

# GEF-7 PROJECT CONCEPT

PROJECT TYPE: FULL-SIZED PROJECT

TYI FUND: GEF TRUST FUND



## PART I: PROJECT INFORMATION

Project Title:	Strengthening conservation and resilience of globally-significant wild cat landscapes through a focus on small cat and leopard conservation		
Country(ies):	India	GEF Project ID:	TBD
GEF Agency(ies):	UNDP, WWF-US	GEF Agency Project ID:	6355
Project Executing Entity(s):	Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change	Submission Date:	March 15, 2019
GEF Focal Area(s):	Biodiversity	Project Duration (Months)	60

### A. INDICATIVE FOCAL/NON-FOCAL AREA ELEMENTS

Programming Directions	Trust Fund	(in \$)	
		GEF Project Financing	Co-financing
BD-1-2a – Mainstream biodiversity across sectors as well as landscapes and seascapes through global wildlife program to prevent extinction of known threatened species	GEF TF	2,500,000	14,000,000
BD-2-7 – Address direct drivers to protect habitats and species and improve financial sustainability, effective management, and ecosystem coverage of the global protected area estate	GEF TF	2,000,000	14,222,000
<b>Total Project Cost</b>		<b>4,500,000</b>	<b>28,222,000</b>

### B. INDICATIVE PROJECT DESCRIPTION SUMMARY (*LINK TO GWP "TABLE B" FOR PROGRAM COMPONENTS*)

<b>Project Objective: Secure populations and habitats of wild cats subject to habitat encroachment, human-wildlife conflict, poaching and illegal trade in priority landscapes of western, northern and north-eastern India.</b>						
Project Components	Component Type	Project Outcomes	Project Outputs	Trust Fund	(in \$)	
					GEF Project Financing	Co-financing
1. Enabling policy and institutional framework for wild cat conservation at landscape level  (GWP Component 1: Sub-C. 1.2)	TA	Strengthened policy, planning and institutional framework for wild cat conservation at landscape level in accordance with the National Wildlife Action Plan 2017-2031, as indicated by:  <i>-Landscape conservation strategies developed for four globally-significant wild cat landscapes with implementation supported by multi-sector partnerships.</i>	1.1 Landscape conservation strategies developed and mainstreamed into government plans and programs. This will involve: i) landscape analysis (e.g. land use, threats and small cat status) and review of existing assessments; ii) review of species and PA management plans, sectoral plans etc to identify gaps, conflicts and common actions for landscape conservation; iii) collaborative planning with stakeholders to develop landscape strategies with targets, actions and landscape-scale measures of success (implementation supported by other components); iv) establishment/strengthening of multi-stakeholder partnerships at	GEF TF	800,000	4,800,000

		<p><i>-Improved institutional capacity of relevant State departments for landscape scale conservation, as measured by Capacity Development Scorecard.</i></p> <p>-- Targets and indicators to be confirmed during PPG phase.</p>	<p>local level to institutionalize the implementation of landscape conservation strategies across boundaries and sectors.</p> <p>1.2 State and district-level development and land use planning processes reviewed and revised to include better consideration of landscape-level protection and connectivity of wild cat habitats including adoption of climate-smart land use planning.</p> <p>1.3 Capacity development program implemented for landscape-level conservation including training of State departments and research institutions, and sensitization of elected representatives on wild cat conservation.</p> <p>1.4 Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for small cat and leopard conservation developed and institutionalized in State and district forest departments. SOPs will include: i) human-wildlife conflict (HWC) management; ii) standardized small cat monitoring protocols; iii) human-rights approach to site-based law enforcement.</p>			
<p>2. Strengthened management and protection of wild cat landscapes</p> <p>(GWP Component 1: Sub-C. 1.1, 1.2; Component 3: Sub-C. 3.3)</p>	TA/INV	<p>Improved protection and management of wild cats and habitats in target PAs, corridors and buffer zones in wild cat landscapes, as indicated by:</p> <p><i>-Enhanced management effectiveness of target PAs covering 520,949 ha, as measured by METT.</i></p> <p><i>-Improved frontline capacity for conservation and management of wild cats and their habitats, as measured by Capacity Development Scorecard adapted</i></p>	<p>2.1 Site-specific guidelines on small cat (plus leopard) conservation integrated into revised big cat conservation strategies and management plans of tiger reserves and other PAs.</p> <p>2.2 Targeted interventions to improve wild cat habitat and prey management demonstrated at project landscapes. Site-specific interventions will be confirmed during the PPG phase. Examples include: i) native species plantings in PAs, buffer zones and riparian habitat to improve vegetation cover and prey availability for wild cats; ii) revised regulations and enforcement of fishing activities in PAs and buffer zones to improve prey base of wild cats.</p> <p>2.3 Frontline staff capacitated and equipped to conduct monitoring,</p>	GEF TF	1,100,000	6,922,000

