



PROJECT IDENTIFICATION FORM (PIF)

PROJECT TYPE: Full-sized Project

THE GEF TRUST FUND

Submission Date: 17 January 2008

Re-submission Date:

PART I: PROJECT IDENTIFICATION

GEFSEC PROJECT ID:

GEF AGENCY PROJECT ID:

COUNTRY(IES): Morocco

PROJECT TITLE: Participatory Control of Desertification and Poverty Reduction in the Arid and Semi-Arid High Plateau Ecosystems of Eastern Morocco

GEF AGENCY(IES): IFAD and UNIDO

OTHER EXECUTING PARTNERS: Haut Commissariat aux Eaux et Forêts et à la Lutte Contre la Désertification (HCEFLCD)

GEF FOCAL AREAS: Land degradation and International waters.

GEF-4 STRATEGIC PROGRAM(S): LD SP 1 and IW SP3

INDICATIVE CALENDAR	
Milestones	Expected Dates
Work Program (for FSP)	April 2008
CEO Endorsement/Approval	June 2008
GEF Agency Approval	July 2008
Implementation Start	June 2009
Mid-term Review	June 2011
Implementation Completion	July 2014

A. PROJECT FRAMEWORK

Project Objective: Combat desertification, protect the ecosystem functions and productivity of the pastoral resources, and improve the livelihoods of the rural poor in the Eastern High Plateaus of Morocco.

Project Components	Inv, TA, or STA **	Expected Outcomes	Expected Outputs	Indicative GEF Financing*		Indicative Co-financing*		Total (\$)
				(\$)	%	(\$)	%	
1. Enabling policy environment and SLM/IWRM mainstreaming in rangeland ecosystems	Inv. TA	1. Regulations improved and coordination mechanisms strengthened among line ministries 2. Policies for basin-scale IWRM supported ATP (Tri-partite accord) finalized and implemented 6. Authority for land and water use decisions decentralized to provincial and local levels	a) Revision of key sectoral programs for SLM/IWRM mainstreaming b) Inter-ministerial agreements and practical directives and regulations for ATP implementation c) Decentralization of Land and water use decision-making processes d) Capacity enhanced for 45 RUA ¹ 's for decentralized decision-making	377,199	37	631,017	63	1,008,216
2. Capacity building for SLM and IWRM	Inv. TA	1. Institutional capacity enhanced to support SLM and IWRM provided 2. Operational early drought and climatic warning system for decision making is supported	a) A minimum of 3 training sessions/yr on SLM/IWRM b) SLM/IWRM training manuals widely disseminated c) A minimum of 45 RUAs ² trained to incorporate SLM/IWRM d) Database for bio-physical monitoring available	425,444	30	1,014,322	70	1,439,767

¹ Range User Associations.

			e) Improved readiness to drought					
3. Up-scaling best practices for SLM and water conservation practices for rangeland ecosystems	Inv	1. Large scale areas for pilot SLM/IWRM practices established 2. SLM and IWRM best management practices up-scaled 3. Farmer/herder knowledge management and information system for SLM established	a. 3 sites (35 000 ha each) have Participatory SLM/IWRM plans b. 100 000 ha of rangelands under good management practices c. 5 000 ha of protected areas for seed production d. 120 ha put under control measures for sand stabilization e. 15 000 ha for water harvesting, catchments ponds, and rehabilitated Sigas in the Ain Bni Mathar and Moulouya basins f. 20 % improvement in supply of potable water g. Establishment of one community-led knowledge management and Training Center	3,766,987	23	12,952,711	77	16,719,698
4. Local communities livelihoods improvement	Inv	1. Environmental Income generating activities promoted 2. Eco-tourism potentialities supported 3. Capacity building for environmental services supported	a) A minimum of 5 innovative/environmentally friendly small enterprises promoted b) A minimum of 20% increase farmers' income through value-added and market access for local products c) A minimum of 3 pilot ecotourism enterprises developed d) Innovative types of environmental services supported	441,630	19	1,817,008	81	2,258,638
5. Project monitoring and evaluation	Inv. TA	1. Results based system for project monitoring and evaluation is developed and implemented	a) An operational M&E system established b) Projects technical reports , results, and lesson learned disseminated	397,475	24	1,263,610	76	1,661,084
6. Project management				591,266	33	1,206,497	77	1,797,763
Total project cost				6,000,000	24	18,885,165	76	24,885,165

