REQUEST FOR MSP APPROVAL (1-STEP PROCEDURE)

TYPE OF TRUST FUND:GEF Trust Fund

PART I: PROJECT IDENTIFICATION

Project Title:	Sustainable Land Management in the Churia Range, Nepal		
Country(ies):	Nepal	GEF Project ID:[1]	5596
GEF Agency(ies):	World Wildlife Fund Inc.	GEF Agency Project ID:	G0002
Other Executing Partner(s):	Ministry of Agriculture Development, Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation, Ministry of Land Reform and Management, WWF-Nepal	Submission Date:	10/28/2013
GEF Focal Area (s):	Land Degradation	Project Duration (Months)	36
Name of parent program (if applicable):	N/A	Project Agency Fee ($):	82,569.00

A. FOCAL AREA STRATEGY FRAMEWORK[2]:

Focal Area Objectives	Expected FA Outcomes	Expected FA Outputs	Trust Fund	Grant Amount ($)	Co-financing ($)
LD-1	1.2 Improved agriculture management 1.3: Sustained flow of services in agro-ecosystems	1.2 Types of innovative SL/WM practices introduced at field level. 1.3 Suitable SL/WM interventions to increase vegetative cover in agro-ecosystems. 1.5 Information on SLM technologies and good practice guidelines disseminated	GEFTF	285, 633 245, 634	1,369,542 1,177,757
LD-3	3.1 Enhanced cross-sector enabling environment for integrated landscape management. 3.2 Integrated landscape management practices adopted by local communities	3.1 Integrated land management plans developed and implemented 3.2 INRM tools and methodologies developed and tested 3.4 Information on INRM technologies and good practice guidelines disseminated	GEFTF	258,730 127,434	1,240,549 611,016
		Total Project Cost		917,431	4,398,864

B. PROJECT FRAMEWORK

Project Objectives: By 2017, to substantially reduce degradation and maintain or improve conditions in agro-pastoral lands and Churia sal and mixed forest areas in strategic project locations throughout the four pilot Churia Range districts.

Project Component	Grant Type	Expected Outcomes	Expected Outputs	Trust Fund	Grant Amount ($)	Co-financing ($)
1. Sustainable management of agro-	TA	1.1 – Improved agricultural management through innovative	Output 1.1.1 – Innovative climate-smart, irrigated, terraced agriculture (SALT technology) implemented in at least 200 ha of	GEFTF	347,869	1,694,847

[1] Project ID number will be assigned by GEFSEC.

[2] Refer to the reference attached on the Focal Area Results Framework and LDCF/SCCF Framework when filling up the table in item A.

pastoral land		pilot practices introduced at the field level that reduce erosion and climate vulnerability across 1,000 ha	agricultural land within the 4 Churia districts to reduce erosion and climate vulnerability on steep slopes. Output 1.1.2 – Mixed-cropping implemented in at least 200 ha of agricultural land within the 4 districts to increase soil fertility and reduce climate vulnerability. Output 1.1.3 – Water collection and storage, from uphill sources and rainwater, introduced at 20 storage points across at least 200 ha within the 4 districts for controlled irrigation of terraced agricultural fields on sloping lands to reduce erosion and climate vulnerability. Output 1.1.4 – Bio-engineering introduced in at least 6 sites across 400 ha in 3 districts to stabilize soils, reduce erosion, and restore productivity in heavily degraded areas.			
		1.2 – Improved land management across 1,500 ha through an enhanced enabling environment within the agricultural sector.	Output 1.2.1 – Twelve stakeholder consultations held in the four districts to identify and designate grazing pastures in areas less prone to erosion. Output 1.2.2 – Productive cattle breeds introduced, stall feeding implemented, and native fodder and forage grass promoted in at least 6 sites across 1,500 ha in 3 districts. Output 1.2.3 – Vulnerability, risk assessment, and hazard mapping conducted in the 4 districts to identify areas susceptible to natural disasters (eg. landslides, floods) to inform site selections and encourage communities to avoid			

			expansion of agro-pastoral practices in those fragile areas. Output 1.2.4 – Convene at least 20 community training events to encourage consolidated land management to prevent land fragmentation and encourage efficient and productive agricultural practices aimed at reducing encroachment and expansion in fragile areas or areas under landscape management. Output 1.2.5 – At least 15 community grants awarded in the 4 districts to promote priority community programs for improved land management within the agricultural sector. Output 1.2.6 – Build capacity within the local communities and government extension services to implement and sustain these practices, monitor the outcomes, and enhance knowledge transfer for decision support.			
2. Integrated landscape management in forested areas	TA	2.1 Integrated landscape management practices adopted by local communities in 5,000 ha of forested areas within the four pilot Churia Range districts.	Output 2.1.1 – Forest areas in strategic locations (steep slopes, large patches, priority sub-watersheds, water sources, high biodiversity areas, wildlife corridors) are identified, conserved, managed, and restored in at least 40 forested sites across 5,000 ha in the 4 project districts. Output 2.1.2 – At least 70 alternative energy source units (biogas, solar, or improved cooking stoves) are distributed in the 4 Churia Range districts to reduce demand for firewood. Output 2.1.3 – Alternative liveliood opportunities of at least 600 households in the 4 districts	GEFTF	238,486	1,204,303

