



**GEF 8 Reimagining National Parks for People and Nature
- Mega Living Landscapes Project (GEF ID: 11347)**

GEF 8 REQUEST FOR FSP CEO ENDORSEMENT / APPROVAL

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GENERAL PROJECT INFORMATION

Project Title:	Reimagining National Parks for People and Nature – Mega Living Landscapes Project		
Region:	Africa	GEF Project ID:	11347
Country(ies):	South Africa	Type of Project	Full-sized Project
GEF Agency(ies):	WWF GEF	GEF Agency Project ID:	G0048
Anticipated Executing Entity(s) and Type:	SANParks Government entity		
GEF Focal Area(s):	Biodiversity	Submission Date:	5 Feb 2024
Type of Trust Fund:	GEF TRUST FUND	Project Duration (Months)	72 months
GEF Project Grant: (a)	\$8,874,312	GEF Project Non-Grant (b)	N/a
Agency Fee(s) Grant: (c)	\$798,688	Agency Fee(s) Non-Grant: (d)	N/a
Total GEF Financing: (a+b+c+d)	\$9,673,000	Total Co-financing:	\$62,042,930
PPG Amount (e):	\$300,000	PPG Agency Fee(s) (f):	\$27,000
Total GEF Resources (a+b+c+d+e+f)	\$10,000,000		
Project Tags:	<input type="checkbox"/> CBIT <input type="checkbox"/> NGI <input type="checkbox"/> SGP <input type="checkbox"/> Innovation		
Project Sector (CCM only)	Biodiversity		
Rio Markers			
- Climate Change Mitigation	<input type="checkbox"/> No Contribution (0) <input type="checkbox"/> Significant Objective (1) <input type="checkbox"/> Principal Objective (2)		
- Climate Change Adaptation	<input type="checkbox"/> No Contribution (0) <input type="checkbox"/> Significant Objective (1) <input type="checkbox"/> Principal Objective (2)		
- Biodiversity	<input type="checkbox"/> No Contribution (0) <input type="checkbox"/> Significant Objective (1) <input type="checkbox"/> Principal Objective (2) X		
- Land Degradation	<input type="checkbox"/> No Contribution (0) <input type="checkbox"/> Significant Objective (1) <input type="checkbox"/> Principal Objective (2)		

Project Summary

Despite being one of the 17 megadiverse countries with many species found nowhere else, South Africa's pathway to sustainable development is still fraught with challenges. The country faces triple environmental threats, including biodiversity loss, climate change impacts, and pollution.

Underlying barriers include a limited community participation and benefit sharing from conservation activities; outdated conservation strategies disconnected from productive landscapes, communal lands, and local communities' economic and socio-cultural interests; and limited financial resources and poor capacity for the effective management of conservation areas.

The GEF 8 Mega Living Landscapes (MLLs) Project will drive innovative and transformative change to address some of South Africa's most complex environmental, social, and economic challenges. It will pioneer the establishment of three groundbreaking Mega Living Landscapes (MLLs) that will conserve 2 million hectares of biodiversity-rich land through innovative contractual and collaborative partnerships, foster sustainable economic opportunities for local entrepreneurs, focusing on women and youth, elevate socio-economic empowerment via enterprise and skills development, build robust conservation management institutions, and bolster the conservation capacity and skills of partner organisations. The project is a core part of the South African National Parks (SANParks) implementation programme of Vision 2040—a forward-thinking strategy to redefine conservation by fostering inclusivity, sustainable development, and community engagement.

In these MLLs the GEF project will, within six years, bring 2 million hectares of land under conservation –1,297,175 hectares being added to the Protected Area (PA) estate or under improved management within PAs, and 630,300 hectares of landscapes outside declared PAs under improved biodiversity management.

Project Description Overview

The Table below (referred to as Table B) indicates the strategic project components, outcomes (results), project outputs and indicative funds required. A narrative explanation follows the Theory of Change diagram provided later in the document.

Table 1: Project Objective, Components, Outcome and Outputs

Project Objective:	Pioneer the establishment of three Mega Living Landscapes (MLLs) to conserve 2M ha of biodiversity rich land, foster sustainable economic opportunities for local communities, build robust conservation management institutions and demonstrate the transformative potential of the MLL concept.					
Project Components	Component Type	Project Outcomes	Project Outputs	Trust Fund	(in \$)	
					GEF Project Financing	Co-financing
1. Creating sustainable MLL institutional mechanisms and governance structures	TA	1.1 MLLs established through inclusive institutional and governance structures (MLL Hubs), vision and planning frameworks.	<p>1.1.1. MLLs formal governance structures, stakeholder participation platforms and partnerships established, with effective representation and participation of local communities, women and youth in decision making and consultative initiatives.</p> <p>1.1.2. Unifying vision & Landscape level Framework Plans for each MLL participatorily developed and approved by MLLs governance structures.</p>	GEFTF	1,701,952	11,788,157
		1.2 Capabilities of SANParks, MLL governance members and management teams, local community leadership increased for effective management of MLL.	<p>1.2.1. Bespoke leadership and management training, and ongoing coaching of SANParks in managing MLLs developed and implemented.</p> <p>1.2.2 Capacity building programs delivered at landscape level for local leaders in MLL governance structures, partner organizations, and management teams on inclusive conservation including adaptive and biodiversity conservation management, biodiversity monitoring, ecosystem restoration, amongst others, to ensure successful implementation and effective management of self-sustaining MLLs.</p>			

2. Fostering and enhancing sustainable economic opportunities & socio-economic empowerment	TA	2.1 Increased biodiversity-positive sustainable socio-economic empowerment and development, owned by local stakeholders and benefiting local communities in the 3 MLLs.	<p>2. 1.1. Portfolio of inclusive and sustainable socio-economic development initiatives developed and implemented, creating MLL-based opportunities for local community enterprises, cooperatives and livelihoods upliftment, with focus on women-led and youth-led initiatives.</p> <p>2.1.2. Capacity building and skills development in SMMs establishment, employment, business incubation and livelihood income, with emphasis on women and youth in local communities in the 3 MLLs.</p>	GEFTF	2,928,523	20,474,167
3. Improving Inclusive Conservation in the MLLs	Inv	3.1. Increased area of PAs newly created, and area of existing PAs with improved effective management, delivered through a new inclusive and collaborative conservation model in the 3 MLLs.	<p>3.1.1 Partnerships, collaborative and inclusive interventions implemented to facilitate new PA declaration via stewardship, voluntary land acquisition processes, including technical assessments, safeguards, stakeholder engagement & legal processes.</p> <p>3.1.2 On the ground collaborative and coordination in implementation of MLL Plan activities to improve management effectiveness of existing PAs and improve management activities to benefit biodiversity outside of PAs.</p> <p>3.1.3. Capacity building programs in inclusive conservation management institutions, community of practices delivered within and across the 3 MLLs.</p>	GEFTF	3,194,752	22,335,455
4. Knowledge management.	TA	4.1 Increased awareness & enhanced conservation knowledge and	4.1.1 Cross mega living landscape Community of Practice workshops to share knowledge & experience held.	GEFTF	198,616	1,388,583

		practices amongst SANParks, MLL partners and local communities on inclusive conservation topics and experiences in the 3 MLLs.	4.1.2 Knowledge management & communication products delivered.			
Component 5. Monitoring & Evaluation Outcome 5.1: Effective, informed, and adaptive project management. Outputs: 5.1.1 M&E reports, including project progress reports and midterm evaluations for corrective actions and adaptations 5.1.2 Annual lessons learnt workshops, between main stakeholders, held.				GEFTF	443,716	3,102,144
Subtotal				GEFTF	8,467,559	59,088,505
Project Management Cost (PMC)				GEFTF	406,753	2,954,425
Total Project Cost				GEFTF	8,874,312	62,042,930

PROJECT OUTLINE

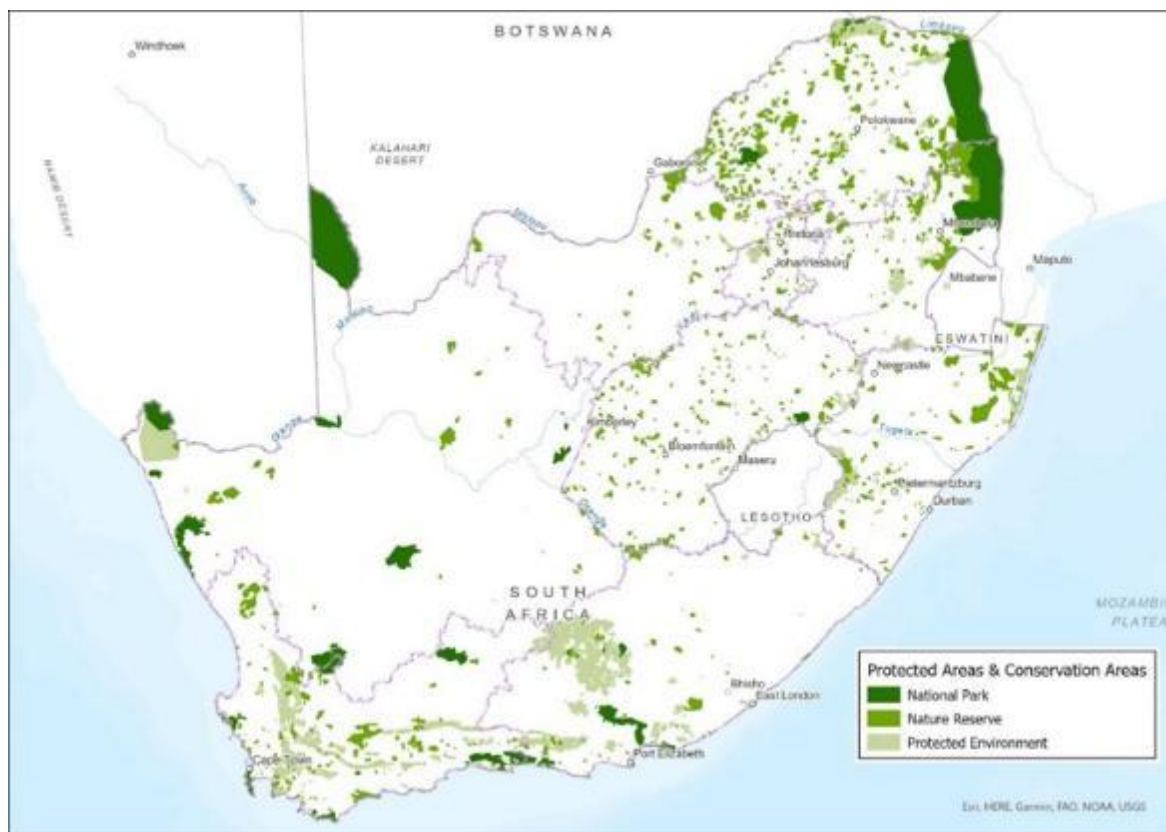
A. PROJECT RATIONALE

A1 Background

South Africa (SA) is one of the 17 megadiverse countries hosting most of the world's biodiversity and has large numbers of species found nowhere else. South Africa's pathway to sustainable development is still fraught with challenges. The country faces triple environmental threats, including biodiversity loss, impacts of climate change, and pollution. Compounding these are persistently high levels of unemployment, poverty, and inequality. According to a World Bank Report released in August 2024, South Africa is the most unequal country globally, with a Gini coefficient of 0,67. These socio-economic and environmental issues are intertwined, creating a complex web of challenges threatening the integrity of South Africa's rich biodiversity. Further, the lingering effects of past race-based land dispossession also continue to play a role, and this is illustrated by the ongoing low levels of meaningful participation by local communities in conservation efforts who gain associated benefits. Additionally, unsustainable production and consumption practices characteristic of South Africa's linear economic model also exacerbate biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation, perpetuating a cycle of ecological and socio-economic decline.

Considering South Africa's precarious trajectory towards sustainable development, the National Department of Forestry, Fisheries, and Environment (DFFE) has strategically aligned its mandate with the National Development Plan's goals, which are to reduce unemployment, eradicate poverty, reduce inequality, and achieve a decent standard of living by 2030. The newly published White Paper on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of South Africa's Biodiversity aims to conserve the nation's rich biodiversity while promoting sustainable and equitable socio-economic development. It also emphasizes integrating environmental, social, and economic elements to ensure biodiversity conservation benefits current and future generations.

South Africa is committed to meeting global environmental objectives, particularly the Kunming – Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework's (GBF) mission to "take urgent action to halt and reverse the loss of biodiversity for the benefit of people and the planet" by 2030. The country will contribute to achieving its 30 x 30 target (GBF target 3), which requires that 13.35% of land and inland freshwater resources and 15.3% of its marine areas be added to the current conservation estate (refer Map 1 and Table 2 below).



Map 1. Map of protected areas in South Africa.

Table 2. The total contribution of protected areas in relation to the 30 x 30 targets.

	Protected Area	Conservation Area	Total % of SA	Gap to 30 %
Land	9.9% 12 mil ha	6.65%	16.65%	13.35%
Marine	5.4%	0	5.4%	25%
Marine incl. PEI	14.7%	0	14.7%	15.3%

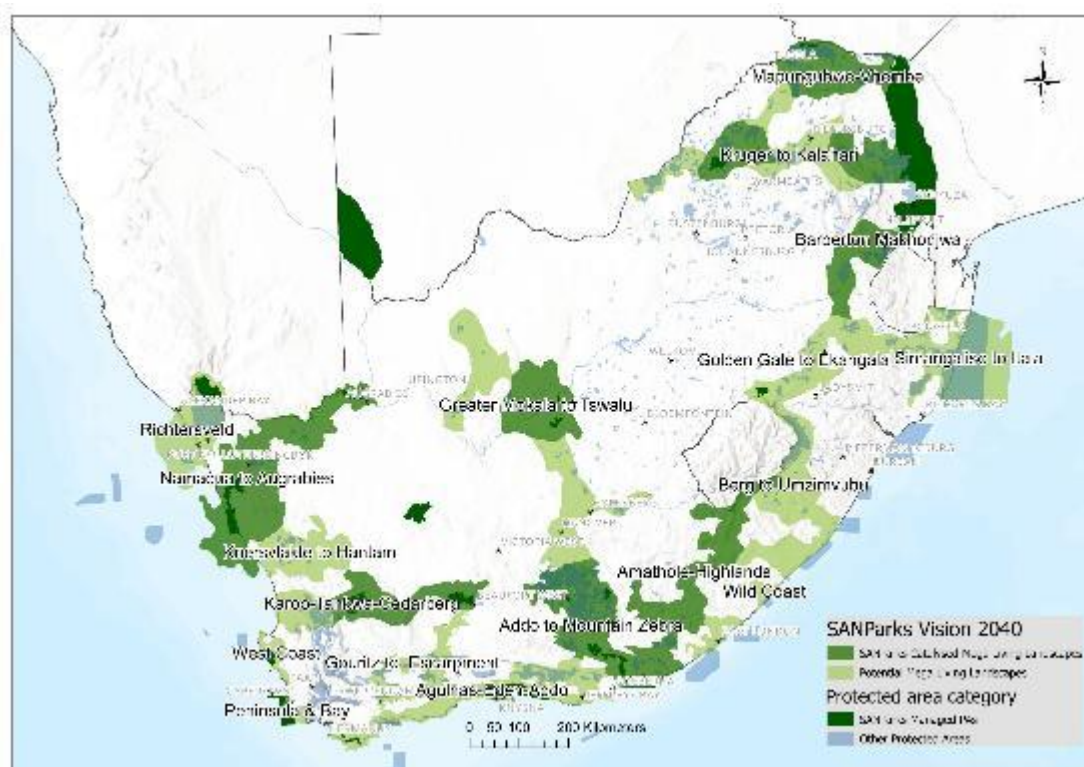
In line with these national sustainable development goals, the South African National Parks (SANParks) has introduced Vision 2040, a forward-thinking strategy that redefines conservation by fostering inclusivity, promoting sustainable development, and engaging the community. Vision 2040's key pillars include creating Mega-Living Landscapes (MLLs) in areas of biodiversity importance and advancing economic development through conservation, sustaining ecological services, community inclusion, and social justice. This vision thus ushers in a paradigm shift that reimagines a co-created new future for South Africa, in which people live in harmony with nature in Mega-Living Landscapes (MLLs), and nature is understood to be the bedrock of the economy. This vision calls for SANParks to discharge its mandate into the future to facilitate harmonious relationships between societal needs, human well-being, and environmental management requirements. To realise its aspirations will require a substantial shift in focus, scope, and implementation strategy, as well as the involvement of the DFFE, the private sector, national and provincial authorities, entities, local communities, women, youth, NGOs, and other broader stakeholder groupings.

The Mega Living Landscape Programme aims to catalyse sustainable development, particularly in rural areas, by transitioning from the traditional approach to developing and managing protected areas collaboratively and fostering biodiversity conservation beyond the conventional protected areas. This new conservation philosophy focuses on creating expansive, interconnected landscapes that integrate national parks and other protected areas with productive lands in surrounding communities. The ultimate goal in pursuing the MLL strategy is for biodiversity to thrive at all levels in conserved and productive landscapes that sustain healthy ecological functions, provide spiritual, cultural, sustainable economic, and subsistence benefits, and deliver prosperity for people living in and around these landscapes. As a result, biodiversity degradation and loss should be reversed, and conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity should be a shared commitment among all who benefit from these landscapes.

The SANParks will champion, lead, and play a facilitatory role in implementing the MLL strategy with multiple partners and with a commitment to meaningful participation and inclusion of local communities.

SANParks identified eight large areas (see Map 2) in the country where it seeks to facilitate the establishment of Mega Living Landscapes, and the concept is explained as follows:

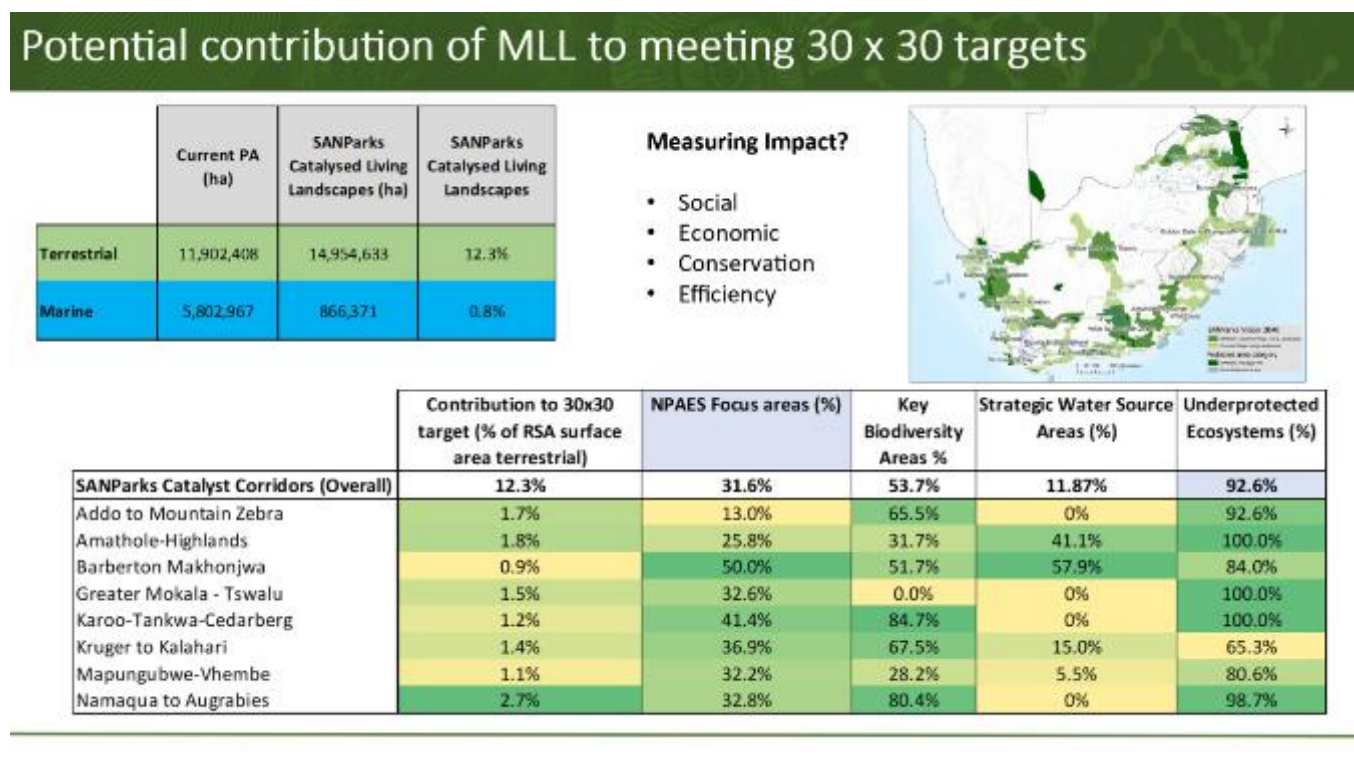
- “Mega” thinking at a larger scale.
- “Living” people and nature co-exist together harmoniously.
- The “Landscape” consists of different elements, such as land and water, biodiversity, livelihoods, and heritage, which can be included as parts of the whole.



