSOs/CBOs with enabling partners and achieving mutually supportive livelihood and environmental outcomes at scale.

The objectives of the SGP OP8 is to engage local CSOs/CBOs in landscape-seascape approaches across the world, providing them access to knowledge and information, capacitating them through learning-by-doing, skills development, and delivering technical and grant assistance for interventions that enhance wellbeing and socioeconomic conditions and generate global environmental benefits.

The OP8 objectives reflect the key features of GEF Small Grants Programme 2.0, including new approaches to support youth, women and Indigenous Peoples, linking up with complementary mechanisms, such as the Microfinance Initiative and CSO Challenge Programme, cooperating with other GEF Agencies, and leveraging opportunities with GEF strategies, including the delivery of the GEF-8 Integrated Programmes. In addition, OP8 will facilitate opportunities for innovation and scaling up, catalyze multi-stakeholder alliances to test innovative approaches through CSOs, and leverage its dialogue platforms towards greater impact. OP8 will also align and contribute to the UNDP Strategic Plan (2022-2025).

2. COUNTRY PROGRAMME SUMMARY: Key results and achievements

The Lesotho SGP project portfolio has grown steadily from 17 in OP4 to more than 100 by end of OP 7. In addition, the awareness about the environmental challenges facing the country grew and more CSOs became aware of and sought to access the SGP. The Programme, now in its 17th year (2008 – 2024), has to date registered 117 community project grants with over USD 1.5 million awarded in grants to local communities through more than 50 civil society organizations (NGOs, CBOs and academic and research institutions) benefiting more than 10,000 people, majority being women followed by men and youth and reaching more than 20,000 in awareness campaigns.

In OP6 the SGP in Lesotho adopted the landscape approach, with the Senqu/Orange River Basin selected as the priority landscape for SGP interventions in OP6 and OP7, thus resulting in an increase in the mass of projects in the landscape that is inhabited mostly by the less literate and most impoverished of the populace who are, on the other hand, entrusted with the stewardship of the country's biodiversity hotspots and strategic water sources of international significance. With agriculture, particularly livestock farming, being the main livelihood support activity in this rugged terrain, community landscape conservation with focus on sustainable rangeland management continued to dominate the projects portfolio (Table 2). Notwithstanding this result, the investments thus far cover only about one third of this vast landscape.

There are a number of other on-going initiatives and programmes across the Senqu River Valley landscape. These include among others, (i) the Integrated Catchment Management Programme whose focus is restoration of land and water resources in Lesotho and the Orange-Senqu River Basin; supported through a

partnership between the Government of Lesotho, the European Union Delegation to Lesotho and BMZ; (ii) Wool and Mohair Promotion Project (WAMPP), an International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)/Government of Lesotho (GoL) funded project operating across Lesotho but mainly in the mountain districts including the Senqu River Valley from Quthing to Mokhotlong. The Project sought to improve the resilience of smallholder farmers from the impacts of climate change through three key components: i) climate smart rangeland management; ii) livestock improvement and management; and iii) Marketing and processing of livestock products. Through this project quite a few grazing associations were established. This increased the network of CBOs particularly in the areas that fall within the SGP priority landscape for both OP6 & 7 thus laying a foundation for the SGP grantmaking process. The bulk of the brush control achievements realized by the SGP grantees is mostly attributable to WAMPP support notably in the districts of Thaba Tseka where the Department of Range Resources Management deliberately targeted the SGP grantee projects for the brush control campaign.

It is envisaged that the follow-on project “WaMCoP” that is going to build on the lessons from WAMPP bring in a strong component on value chain governance and coordination. The ongoing “*Integrated Watershed Management for improved agro-pastoral livelihoods in the Sebakale sub-catchment*,” in Quthing. The Sebakale project has anchored the pilot site for the Lesotho chapter of the Great Green Wall Initiative implemented by the Government of Lesotho in partnership with the SGP for this pilot phase. The upcoming “Promoting Conservation, Sustainable Utilization and Fair and Equitable Benefit-Sharing from Lesotho’s Medicinal Plants for Improved Livelihoods,” is another opportunity for strengthening local communities’ involvement in conservation as true stewards of natural resources.

Table 2 Distribution of Project Grants by Strategic Initiative and by Focal Area in OP6 & 7

Source: Project Portfolio. (SGP Database)							
Strategic Initiative/Outcome	Number of Projects	Focal Areas contributed to per Intervention					
		BD	CC	LD	IW	CH	CD
Community landscape conservation	46	10	0	35	1	0	0
Climate smart innovative agro-ecology	8	5		3			
Low carbon energy access co-benefits	3		3				
Local to global chemical management coalitions	1	-	-	-	-	1	-
CSO-Government Policy and Planning Dialogue Platforms	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Promoting Social Inclusion	1	1	-	-	-	-	-
Country Programme Strategy	2						2
Global Reach for Citizen Practice-Based Knowledge Programme	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
TOTAL NUMBER OF PROJECTS IN OP6&7	63	16	5	38	1	1	4

Through the established grantee and other partnerships that form the backbone of the SGP, more than 4000 hectares of degraded land, mostly rangelands, has been rehabilitated and put back to productive use and under sustainable management. There is a notable decrease in incidents of wildfires particularly within the Mokhotlong, Qacha’s Nek and Thaba Tseka project areas with the water table and water retaining capacity of wetlands all together covering more than 20 ha improved. The SGP has contributed to the establishment



of community botanical gardens, adoption of renewable energy technologies such as biogas production, solar energy to name a few, and enhanced the capacity of NGOs and CBOs in project development and management and leadership and conflict resolution. The Programme has seen more than 50 species of plants, including those gazetted by government as threatened protected and conserved. There has also been notable impact on preservation of cultural heritage, specifically San rock art caves in Maseru, Qacha's Nek and Thaba Tseka districts, containing some of the unique paintings found in southern Arica.

Following the declaration of the Sehlabathebe National Park (SNP), the Lesotho component of the Transboundary Maloti Drakensberg Park (MDP) World Heritage Site, a transboundary Community Management of Protected Areas Conservation Project (COMPACT) has been established and is being implemented jointly by Lesotho and South Africa, the two countries managing the MDP. The COMPACT project is meant to empower and strengthen involvement and beneficitation of the local communities in the management and preservation of the outstanding universal value of Sehlabathebe National Park. Grantees in the SNP Buffer Zone have pulled resources and engaged two consultants to provide mentorship and Monitoring and reporting support for the first twelve months of project implementation. This support is reinforcing the support grantees are already enjoying from the SNP Team. Through capacity development and CSO-government dialogue grants, the weak CSO network and mountain communities, particularly in the priority landscape are being empowered and mentored to develop and implement community environmental protection projects that enhance the livelihoods of mountain communities.

The resilience of mountain communities was further strengthened through the SGP-Mountain Products initiative through which the process for narrative labeling of dry beans and sorghum was initiated. Further assistance, technical and financial, is required to complete the initiated processes for certification of the products. These achievements however particularly agricultural productivity was severely impacted by effects of climate change as evidenced by severe drought in 2017/2018, heavy rains and flooding in 2021/2022 and the Covid-19 pandemic.

Resource mobilization efforts, particularly at Country Programme level, picked up during this period with the Country Programme receiving GEF-7 and GEF-8 STAR amounting to USD 1.5 million. Most of the co-financing is in the form of in-kind contribution and the bulk of it is at project level. The number of community projects in the COMPACT Site has increased from 1 in 2019 to 8 in 2023, a development that has increased the mass of community projects in the buffer zone of the Sehlabathebe National Park that will enhance, involvement of the local communities in conservation and their beneficitation thereof. Another partnership on Business Development Support Services for SGP grantees among other initiatives in UNDP is being facilitated by SGP with Basotho Enterprises Development Corporation (BEDCO). Through this partnership, SGP grantees in Sehlabathebe and elsewhere will benefit from BEDCO's incubation and acceleration programme. The process for development of a Memorandum of Understanding for this partnership is underway. Furthermore, active participation of the SGP Team in the Natural Resources Management Donors Coordination Forum is an inroad for raising the needed co-financing for the Country Programme.

Lesotho is one of the 8 countries contributing toward implementation of the SADC Strategy for the Great Green Wall Initiative (GGWI). Through consultation with the National GGWI Focal Point in Lesotho, grantmaking under the initiative will be piloted in Quthing district to build on the community mobilization work done under a GEF project titled "Integrated Watershed Management for improved agro-pastoral livelihoods in the Seapala sub-catchment," also a designated GGWI Sub-catchment (SC54). This initiative closes the grantmaking gap in this southern part of the priority landscape.

Among the few success stories thus far is a sustainable range resources management project in the Mokhotlong district that has become a demonstration for leadership, harmony, and cohesion for sound management of natural resources, rangelands in particular. A capacity development grant was awarded for mentorship of small CBOs in the districts of Mokhotlong, Qacha's Nek and Thaba Tseka, an initiative that enhanced the capacity of small CBOs to implement and manage projects and report accordingly. Through a strategic project on Women-led Nature-based enterprises, bees and their importance not only as a livelihoods activity but also as a landscape restoration strategy has ignited a passion for beekeeping notably among women and girls, culminating in organization of beekeepers and establishment of a national beekeepers association called Beekeeping and Industry Organization of Lesotho (BIOLE). The Director of Technologies for Economic Development (TED) with this project won the Mountain Innovation Award 2023.