			are supported with the promotion of alternative livelihoods based on sustainable use of forest-based resources. Output 2.1.4 – At least 2 workshops held to disseminate and support local authorities in policy implementation related to community, collaborative and leasehold forestry programs to enhance the engagement of communities in restoration of degraded forest lands. Output 2.1.5 – At least 20 community grants awarded in the 4 districts to establish priority community programs for improved land management within the forestry sector.			
3. Cross-sectoral coordination and local community engagement	TA	3.1 Enhanced cross-sectoral enabling environment for integrated landscape management and participatory decision-making.	Output 3.1.1 – Pro-poor, gender inclusive selection and targeting criteria is developed in a participatory manner to determine final project sites, recipients of training, criterion for issuing grants, and recipients of project benefits such as biogas and alternative livelihood promotion (prioritizing participation and benefit distribution for those most vulnerable to project impacts, e.g. restricted access and resource uses). Output 3.1.2 – Capacity is built in 9 institutions and mechanisms and fora are instituted among local governments and diverse local community groups for inclusive, coordinated, inter-sectoral land and resource use plans. Output 3.1.3 – At least 30 CBO representatives are capacitated through integrated landscape management job training and	GEFTF	112,559	1,003,913

			internships to enhance the enabling environment for land conservation in the Churia Range. Output 3.1.4 – District-level land use planning and analyses that identify important and sensitive areas for restoration and conservation management are completed and integrated into district land-use plans in the 4 project districts. Output 3.1.5 – Localized land-use policies/plans for sustainable land management in the 4 districts developed by the Government of Nepal in consultation with local government and local community groups, and project leadership structures, contact information and formal agency grievance mechanisms are established and shared. Output 3.1.6 – Informational, educational, and communication materials on sustainable land management disseminated in at least 24 awareness programs and media interactions in the 4 districts.			
4. Monitoring and Evaluation	TA	4.1 Employ participatory monitoring and evaluation (M&E) throughout the project life cycle	Output 4.1.1 – Project monitoring system operating and systematically providing information on progress in meeting project output and outcome targets. Output 4.1.2 – Baseline assessment, including GIS mapping, completed in a timely manner. Output 4.1.3 – Interim project progress review executed. Output 4.1.4 – Development and dissemination of project lessons	GEFTF	136,677	185,854

			learned to primary project stakeholders Output 4.1.5 – Timely submission of GEF LD Tracking Tool. Output 4.1.6 – Final evaluation carried out and reports disseminated in a timely manner.			
Subtotal					835,591	4,088,917
Project Management Cost[3]				GEFTF	81,840	309,947
Total Project Cost					917,431	4,398,864

C. CO-FINANCING FOR THE PROJECT BY SOURCE AND BY NAME IF AVAILABLE, ($)

Sources of Cofinancing	Name of Cofinancier	Type of Cofinancing	Amount ($)
National Government	Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation	Cash	1,346,766
National Government	Ministry of Land Reform and Management	Cash	758,416
National Government	Ministry of Agriculture Development	Cash	1,444,818
Others	WWF-Nepal	Cash	450,000
GEF Agency	WWF-US	Cash	398,864
Total Cofinancing			4,398,864

D. GEF/LDCF/SCCF/NPIF RESOURCES REQUESTED BY AGENCY, FOCAL AREA AND COUNTRY[1]

GEF Agency	Type of Trust Fund	Focal Area	Country Name/Global	Grant Amount (a)	Agency Fee (b)[2]	Total c=a+b
(select)	(select)	(select)				0
Total Grant Resources				0	0	0

[1] In case of a single focal area, single country, single GEF Agency project, and single trust fund project, no need to provide information for this table

[2] Please indicate fees related to this project.

E. CONSULTANTS WORKING FOR TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE COMPONENTS:

Component	Grant Amount ($)	Cofinancing ($)	Project Total ($)
International Consultants	0	0	0
National/Local Consultants	48,680	236,335	285,015

F. DOES THE PROJECT INCLUDE A "NON-GRANT" INSTRUMENT? No

[3] PMC should be charged proportionately to focal areas based on focal area project grant amount in Table D below.

(If non-grant instruments are used, provide an indicative calendar of expected reflows to your Agency and to the GEF/LDCF/SCCF/NPIF Trust Fund).