B. INDICATIVE FINANCING PLAN SUMMARY FOR THE PROJECT (\$)

	Project Preparation	Project	Agency Fee*	Total
GEF Grant	350,000**	6,000,000	635,000	6,985,000
Co-financing	150,000	18,885,165		19,035,165
Total	500,000	24,885,165	635,000	26,020,165

- *Fees to be equally shared between IFAD and UNIDO
- ** already received (without fees)

² The 45 RUAs represent approximately 14,000 farmer/herders

C. INDICATIVE CO-FINANCING FOR THE PROJECT (INCLUDING PROJECT PREPARATION AMOUNT) BY SOURCE AND BY NAME (IN PARENTHESIS) IF AVAILABLE, (\$)

Sources of Co-financing	Type of Co-financing	Amount
Project Government Contribution	Guarantee	13,571,694
GEF Agency IFAD	Soft loan	5,174,029
GEF Agency (UNIDO, IFAD and GM)	Grant (PDF-B co financing)	80,000
Others – Beneficiaries	Guarantee (in kind)	209,442
Total co-financing		19,035,165

D. GEF RESOURCES REQUESTED BY FOCAL AREA(S), AGENCY (IES) SHARE AND COUNTRY(IES)*

GEF Agency	Focal Area	Country Name/ Global	(in \$)			
			Project Preparation	Project	Agency Fee	Total
IFAD	LD	Morocco	350,000	5,000,000	535,000	5,535,000
IFAD	IW	Morocco	(received)	1,000,000	100,000	1,100,000

PART II: PROJECT JUSTIFICATION

A. STATE THE ISSUE, HOW THE PROJECT SEEKS TO SOLVE IT, AND THE EXPECTED GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS TO BE DELIVERED:

Land degradation affects the livelihoods and food security of about 1.5 million households in Morocco, and is undermining the carrying capacity of the ecosystems of the country. It is forcing farmers to extend production to marginal and fragile lands, thus seriously degrading the natural resource base. At the same time, rangeland quality is being depleted due to increasing herd size and prolonged drought. The majority of Morocco climatic zones fall under semi-arid and arid ecosystems (93%). These ecosystems, rich with diverse habitats and species heterogeneity, are of high international importance. However, the pervasive poverty, the increasing pressure on the land and its inadequate management, are leading to wide scale land degradation, depletion of water resources, loss of wildlife habitat, and increased susceptibility to droughts and climate change.

The use, management and control of degradation of common lands are serious issues in Morocco. In the Eastern Region, about 70% of the land is collectively used by local tribes and communities, and land use conflicts over access to grazing areas and water are regular features, seriously contributing to continual and often intensive degradation of the land. This combination of factors result in a spiral of increasing rural poverty and continual degradation of natural resources, with increasing outward migration of poor people to urban areas and elsewhere.

Related to the issues of land degradation and rural poverty is the major issue of water scarcity, with the Eastern High Plateaus being one of the most deprived regions in the country. Groundwater resources exist in several basins, Ain Bni Mathar, and the Moulouya basins, as well as several smaller basins, but the groundwaters are found at great depths and yields are often quite low. Surface water resources, estimated at 1.65 M m³/yr, are highly irregular and unreliable, and related mostly to sporadic winter and some spring and summer storms. These normally drain and/or runoff very quickly, and in the absence of water harvesting and constructed water catchments, they do not provide much relief to the perennial problems of water deficits and the frequent droughts (annual rainfall has been decreasing in the region, and there have been five major droughts since 1975). The application of SLM technologies, including mechanized water harvesting, catchment ponds, and rehabilitated Sigas, are some of the only viable options for the sustainable management of the land and water resources of the region