3. COUNTRY PRIORITIES AND STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

3.1 Alignment with national priorities

Table 3 List of relevant conventions and national/regional plans or programmes

Conventions + national planning frameworks		Date of ratification / completion
GEF-8 National Dialogues		2023
Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF)		
CBD National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP)		2000
Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit-Sharing (ABS)		2014
UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)		1995
UNFCCC National Communications	1 st National Communication	2000
	2 nd National Communication	2013
	3 rd National Communication	2021
UNFCCC Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions (NAMA)		
UNFCCC National Adaptation Plans of Action (NAPA)		1997
Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) for the Paris Accord	First NDC	2018
	Second NDC	Under review
UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)		1995
UNCCD National Action Programmes (NAP)	Completed in 1999 and reviewed in 2005 to align it with major national policies	2005
Stockholm Convention (SC) on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs)		2002
SC National Implementation Plan (NIP)		2009
Minamata Convention (MC) on Mercury		2014
UN 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)		
Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) for the UN SDGs		2019 and 2022
Strategic Action Programmes (SAPs) for shared international waterbodies (IW)		2014
GEF-7 National Dialogues		
National Strategic Development Plan (NSDP)	NSDP II 2018 - 2024	2018
	Extended NSDP II 2024 - 2028	Under review
United Nations Sustainable Development Framework Lesotho 2024 - 2028		2023
UNDP Country Programme Document 2024 - 2028		2023

3.2 Gaps and opportunities

Lesotho's environment and natural resource base is under threat from a myriad of forces. The threats are compounded by the growing population pressure on the land, development as well as legal and institutional problems in managing land. Land degradation is one of the most serious and pervasive environmental problems facing Lesotho, largely because of over-exploitation of land, water and other natural resources. The loss of native cover promotes increased runoff, sheet erosion of the topsoil and rill erosion. The resultant gully erosion spread out reaching the sandstone escarpments, from which water runoff derives energy to cut even deeper into the soil. The result of this erosion is the extensive network of gullies that have dissected the country especially in the lowlands and foothills. The problem of gully erosion is more intense in the southern lowlands of the country and along the Senqu River Valley. The biodiversity of Lesotho is considerable, in relation to the size of the country but faces threats which vary from natural to human induced. Natural threats include extreme climatic conditions such as hail, frost, drought, snow. Also included are lightning induced fires, predators, pests and diseases, increased populations of a particular species and invasion by alien invasive species. Human induced threats include destruction of habitats which are home to flora and fauna. These ecosystems, habitats and species are over-exploited, and over-utilized. Examples of activities leading to biodiversity loss in the country include overgrazing of rangelands, mismanagement of sensitive ecosystems such as wetlands, over harvesting of medicinal plants and animals, poor agricultural practices leading to reduced genetic variety, and poor and/or misguided biodiversity conservation practices, such as misuse of fire as a range management tool.

Lesotho's sensitive mountains ecosystems are also susceptible to the effects of climate change precipitated by global warming. Overall, this increased pressures on biodiversity is leading to some species becoming endangered and therefore should be subject to stringent control in use. However, some of this endangered species have acquired an economic value leading to trade in those species becoming increased and therefore further increasing vulnerability of such species to extinction. Lack of scientific data on populations makes it difficult to institute controls in the use of such species.

A rapid assessment of the OP6 &7 priority landscape revealed some critical gaps and opportunities to be addressed under the OP8 grant making window. Government ministries and departments are slowly becoming aware and increasingly coming forward to join hands with the SGP for community environmental protection interventions. An example is the Ministry of Environment and Forestry that continues to engage and provide technical backstopping and facilitate access to the SGP funding opportunities. A key observation is that generally, successful projects remain engaged with the key ministries, local authorities, and umbrella CSOs throughout implementation. For example, the success of the *Ratšoleli Farmers Association*, *Ha e Lale Hlapalimane and Sehlabathebe Community Conservation Forum and SMARDT* in Qacha's Nek; *Bolokanang Liphamola Support Group and Malubalube sustainable rangeland management* in Mokhotlong district; and *Thaba Mosobelo, Masiasiane Grazing Association and Thaba Tšehla Grazing Association* in Thaba Tseka to name a few, are salient examples where government departments are closely monitoring the implementation process. The challenge though remains, of a full understanding of the SGP approach and its focus on local communities' empowerment and capacity building and with no opportunity whatsoever for institutional capacity building. This is attributable to likening of the SGP to other big GEF projects and programmes that usually have components on institutional capacity building. This is further exacerbated by the prevailing scarcity of resources and budgetary limitations within government ministries.

It is therefore, imperative to invest in a deliberate advocacy to raise awareness of the SGP approach and Grant making processes. In addition, there is critical need for grantee groups, particularly in mountain communities, to be capacitated on grant management to ensure compliance and delivery. In this regard,



capacity development grants have proven to be strategic and thus should be extended to all grantee groups but must be localized and have an oversight role on grantee project implementation and overall grant management.

The typology of strategic priorities in the SGP OP8 provides opportunities for the country to address many of these challenges and thus filling gaps in the national programmes which cannot be addressed because of the fiscal challenges in the various ministries and departments of government. The SGP also provides a unique opportunity for community groups and associations to participate with grass root solutions at the landscape level.

3.3 OP8 strategic priorities of the SGP Country Programme

Table 4 SGP Country Programme's Alignment with SGP OP8 Strategic Initiatives and Country Priorities/Projects/Programmes

SGP OP8 Strategic Initiatives - Global	SGP Country Programme's OP8 Priorities	SGP Country Programme's complementarity with GEF, UNDP, other projects & programmes	
		UNDP Strategic Objectives	Projects and Programmes Addressing National Priorities
Community-based conservation of threatened ecosystems and species a) Improve the effectiveness of biodiversity and ecosystem conservation and management through equitable governance systems by recognizing and respecting the rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities. b) Improve community-led biodiversity friendly practices and approaches, including promoting blue economy approaches (e.g. agriculture, fisheries, forestry, tourism, infrastructure) c) Enhance community led actions for protection of threatened species.	<i>Community-based conservation of threatened ecosystems and species</i> a) Improve the effectiveness of biodiversity and ecosystem conservation and management through equitable governance systems by recognizing and respecting the rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities. b) Improve community-led biodiversity friendly practices and approaches, including promoting blue economy approaches (e.g. agriculture, fisheries, forestry, tourism, infrastructure, etc.). c) Enhance community led actions for protection of threatened species	New Country Programme Document 2024 – 2028 (CPD 2024 – 2028) designed to support the <i>National Strategic Development Plan II</i> (NSDP II) objectives. The CPD is aligned to with the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) Outcomes: a) Improved governance structures b) Improved Food Security and Climate Resilience c) Transformative economic and reduced inequalities CPD 2024 – 2028 Programme Priority Areas most relevant to the SGP: a) Environmental sustainability, climate action, and resilience - Build community resilience, safeguard livelihoods and food security, and promote local economic growth, natural resources governance, and environmental management. - Develop partnerships for renewable energy and access to renewable energy solutions; integrated natural resources	- Extended NSDP II - Promoting conservation, sustainable utilization, and fair and equitable benefit-sharing from Lesotho's Medicinal Plants for improved livelihoods – GEF Funded project. - Integrated Watershed Management for improved agro-pastoral livelihoods in the Seapapala sub-catchment - EU and GIZ supported ICM programme and ReNoka - Great Green Wall Initiative - National Action Plan implementation - IFAD funded Wool and Mohair Value Chain Competitiveness Project (WaMCoP) coordinated in Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security - The WFP – follow up project to Adaptation Fund titled “Improving Adaptive Capacity of Vulnerable and Food Insecure Populations in Lesotho” in collaboration with MFRSC, MEM - IFAD funded Sustainable Agriculture Development Programme (SADP II) in the MAFS addresses both food security and natural resource management. - National programmes in the MFRSC for promotion of inter-planted orchards - The Private Sector Improvement Program under the Ministry of Trade - Horticulture Initiative funded by IBISA. - MAFS has core mandate on diversification of agricultural enterprises e.g. Fisheries, piggery, poultry rabbits etc. - Department of Forestry programme on indigenous tree afforestation and conservation.

Sustainable agriculture & fisheries, and food security a) Increase efficiency and effectiveness of overall food production & value chain, including in vulnerable ecosystems (mountains, island ecosystems, etc.). b) Increase diversification and livelihood improvement. c) Remove deforestation from supply chain and expand restoration of degraded lands.	<i>Sustainable agriculture and fisheries, and food security</i> a) Increase efficiency and effectiveness of overall food production and value chain, including in vulnerable ecosystems (mountains). b) Increase diversification and livelihood improvement. c) Remove deforestation from supply chain and expand restoration of degraded lands.	management, and climate change negotiations. Promote design and delivery of integrated solutions for conservation and managing natural ecosystems for sustainable productivity and livelihoods, low-emissions, and climate-resilient development. b) Inclusive structural transformation, green and sustainable economic growth – Promote research, knowledge, and data analysis to influence human development, reduce vulnerability, promote digitization and innovations, and SDGs. – Support reforms for the business environment and foster entrepreneurship, Innovations and participation in local and regional trade. – Assist mobilization of private sector investments and partnerships, and MSMEs development in high impact development sectors for SDG attainment	– Great Green Wall Initiative - National Action Plan implementation – IFAD funded Wool and Mohair Value Chain Competitiveness Project (WaMCoP) coordinated in Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security – Integrated Watershed Management for improved agro-pastoral livelihoods in the Seapala sub-catchment – GEF funded project on SLM – The WFP – follow up project to Adaptation Fund titled “Improving Adaptive Capacity of Vulnerable and Food Insecure Populations in Lesotho” in collaboration with MFRSC, MEM – IFAD funded Sustainable Agriculture Development Programme (SADP II) in the MAFS addresses both food security and natural resource management. – National programmes in the MFRSC for promotion of inter-planted orchards – The Private Sector Improvement Program under the Ministry of Trade - Horticulture Initiative funded by IBSA – MAFS has core mandate on diversification of agricultural enterprises e.g. fisheries, piggery, poultry, rabbits etc.
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3. Low-carbon energy access co-benefits a) Support implementation of Paris Agreement & the NDCs b) Promote renewable and energy efficient technologies providing socio-economic benefits & improving livelihoods. c) Promote off-grid energy service needs in rural and urban areas.	<i>Low-carbon energy access co-benefits</i> a) Promote renewable and energy efficient technologies providing socio-economic benefits and improving livelihoods. b) Promote off-grid energy service needs in rural	a) Inclusive structural transformation, green and sustainable economic growth Promote research, knowledge, and data analysis to influence human development, reduce vulnerability, promote digitization and innovations, and SDGs.	- National University of Lesotho – Energy Resources Centre programmes - CSOs energy Programmes - Appropriate Technology Services (ATS) under Department of Science and Technology initiatives on energy conservation through solar and improved cooking stoves
4. Enhancing social inclusion a) Promote inclusive targeted initiatives. b) Mainstream social inclusion in all projects. (e.g. women/girls, Indigenous Peoples, youth, and persons with disabilities).	<i>Enhancing social inclusion</i> a) Promote targeted inclusive initiatives. Mainstream social inclusion in all projects.		NATIONAL PRIORITY OR GOAL: Enhancing inclusive and sustainable economic growth and private sector-led job creation. The Ministry of Youth and Gender is a key partner in promoting social inclusion. In addition, social inclusion is cross-cutting requirement for most projects in the public, private sector and NGOs programs