PART II: PROJECT JUSTIFICATION

A. PROJECT OVERVIEW

A.1. Project Description. Briefly describe the project, including ; 1) the global environmental problems, root causes and barriers that need to be addressed; 2) the baseline scenario and any associated baseline projects, 3) the proposed alternative scenario, with a brief description of expected outcomes and components of the project, 4) incremental cost reasoning and expected contributions from the baseline , the GEFTF, LDCF/SCCF and co-financing; 5) global environmental benefits (GEFTF, NPIF) and adaptation benefits (LDCF/SCCF); 6) innovativeness, sustainability and potential for scaling up.

1) the global environmental problems, root causes and barriers that need to be addressed;

Like many places around the globe, land degradation in Nepal is the result of an increasing population with greater resource demands, which places increased pressure on land and land-based resources through over-harvest of forests and forest products, over-grazing by livestock, and cultivation of marginal lands to meet the resource deficits. These activities lead to soil erosion, and loss of soil nutrients and fertility. Degraded lands then result in a decline in biological and/or economic productivity of agricultural lands, pastures, and forests. In Nepal, landslides are common on degraded slopes of hills and mountains, causing further economic losses from damage to infrastructure. Landslides also cause environmental damage and endanger the lives and properties of people.

The Churia Range is the outermost of the Himalayan mountain range stretching across southern Nepal and is composed of fragile, brittle sedimentary limestone and clay conglomerate deposits. The forests within the Churia Range perform a vital ecological function by stabilizing the structurally weak steep slopes from erosion during the monsoon season. These forested watersheds are regionally important for sustaining and regulating river flows, an important ecosystem service that sustains local communities, the agro-based economy, and the economically and ecologically significant global biodiversity, including Bengal tigers and Asian elephants. Increasingly, however, local populations, including poverty-stricken people marginalized into the Churia Range, who have little or no access to resources clear the forest and ground cover opportunistically and engage in unsustainable agro-pastoral practices. The situation is further exacerbated by the impact of climate change, which has led to less predictable weather events. For these reasons, forest loss and land degradation are becoming more intense and widespread in the Churia Range, with consequent loss of life and livelihood-supporting forest and agro-ecosystem services. Please see Sections 1.1 – 1.4 of the Project Document for more information.

2) the baseline scenario and any associated baseline projects;

In early 2012, the Government of Nepal's Ministry of Land Reform and Management (MoLRM) enacted the National Land Use Policy 2012 to address rapid land degradation across the country. The National Land Use Policy aims to classify and manage land for optimum long-term use. However, the policy has been difficult to enforce because of unclear and often conflicting policies and complex tenure issues in more populated regions like the Churia Range. As a result, there is a 'tragedy of the commons' situation in the Churia Range in which responsibility, accountability, and long-term sustainability are absent. In addition to the National Land Use Policy, the importance of the Churia Range was specifically acknowledged by the Government of Nepal with the formulation of the President Churia Conservation Programme in 2011. This program aims to stop further degradation of the environment in

the Churia Range and promote rural development among local communities. Please see *Section 1.7: Baseline Analysis and Gaps* of the Project Document for more information.

3) the proposed alternative scenario, with a brief description of expected outcomes and components of the project;

While these baseline activities are addressing land degradation, lack of capacity and limited manpower and budget will likely present challenges that impact the success of the President Churia Conservation Programme. In order to address the baseline situation, there is a clear need to improve the management capacity and sustainable conservation principles of local communities. In light of the Churia Range's key role in regulating ecosystem services from agro-ecosystems and forests across the wider landscape, it represents the ideal location in Nepal to implement pilot demonstration activities. These demonstration activities will empower decision makers, natural resource managers, and local communities to sustainably manage their natural resources.

The proposed three-year GEF Medium Sized Project aims to substantially reduce degradation in 2,500 ha of agro-pastoral lands and 5,000 ha of forests by 2017 through integrated land and watershed management, and will work in strategic locations under community conservation in four pilot Churia Range districts. The project will achieve this objective by: a) promoting sustainable agricultural and livestock management practices; b) engaging local communities in forest conservation; and c) creating the enabling conditions for inter-sectoral collaboration for sustainable land use and management. This project is closely aligned with the GEF Land Degradation focal areas, specifically LD Strategic Objective 1: *Maintain or improve flows of agro-ecosystem services to sustain livelihoods of local communities*, and LD Strategic Objective 3: *Reduce pressures on natural resources from competing land uses in the wider landscape*.