The GEF project concurrently addresses the major problems of the region, namely land degradation, rural poverty, and water management. This is achieved through an integrated approach by (i): Mainstreaming SLM/IWRM at national, provincial, and local levels; (ii) specific investments to mobilize and empower range users as partners in managing the natural resources, and (iii) specific investments to improve the ecosystem integrity and diversify the income potentials

of the local populations. The philosophy is to create and promote investment opportunities for land resource management which provide concurrent environmental and economic benefits. Mitigation of a process as complex as desertification can only be achieved by building partnerships with local beneficiaries whose livelihoods and economic well being depend on the sustainable management and conservation of their resources. Thus, the project will be articulated around five interlinked components to deliver an integrated approach for SLM and IWRM. These are the following:

- **Mainstreaming SLM principles and IWRM for rangeland ecosystems:** This will be achieved through interventions consisting of: (i) sensitizing relevant sector ministries to incorporate SLM and IWRM principles into their major programmes and local initiatives; (ii) establishing inter-institutional agreements as necessary for networking SLM/IWRM and national/regional integrated development; (iii) developing partnerships and procedures to resolve conflicting jurisdictions in land and water use and tenure (Accord Tripartite) for commonly used lands, including devolving responsibility and authority for control and management of rangelands to local authorities and RUAs; (iv) mobilizing local range users and RUA's as primary agents for sustainable use of range lands; (v) strengthening the coordination of GOM and donor-sponsored projects on SLM in relation to their contributions and impacts on mitigation of land degradation, desertification, and poverty reduction in Morocco.
- **Capacity building for national and local institutions to support integrated SLM and IWRM:** This component will contribute to (i) consolidate and strengthen the capacity of selected national and local government departments and services to implement existing enabling policy environments, remove institutional barriers to SLM/IWRM, and accelerate the adoption of improved technical interventions that produce concurrent economic and environmental benefits. (ii) promote and enhance the capacity of local stakeholders in the use, management, and control of natural resources, including the allocation of local land and water use, undertaking participatory land use planning activities, preparation of land management plans for SLM and water conservation, and resolution of land use conflicts. (iii) support the early drought and climatic warning system, initiated under the IFAD PDPEO-II Project.
- **Up-scaling SLM and IWRM best practices for rangeland ecosystems:** This component focuses on investments and will support the following interventions: (i) establish three large-scale pilot areas, and develop SLM focal groups to provide leadership in development and adoption of SLM and water conservation technologies; these areas will be representative of the arid region in the south, and the dry, semi-arid region in the centre and north, and will serve as models for SLM up-scaling for the remainder of the EHPM. SLM and IWRM practices will emphasize proven techniques and may include technical interventions for control of land degradation, rehabilitation of degraded areas, and protection of rangeland resources, such as rotational grazing, natural rest (fallow) pastures, protection of seed producing areas, controlled stocking rates, windbreaks, contour terraces, water conservation and harvesting techniques, etc. (ii) develop and implement an effective SLM knowledge management system, supported by an Information and Training Centre for information exchange and herder-herder training. (iii) promote a farmer/herder SLM network based on the RUA's and their federations for implementing, monitoring and up-scaling selected SLM best practices; (iv) provide support to RUA's to up-scale selected SLM best practices in the rest of the area, involving a mix of traditional and technical on-the-ground solutions for desertification control.
- **Support for local livelihood improvement:** This component will promote income generating activities to alleviate poverty and absorb excess labor, so as to reduce pressures on natural resource exploitation. The focus will be on adding value to local products while preserving environmental services. Activities will include market development for natural products (truffles, rosemary, aromatic plants etc), dairy processing, and specialty livestock products. This component will also promote small business opportunities in ecotourism through supporting: (i) pilot eco—tourism enterprises in terms of training, equipment, marketing, etc.; (ii) building partnerships between coastal and in-land tourism; and (ii) linking with the eco-museum of Chekhar SIBE initiated under a GEF project. As part of this component, the project will also provide capacity building to support development of an incentive framework (payment for ecosystem services) for improved carbon sequestration and other ecosystems services in the EHPM. This will be achieved through: (i) developing partnerships with RUA's for improved carbon sequestration mechanisms assisting the local communes and RUA's to formulate carbon projects in line with potential buyers' guidelines for example.
- **Project monitoring and evaluation:** This component will develop a results-based M&E system integrating activities achieved, and the economic and environmental impacts of the project. These will be documented and will serve to guide SLM activities and investments in arid and semi-arid rangeland ecosystems. The reports produced (including SLM best practices) will be disseminated in national, regional (through MENARID) and international events.