5. Knowledge Management (KM) a) Capture knowledge and lessons from projects and activities. b) Improve capacities of CSOs/CBOs. d) Conduct South-South Exchanges to promote technology transfer and replication of good practices.	<i>Knowledge Management</i> a) Capture knowledge and lessons from projects and activities. b) Improve capacities of CSOs/CBOs. c) Conduct South-South Exchanges to promote technology transfer and replication of good practices. Strengthen local CSO networks through peer-to-peer experience sharing platforms
6. Results Management, Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) a) Administer new M&E strategy in Country Programme and project design, implementation and overall decision making using participatory mechanisms.	<i>Results Management, Monitoring & Evaluation</i> Administer new M&E strategy in Country Programme and project design, implementation and overall decision making using participatory mechanisms.

4. OP8 PRIORITY LANDSCAPES/SEASCAPES & STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

4.1 Grant making within the priority landscape/Seascapes

4.1.1 Process for selecting priority landscapes and seascapes

During the SGP OP6 Phase, three (3) major river basins were assessed to select a landscape compliant with the guidelines. These were the Mohokare, Makhaleng and the Senqu River basins. In the Mohokare river basin, four (4) watersheds were targeted (*Phuthiatsana* South and North, *Hlotse* and *Hololo* catchments). However, *Mohokare* and *Makhaleng* are not contiguous on the landscape and were found to be comparatively low ranking on issues of global significance. The *Senqu River Basin* (SRB), on the other hand, is a composite of two agro-ecological zones (Mountain region and Senqu river valley) which together constitute more than 50 percent of the land area of Lesotho and cuts across seven (7) administrative district jurisdictions (*Fig. 3*). Furthermore, this area supports the less privileged rural and mountain communities deriving their livelihoods from livestock and arable dryland farming systems most vulnerable to climate change impacts hence in most dire need of livelihood adaptation efforts.

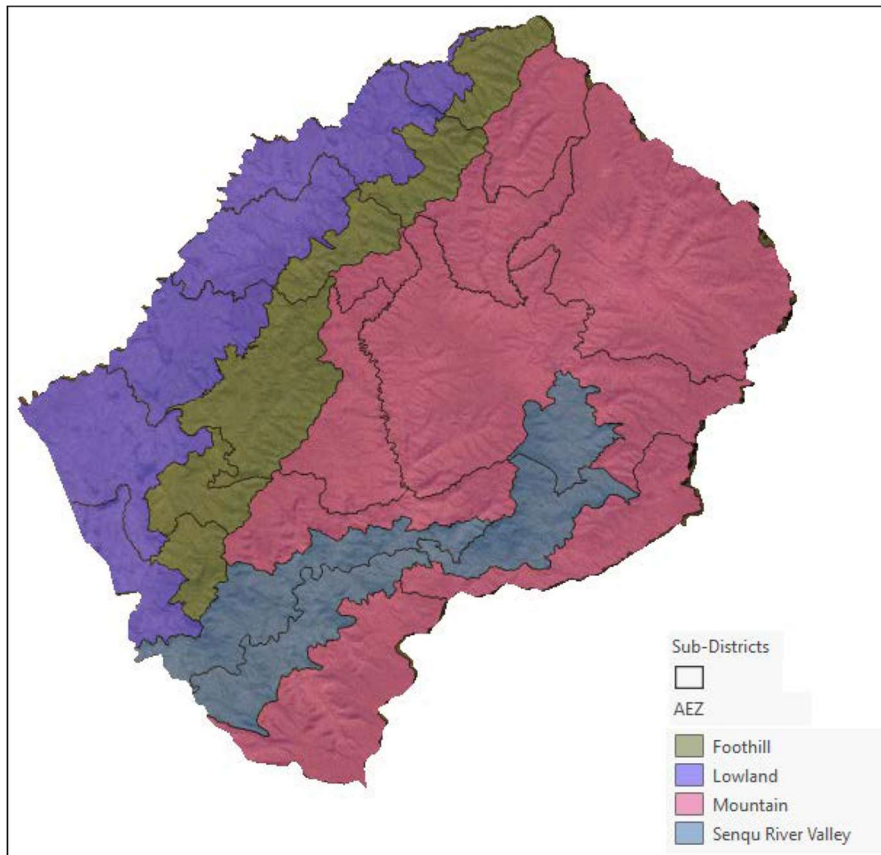


Figure 1 Map of Agro-ecological Zones of Lesotho showing the Senqu River Basin as a composite of the Senqu River Valley and Mountain Region

In addition, the following criteria were favourable to the Senqu River Basin.

Table 5 Landscape selection Criteria

Criteria	Assessment of the Senqu River Basin
Landscapes endowed with agricultural biodiversity and genetic resources as well as other biodiversity such as wild relatives, pollinators and wildlife associated with agricultural systems landscapes.	The SRB hosts the greatest agricultural biodiversity with the greatest use of open pollinated crop varieties that are also indigenous to the landscape area. In addition, biodiversity is also greatest in this region with hotspots for wildlife and nature reserves and parks of global significance (e.g. Sehlabathebe National Park – Maloti Drakensberg Park World Heritage Site; Letšā-la-Letsie - Ramsar Site)
Landscapes nurtured by farmers and /or people who maintain invaluable knowledge, indigenous technology and management systems of natural resources including seeds, biota, land and water	The SRB is populated by rural farming communities of herders and crop farmers with invaluable knowledge of natural resources with adaptive skills livelihoods and survival on livestock farming and agriculture in a difficult environment. These communities still practice indigenous grazing management strategies based on <i>maboeella</i>
Landscapes with groups organized in social organizations and /or networks including customary institutions for agro-ecological management, normative arrangements for resource access and benefit sharing	In the greater SRB there are Range Management Associations and Community Based Organizations (CBOs) associated around a variety of initiatives including biodiversity conservation. These CBOs are facing challenges of access and benefit sharing in the national parks and nature reserves. In the upper reaches of the SRB, the Lesotho Highlands Development Authority (LHDA) has installations of regional economic value which inter alia provide waterscapes with opportunities for exploring resource access and benefit sharing by the riparian communities of the Katse, Mohale and Polihali (under construction) dams
Landscape features resulting from human management that provide ingenious or practical solutions to environmental challenges and create opportunities for enhancement of biodiversity conservation and collective recreational, aesthetic, artistic, educational, spiritual, and /or scientific uses	There is a need for wetland management to sustain international waters and land conservation in the landscape which serve as head waters of the three major water projects initiatives of the LHDA. The Letšā-la-Letsie Ramsar site and Sehlabathebe National Park provide recreational, aesthetic, educational and scientific uses
Landscape strategies address inter-related challenges at the landscape level and propose integrated economic, ecological and social solutions. When looking for ways to address global challenges – including poverty eradication, food security, climate change and environmental sustainability – concerted holistic actions at the local level with impacts at global level are critical	The SRB landscape unit, given its size and range of environmental /ecological issues therein, provides the best platform for SGP to float themes addressing economic, ecological and social challenges

4.1.2 Selected landscape for OP8

The Kingdom of Lesotho is situated at the highest part of the Drakensberg escarpment of the eastern rim of the Southern African plateau between 1500 m and 3482 m above sea level (a.s.l.). This landscape is divided into Lowlands & the Senqu River Valley (SRV), Foothills, and the Mountain region (Schmitz and Rooyani 1987)¹. These physiographic regions are geographically based on elevation and agro-climatology, but coincidentally delineate livelihood zones (Lesotho VAC, 2005)² with variable vulnerability and resilience to climate change. Over 80 percent of the productive arable lands and coincidentally with the highest population densities of the 2.1 million population (Lesotho Census, 2016)³ are found along a narrow belt of lowlands (20–50 km wide) along the western border with South Africa below 1800 m above sea level. The foothills (1800 m–2000 m a.s.l.), form a narrow strip running northeast to southwest, adjacent to the lower mountain range to the east. This region covers eight percent of the country and supports high population densities subsistent on mixed crop and livestock systems. The Senqu River Valley (1500–1800 m a.s.l.) is a major grassland area marked by shallow soils and suffers a rain shadow effect. The population in this region also depends largely on livestock and mixed farming. The mountains (2000–3482 m a.s.l.) form approximately two thirds of the country and are primarily used for summer grazing transhumance practices. They also host some unique African alpine and sub-alpine habitats of the Drakensburg range (Marake, 1999)⁴.

