

## Safeguards Compliance Memorandum

### Project Information

<b>Project Name</b>	Integrated Landscape Management to Secure Nepal's Protected Areas and Critical Corridors
<b>GEF Focal Area</b>	Biodiversity, Land Degradation, Sustainable Forest Management
<b>Safeguards Categorization</b>	B

### Project Description

The GEF project “Integrated Landscape Management to Secure Nepal’s Protected Areas and Critical Corridors” is focused on the Terai Arc Landscape (TAL). The project is based on a landscape management approach to ensure that buffer zones around Protected Areas, and corridors that connect Protected Areas, are managed and conserved for the region’s globally significant forests and large ranging mammals, including tigers, rhinos, and elephants. The project objective is to promote integrated landscape management to conserve globally significant forests and wildlife. This GEF project focus is the Government of Nepal’s priority landscape, the Terai Arc Landscape (TAL), and with an on-ground intervention focus in the Bardi-Banke National Park complex. The project will be implemented at the national level and across TAL for Component 1; in TAL for Component 2; and in Banke National Park Buffer Zone, Bardia National Park Buffer Zone, Kamdi Corridor and Karnali Corridor (termed Bardia-Banke complex) for Component 3.

The project will accomplish this objective through the implementation of the below components:

**Component 1:** National capacity and enabling environment for cross-sectoral coordination to promote forest and landscape conservation.

An integrated landscape management approach will involve collaboration among different government agencies and stakeholders that influence landscape level conservation outcomes. At the national level and for TAL, the project will foster coordination among key actors in the infrastructure, rural development, and forest and wildlife management sectors to implement a shared goal of landscape management for sustainable socio-economic development and ecosystem health. Outcomes of this component include: (i) improved inter-sectoral coordination from Federal, State to Local level for sustainable forest management and integrated landscape management; and (ii) capacity increased for multi-stakeholder and cross-sector landscape and forest planning and management. Mechanisms for coordination will be established to develop: a mutual understanding of rights, stakes, and objectives; communication channels for conflict management and negotiation; and adaptive management based on shared learning. This component will be led by the Ministry of Forests and Environment (MoFE).

**Component 2:** Integrated planning for protected area buffer zones and critical corridors which will include corridor planning and development of operational plan in the Terai Arc landscape

The project will operationalize the integrated landscape management approach for Nepal's priority landscape, the Terai Arc. An integrated landscape management approach will involve collaboration among different land managers and stakeholders at the national, landscape, and district level towards ensuring that forest, biodiversity and ecosystem values are known and considered by multiple actors in land use planning and management. Planning and management, led at the national level and implemented at the district level, will identify and take into account the key forest ecosystem services, such as water provision, soil conservation, carbon storage and sequestration, climate resilience, local livelihood provision, and cultural values; as well as biodiversity protection for species and habitat conservation, connectivity, and associated services, such as ecotourism. The anticipated outcomes are: (i) improved corridor planning for three TAL corridors (Brahmadev, Karnali and Kamdi); and (ii) improved participatory planning for sustainable management of the Banke-Bardia complex.

Under this component there will be support for improved corridor planning for three corridors - Brahmadev, Karnali and Kamdi. The project will support biodiversity and socio-economic surveys and stakeholder consultations to understand options for improved governance, such as community-based natural resource management, if there is such community support.

Additionally, priority community forest areas will be identified, based on forest and habitat conservation and socio-economic priorities, for the two buffer zones and Karnali and Kamdi, and Forest Management Operational Plans will be developed (and operationalized through component 3). Forest Operational Plans and/or sustainable forest management plans will be developed for Brahmadev, Kamdi and Karnali corridors.

This component will be led by Department of Forests and Soil Conservation and Divisional Forest Offices under the provincial Ministry of Industry, Tourism, Environment and Forests.

**Component 3:** Forest and wildlife management for improved conservation of targeted protected area buffer zones and corridors in the Terai Arc landscape

The project will build community and district capacity for forest and wildlife management, and will demonstrate applied forest, wildlife and land management in priority locations in the targeted buffer zones and corridors in the Bardia-Banke complex. Interventions will be focused in the areas where key forest, forest carbon and biodiversity values overlap with high threats (per map developed in component 2) and will use a community-based NRM approach to secure livelihoods and promote forest and wildlife conservation. Outcomes of this component include: (i) sustainable forest management practices that strengthen livelihoods and biodiversity conservation; (ii) improved management of human-wildlife conflict; and (iii) enhanced capacities of government and community in curbing wildlife crime. Activities will be implemented by communities, community organizations, and districts, and will contribute to the goals of securing forests and forest ecosystem services and protecting globally significant biodiversity in TAL.