4) incremental cost reasoning and expected contributions from the baseline , the GEFTF, LDCF/SCCF and co-financing;

The proposed GEF project will act at the national level and across the pilot Churia Range districts (Rautahat, Bara, Parsa, and Makwanpur) to facilitate sectoral coordination for more effective project and program implementation. The project will build community level capacity to promote true integrated land management within the Churia. Because ministry involvement is central to the proposed project, a second output of the project will be increased government capacity to replicate the results of the Churia project in other districts across the country.

Despite recognition of the importance of the hydrological role of the Churia in the national land-use policy, there are no clear policies for land-use and land management in the Churia to govern and regulate the complex, and there are uncertain land tenure issues. Until 2012, the primary policy that governed the use and extraction of forest resources and controlled grazing was the Forest Act of 1993. However, because of inadequate capacity within the Forest Department, enforcement of the existing legislation has been weak. Consequently, there is widespread encroachment and illegal extraction of timber and forest products, which has resulted in a 'tragedy of the commons' situation in the Churia hills. The National Land Use Policy was approved by the Government of Nepal in April of 2012. The National Land Use Policy 2012 recognizes the importance of the ecosystem services provided by the Churia, and considers sustainable land management to be a clear priority. However, allocating lands, and governing and regulating their use, is difficult because of unclear and often conflicting policies and complex tenure issues. The proposed GEF project will support the implementation of the 2012 National Land Use Policy in the field for the first time through the conservation and sustainable livelihoods

components. The support, participation, and ownership, of local communities will also help to deflect and resist any political or social interference. The project is also expected to catalyze greater interest among other donors once the functional institutions, capable human resources, and financial robustness become evident, enhancing financial sustainability. Because the baseline projects do not have clear objectives to address these policy issues, the proposed GEF project includes a component to address these policy gaps, with capacity building at local (district and village) levels for implementation.

A lack of GEF support (*the business as usual scenario*) would lead to failure of Nepal to substantially reduce land degradation in the Churia Range, resulting in loss of lives and livelihoods from flooding and river bank cutting and significant erosion, loss of globally important biodiversity, and loss of revenue to the national economy due to decreased tourism and a collapsed agro-economy. These issues would also be exacerbated by climate variability and weak management and enforcement of national land use policies. Because the National Land Use Policy is less than a year old, a business as usual scenario would fail to capitalize on the opportune timing to assist the government in the implementation of their policies and set government precedents for future improved management and enforcement of land use polices. This would likely result in a nation-wide "business as usual" scenario, where confusion of land tenure and management, and ineffective government regulation, are already widespread and communities and government agencies are unable to sustainably manage their land and natural resources.

In response, GEF support for this project (*alternative scenario*) will concentrate on addressing the direct and indirect threats, barriers and root causes through active involvement of the local community, which depend on the natural resources as their main source of livelihood, as well as implementation of government policies. The project will encompass community-based interventions focusing on innovative technologies and capacity building of CBOs and ministerial staff.
Active participation of key decision-makers responsible for the joint management of natural resources is a prerequisite for sustainable development. Decision-makers must identify factors that need to be addressed to reach an agreed-upon regional vision while improving their understanding of the social, environmental and economic situation. Improved understanding must be applied by all decision-makers and supported by monitoring, evaluation and adjustment of development processes. The capacity of local communities to drive development processes and to access services of supporting organizations must also be strengthened. In support of this view, the interventions of this project focus on decision-making (including land users and local people) at all levels.

The importance of the GEF contribution therefore lies in the successful demonstration of innovative and sustainable technologies and sustainable land and forest management practices in the four pilot districts. These activities are supported by significant attention towards community and ministerial capacity building to replicate and upscale the knowledge and lessons learned from the pilot sites to other districts within the Churia Range and across Nepal. Further, the GEF contribution will facilitate government staff and communities to successfully implement national policies and programs, giving these government-led initiatives the opportunity to take root within current, or non-existing, natural resource management practices. This will provide the catalyst needed by the government to achieve sustainable long-term management.

The emphasis on collective learning-by-doing of local communities and ministry staff will ensure significant capacity building that will lead towards replication across districts in the Churia Range and Nepal. The long term impact and sustainability is thus via improved decision making (at all levels – household to national government), sharing of known and proven technologies and strategies, capacity building of those in important decision making positions, especially at the local level, and sharing of

information and knowledge. The global significance lies in the specific mode of project implementation – the testing of a community of practice to improve sustainable land management.

Please see Section 2.10: Incremental Cost Reasoning of the Project Document for more information.

5) global environmental benefits (GEFTF, NPIF) and adaptation benefits (LDCF/SCCF);

Global Environmental Benefits: This project will provide important environmental benefits to the Churia Range and communities, but the outcomes and lessons learnt will extend to communities in the Terai, across Nepal, and the globe. The project outcomes will include improved agro-economic and forest ecosystem goods and services, reduction of pollution and siltation of international waters, and a reduced vulnerability of agro-ecosystems and forest ecosystems to climate change and other human-induced impacts. The project will also improve economic and livelihood-related inducements to local communities to become better stewards of the Churia ecosystems to ensure sustainability of natural resources that are the source of their livelihoods and also their 'safety net' in times of environmental and economic stress.