The Senqu River Basin was selected as the priority landscape for OP6 and continued to be the priority landscape in OP7 as a considered decision of the National Steering Committee of the SGP in Lesotho. The SRB during the OP6 baseline assessments was subdivided into five (5) watersheds: Khubelu, Upper Senqu, Malibamatšo, Senqunyane and Lower Senqu. The SGP interventions focused, during OP6, in only two of five watersheds of the SRB. The process for selection of this target landscape was influenced by national strategies for integrated watershed management⁵ evolving in the critical ministries of Forestry, Range and Soil Conservation and the Department of Water Affairs in the Ministry of Water and weighted against the criteria for identifying landscapes to implement agro-ecological projects. The watershed based approach was aligned with three main river basins of Lesotho namely: a) **Senqu River Basin** and its major catchments: Malibamatšo, Khubelu, Senqunyane, Tsoelike inclusive of the Sehlabathebe National Park in the upper reaches of *Tsoelikana* and the *Letša-la-Letsie Ramsar site* in the upper reaches of the *Quthing river catchment*; b) **Makhaleng River Basin**; c) the **Mohokare River Basin** with its major sub-catchments of **Phuthiatsana river** (North and South); *Hlotse river* inclusive of the **Tšehlanyane Nature Reserve**; and the Hololo river inclusive of the sub-catchments of the *‘Muela Hydropower infrastructure (Fig.1)*.

¹ Schmitz G. and F. Rooyani. 1987. Lesotho Geology, Geomorphology and Soils. Morija Printing Works – Lesotho.

² Lesotho Vulnerability Assessment Committee. 2005. Disaster Management Authority. Government of Lesotho.

³ Lesotho National Population Census. 2016. Bureau of Statistics. Government of Lesotho.

⁴ Marake M.V. 1999. Arable Agriculture in Lesotho. In First State of the Environment Report (ed.) K.Q. Chakela. 1999.

⁵ Water and Sanitation Strategy of the Water and Sanitation Policy of 2007 - The Department of Water Affairs is a custodian of water resources management in Lesotho and it is mandated to implement Integrated Catchment Management (ICM).

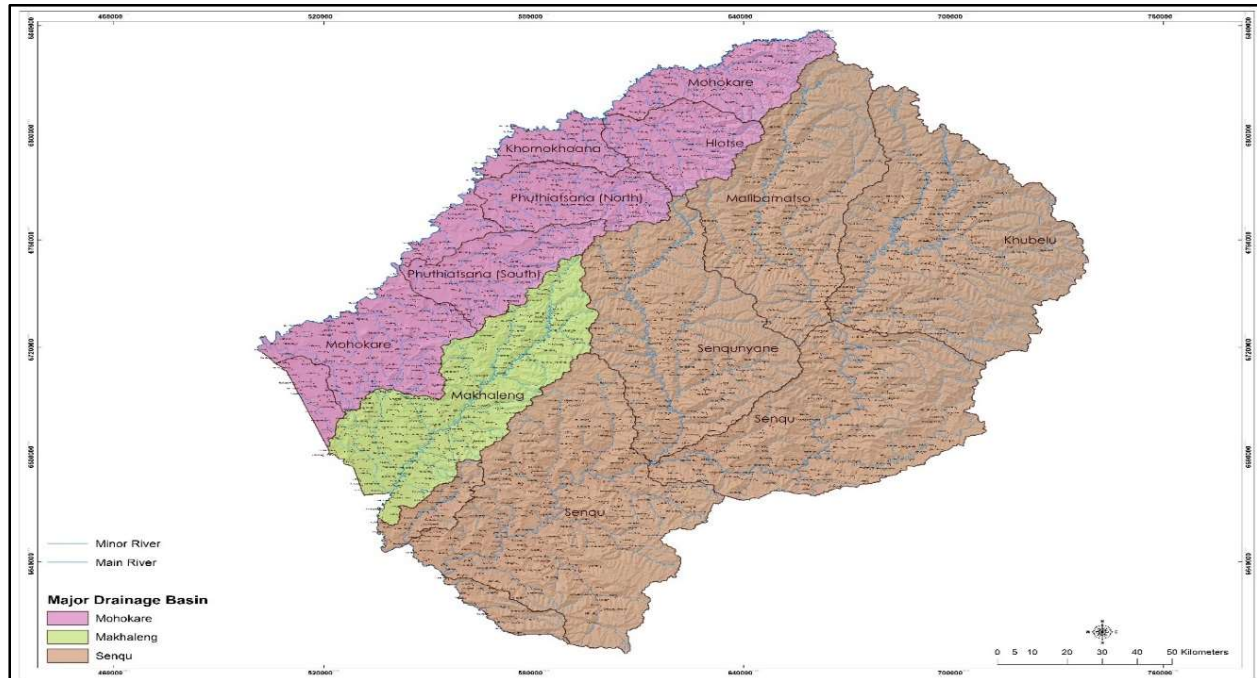


Figure 2 Map of the Basins: Senqu, Makhaleng and Mohokare with major catchment areas

Of these catchments, the Senqu River Basin (SRB) (Fig. 2) is the most extensive as its landscape combines both the SRV environment and the mountain ecosystems making 68 per cent of the land area of the country (20, 400 km²). As a compound landscape, the SRB is aligned with one of the major agro-ecological and livelihood zones and encompasses a few sub-catchments of global significance in terms of the GEF OP8 focal areas including the Sehlabathebe National Park – a component of the Maloti Drakensberg Park which is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site and the Ramsar site at Letšeng-la-Letsie. These national heritage sites by virtue of their status remain as key units of the landscape domain of the OP8 programme. The other catchments are much smaller in extent and themselves sub-catchments of the Mohokare river basin except the Makhaleng river basin. Both the Hlotse and Malibamatšo catchments encompass the Tšehlanyane Nature Reserve and Bokong biosphere respectively.

4.1.3 OP8 Strategic Initiatives in the landscapes/seascapes

4.1.3.1 Community-based conservation of threatened ecosystems and species: Key Objectives /Focus Strategic Initiatives

Improve community-led biodiversity friendly practices and approaches, including promoting sustainable and alternative agriculture initiatives, conservation, and restoration of indigenous forests, and promoting community driven ecotourism options.

This strategic initiative is aligned with on-going programmes and projects which will help landscape implementation. For example, range management programmes promoting grazing associations fit well with management resource areas which are more inclusive of other resource users and already involve participation of several communities across the landscape or household communal arrangements within local landscape jurisdictions especially in the B and C grazing areas. In addition, the SGP initiatives will dovetail into the ongoing integrated catchment management programme which is being rolled out in 74

sub-catchments of the three major river basins. This strategic initiative is also aligned with the catchment based public works programme (*Fato-fato*) in the Ministry of Environment and Forestry. Through the Community Management of Protected Areas Conservation (COMPACT) project in the Maloti Drakensberg Park, local communities will continue to be empowered and their involvement in the protection and management of the heritage resources of the Park and its buffer zone strengthened. More attention will be given to the south, central and northeastern parts of the priority landscape where there have been minimal to no interventions during OP 6 and 7.

b) *Enhance community led actions for protection of threatened species*

The spate of land degradation throughout the Lesotho landscape is threatening a range of biodiversity components in both fauna and flora. Grant making in this area will be supported by a range of initiatives that can be potentially led by communities and community based organizations. This initiative will synergize with the recently approved GEF project between the UNDP and the Ministry of Environment and Forestry titled “*Promoting conservation, sustainable utilization and fair and equitable benefit-sharing from Lesotho's Medicinal Plants for improved livelihoods*”. The objective of the project is to promote conservation, sustainable use, and improved access and benefit-sharing (ABS) from ABS products derived from selected medicinal plants in selected highlands and foothill areas of Lesotho. This will be achieved through the following three interrelated components: 1) strengthened institutional capacity and regulatory framework to support the implementation of the Nagoya Protocol on ABS; 2) sustainable use and conservation of selected commercially important medicinal plants for the development of ABS products for the pharmaceutical sector; and 3) gender mainstreaming, knowledge management, and monitoring and evaluation.

Grant making may include community botanical gardens including projects to conserve and protect medicinal and other economic grass species especially by community conservation forums in the corridors adjacent to the Letša-la-Letsie Ramsar site in Quthing and the Sehlabathebe National Park in Qacha's Nek.

4.1.3.2 *Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security*

a) *Increase efficiency and effectiveness of overall food production and value chain, including in vulnerable ecosystems (mountains)*

This strategic initiative is core mandate of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security hence it will anchor the core activities and coordination through the extension services. In particular, the Wool and Mohair Promotions project will provide critical co-financing for implementation of this priority action through the component of sheep and goat improvement programme as well as the climate smart rangeland component. This project covers the critical mountain ecosystems of the selected landscape. Lesotho was one of the countries participating in the “*Enhancing agri-food value chains to increase resilience of mountain communities*” initiative, a partnership between the SGP and the Mountain Partnership Products initiative (SGP-MPP). It is envisaged that the Initiative will continue into OP 8 so initiated processes can be completed. The Great Green Wall Innovation Programme will be an anchor to expand the SGP interventions in the southern parts of the country that have been demarcated as hotspots for the Great Green Wall Initiative in Lesotho. This intervention will contribute immensely towards addressing the food insecurity challenge in the southern mountain region.

b) Increase Diversification and Livelihood Improvement

A critical aspect of the food security policy of the Government of Lesotho is to diversify livelihood support systems from natural resource intensive livelihoods especially those dependent on rangelands and soil resources. This initiative will be coordinated through collaboration with CSOs working on various aspects of livelihoods especially agriculture and environment. Critical support programmes will include some of the WAMCO investments in wool and mohair improvement, programmes of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security on the promotion of inter-planted orchards as promoting production of domestic small stock such as pigs, poultry, and apiary.

c) Remove Deforestation from Supply Chain and Expanded Restoration of Degraded Lands

Several CSOs are collaborating with the Ministry of Environment and Forestry to promote conservation and restoration of indigenous forests and use of efficient energy technologies to remove deforestation from the energy supply chain. This will include coordination through programmes that promote indigenous tree afforestation and conservation, energy conservation through solar and improved cook stoves. The initiative will also require cultural innovation to reduce the deforestation footprint in the *lebollo* (initiation school) rituals.