**Component 4:** Knowledge management and monitoring and evaluation

The project will support knowledge management in the form of increased dialogue from the local to regional to national level. The project will increase the capacity for monitoring and evaluation and ensure the use of M&E outputs for adaptive management in integrated landscape management. Support will be provided for dedicated knowledge management, including capturing and sharing of key project lessons to project stakeholders and beyond the project.

### **Project Location and Salient Physical Characteristics Relevant to the Safeguard Analysis**

This GEF project will be implemented at the national level and across TAL for Component 1; in TAL for Component 2; and in Banke National Park Buffer Zone, Bardia National Park Buffer Zone, Kamdi Corridor and Karnali Corridor (termed Bardia-Banke complex) for Component 3. The selection of intervention sites within Banke National Park Buffer Zone, Bardia National Park Buffer Zone, Kamdi Corridor and Karnali Corridor in Component 3 will be made during implementation, based on criteria such as presence of high value conservation forest, high carbon stock forest, human-wildlife conflict hotspots, importance for wildlife movement, and priority areas for responding to threats.

**Banke National Park Buffer Zone** lies in tropical and sub-tropical ecological zones and the Churia, Bhabar (narrow belt of gently sloping southern foothills of the Churia hills) and Terai physiographic regions of Nepal. The buffer zone (BZ) of BaNP has an area of 343 km<sup>2</sup>, encompassing parts of Banke, Dang and Salyan districts. The BZ includes parts of Kohalpur municipality and two rural municipalities of Banke district. Similarly, the northern part of the BZ occupies parts of two rural municipalities of Dang and one rural municipality of Salyan. The ethnic composition of the buffer zone comprises of Tharu, Musalman, Brahman, Chhetri, Magar, Kurmi and Thakuri. Agriculture is the major occupation in the area. Mining of sand and gravel is also a major source of income generation in the area. The villagers living near the buffer zone are dependent on community forests for firewood, fodder and other non- timber forest products.

**Bardia National Park Buffer Zone** covers an area of 327 km<sup>2</sup> encircling the eastern, southern and western boundaries of the park. A population of over 100,000 people including about 60 percent Tharu community is spread over 17 Village Development Committees (VDC) around the park boundary except towards the north i.e. north of the Siwalik (Chure) ridge. In addition to indigenous tribal people, Tharu people have also immigrated from Dang and Deukhuri Valleys. Tharu from Dang and Deukhuri make up a majority of Bardia's population. Other tribes called Sonaha live near the Karnali River and the western periphery of Bardia National Park, who are historically engaged in extracting gold ore from river sediments and fishing. The major occupations of the people are agriculture and fishing. Most of the people are marginalized and landless people which is the main reason behind the encroachment in the buffer zone.

**Brahmadev Corridor** is situated in Bhimdatta and Bedkot Municipalities of Kanchanpur District. The corridor spreads from the Terai to the Siwaliks region. . The corridor has several religious places including Baijnath Dham, Siddhanath Temple, Bishnudham and Bishnu Mandir. It is currently unprotected. The corridor is bottlenecked in Bhimdutta and Daijee. Sal (*Shorea robusta*) and Mixed Hardwood forests are the major forest types in the corridor. The proposed project area has a population of 48,815, consisting of Bramhan, Chhetri, Janajati and Dalit

peoples. Agriculture and livestock are main sources of income for the majority of households. A total of 4,603 households are managing 17 community forests with 2,884 ha of forest. People collect timber, poles, fuelwood, grass, thatch, edible fruits, medicinal plants and canes from the forest.