		<p><i>for wild cat conservation.</i></p> <p><i>-Targeted reduction in threats to wild cat populations and their habitat and prey, as measured by patrol reporting/SMART.</i></p> <p>--</p> <p>Targets and indicators to be confirmed during PPG phase.</p>	<p>surveillance and enforcement, through i) security assessment; ii) equipment for monitoring wild cats and surveillance in core zones and buffer zones (e.g. GPS, binoculars); iii) trail-guard applications to monitor poaching-related activities; iv) training on indigenous peoples, community engagement and human rights-based approach to enforcement activities.</p>			
<p>3. Community stewardship and human-wildlife coexistence in wild cat landscapes</p> <p>(GWP Component 1: Sub-C. 1.1, 1.2; Component 2: Sub-C. 2.4)</p>	TA/INV	<p>Enhanced community-based management of wild cats and habitats, with reduced threat reduction including HWC and improved local livelihoods as measured by:</p> <p><i>-Improved management practices for wild cat conservation and habitat management over 200,000 ha in buffer zones adjacent to PAs and corridors.</i></p> <p><i>-Targeted reduction of locally-specific threats including reduced reports of HWC incidences and extent of HWC damage, and reduced poaching and retaliatory killing of wild cats.</i></p> <p><i>-Number of local community members benefitting from diversified livelihood options increasing.</i></p> <p>--</p> <p>Targets and indicators to be confirmed during PPG phase.</p>	<p>3.1 Training on wild cat habitat management, participatory monitoring, and institutional management (e.g. financial management, record-keeping) delivered to community and village-level institutions (e.g. Forest Management Committees).</p> <p>3.2 Workshops with local communities, particularly women and youth, to raise awareness of wild cat conservation and document traditional knowledge and practices for wild cat conservation and habitat management.</p> <p>3.3 Participatory community monitoring of wild cat populations and HWC operationalized through village-level institutions.</p> <p>3.4 Local livelihood options diversified to encourage reduced pressures on wild cat habitats, for example i) value addition to agriculture and livestock products; ii) small infrastructure and facilities for homestay tourism.</p> <p>3.5 Targeted interventions in HWC hotspots to implement mechanisms for the prevention and management of HWC adjacent to PAs and corridors. This will include i) SAFE workshops with communities to identify issues and solutions; ii) investment in community-based HWC solutions such as corral reinforcement.</p>	GEF TF	1,736,000	10,000,000
4. Partnerships, knowledge	TA	Effective partnerships, communications,	4.1 Wildlife Business Council established to develop sustainable financing instruments for long-	GEF TF	650,000	5,600,000

management and M&E  (GWP Component 1: Sub-C. 1.3; Component 2: Sub-C. 2.4; Component 5: Sub-C. 5.1, 5.2)		<p>knowledge management and M&amp;E for wild cat conservation, as indicated by:</p> <p><i>-Wildlife Business Council operationalized with Terms of Reference, broad membership and dedicated resources for operation.</i></p> <p><i>-Improved understanding of values of wild cats and more positive attitudes towards wild cat conservation among target audiences, as measured by KAP (Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices) score.</i></p> <p><i>-PAs, institutions and countries sharing knowledge on wild cat conservation through regional knowledge platform.</i></p> <p><i>-6 project best practices developed, disseminated and used, including on gender mainstreaming and traditional knowledge.</i></p> <p>-- Targets and indicators to be confirmed during PPG phase.</p>	<p>term community participation in wild cat conservation, including support for pilot conservation and livelihood initiatives in project landscapes.</p> <p>4.2 Targeted communications, social mobilization and advocacy to reduce poaching and IWT in small cats and their body parts.</p> <p>4.3. Transboundary joint action and collaboration on wild cat conservation (including across tiger range countries) facilitated through new/strengthened bilateral agreements and agreed joint action portfolio.</p> <p>4.4 Knowledge management coordinated between landscapes, across India, neighbouring countries and with the Global Wildlife Program, including sharing of best practices and lessons learned.</p> <p>4.5 M&amp;E system incorporating gender mainstreaming and safeguards developed and implemented for adaptive project management.</p>			
Subtotal			GEF TF	4,286,000	27,322,000	
Project Management Cost (PMC)			GEF TF	214,000	900,000	
<b>Total Project Cost</b>				<b>4,500,000</b>	<b>28,222,000</b>	

For multi-trust fund projects, provide the total amount of PMC in Table B, and indicate the split of PMC among the different trust funds here: (N/A)

**C. INDICATIVE SOURCES OF CO-FINANCING FOR THE PROJECT BY NAME AND BY TYPE, IF AVAILABLE**

Sources of Co-financing	Name of Co-financier	Type of Co-financing	Investment Mobilized	Amount (\$)
Recipient County Government	Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Water Resources, Ministry of Rural Development, Ministry of Commerce, State Governments of	Grant/In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	18,400,000
		Grant	Investment mobilized	6,000,000

	Assam, Gujarat, Meghalaya, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh (relevant departments)			
Private Sector	Members of the Wildlife Business Council, agricultural companies in project landscapes	Grant	Investment mobilized	500,000
		In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	500,000
Civil Society Organization	Global Tiger Fund, Salim Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History, WWF India	In-kind/Grant	Recurrent expenditures	1,700,000
GEF Agency	UNDP	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	800,000
GEF Agency	WWF-US	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	322,000
<b>Total Co-financing</b>				<b>28,222,000</b>

Describe how any "Investment Mobilized" was identified:

Estimates of Investment Mobilized represent anticipated additional budgetary provisions to the Ministry of Environment Forest and Climate Change and State Governments of Assam, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Meghalaya and Rajasthan for schemes on Support to Protected Areas (National Parks, Wildlife Sanctuaries, Conservation Reserves and Community Reserves), Protection of Wildlife Outside Protected Areas and Recovery programmes for saving critically endangered species and habitats. These include Centrally Sponsored scheme on Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats and for strengthening Wildlife Division. The investment mobilized from private sector includes investments to be made in the field of conservation of biodiversity through Corporate Social Responsibility. Names of private sector co-financiers will be confirmed during the PPG phase and at this stage only an indicative combined estimate is provided. Co-financing sources and amounts are indicative only at this stage and will be defined further during the PPG phase and verified in co-financing letters presented at the time of CEO Endorsement.