Innovative grant making may entail incorporation of Initiation School Societies with the view to promote planting of indigenous trees and grasses that are critical for the cultural rituals but also critical components of the landscape biodiversity.

4.1.3.3 Low-carbon energy access co-benefits by supporting implementation of Paris agreement and the NDCs

a) Promote renewable and energy efficient technologies providing socio-economic benefits and improving livelihoods.

This priority action will be coordinated through on-going work of certain NGOs and the National University of Lesotho Energy Resource Centre and Innovation Hub, working on renewable and energy efficiency technologies especially improved cooking stoves and solar pv systems. This could also be collaboratively coordinated under the Appropriate Technology Services (ATS) in the Department of Science and Technology. The process of implementation involves both community landscapes initiatives as well household initiatives within participating villages. The use of energy efficient stoves goes with pruning of indigenous trees, plantation of fruit trees and use of pruned twigs as sources of energy rather than felling the trees, and use of solar energy for food preservation and other energy needs. This is a concept of green villages. This initiative will benefit from the ongoing Sustainable Energy for All project which will be installing mini-grids and establishing energy centers in most parts of the priority landscape.

4.1.3.4 Enhancing Social Inclusion

a) Mainstream Social Inclusion in all Projects

This is both a mandatory and cross cutting initiative with the view to mainstream and integrate gender sensitive approaches in all projects (e.g. women/girls, herders, youth, persons with disabilities and the aged). Special attention will be integrated in all projects from design to implementation. This will also be a critical aspect of the evaluation of projects. Lesotho is one of the counties implementing the SGP Women

Innovation Programme on removing barriers to upscaling women-led and nature-based enterprises such as wool and mohair tapestry and beekeeping. The rolling out of this project will also complement the CSO-Government-Private sector policy and planning dialogue platforms. The UNDP Accelerator Labs is running an experiment on herd boys to highlight the critical role played by herders (herd boys) in sustainable management of land and water resources, though a somewhat forgotten group in the society. Lessons from this experiment will inform targeted projects to be implemented in the herders' workspace.

4.1.3.5 Knowledge Management

A mandatory component of each project shall be to document the implementation processes as well as the experiences and lessons learnt. Photographs and video clips will be taken in each project with the view to contributing to the knowledge management pool. Field days and study tours will be promoted to enhance knowledge sharing and information exchange amongst the grantees as well as between grantee landscapes and adjacent landscape outside the target areas. The Country Programme through briefs will disseminate successes and lessons learned making full use of the local platforms and the Global SGP Intranet facility. The SGP innovation programmes for SGP strategic initiatives will create platforms for results and experiences sharing between and among countries. The Country Programme will participate actively and take full advantage of these platforms. The SGP is implementing a COMPACT project jointly with South Africa, in the transboundary Maloti Drakensberg Park that is jointly managed by the two countries. Local communities in the buffer zone of the Park will benefit from learning exchanges particularly on the sustainable tourism front and ecotourism in particular. The SGP will take full advantage of the rekindled links with the Lesotho Tourism Development Corporation, various projects, and programmes in the ICM space.

4.1.3.6 Results Management, Monitoring and Evaluation

This is a mandatory priority initiative. Special efforts and capacity building initiatives will be undertaken to administer the new M&E strategy build in from the project design through implementation covering all decision making through innovative and participatory approaches.

4.2 Grantmaking outside the Priority Landscapes

An important aspect of the SGP within the selected landscape is to pilot potential practices with the view to upscale the best of them beyond the landscape. However, one way to facilitate this technology transfer is to look for opportunities where it would be possible to initiate some projects best suited or amenable to conditions outside the selected landscape but pursuant to the overall objectives of the SGP-OP8 programme. In this Country Program Strategy, we envision three grant making priorities outside the landscape.

4.2.1 Climate smart agriculture and food security for school going children

This idea entails piloting with schools to promote food security. One or two rural schools where the student population does not exceed 300 students may be targeted as sample. The grant would cover the school as a type of association and households of the school pupils as members of the association. This

would be the forum for training and demonstration of climate smart agriculture and food security at the school level where pupils are trained collectively. However, each pupil and teacher will be engaged in a climate smart production system at their homestead. There will be peer support and field days in their respective villages with the view to share experiences and lessons and thus, translate experiences and lessons into action.

4.2.2 Solid Waste Management

The ethos of cleanliness and waste management can be promoted through targeted grant making within the schoolscapes utilizing the school as the center but extending to the communities where the students come from. Such programs would seek to enlist the support of communities and local authorities in solid waste management as partners.

4.2.3 Remove Deforestation from Supply Chain and Expanded Restoration of Degraded Lands

Several NGOs are collaborating with the Ministry of Environment and Forestry to promote conservation and restoration of indigenous forests and use of efficient energy technologies to remove deforestation from the energy supply chain. This will include coordination through programmes that promote indigenous tree afforestation and conservation, energy conservation through solar and improved cook stoves among other strategies. The initiative will also require cultural innovation to reduce the deforestation footprint in the *lebollo* (initiation school) rituals. The idea is to target indigenous tree species Eco-site where to conduct demonstrations for the restoration of indigenous forests.

4.2.4 Metolong Dam Catchment

The Catchment was identified as one of the four priority landscapes during consultations for OP7 STAR grant targeting process. Grantmaking in this landscape will continue as a collaborative effort between the Lesotho Highlands Development project and the *ReNoka* Initiative under the Integrated Catchment Management project implemented in Lesotho under the EU-GIZ-Government of Lesotho Partnership.

4.3 CSO-government-private sector dialogue platforms

In Lesotho there is a gap between policy and law makers and communities as well community associations and community-based organizations. This gap results in poor participation in policy and law making which denies communities to take a center role to shape the nature of law and policy across all sectors of the economy but mainly in terms of food security and environmental management. Lesotho is party to several multilateral international conventions which have been ratified without adequate participation of the people. Consequently, people cannot take the government to task regarding implementation of the conventions. A tacit example for Lesotho is the Environmental Act 2008 which has been enacted but the communities cannot cause and /or force government to implement the principles of the law e.g. in solid waste management and use of chemicals.

In the light of the forgoing, it is imperative to facilitate CSO-Government-Private Sector dialogue platforms in which community interest groups can advocate and lobby for their interest in sustainable agriculture and food security, environmental management and conservation and implementation of strategic policies on afforestation, land degradation control, biodiversity conservation and climate change policy. The product of such platforms will be packaged in policy briefs and used to lobby government and inform advocacy groups. It is critical to organize platforms in preparation of environmental convention

Conference of the Parties (CoP) and reporting back on positions taken by the CoPs and how they affect the nation. Some in-roads were made during SGP-MPP journey through which smallholder farmers – government – private sector dialogues were initiated. It is envisaged that the process will continue in OP 8. Through the Innovation Programme on Nature-based Women-led enterprises, some awareness on beekeeping as a strategy for landscape restoration and the untapped potential of wool and mohair tapestries and beekeeping cottage industries. Dialogues in these spaces will continue to be supported in OP 8.

4.4 Promoting social inclusion, including gender equality and women's empowerment

As elaborated in the Second National Strategic Development Plan (NSDP II 2918/19 – 2022/23), Lesotho is a patriarchal society with women often having a subordinate standing in society. This societal structure which is backed by cultural norms and traditional practices has defined the responsibilities of men and women at household as well as at the community level, thereby rendering women susceptible to gender-based violence and often having an unequal voice in decision-making in family matters and developmental decision-making, especially in the rural areas. This setting also has a bearing on the life of Basotho: *marriage, divorce, inheritance, property rights, access to finance and the justice system*. Lesotho has a dual legal system comprising Customary Law (*customs and traditions*) and common law, with the Customary Law, which because it still has discriminatory elements, at times undermines gender and social equality as well as livelihoods of and economic opportunities for vulnerable groups particularly women, notwithstanding the fact that women constitute about 51% of the population of Lesotho. It is worth noting though that Lesotho has made significant strides in addressing these developmental challenges and setbacks through among other things, enacting the Legal Capacity of Married Persons Act of 2006 which places women at par with men and the Land Act of 2010 which allows women to register land in their names; these have a backing of the Lesotho Gender Policy of 2003. Nevertheless, the application of the dual legal system, which has defined the societal structure, continues to present a challenge for women's rights.

Another gender aspect relates to youth in the light of recurrent high unemployment among the youth which leads to social and economic problems. It is estimated that 15.3 percent of the youth (25-29 age bracket) are unemployed, and the small size of the private sector has been unable to accommodate the youth that have not been employed by the public sector.⁶ Unemployment is also exacerbated by the shortage of mining jobs available to Lesotho men in South Africa. While this means that more youth are taking part in agricultural activities, agricultural resources tend to remain in the hands of the older

generation for longer periods. Entry into farming is delayed, particularly for young men, as they struggle to gather economic assets and resources. Agriculture has not been a reliable source of income and many youth prefer to seek waged income opportunities. This programme can potentially rekindle and increase youth interest in and reliability of income from the agricultural–natural resource nexus by generating new knowledge, forecasts, and data about adaptive agricultural practices that can stand the test of time and climate. This may mitigate the risk of potential losses due to climate variability and could possibly attract renewed youth interest in the sector thereby lessening unemployment rates.