**Kamdi Corridor** covers 450 km<sup>2</sup> of Kohalpur Municipality, and Rapti Sonari, Duduwa and Narainpur Rural Municipalities in Banke District. The forest area is dominated by sal forest and mixed forest. Over the last 20 years, the area of forest, agriculture, grassland and wetland have increased while shrubland has decreased significantly. The corridor is currently unprotected in terms of legal status as Protected Forest. The corridor has 19,730 households with 101,399 people. Tharu is the main ethnic community in the southern part of the highway, while close to the highway there is the majority of immigrant population including Bramhan, Kshetri and Thakuri Indigenous groups and Dalit people. Forty-nine community forest user groups (CFUGs) with 10,775 households are managing 9,741.77 ha of Community Forests. Agriculture is the main occupation, and NTFPs are collected as well.

**Karnali Corridor** covers a total of 227 km<sup>2</sup> of Lamkichuha Municipality, Janaki Rural Municipality and Tikapur Municipality of Kailali District, and Rajapur Municipality of Bardia District, of which 149 km<sup>2</sup> is forest corridor and 78 km<sup>2</sup> is impact zone. The corridor is currently unprotected in terms of legal status as Protected Forest. Forest covers around 60 percent of the corridor, however adjacent cultivated land and settlements present challenges to maintain the corridor. The corridor is bottlenecked in several areas and needs restoration through plantation. The corridor provides an excellent environment for many rare and endangered species. There are 34 community forest user groups with 12,127 households that are managing 1,420.97 ha forest in the corridor.

Safeguards Policy	Triggered	Explanation
Environmental and Social Risk Management	Yes	<p>The project is essentially a conservation initiative, expected to generate significant positive and durable social, economic and environmental benefits. Any adverse environmental and social impacts due to project activities to ensure effective management or involvement of indigenous people are minor and site specific and can be mitigated.</p> <p>The actual locations of site level interventions are not yet determined and will be identified during the first year of the project execution. The Executing Agency Ministry of Forest and Environment prepared an Indigenous People plan and Process Framework/Livelihood Restoration Plan during project preparation that will address amongst others any potential adverse social impacts and any potential adverse impacts to</p>

		Indigenous Peoples affected by the project.
Natural Habitats	Yes	The proposed project directly targets protecting and restoring species and their habitats while strengthening local communities' ability to conserve the natural resources they depend on.
Indigenous People	Yes	<p>Proposed project activities will impact Indigenous Peoples who live around the selected PAs and in the Buffer Zones and Corridors in the Terai Landscape. They are Tharu, Magar, Tamang, Gurung, Tamang, Danuwar, Darai, Chidimar who are considered indigenous under the WWF policy on Indigenous Peoples.</p> <p>Given the context described above, an Indigenous Peoples Planning Framework (IPPF) has been prepared and an IPP will be prepared in the relevant sites to ensure project interventions will allow those IPs to participate and benefit from project activities in ways which are culturally appropriate to provide for culturally appropriate benefits, mitigation measures and mechanisms to ensure the meaningful participation of IPs in the project. The IPPF includes an identified process for achieving Free Prior Informed Consent (FPIC) once site specific interventions are identified.</p>
Involuntary Resettlement	Yes	While the proposed project is unlikely to cause displacement of people, the project aims to conduct participatory planning for three selected corridors and two PA buffer zones through community participation including implementation of integrated livestock management (which may include open-grazing restrictions) under Component 3. The WWF policy on Involuntary Resettlement does not apply in situations where restrictions to access of resources are taking place under community-based projects such as community based NRM models however it is reasonable to assume that some decisions taken to restrict access to natural resources could be initiated by the Government, and will not fall solely within the authority of the local communities such as the no grazing zone. Therefore, WWF's Policy on Involuntary Resettlement has been triggered as the proposed project is likely to restrict access to natural resources and livelihoods activities within the

		areas the project will work and a Process Framework (PF)/ Livelihood Restoration Plan (LRP) has been prepared by the Ministry of Forest and Environment (MOFE) as per WWF's Environment and Social Safeguards Integrated Policies and Procedures (SIPP).”
Pest Management	No	The policy is not triggered as the project will not finance any pesticide use.

### Summary of Key Safeguards Issues

**Describe any safeguard issues and impacts associated with the proposed project. Identify and describe any potential large scale, significant and/or irreversible impacts:**

This is essentially a conservation project and no potential large scale, significant and/or irreversible negative impact is expected from the project.