#### D. INDICATIVE TRUST FUND RESOURCES REQUESTED BY AGENCY(IES), COUNTRY(IES), FOCAL AREA AND THE PROGRAMMING OF FUNDS

GEF Agency	Trust Fund	Country/ Regional/ Global	Focal Area	Programming of Funds	(in \$)		
					GEF Project Financing (a)	Agency Fee (b)	Total (c)=a+b
UNDP	GEFTF	India	Biodiversity	N/A	1,975,000	177,750	2,152,750
WWF-US	GEFTF	India	Biodiversity	N/A	2,525,000	227,250	2,752,250
<b>Total GEF Resources</b>					<b>4,500,000</b>	<b>405,000</b>	<b>4,905,000</b>

#### E. PROJECT PREPARATION GRANT (PPG)

Is Project Preparation Grant requested? Yes  No  If no, skip item D.

#### PPG AMOUNT REQUESTED BY AGENCY(IES), TRUST FUND, COUNTRY(IES) AND THE PROGRAMMING OF FUNDS

GEF Agency	Trust Fund	Country/ Regional/Global	Focal Area	Programming of Funds	(in \$)		
					PPG (a)	Agency Fee (b)	Total c = a + b
UNDP	GEFTF	India	Biodiversity	N/A	150,000	13,500	163,500
<b>Total PPG Amount</b>					<b>150,000</b>	<b>13,500</b>	<b>163,500</b>

**NB:** while PPG funds will flow through UNDP for cost-effectiveness and efficiency and UNDP has been identified as the agency to coordinate the PPG and submit the CEO Endorsement documentation to GEF Secretariat, the PPG will be designed and delivered in a fully collaborative fashion between UNDP and WWF as joint GEF Agencies, ensuring project documentation and a PPG process that adheres to the policies and standards of both GEF Agencies.

## F. PROJECT’S TARGET CONTRIBUTIONS TO GEF 7 CORE INDICATORS

Provide the relevant sub-indicator values for this project using the methodologies indicated in the Core Indicator Worksheet provided in Annex B and aggregating them in the table below. Progress in programming against these targets is updated at the time of CEO endorsement, at midterm evaluation, and at terminal evaluation. Achieved targets will be aggregated and reported at anytime during the replenishment period. There is no need to complete this table for climate adaptation projects financed solely through LDCF and SCCF.

Project Core Indicators		Expected at PIF
1	Terrestrial protected areas created or under improved management for conservation and sustainable use (Hectares)	520,949 ha
4	Area of landscapes under improved practices (excluding protected areas) (Hectares)	200,000 ha
	Total area under improved management (Hectares)	720,949 ha
11	Number of direct beneficiaries disaggregated by gender as co-benefit of GEF investment	6,000 (50% women)

*Provide additional explanation on targets, other methodologies used, and other focal area specifics (i.e., Aichi targets in BD) including justification where core indicators targets are not provided.*

Project contributions to core indicators are based on the following information at concept note stage. First, the project will help strengthen the management effectiveness of four existing PAs (Ranthambore National Park, Gir National Park and Wildlife Sanctuary, Manas Tiger Reserve and Dudhwa National Park) that cover a combined 520,949 ha in the demonstration wild cat landscapes of western, northern and north-eastern India (see Annex 1 for individual PA details). The project will also improve the management of an estimated 200,000 ha of agricultural and forest land surrounding and connecting these PAs. This area will be chosen from within a buffer zone of 10km around each of the four project PAs and confirmed during PPG as project activities and community support at specific sites are confirmed. Indirect benefits from replication and upscaling of project activities could spread across the 10km buffer zone around each PA, resulting in indirect impact across up to 1,772,545 ha (PA size plus full 10km buffer of 1,251,596 ha).

The direct beneficiaries of the project will include government and communities at project PAs and landscapes. An initial estimate is that the project could reach up to 6,000 direct beneficiaries, with the aim that 50% of these will be women (NB: while at least 50% of direct beneficiaries are expected to be women at project landscapes, a lower target of 30% women will likely need to be applied for government beneficiaries due to the sector being male-dominated). These estimates are indicative only and will be confirmed during PPG as project sites and activities are defined.

## PART II: PROJECT DESCRIPTION

### 1) Country context

Of the 41 wild cat species, 15 are native to India. Hotspots for cat diversity are the scrub and open forest of the semi-arid and arid regions in western India, and the vast elevational gradient and associated forest types of the north-east, each having 9 wild cat species. Among these are iconic large cats such as tiger (IUCN Red-list: EN) and leopard (VU), with lion (VU) in Gujarat’s Gir landscape. Lesser-known are the small cats of these landscapes: the drier open forest of western India holds jungle cat, caracal, Asiatic wild cat, rusty-spotted cat, and fishing cat (VU), whereas the sub-tropical and temperate forests in north-eastern India house leopard cat, marbled cat, golden cat and clouded leopard (VU), with Pallas’s cat in the Himalayan foothills that connect these two eco-regions. While most of India’s wild cats do not yet feature as a conservation priority attracting the resourcing of flagship species such as tiger, almost all small cats plus leopards have decreasing populations and many are approaching vulnerable status globally. A higher level of threat is considered to apply to many at national level (e.g. caracal is thought to be endangered within India).