⁶African Development Bank. *African Economic Outlook 2012: Lesotho*. Online at: <http://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Publications/Lesotho%20Full%20PDF%20Country%20Note.pdf>.



a) *Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality*

The situation of women in the selected landscape bears the character of rural livelihoods with high unemployment. In this landscape, the challenges of women are not atypical to the rest of the country, their mean year of schooling is 6.8 which is comparatively high in sub-Saharan Africa. However, they have the highest maternal mortality ratios in the world at 1,024 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births (LDHS 2014). It is probably worse in the rural and mountainous landscape of the project given the disparities in the accessibility, quality, and distribution of health facilities; hence it is imperative to use Gender Marker in the process.

They are also characterized by high dependency on natural resources hence high sensitivity to climate change induced natural resource degradation. According to the National Development Index Report of 2015, 63.6 percent of the population live on degraded lands while 53 and 51 percent of the population rely on biomass for cooking and for heating respectively. These data must be contextualized against a backdrop of low proportion of access to electricity when the national forest cover is only 1.6 percent of total land area. The foregoing is critical to women in the landscape because the biomass demand for cooking and heating is highest compared to the rest of the country and women are singularly the gender group responsible for provision of water and energy requirements of households. The 2018 Government –Civil Society dialogues on mountain communities highlighted the key role played by these communities who inhabit critical ecosystems, some of which sustain Lesotho and neighboring countries. Yet, these communities are the poorest and least serviced. Enduring the most of all this are rural women and girls who have the responsibility of providing for and caring for their families: cooking, heating, washing, subsistence agriculture (*in the wake of climate change*) and caring for the elderly and sick.

Lesotho being a grassland, has very few and threatened Indigenous shrub lands and vast areas of invasive shrubs that serve as the source of cooking, heating, and lighting energy for rural households, particularly those in the mountain region, the area of focus for the SGP in OP6 and OP7. Other than caring for the families and engaging in non-cash activities like tilling the land and with local beer brewing bringing in a little income, rural communities, especially women and girls do not, generally, engage in economic activities and remain overly dependent on men, a situation that exacerbates child marriages, gender-based violence and utter hopelessness in some respects. Among the key developmental challenges identified by the National Strategic Development Plan is unemployment, estimated at 32.8% but recorded as higher for females and youths estimated at 39.9% and 32.3% respectively, compared to males at 26.2%. On the other hand, the agricultural sector's performance whose contribution to the GDP has declined from 15.2% (1984) to 5.2% remains an important sector supporting lives of more than 70% of the total population residing in rural areas.

A conscious effort will be made to offer equal access to opportunities and encourage participation by women in the OP 8 grant making. There will also be gender-oriented vetting that takes place at the proposal review stages to ensure that women are screened in and assisted in the process of obtaining grants. Given that OP 8 is designed to support smallholders to foster greater economic independence and sustainability, and the emphasis in the project design in targeting women beneficiaries, it is anticipated that the project will result in greater economic autonomy and financial and food security for women. Given the context in Lesotho where women dominate agriculture groups, extension groups, savings and credit groups, agriculture production of pigs, poultry, fruits, and vegetables and are more educated than men, it is anticipated that women participation will be high.

In the light of the foregoing, the Country Programme Strategy (CPS) prioritizes the empowerment of women and will take special precautions to ensure commensurate targeting of women groups in the grant making by allocating a preferential proportion of points to groups above 50 percent women membership

and participation. The CPS will also provide at least 10 percent of the total OP 7 resources to women-led and /or focused on women's empowerment interventions. Specifically in OP 7 the CPS will address itself to the following entry points as detailed in the GEF Gender Strategy and Action Plan.

- *Enhance women's participation and role in natural resources decision-making processes, with women as agents of change at all levels by:*
 - Promoting women's equal engagement in community, rural and urban planning processes
 - Supporting women's engagement in producer organizations, cooperatives, and outgrow schemes.
 - Promoting women's voices (including local communities) in partnerships and alliances with regional and national networks
- *Target women as specific beneficiaries by:*
 - Increasing awareness of the roles of women and men in the sustainable management and use of natural resources.
 - Creating opportunities from (alternative) sustainable livelihoods and income-generation opportunities such as conservation, rehabilitation, and restoration actions for women.
 - Engaging women in processes for making commodities and supply chains more sustainable.
 - Supporting clean technology and energy solutions that also offer women the possibility to reduce their environmental footprint and start new businesses; and
 - Supporting women entrepreneurs, and activities that offer women access to credit and finance.

The SGP project on *"Upscaling Women-Led Enterprises Program: Removing Barriers for Upscaling Beekeeping and Production of Wool and Mohair Products in Lesotho"* was an impetus to women empowerment in OP7. The Great Green Wall Innovation Programme (GGW IP) that has just been initiated, with a special focus on empowering women and youth in food security and climate resilient agriculture and agroforestry, will contribute notably in strengthening involvement of women and youth in conservation. All Grant making cycles during OP 8 will be preceded by a proposal development training workshop incorporating awareness on gender equality and women empowerment and their critical importance in development and economic growth. The training will target, civil society organizations, local authorities and government extension workers and officials at the local and district levels, in the priority landscape. Simple tools for conducting gender analysis at the local community level will be put together in the local language for ease of reference and use, to facilitate mainstreaming of gender in project development and management.

b) Youth Empowerment

Youth development and empowerment entails enhancing the status of young people, empowering them to build on their competencies and capabilities for life. The Youth Development Index examines youth development in five domains: health, education, employment, civic and political participation.

Lesotho is a youthful country with nearly 40 percent of the population under 35 years of age. The challenge is to explore strategies to harness their energy, power, intellect, labour, and ingenuity in efforts aimed at addressing Lesotho's development objectives through their active participation. Thus, identifying the most pressing needs of the youth and listening to their aspirations are central to the process of sustainable development. In the context of the SGP, the Country Programme Strategy adopts

a strategy of youth involvement by allocating a proportion of points preferentially to youth led or focused on youth empowerment. The CPS will also set aside at least 10 percent of the grant making funds for youth groups and associations. In addition, this program strategy has sort to identify niche areas for youth both in the landscape and outside. Established links with the Limkokwing University of Creative Technologies, The National University of Lesotho Innovation Hub and, closer to home, the UN Accelerator Labs, are seen as inroads to realizing youth empowerment.

c) Promote Participation of Persons with Disability in Country Programming and Projects

People with disabilities are disadvantaged by exclusion from participation in the development process. According to the National Democratic Institute (NDI) (2015) most blind adults in Lesotho can read in braille while 10 percent of people with disability are enrolled in tertiary institutions. However, the population of deaf children who know education sign language is increasing yet still few people with disability have access to the required equipment and technology.

This Programme Strategy will seek to promote participation of people with disabilities in the grant making process by giving them preferential award of some points for projects led and/or focused on strengthening involvement of people with disability in environmental management. A proportion of the grant allocation, under the 30% outside the priority landscape window, will be set aside for groups and associations of persons with disability. Special consultation will also be undertaken with the Lesotho National Federation of Organizations of the Disabled (LNFOD).

4.5 Knowledge Management

A mandatory component of each project shall be to document the implementation processes as well as the experiences and lessons learnt. Photographs and video clips will be taken in each project with the view to contributing to the knowledge management pool. Field days and study tours will be promoted to enhance knowledge sharing and information exchange amongst the grantees as well as between grantee landscapes and adjacent landscape outside the target areas. Reporting on knowledge management activities will be mandatory for all grantee projects. The SGP Secretariat will compile all reports and information sharing activities for posting on the website and other digital library platforms. Students from tertiary institutions will be allowed to write documentary and analytic projects on the grantee projects where possible. The GGWI particularly the southern Africa component presents another platform for information and experience sharing among the SADC countries taking part in the Initiative. In alignment with the UNDP Country Programme monitoring, evaluation, and reporting, SGP human-impact stories, results and partnerships and knowledge will be shared.

5. COMMUNICATION PLAN

The Country Programme will develop a National communications Strategy (NCS). The NCS activities will be derived from the GEF-SGP Global Communication Strategy and the GEF-SGP Project Document, adjusted for Lesotho and tailored to target various audiences. Communications activities to be included in annual work-plans will among others include the following:



- Through ongoing knowledge management efforts, the SGP Secretariat will continue to organize workshops for NGOs & CBOs, government agencies and community councils in different jurisdictions within the operational landscapes and other district fora to present the SGP concept, how to apply for grants, its focal areas and strategic initiatives and explain how to write an acceptable project proposal responding to the prioritized national strategic initiatives
- National print, radio and television media featuring success stories, challenges and lessons learned on SGP projects.
- Prepare newsletters/programme briefs on SGP events and circulate them widely to share success stories.
- Prepare audio-visual materials on successful projects to screen them in all events, workshops, and conferences.
- Preparation of information brochures on the country programme
- Field days and site visits for key stakeholders to flagship projects
- Documentation of lessons learned on projects in the form of best practices and analysis to extract ingredients of success.
- Talks/presentations in high-profile events and in support of resource mobilization
- Compile materials and tools useful for community level advocacy and outreach, especially with focus on participatory techniques.
- Conduct workshops for key stakeholders on SGP and NGOs on national priorities and clarifying GEF SGP outcome indicators.
- Support to and participation in commemoration of world environment and wetland days and national environment fairs.
- Grantee exchange visits and networking and exhibitions at national and international events to highlight achieved results.
- Briefing sessions and MOA signature ceremonies officiated by District Authorities, GEF NFP and UNDP Senior Management.
- Updating the website of the SGP in Lesotho and that of the UNDP Country Office regularly to assist the NGOs, CBOs, government, and all relevant stakeholders to learn more about SGP activities and acts as an important means of communication and sharing experiences of the different projects in all focal areas. Implementation of these activities will be monitored closely and evaluated to determine their appropriateness and effectiveness in contributing to the success of the Country Program.

6. RESOURCE MOBILIZATION AND PARTNERSHIP PLAN

The CPS recognizes the importance of mobilizing and encouraging co-finance needed to increase the effectiveness of GEF SGP in Lesotho.