Map 2: Location of eight potential Mega Living Landscapes identified by SANParks.

Establishing the eight Mega Living Landscapes (MLLs) is a key strategy for achieving GBF Target 3 (dubbed “30 x 30”). The SANParks-led MLLs initiative aims to contribute an additional 12.3% (approximately 14 million hectares) to South Africa's land conservation targets.

Table 3: Potential contribution of identified MLLs by SANParks to GBF Target 3



To progress the concept of MLLs from theory to practice, SANParks plans to pilot it in strategic areas nationwide with funding from the Global Environment Facility Replenishment Fund Phase 8 (GEF 8). In this way, the GEF 8 funding will contribute to SANParks' implementation of Vision 2040, which aims to deliver transformative conservation outcomes at its core. Implementing the three MLLs will also contribute to the government's National Development Plan (NDP) and its strategic priorities for 2024 – 2029, as articulated in the national Medium-Term Development Plan (MTDP). The MTDP priorities for the next five years are inclusive growth and job creation, poverty reduction, and building a capable, ethical and developmental state.

The GEF 8-funded Mega Living Landscapes (MLL) project aims to establish a cohesive and sustainable development vision by developing, coordinating and integrating diverse activities across three pilot landscapes. This project will mobilise institutions, communities, and marginalised stakeholder groups and resources to demonstrate impactful MLL implementation, foster ecological connectivity within the selected landscapes and enhance coherence among collaborating partners and local communities.

Each of the three selected MLLs will encompass national parks, other formally protected areas, other effectively conserved lands, productive landscapes and communal land, and these are:

- a) **Greater Addo MLL**, which covers parts of Gqeberha (formerly Port Elizabeth), Addo National Park, its adjacent marine protected area, Mountain Zebra National Park (near Craddock), and Camdeboo National Park (surrounding Graaff Reinet) in the Eastern Cape Province.
- b) **Barberton/Makhonjwa MLL** (part of the Greater Kruger), which extends from near Barberton to the south of Kruger National Park in the Mpumalanga Province.
- c) **Eastern Grasslands MLL** encompasses the formal declaration of Grasslands National Park in the Eastern Cape highlands. Amongst the conservation tools to be deployed are stewardship mechanisms and other compatible land use interventions, with active participation from landowners and communal land users.

At the MLL level, comprehensive interventions will be meticulously implemented to foster holistic and sustainable development. These efforts will align visioning processes, strategic planning, sustainable financing, and ongoing assessments to ensure impactful outcomes. Institutional mechanisms and governance structures will be strengthened by enhancing operational capacity, promoting robust governance practices, empowering local leadership, and ensuring sustainability. Concurrently, the project will drive economic growth, promote socio-economic inclusion, empower women and youth, and improve access to finance and markets. Additionally, conservation management institutions will be bolstered, conservation knowledge and practices will be enhanced, and conservation capacity will be increased, all while promoting inclusive community participation.

These integrated interventions will collectively advance the three core MLL project components, leading to resilient and thriving ecosystems, empowering communities, and ensuring sustainable progress.

The MLL initiative will have a national impact at and beyond the selected three sites. Within the three MLLs targeted sites, the quality of life of local people and communities will improve. Further, additional land for biodiversity conservation will be secured while progressively, biodiversity loss will reverse and improve ecosystem functioning, which delivers valuable ecological services. For SANParks, MLL implementation lessons from the pilot will inform the establishment of five new MLLs, which aim to double the 4.6 million hectares SANParks currently protects and conserves. Nationally, cumulative learnings and insights gained from these three MLLs will inform the future model for the design and development of MLLs and demonstrate an “all-of-society” approach to undertaking biodiversity-centric sustainable development.

A sister project funded by the Global Biodiversity Framework Fund (GBFF), “Reimagining National Parks for People and Nature—Leveraging Durable Financing Mechanisms for Mega Living Landscapes (MLL) to achieve Target 3 in South Africa (GEF ID 11588),” will also support components of the MLL initiative, creating enabling conditions for durable financing by developing landscape-level Investment Frameworks and securing long-term financing mechanisms in the three MLLs. Implementing this GEF8 project will be coordinated and synergised with the sister project funded by the GBFF, forming an integrated MLL initiative.

The theory of change underpinning this GEF 8 MLL project is that creating Mega Living Landscapes (MLLs) will demonstrate that the outdated conservation mindset of separating people, nature, and culture—historically entrenched by apartheid policies—is no longer optimal for establishing Protected Areas (PAs), conserving ecosystems and preventing the loss of biodiversity. This project will show that well-connected, functioning ecosystems foster thriving biodiversity and enhance local communities’ livelihoods, well-being, and resilience. By catalysing pro-nature economic development, these initiatives aim to retain or improve biodiversity and ecosystem services while benefiting local communities and the private sector. Creating MLLs will drive inclusive economic growth by integrating biodiversity and conservation-linked opportunities into local economies, promoting equitable and sustainable community benefits. This approach will foster resilient community-led enterprises, generate employment, enhance social cohesion, improve market access, and stimulate inclusive economic growth through biodiversity value chains and conservation-linked initiatives. The long-term impact will be well-connected, functioning ecosystems that result in thriving biodiversity and increased livelihoods, human well-being, and resilience within three Mega Living Landscapes.

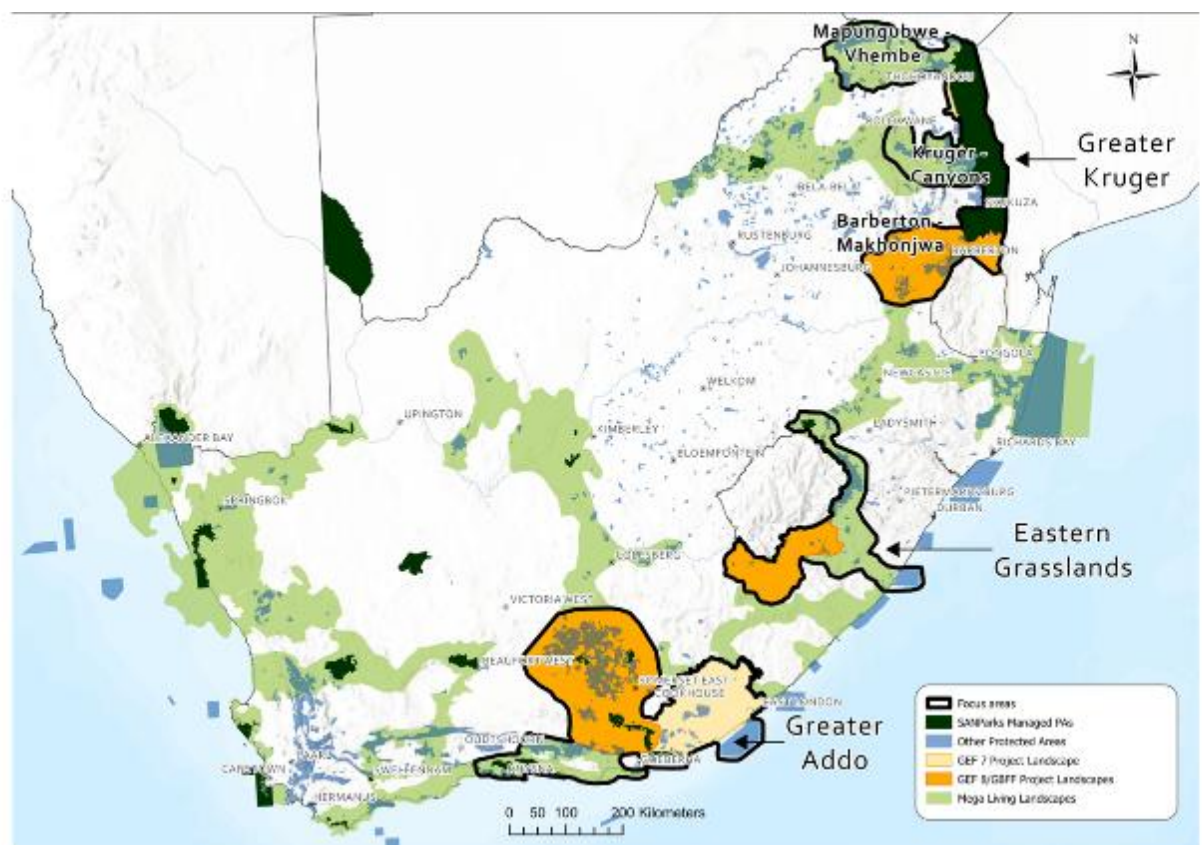
A2 Current Situation and Future Scenarios

Project Geography

The GEF-funded MLL project will focus on three areas of the country where the planned interventions align with and contribute to achieving the priorities of the NDP, the MTDP, the White Paper on Biodiversity, and SANParks Vision 2040 regarding the delivery of social, environmental, and economic dividends, particularly to local communities, women, and youth. The project will expand areas critical for conservation and contribute to meeting Target 3 of the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF).

Geographically, the MLL project sites are situated in provinces and regions of the country that are home to the most impoverished communities and have hitherto not derived meaningful socio-economic benefits from biodiversity and heritage resources in the neighbouring formally conserved areas. The three MLL project sites are the Greater Addo, which is mainly in the southern Eastern Cape Province; Barberton – Makhonjwa MLL, (part of Greater Kruger) located to the south of the Kruger National Park and the near north/north-west of Eswatini; and the Eastern Grasslands which is in southern Drakensberg Mountains within the Eastern Cape and bordering Lesotho are shown in Map 3 below.

The location of the three Project MLLs within South Africa is shown in the map below.



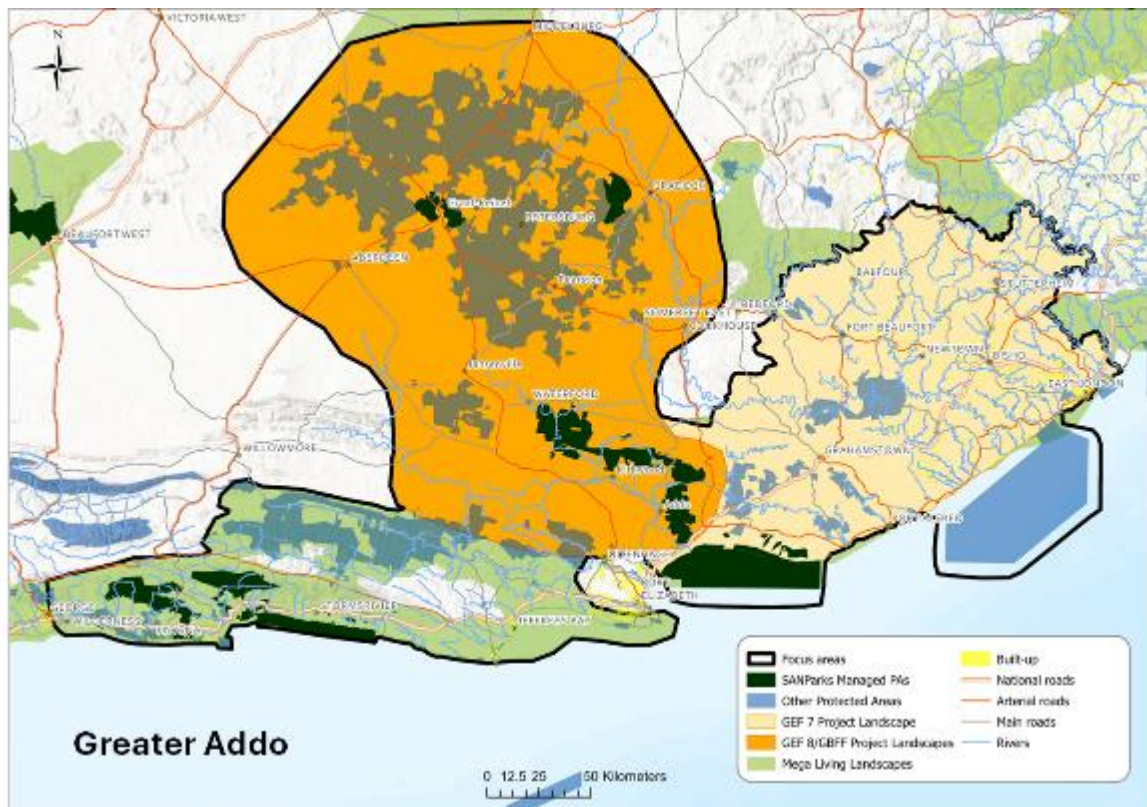
Map 3: Location of the three Project Mega Living Landscapes identified by SANParks.

Detailed description of the geography of each of the Mega Living Landscape sites selected

Below are details of the specific locations, extent, biophysical characteristics, and heritage assets in each of the three planned MLLs.

The Greater Addo Mega Living Landscape

This MLL extends from the northern reaches of the Addo Elephant National Park northwards towards the towns of Cradock and Graaff Reinet. Middelburg is the northern extent, and Murraysburg, Aberdeen, and Steytlerville are the western extent (see Map 4).



Map 4: Greater Addo Mega Living Landscape showing the GEF 8 project area in relation to the GEF 7 and broader MLL.

The MLL will have a footprint of 3.5 million hectares, including 1,210,468 hectares of officially designated protected areas (Tables 4 and 5). It is situated at the intersection of seven distinct biomes: Nama Karoo, Albany Thicket, Grasslands, Fynbos, Succulent Karoo, Forest, and Azoonal vegetation. These areas are recognised as biodiversity hotspots and include two Strategic Water Source Areas (SWSAs). The two SWSAs partially within the MLL are groundwater-based: the Eastern Upper Karoo Strategic Water Source Area and a small Coega Aquifer Water Source Area patch.

Table 4: Protected areas where interventions will occur in the Greater Addo

Protected area name	Type of protected area	WDPA ID	Area (Ha)	Date of declaration
Protected areas where GEF 8 interventions will take place				
Addo Elephant National Park	National Park (IUCN category II)	875	152,355 ha	3 July 1931
Mountain Zebra National Park	National Park (IUCN category II)	877	20,247 ha	2 July 1937
Camdeboo National Park	National Park (IUCN category II)	4035	18,790 ha	28 October 2005
Noorseveld Protected Environment	Protected Environment (IUCN V Protected Landscape/Seascape)	555570868	47,926 ha	17 March 2014
Compassberg Protected Environment	Protected Environment (IUCN V Protected Landscape/Seascape)	555563479	28,851 ha	6 July 2012
Mountain Zebra – Camdeboo Protected Environment	Protected Environment (IUCN V Protected Landscape/Seascape)	555571010	892,754 ha	5 December 2014 and 1 April 2016

Table 5: Other protected areas in the Greater Addo MLL

Protected area name	Type of protected area		
Camdeboo Private Nature Reserve	Nature Reserve	19,373 ha	7 February 2024
Bergplaas Private Nature Reserve	Nature Reserve	5,098 ha	8 May 2015
Agter Sneeuwberg Private Nature Reserve	Nature Reserve	16,053 ha	12 January 1995
Aberdeen Nature Reserve	Nature Reserve	1,673 ha	12 February 1982
Somerset East Bosberg Nature Reserve	Nature Reserve	2,698 ha	6 October 1967
High Karoo Park Protected Environment	Protected Environment	4,671 ha	22 February 2021

Endangered and vulnerable species occurring in this region include the black rhino, Cape mountain zebra, eagles, and 13 species of endemic herpetofauna.

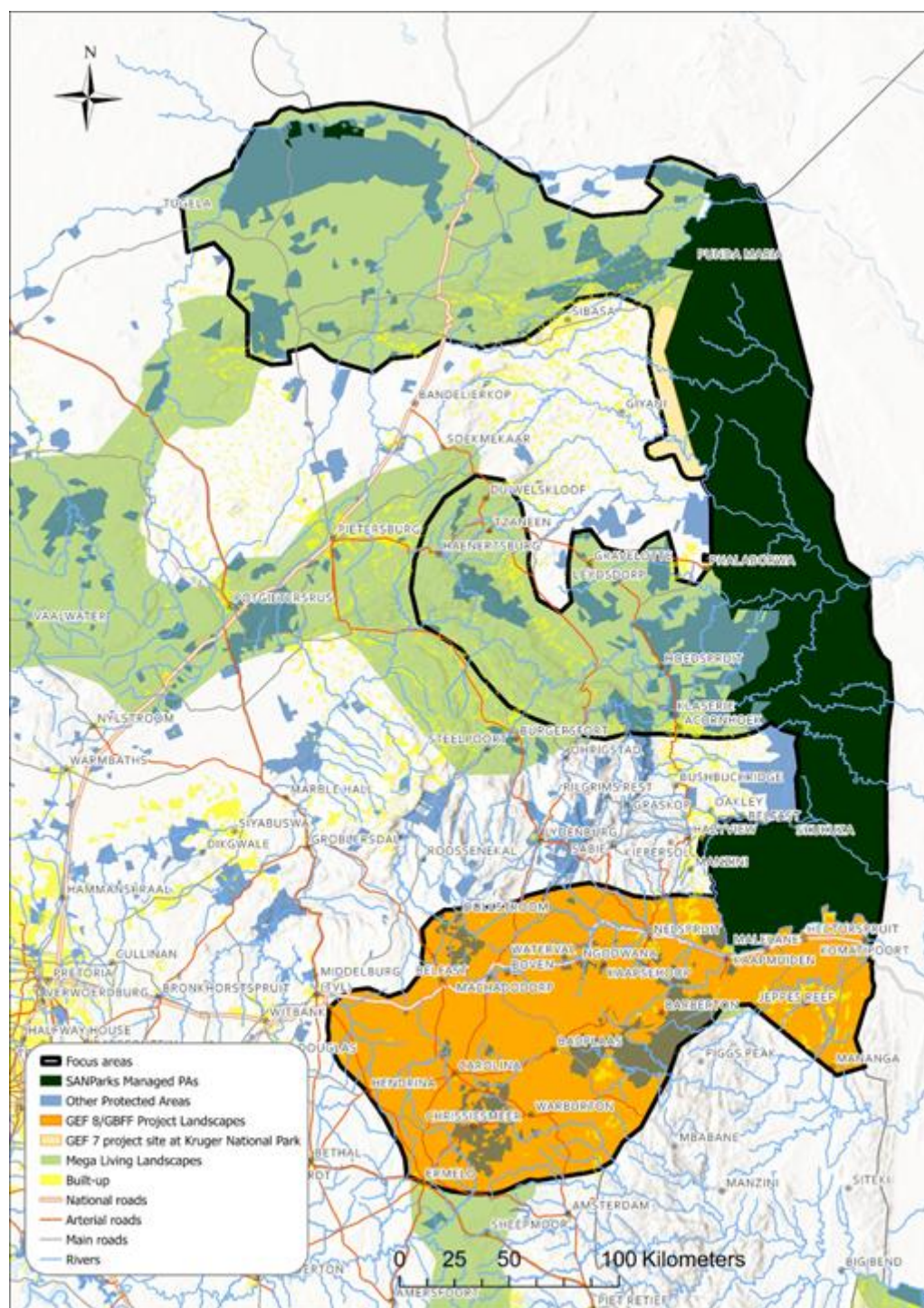
The area holds significant heritage value, as shown by the evidence found of the early occupation of the Khoisan people, the first inhabitants of southern Africa. Additionally, it has high palaeontological value, with rock strata and fossil records dating back 230 million years.