Small cats are keystone species, providing crucial economic and ecosystem services such as pest control and disease control, and their conservation is essential to underpin the integrity of big cat conservation efforts and maintain large natural ecosystems across India. While India's network of tiger reserves provides a safe refuge to many cat species, a substantial part of the geographical distribution of small cats occurs outside the Protected Area (PA) network, making protection, restoration and connectivity of habitats at a landscape scale essential for their long-term conservation. These areas are subject to varying degrees of habitat degradation and fragmentation, and cats are threatened by poaching and human-wildlife conflict (HWC) – threats that are increasing in extent and frequency as ongoing development and land use changes extend the human-wild cat interface and increase the potential for local-level conflicts. For example, four leopards are illegally killed in India each week.

This project will secure the conservation of globally-significant wild cat landscapes in western, northern and north-eastern India (States of Assam, Gujarat, Meghalaya, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh) through an integrated landscape approach that broadens and brings together the conservation programs of individual species, connects stakeholders and empowers communities, and operates across PAs, identified tiger corridors and in buffer zones surrounding and connecting these areas.

Current barriers to achieving wild cat conservation at a landscape level include: 1) *Gaps in the policy, planning and procedural framework*, including incomplete understanding of conservation status, distribution, habitat needs and threats, lack of understanding of conservation priorities (and translation of priorities into key actions) at a landscape level, weak integration of efforts among existing species and site conservation and management plans, insufficient consideration of habitat protection and connectivity in land use and development planning and in work programmes of other sectors, and lack of standardized protocols for monitoring and managing small cats; 2) *Limited capacity* (e.g. personnel, equipment, SOPs) at State, landscape and site level, including to monitor wild cat populations and habitats, apply appropriate management techniques for habitat restoration and connectivity, and manage HWC in an appropriate and timely fashion; 3) *Lack of incentives to support community engagement and participation* in wild cat conservation, restricting community capacity and willingness to apply eco-friendly land use and habitat management techniques that will support wild cat conservation and help prevent and manage HWC; 4) *Insufficient partnerships, regional coordination and outreach* to engage the private sector and identify sustainable financing options, strengthen transboundary collaboration, reduce participation in poaching and trafficking of wild cats, and support knowledge exchange and transfer.

## **2) Project overview and approach**

### *a) Geographical targets*

The project will focus activities in wild cat hotspots in western, northern and northeastern India that contain multiple species of small cats and leopards, along with presence of charismatic big cats such as tiger or lion. These are critical sites for maintenance of wild cat diversity in India. Four demonstration landscapes are proposed (see Annex 1). Each is built around a key PA for wild cat conservation and also extends into surrounding buffer zones that contain important habitats for small cat conservation. Activities will be conducted within PAs, buffer zones (demarcated as up to 10km around each PA) and identified tiger corridors within these landscapes. The project landscapes are: Ranthambore landscape in Rajasthan, Gir landscape in Gujarat, Bhramaputra landscape in Assam and Meghalaya, and Dudhwa landscape in Uttar Pradesh. Each landscape contains 5-8 species of wild cats and an identified Key Biodiversity Area, recognizing its global biodiversity significance. These landscapes face habitat loss, degradation and fragmentation, and the wild cats they house are threatened by HWC and by poaching for illegal markets and retaliatory killing. Ongoing development impacts reduce and fragment habitat, increasing the interface between humans and wild cats. Increasing human populations and economic development that does not consider environmental needs are drivers of the threats to wild cats.

### *b) The baseline scenario and any associated baseline projects, stakeholder engagement and gender mainstreaming*

Forest and Wildlife are in the concurrent list of the constitution, supported by strong national legislation for conserving forest and wildlife. Wildlife conservation is mandated to be a government responsibility and programmes for conservation and management of wildlife are in place. The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has the mandate to lead on these matters. These include the maintenance of the PA network that has been expanded by 26% over the past two decades, and a central scheme dedicated to the conservation of areas outside PAs. At the same time, policy initiatives of inclusive governance of PAs are anchored in the Amended Wildlife (Protection) Act of India, 1972 and include Conservation Reserves and Community Reserves. The non-statutory, bottom-up initiative of Community Conservation Areas is widespread across regions of India, however these largely do not overlap with the main geographic range of small cat species. Forest restoration efforts of the Government of India are anchored in the Bonn Challenge of Forest Landscape Restoration, with India's pledge for restoring 13,000,000 ha of forest landscapes by 2020 and further 8,000,000 ha by 2030. Ambitious investments are directed towards increasing the country's forest cover through dedicated programmes such as the Green India Mission. Eighty-six percent of the forests in India are under public ownership and 63% are under public management.

The national legislation for wildlife in India, the Wildlife (Protection) Act of India, 1972, lists 15 species of cats (which includes four species of big cats in Schedule I which is accorded the top-most protection). All small cats, except for the Jungle Cat figure in Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, with the Jungle Cat placed in Schedule II which also prohibits hunting. Concerted national efforts to support the conservation of iconic big cats such as Tiger, Snow Leopard and Lion include dedicated Protected Areas, the Tiger Landscapes, and human-big cat interaction strategies. For the Leopard and all small cat species similar dedicated conservation programmes and management strategies have not yet been developed and there is an absence of species-specific understanding of conservation needs and priorities.