6.1 Secured and planned cash and in-kind co-financing

The GEF-SGP through the National Coordinator, with support from the UNDP CO, the National GEF Focal point, and the NSC will solicit support for establishment of partnerships for mobilization of financial and technical assistance with bilateral and multilateral development agencies, intergovernmental organizations, the private sector, NGOs, the academia, and other organizations. The SGP is now firmly rooted in Lesotho and its impact starting to show as a result, it has leveraged GEF STAR resources in both GEF-7 and GEF-8. Quite a few programmes/projects forming the portfolio of projects under the Energy and Environment portfolio of the UNDP CO are GEF funded projects while some are bilaterally funded. Synergies will continue to be explored for collaboration on implementation of community level activities where the SGP has comparative advantage. Through collaboration with the Ministry of Environment and Forestry, and UNDP, implementation of the GGW National Action Plan is being piloted in the project site for a GEF funded project titled “*Integrated Watershed Management for improved agro-pastoral livelihoods in the Seapala sub-catchment,*” with the aim of augmenting the community beneficiation and livelihoods component with a special focus on women and youth.

Some national development partners continue to consult with the Country Programme for potential candidates for their small grants programme and this presents a potential avenue for co-financing of the Country Programme management costs. It is also envisaged that new and additional resources will be leveraged through the Women-led Enterprises Innovation project that is under development and the Mountain Partnership Programme on Food Security. Partnerships have been kindled with various government departments namely, Department of Water (*Integrated Catchment Management Project*) Lesotho Highlands Development Authority (*targeting the head waters of the Senqu River*), the Ministry of Environment and Forestry, to name a few. Furthermore, the UN Accelerator Labs present an opportunity for innovation in programme implementation.

6.2 Co-financing opportunities

There are successful models in the provision of effective participation by the CSOs, local authorities and local communities which should be explored. However, there is the tendency to make more efforts to encourage co-financing in parallel to the development of resources and contributions in the implementation of projects to ensure sustainability. There are initiatives for enhanced participation and support from UNDP to mobilize the private sector and to engage it as an active partner to fulfil its social responsibility. UNDP CO is adopting a portfolio approach for the implementation of its new Country Programme Document (2024 – 2028); a development that will build on the landscape approach of the SGP and that presents another opportunity for leveraging new and additional resources to implement the SGP Strategic Initiatives. The CPS for OP 8 will emphasize again on the importance of continuation and building more partnerships with the stakeholders and actors which may provide contributions (in cash and in kind) to active CSOs. This would ensure mobilizing additional resources in addition to the co-financing provided by the NGOs and local communities.

7. PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

The SGP Team including NSC, Technical Advisory Groups and some long term CSO partners will, through their respective community development programmes and unemployed graduates volunteer programmes, assist local communities, local authorities and CSOs in accessing funding through development of project proposals in response to calls for proposals by government, bilateral and multi-

lateral organizations. The COMPACT project site was identified as a priority landscape and thus targeted for grant making with GEF-7 STAR. With SGP support, the group of grantees in this landscape have pulled resources to secure planning, reporting and mentorship support from a 2 experts at minimal fees. As part of the UNDP Team, the NC continues to participate in the Development Partners Forum on Resilience and Natural Resources Management, where information of is shared and synergies are established. Through the SGP facilitation, a Memorandum of Understanding for UNDP partnership with Basotho Enterprises Development Corporation (BEDCO) is under development. Under this partnership, among other UNDP supported groups, SGP grantees will receive entrepreneurial mentorship to strengthen the livelihoods component of the various environmental protection projects implemented.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN

Table 6 Description of risks identified in OP8

Project Risk Analysis and Management Matrix			
Describe identified risk	Degree of risk (low, medium, high)	Probability of risk (low, med, or high)	Risk mitigation measure foreseen
Institutional conflicts with on-going public and /or NGO projects on the landscape	Slow-down of project implementation and jeopardize integration of relevant experiences into national programs	Low	The project formulation process will maintain the multi-institutional nature of the NSC inclusive of key relevant line Ministries Meteorological Services, Disaster Management Authority at both national and district levels to ensure effective coordination and participatory decision-making.
Highly fragile environment for intensifying crop and livestock production pursuant to sustainable agriculture and food security	High-risk aversion to innovations among subsistence farmers and herders and high vulnerability to climate-related hazards	Medium	Building resilience of local ecosystems and ensuring stability and optimal use of chemicals and fertilizer. Reducing vulnerability through reliance on improved farming practices, improved natural resources management including soil erosion control.
Conflicts in the management of communally owned resources	Could lead to low interest in participation and failure of communally implemented innovations/practice.	Medium	Participatory approach in decision-making and building community consensus through local authorities at the initial stage including some training on conflict management of common property resources
Politicization of the grants	Create attitudes and political bias	Low	The fund management will be ring fenced from government institutions and political groups
Operational issues: lack of quality in design	Poor design would create a disconnect between activities and resources allocated	Medium	The proposal development process culminating in funding will monitor and evaluate any discord between activities and budget
Operation: Lack of expertise	Could derail the deliverable potential of the project	Medium	The proposal evaluation process would look for this and advise for modification of projects accordingly. In addition, the collaborative

Project Risk Analysis and Management Matrix			
Describe identified risk	Degree of risk (low, medium, high)	Probability of risk (low, med, or high)	Risk mitigation measure foreseen
			linkage with expert departments /NGOs would be enforced. Furthermore, supervision and mentorship components will be built into project proposals
Operational: Conflicts with local authorities	This could derail the project especially where activities involve the commons	High	The assessment of the project proposal will ensure that there is transparency and cooperation between grantees and local authorities and communities

9. MONITORING AND EVALUATION PLAN

Monitoring and Evaluation is essential to measure the progress on the set goals and objectives of every initiative. It must be a cross cutting element that is realized at planning stage (initiation/conceptualization), approval stage, and implementation stage (execution) and evaluation stage.

Using the Foresight Approach which is the ability to create and maintain a high quality, coherent and functional view, and in line with the UNDP evaluation policy, at least 10 percent of SGP resources will be allocated for monitoring and evaluation and will ensure systematic collection of disaggregated data to augment the evidence and analysis behind SGP, as this will reduce duplication of efforts while at the same time closing data gaps that may bring challenges in the implementation process of SGP. In response to Gender issues, the UNDP gender marker will be applied for tracking expenditure towards gender mainstreaming from planning process, project approval, project implementation and evaluation. It further exposes efficiency in monitoring that outputs and outcomes promote equal benefits for men and women in SGP implementation.

Community participation, community capacity enhancement and involvement will be done through joint dialogues, visits, meetings, and programme reviews together with stakeholders and technical working groups and institutions. The SGP in OP8 will continue to work largely with mountain communities in the same landscape as in OP 6 and OP 7.

9.1 Monitoring approaches at project and country levels

Using the Foresight Approach which is the ability to create and maintain a high quality, coherent and functional view, and in line with the UNDP evaluation policy, at least 10 percent of SGP resources will be allocated for monitoring and evaluation and will ensure systematic collection of disaggregated data to augment the evidence and analysis behind SGP, as this will reduce duplication of efforts while at the same time closing data gaps that may bring challenges in the implementation process of SGP. In response to Gender issues, the UNDP gender marker will be applied for tracking expenditure towards gender mainstreaming from planning process, project approval, project implementation and evaluation. It further exposes efficiency in monitoring that outputs and outcomes promote equal benefits for men and women in SGP implementation.

Community participation, community capacity enhancement and involvement will be done through joint dialogues, visits, meetings and programme reviews together with stakeholders and technical working groups and institutions. The SGP in OP8 will continue to work largely with mountain communities in the same landscape as in OP7.



9.1.1 Monitoring at the Project Level

As a capacity development strategy, the SGP will continue to encourage grantees within the same sub-catchment to pool resources for engagement of local consultants to mentor and build capacities of the grantees and mountain communities in project management including in monitoring and evaluation and reporting. Awarding of capacity development grants is another strategy that will be continued in this regard. Appropriate monitoring and evaluations tools to capture data and information, in alignment with the SGP Country Programme M&E guidelines, will be developed for this purpose. As a strategy for promoting networking and sharing and exchange of lessons and experiences, there will be joint mentorship, planning and reporting sessions and exchange visits for a network of grantees within the priority landscape. Every effort will be made to undertake project monitoring visits in conjunction with major programme activities including, during project appraisal visits, mentorship sessions and during activities organized by other stakeholders and partners that will be taking place in the priority landscape. Every effort will be made to ensure that each project is visited *at least* twice in its lifetime. Each project will include, as a critical component, an activity for end of project evaluation to document overall project impact and factors for sustainability of project results over the long-term.

Furthermore, before the commencement of Grant making in OP8 and development of a portfolio of projects, a training workshop(s) will be held as part of the inception process for the eighth operational phase of the SGP in Lesotho, with the objective of laying the foundation for grant making and building capacities on the new SGP Monitoring and evaluation Strategy. There will be continuous engagement first and foremost, with the capacity development grantees and with the entire grantee network and key stakeholders supporting programme implementation.

9.1.2 Monitoring at the Country Level

In achieving evidence-based management and monitoring, there will be need for qualitative and quantitative data that will be sourced from national data sources for sustainability. The frequency will be annually and as an when need arises while at the same time taking stock of lessons learned, participatory monitoring and observation by team members and beneficiaries to achieve community ownership in the implementation process and open communication for re-planning, harmonized environment for advocacy and policy reviews throughout the project cycle which will be done annually, and adjustments done if needed from planning to execution.