The Barberton-Makhonjwa Mega Living Landscape (part of the Greater Kruger)

This MLL is centred on the Barberton Nature Reserve and Songimvelo Game Reserve, part of the Barberton-Makhonjwa World Heritage Site (see Map 5).

It covers three biomes: forest, Savanna, and grassland, as well as biodiversity hotspots. Four Strategic Water Source Areas occur partially in this MLL: the Mpumalanga Drakensberg, Upper Usuthu, Mbabane Hills, and Upper Vaal Strategic Water Source Areas, which account for nearly 60% (888,190 ha) of the MLL. The MLL is a centre of plant

endemism and is home to endangered and vulnerable species, including at least 80 endemic plant species and the black rhino.



Map 5: Barberton-Makhonjwa MLL (orange) in the context of the Greater Kruger.

The proposed MLL encompasses an area of approximately 1.5 million hectares, with 322,855 hectares of formally declared protected zones (see Tables 6 and 7).

Table 6: Protected areas where interventions will occur in the Barberton Makhonjwa MLL.

Protected area name	Type of protected area	WDPA ID	Area (Ha)	Date of declaration
Barberton-Makhonjwa World Heritage Site	World Heritage Site		113,345	12/03/2021
Barberton Nature Reserve	Nature Reserve (IUCN - IV Habitat/Species Mgt. Area)	32884	27,365	29/03/1996
Mthethomusha Nature Reserve	Nature Reserve (IUCN - IV Habitat/Species Mgt. Area)	351103	7,979	29/03/1996
Nkomazi Wilderness Nature Reserve	Nature Reserve (IUCN - IV Habitat/Species Mgt. Area)	555703203	5,665	08/10/2001
Songimvelo Game Reserve	Nature Reserve (IUCN - IV Habitat/Species Mgt. Area)	555703203	1,128	03/04/1983

Table 7: Other Protected Areas in the Barberton Makhonjwa MLL

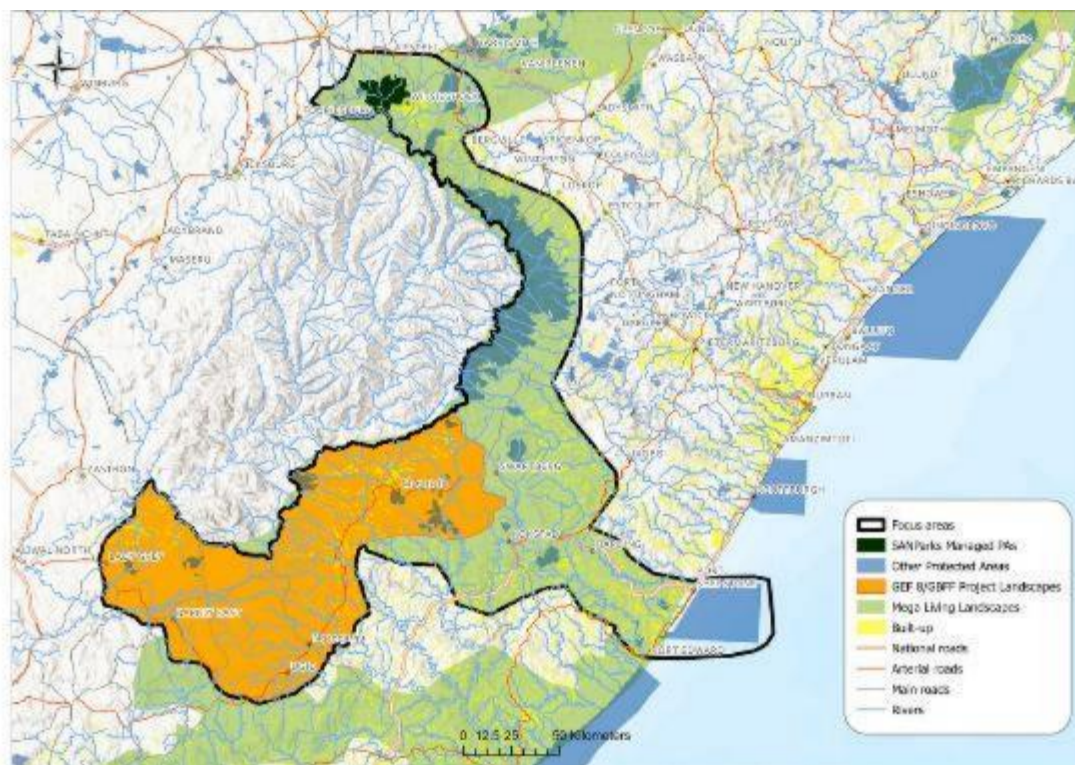
Protected area name	Type of protected area	Area (Ha)	Date of declaration
Angle Ridge Nature Reserve	Nature Reserve	1,096	07/04/2017
Barberton Private Nature Reserve	Nature Reserve	403	27/01/1965
Berlin Forest Nature Reserve	Forest Nature Reserve	1,269	19/10/2021
Bewerwyk Private Nature Reserve	Nature Reserve	1,871	17/08/1955
Blouswaelvlakte Reserve	Forest Nature Reserve	511	13/09/2013
Cecilia Private Nature Reserve	Nature Reserve	601	11/06/1956
Chrissiesmeer Protected Environment	Protected Environment	57,500	22/01/2014
Cythna Letty Nature Reserve	Nature Reserve	7	15/02/1967
Dombeya Private Nature Reserve	Nature Reserve	247	15/02/1967
Dr Hamilton Nature Reserve	Forest Nature Reserve	18	20/09/1985
Ermelo Private Nature Reserve	Nature Reserve	22	29/08/1962
Greater Lakenvlei Protected Environment	Protected Environment	14,123	07/04/2017
Kruger National Park	National Park	1,916,915	26/07/1926
Langkloof Private Nature Reserve	Nature Reserve	597	17/08/1955
Laughing Waters Private Nature Reserve	Nature Reserve	1,062	21/05/1969
Maffia Private Nature Reserve	Nature Reserve	1,407	29/05/1968
Mahushe Shongwe Game Reserve	Nature Reserve	1,140	29/03/1996
Mount Morgan Nature Reserve	Nature Reserve	1,012	07/04/2017

Nelsberg Reserve	Forest Nature Reserve	542	13/09/2013
Nelshoogte Nature Reserve	Forest Nature Reserve	279	07/01/1972
Nelspruit Nature Reserve	Nature Reserve	291	26/01/1972
Ngodwana Valley Nature Reserve	Nature Reserve	969	07/04/2017
Ngodwanakloof Reserve	Forest Nature Reserve	1,577	13/09/2013
Nooitgedacht Dam Nature Reserve	Nature Reserve	2,989	29/03/1996
Oosterbeek Nature Reserve	Nature Reserve	1,901	07/04/2017
Paranie Private Nature Reserve	Nature Reserve	4,319	29/01/1964
Paulina van Niekerk Private Nature Reserve	Nature Reserve	1,493	27/01/1965
Queensriver Reserve	Forest Nature Reserve	1,597	13/09/2013
Red Arces Private Nature Reserve	Nature Reserve	2,103	15/03/1961
Rentia Kritzing Private Nature Reserve	Nature Reserve	706	29/05/1968
Rocky Drift Private Nature Reserve	Nature Reserve	250	15/02/1967
St Louis Private Nature Reserve	Nature Reserve	1,128	29/05/1968
Starvation Creek Nature Reserve	Forest Nature Reserve	521	11/10/1985
Stenson Estate Private Nature Reserve	Nature Reserve	1,668	29/08/1962
Thorncroft Nature Reserve	Nature Reserve	17	15/02/1967
Tinie Louw Nature Reserve	Nature Reserve	10	15/02/1967
Tullach Mhor Private Nature Reserve	Nature Reserve	772	15/02/1967
Uitkyk Private Nature Reserve	Nature Reserve	1,161	29/01/1964
Umhloti Nature Reserve	Nature Reserve	1,561	08/06/1994
Vischspruit Private Nature Reserve	Nature Reserve	1,894	27/01/1960
Vlakplaats Private Nature Reserve	Nature Reserve	1,581	15/02/1967
Wonderkloof Nature Reserve	Forest Nature Reserve	828	11/05/1973
Zasm Falls Nature Reserve	Nature Reserve	142	29/08/1962

The MLL also has high heritage value and contains the best-preserved, oldest, and most diverse sequence of volcanic and sedimentary rocks on Earth. Earth science recognises it as a unique living laboratory. The sequences in the Barberton Greenstone Belt record the birth of the early oceans, the first atmosphere, the first life to appear on the planet, and evidence of the formation of the first continent.

The Eastern Grasslands Mega Living Landscape

The Eastern Grasslands Mega Living Landscape covers 1.5 million hectares and is centred between Rhodes and Maclear (see Map 6).



Map 6: Grasslands Mega living Landscape showing the GEF 8 project focus

The proposed MLL contains 37,721 hectares of formally declared protected areas (see Table 8).

It covers the grasslands biome and other vegetation types that are poorly represented in South Africa's protected area system but are critical for biodiversity values and ecosystem functions. It is a biodiversity hotspot. Endangered and vulnerable species with high levels of endemic species, including birds such as the wattled and blue cranes, are found in this area.

Table 8: Protected Areas to be incorporated into the Eastern Grasslands MLL

Protected area name	Type of protected area	WDPA ID	Area (Ha)	Date of declaration
Balloch Protected Environment	Protected Environment (IUCN V Protected Landscape/Seascape)	555571131	4,418	01/08/2022
Golden Fleece Nature Reserve	Nature Reserve (IUCN V Protected Landscape/Seascape)	555571129	289	08/08/2022
Cedarville Protected Environment	Protected Environment (IUCN V Protected Landscape/Seascape)	555570913	15,147	08/05/2015
Lammergeier Highlands Nature Reserve	Nature Reserve (IUCN V Protected Landscape/Seascape)	555570910	3,079	08/05/2015
Wilfried Baur Nature Reserve	Nature Reserve (IUCN V Protected Landscape/Seascape)	555564141	157	25/08/1967
Matatiele Nature Reserve	Nature Reserve (IUCN V Protected Landscape/Seascape)	555563915	4,405	06/09/2007
Malekgalonyane Reserve	Nature Reserve (IUCN V Protected Landscape/Seascape)	351423	10,225	06/07/1990

This MLL includes the entire Eastern Cape Drakensberg Strategic Water Source Area and the Southern Drakensberg SWSAs, which cover 57% of the MLL (943,374 hectares). These areas are crucial for water security, essential economic activities, and ecosystem health.

This MLL, too, is of high heritage value as unique ancient San rock art is found in this area.

Environmental context

South Africa is renowned for its extraordinary biological diversity. It encompasses nine distinct biomes, including the savanna, grasslands, forest, fynbos, thicket, and Nama-Karoo. Each biome hosts unique ecosystems. South Africa is one of the world's 17 megadiverse countries, with high levels of endemic species. Its diverse ecosystems are crucial for providing ecological services such as water for the people, nature, and the economy.

South Africa is also rich in heritage resources, such as San rock art, which offers a glimpse into early hunter-gatherer societies' cultural and spiritual life. The country is also home to significant palaeontological finds. This intricate blend of biodiversity and heritage makes South Africa a global treasure trove of natural and cultural significance.

However, South Africa's pathway to sustainable development is fraught with challenges. The country faces the triple environmental threats of biodiversity loss, climate change impacts, and pollution. Biodiversity loss, species loss, ecological degradation, and the decline of ecosystem services are emblematic of this challenge. Almost half of the 1,021 ecosystem types assessed in SA's National Biodiversity Assessment (2018) are threatened. Rivers and inland wetlands have the highest proportions of their types classified as Critically Endangered, at 42% and 61%, respectively.

According to the same assessment, several species are also threatened with extinction, and some of these are only found in South Africa: of the assessed taxa in South Africa (23 312 Indigenous taxa from 11 taxonomic groups), 0.2% are extinct, and 14% are threatened with extinction. The assessment also found that 22% of endemic taxa are threatened with extinction. Estuaries have the highest proportion of threatened taxa (27%), and 19% of marine taxa are threatened. The IUCN Red List Index that tracks the changes in species threat status shows an increased extinction risk for most of the eight taxonomic groups assessed, including plants, reptiles, birds, mammals, amphibians, freshwater fishes, dragonflies, and butterflies and freshwater species and butterflies at most risk.

The interlinkages between climate change's impact on biodiversity and increasing pollution in land, freshwater systems, and the ocean present further complexity. South Africa is highly vulnerable to climate change, and among the projected impacts are the likely changes in the distribution of the South African biomes. If climate change is unmitigated, it is expected to significantly change South Africa's ecosystem structure and functioning by 2050, resulting in substantial biodiversity losses in the latter half of this century. Consequently, this will cascade adverse effects on human well-being and security.

Persistently high unemployment, amounting to 34% of the population, or at least 7.9 million people, poverty, and inequality, measured at the Gini coefficient of 0.63, compound these complex environmental challenges in South Africa. Climate change also negatively impacts agriculture and communities that depend on natural resources. Further, the lingering effects of past race-based land dispossession also continue to play a role, and this is illustrated by the ongoing low levels of meaningful participation by local communities in conservation efforts and gaining associated benefits. This further aggravates poverty and inequality, particularly in rural areas where most of South Africa's formal conservation estate is situated. Additionally, unsustainable production and consumption practices characteristic of South Africa's linear economic model also exacerbate biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation, perpetuating a cycle of ecological and socio-economic decline.

These socio-economic and environmental issues are intertwined, creating a complex web of challenges that threaten the integrity of South Africa's rich biodiversity. Creating Mega Living Landscapes (MLL) is an appropriate intervention to tackle this level of complexity in the identified areas. The MLLs are designed to intervene at scale

and will involve multiple stakeholders, including local communities and follow an “all of society” approach to co-create sustainable solutions. As intended under Vision 2040 of SANPARKS, successfully establishing MLLs not only will biodiversity conservation goals in the selected sites be realised by contributing an additional 12.3% (approximately 14 million hectares) towards the land conservation targets but a more people-inclusive, collaborative model of conservation will be demonstrated and will be applied in other identified MLL sites in the country in the future.

The specific environmental contexts and the vision of each of the three MLLs

The Greater Addo MLL

The Greater Addo MLL faces severe land degradation due to decades of poor grazing management and climate change effects such as rising temperatures and decreasing rainfall. Limited land is available for critically endangered species. Although renewable energy projects are vital for the economy, they negatively impact wilderness areas and ecotourism potential. Local towns suffer from high poverty, unemployment, and low education levels.

The long-term vision for the Greater Addo MLL is to expand the Addo Elephant National Park and create a malaria-free Big Seven regenerative tourism economy. The GEF 8 funds for the project will support the development of eco-tourism and wildlife economy businesses, creating jobs in towns with high poverty and unemployment rates. The project will also establish a robust governance framework and ensure lasting positive environmental and societal impacts. It aligns with the long-term vision of creating a sustainable wildlife and malaria-free Big Seven regenerative tourism economy.

The Greater Addo MLL, funded by GEF 8 funds, is planned to achieve a balanced and sustainable integration of conservation and economic development. The region should experience significant socio-economic upliftment, with empowered local communities, particularly women and youth, thriving ecotourism, and enhanced biodiversity integrity.

The Barberton-Makhonjwa MLL

This MLL is one of South Africa's most agriculturally productive and economically vital regions. It has seen significant habitat transformation due to crop production, coal mining, plantation forestry, and urban development, such as in Mbombela. Poor grazing, fire management practices, and invasive alien plants have also contributed to ecological degradation. Legal and illegal mining are significant issues, with Barberton Mines holding 97% of its mining rights in the Barberton Nature Reserve.

Leveraging its scenic beauty, cultural diversity, and unique biodiversity, this MLL envisions a vibrant economy driven by regenerative tourism, ecosystem restoration, sustainable use of wildlife and plant products, and extensive livestock grazing. This approach will enable communities to thrive and build resilience to climate change. The GEF project will support this strategic objective by nurturing new entrants into the biodiversity economy (especially the tourism and wildlife sectors), strengthening protected area systems and management effectiveness, and enhancing biodiversity management in extensively grazed ecosystems. This will also improve the economic returns of livestock owners.

The Grasslands MLL

The Grasslands MLL suffers from land degradation and soil erosion caused by invasive alien plants, bush encroachment, inappropriate livestock grazing, and fire management. The MLL, which is situated in the Eastern Cape, also faces high levels of poverty and unemployment and grapples with the legacy and effects of the area being a source of migrant labour as well as low literacy levels, education, and skills. Racialised economic, social, and spatial disparities further compound these. These environmental challenges, intertwined with the social difficulties and the damaging legacy of previous apartheid policies in the area, pose a threat to grassland

ecosystems, which are essential to the rural economy and perpetuate high levels of poverty, unemployment and inequality.

The MLL project aims to restore degraded ecosystems through regenerative agriculture, improved grazing systems, and partnerships with local communities and communal farmers. This initiative seeks to protect key biodiversity areas and create businesses and job opportunities within the biodiversity economy. The GEF project will incubate new entrants to the biodiversity economy, particularly in restoration efforts. It will strengthen protected areas and their management effectiveness and enhance biodiversity management in extensively grazed ecosystems, providing improved economic returns for livestock owners.

The project will establish a robust governance framework, ensuring transparency and accountability in managing conservation and economic activities while mobilising increased funding for sustainable development. Enhanced connectivity and integrity of grassland ecosystems, improved biodiversity indicators, and a thriving biodiversity economy collectively positively impact the environment and society. This aligns with the strategic objectives of restoring degraded ecosystems, creating business and job opportunities linked to the biodiversity economy, and fostering inclusive and equitable development.

South Africa faces triple environmental challenges: biodiversity loss, climate change impacts, and pollution. Unsustainable production and consumption practices, such as agricultural practices, overfishing, and habitat destruction due to unsustainable economic development activities, contribute to biodiversity loss. The National Biodiversity Assessment Report of 2018 by the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI) highlights species' decline as a grave concern. Climate change also negatively impacts biodiversity, with models predicting severe future impacts. These projected impacts may render current conservation models ineffective, necessitating reimagined conservation strategies as envisioned by SANParks Vision 2040. Adapting and enhancing ecosystem resilience is crucial for demonstrating the MLL concept in practice. South Africa's economy heavily relies on resource extraction through mining, which is wasteful and dependent on fossil fuels. The linear economic model of the country, which the Ellen MacArthur Foundation describes as the "take-make-waste" model, is negatively impacting biodiversity. Freshwater systems, including Strategic Water Source Areas and marine environments, suffer from industrial and solid waste pollution, exemplified by plastic pollution. Prolonged high unemployment, poverty, and inequality compound these environmental challenges. The MLL intervention recognises the intertwined environmental and socio-economic challenges and how these exacerbate biodiversity loss.

Barriers that the Project aims to improve

Barriers that the project aim to improve include:

1. **Limited Community Participation and Benefit Sharing** The legacy of past racial segregation policies, including land dispossession, persists, excluding local communities from mainstream conservation activities and benefits. Reversing this legacy remains challenging. Traditional conservation models often marginalise communities living in and around protected areas, limiting their access to resources and benefits. The GEF 8 MLL project, consistent with Vision 2040, explicitly aims to collaborate and co-create solutions with local communities for developing and managing biodiversity resources in the MLLs. This approach fosters community ownership and pride in safeguarding biodiversity for current and future generations.

In all three MLLs there is insufficient realisation of socio-economic benefits to local communities living in poverty. To generate the intended socio-economic benefits, it is important to understand the value of the assets that can be mobilised and the external resources which could contribute to the development and expansion of identified opportunities. Assets that can be leveraged relate to ecosystem goods and services; skills and labour; financial assets; land, infrastructure and other services; social, cultural and heritage

resources. The key socio-economic opportunities that align with the conservation objectives include restoration, nature-based tourism and heritage, and the wildlife economy and the delivery of environmental services. Linked to this barrier is the barrier of unrealised, uncoordinated and untransformed ecotourism offerings. As is the inability of the public works programmes to unlock sustainable restoration programmes and small enterprise opportunities. Fortunately, there are excellent socio-economic interventions in the Barberton MLL that can be scaled up in that landscape and shared in other landscapes.