Baseline interventions that specifically focus on small cats and their habitat include engagement by the Wildlife Trust of India with communities in West Bengal focusing on conserving populations and habitat of the fishing cat by addressing HWC and marshland conservation. Conservation activities that focus on small cats are typically localized interventions that focus on a species or habitat and do not follow a holistic, strategic approach to leverage transformational change towards securing the species' long-term survival in intact habitats. At an international level there is also increasing recognition of the importance of small cat conservation, with the first International Small Wild Cat Conservation Summit held in September 2017, with the support of the Mohamed bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund and the Aspinall Foundation. Case studies from India were among those shared at this inaugural event.

#### *Stakeholder engagement*

The project will build upon existing mechanisms for stakeholder coordination and engagement related to wild cat conservation. The project will be implemented by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change and engage with other relevant central Ministries that have a mandate relevant to the project objective including agriculture, tribal affairs, rural development, power, railways, tourism and defence; along with relevant State departments. There are existing mechanisms for community engagement in natural resources management and biodiversity conservation in place at village level, for example Forest Management Committees. These will be strengthened through project activities such as targeted capacity building. A regional mechanism for coordination on tiger conservation is in place via the Global Tiger Forum. The GTF will be a partner in project implementation and provide a platform that can support field implementation and transboundary engagement with neighbouring tiger range States. There is not yet an operational mechanism for engagement of the private sector in wild cat conservation. The establishment of a mechanism to strengthen this private sector engagement and investment will be supported by the project (see next section). During project PPG phase and during implementation, a broad approach to stakeholder engagement will be continued, as strong partnerships across government and with the private sector and local communities are needed to achieve effective conservation of wild cats. Specific activities will be integrated into the project design to strengthen partnerships and stakeholder engagement. Individual stakeholder interests will be mapped as part of the project PPG phase, and potential roles in project implementation agreed as part of detailed stakeholder consultations (which will include FPIC with local communities in accordance with policies and standards of the GEF Agencies).

#### *Gender integration*



All programmes and schemes of the Government of India seek to ensure equal representation of women across all levels for design, implementation and monitoring of actions. For example, local-level institutions like Biodiversity Management Committees and Panchayati Raj Institutions have 50% representation of women across all levels. The gender budgeting scheme of the Ministry of Women and Child Development aims to mainstream gender across various government departments and agencies. This proposed project will seek to build off this baseline to further support gender mainstreaming, particularly at project sites. There are gender disparities and differences in the way that men and women interact with and use natural resources in the project landscapes. The project will strive to create opportunities to increase women's participation and decision-making and generate socio-economic benefits for women in these landscapes. These opportunities will be explored at site-level during the PPG phase and specific activities targeting women defined. A comprehensive gender analysis will be completed to identify the different roles of men and women pertaining to local livelihoods, resource use and land tenure, and their differing participation in conservation and habitat management activities and decision-making. Consultation sessions will be held to obtain views and inputs of a wide range of local stakeholders, including women, to inform the development of project activities and a robust stakeholder involvement plan with full gender considerations. A gender mainstreaming plan will be completed and submitted at the time of CEO Endorsement. Gender mainstreaming will be integrated across project activities as relevant and has also been explicitly recognized in a project output (see next section).

*c) The proposed alternative scenario with a brief description of expected outcomes and components of the project*

To address the above-mentioned barriers, the proposed project will support India to put in place an integrated model for wild cat conservation at landscape scale that can be upscaled and replicated nationally and in wild cat landscapes of other range States. The proposed project will be achieved through four complementary components that aim to build the required enabling policy framework and institutional capacity (Component 1); strengthen government management of wild cats and habitat (Component 2) and build community stewardship (Component 3) at landscape level; and enhance private sector partnerships, regional collaboration, and knowledge transfer and learning (Component 4).

Component 1 will put in place a landscape-level approach to wild cat conservation that will guide the revision and implementation of existing policies, plans and programs of government departments at national and sub-national level. GEF support will be used to establish landscape-level conservation strategies (Output 1.1) through a participatory process involving government agencies, communities and other local stakeholders. These will be informed by i) landscape-scale assessments of land use, small cat distribution and threats, along with review of existing assessments and baseline studies; ii) a review of existing species and PA management plans, sector plans and work programs to identify gaps, landscape-level conflicts and key actions and measures of success for achieving landscape-level conservation; iii) collaborative planning with stakeholders to identify . The implementation of landscape conservation strategies will be supported by outputs under Components 2 (integration of landscape strategies into existing site-based conservation and PA management plans), 3 (community mobilization and incentives for collective action towards small cat conservation) and 4 (creation of business partnerships to support private-sector supported conservation and livelihood pilots in project landscapes). Landscape conservation priorities for wild cats will be mainstreamed into the strategies and work plans of other sectors through the revision of State and district-level land use planning processes (Output 1.2) and through capacity building of State departments (e.g. Forest, Revenue, Animal Husbandry, Land Use Planning and Agriculture & Fisheries), District Administrations and research institutions for landscape-level conservation, along with sensitization of elected representatives to build political will for wild cat conservation (Output 1.3). Finally, standardized procedures to support the operationalization of landscape conservation strategies will be developed, including the development of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for HWC management, standardized monitoring protocols for small cats, and national guidelines for strengthening human-rights approaches to law enforcement (Output 1.4).