Specifically, the project also aims achieve the following tangible global environmental benefits. First, 7,500 hectares of vegetative cover will be placed under proper sustainable land management with the aim of upscaling in the four Churia Range districts. Second, approximately 3.6 tons/ hectares of CO_2 emissions will be avoided in 5,000 hectares of targeted project sites for improved forest management, yielding approximately 18,000 tons of avoided CO_2 emissions annually, totaling 54,171 tons over the three-year project duration.[4] The presentation of global environmental benefits associated with the project can also be viewed in the Land Degradation Focal Area Portfolio Monitoring and Tracking Tool (PMAT) (Appendix 18).

Please see Section 2.2 Project Rationale and Conservation Targets of the Project Document for more information.

6) innovativeness, sustainability and potential for scaling up.

In order to substantially reduce land degradation in the Churia Region, the project will utilize a number of innovative approaches with the hope that results can be replicated within the districts, the country, and the region, to achieve significant results. These results will also be strengthened by a number of approaches that aim to achieve a sustainable and lasting impact after the end of the project whilst maintaining cost-effective measures during project implementation. Please see Section 2.11: Innovativeness, Sustainability, and Cost-Effectiveness of Project Document for more information.

A.2. Stakeholders. Identify key stakeholders (including civil society organizations, indigenous people, gender groups, and others as relevant) and describe how they will be engaged in project and/or its preparation:

This project engaged the relevant stakeholders and partners throughout the planning phase at the local level and central level. This included forming a technical team from WWF Nepal and partner ministries that held frequent deliberations internally, as well as with line ministries, district line agencies, and community groups. In addition, community consultations were performed to engage a diverse group of

[4] The USAID Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use (AFOLU) calculator was used to calculate CO_2 emission calculations. The tool is available online here: http://www.afolucarbon.org/

local stakeholders, and to assess potential high-risk project sites. Key stakeholders in the Churia Range include civil society groups and community-based organizations that derive livelihood, economic, and ecological service-related benefits from the Churia Range. This includes the farmers, pastoralists, and the community/collaborative/leasehold forest user groups (CFUGs), protected area buffer zone user committees (BZUCs), Buffer Zone Management Committees (BZMCs), and water user groups. These groups sustain direct benefits from improved agro-ecosystem service delivery and access to forest resources. Please see Section 1.5: Stakeholder Analysis and Appendix 19: Stakeholder Consultation Lists of the Project Document for more information.

A.3. Describe the socioeconomic benefits to be delivered by the Project at the national and local levels, including consideration of gender dimensions, and how these will support the achievement of global environment benefits (GEF Trust Fund/NPIF) or adaptation benefits (LDCF/SCCF).:

The proposed project will provide important environmental benefits to the Churia Range and communities, but the outcomes and lessons learnt will extend to communities in the Terai, across Nepal, and the globe. The project outcomes will include improved agro-economic and forest ecosystem goods and services, reduction of pollution and siltation of international waters, and a reduced vulnerability of agro-ecosystems and forest ecosystems to climate change and other human-induced impacts. The project will also improve economic and livelihood-related inducements to local communities to become better stewards of the Churia ecosystems to ensure sustainability of natural resources that are the source of their livelihoods and also their 'safety net' in times of environmental and economic stress. Please see Section 2.2 Project Rationale and Conservation Targets of the Project Document for more information.

A.4 Indicate risks, including climate change, potential social and environmental risks that might prevent the project objectives from being achieved, and if possible, propose measures that address these risks:

Risk Description	Ranking	Mitigation Strategy
Encroachment and clearing of Churia forests continues despite the project.	Medium	Introduce policy and community stewardship-related measures to prevent further encroachment and illegal forest clearing in the Churia.
Climate change increases the unpredictability of weather patterns with greater risk of crop failure and weather induced disasters.	Medium	Establish or negotiate government commitments on the adoption of a Churia conservation strategy that integrates climate change adaptation measures and ensures climate funding.
Infrastructure development without consideration for the environmental impacts on the Churia.	Medium	Adopt strategies for forest conservation in sensitive and vulnerable areas and identify them as 'no-go areas' for infrastructure and development. Promote green infrastructure designs to minimize impacts. Promote sustainable development and create markets for sustainable/green enterprises
Poor cooperation and coordination among the line agencies and other stakeholders for implementation of regulations for land, water, and resource management in the Churia	Medium	Project (and baseline project partners) will support a coordinating and steering mechanism to facilitate coordination. Such a body has been proposed under the National Churia Conservation Strategy, which is under preparation by the GoN. Since it involves many partners/stakeholders, it adopts strategies and then minimizes the inter-agencies/stakeholders inefficiencies.
Current provincial laws and	Medium	The project will contribute to the evaluation of