Benefits at national and local levels include improved capacity and proven methodologies to guide expansion of SLM in the EHPM and other regions of Morocco, leading to less vulnerability to drought and climate change. There will be increased beneficiary knowledge and awareness of the importance of collective action, through cooperative work (RUA's) in the rehabilitation and improved productivity of the natural resource base that constitutes the source of their livelihoods. Appropriate technical and managerial practices and access to alternative sources of income for the local population will lead to reduced poverty and the valorisation of the productive assets and potential of the Eastern

Region. Investments in SLM best management practices will increase the levels of organic matter in the soil, resulting in improved carbon storage, improved soil water retention, and improved capacity for mitigation of droughts and climate change. It has been shown in many other arid and semi-arid areas that even small increases in soil organic matter will pay large dividends in assuring some degree of productivity and mitigation of climate risks.

SLM mainstreaming and good practices that are generated and disseminated by this project will reflect on its added value to the global environment, particularly on critically endangered ecosystems (arid and semi-arid EHPM). In general, global benefits will include: (i) maintenance in ecosystem integrity and service provision capacities; (ii) conservation of soil and water resources leading to higher net primary productivity and increased carbon storage (soil and biomass carbon stocks); (iii) better ecosystem resilience and improved adaptation to climate change and drought (water harvesting, improved soil moisture storage, amelioration of climate risk in SLM investments); (iv) improved biodiversity and reduced habitat fragmentation in sites and ecosystems of global importance to reduce stress on remaining biodiversity hotspots and (v) enhanced functioning of joint management institutions (integrating SLM and IWRM).

The project will measure global environmental benefits through direct measurements of NPP increase, rehabilitation or rangelands and key ecosystems, and conservation of soil and water resources. The preservation and conservation of the rangeland resources of the High Plateaus, including the ecosystem integrity and functions of the alfagrass ecosystems in particular, will be a major contribution to environmental benefits. Following the major drought of 1979 – 84, and the drastic losses of the *Artemisia-herba alba* stands (the most palatable rangeland sites and the among the richest in terms of floristic diversity), there was increased tendency for herders to concentrate their herds in defined areas with supplemental feeding with local and imported forages. This resulted in considerably increased pressure on the land, considerably increased soil erosion, and drastically reduced species richness in many ecosystems, especially those dominated by alfa grass (*Stipa tenacissima*). It is important to note that maintenance of the alfa grass ecosystem is critical for the control and mitigation of desertification, because of its high resistant to drought. If this important resource and its concomitant global environmental benefits, such as maintenance of soil carbon stocks, biodiversity, etc., are allowed to deteriorate further, then no amount of rehabilitation will restore it. This is the last step in the defence against desertification for the entire EHP.

Other global benefits will accrue from improved practices of rangeland management, better maintenance of ground cover, and improved control of soil erosion and land degradation. Emphasis will be on native biodiversity, which will be preserved through use of endogenous sources of seed stock for rangeland improvement and rehabilitation. Also, there are 47 species of mammals in the area, most of which are endangered and three already extinct, and 61 species of birds of which 25 are either endemic, rare or endangered, and 23 species of reptiles. The interventions in this project will improve the local habitat conditions and improve local cover and water supplies, through constructed water catchments, shrub plantations, natural rangeland fallows, and improved vegetative cover. These activities will work to control the desertification process, and thereby help to maintain the biodiversity resources in the region.

Furthermore, a major global benefit will come from development and illustration of an institutional model for control of desertification and IWRM, involving creation of enabling policy environments and joint management at national and local levels, coupled with decentralization of authority and responsibility for natural resource management to rural communities. This model will be suitable for replication in large areas of similar ecosystems in North Africa and the Middle East, and to similar regions of SSA. The project will illustrate the importance of a high level State appointment (i.e., HCEFLCD) to resolve conflicts of cross-jurisdiction, operationalize the regulatory and enabling policy environment, implement a bottom-up land use planning approach, and the process of mainstreaming SLM processes into priority rural development strategies.