Components 2 and 3 will be implemented in four project landscapes, putting in place the required local capacity, collaborations and community stewardship for landscape-scale conservation in globally-significant landscapes for wild cats, focussed on clustered hotspots where small cat distribution overlaps with big cat habitats (see Annex 1). Component 2 will bring together key government departments with a role to play in wild cat conservation to support the implementation of landscape-scale strategies. Site-specific guidelines on small cat conservation will be developed

in accordance with landscape-level strategies developed under Component 1 and integrated into revised big cat conservation strategies, conservation plans of tiger reserves and management plans of other PA types (Output 2.1). This will help build a complementary and coordinated action portfolio for wild cat conservation bringing together big cat and small cat conservation. Supporting the implementation of landscape conservation strategies, targeted interventions will be demonstrated to improve wild cat habitat and prey management (Output 2.2), including measures such as native species plantings in PAs, buffer zones and riparian zones; and regulation and enforcement of fishing activities in PAs and buffer zones to improve the wild cat prey base. Finally, frontline staff will be capacitated and equipped to support wild cat conservation, monitoring and enforcement (Output 2.3). This will include completion of security assessments and provision of equipment for monitoring and surveillance (e.g. GPS, night-vision binoculars), trail-guard applications/artificial intelligence-based cameras to monitor poaching-related activities, and training in state-of-the-art monitoring protocols (e.g. M-STriPES 'Monitoring System for Tigers - Intensive Protection and Ecological Status' protocols and software system), and implementation of SOPs for wild cat conservation developed under Component 1 including training in indigenous peoples, community engagement and delivery of a human rights-based approach to site-based wildlife law enforcement.

Working in parallel with Component 2, in the same wild cat landscapes, Component 3 will build community stewardship and engagement in the co-management of wild cat habitats. Target locations for community collaboration on wild cat conservation will be identified during the PPG phase, and local consultations conducted to confirm support for project activities. The project will strengthen the governance and capacity of existing community and village-level institutions (e.g. Forest Management Committees) to take a greater role in wild cat conservation in support of landscape-level strategies (Output 3.1). GEF funds will support the delivery of training on wild cat habitat management, participatory monitoring and business skills. Community engagement and participation will be enhanced through the delivery of local community workshops (Output 3.2) that aim to raise awareness of wild cat conservation and document traditional knowledge and practices that support wild cat conservation. A new model for participatory community monitoring of wild cat populations and HWC damage and risks will be operationalized (Output 3.3) with the support of village-level institutions, raising understanding of local wild cat population status, the quality and use of habitats within PAs and across the surrounding mosaic of forest and agricultural land use, and on the extent of threats such as HWC and poaching. Incentives will be provided to support community participation in wild cat conservation and reduce pressure on wild cat habitats through diversification of local livelihoods (Output 3.4). Uptake of more sustainable land and habitat management practices will be supported by value addition to agriculture and livestock products, and establishment/enhancement of tourist facilities and homestay tourism programmes. Finally, HWC hotspots will be identified and innovative mechanisms for preventing and managing HWC in areas adjacent to PAs and corridors demonstrated (Output 3.5). This will involve the completion of SAFE workshops with communities and local stakeholders applying the WWF SAFE Framework, followed by investment in community-based HWC solutions (e.g. corral reinforcement) that respond to the identified issues.

Finally, Component 4 will build the necessary partnerships and platforms for integrated and collaborative wild cat conservation. A Wildlife Business Council will be established (Output 4.1) to engage the private sector in wild cat conservation and facilitate the identification of sustainable financing options to maintain community stewardship outside of core tiger habitats protected in PAs. This is expected to include partnerships with agricultural businesses operating within the project landscapes, supporting pilot conservation and livelihood initiatives under Component 3. Targeted communications and outreach adopting social and behavioural change communications principles (Output 4.2) will be deployed to target audiences including local communities to help shift attitudes and behaviours and reduce participation in poaching and illegal trade in small cats and their body parts. Transboundary and regional collaboration on wild cat conservation, including with tiger range states, will be enhanced through new/strengthened bilateral agreements, sharing of information and knowledge on wild cat conservation, and identification of areas of common concern and agreed joint actions for monitoring, species conservation and combating illegal trafficking (Output 4.3). Web-based knowledge platforms and e-networks will be established (Output 4.4) to facilitate knowledge sharing and information dissemination between landscapes, States and with the Global Wildlife Program, while an effective M&E system (Output 4.5) will help ensure project impact and adaptive management and adequate consideration of gender mainstreaming and social and environmental safeguards.

*d) Alignment with GEF focal area and/or Impact Program strategies*

Through its effort to combat threats to known threatened wild cat species, including from poaching and illegal trade, and mainstream wild cat conservation at State and landscape level, the proposed project is aligned to GEF-7 focal area objective *BD-1-2a Mainstream biodiversity across sectors as well as landscapes and seascapes through global wildlife program to prevent extinction of known threatened species.*

The project aligns to the GWP Theory of Change in the following ways: i) implementation of landscape-level conservation management plans integrated across existing species and site plans and programmes will support improved management of PAs, improve biodiversity management across landscapes and support healthy wildlife populations; ii) increased frontline capacity for patrolling and surveillance activities will improve PA management and support stabilization of wildlife populations with reduced poaching; iii) effective HWC management strategies and the provision of financial incentives to communities will support community participation in wild cat conservation and bring about more positive attitudes towards wildlife and human-wildlife coexistence; iv) targeted awareness, advocacy and social mobilization can achieve a shift in attitudes and behaviours that deter and reduce participation in poaching and illegal trafficking of wild cats, helping disrupt supply to illegal wildlife markets.