rights concerning landscape level conservation limit effective inter-district coordination.		restructuring state legal instruments and provisions. Strategies will also be used to develop a master law for natural resource management, specifically as it pertains to water, land and forest. The strategies will create a win-win situation for all stakeholders.
Lack of land tenure rights among poor, marginalized forest dependent communities set back conservation efforts.	Medium	The project will carry out activities that strengthen community based organizations, namely community forest user groups (CFUGs). The project will also promote local land reform with comprehensive land use planning principles. The project will identify socially excluded or marginalized groups and ensure they receive equitable benefits.

Please see Section 2.6: Risk Analysis and Risk Mitigation Measures of the Project Document for more information.

A.5. Explain how cost-effectiveness is reflected in the project design:

The project will implement the following to achieve cost-effective measures that allow the proposed GEF Medium Sized Project to extend the maximum amount of financial resources to project intervention activities and on-the-ground action. Please see Section 2.11: Innovativeness, Sustainability, and Cost-Effectiveness of Project Document for more information.

A.6. Outline the coordination with other relevant GEF financed initiatives [not mentioned in A.1]:

The proposed work will contribute to the coordination with other initiatives financed by GEF in Nepal by applying and building upon the experiences and lessons learned of previous and ongoing projects. In the GEF-financed and UNDP implemented 'Landscape Level Biodiversity Conservation in Nepal's Western Terai Complex', WWF has been working to empower local communities to practice sustainable natural resource and land use management, and to pursue diversified livelihoods. WWF co-financed this project, which has specifically involved providing targeted training of local institutions and involving them directly in developing and implementing training of local communities in sustainable livestock management and grazing practices. The Western Terai project has also involved developing and implementing training and pilot demonstrations for community forest user, leasehold forestry, and collaborative forest management groups in sustainable forest management. These community-based efforts in livestock and forest management in the Western Terai will play an important role in informing the work performed under this project. In the proposed Churia range project, we will further pursue the involvement of local communities, and will engage and build capacity among local stakeholders by identifying and designating grazing pastures in areas less prone to erosion, as well as introducing productive cattle breeds, implementing stall feeding, and promoting native fodder and forage grass. The Churia Range project will also utilize lessons in sustainable forest management and will identify, conserve, manage, and restore forest areas in strategic locations. These efforts will build off of the diversified livelihoods approach of the Western Terai project by promoting alternative livelihood opportunities based on sustainable use of forest-based resources

The GEF LDCF/SCCF funded and UNEP implemented project titled 'Catalysing ecosystem restoration for resilient natural capital and rural livelihoods in degraded forests and rangelands of Nepal' will also be closely aligned with the Churia Range project. This LDCF/SCCF project prioritizes local and national institutional capacity development, specifically with respect to restoring rangelands and forests

to improve local livelihoods. The Churia Range project will further contribute to developing institutional capacity by convening workshops to disseminate and support local authorities in policy implementation related to community, collaborative and leasehold forestry programs. This will enhance the engagement of communities in restoration of degraded forest lands. This project will also involve the provision of community grants that establish priority community programs for improved land management within the forestry sector. Furthermore, the Terai Arc Landscape Program, jointed implemented by WWF and the Government of Nepal, has prioritized local capacity building through its initiatives that address grazing and pasture land management across the region. The strategies and lessons learned from WWF's experience with grazing and pasture land management in the Terai Arc Landscape have been supported by a multitude of projects financed by GEF, and can be replicated in the Churia region. These strategies have involved capacity building of local communities, building and capacitating institutions, and ensuring sustainability of these initiatives. Through these investments, GEF provides the opportunity to further develop and enhance these approaches across the Churia and Terai Arc Landscape regions.

The Churia Range project will also support sustainable livelihoods in the agricultural sector, and will further promote the goals of the GEF-financed and FAO implemented project titled 'Reducing vulnerability and increasing adaptive capacity to respond to impacts of climate change and variability for sustainable livelihoods in agriculture sector in Nepal'. The vulnerability and adaptation project promotes climate-resilient physical measures through the implementation of improved agriculture technology, taking into account necessary measures associated with climate change adaptation. This approach will be built upon in the Churia range project, which has specific outputs involving innovative climate-smart, irrigated, terraced agriculture (SALT technology), mixed-cropping, and water collection and storage from uphill sources and rainwater. Each of the previous and current GEF projects pursued in Nepal has and will continue to contribute to the specific outputs and outcomes of the Churia range project, and will contribute to the sustainability and replicability of these initiatives across the country.