The project will illustrate the importance of engaging and mobilizing local rural populations (RUAs) in the management of common lands, and in control of land degradation and desertification. Through these initiatives, rural populations most affected by desertification will be mobilized as important partners to effect the front line control. The project will illustrate how to develop such a practical and cost effective approach, and how to duplicate this in other countries of North Africa and the Middle East, as well as other regions subject to the threats of desertification.

B. DESCRIBE THE CONSISTENCY OF THE PROJECT WITH NATIONAL PRIORITIES/PLANS:

The proposed GEF project responds to several important initiatives of the Moroccan NAPCCD: (i) supporting the implementation of an enabling environment and removing critical barriers, (ii) integrated participatory models for sustainable development; (iii) capacity building to combat land degradation including support institutions and farmers/herders associations; (iv) generation of technological packages adapted to arid- and semi-arid areas, and (v) promotion of income generation activities for poverty reduction. It is also in accordance with the priority objectives of the Government, including:

- Morocco's policy for environmental management and combating desertification: The GEF project is developed as an integral part of the National Action Plan for combating Desertification (NAPCCD), and the National Action Plan for the Environment (NEAP). These are strategic documents for sustainable development, approved and enforced by acts of parliament.
- Morocco's strategy for rural development (Strategy 2020) and National Initiative for Human Development (INDH): The GEF project is consistent with the GOM agricultural and rural development strategy for 2020, and with the INDH, a large-scale poverty reduction program designed to: (i) alleviate poverty, vulnerability, marginalization and social exclusion by improving the incomes and the living conditions of vulnerable people; and (ii) the establishment of a sustainable dynamics in favour of human development, the prosperity and wellbeing of all the people of Morocco.
- The major initiatives and programmes in the EHPM particularly: (i) The IFAD Livestock and Pasture Development Project (PDPEO). Within the PDPEO, the major line ministries (Interior, MAPM, HCEFLCD) acting on natural resources elaborated an agreement (Accord Tripartite) defining their respective responsibilities and the mechanisms to enhance synergy for the management and conservation of the EHPM rangelands. (ii) The Programme for Agricultural Development in Jerada province (PDAJ) financed by the GOM and focusing on activities such as agro-forestry and water catchments; (iii) The GOM programme for drought impact alleviation focusing on safeguarding livestock from the effect of drought and creating employment opportunities; (iv) More recently, the GOM established the Agency for the Development of the Eastern region of Morocco with primary objectives to reduce the pervasive poverty in the region and foster sustainable economic growth.

The proposed project is also a direct response to operationalize the SLM partnership framework and resource mobilization strategy for Morocco, which was prepared in collaboration with the GM and endorsed by financing partners.

C. DESCRIBE THE CONSISTENCY OF THE PROJECT WITH GEF STRATEGIES AND STRATEGIC PROGRAMS:

The project conforms closely to the GEF's Focal Area strategy, objectives, and eligible activities under the Land Degradation and International Waters. It focuses on a landscape approach, which embraces ecosystem principles addressing processes that provide people with ecosystem goods and services at local and global scales. It is located within a region severely affected by land degradation but which has potential for yielding global environmental benefits and up-scaling good SLM practices that would be replicated in neighbouring countries.

The project responds to the strategic priorities of Sustainable Land Management and International Waters. In particular, it relates LD SP1 (Supporting Sustainable agriculture and rangeland management) and IW SP3 (balancing overuse and conflicting uses of water resources in surface and groundwater basins). While putting emphasis on investment, the project responds to LD SO1 (through mainstreaming SLM strategies and principles into national development priorities, as well as national and community level capacity building to ensure participatory involvement in integrated land use planning and implementation. It also entails support to joint planning and promotion of cross-sectoral approaches to SLM/IWRM. The proposed project targets LD SO2 and IW SO2 through participatory on the ground investments for integrated SLM/IWRM and water harvesting technologies contributing to rangeland improvement, rehabilitation, and protection. The objective is to ensure long term, sustainable control and mitigation of land degradation and desertification in the eastern region. Emphasis will be on the use of indigenous species for regeneration, and on using local knowledge and proven technologies common to the farmer/herder populations to manage pasture resources and aid in reversing the current trend of land degradation. Related components will focus on alternate income generating activities to relieve rural poverty, improve rural livelihoods, and buffer against loss of equity during severe droughts and climate change.