The project will make the following contributions to the GEF-7 Global Wildlife Program framework:

<b>GWP Component</b>	<b>Contributions of this project (and alignment to GWP Sub-Components)</b>
1. Conserve wildlife and its habitats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Enhanced management of wild cat landscapes including tiger reserves, PAs, tiger corridors (Sub-Component 1.1)</li> <li>-Strengthened policy, procedures, institutions and partnerships for managing protection of habitats at landscape level within and outside of PAs (Sub-Component 1.2)</li> <li>-Sensitization of other sectors and elected representatives to support mainstreaming of wild cat conservation and build political will for more attention on managing and connecting significant wild cat habitats (Sub-Component 1.2)</li> <li>-New private sector sustainable financing solutions to support community stewardship of wild cat habitats (Sub-Component 1.3)</li> </ul>
2. Promote wildlife-based economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Innovative solutions for preventing and managing HWC deployed at identified hotspots within wild cat landscapes, and increased adoption of land use and habitat management techniques to minimize potential for conflicts (Sub-Component 2.4)</li> <li>-Communication initiatives and outreach to minimize local community engagement in poaching, retaliatory killing and illegal trade in wild cats and their body parts, helping build human-wildlife coexistence (Sub-Component 2.4)</li> </ul>
3. Combat wildlife crime	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Frontline training and equipment for monitoring and surveillance of wild cats and poaching-related activities, strengthening site-based anti-poaching and enforcement capacity (Sub-Component 3.3)</li> </ul>
4. Reduce demand and disrupt markets	N/A (but also see communications and outreach under Component 2)
5. Coordinate and enhance learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Enhanced regional cooperation between India and neighbouring tiger range States and agreed coordinated action portfolio (Sub-Component 5.1)</li> <li>-Capacity-building of State, district and community-level institutions to support conservation of wild cats and their habitats (Sub-Component 5.2)</li> <li>-Knowledge management to identify, document and share project best practices and lessons learned between project landscapes, across India and other wild cat range countries and across the Global Wildlife Program (Sub-Component 5.2)</li> </ul>

*e) Incremental/additional cost reasoning and expected contributions from the baseline, the GEFTF, LDCF, SCCF, and co-financing*

<b>Baseline</b>	<b>Alternative to be put in place by project</b>	<b>Global environmental benefits</b>
<i>Policy and planning framework</i>		

<p>Limited understanding of conservation needs, threats and status of small cats and leopards across India.</p> <p>Observations of ecosystem services that are supported by these species, but no standardized assessments of the extent to which these are provided or the overall benefits of small cats to ecosystem health.</p> <p>No standardized protocols for small cat management and monitoring further challenging understanding of their distribution and conservation status.</p> <p>Conservation planning focussed on flagship species such as tiger and the protection of critical sites.</p> <p>Land use planning and development decisions do not consider wild cat conservation, resulting in habitat fragmentation and degradation.</p>	<p>Updated and data-driven National Red List for wild cats, informing global Red List updates.</p> <p>Species-specific conservation action plans developed for globally-threatened wild cats.</p> <p>Multi-sector and participatory landscape conservation action plans, supported by land use and development planning processes that are more sympathetic to wild cat conservation and adopt a climate-smart planning approach; and the mainstreaming of small cat (plus leopard) conservation into strategies and work plans of other sectors.</p> <p>Standardized protocols for management and monitoring of small cats support increased understanding of their conservation status and improved effectiveness of conservation actions.</p>	<p>Integrated and coordinated management of globally-significant wild cat landscapes covering over 720,000 ha in western, northern and north-eastern India.</p> <p>Improved management of 520,949 ha of PAs in five States of India, including improved management of four identified KBAs.</p> <p>Improved management of an estimated 200,000 ha of agricultural and forest mosaic that buffers and connects PAs and provides important habitats for small cats.</p> <p>Stable and improved populations of globally-significant wild cats including tiger (EN), lion (VU), common leopard (VU), fishing cat (VU) and clouded leopard (VU).</p> <p>Arrested declines of small cat populations for species currently listed as globally near-threatened but reaching vulnerable status globally and at higher risk within India.</p>
<i>Wild cat conservation and community involvement</i>		
<p>Declining populations of small cats species and increasing threats to their habitats.</p> <p>Conservation programmes typically restricted to iconic big cats such as tiger and lion with no dedicated programmes for small cats or leopards.</p> <p>Site-level management is predominant, with little consideration of management at a landscape scale.</p> <p>Limited financial incentives for conducting land and habitat management in a way that benefits small cat conservation Human-wildlife conflict is common in areas buffering and connecting PAs.</p> <p>Limited involvement of private sector in wild cat conservation. Reliance on government and donor funds for maintenance of community engagement.</p>	<p>Dedicated conservation programmes for small cats and leopards and their integration with management plans of tiger reserves and other PAs, providing an integrated set of actions for wild cat conservation.</p> <p>Implementation of technically-sound interventions to support wild cat conservation at a landscape-scale.</p> <p>Communities act as stewards for wild cat landscapes, adopting eco-friendly land management that provides livelihood benefits, improves quality, extent and condition of wild cat habitats and promotes human-wildlife coexistence.</p> <p>Effective private sector engagement provides sustainable co-financing solutions to maintain community involvement and provide long-term livelihoods benefits.</p> <p>Strengthened transboundary cooperation across tiger range States.</p>	

*f) Global environmental benefits (GEFTF) and/or adaptation benefits (LDCF/SCCF)*