2. **Outdated Conservation Strategies** with a mindset that resulted in a fragmented, small and unconnected Protected Area Network (PAN) that isn't linked to compatible land uses and isn't critical to the sustainable development trajectory of the country. Predominant conservation strategies in South Africa focus on developing and managing conservation areas as isolated systems disconnected from productive landscapes, communal lands, and local communities' economic and socio-cultural interests. These strategies disincentivise private and communal landowners from contributing to biodiversity conservation and adopting sustainable land use practices. The project aims to integrate conservation and sustainable land use practices to create cohesive and interconnected landscapes. It seeks to build partnerships that support landowners in engaging in conservation activities and adopting sustainable practices.

In the past there was a fixed protected areas mindset that the only way to protect biodiversity was to separate nature and people. This was overlayed by apartheid beliefs that saw protected areas being orientated towards servicing the privileged white population. In certain cases, black rural communities were impoverished as they were forced off their land resulting in a negative relationship with conservation which sometimes led to over-extractive practices, and vulnerability towards participation in illegal poaching and harvesting. Linked to this was the historic view that agriculture and extractive activities (essentially mining) and manufacturing were more important land uses and dominated the landscapes, forcing conservation land into the "unproductive" areas. This mindset drove where and how national parks were established, resulting in National Parks being established in a way that led to the separation of nature and people and their culture. In the Barberton and Grasslands MLLs the PAN is small and fragmented while the Greater Addo MLL, which includes a large Protected Environment and three small National Parks, lacks connectivity between them. In society there is limited knowledge and awareness of the link between nature and people, and a narrative that pits environment versus people, whereas it should be that a healthy environment is essential for healthy people.

3. **Limited Financial Resources and Poor Capacity for Effective Management:** South Africa's prolonged economic underperformance and increasing safety net allocations for unemployed and impoverished citizens have led to reduced investment in conservation by state actors, including provincial administrations. This results in inadequate management of conservation land and a lack of human capacity resources. Consequently, biodiversity conservation objectives are not being met, and the quality of legally protected conservation areas is deteriorating. The MLL initiative, with its expansive scope and focus on strengthening conservation management institutions and practitioners, will mitigate the risk of deterioration in already protected conservation estates, ensuring they remain effective in conserving biodiversity. This intervention will also reinforce the fulfilment of the GBF mission. Limited financial resources and incentives to establish and implement MLLs are being addressed by the sister GBFF MLL project.

Future narratives

Key drivers of this system are:

- Socio-economic conditions (e.g. mining in Barberton, land degradation in Addo and Grasslands caused by a range of factors including inappropriate land use and fire management) continue unabated to cause biodiversity loss and ecological damage – as socio-economic pressure continues and poverty and inequality rise, society's mindset that separates nature and people, with value placed on short-term extraction, continues.
- Future climate change – the frequency, intensity, and timing of devastating events becomes more extreme (e.g. heat, flooding, fire).

Two key axes of uncertainty can be drawn from these drivers where interventions will have limited ability to greatly affect them. The one relates to the level of climate change. The second relates to deteriorating socio-economic conditions that negatively feed the mindset/narrative in society and amongst key decision makers that pits nature against people, arguing that development must occur at any cost because it contributes to reducing poverty and inequality. The brief future narratives are therefore framed around lower or higher levels of climate change, and lower or high levels of socio-economic conditions as these impact awareness of the interwoven nature of people and nature. It is noted that how these axes of uncertainty play out will be bespoke within each Mega Living Landscape¹ and that these nuances aren't captured at this generic level but will be reflected in the detail of the programme as it rolls out within each MLL.

Narrative 1: Lower levels of climate change (or a lower impact of climate change), and a stable socio-economic outlook where there is an improved understanding of the value of nature for a sustainable development trajectory for South Africa. Slower increase in the frequency, intensity, and timing of devastating climate events and/or evidence that the MLL approach, where the connectivity created mitigates the impact of these events, may allow for the ecological system to remain relatively stable. If socio-economic conditions remain stable this allows some opportunity for local communities to participate in and benefit from conservation efforts (for example rhino rehabilitation leads to better income and education opportunities for local communities, and regenerative agriculture leads to increased production and ecosystem services) so that they seek to drive such efforts, and influence people's thinking about the value of nature leading to a continuing cycle of nature-based production and poverty alleviation linked to caring for nature.

Narrative 2: Higher levels of climate change and a stable socio-economic outlook where there is an improved understanding of the value of nature for a sustainable development trajectory for South Africa. As per narrative 1, if socio-economic conditions remain stable this allows some opportunity for local communities to participate in and benefit from conservation efforts (for example rhino rehabilitation leads to better income and education opportunities for local communities, and regenerative agriculture leads to increased production and ecosystem services). However, if there are higher levels of climate change, such as hotter and drier conditions that increase fire intensity and frequency, livelihoods will be marginal, and nature will not be seen as a refuge for people.

Narrative 3: Higher levels of climatic change and worsening socio-economic conditions that exacerbate poverty and inequality. Worsening socio-economic conditions and resultant reduced nature-based productivity level will increase pressures on ecological resources. If this is coupled with worse climate impacts, such as hotter and drier conditions that increase fire intensity and frequency, livelihoods will be marginal, and nature will not be seen as a refuge for people. Intense anthropogenic pressure will greatly impact the endemic flora and fauna and ecosystem services within the MLL leading to a downward spiral.

Narrative 4: Lower levels of climatic change and worsening socio-economic conditions that exacerbate poverty and inequality. In this scenario, worsening socio-economic conditions will result in increased pressures on ecological resources.

¹ For example, population density is not mentioned as a key uncertainty here as its impact is very different within the 3 MLLs. The Barberton MLL has a higher impact from population growth than the other 2 MLLs with population density projected to be 54.8 people per km² by 2032, while Grasslands is 27.7 and Addo 4.2.

The objective of the proposed project is to Pioneer the establishment of three Mega Living Landscapes (MLLs) to conserve 2M ha of biodiversity rich land, foster sustainable economic opportunities for local communities, build robust conservation management institutions and demonstrate the transformative potential of the MLL concept.

The size and biological connectivity of MLLs will help towards maintaining the biodiversity of the areas in the face of climate change. The climate across all three MLL varies considerably due to the high variability in terms of topography, altitude, slope and aspect.

A3 Project Approach

The project approach entails a pioneering strategy in South Africa, establishing and managing Mega Living Landscapes (MLLs). The recent approval of the White Paper on Conservation and Sustainable Use of South Africa's Biodiversity and the launch of SANParks Vision 2040 marks the beginning of a transformative paradigm shift, positioning nature as the bedrock for sustainable development. This MLL initiative aims to dismantle barriers hindering the expansion of protected areas and promote pro-nature economic development that benefits local communities. It will create three MLLs contributing to a dynamic, reimagined national conservation vision for South Africa, integrating sustainable development and fostering a nature-positive economic future for thriving people and nature.

The South African Government has committed to the global target of conserving and effectively managing at least 30% of its terrestrial, inland water, and marine areas by 2030. This commitment necessitates a transformation in the conservation approach, activity, scale, and the involvement of a broad range of role players and stakeholders. People and communities are central to biodiversity conservation, reshaping rural economic development on a sustainable trajectory. Rather than ring-fenced conservation areas, the proposed approach involves creating large, interconnected areas formally protected under the Protected Areas Act or informally via agreements. These areas will include state, private, and communal lands, each pursuing activities to achieve land management compatible with conservation objectives. These Mega Living Landscapes will evolve from the bottom up through formal and informal arrangements. Critically, they will enable individuals previously excluded from the biodiversity economy to collaborate, building an inclusive, equitable sector that reduces poverty and inequality. They recognise the interconnectedness of biodiversity protection, climate resilience, income-generating activities, and the well-being of all South Africans. People will understand the value of a well-managed environment for health and well-being, encompassing social, agricultural, and economic systems.

This approach tackles the main barriers identified for addressing environmental problems in the landscape through three interconnected components. When implemented, the GEF 8 project will facilitate the development of **Sustainable Institutional Mechanisms and Governance Structures**, which aim to enhance institutional operational capacity, promote robust governance practices, and empower local leadership. This foundational pillar ensures the longevity and sustainability of MLL institutions. In parallel, the project fosters **Sustainable Economic Opportunities and Socio-Economic Empowerment**, focusing on economic growth and socio-economic inclusion, particularly for women and youth, by improving access to finance and markets. These integrated efforts are crucial for achieving inclusive and equitable development within the MLL regions. The project's commitment to **Conservation Management and Capacity Building** strengthens conservation management institutions and enhances conservation knowledge and practices through inclusive community participation. By establishing operational Communities of Practice (CoPs), the project fosters collaboration among Conservation Management Institutions, enhancing conservation knowledge and practices across MLLs.

These collective efforts aim to achieve measurable conservation impacts, empower local leadership, and promote sustainable livelihood practices. The GEF 8-funded MLL project embodies a holistic and strategic vision for sustainable development.

The MLL initiative will impact at three levels within the MLLs, with SANParks and nationally. Within the three MLLs targeted sites, the quality of life of local people and communities will improve. Further, additional land for biodiversity conservation will be secured while progressively, biodiversity loss will reverse and improve ecosystem functioning, which delivers valuable ecological services. For SANParks, MLL implementation lessons from the pilot will inform the establishment of five new MLLs, which aim to double the 4.6 million hectares SANParks currently protects and conserves. Nationally, cumulative learnings and insights gained from these three MLLs will inform the future model for the design and development of MLLs and demonstrate an “all-of-society” approach to undertaking sustainable development.

The Mega Living Landscapes (MLL) approach does not only respond to the various future scenarios of climate impacts and socio-economic conditions but also enhances resilience and delivers improved results even under the most challenging conditions:

1. **Large-Scale Interventions (Mega Landscapes):** The MLL concept emphasises large-scale interventions, facilitating interconnections between formally conserved areas, production landscapes, and communal lands. Interconnected landscapes ensure ecological connectivity and enhance the resilience of ecosystems and biodiversity against the adverse effects of climate change. Additionally, these connections enable more efficient resource management and support large-scale conservation efforts, leading to a more sustainable and robust environmental future.
2. **Sustainable Livelihoods and Production Activities (Living):** Aligning livelihoods and production activities with conservation efforts is a core aspect of the MLL initiative. By promoting sustainable practices, the project helps mitigate the socio-economic impacts of climate change. This alignment fosters developing and realising biodiversity-based economic opportunities, ensuring communities benefit from conservation efforts. Sustainable agriculture, ecotourism, and other biodiversity-based enterprises can provide alternative income sources, reducing vulnerability and promoting economic resilience.
3. **Inclusive Governance and Stakeholder Participation:** The MLL project design deliberately integrates inclusive governance and stakeholder participation, particularly involving local communities, women, youth and other key stakeholders. This inclusive approach ensures that diverse perspectives are considered in decision-making processes, leading to more equitable and effective outcomes. By empowering local communities and fostering ownership of conservation efforts, the project strengthens social cohesion and resilience, making it better equipped to handle the socio-economic challenges posed by climate change.

By addressing these drivers through large-scale interventions, sustainable livelihoods, and inclusive governance, the MLL project is well-positioned to deliver improved results and foster a sustainable, thriving future even under the most challenging scenarios.

A4 Project Baseline

Not addressing the identified barriers will have far-reaching negative implications for biodiversity conservation, achieving GBF Target 3, and the quality of life for communities living in and around conserved areas. Therefore, a

comprehensive and integrated approach is imperative to overcome these challenges and ensure a sustainable and inclusive future.

This GEF 8 Project will build upon and enhance key initiatives to create a more inclusive and effective conservation model in South Africa. By aligning with the DFFE's White Paper on Conservation and Sustainable Use of South Africa's Biodiversity 2022, the SANParks 2040 Vision implementation process, the National Development Plan (NDP), the Medium-Term Development Plan (MTDP) 2024 to 2029, and the National Biodiversity Economy Strategy, the project aims to drive substantial progress in biodiversity conservation.

By strategically integrating the initiatives below, the project will advance Vision 2040's implementation of MLLs. This comprehensive approach will ensure the creation of interconnected landscapes, foster equitable benefit sharing, and contribute to the sustainable development of South Africa's biodiversity economy. It will also reinforce the country's commitment to achieving global targets for biodiversity conservation and sustainable use, aligning with national and international development goals.

Key Initiatives and Programmes being advanced by the GEF 8 funded MLL project:

- **White Paper on Conservation and Sustainable Use of South Africa's Biodiversity 2022:** This policy aims to create large, contiguous, connected terrestrial conservation landscapes that enhance naturalness and wildness. It emphasises four pillars: conservation, sustainable use, equitable benefit sharing, and transformation. The White Paper advances the socio-economic goals and priorities of the NDP and MTDP for 2024 to 2029 through the conservation, sustainable use, and benefit sharing of South Africa's biodiversity.
- **SANParks' Vision 2040 Implementation:** Vision 2040 seeks to implement mega-living landscapes across South Africa and calls for SANParks to facilitate harmonious relationships between societal needs, human well-being, and environmental management requirements. It emphasises the interconnectedness between biodiversity protection, climate resilience, and human well-being. The project will serve as a key implementation mechanism for this 2040 vision.
- **Department of Forestry, Fisheries and Environment Initiatives:** The National Biodiversity Economy Strategy, the National Integrated Strategy to Combat Wildlife Trafficking, and the DFFE/UNDP's BioFin Initiative. SANParks Programmes, such as the Rhino Range Expansion Programme, Rhino Conservation Strategy, SANParks Land Inclusion Plan, Park Management Plans, and previous and currently funded GEF projects, will also be integrated into this effort.
- **Civil Society Initiatives:** To advance the project's objectives, the initiative will harness partnerships and collaborations with civil society organisations across South Africa. Civil society organisations are already spearheading efforts to achieve South Africa's targets for the Global Biodiversity Framework's Target 3. They are also a source of innovation, having piloted and de-risked conservation models and concepts essential for implementation. The project's design also incorporates knowledge sharing, leveraging the extensive expertise these organisations have accumulated to enhance project outcomes.
- **Private Sector and Business Initiatives:** Engagements with the private sector will be fostered to align business practices with conservation objectives and to unlock investments for sustainable development. The private sector also owns significant tracts of land that could advance the MLL project's objectives. Some private sector players have adopted sustainable use and regenerative practices in their production landscapes. The MLL partnership approach should incentivise scaling these practices within and among the MLL sites.

The MLL GEF 8 project will create synergies, complement and leverage actions with baseline initiatives described in the table below and presented by project component and project MLL:

Table 9: Baseline activities at each of the three MLLs per MLL

	Greater Addo MLL	Eastern Grasslands MLL	Barberton/Makhonjwa MLL
Project Component 1: Creating MLL Sustainable Institutional Mechanisms & Governance Structures			
Existing initiatives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Existing SANParks Teams: Park Managers currently managing the three national parks. 2. SANParks Regional Office: Drawing on experiences such as the Greater Kruger Strategic Development Plan for MLL Framework Plans. 3. Eastern Cape Parks & Tourism Agency (ECPTA): Managing provincial parks and conservation programs within the MLL. 4. Partnership between AgriEC, WRSA, and Living Lands: Development of the Eastern Cape Conservancies Management Association for improved collaboration and integrated management. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. SANParks & WWF Partnership: Since 2021, managing the process towards the declaration of the Grasslands National Park. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. CFW's Co-Management Agreement with MTPA: Managing Barberton Nature Reserve with donor funding for infrastructure upgrades, ecological management, fire management, security, and annual operational plans.
Project Component 2: Fostering and enhancing sustainable economic opportunities & socio-economic empowerment			
Existing Initiatives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Extensive Ecotourism Products: Ecotourism offerings adjacent to national parks and within the MLL are supported by local tourism associations. 2. SANParks Tourism Development: Development of tourism products in existing parks. 3. Restoration Initiatives: Initiatives by DFFE's Extended Public Works Programme and the Youth Employment Service (YES) for rehabilitation and job creation within National Parks. 4. TASC Cookstove Project: Implementing the TASC CookStove Project in Camdeboo National Park to reduce reliance on non-renewable biomass for cooking. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sustainable Rangeland Management Initiatives: Implemented by ERS, CSA, and WWF-SA with support from Meat Naturally, enabling market access and improved land-use management practices. 2. Meat Naturally's Social Enterprise Model: Market access for community livestock owners, conservation agreements, mobile auctions, and mobile abattoir services. 3. CSA & SANBI's PES & Youth/Restoration Initiatives: Programs supporting ecological restoration and youth employment. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. CFW's Partnerships with Swazi Communities: Collaborations on farming and conservation projects with 7 surrounding Swazi traditional communities. 2. CFW's Ecological Management and Restoration Projects: Funded by the Investec Youth Employment Services (YES) Programme, employing over 800 interns over five years. 3. Partnership with Meat Naturally: Development of a Herding for Health model and a rangeland stewardship framework for regenerative grazing and fire management.

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. SA College of Tourism: Skills development and SMME incubation through tourism bursaries, internships, and job placements in the hospitality industry. 6. Restoration-Related SME Incubation: Incubation of restoration-related SMEs through various restoration initiatives. 7. Healing Hooves: Training and supporting livestock farmers in sustainable grazing practices, with governance and administrative training for community members. 8. Wilderness Foundation Africa's ECOSTudy Project: Leveraging current experience to improve classroom teaching of environmental and sustainable development messages. 9. Stewardship Initiatives: Efforts by the Mountain Zebra – Camdeboo Protected Environment Landowners Association and WFA to promote Protected Environments. 10. Landowner Engagements by Eden to Addo: Pursuing stewardship arrangements with landowners connecting Addo Elephant National Park and Baviaanskloof. 11. Wildlife Ranching South Africa (WRSA) Initiatives: Supporting game ranches in improved wildlife management with geographic information systems. Development of the wildlife economy, training in wildlife value chains, and SMME incubation. 12. Extensive Engagement and Support from Wool and Mohair Fibre Brokers: Supporting sustainable management initiatives to secure fibre for international markets. 13. Mohair Empowerment Trust Support: Assisting land reform landowners in implementing appropriate mohair production. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Umzimvubu Catchment Partnership: Conserving the Umzimvubu River system through sustainable restoration, economic development, and job creation. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Skills Training by Meat Naturally: Providing skills training for community members and governance and administrative training for livestock owners. 5. CFW's Relationship with Barberton Chamber of Business: Collaborating on business-related initiatives.
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Project Component 3: Improving Inclusive Conservation in the MLLs			
Existing initiatives	1. Co-Management Contractual Agreements: Landowner agreements with SANParks	1. WWF-SA's Work: Protecting Strategic Water Source Areas	1. MOU between SANParks & CFW: Rescuing, rehabilitating, rewilding, and releasing black rhinos within Barberton Nature Reserve, aiming for a viable breeding population. 2. Work by Private Landowners: Creating conservancies and protected areas within the MLL.

A5 Project stakeholders

This GEF CEO Endorsement Request document is informed by extensive stakeholder engagement during the Project Preparation Grant (PPG) phase. The process began with a national technical design workshop on 19 March 2024 in Pretoria, South Africa, which set the stage for further engagement across the three MLLs and nationally. Through co-design, key stakeholders collaborated to develop objectives, outcomes, strategies, and approaches.

Summary of Stakeholder Engagement (April - October 2024):

- **~100 consultation sessions were conducted**
- **~75 entities were engaged**, including national, provincial, and local governments, traditional authorities, local communities, NGOs, conservancies, Protected Environments, and the private sector
- **~325 individuals were engaged**, 198 of whom were women
- Design workshops in each MLL to develop programs focusing on livelihoods, socio-economic, and protected area expansion outcomes
- Engagements with women and youth to inform the Gender Analysis and Action Plan

The engagement concluded with a Final Design Workshop on 2 October 2024 in Johannesburg, attended by 40 representatives from various sectors. The workshop presented the Mega Living Landscapes Initiative and garnered positive support and valuable input for the project plan.