The GEF assistance will be consistent with the work program priorities of the Morocco NAPCCD, and with the partnership building and resource mobilization activities initiated by the Global Mechanism (GM). The components of the project, the M&E system, and the knowledge management functions, are fully compatible with the MENARID program framework.

D. OUTLINE THE COORDINATION WITH OTHER RELATED INITIATIVES:

The GEF investment will strongly support the “Haut Commissariat aux Eaux et Forêts et à la Lutte Contre la Désertification – HCEFLCD”, and accelerate its capacity for strong leadership in integrated environmental policy and rural development. The HCEFLCD is a high level, cabinet appointment, with oversight responsibilities on line departments concerning all aspects of environmental management. The HCEFLCD has the authority and the responsibility to coordinate and regulate development activities in rural areas to ensure development which is economically and environmentally sustainable. This agency will have direct responsibility to direct and coordinate this project and will ensure high coordination with other similar initiatives in the country.

This project will be an integral part of a portfolio of projects on SLM in Morocco. Specifically, it will build on the successes achieved in the Livestock and Pasture Development Project (PDPEO), developed under an IFAD contracted loan. This approach was identified as the best and most cost effective approach to fast track SLM priorities and principles in national and local programs and policies, and the best opportunity for mobilizing local populations as full partners in control of desertification and reduction of rural poverty.

In addition, the project will link closely and provide input to important international and regional programs on desertification, such as: (i) information systems on desertification, in support of national and regional programs of the CCD in the Mediterranean region; (ii) monitoring and follow-up of the desertification in southern Mediterranean countries, implemented in partnership with the Sahara and Sahel Observatory (OSS) within the “Life Program” of the European Union; (iii) development of M&E systems within the UNCCD Action plans of Maghreb countries neighbouring the Mediterranean; and (iv) the project “Conserving Biodiversity through Transhumance” which produced a large data base of local knowledge in managing, using and conserving biodiversity. The database developed under this project will constitute a valuable source for developing indicators and support the development of the information centre to be established under this GEF proposal. These supplemental/technical outcomes, including reinforcing the knowledge base, development of indicators, and monitoring and evaluation systems for desertification control, will be highly useful for up-scaling SLM to other regions in Morocco and other countries in the MENA region.

Synergy will also be developed with the existing projects in the EHP involving the GEF, namely the Protected Areas Management Project, aiming at the creation and management of national parks and biodiversity conservation at 2 sites: (i) “Sites d’Intérêt Biologique et Ecologique” SIBE of *Jbel Krouz*: a large site (60,000 ha) representative of the Atlas Saharien ecosystems, located in the province of Figuig (southern part of the Project area); (ii) SIBE of *Chekhar*: a diverse, somewhat degraded ecosystem (10,000 ha) up to 1350 m, in the Province of Oujda, with remnant oak forest (northern part of the Project area).

The proposed GEF project is also in harmony with the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) targeting poverty reduction, decentralization to local level to allow development actions to be adapted to specific problems, partnership approaches to program development and execution using participatory mechanisms together with the beneficiaries.

The project is an integral part of the MENARID programme framework. It will work towards MENARID’s objectives and PRs in harmony with other ongoing and planned GEF projects in the country/region. It will meet MENARID objectives while contributing to increased exchange of lessons learned and best practices across the MENA region.

E. DISCUSS THE VALUE-ADDED OF GEF INVOLVEMENT IN THE PROJECT DEMONSTRATED THROUGH INCREMENTAL REASONING:

Without the GEF involvement

Morocco’s rural areas are characterized by poor socioeconomic infrastructure, low levels of education, inadequate support services and an ageing farm population. Farmers are thus not equipped to face the challenges of an economy that is opening up to free market competition. The major causes of insufficient productivity in the agricultural sector are: (i) degradation of natural resources; (ii) rural poverty; (iii) insufficient social infrastructure; (iv) limited involvement of the rural population, especially women, in the development process; (v) poor use of the Government’s