The proposed project will result in the improved management of almost 600,000 ha of landscapes in western, north-eastern and northern India that provide critical habitats for wild cats. Each landscape includes a globally-significant site for biodiversity conservation (identified KBA; see Annex 1). The project will strengthen the management of an estimated 391,400 ha across four pivotal PAs for the conservation of wild cats (including a number of tiger reserves) along with improve the management of an estimated 200,000 ha of agricultural and forest land buffering and connecting these reserves through the adoption of eco-friendly land and habitat management practices. The improved

management and connectivity of habitats within these landscapes and delivery of coordinated wild cat action portfolios will support the long-term conservation of globally-significant species such as tiger (EN), lion (VU), common leopard (VU), fishing cat (VU) and clouded leopard (VU) and help arrest declining populations of many other small cat species that are considered to be nearing vulnerable status globally and are perhaps already endangered within India. Improved PA management effectiveness and the improvement of habitat quality, extent and connectivity across forest and agricultural mosaics will in turn support the conservation of a wide range of biodiversity found in these eco-regions of India. The focus of the project on building conservation and resilience at landscape level will support the adaptive capacity of species and ecosystems to respond and shift as climatic envelopes change.

### **3) *Engagement with the Global / Regional Framework***

*Innovation:* Project strategies are based on a novel approach of multi-stakeholder engagement and stewardship that have not been adequately applied before in India for integrated conservation of wild cats at landscape scale. The project will engage communities in wild cat conservation by empowering community-level institutions in co-management and by creating economic incentives for the adoption of wild cat-friendly land and habitat management techniques in the forest and agricultural mosaic surrounding key PAs and corridors; apply a holistic landscape approach that considers the interconnectedness of landscape elements and actors and integrates conservation actions for individual species into a coordinated action portfolio; and engage stakeholders from different administrative units (e.g. States, districts, individual PAs), institutional mandates (e.g. Departments of Forest, Agriculture, Land Resources) and functions (e.g. government, non-government, civil society, community) in wild cat conservation.

*Sustainability:* long-term ownership over project outputs will be achieved by institutionalizing project approaches within State, district and local-level institutions, mainstreaming wild cat conservation into policies and plans of other sectors including land use planning; integrating project outputs within existing government programs (e.g. conservation plans for tiger reserves and management plans for other PAs) and by creating the economic incentives and public-private partnerships needed to sustain community participation beyond project close.

*Scaling up:* Project approaches have high potential for up-scaling to other wild cat landscapes in India and to neighbouring countries and wild cat range States. The projects effort's to ensure effective knowledge management and transfer will identify and disseminate best practices and lessons learned across India, neighbouring countries and the Global Wildlife Program to facilitate this scaling up, as well outputs to strengthen bilateral partnerships and coordinated action with neighbouring countries.

*Knowledge management:* The project will support knowledge management at a range of levels. First, the project will establish web-based knowledge platforms and e-networks to facilitate information dissemination and knowledge transfer between project landscapes. This will also be facilitated through knowledge transfer visits between landscapes during project implementation. A national steering committee will also help facilitate this transfer between landscapes. Partnership mechanisms such as local institutional partnerships to support the implementation of landscape-level strategies will help facilitate knowledge transfer between sectors, as will the proposed Wildlife Business Council that will share knowledge with interested businesses, including those engaged in livelihood activities at project sites. The project will actively participate in the GWP knowledge exchange platform and seek to share lessons learned from this global engagement through national fora and project landscapes. Importantly, the project will also seek to enhance knowledge transfer with neighbouring countries in wild cat – and particularly tiger – conservation. This will build off existing platforms such as the Global Tiger Forum and existing bilateral agreements. Knowledge management is captured under Output 4.4 (and also Output 4.3) in the results framework giving emphasis to the project's attention on knowledge sharing, learning and sharing of experiences. The project will identify, document and disseminate project best practices, including on gender mainstreaming and documentation and use of traditional knowledge.

## **PART III: APPROVAL/ENDORSEMENT BY GEF OPERATIONAL FOCAL POINT(S)**

**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 SGP OFP endorsement letter).

<b>NAME</b>	<b>POSITION</b>	<b>MINISTRY</b>	<b>DATE (MM/dd/yyyy)</b>
Ms. Manju Pandey	Joint Secretary and GEF OFP, India	Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change	<b>03/13/2019</b>

**Annex 1:** Preliminary information on project landscapes (to be delineated and confirmed during PPG phase)

Landscape	Wild cat species	Target project PAs	KBA references
<i>Western region</i>			
Ranthambhore landscape (Rajasthan)	Jungle Cat, Caracal, Fishing Cat, Rusty-spotted Cat, Leopard, Tiger	Ranthambore National Park (36,276 ha)	Ranthambore National Park and Tiger Reserve (18358)
Gir landscape (Gujarat)	Jungle Cat, Rusty-spotted Cat, Lion, Leopard	Gir National Park and Wildlife Sanctuary (118,200 ha)	Gir National Park and Wildlife Sanctuary (18133)
<i>North-eastern region</i>			
Bhramaputra landscape (Assam, Meghalaya)	Jungle Cat, Leopard Cat, Marbled Cat, Golden Cat, Fishing Cat, Clouded Leopard, Leopard, Tiger	Manas Tiger Reserve (291,796 ha)	Manas National Park (18093)
<i>Northern region</i>			
Dudhwa landscape (Uttar Pradesh)	Jungle Cat, Fishing Cat, Leopard Cat, Rusty-spotted Cat, Leopard, Tiger	Dudhwa National Park (74,677 ha)	Dudhwa National Park (18417)

NB: project will also operate in targeted spots within 10km buffer zones and corridors around the project PAs. These will be identified during the PPG phase based on further assessments and local consultations.