A.7 Describe the institutional arrangement for project implementation:

The MoLRM will designate the Joint Secretary of the Ministry as the coordinator for the project. A Project Steering Committee (PSC) shall be formed at the central level to provide policy guidance, support, and to approve annual work plans. The PSC is chaired by the Secretary of MoLRM and members represented from MoFSC, MoAD, MoSTE, MoF, WWF Nepal, and World Wildlife Fund Inc. The appointed Coordinator serves as the member secretary. Invitees will attend as needed. The PSC will meet bi-annually.

A Project Coordination Committee (PCC) will be formed to enhance coordination among the partners and to facilitate development of annual work plans. The PCC will be represented by the Joint Secretaries of the MoFSC, MoAD, MoSTE and by WWF Nepal. The PCC will be chaired by the Joint Secretary of MoLRM. The PCC Chair will also be the Project Coordinator. The issues from the field implementation are brought into the discussion and resolved at PCC meetings, which will be held every week, but can be called upon as and when required.

The on-the-ground implementation will be handled by the Project Management Unit. It will be housed in Kathmandu at the WWF Nepal office. A Project Manager and an F&A Officer will be seconded from WWF Nepal and they will constitute the team with the PCC Coordinator. The GEF Project Management Team (Project Coordinator, Project Manager and F&A Officer) shall be responsible for overall project implementation, documentation and monitoring of the proposed activities. It is further supported by the

district line agencies of the respective ministries for smooth implementation of the activities. Following a project cycle, the project management team, in close coordination with district offices and community users, will develop the annual program and budget that will be submitted to the PSC for endorsement through the PCC.

Please see Section 3: Institutional Framework and Implementation Arrangements of the Project Document for more information.

B. DESCRIPTION OF THE CONSISTENCY OF THE PROJECT WITH:

B.1 National strategies and plans or reports and assessments under relevant conventions, if applicable, i.e. NAPAs, NAPs, NBSAPs, national communications, TNAs, NCSA, NIPs, PRSPs, NPFE, etc.

Controlling land degradation is accorded high priority in the Government of Nepal's plans and policies. The various National Action Plans include action programs that prioritize control and mitigation of land degradation by breaking the cycle of poverty and land degradation, and several initiatives have already been started by the relevant line agencies in MoAD, MoFSC, and MoLRM to implement programs on agriculture, leasehold forestry, private forestry, community forestry, sustainable soil management, integrated plant nutrient management systems (IPNMS), and other forms of sustainable land-use. Please see Section 2.7: Consistency with National Priorities or Plans of the Project Document for more information on alignment with National Action Programme for Land Degradation and Desertification, National Churia Conservation Strategy, National Biodiversity Strategy, National Adaptation Programme of Action, National Framework on Local Adaptation Plans for Action, Terai Arc Landscape Strategic Plan, and the National Conservation Strategy.

B.2. GEF focal area and/or fund(s) strategies, eligibility criteria and priorities

The project has been designed to address land degradation and deforestation within the Churia Range of Nepal and is closely aligned with the GEF's Land Degradation focal area. The project will utilize US$ 1 million of Nepal's LD STAR to address national issues that are scalable to produce quantifiable global environmental benefits. The three activity-based project components are well aligned with Objectives 1 and 3 of the GEF-5 Strategy. Specifically, project Component 1 aims to substantailly reduce Churia's land degradation process through the interventions in 2,500 ha of degraded agro-pastoral land in the four pilot Churia Range districts. The project is closely aligned with **Land Degradation Objective 1 (LD-1)**: *Maintain or improve flows of agro-ecosystem services to sustain livelihoods of local communities*. The expected outcomes include an enhanced enabling environment within the agriculture sector (**LD Outcome 1.1**) and improved agriculture management (**LD Outcome 1.2**), and will be achieved through implementation of innovative agriculture and land conservation technologies as well as supporting community involvement in the management of land resources.

Project Component 2 aims to expand beyond the scope of the agriculture lands, by addressing wider landscape forest restoration and conservation concerns in 5,000 ha of the four pilot Churia Range districts using an inter-sectoral bottom-up approach. Finally, project Component 3 will compliment these activities by attempting to rectify relevant policy gaps and enable inter-sectoral coordination needed to provide sustainable land tenure and planned land use and land allocation. Project Component 2 and Component 3 are closely aligned to **Land Degradation Objective 3 (LD-3)**: Reduce pressures on natural resources from competing land uses in the wider landscape. The expected outcomes of Components 2 and 3 include enhanced cross-sector enabling environment for integrated landscape management (**LD Outcome 3.1**) and integrated landscape management practices adopted by local communities (**LD**

Outcome 3.2). These two outcomes will be achieved by promoting an enabling environment in the wider Churia Range landscape to improve the pressure on land resources by local communities.