**Describe measures taken by the Project Team to address safeguard policy issues. Provide an assessment of grantee capacity to plan and implement the measures described:**

The Executing Agency – Ministry of Forests and Environment – prepared an Indigenous Peoples Planning Framework and a Process Framework/Livelihoods Restoration Plan to meet WWF's Environment and Social Safeguards Integrated Policies and Procedures. During project execution, site specific safeguards plans will be prepared and disclosed for specific activities. The safeguard instruments were shared and consulted with key stakeholders both on-line and disclosed by Forest and Protected Area Officers.

The PMU will be strengthened by a safeguards specialist who will coordinate the execution of the IPPF and the PF/LRP. The Ministry of Forest and Environment has not executed a project previously with WWF GEF and trainings and capacity building will be provided on WWF Environment and Social Safeguards Integrated Policies and Procedures (SIPP) to Forest Officers and other relevant Ministry officials prior to the commencement of project activities.

**Identify the key stakeholders and describe the mechanisms for consultation and disclosure on safeguard policies, with an emphasis on potentially affected people:**

During project preparation, there were several extensive stakeholder consultations/workshops with Protected Area Managers, local communities, indigenous communities in all the selected Parks and critical corridors. A validation workshop took place 9<sup>th</sup> August 2018 where the findings of the Indigenous Peoples Planning Framework (IPPF) and the Process Framework (PF) / Livelihoods Restoration Plan (LRP) were discussed with key stakeholders (governmental, civil society organizations representative of the forestry sector, indigenous

groups). These documents were publicly disclosed at Banke National Park (BaNP) Buffer Zone, Bardia National Park Buffer Zone, and at the Kanchanpur, Banke and Pahalmanpur Divisional Forest Offices (responsible for the oversight of Brahmadev, Kamdi and Karnali Corridors respectively). Hard copies of these documents are available in each of these offices. In addition, the IPPF and PF/LRP and PF, has been disclosed in Nepali on the Ministry of Forest and Environment website since June 7, 2019. The documents can be downloaded from these websites. The IPPF and PF/LRP have been disclosed on the WWF Safeguards Resources website since June 10, 2019.

Once the specific areas within the two buffer zones and two corridors of Bardia-Banke complex are selected and activities to be implemented are determined, the project will identify the Project Affected Parties (PAPs) before any investments will start, and any site-specific safeguards documents will be disclosed in a culturally appropriate manner accessible to the PAPs. If one of the selected sites include IPs, an Indigenous Peoples Plan as described in the IPPF will need to be completed prior to investments, and PAPs will need to provide their Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) to the activities implemented under the project.

### Monitoring and Compliance

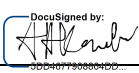
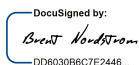
Have satisfactory calendar, budget and clear institutional responsibilities been prepared for the implementation of measures related to safeguard policies? Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> NA <input type="checkbox"/>
Have costs related to safeguard policy measures been included in the project cost? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> NA <input type="checkbox"/>
Does the Monitoring and Evaluation system of the project include the monitoring of safeguard impacts and measures related to safeguard policies? Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> NA <input type="checkbox"/>
Have satisfactory implementation arrangements been agreed with the Executing Agency and the same been adequately reflected in the project grant agreement? Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> NA <input type="checkbox"/>
Have relevant safeguard policies documents been sent to WWF-US? Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> NA <input type="checkbox"/>
Have relevant documents been disclosed in-country in a public place in a form and language that are understandable and accessible to project-affected groups and local NGOs? Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> NA <input type="checkbox"/>

### Disclosure Requirements

Environmental and Social Management Framework/ Process Framework and Indigenous Peoples Planning Framework	
Date received by WWF-US	June 7, 2019
Date Disclosed on WWF-US website	June 10, 2019
<i>In country Disclosure:</i>	
Date Disclosed on Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation's website	June 7, 2019
Date Disclosed in Banke National Park (BaNP) Buffer Zone, Bardia National Park Buffer Zone, Kanchanpur, Banke and Pahalmanpur Divisional Forest Offices	June 6, 2019

responsible for the oversighting of Brahmadev, Kamdi and Karnali Corridors respectively.	
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**Approvals**

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Brent Nordstrom, Safeguards Compliance Officer	 DocuSigned by: Brent Nordstrom DD6030B6C7E2446...	Date: 9/6/2019