Key Stakeholders and Roles:

- **Executing Agency:** SANParks, responsible for implementing the GEF 8 funded projects within time and budget, with the Project Management Unit (PMU) housed by SANParks.
- **Sub-executing Agencies:** Appointed through a fair process by SANParks, responsible for day-to-day project execution in each landscape and delivering Framework Plans and Investment Strategies.
- **Project Steering Committee (PSC):** This committee provides strategic direction and guides the work plan to align with project objectives.
- **Local Communities:** Participate in co-creating various activity plans and are primary beneficiaries actively engaged throughout the project implementation.
- **Co-finance Partners:** Provide co-finance to the project.
- **Collaborating Partners:** Collaborate on various matters and on relevant local economic development initiatives.
- **Landscape Collaborative Platform Members:** Include representatives from government, traditional leadership, local communities, NGOs, agricultural commodity bodies, and marginalised groups.
- **Technical and Capability Support:** Organisations like SANBI provide technical data and expertise.

Stakeholder Engagement and Social Inclusion: The Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP) and the Social Inclusion Planning Framework (SIPF) ensure that marginalised groups are included in MLL-level planning, collaboration, and implementation. The SEP recommends detailed engagement for each MLL in the first year, aligned with the SIPF and Gender Action Plan. Social Inclusion Plans will be prepared before engaging with communities to ensure project interventions reflect local aspirations and include marginalised groups.

Means of Engagement of Stakeholders: Stakeholder engagement took various forms and modalities, including project launch and inception meetings, PSC meetings, face-to-face meetings, landscape collaboration platform

meetings, technical workshops, informal dialogues, information-sharing sessions, focus group discussions, conferences, project symposia meetings, electronic communications, and site visits.

The Table below summarizes the key project stakeholders proposed as key partners during the project's implementation phase and their roles and responsibilities during that phase.

Table 10: Stakeholder Responsibilities

Stakeholder	Role and responsibility in achieving global environmental benefits in this project
Across all Mega Living Landscapes	
Department of Forestry Fisheries & Environment (DFFE)	<p>The Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE) serves as South Africa's GEF Focal Point, overseeing projects, engaging technically, co-financing, and participating as a member of the Project Steering Committee of this GE 8 project.</p> <p>This national department is dedicated to safeguarding South Africa's natural environment, promoting sustainable resource management, and addressing environmental challenges to ensure a healthy and resilient future. It receives grant funding from the National Treasury, allocated by Parliament, to fund SANParks.</p> <p>The DFFE also convenes the national People and Parks Forum, which addresses issues at the intersection of conservation and communities. The Forum focuses on realizing tangible benefits for communities previously displaced to establish protected areas. It facilitates active participation of rural communities by supporting land claim resolutions in protected areas, strengthening governance, participation, access, and benefit-sharing, and developing and implementing capacity-building and awareness-raising strategies.</p>
SANParks	<p>SANParks is the Project Executing Agent, responsible for project oversight, overall implementation through the Project Management Unit (PMU), will provide technical support, capacity building, co-financing, and chairing of the Project Steering Committee.</p> <p>As South Africa's premier conservation authority, SANParks operates as a Schedule 3A public entity under the Public Finance Management Act 1 of 1999 and is governed by a Board. Its mandate is derived from the National Environmental Management: Protected Areas Act 57 of 2003 and it is to promote ecological, environmental, and tourism interests. SANParks significantly contributes to employment by directly employing 4,720 full-time staff and supporting local communities with 4,741 full-time equivalents through public works initiatives and 2,100 jobs via SANParks concessionaires. The organization also trades in game meat sales and promotes nature-based enterprises and their value chains. SANParks has a strong track record of good governance, consistently receiving unqualified audits.</p>

Stakeholder	Role and responsibility in achieving global environmental benefits in this project
	<p>Recently, SANParks introduced Vision 2040, a progressive strategy aimed at redefining conservation in South Africa by promoting inclusivity, sustainable development, and community engagement. Key components of Vision 2040 include the implementation of the Mega Living Landscapes (MLLs) concept South African regions. The organisation is also focused on achieving long-term financial sustainability, having generated approximately 80% of its annual required income of R3 billion over the past decade, primarily from ecotourism.</p>
South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI)	<p>SANBI will provide project technical support, project capability support and will be collaborating partner.</p> <p>SANBI also operates as a Schedule 3A public entity under the Public Finance Management Act 1 of 1999 and derives its a broad mandate from National Environmental: Biodiversity Act 10 of 2004 and this is to explore, reveal, celebrate and champion biodiversity for the benefit and enjoyment of all South Africans, which includes managing the National Botanical and Zoological Gardens as ‘windows’ to South Africa’s biodiversity for enjoyment and education.</p>
National Treasury	<p>The National Treasury will be a Project Steering Committee member and a collaborating partner.</p> <p>The National Treasury is responsible for managing South Africa’s national government finances. Its mandate is to support efficient and sustainable public financial management as a fundamental to the promotion of economic development, good governance, social progress and a rising standard of living for all South Africans. The Constitution of the Republic, Chapter 13, mandates the National Treasury to ensure transparency, accountability and sound financial controls in the management of public finances.</p> <p>SANParks receive its government grant from National Treasury and must report to them in terms of the Public Finance Management Act.</p>
Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD)	<p>DALRRD is proposed to be a member of the Project Steering Committee and a collaborating partner.</p> <p>The mission of the DALRRD is to accelerate land reform, catalyse rural development and improve agricultural production to stimulate economic development and food security.</p>
Other government departments	<p>Other government department will be invited ad collaborating partners and be involved in landscape collaborative platforms as appropriate.</p>
Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF) – South Africa	<p>WWF SA supports WWF US, the GEF Implementing Agency, locally and will be invited to the Project Steering Committee meetings. WWF SA will also be a co-financing partner and collaborating partner.</p> <p>WWF South Africa, is registered as a South African NGO and is part of the global WWF network. Its work is focused on driving large-scale and integrated area-based Conservation in key geographical areas, as well as driving systemic change to key drivers and enablers of environmental change. WWF SA plays a key role in building relationships between protected areas and communities by supporting partnerships between communities, other NGOs and government institutions. WWF SA is a key partner with SANParks in developing the Grasslands National Park within the Grasslands MLLs.</p>
National House of Traditional and Khoi-San Leaders	<p>Representatives of this stakeholder are proposed to be a member of the Project Steering Committee and collaborating partners.</p>

Stakeholder	Role and responsibility in achieving global environmental benefits in this project
	<p>The mandate of the National House of Traditional and Khoi – San Leaders is to promote the role of traditional leadership within the constitutional dispensation; promote nation-building, and peace, stability and cohesiveness of communities; develop, preserve and promote culture and traditions of communities; participate in intergovernmental structures; and advise the national government and make recommendations on any matter that the government may require.</p>
The Nature Conservancy	<p>TNC will be a collaboration partner and a member of the MLL collaborative platforms.</p> <p>The Nature Conservancy is a US based conservation NGO, with a division in South Africa, tackling the dual threats of accelerated climate change and unprecedented biodiversity loss.</p>
Conservation South Africa (CSA)	<p>CSA will be a collaborating partner and a member of MLL collaboration platforms.</p> <p>Conservation South Africa is an independent affiliate of Conservation International, legally registered as a Section 18A public benefit organisation in South Africa. As an affiliate, Conservation South Africa subscribes to the aspirational vision and mission, strategic framework, and operational requirements of Conservation International, but is enabled to adapt language and specific policies and goals to the unique context of South Africa. They work at the conservation/community interface and can support the community components of the project.</p> <p>They are a key member of the Umzimvubu Catchment Partnership within the Eastern Grasslands MLL, and are implementing a sustainable grazing initiative. They also implement the Kering Project, in the Grasslands, and through it they seek to strengthen sustainable wool products.</p>
SA College of Tourism (SACT)	<p>SACT is proposed a collaborating partner to provide tourism training support and will be a member of the MLL collaboration platforms. They will be a co-financing partner.</p> <p>SACT is a non-profit organisation that operates under the auspices of Peace Parks Foundation. The College provides professional training to unemployed men and women from rural backgrounds and equip them to take up skilled positions in the nature-based tourism industry.</p>
Specific to the Greater Addo MLL	
SANParks	<p>Refer to the role of SANParks above. In this landscape there are Park Management staff for 3 National Parks and a regional office will leadership and active roles in implementation activities.</p>
Wilderness Foundation Africa (WFA)	<p>WFA is a proposed collaborating partner and will be a member of the MLL collaboration platforms.</p> <p>WFA is an African-based conservation NGO that protects and sustains landscapes through its agile and innovative approach to conservation. They play a pivotal role in conservation, environmental education, and community development in Southern Africa. Their holistic approach aims to safeguard wilderness areas, protect wildlife, empower communities, and inspire future generations to become stewards of the natural world. They have a long history of actions in this landscape and have a track record of collaboration with the SANParks in this landscape and promoting biodiversity stewardship initiatives.</p>

Stakeholder	Role and responsibility in achieving global environmental benefits in this project
Eastern Cape Parks and Tourism Agency (ECPTA)	<p>ECPTA are proposed to a member of Project Steering Committee and will be a collaborating partner and member of MLLs collaboration platforms.</p> <p>Eastern Cape Provincial conservation authority, with the responsibility of provincial protected area expansion and tourism development.</p>
Eastern Cape Department of Economic Development, Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEDEAT)	<p>DEDEAT a proposed to be a collaborating partner.</p> <p>This Eastern Cape Provincial Department is responsible for discharging the environmental mandate of the province and as prescribed in the South African Constitution. The Department is responsible for policy development and environmental management and development related approvals.</p>
District & Local Municipalities that overlay with the MLL	<p>Representative of the local government will be collaborating partners.</p> <p>The mandate of local municipalities in South Africa encompasses a wide range of responsibilities aimed at promoting the well-being and sustainable development of communities within their jurisdictions. District municipalities are created to ensure the provision of services that cannot be efficiently provided by local municipalities alone.</p>
Agri EC (Eastern Cape)	<p>Agri EC is proposed to be a collaborating partner.</p> <p>Agri EC is an organisation that represents the agricultural sector in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa and has 3000 members and is very active in this landscape. They play a crucial role in representing and supporting the agricultural sector in the Eastern Cape, contributing to its sustainability, competitiveness, and socio-economic development.</p>
Wildlife Ranching South Africa (WRSA)	<p>WRSA is proposed to be a collaborating partner and a member of the MLL collaboration platforms.</p> <p>Wildlife Ranching South Africa (WRSA) is an organisation dedicated to promoting and representing the interests of wildlife ranchers in South Africa and is very active in this landscape. They play a crucial role in supporting the sustainable management of wildlife on private lands, contributing to conservation efforts, rural development, and the responsible use of natural resources in South Africa. They work through the Eastern Cape Game Management Association (ECGMA).</p>
Mountain Zebra Camdeboo Protected Environment (MZCPE)	<p>MZCPE is proposed to be a collaborating partner and will be member of the MLL collaboration platforms.</p> <p>Over 200 landowners have declared their properties as part of the Mountain Zebra – Camdeboo Protected Environment and are key stakeholders regarding the component to improve management effectiveness of existing protected areas. The MZCPE Exco has been established through the MZCPE Landowners Association and is the assigned Management Authority of the MZC Protected Environment.</p>
Eastern Cape Conservancies Management Association (ECCMA)	<p>ECCMA is proposed to be a collaborating partner and will be member of the MLL collaboration platforms.</p> <p>The Eastern Cape Conservancies Management Association (ECCMA) is an organisation dedicated to the management and promotion of conservancies in the Eastern Cape province of South Africa. Conservancies are community-based initiatives aimed at conserving biodiversity, protecting natural resources, and promoting sustainable land use practices.</p>

Stakeholder	Role and responsibility in achieving global environmental benefits in this project
Eden to Addo	<p>Eden to Addo is proposed to be a collaborating partner and will be a member of the MLL collaboration platforms.</p> <p>Eden to Addo is a non-profit organisation based in the Eastern Cape and focuses on conservation and biodiversity initiatives across the landscape stretching from the Garden Route in the Western Cape to the Addo Elephant National Park in the Eastern Cape.</p>
Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT)	<p>EWT is proposed to be a collaborating partner and will be a member of the MLL collaboration platforms.</p> <p>The Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT) is a registered Non-profit, Non-governmental, and Public Benefit Organisation. Since its establishment in 1973, the EWT has become a leading, well-known, and trusted conservation role-player in conservation of biodiversity. They are committed to conserving threatened species and ecosystems in southern Africa to the benefit of all.</p>
Provincial House of Traditional and Khoi-San Leaders	They are proposed to be a collaborating partner and will be a member of collaborating platform.
Indigenous Knowledge Groups	<p>Indigenous Knowledge Groups is a broad term used in SA to refer to those local community members (individuals and groups) who hold traditional African knowledge about their land, flora and fauna. Some may be formally registered practitioners of traditional medicine (e.g., sangomas) while others are those who hold traditional knowledge about rangeland management and agriculture, indigenous languages and folklore. How people with this knowledge are organised differs across the 3 MLLs, and who exactly will represent this grouping will emerge as part of the bottom up multistakeholder engagement process during the development of the MLL vision and plan.</p> <p>Representatives of the Indigenous Knowledge Groups will be collaborating partners and will be members of the MLL collaborating platform. Indigenous Knowledge Groups will be identified as part of the process to develop an MLL wide Stakeholder Engagement Plan as recommended in the Stakeholder Engagement Plan and Social Inclusion Planning framework.</p>
Provincial People and Parks Forum	<p>Provincial People and Parks Forums are Forums established between SANParks and local communities living adjacent to National Parks or who have land claims on National Parks. These Forums facilitate active participation of rural communities through supporting the resolution of land claims in National Parks; strengthening governance, participation, access to and benefit sharing from the Parks; and developing and implementing a capacity building and awareness raising strategy.</p> <p>They will be collaborating partners and will be members of the MLL collaborating platforms.</p>
<p>Residents (individually & in organisations) living in the following towns:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Graaf-Reinet • Craddock, • Somerset East • Cookhouse • Kirkwood • Thembalesize • uMasizakhe • Jansenville • Klipplaat 	<p>Representatives of residents living in towns with the MLL will identified as collaborating partners and members of the MLL collaborating platform.</p> <p>The plan is to identify these representatives as part of the process to develop an MLL wide Stakeholder Engagement Plan as recommended in the Stakeholder Engagement Plan and Social Inclusion Planning framework.</p>

Stakeholder	Role and responsibility in achieving global environmental benefits in this project
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> KwaZamukuncinga Waongalethu 	
Specific to the Eastern Grasslands MLL	
SANParks	Refer to the above described role of SANParks. In the Eastern Grasslands MLL SANParks in collaboration with WWF SA are establishing the Grasslands National Park and the follows an approach that involves partnerships with owners of productive landscapes including communal land in the region.
Environment & Rural Solutions (ERS)	<p>ERS will be a collaborating partner and will member of the MLL collaboration platforms.</p> <p>ERS is a locally based NGO that intervenes through projects by addressing issues at the conservation/local community interface. They work on natural resource management for resilient ecosystems and human wellbeing co-creating solutions with traditional and local leadership and rural residents</p>
ECPTA	<p>ECPTA is a proposed collaborating partner and member of Project Steering Committee and will be member of the MLL collaborating platforms.</p> <p>Refer to descriptor under the Greater Addo MLL in respect to the ECPTA mandate and role</p>
DEDEAT	The DEDEAT is proposed to be a collaborating partner. Their mandate and role is described under the Greater Addo MLL
District & Local Municipalities that overlay with the MLL	<p>Representative of the local government will be collaborating partners.</p> <p>The mandate of local municipalities in South Africa encompasses a wide range of responsibilities aimed at promoting the well-being and sustainable development of communities within their jurisdictions. District municipalities are created to ensure the provision of services that cannot be efficiently provided by local municipalities alone</p>
Meat Naturally	<p>Meat Naturally is a collaborating partner and will be a member of the MLL collaboration platforms.</p> <p>Meat Naturally partners with government and NGOs to offer rural farmers formal training on regenerative grazing techniques, rangeland restoration practices, cattle management, stock theft patrol, and predator control. They also operate in the Barberton MLL. MNA brings together livestock farmers, NGOs, meat buyers, and stakeholders in the meat value chain. MNA provides education, farming resources, grazing expertise, and market opportunities towards the restoration of Africa's rangelands. They support the implementation of the sustainable agriculture interventions across Grasslands and Barberton MLLs.</p>
Provincial House of Traditional and Khoi-San Leaders	They are proposed to be a collaborating partners and will be a member of collaborating platform..
Indigenous Knowledge Groups	<p>Representatives of the Indigenous Knowledge Groups will be collaborating partners and will be members of the MLL collaborating platform.</p> <p>Indigenous Knowledge Groups will be identified as part of the process to develop an MLL wide Stakeholder Engagement Plan as recommended in the Stakeholder Engagement Plan and Social Inclusion Planning framework.</p>
Provincial People and Parks Forum	They will be collaborating partners and will be members of the MLL collaborating platforms.

Stakeholder	Role and responsibility in achieving global environmental benefits in this project
<p>Local communities in Upper Tsitsana Traditional Authority and Maloti Thaba Tsa Metse Traditional Authority, including Villages around Ongeluksnek NR; Pitseng Farmers Association</p>	<p>These communities are already identified and are proposed as project collaborating partners and will be members of collaboration platforms.</p> <p>Members of these communities are engaged in conservation and sustainable development in the area. They have also been actively and extensively engaged either through the process of establishing the Grasslands National Park or the work of the Umzimvubu Catchment Partnership.</p> <p>In the case of the Maloti Thaba Tsa Metse Traditional Authority, extensive engagement has taken place over more than ten years and has culminated in the local communities agreeing to declare parts of their land as a Protected Environment under NEM: PAA. These engagement processes have shaped the proposed project activities put forward for this landscape.</p>
Specific to the Barberton-Makhonjwa MLL	
<p>Care for Wild</p>	<p>Care for Wild are proposed to be a project collaborating partner and will be a member of the collaboration platforms.</p> <p>Care for Wild is a registered wildlife rehabilitation centre and has entered into Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with SANParks formalising a partnership on joint efforts to rehabilitate and care for injured and orphaned rhinos.</p> <p>Care for Wild provides support to the Mpumalanga Tourism and Parks Agency (MTPA) in respect to the management of Barberton Nature Reserve and this is in terms of a Memorandum of Agreement between the two parties. The designated management authority of the Barberton Nature Reserve and Songimvelo Game Reserve is the MTPA.</p> <p>The organisation works extensively with the Lomshiyo Community Trust. Activities undertaken by Care for Wild at the Barberton Nature Reserve creates over 455 direct jobs, and in total they support over 600 jobs in the broader economy.</p> <p>They currently manage 9 community projects, one of which is the Junior Rangers Programme with 32 participants, and they host over 580 interns to assist as field rangers, firefighters, security and other general services.</p> <p>Another 150 community members are employed through the Care for Wild-Lomshiyo Community Trust agricultural partnership. Care for Wild has actively engaged with other traditional authorities in the MLL towards building a programme of work for nature positive socio-economic development.</p>
<p>SANParks</p>	<p>Refer to the above described role of SANParks. In this MLL, the Kruger National Park and the rhino rehabilitation programme are deemed core constituent initiatives within the GEF 8 funded MLL project.</p>
<p>Mpumalanga Tourism and Parks Agency (MTPA)</p>	<p>MTPA is proposed to be a member of Project Steering Committee and will be collaborating partner and member of the MLL collaboration platforms. The MTPA will be a co-financing partner.</p> <p>The MTPA plays a crucial role in promoting tourism and conserving biodiversity in the Mpumalanga province. It operates as a Schedule 3C Public Entity. They are a key partner in the institutionalisation of this</p>

Stakeholder	Role and responsibility in achieving global environmental benefits in this project
	MLL objectives in provincial parks and through co-management agreements with communities, as well as coordination with tourism organisations.
Local Municipalities located in this MLL (6 of these)	<p>Representative of the local government will be collaborating partners.</p> <p>The mandate of local municipalities in South Africa encompasses a wide range of responsibilities aimed at promoting the well-being and sustainable development of communities within their jurisdictions. District municipalities are created to ensure the provision of services that cannot be efficiently provided by local municipalities alone</p>
Provincial House of Traditional and Khoi-San Leaders	They are proposed to be a collaborating partners and will be a member of collaborating platform..
Indigenous Knowledge Groups	<p>Representatives of the Indigenous Knowledge Groups will be collaborating partners and will be members of the MLL collaborating platform.</p> <p>Indigenous Knowledge Groups will be identified as part of the process to develop an MLL wide Stakeholder Engagement Plan as recommended in the Stakeholder Engagement Plan and Social Inclusion Planning framework.</p>
Provincial People and Parks Forum	They will be collaborating partners and will be members of the MLL collaborating platforms
<p>Local residents/ traditional communities in Lomshiyo Traditional Area including Mandela, Noordkaap, Sheba, Gaza, Louieville, Lows Creek, Shalock, Shiyalongubo, Verulam, Fairview Mine, Matsulu.</p> <p>Other traditional communities with land rights in in the MLL – around Mjejane, Mtethomusha, Barberton, Songimvelo.</p> <p>Local residents/communities in the Ebutsini Traditional Authority (including Aarnhemburg, Mooiplaas, Mooiplaats, Stinini), and the Nkhaba Traditional Authority (including Nhlababa, Ngonini, Kroomdraai, Elukhetseni)</p>	<p>These communities are already identified and are proposed as project collaborating partners and will be members of collaboration platforms. They are engaged in conservation and sustainable development in the area.</p> <p>Traditional Authorities have been engaged through the process of developing a landscape vision with the Barberton-Makhonjwa World Heritage Site and Barberton Nature Reserve at the core. Care for Wild, in its role as designated management authority for Barberton Nature Reserve, has facilitated this process with a view to promoting nature-positive rural socioeconomic development within the landscape.</p> <p>Further target communities are to be identified and engaged as part of the process to develop an MLL wide Stakeholder Engagement Plan as recommended in the Stakeholder Engagement Plan and Social Inclusion Planning Framework.</p>
Meat Naturally	<p>Meat Naturally is a collaborating partner and will be a member of the MLL collaboration platforms.</p> <p>Meat Naturally partners with government and NGOs to offer rural farmers formal training on regenerative grazing techniques, rangeland restoration practices, cattle management, stock theft patrol, and predator control. They also operate in the Barberton MLL. MNA brings together livestock farmers, NGOs, meat buyers, and stakeholders in the meat value chain. MNA provides education, farming resources, grazing expertise, and market opportunities towards the restoration of Africa's rangelands. They support the implementation of the sustainable agriculture interventions across Grasslands and Barberton MLLs.</p>

B. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

B1 Theory of Change

South Africa's pursuit of sustainable development and reversal of biodiversity loss is profoundly complex due to the intersection of environmental and socio-economic challenges. Biodiversity loss, climate change impacts, and pollution intersect with deep-seated poverty, unemployment, and inequality, forming a multifaceted web of issues. The legacy of race-based land dispossession and the prevailing linear economic model, promoting unsustainable production and consumption practices, further compound these challenges. Addressing these intricate problems necessitates an approach where social, environmental, and economic interventions are seamlessly integrated and co-created by key stakeholders, including productive economic sectors and local communities.