B.3 The GEF Agency's program (reflected in documents such as UNDAF, CAS, etc.) and Agencies comparative advantage for implementing this project:

WWF's key mission is to stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature. For the past 13 years, WWF has been implementing conservation and development programs in the two major landscapes of Nepal - the Terai Arc Landscape (TAL) and the Sacred Himalayan Landscape. The extensive experience of field implementation has generated considerable in-house experience and staff capacity. But, as a science-based organization, WWF is also constantly innovating and testing new and transformational initiatives, and is therefore adapted to constantly assess and build capacity and knowledge. Throughout the years, WW has maintained excellent working relationships with both government departments and local communities. During the period of civil strife, WWF Nepal was able to maintain a field presence because of the trust of local communities.

WWF Nepal is also providing significant support to the Government of Nepal for policy related work. WWF Nepal is represented in the Executive Committee and Steering Committee of the National Land Use Policy formulation team of the MoLRM. WWF Nepal was also a member in the Parliamentary Committee on Natural Resources and Means (the Constituent Assembly was dissolved some months back). Apart from these, WWF Nepal is represented in various committees at the national level including in the national delegation to the UNFCCC. Participation of WWF in these fora provide an excellent opportunity to engage with the government to bring the policy changes envisioned under this project. WWF Nepal also has the technical and administrative capacity to handle and implement large projects, but also has the advantage of drawing on network expertise and backstopping when necessary.

WWF Nepal's administrative head office is in Kathmandu, with two field offices in the Terai through an agreed implementation modality with MoFSC. WWF Nepal has always had a strong field presence, and has established itself on the frontlines, working with the local communities and government. WWF Nepal is also supporting the GoN on policy development, including contributions to the National Land Use Plan, Climate Change Policy, Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD) Strategy, Koshi River Basin Management Strategy, Forestry Master Plan and the TAL Strategic Plan (2004 – 2014), and the TAL Implementation Plan (2004–2014). WWF Nepal has a strong GIS/Monitoring and Evaluation unit and an Operation team with dedicated staff capacity to provide technical and administrative support for all programmatic needs.

Internationally, WWF Nepal has strong links to the WWF network. As the first international non-governmental organization to receive GEF Project Agency accreditation and the world's largest independent conservation organization, the comparative advantage of WWF-US rests in the extensive experience of over 50 years of field implementation supported by over 5 million supporters worldwide, working in 80 offices in over 100 countries, supporting around 1,300 conservation and environmental projects led by 13 Global Initiatives and WWF's programmatic pillars of Species Conservation, Forest Conservation, Climate Change and Energy, and Freshwater, supported by crossing cutting issues, especially Social Inclusion and Sustainable Livelihoods. WWF has been particularly successful at building public sector partnerships to bridge science, economic, and policy gaps, and transform markets at the local, country, regional, and global levels.

C. DESCRIBE THE BUDGETED M &E PLAN:

The project will employ participatory monitoring and evaluation (M&E), with an informative and proactive feedback mechanism integrated at all levels of the decision-making and adaptive management process. WWF has adopted standardized M&E protocols, processes and tools to aid this process. Best practices in program monitoring and evaluation, tools and techniques will be incorporated into our technical capacity-building and mentoring activities for communities and district governments. A combination of in-person training modules and guidance documents will facilitate the dissemination of information and tools. Our practical approach to M&E includes a collaborative process of routine information sharing and coordination among partners, subrecipients, and other project stakeholders. Please see *Section 5: Monitoring and Evaluation Plan* of the Project Document. The M&E budget can be found in *Section 6: Project Financing and Budget* of the Project Document.

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 Operational Focal Point endorsement letter(s) with this template. For SGP, use this OFP endorsement letter).

NAME	POSITION	MINISTRY	DATE *(MM/dd/yyyy)*
Madhu Kumar Marasini	Joint Secretary	MINISTRY OF FINANCE	09/02/2013

B. GEF AGENCY(IES) CERTIFICATION

This request has been prepared in accordance with GEF/LDCF/SCCF/NPIF policies and procedures and meets the GEF/LDCF/SCCF/NPIF criteria for project identification and preparation.					
Agency Coordinator, Agency name	**Signature**	**DATE** *(MM/dd/yyyy)*	**Project Contact Person**	**Telephone**	**Email Address**
Herve Lefeuvre, World Wildlife Fund, Inc.		09/18/2013	Herve Lefeuvre	+3227610426	herve.lefeuvre@wwfus.org

ANNEX A: PROJECT RESULTS FRAMEWORK (either copy and paste here the framework from the Agency document, or provide reference to the page in the project document where the framework could be found).

Please see Appendix 5: Logical Framework Matrix of the Project Document