human and financial resources; and (vi) the almost non-availability of rural financial services for small farmers and the rural poor. Natural resources are affected by increasing degradation. Apart from the broad alluvial plains, most of Morocco's soils are fragile and subject to erosion. It is estimated that 35% of the rural population live in areas of serious degradation, i.e. on rangelands and key ecosystems for the country and the global environment. The baseline scenario aims to increase incomes and improve living conditions among rural poor people in the eastern region of Morocco in particular. There is a particular focus on women and girls, whose income-generating activities are poorly developed and who have little access to rural financial services. The baseline interventions work towards the creation of new socio-economic opportunities that generate incomes and build autonomy among local communities. The baseline scenario will not be sufficient to address the strong linkages between environmental degradation (that affects both the local and the global environment). Without GEF intervention less emphasis and lower investment will be leveraged to restore key ecosystem functions and hydrological regimes which constitute the main resource base for the local population.

With the GEF involvement

The proposed GEF project aims to combat land degradation and desertification in the arid and semi-arid high plateaus, conserve rangeland ecosystems, and contribute to alleviation of rural poverty (main driver for environmental degradation in the region). This will be achieved by building on results of previous experiences and by completing ongoing initiatives from a global environmental perspective. The project will be particularly linked to the Livestock and Pasture Development Project (PDPEO), which is being implemented under an IFAD loan. The two projects are complementary and will be blended to capture the synergy of objectives, improve cost effectiveness, and maximise impact on the ground.

Specifically, the PDPEO focuses on livestock production compatible with sustainable participatory management of rangeland resources, drought proofing, and poverty reduction. Its objectives are to increase the income and improve the living conditions of the rural poor in the Eastern Region. Its activities include: (i) working through local community empowerment to capitalize on the potentials of the eastern region, (ii) control and mitigate drought, and (iii) create new economic opportunities for the most vulnerable groups.

The GEF project will focus on control of land degradation and desertification and on conservation and preservation of the integrity, functions, and services of the alfa grass and other steppe ecosystems. At the same time, it will contribute to rural development objectives by providing support to enhance the institutional management of local natural resources by ensuring effective participation of all stakeholders and bottom-up natural resources management. It will promote the further empowerment and capacity of the RUAs and local communes to become full partners in the use and management of natural resources of the region in balance with its natural capacity. The project will put equal emphasis on IWRM and will seek to balance over-use of water resources over 15.000 ha in key basins (Ain Bni Mattar and Moulouya). IWRM and SLM will be addressed in a holistic manner.

The proposed GEF project will develop and illustrate one of the most important principles in sustainable global environmental management, i.e. the concurrent achievement of environmental and economic benefits through targeted investments. The project will promote the concept of balanced eco-environmental management by promoting best SLM and IWRM practices which provide added economic return while concurrently ensuring environmental stewardship. The project will also demonstrate the importance of mobilizing and empowering resource users as the primary, first line agents for managing their natural resources.

The GEF project will support the poverty reduction objectives of the PDPEO project by promoting development of small businesses, ecotourism, and other income generating activities, including off-farm, rural activities for men and women. The focus will be on activities that improve income, but concurrently improve ecosystem resilience, reduce pressure on rangeland resources, and contribute to global benefits. This will be promoted by conducting market surveys for natural products from the area, including specialty range fed meats (e.g. organic meat production), honey production, truffles, local arts and crafts etc., evaluating the potentials for eco-tourism in the area, and promoting collective self-help initiatives. These activities will be funded collectively through the PDPEO project and other sources such as the Agency for the Development of the Eastern Region of Morocco.

By targeting degraded alfa ecosystems, the proposed project will add a significant global environmental dimension to the baseline scenario through carbon sequestration, conservation and restoration of habitats through rangeland management, improvement in the hydrologic regime at the basin scale, and improve soil and water conservation. The

proposed GEF project will also strengthen the capacity of local resource users (herders in particular) to adapt to climate change impacts through drought early warning coping strategies and diversified income generating activities.

Finally, the EHPM are representative of globally important ecosystems, such as those found in many countries in North Africa and the Middle East. The integrated biophysical, social and economic model presented in this project has the potential to reverse the continued desertification of these regions. This will ensure the continual provision of viable environmental services and reliable economic returns from these regions.