This GEF 8 funded project, alongside a sister project funded by the GBFF, “Reimagining National Parks for People and Nature—Leveraging Durable Financing Mechanisms for Mega Living Landscapes (MLL) to achieve Target 3 in South Africa” (GEF ID 11588), forms an integrated MLL initiative. The project will implement the core pillars of South African National Parks’ Vision 2040: creating Mega-Living Landscapes (MLLs) in biodiversity-rich areas, advancing economic development through conservation, and fostering community inclusion and social justice.

The MLLs to be established with GEF 8 and GBFF funding include the Greater Addo MLL, the Barbeton - Mathenjwa MLL, and the Grasslands MLL. GBFF interventions at these sites will encompass financial frameworks and mechanisms, revenue generation, and capacity and knowledge building. Key mechanisms of change include Inclusive Governance and Community Participation, Preferential Market Access and Value Chain Integration, Public-Private Partnerships, and Monitoring and Adaptive Management. These interventions will ensure the financial durability of the MLLs beyond the project investment timeline.

Against this backdrop, our Theory of Change for this GEF 8 funded project envisions a future where people and nature coexist harmoniously through the establishment of three groundbreaking Mega Living Landscapes (MLLs). Through innovative contractual and collaborative partnerships, these landscapes will conserve approximately 2 million hectares of biodiversity-rich land. Concurrently, the project will foster sustainable economic opportunities for local entrepreneurs, with a primary focus on women and youth. It aims to elevate socio-economic empowerment through enterprise and skills development, build robust conservation management institutions, and bolster partner organisations’ conservation capacity and skills. By 2030, the transformative potential of the MLL concept will be demonstrably realised.

The MLL initiative acknowledges that South Africa's intertwined environmental and social challenges exacerbate biodiversity loss. The MLL approach promotes inclusive participation in conservation activities and benefits sharing by local communities, including women and youth, fostering community ownership and pride in safeguarding biodiversity for current and future generations. Additionally, the legacy of past racial segregation policies, including land dispossession, has limited community participation and benefit sharing in mainstream conservation activities. The MLL initiative seeks to build partnerships that support landowners, including those in communal lands, in engaging in conservation activities and adopting sustainable practices.

Traditional conservation strategies focusing on isolated conservation areas, disconnected from productive landscapes, communal lands, and local communities' economic and socio-cultural interests, are no longer viable in South Africa. Such outdated strategies disincentivise private and communal landowners from contributing to biodiversity conservation and adopting sustainable land use practices. By establishing the MLLs, we aim to integrate conservation and sustainable land use practices to create cohesive and interconnected landscapes. This initiative will mitigate the risk of deterioration in already protected conservation estates, ensuring they remain effective in conserving biodiversity. It will contribute to fulfilling global conservation objectives, notably Target 3 of the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF).

The core project components for the GEF 8 funded project represent strategic interventions to overcome barriers to successful biodiversity conservation integrated with an inclusive socio-cultural and economic dispensation. These components, encompassing outputs and outcomes, contribute to sustainable development goals in the selected MLL sites and demonstrate the MLL concept in practice:

1. **Institutional Mechanisms and Governance Structures:** Enhance institutional operational capacity, promote strong governance practices, empower local leadership, and ensure the sustainability of MLL institutions.
2. **Sustainable Economic Opportunities and Socioeconomic Empowerment:** Promote economic growth and socio-economic inclusion, empower women and youth, and improve access to finance and markets.
3. **Conservation Management Institutions and Communities of Practice:** Build capable conservation management institutions, improve conservation capacity and skills, enhance conservation knowledge and practices, and promote inclusive community participation.

By integrating these strategic components, the MLL initiative addresses South Africa's intertwined environmental and social challenges, ensuring biodiversity thrives in conserved and productive landscapes. This approach benefits nature and enhances local communities' socio-economic well-being, driving the country towards a sustainable and equitable future.

The MLL Initiative has been designed to prevent elite capture of resources and capacities. Some of the mechanisms included in the project to avoid elite capture include: 1. Clear stakeholder mapping. The SEP has included a map of all stakeholders that are going to be participating and benefitting from project activities. 2. Participatory planning and decision making and transparent governance structures. The project includes bottom-up participatory mechanisms, and inclusive governance structures to ensure all voices are heard in planning an implementation and there is a balance representation of local communities' interests in decision making in the 3 MLLs. 3. Capacity building and empowerment. The project has a strong focus on capacity building on inclusive approaches, including capacity building to vulnerable and marginalized local communities to participate meaningfully in the project decision making processes. 4. Independent Grievance Mechanism. The ESMF establishes an independent trusted, accessible grievance redress mechanism that local communities will be able to use.

Figure 1 illustrates this Theory of Change and graphically and explicitly presents the assumptions underpinning the changes expected within the highlighted context for establishing the MLLs. Our Theory of Change highlights the centrality of multistakeholder partnerships in achieving the desired results and impact. It envisions the development of institutional governance and relevant policy frameworks across the MLLs alongside active enterprise development programs, training, and capacity-building initiatives. Participating stakeholders and local communities, particularly youth and women, will be represented and included in MLL decision-making and consultative initiatives. They will benefit directly from capacity-building programs for MLL governance members and conservation capacity and skills initiatives. Additionally, they will gain access to employment opportunities, finance, and trade agreements facilitated by the MLL institutions.

Partnerships and collaborative arrangements among Conservation Management Institutions across each MLL will be established, with operational Conservation Management Communities of Practice (CoP) enhancing conservation knowledge and practices within and across MLLs. Ultimately, MLL institutional arrangements will exhibit enhanced operational capacity and adopt strong governance practices, ensuring sustainability. Conservation Management Institutions across the three MLLs will be strengthened, resulting in measurable conservation impact. Local leadership, women, and youth will be more empowered, and sustainable livelihood

practices will be widely adopted across communities in the three MLLs, leading to increased economic growth and socio-economic inclusion of local communities in the regions where the three MLLs are located.

Critical assumptions foundational to this Theory of Change must hold for the successful implementation and impact of the Mega Living Landscapes project. These include:

1. **Stakeholder Engagement, Participation, and Collaboration:** All relevant stakeholders, including civil society, the private sector, local communities, landowners, and governmental entities, are assumed to engage actively and sustainably. Collaboration is essential for co-creating solutions, integrating conservation with sustainable development, and ensuring the successful implementation of the MLL approach. The effectiveness of the MLL project depends on the participation, alignment, and cooperation of diverse stakeholders to comprehensively address intertwined environmental and social challenges.
2. **Community Ownership and Participation:** Local communities are assumed to participate actively in and own MLL biodiversity conservation initiatives, thereby realising meaningful local socio-economic benefits. Local community involvement is crucial for reversing historical marginalisation and ensuring equitable benefit sharing. The success of the MLL project hinges on fostering community pride and ownership in safeguarding biodiversity, which will enhance the sustainability and resilience of conservation efforts.
3. **Policy and Institutional Support:** National and provincial policies, institutional frameworks, and other relevant strategies are assumed to support and enable the MLL project consistently. This alignment provides a solid foundation for the MLL project, ensuring it is well-integrated into existing conservation initiatives and receives the necessary resources and regulatory support.
4. **Durable Financial Resources and Capacity Building:** Sufficient and durable financial resources, including those leveraged through the GBFF investment, are assumed to support the MLL project beyond the project period. Capacity-building efforts will strengthen conservation management institutions and practitioners, overcoming financial and human resource constraints and ensuring that protected areas are effectively managed beyond the project period.
5. **Adaptive Management and Ecosystem Resilience:** The MLL project is assumed to successfully implement adaptive management strategies that enhance ecosystem resilience to climate change and other environmental stressors. Adapting and responding to changing environmental conditions is essential for demonstrating the effectiveness of the MLL concept in practice and achieving long-term conservation and sustainability goals.

This GEF 8-funded project supports SANParks Vision 2040, the White Paper on Biodiversity, and national sustainable development priorities. It also contributes to GBF Target 3. The project will create Mega-Living Landscapes (MLLs) that become integral to South Africa's nature-positive socio-economic future, resulting in thriving people and nature.

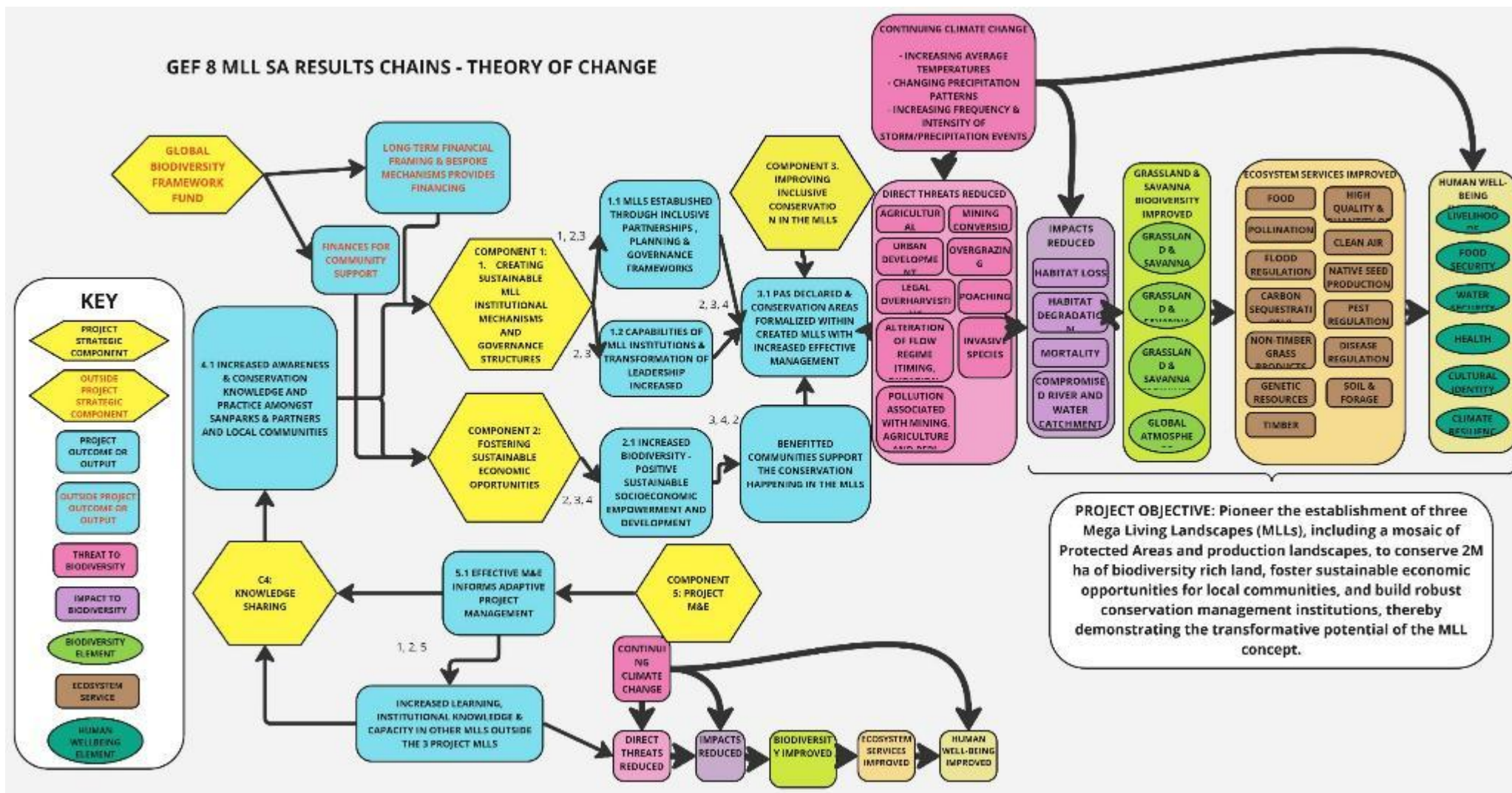


Figure 1: GEF 8 funded MLL project Theory of Change Diagram

The Theory of Change (TOC) of this Project is based on the logic that,

IF

- Diverse stakeholders (community, public and private) in each of these three shared landscapes lead a process and framework that empowers them to collaborate around their shared interests in promoting pro-nature economic development that benefits nature and people.
- Collaborative stakeholder platforms that facilitate cooperation are established and maintained over years.
- Local communities participate in conservation efforts, and they participate in meaningful, equitable benefits that demonstrate the value of the conservation efforts that are being undertaken.
- Investment and commercialisation plans, strategies, branding, value chain analyses and certification schemes within the ecotourism, sustainable agriculture, wildlife and restoration sectors, are effectively developed.
- Capabilities of organisations and individuals within the landscapes are enhanced and built, including their awareness that the Protected Area Network (PAN) forms the foundation of the potential pro-nature economic development of these landscapes.
- SANParks demonstrates their leadership driving their changed role to be one where they work both inside and outside of national parks with diverse landowners/users and land uses, building momentum and scale, embracing non-land based but aligned enterprises across the value chain that support and bolster the ecological and livelihoods vision.
- Tools for PA expansion, such as stewardship and a streamlined declaration processes, amongst others and resources needed to achieve this, are effectively deployed.
- The potential of landowners and land users, both communal and private, to improve the sustainable use of their land, is incentivised.
- Managers of PAs are capacitated to improve their management practices.

THEN, the project will be catalytic enabling,

- Stakeholders, at a landscape level, to develop a collective vision and plan for their landscape that promotes pro-nature economic development inclusive of local communities.
- The biodiversity sector's potential for social and economic transformation within the ecotourism, sustainable agriculture, wildlife and restoration sectors will be unlocked.
- Local communities, with a focus on those living in poverty and marginalised women, will be able to increase their ability to participate in and drive entrepreneurship opportunities, including economic empowerment of women, in the ecotourism, wildlife, sustainable agriculture and restoration sectors.
- The social licence to operate protected areas and conservation initiatives will develop/be strengthened.
- The expansion of the Protected Area Network, as one aspect of a mosaic of land uses within the landscape, will enhance national efforts towards attaining global conservation targets and commitments.
- Improved management effectiveness of PAs.
- Reduction of threats associated with unsustainable land practices.
- Through protection of key ecosystem services within the MLLs (such as water sources which demonstrate a direct link to benefiting people), without excluding all human activities (such as sustainable agricultural activities), and through innovative stewardship approaches that retain private landowners and communal land users on the land while conserving biodiversity, MLLs will demonstrate the critical importance of the biodiversity economy in SA and the benefits this can realise for both the private sector and local communities.
- The project to demonstrate that climate change impacts can be mitigated through the creation of large continuous corridors that allow for species migration and adaptation.

And thus, create Mega Living Landscapes (MLLs) that become an integral part of SA's nature positive economic future resulting in thriving people and nature.

B2 Project Strategies, Outcomes and Outputs

This section explains the project strategy with more detail. Project activities will be implemented with a gender sensitive approach, considering that, in the communities, men's and women's differential roles, responsibilities and daily practices directly influence their uses and needs for natural resources and access to economic opportunities. The project will ensure that access to resources and opportunities for training, information and decision making are equitable and transparent for all community members, including women, at the household, community, and landscape levels. Some of the interventions are focused on women, while others tend to be more male dominated.

The MLL initiative acknowledges that South Africa's intertwined environmental and social challenges exacerbate biodiversity loss. The MLL approach promotes inclusive participation in conservation activities and benefits sharing by local communities, including women and youth, fostering community ownership and pride in safeguarding biodiversity for current and future generations. Additionally, the legacy of past racial segregation policies, including land dispossession, has limited community participation and benefit sharing in mainstream conservation activities. The MLL initiative seeks to build partnerships that support landowners, including those in communal lands, in engaging in conservation activities and adopting sustainable practices.

Traditional conservation strategies focusing on isolated conservation areas, disconnected from productive landscapes, communal lands, and local communities' economic and socio-cultural interests, are no longer viable in South Africa. Such outdated strategies disincentivize private and communal landowners from contributing to biodiversity conservation and adopting sustainable land use practices. By establishing the MLLs, conservation and sustainable land use practices will be integrated to create cohesive and interconnected landscapes. This initiative will mitigate the risk of deterioration in already protected conservation estates, ensuring they remain effective in conserving biodiversity. It will contribute to fulfilling global conservation objectives, notably Target 3 of the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF).

Component 1: Creating sustainable MLL institutional mechanisms and governance structures

This component will create sustainable institutional mechanisms, such as MLL Hubs, and other MLL governance structures. Collectively, these efforts will enhance institutional operational capacity, promote strong governance practices, empower local leadership, and ensure the sustainability of MLL institutions, contributing to the region's overall socio-economic and environmental well-being.

The establishment of each of the MLLs envisages a bottom-up stakeholder vision development, multi-stakeholder forums established, landscape plans and financing frameworks developed, capabilities to establish and expand the MLLs are developed, and socio-economic opportunities are enabled as a cross-cutting imperative as shown in the Figure below.