Table 7 Monitoring and Evaluation Plan at Country Programme Level

M&E Activity	Purpose	Responsible Parties	Budget Source	Timing
Country Programme Strategy elaboration	Framework for action including identification of community projects	NC, NSC, country stakeholders, grantees	A SGP planning grant to engage consultants may be used to update OP8 CPS	At start of OP8
As part of NSC meetings, ongoing review of project results and analysis. This includes an Annual CPS Review	Assess effectiveness of projects, country portfolio; learning; adaptive management	NC, NSC, UNDP Country Office. Final deliberations shared/ analyzed with CPMT colleagues	Staff time, Country Operating Budget	At least one annual CPS review to ensure OP8 CPS is on track to achieve its results and make timely and evidence-based modifications to CPS as may be needed ⁷
Annual Monitoring Report Survey ⁸	Enable efficient reporting to CPMT and GEF. It serves as the primary tools to record and analytically present results to donors	NC/PA in close collaboration with NSC. CPMT provides technical guidance support and receives final country submission for further action	Staff time	Once per year in June- July
Country Portfolio Review	Methodological results capture of the portfolio at a given point to note impact level change as well as broader adoption. The goal is to support reporting to stakeholders, learning, and support to strategic development/ implementation of CPS	NC, NSC	SGP planning grant to engage consultants may be used to undertake previous operational cycles impact review and utilize lessons for both OP8 CPS development and its implementation. Global technical M&E support can be expected	Once per operational phase

⁷ It is recommended that the Annual CPS review is done close to AMR submissions for both processes to benefit from each other (suggested timeframe is May- July). Note that OP8 CPS will be regarded as a dynamic document and can be updated by the SGP country team and NSC on a periodic basis to reflect any necessary adjustments to ensure maximum impact.

⁸ Timely and quality country level submissions to Annual Monitoring Process are mandatory. As a Global Programme, it enables aggregated reporting by CPMT to GEF, UNDP and other stakeholders.



M&E Activity	Purpose	Responsible Parties	Budget Source	Timing
SGP Database	Ensure recording of all Project and Country Programme inputs in SGP database	NCs, PAs,	Staff time	Throughout the operational phase. Ensure quality assurance and completion of data prior to annual monitoring cycle (May- June of every year)
Audit	Ensure compliance with project implementation/management standards and norms	External/independent auditors. NC/ PA to provide requisite support.	Global Operating Budget	Annually for selected countries on risk-assessment basis



9.2 CPS Results Framework



Alignment with SDGs

In this context the OP8 programme is aligned with a number of SDGs. In particular SDG 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8,9, 11, 13, 15 and 17

Synergy with UNDP Country Programme Document (CPD):

The UNDP Country Office in Lesotho is guided by a new Country Programme Document 2024 – 2028 (CPD 2024 – 2028) that is designed to support the *National Strategic Development Plan II* (NSDP II) objectives.

The CPD is also aligned to with the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) Outcomes being:

- a) Improved governance structures
- b) Improved Food Security and Climate Resilience
- c) Transformative economic and reduced inequalities

CPD 2024 – 2028 Programme Priority Areas most relevant to the SGP:

1. *Environmental sustainability, climate action, and resilience*
3. Build community resilience, safeguard livelihoods and food security, and promote local economic growth, natural resources governance, and environmental management.
4. Develop partnerships for renewable energy and access to renewable energy solutions, Integrated natural resources management, and climate change negotiations.
5. Promote design and delivery of integrated solutions for conservation and managing natural ecosystems for sustainable productivity and livelihoods, low-emissions, and climate-resilient development.
2. *Inclusive structural transformation, green and sustainable economic growth*
4. Promote research, knowledge, and data analysis to influence human development, reduce vulnerability, promote digitization and innovations, and SDGs.
5. Support reforms for the business environment and foster entrepreneurship, innovations and participation in local and regional trade.
6. Assist mobilization of private sector investments and partnerships, and MSMEs development in high impact development sectors for SDG attainment

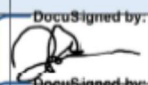
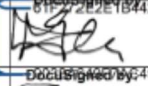
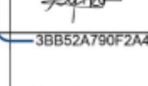
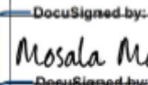
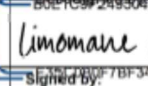
OP8 SGP Programme Goal: Engage local CSOs/CBOs in landscape-seascape approaches across the world, providing them access to knowledge and information, capacitating them through learning-by-doing, skills development, and delivering technical and grant assistance for interventions that enhance wellbeing and socioeconomic conditions and generate global environmental benefits.

OP8 SGP CPS Strategic Initiatives	CPS Indicators and Targets	Means of Verification
1. <i>Community-based conservation of threatened ecosystems and species</i> a) Improve the effectiveness of biodiversity and ecosystem conservation and management through equitable governance systems by recognizing and respecting the rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities. b) Improve community-led biodiversity friendly practices and approaches, including promoting blue economy approaches (e.g., agriculture, fisheries, forestry, tourism, infrastructure, etc.). c) Enhance community led actions for protection of threatened species	– 30,000 hectares of landscapes under improved practices (excluding protected areas) (GEF core indicator 4.1 and 4.3) – 20,000 hectares of waterscapes (e.g. Metolong Dam Catchment) under improved practices (GEF core indicator 5) – 3 community-based protected area/ conserved area designations and/or networks strengthened. – 2 plant species managed and used under access and benefit-sharing regime. – 50 community groups implementing sustainable land management programmes. – Number of women-led groups implementing sustainable land management projects – Number of youth-led groups implementing sustainable land Management projects – Number of people benefiting from improved livelihoods interventions supported - 10,000 (Women: 6000, Men: 4000) – 5 plans and strategies for sustainable rangeland management implemented	– Individual project reporting by SGP country teams (as part of midterm and final Progress reports) – Baseline assessment comparison variables (use of conceptual models and partner data as appropriate) – Annual Monitoring Report (AMR), SGP global database – Country Programme Review

OP8 SGP CPS Strategic Initiatives	CPS Indicators and Targets	Means of Verification
2. Sustainable agriculture and fisheries, and food security a) Increase efficiency and effectiveness of overall food production and value chain, including in vulnerable ecosystems (mountains). b) Increase diversification and livelihood improvement. c) Remove deforestation from supply chain and expand restoration of degraded lands	– 100 hectares of land and ecosystems under restoration (GEF core indicator 3.1) – 510 hectares of degraded agricultural lands restored (hectares) (GEF core indicator 3.1) – Number of projects supporting linkages and partnerships for sustainable food production practices (such as diversification and sustainable intensification) and supply chain management including in sustainable fisheries management – 1000 small-holder farmers (at least 30% women) supported towards the achievement of national Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) targets	– Individual project reporting by SGP country teams (as part of midterm and final Progress reports) – Annual Monitoring Report (AMR), SGP global database – Country Programme Review – Socio-ecological resilience indicators for production landscapes (SEPLs)
6. Low-carbon energy access co-benefits c) Promote renewable and energy efficient technologies providing socio-economic benefits and improving livelihoods. d) Promote off-grid energy service needs in rural	– kW increase in installed renewable energy capacity from community-scale systems (e.g., biomass, micro-hydro, solar, etc.) – 2 locally adapted solutions promoting low-carbon technologies (such as new/modified biogas technology, locally developed energy-efficient stoves, innovative uses of solar/wind energy, etc.) – ha of forests and non-forest lands with restoration and enhancement of carbon stocks initiated. – Increase in installed renewable energy capacity from local technologies (e.g., on types of renewable energy technology biomass, small hydro, solar).	– Individual project reporting by SGP country teams (as part of midterm and final Progress reports) – Annual Monitoring Report (AMR), SGP global database – Country Programme Strategy Review – (NSC inputs)

OP8 SGP CPS Strategic Initiatives	CPS Indicators and Targets	Means of Verification
7. Enhancing social inclusion d) Promote targeted inclusive initiatives. e) Mainstream social inclusion in all projects.	– 2000 people benefitting from GEF-financed investments disaggregated by sex (GEF core indicator 11) – 2 projects with focused interventions promoting gender equality and women's empowerment. – 2 projects that demonstrate models of engaging (a) Indigenous Peoples, (b) youth, and (c) persons with disabilities. – 20% of grants with targeted support for 1) women or women groups; 2) youth or youth-led groups; 3) Indigenous Peoples' groups	– Individual project reporting by SGP country teams – Annual Monitoring Report (AMR), SGP global database – Country Programme Review
8. Monitoring and Evaluation and Knowledge Management Administer new M&E strategy in Country Programme and project design, implementation and overall decision making using participatory mechanisms.	– At least 10 projects with meetings involving local CSOs/CBOs or communities to monitor project results, assess impacts, and identify lessons learned. – At least 10 knowledge exchange/sharing events with participation of local communities – At least 1 country/cross-country impact review conducted with evidence of SGP impact and lessons learned. – 10 South-South exchanges between communities, NGOs/CSOs, or other partners within or across countries to transfer knowledge, replicate technology, tools or approaches on global environmental issues	– Individual project reporting by SGP country teams – Annual Monitoring Report (AMR), SGP global database – Country Programme Review

10. NATIONAL STEERING COMMITTEE ENDORSEMENT

NSC members involved in OP8 CPS development, review and endorsement	Signatures	Date
1. Khotso Lepheana	 DocuSigned by: 81F72E2E1B442E...	01-Sep-2024
2. Maboi Mahula	 DocuSigned by: 491...	01-Sep-2024
3. Stephen Monyamane	 DocuSigned by: 220A82B753F54BF...	03-Sep-2024
4. Malehloa Jockey	 3BB52A790F2A40C...	
5. Mamasheane Ntsonyana	 DocuSigned by: Mosala Mokutlulu	02-Sep-2024
6. Mosala Mokutlulu	 DocuSigned by: Limomane Peshoane	02-Sep-2024
7. Limomane Peshoane	 signed by: 7BF34E4...	
8. Selebaleng Mofolo	 signed by: 4E5456BB8808AD3...	02-Sep-2024
9. Mamosa Mohlabula-Nokana	 A43815B8F88E4FC...	