F. INDICATE RISKS INCLUDING CLIMATE CHANGE RISKS, THAT MIGHT PREVENT PROJECT OBJECTIVE(S) FROM BEING ACHIEVED, AND IF POSSIBLE INCLUDING RISK MEASURES THAT WILL BE TAKEN:

Project risks involve both natural and institutional risks. The risks of natural disasters, such as droughts, and insect infestations, are endemic in the eastern region. The people in the area have long standing experience in coping with natural disasters, and these risks are tolerable if they are of relatively short duration, but they become more serious if they last for four years or more. To minimize this risk, the project will promote collective action for the rational use and management of rangelands, including pasture rotation, natural (fallow) rest periods, natural regeneration, etc., as well a drought proofing activities such as water harvesting, and other water management activities. Also, the project will contribute to strengthening the drought warning system in collaboration with the National Observatory on Drought under the Ministry of Agriculture.

Institutional barriers and risks will be minimized through actions in implementing and extending the Accord Tripartite, and having this mainstreamed in line ministry's strategy documents, including poverty reduction strategies, rural development strategies, and in accordance with NAPs for environment and for the CCD. This Accord, and the agreements resulting there from, will resolve cross-jurisdictional inconsistencies between GOM departments in land use, land management, and it will resolve the issues of local land use and tenure for land improvements in the eastern region.

The project will significantly depend on the strength and commitment of local stakeholders, particularly communes and RUAs that are identified as the key partners. The project will ensure that these organizations are mobilized and empowered with sufficient commitment, finances, jurisdictions, and backstopping to enable them to provide the leadership, guidance, and entrepreneurship necessary to implement and manage the planned initiatives within the project.

G. DESCRIBE, IF POSSIBLE, THE EXPECTED COST-EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROJECT:

The GEF project will draw on lessons and build on successes already achieved through the IFAD Project (PDPEO) to address desertification, SLM, and IW issues in the Eastern Region of Morocco. This approach was identified in the Concept Note and confirmed during the PDF B phase as the best and most cost effective mix of institutional and technical activities, and the best opportunity for mobilizing local populations and partnership building to combat desertification. The GEF project will capitalize on these achievements and lessons learned, and accelerate and promote efforts to simultaneously promote desertification control while contributing to improving economic and social sustainability of the rural populations.

The project is strongly supportive of the work of the HCEFLCD, and thus it is strategically important for building the institutional and administrative structures necessary for control of desertification and reduction of rural poverty in Morocco. This model, which is designed to accelerate building enabling policy environments while also mobilizing local action through participatory approaches, has been shown to be successful in other areas, and will serve as a model for control of desertification in other countries in North Africa.

The proposed project adopts a targeted approach to capacity building and SLM/IWRM mainstreaming while putting emphasis on investment on the ground. The objective is to increase the impact per GEF dollar on both people and ecosystems. Linking with the MENARID M&E framework will reduce transaction costs and contribute to a cost-effective knowledge sharing function. The project is also focusing on up-scaling in view of supporting a multiplier effect and wider dissemination of the investment. Further cost-effectiveness assessments will be undertaken during project preparation.

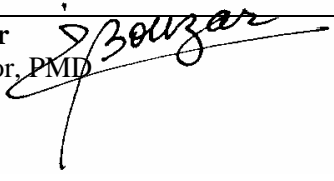
PART III: APPROVAL/ENDORSEMENT BY GEF OPERATIONAL FOCAL POINT(S) AND GEF AGENCY(IES)

A. RECORD OF ENDORSEMENT OF GEF OPERATIONAL FOCAL POINT (S) ON BEHALF OF THE GOVERNMENT(S):

(Please attach the [country endorsement letter\(s\)](#) or [regional endorsement letter\(s\)](#) with this template).

Mr Taha BALAFREJ GEF Focal Point Directeur du Partenariat, de la Communication et de la Coopération	Date: 21 November 2007
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B. GEF AGENCY(IES) CERTIFICATION

This request has been prepared in accordance with GEF policies and procedures and meets the GEF criteria for project identification and preparation.	
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