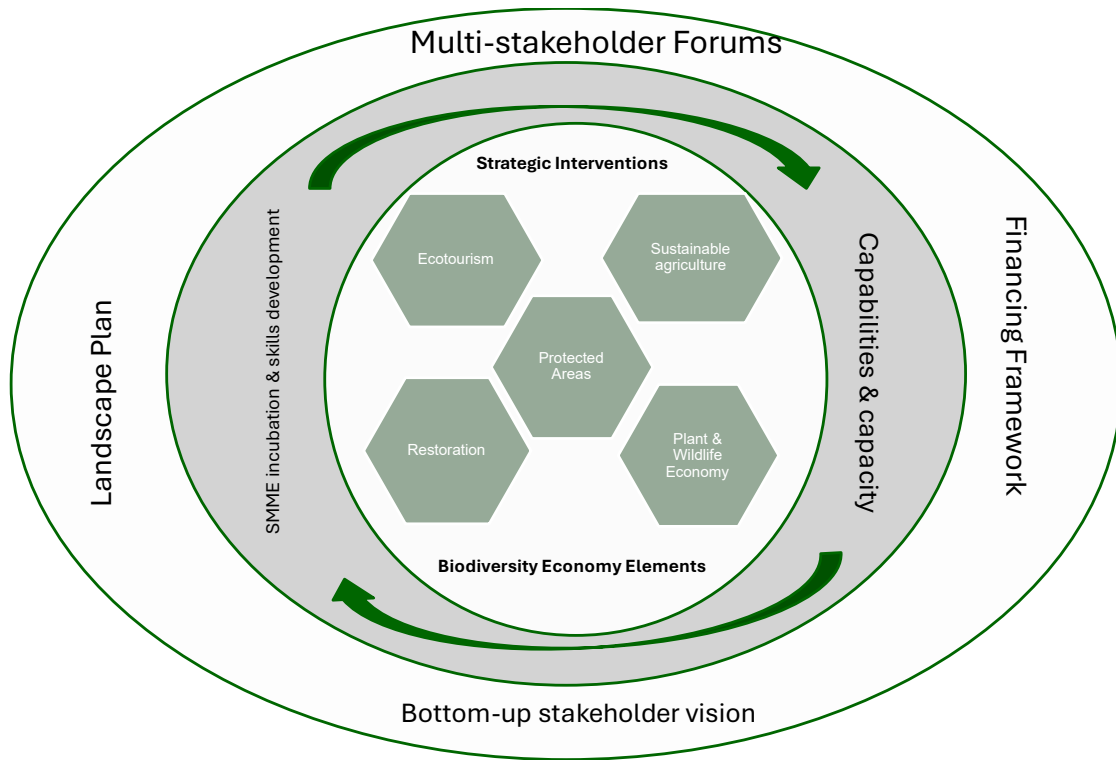


Figure 2: The structured activities and strategic interventions to be implemented in each of the Mega Living Landscapes

The desired outcomes for the project's first component focus on achieving institutional self-reliance and strong governance practices. By 2030, all MLL governance structures will be capable of independently managing conservation activities of the mega living landscapes and mobilising resources, ensuring transparent and accountable governance. Additionally, the project aims to empower local leadership with a significant representation of women and youth in governance positions and improve conservation and management skills among local leaders. A growing collective commitment amongst stakeholders will be evident regarding the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity. Ultimately, the project envisions sustainable MLL institutions characterised by self-sustaining governance structures and an active national network fostering continuous collaboration and innovation.

Outcome 1.1. MLLs established through inclusive institutional and governance structures (MLL Hubs), vision and planning frameworks.

Output 1.1.1. MLLs formal governance structures, stakeholder participation platforms and partnerships established, with effective representation and participation of local communities, women and youth in decision making and consultative initiatives.

Output 1.1.1 will establish MLLs, through robust institutional frameworks and an inclusive governance mechanisms.

By 2026, interim governance bodies with clearly defined roles will be established for each MLL, and governance charters and operational guidelines will be approved. By the end of the same year, all three MLLs will be formally constituted in alignment with these charters and relevant laws. Policy alignment reviews will be completed by 2027, and by the same year, governance structures will adopt comprehensive institutional policies on financial management, good governance, transformation, inclusion, and socio-economic empowerment.

Stakeholder representation and inclusion are emphasised. By 2026, at least 60% of local community members, including 50% women and 50% youth, will be represented in governance structures. Annual stakeholder engagement forums will also ensure transparency and participatory decision-making.

Capacity-building efforts will include conducting workshops for governance members by 2029 and establishing a knowledge-sharing platform for best practices and lessons learned among MLL governance bodies by 2026.

Project Component 1-related activities will entail the establishment and maintenance of robust governance structures, while policy frameworks, the formalisation of governance structures, and the MLLs' fit-for-purpose operating models will be implemented by 2026.

First, the Project Management Unit (PMU) will be established and functional at SANParks, initiating the setup of interim governance structures in each MLL. Key activities include identifying and appointing interim governance members, defining roles and responsibilities, and conducting initial meetings to set up governance structures. Governance charters and operational guidelines will be drafted, and stakeholders will be engaged to provide input. Once finalised, these will be implemented. Formal governance structures will be established by aligning governance structures with charters, contractual agreements and relevant legal statutes before holding inaugural meetings. Policy alignment reviews with national and regional conservation laws will be conducted, and institutional policies on financial management, governance, transformation, and inclusion will be adopted.

Output 1.1.2 Unifying vision & Landscape level Framework Plans for each MLL participatorily developed and approved by MLLs governance structures.

Each one of the MLL will develop a common vision and Framework Plan which will pragmatically guide their implementation. Best practices will be drawn from several landscape level initiatives: for example, the Greater Kruger Strategic Development Programme where partnerships and regional integration are at the heart of creating a platform for inclusive conservation compatible with economic development, and the Upper Umzimvubu Catchment Partnership in the Grasslands MLL, where collaboration around water is occurring. Gender mainstreaming considerations will be considered during the development and implementation of the MLL Plans, including the participation of women, youth and their representative organizations in planning platforms, PA management workshops and trainings. Methods and materials used in those activities will be gender sensitive.

Activities under Output 1.1.2. could include:

- A bottom-up stakeholder driven vision development process is facilitated by the MLL Hub. This process will involve stakeholder engagements, discussions and meetings.
- Strategic Framework Plans to be developed and agreed amongst stakeholders in the 3 MLLs. The focus of the Framework Plan will differ from landscape to landscape reflecting the realities in that Landscape. The Framework Plans will all deal with the key economic sectors – eco and heritage tourism, sustainable agriculture and restoration, and wildlife - but the emphasis will differ depending on the circumstances in that landscape. Service providers will be hired to facilitate the development of the Framework Plans.
- The development of the MLL Vision and Framework Plans is based on a bottom-up stakeholder driven vision and development process that includes the development of collaborative multi-stakeholder platforms. This process will include a) setting out the principles and values that will guide how stakeholders collaborate in the landscape; b) identification of the strategic interventions and maps showing focus areas where these interventions should occur; and c) stakeholder engagement plan that specifies how conflicting interests will be addressed.

Complementary with the MLL GBFF project on this outcome:

- Once the building of a bottom-up stakeholder driven vision, collaborative platforms and Strategic Framework Plan in the three MLLs are completed, the GBFF funding will be utilised to develop a high-level forecast model and Investment Framework for the 3 identified MLLs. The GBFF funding will thereafter be utilised to create a SANParks overall MLL Funding Strategy including a detailed forecast modelling.

Outcome 1.2. Capabilities of SANParks, MLL governance members and management teams, local community leadership increased for effective management of MLL.

SANParks has committed to put its full organisational force behind delivering the MLL Vision, recognising that this requires substantial change in its own operations and capabilities. Key features of this future changed role are working both inside and outside of national parks with diverse landowners and land uses, building momentum and scale, embracing non-land based but aligned enterprises that support and bolster the ecological and livelihoods vision, and developing the financial resources necessary for long-term sustainability of the MLL Initiative. To execute this, SANParks requires agile leadership, new capabilities and a process of change management. Thus, one of the core focuses for the capability strategy is to support SANParks build these capabilities. A Project Management Unit (PMU), which will fulfil an overarching strategic role of catalysing the transformation within SANParks to deliver MLLs will be established at national level. It will be responsible for Project Implementation; overseeing the execution of the GEF-and GBFF-funded projects, financial management and reporting; managing the performance of Sub-executing agents; ensuring compliance with GEF, WWF, and national policies, particularly regarding environmental, social, and financial safeguards; stakeholder communication; and catalysing the other five MLLs.

Secondly, the establishment of MLL requires appropriate human resources and capacities at the landscape levels. Three MLL Hubs, one in each landscape, will be established. They will comprise core contracted human resources located within each landscape under sub-executing agencies and under SANParks who will undertake the bulk of the project activities. The word “hub” is used as it is a colloquial term associated with creating a working unit at the heart of delivery in the landscape.

The institutional and capacity strategy for this project is aligned with SANParks' Vision 2040, which addresses the climate crisis, poor land use practices, and the connection between ecological issues and poverty. It recognizes the biodiversity sector's potential for social and economic transformation. SANParks is committed to shifting its operations from focussing within national parks to support Mega Living Landscapes (MLLs) by engaging with diverse landowners/users, expanding financial resources, and adopting a long-term sustainable approach. To achieve this, agile leadership and new capabilities are essential, with the strategy focusing on supporting SANParks and the sub-executing partners in their leadership role and change management efforts. The institutional and capacity strategy focuses on six key elements: 1) The establishment of the PMU, 2) Strengthening existing and building new partnerships and collaborative networks, 3) Partnering with the four sub-executing agencies, 4) Establishing the 3 landscape level Hubs which pull together SANParks and the partners, 5) Contracting the necessary human resources, and 6) Facilitated learning, direct training and ongoing mentorship of people involved in implementation. To ensure sustainability post project closure, the approach is to secure additional ongoing sustainable financing (GBFF project) and to build partnership mechanisms that outlast short term project finance.

Capacity building is provided as an output under each of the Components to ensure that it is consciously included in each component and focused on that area, noting that there is one unifying strategy. Under Component 1 (Creating sustainable institutions) the capacity building focuses on the building of institutions and MLL governance structures. Under Component 2 (Socio-economic empowerment) the focus is on capacity building of local community businesses, and under Component 3 (Inclusive conservation) the focus is on capacity building of the topic of inclusive conservation, where the emphasis is on strengthening the ability of land users/owners to engage effectively in stewardship process and agreements.

Output 1.2.1. Bespoke leadership and management training, and ongoing coaching of SANParks in managing MLLs developed and implemented.

Activities could include:

- Establishment and appointment of contracted human resources of the Project Management Unit (PMU) and MLL Hubs.
- Appointment and management of the sub-executing agencies.
- Design and implementation of a SANParks Management Leadership and Development Programme including coaching.

Output 1.2.2 Capacity building programs delivered at landscape level for local leaders in MLL governance structures, partner organizations, and management teams on inclusive conservation including adaptive and biodiversity conservation management, biodiversity monitoring, ecosystem restoration, amongst others, to ensure successful implementation and effective management of self-sustaining MLLs.

Activities could include:

- Design and implementation of Training of trainers to conduct social facilitation courses for those working in the landscapes. This could be done either by a consultancy or the sub-executing agent or a combination.
- Design and implementation of a variety of skills development programmes focused on building the capabilities of local communities, the details of which will depend on the circumstances relevant to the landscape and time.
- Ensuring stakeholder representation and inclusion in decision-making processes is crucial. Local community members, with a target of at least 50% women and 50% youth, will be identified and engaged for governance roles, with orientation and training provided for new members. Annual stakeholder engagement forums will be planned and scheduled for each MLL, inviting diverse stakeholders to facilitate participatory decision-making and transparency discussions. Workshops per MLL will be designed and conducted to build governance members' capacity, focusing on governance skills, and a knowledge-sharing platform for best practices and lessons learned will be established and promoted among governance structures.

Complementary with the MLL GBFF project on this outcome:

- The Institutional Arrangements that include the establishment of the PMU and MLL Hubs, contracting of sub-executing agencies is the same for both the GEF8 and the GBFF. See the Institutional Arrangements section for details.

Component 2: Fostering and enhancing sustainable economic opportunities & socio-economic empowerment.

Project Component 2 aims to drive substantial economic growth and socio-economic inclusion in the regions where the three Mega Living Landscapes (MLLs) are located. These interventions will collectively enhance economic growth, promote socio-economic inclusion, empower women and youth, contributing to the overall sustainable development of the three MLL regions. A focus will be placed on enhancing household incomes and increasing the contributions of MLL-based enterprises to local economies, which will improve local economic indicators. This component will also prioritize the reduction of unemployment rates among women and youth, promoting their economic independence and improving their livelihoods. It will be complemented by its sister project GBFF, that will focus on the sustainable finance of the MLLs.

The project will prioritize the establishment of women- and youth-led small and medium enterprises (SMEs) or cooperatives, supported by sustainable business incubation hubs in each MLL region. Developing value chains, such as ecotourism and sustainable agriculture, will be undertaken in collaboration with local communities. As part of SANParks Vision 2040, SANParks aims to create 11,000 jobs by 2030, 50% for women and youth respectively and by 2028, an annual employment monitoring system will be in place to track inclusivity. Training and capacity building are also emphasised in the Vision 2040, and the project will contribute to those objectives with a specific capacity building and skills development output, with emphasis on women and youth in local communities in the 3 MLLs.

This component will complement the GBFF project (that will ensure sustainable finance of the initiatives supported) and other initiatives by SAN Parks that focus on improving access to finance and markets, enabling MLL-linked products and services to achieve significant market penetration. Collectively, these efforts contribute to the overarching goal of socio-economic empowerment and sustainable development in the MLL regions, driving transformative change and long-term prosperity.

Outcome 2.1 Increased biodiversity-positive sustainable socio-economic empowerment and development, owned by local stakeholders and benefiting local communities in the 3 MLLs. It has two outputs, as follows

Output 2.1.1 Portfolio of inclusive and sustainable socio-economic development initiatives developed and implemented, creating MLL-based opportunities for local community enterprises, cooperatives and livelihoods upliftment, with focus on women-led and youth-led initiatives.

To establish enterprise development programs, potential entrepreneurs and cooperative members within local communities will be identified and provided with training and mentorship to support business establishment. Sustainable business incubation hubs will be developed in each MLL region and equipped with the necessary infrastructure and resources to attract entrepreneurs. Value chains for eco-tourism, sustainable agriculture, and other locally sourced products will be developed and informed by market research and through collaboration with local communities.

Increasing employment opportunities, particularly for youth and women, involves identifying job opportunities within conservation and sustainable economic sectors, developing targeted job placement programs, and deploying an annual employment monitoring system to track participation and inclusion.

During the PPG phase, the following economic sectors, which are also significant land uses across the MLLs, were identified as sectors with socioeconomic potential in their MLL: eco-and-heritage-tourism, sustainable rangeland and restoration management, and the wildlife economy. The socio-economic benefits derived from these interventions are closely tied to improved biodiversity management, ultimately building resilience and sustainable livelihoods within local communities.

Project activities could complement an array of existing baseline initiatives identified in the MLLs, related to tourism commercialisation plans, investment plans, value chain analyses, product development, and certification schemes. Increased investments in ecotourism and other sectors could create jobs and business opportunities for local communities. SMME incubation support and skills development could be connected to entrepreneurial opportunities and job placements. Data collection tools like household surveys and socio-economic impact assessments could be used to inform project interventions. The following section presents a menu of strategies that could be implemented by the project. The specific activities to be financed by the project and their exact location will be defined with inputs from stakeholders through a participatory, gender-responsive and inclusive co-creation process, that will happen during the first year of project implementation. This participatory process will specifically ensure the views of local and traditional communities and other relevant local project stakeholders are taken into account.

Tourism interventions could provide significant socio-economic benefits for all MLLs. For example, the Barberton/ Makhonjwa MLL (part of Greater Kruger) could develop complementary tourism products. Feasibility studies and business plans could focus on areas like Barberton Nature Reserve, where a lodge development site has been identified. Addo has strong tourism growth potential due to its accessibility.

Sustainable agricultural sector interventions could occur in all MLLs, driving socio-economic benefits by supporting communal livestock owners in accessing markets, improving land-use management practices, and

addressing over-grazing and ecological degradation. They would also contribute to achieving area of landscapes under improved management (outside of protected areas) to benefit biodiversity and contribute towards the targets associated with improved protected area management effectiveness.

Ecological Restoration Economy interventions across all MLLs would improve biodiversity management and socio-economic benefits, addressing issues like invasive alien plants, over-grazing, bush encroachment, and erosion. Developing a restoration strategic investment plan would leverage government and private sector funding, including traditional sources like the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) and SANParks Biodiversity Social Projects (BSP). It would also explore corporate socio-economic development (SED) and enterprise development (ED) opportunities, ESG obligations, and corporate programs like the Investec Youth Environmental Services (YES) Programme. The strategic investment plan would attract private sector investment partners for biomass utilisation and carbon credit generation.

Wildlife Economy interventions, particularly in the Barberton-Makhonjwa and Greater Addo MLLs, would drive socio-economic benefits and improve PA management effectiveness and biodiversity management. They would also contribute towards the targets associated with improved protected area management effectiveness and area of landscapes under improved management (outside of protected areas) to benefit biodiversity. Wildlife economy activities promoted by this project would be compliant with the social and safeguards provisions included in the ESFM and proposed activities will be screened annually via an ESS Screening process, to ensure all safeguards, including consultation and consent processes are followed. Wildlife economy promotion activities would be based on the South African sustainable use policy, would promote biodiversity positive impacts, be based on ecological principles, and would follow sustainable management plans that include social, economic environmental sustainability criteria.

Local communities could benefit from SMME incubation, skills training, and job placements through bursaries and internships. An SMME incubation program could support enterprise development, improve business linkage opportunities, and expand market access in tourism, wildlife, sustainable agriculture, and restoration sectors. Jobs would be created through bursaries and internships linked to job placements in partnership. The training and employment of extension support officers (eco-champs or eco-trainers) would support sustainable rangeland conservation agreements.

The types and names of focal beneficiary groups from local communities are shown in the Table below.

Table 11: Identified IPLC beneficiary groups per economic sectors of focus from three MLLs

Beneficiary types	Focal communities
In Tourism sector: Communities that have investment and business plans developed for tourism facilities on their land within the MLLs. Residents that establish new tourism ventures through SMMEs incubation support. Residents trained and employed within existing and future tourism facilities within the MLLs.	Grasslands: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upper Tsitsana and Pitseng Farmers Association Villages around Maloti Thaba Tsa Metsi PE on state-owned communal land Villages around Ongeluksnek NR Barberton:
Sustainable agriculture:	

<p>Owners of livestock on communal lands that form livestock owners' associations and enter into conservation agreements for sustainable rangeland management practices and better animal production.</p> <p>Herders & residents from villages on communal lands who are trained and employed (mid-level extension officers, eco-trainers, eco-champs) in support of the sustainable rangeland management initiatives.</p> <p>Specific landowner groups, such as those targeted by the Mohair Empowerment Trust.</p> <p>Land rights holders and employees that participate in agro-ecological projects.</p>	<p>Residents living in the villages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mandela, Noordkaap, Sheba, Gaza/Louieville/Lows Creek, Shalock (Sincobile): Shiyalongubo, Verulam/Fairview Mine, Matsulu. • Lomshiyo Community Trust • Other traditional communities with land rights in in the MLL – around Mjejane, Mtethomusha, Barberton, Songimvelo.
<p>Wildlife economy:</p> <p>Landowners and existing protected areas that have culling requirements as part of the ecological management of their conservation and protected areas.</p> <p>Villages adjacent to PAs that receive wildlife donations from SANParks and provincial conservation authorities.</p> <p>Residents that establish new wildlife economy ventures through SMMEs incubation support.</p> <p>Participants in training on wildlife products value chains.</p> <p>Residents employed by wildlife ranches as economy grows.</p>	<p>Greater Addo:</p> <p>Residents living in the following towns:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Graaf-Reinet • Craddock, • Somerset East • Kirkwood • Thembalesize • uMasizakhe • Jansenville • Klipplaat • KwaZamukuncinga • Waongaletu
<p>Restoration economy:</p> <p>The extension staff employed to assist landowners and land rights holders in guiding their ecological restoration efforts.</p> <p>Residents who are employed to undertake restoration activities in private or public restoration initiatives.</p> <p>Residents that establish new restoration economy ventures through SMMEs incubation support - e.g., small businesses that contract services for invasive alien plant management, erosion control, fire management.</p>	

The economic focus will be landscape specific, owned by the relevant industry, and not prescribed by the public sector. For example, in the Addo MLL, tourism offers good opportunities – e.g., the commercialisation of the northern part of the Greater Addo Elephant Park will leverage the natural capital of this Big 7 National Park. SANParks will build on its experience of tourism Private Public Partnerships (PPPs) where its role is to create the enabling environment that facilitate private sector involvement. The private sector is already driving the economy of the area through game and tourism businesses, and through philanthropic investment in the landscape. In the Grasslands landscape, which is remote with less economic drivers, interventions in the sustainable agriculture and restoration will be key. Barberton has opportunities across the economic sectors, with sustainable agriculture holding good promise for communal farmers and tourism good opportunities for traditional communities. A key leverage opportunity is to link this growth to initiatives that promote small enterprise development so that these can be developed to provide products and services required by tourism/game industry etc. If SANParks and other businesses implement preferential procurement, this will enable enterprise development.

There is an alignment between the portfolio of socio-economic development initiatives described here and management activities to benefit biodiversity outside of PAs as described in 3.1.2. The focused geographic areas are the same. This can be illustrated within the sustainable agricultural sector which is a primary land use within these landscapes. Here the focus will be on restoring rangelands and enhancing the sustainability of agricultural practices. For example, through a partnership with MeatNaturally, a social enterprise, communal farmers will enter into Rangeland Stewardship Agreements (RSA). These RSA involve the development of a Grazing Plan with

communal farmer associations which is based on the Herding 4 Health model which includes planning grazing rotation, fire management and the resting of camps. This results in thriving biodiversity. Farmers are incentivized to participate as they receive direct benefits in the form of improved rangeland quality leading to healthier cattle and market access for the sale of their livestock.

Output 2.1.2 Capacity building and skills development in SMMs establishment, employment, business incubation and livelihood income, with emphasis on women and youth in local communities in the 3 MLLs.

Training and capacity-building initiatives include delivering skills development programs aligned to each MLL's needs analysis, such as business management, conservation-based tourism, and agroecology, and partnering with accredited institutions to offer certification programs. Establishing microfinance schemes, promoting funding opportunities, and creating digital and physical marketing platforms facilitate local enterprises' access to finance and markets. Community-owned assets will also be leveraged to generate additional financial resources, ensuring sustainable economic growth and empowerment across the MLLs.

Potential activities related to each Output are shown in the summary table below that also shows potential complementarity between the GEF 8 and its sister GBFF project.

Table 12: Potential socio-economic activities for GEF 8 Component 2 and GBFF Component 3 per MLLs

GEF 8 and GBFF Activities	Addo	Barberton	Grasslands
Tourism Interventions			
2.1.1 Portfolio of inclusive and sustainable socio-economic development initiatives (GEF8)	Development of a commercialisation strategy & an investor prospectus for the north-western part of the AENP. Investor attraction supported through SANParks-Business Development Unit (BDU)	None	None
3.2.2 Portfolio of socio-economic development initiatives (GBFF)	None	- Feasibility study and business plans for the tourism development, for example Lomshiyo lodge development. - Investor attraction supported through SANParks-BDU	None
	SANParks MLL branding, marketing and communication guidelines		
Sustainable agricultural and/or restoration interventions			
2.1.1 Portfolio of inclusive and sustainable socio-economic development initiatives (GEF8)	- Development of a restoration economy strategic investment plan & programme integrating best practise, monitoring, spatial planning & how to crowd in restoration finance for jobs. - Leverage government & private sector funding to support ecological restoration including SANParks BSP, EPWP, SED/ED funds, ESG from corporates or replicating the Investec YES Program funding. - Interventions like engagement with farmers to discuss and develop an agreed upon sustainable grazing system and monitoring tools.	- Undertake spatial planning and monitoring to inform strategic restoration activities. - Sappi partnership around the restoration of areas of land that fragment the landscape. - Suitable eco-agri partners partnership on sustainable rangeland with communal farmers includes employment of 60 Eco-trainers. - Governance and administrative training of livestock owners' associations	- Undertake spatial planning to inform strategic restoration activities. - Development of a restoration economy strategic investment plan. - Undertake the necessary activities to leverage government & private sector funding to support ecological restoration including SANParks BSP, EPWP, SED/ED funds, ESG from corporates or replicating the Investec YES Program funding. - Suitable eco-agri partners partnership on sustainable rangeland with communal farmers includes employment of 60 Eco-trainers. - Governance and administrative training of livestock owners' associations
3.2.2 Portfolio of socio-economic development initiatives (GBFF)	None	- Environment education program.	- Partnership on sustainable rangeland with communal farmers includes employment of Eco-champs. =

GEF 8 and GBFF Activities	Addo	Barberton	Grasslands
Wildlife Interventions			
2.1.1 Portfolio of inclusive and sustainable socio-economic development initiatives (GEF8)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Development of a high-level wildlife economy strategic and investment plan. - Wildlife certification scheme piloted. 	None	None
3.2.2. Portfolio of socio-economic development initiatives (GBFF)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Wildlife investment plan stimulates wildlife economy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Development of a Wildlife Economy strategic investment plan, value chain analysis, including spatial analysis and the identification of wildlife economy hubs. 	None
Skills and SMMEs			
2.1.2 Capacity building and skills development for local communities (GEF8)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tourism SMMEs incubated. - People placed in jobs, as recorded by SA College of Tourism (SACT), after having received bursary and then internship. - Wildlife SMMEs incubated. - Restoration SMMEs incubated. - Training of community members in veld management. - Socio-Economic Impact Assessment to determine the direct, indirect and induced impacts of the Addo MLL on community livelihoods. 	None.	None
3.1.1 Skills development and SMME incubation support for IPLCs (GBFF)	None	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tourism SMMEs incubated. - People placed in jobs, as recorded by SA College of Tourism (SACT), after having received bursary and then internship. - Wildlife SMMEs incubated. - Wildlife product training and capacity development. - Restoration SMMEs incubated. - Socio-Economic Impact Assessment to determine the direct, indirect and induced impacts of the Barberton MLL on community livelihoods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Restoration SMMEs incubated. - Tourism SMMEs incubated. - Socio-Economic Impact Assessment to determine the direct, indirect and induced impacts of the Grasslands MLL on community livelihoods.

Component 3. Improving Inclusive Conservation in the MLLs

Project Component 3 focuses on strengthening conservation management institutions and enhancing conservation practices across the three Mega-Living Landscapes (MLLs). The desired outcomes include establishing capable and well-resourced institutions that can effectively manage MLL activities and partnerships. This component aims to establish a conservation partnership in each MLL and secure significant conservation program funding. The project seeks to reverse biodiversity degradation by securing approximately 2 million hectares of land under conservation across the three MLLs, improving key biodiversity indicators, and enhancing ecosystem connectivity.

Additionally, this component emphasises enhancing conservation knowledge and practices through evidence-based innovations and piloting new approaches and technologies. The aim is to document and implement practices that lead to measurable improvements in biodiversity management. Furthermore, increasing conservation capacity and skills within local communities is a critical outcome. In this regard, the project aims to provide capacity building, training and empower local conservation teams to lead conservation activities independently, certifying local trainers, and ensuring significant participation of women and youth in capacity-building programs. This inclusive approach will foster local ownership and involvement in conservation activities. By 2030, SANParks expects 90% of conservation projects in MLLs will be co-managed by local stakeholders, ensuring sustainable and impactful efforts within the MLLs.

To achieve the desired outcomes under Component 3, the project outputs focus on strengthening conservation management institutions across the three MLLs, creating collaborative partnerships, and enhancing conservation knowledge and practices. By 2030, each MLL will have established at least one formal collaborative partnership with strategic partners, such as conservation organisations, local governments, local communities and private stakeholders. By 2026, institutional conservation strategies, encompassing collectively owned and co-developed landscape Vision & Framework Plans, will be adopted across the three MLLs. The project also aims to facilitate protected area (PA) declaration through stewardship and voluntary land acquisition processes, covering 210,000 hectares, and improve the management effectiveness of existing PAs over 1,162,100 hectares. Interventions to improve biodiversity management outside PAs, such as sustainable agriculture and other effective conservation measures (OECMs), will span 630,300 hectares. Furthermore, formal partnerships for knowledge-sharing and resource mobilisation with national and international conservation organisations will benefit MLL-level conservation practitioners and constituent organisations by 2030. SANParks will have, at least, developed two significant cultural heritage infrastructure products at each MLL by 2029.

Project aims to enhance conservation management institutions and improve conservation capacity and skills within the MLLs. Establishing formal collaborative partnerships with strategic partners such as conservation organisations, local governments, and private stakeholders will enhance biodiversity conservation effectiveness. Institutional conservation strategies will be developed and adopted through stakeholder engagement and the creation of landscape Vision & Framework Plans. Conservation professionals will receive relevant training, while stewardship and voluntary land acquisition processes will facilitate PA declarations and improve management effectiveness.

Outcome 3.1. Increased area of PAs newly created, and area of existing PAs with improved effective management, delivered through a new inclusive and collaborative conservation model in the 3 MLLs.

The consolidation, expansion and creation of new Protected Areas in MLLs will be undertaken primarily through: a) The implementation of the Biodiversity Stewardship approach, by engaging with private and communal landowners and land rights holders to secure protected areas on their properties; and b) Voluntary land acquisition by SANParks and partners when strategic opportunities arise to address critical linkages in the landscape or where significant socio-economic opportunities may be realised through the purchase of land. Voluntary land acquisition by SANParks is a vital strategy for expanding and maintaining South Africa's national parks and protected area system. Through strategic purchases, partnerships, and community involvement, SANParks works to improve the ecological viability of National Parks, in a manner that balances conservation with social and economic considerations. All social and environmental safeguards will be complied with through a yearly ESS Screening

process to ensure that project safeguards including consultation and consent process are followed. This Screening is Appendix 1 to the ESMF.

Output 3.1.1 Partnerships, collaborative and inclusive interventions implemented to facilitate new PA declaration via stewardship, voluntary land acquisition processes, including technical assessments, safeguards, stakeholder engagement & legal processes.

Key activities could include:

- Engage with SANParks, DFFE, and provincial authorities to establish an efficient declaration process for all parties to follow.
- Engaging with private and communal landowners/holders within the Mega Living Landscapes to secure their properties or interest in stewardship as part of existing or as new protected areas, using existing partnership and structures already established to facilitate relationship building.
- Support to SANParks in negotiating the strategic purchase of land for the expansion of existing protected areas or the establishment of new ones.
- Technical support to MLL Hub with respect to stewardship process – landowner/holder negotiations, biodiversity assessments, management plans, annual plans of operation (APO).
- Provide technical support within the Biodiversity Stewardship mechanism to landowner/holders, including obtaining consent from the landowners; performing biodiversity assessments on properties; facilitating the property due diligence (together with the Legal Manager and Legal Admin Officer).
- Development of management plans for new protected areas, ensuring compliance with NEMPAA.
- Development of contractual agreements with landowners/holders in support of protected area declarations.
- Coordinating a single declaration process each year, together with SANParks, DFFE and provincial authorities, including relevant submissions to the Minister / MEC and coordinating the public participation process.
- Completing the administrative aspects of protected area declarations, including the final gazetting and title deed endorsements.
- Providing post-declaration support to landowners in implementing their management objectives, including assisting in the development of APOs; integrating the landowners into the MLL awareness workshops; assisting the landowner in accessing the fiscal benefits (Municipal Property Rates and Income Tax benefit (37D)).

Output 3.1.2 On the ground collaborative and coordination in implementation of MLL Plan activities to improve management effectiveness of existing PAs and improve management activities to benefit biodiversity outside of PAs.

Key activities could include:

- Review the GEF 8 METT baseline assessment with the relevant management authority of the identified protected areas and draft a Management Effectiveness Intervention Report.
- Perform subsequent GEF 8 METT assessments in year three and six with the relevant management authority of the protected areas listed above and draft a Management Effectiveness Intervention Report.
- Sustainable Rangeland Management Interventions that involve the partnership with suitable eco-agri partners: – this covers 157,300 hectares in Barberton, 215,000 hectares in Grasslands and 15,000 hectares in Addo (on the Mohair Empowerment Trust land). The way this will be monitored is through annual assessment of a) Number of hectares where a Grazing Agreement has been signed between Suitable eco-agri partners and the local communal Farmers Association; b) Annual assessment of whether this Grazing Agreement has been implemented as done by Suitable eco-agri partners and verified for purposes of carbon sequestration with the project providing technical support.
- Development of Fire management plan and restoration plan in the Grasslands MLL over 215,000 hectares (same hectares as above) of land. The way this will be monitored will be a) the approval of a Fire Management and restoration Plan developed by a specialist consultant; b) Implementation of the plan has begun by supporting partners with the project providing technical support.

- Developing management plans for registered conservancies in the Addo MLL by the Eastern Cape Conservancies Management Association (ECCMA) over 150,000 hectares of land. The way this will be monitored is through a) Approval of the management plan by the landowner / DEDEAT; and b) Annual assessment of implementation of the plan by the ECCMA with the project providing technical support.
- Risk assessments and management plans in the Addo MLL by the Citrus Industry over 35,000 hectares of land. The way this will be monitored will be a) the approval of a risk assessments and management plan for individual landowners; and b) Implementation of the plan has begun by the landowners and reflected in their audits with the project providing technical support.
- Degradation mapping and development of a restoration plan in the Addo MLL of 100,000 hectares. The way this will be monitored will be a) the development of Restoration Plan, endorsed by restoration partners; and b) Integration of the Implementation of the plan has begun by carbon developers with the project providing technical support.

Output 3.1.3 Capacity building programs in inclusive conservation management institutions & community of practices delivered within and across the 3 MLLs.

Knowledge-sharing partnerships with national and international organisations will be fostered. Conservation Management Communities of Practice (CoP) will connect stakeholders, researchers, and practitioners through an online knowledge-sharing platform will be established. CoP workshops, webinars, and conferences will facilitate knowledge exchange, while case studies, research papers, and best practice guidelines will be published to disseminate valuable insights. Membership drives and outreach activities will promote CoP participation. To build conservation capacity and skills, capacity-building programs will be designed and implemented, certification programs for conservation-related skills will be developed, and mentorship programs will pair local conservation practitioners with experienced mentors to support their growth and development within the MLLs. The aim is to enhance conservation management institutions and improve conservation capacity and skills within the MLLs.

Key activities could include:

- Conservation capacity will be improved by designing and implementing capacity-building programs per MLL, focusing on conservation management, biodiversity monitoring, and ecosystem restoration. Local community members and MLL-related staff will be certified in conservation-related skills. Additionally, a mentorship program pairing local conservation practitioners with experienced mentors will be implemented in each MLL.

Complementary with the MLL GBFF project on this outcome:

- The GEF8 project is responsible for the large number of hectares of expanded PA, PA under improved management effectiveness and land under improved biodiversity management. The GBFF project will add to the GEF8 project work.
- The physical areas where PA expansion and landscapes under improved biodiversity management will occur differ from the areas in the GBFF project and there is no double counting. The areas are shown in the Maps contained in Annex E.
- The geographic areas where improved management effective will occur overlap with the GBFF project, but the nature of the improvement differs. In this GEF 8 project the focus is on METT matrixes related to improved management, while in the GBFF project this focuses on improving financial and budget aspects.

Component 4. Knowledge management.

If the project can increase knowledge and awareness about the benefits of MLLs for both nature and people, this will both generate knowledge and allow for it to be discussed and internalised in the broader society. The MLL platforms will be key conduits of learning and sharing which will occur across sectors and stakeholder groups, with a gender sensitive approach. If knowledge and lessons are shared across society, with the intention to show how the policy/implementation gap can be addressed, this will have a transformative impact. Communicating about MLLs and building awareness will be of critical importance. SANParks will utilize the lessons learnt from the creation of these three MLLs in the creation of the other five MLLs.

MLL is a new concept in SA and as such there is not extensive knowledge about MLL's positive benefits that can be shared at the start of the project. The intention is to align Knowledge Management and M&E so that learnings inform adaptive management. To facilitate landscape level collaborative reflective, planning, and lesson and knowledge sharing, landscape level stakeholders will convene regularly using the collaborative platforms they have collectively established. These MLL platforms will be key conduits of learning and sharing which will occur across sectors and stakeholder groups, with a gender sensitive approach. If knowledge and lessons are shared across society, with the intention to show how the policy/implementation gap can be addressed, this will have a transformative impact at the local level. To facilitate cross project collaborative planning, reflection, lesson and knowledge sharing, staff and implementing partners will convene three times per annum. Based on this approach, the project will develop and maintain a project monitoring, evaluation, reporting and learning framework to monitor and report on project implementation, and document best practices to support replication to MLLs across the country. This framework will combine the value of monitoring against indicators with reflective process monitoring and more open-ended processes for obtaining explanatory data and evaluative insights (for example case studies), enabling consideration for the complexity and non-linearity inherent in implementing a project of this nature. The project monitoring, evaluation, reporting and learning framework will facilitate project accountability including on safeguards and gender aspects, communication of success stories and areas that need attention, guide annual planning and learning. SANParks will utilize the lessons learnt from the creation of these three MLLs in the creation of the other five MLLs.

Outcome 4.1 Increased awareness & enhanced conservation knowledge and practices amongst SANParks, MLL partners and local communities on inclusive conservation topics and experiences in the 3 MLLs.

Outputs 4.1.1 Cross mega living landscape Community of Practice workshops to share knowledge & experience held.

Key activities include:

- PMU to convene MLL Hub staff and implementation partners three times per annum to facilitate cross project collaborative planning, reflection, lesson and knowledge sharing.
- MLL Hubs will regularly convene landscape partners and stakeholders to facilitate landscape level collaborative planning, reflection and lesson and knowledge sharing.
- Communities of Practice (CoP) will be established within and across the MLLs to enhance conservation capacity and skills. Conservation management communities of practice (CoP) will connect stakeholders, researchers, and practitioners through an online knowledge-sharing platform will be established. CoP workshops, webinars, and conferences will facilitate knowledge exchange, while case studies, research papers, and best practice guidelines will be published to disseminate valuable insights. Membership drives and outreach activities will promote CoP participation.

Output 4.1.2 Knowledge management & communication products delivered.

Key activities include:

- The MLL platforms will be key conduits of learning and sharing which will occur across sectors and stakeholder groups, with a gender sensitive approach.
- Knowledge resources and communications products covering topics relevant to MLLs will be developed and shared.
- By year three of implementation, a national MLL community of practice aimed at building organisational and technical capacity in national and sub-national government, the private sector and civil society actors engaged in the establishment of MLLs in South Africa will be launched.

Component 5. Monitoring and Evaluation

Outcome 5.1 Effective, informed, and adaptive project management achieved.

Under this outcome the PMU and partners will follow an M&E plan to monitor and report on project progress and to adapt as experience grows. The following reports will be provided: Annual Work Plan and Budget; Bi-annual Project Progress Report; Quarterly Financial Report; Annual adaptive management workshop; Mid-term and Terminal Evaluation.

The project will implement a robust gender responsive Monitoring and Evaluation plan that collects both gender and sex-disaggregated data with gender sensitive collection methods. All project-level reports will include information on the implementation of the gender mainstreaming plan. Outputs include:

Adaptive Management will be applied throughout implementation through an integrated approach using Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E), reflection workshops, and knowledge management and sharing activities to inform project decision-making and strategy. This approach enables the project to remain responsive to changing context, opportunities, challenges and risks, including dynamic socioeconomic conditions and climate change risks. The Monitoring and Evaluation M&E activities will provide the data and evidence needed to track progress, identify risks early, and inform decision-making. Real time data collection, Outcome and objective level indicators monitoring, annual risk assessments and reflection workshops will be fundamental tools to analyze data and inform adaptive management needs. Annual reflections workshops are a useful opportunity for project stakeholders to revisit the project theory of change, and propose strategy and workplan refinement to maintain relevance, improve results, efficiency and equity to ensure a successful project implementation.

Output 5.1.1 M&E reports, including project progress reports and midterm evaluations for corrective actions and adaptations.

Key activities include:

- M&E reports, including project progress reports,
- Midterm evaluation (including completed Core Indicator tables and GEF METTs).
- Terminal evaluation (including completed Core Indicator tables and GEF METTs).

Output 5.1.2 Annual lessons learnt workshops between main stakeholders.

- Key activities include Annual reflection workshops, between main stakeholders, held with a Report prepared to capture key lessons and actions for incorporation into the next year's AWP.

The Table below summarizes the incremental value of the GEF8 MLL project.

Component	Baseline (business as usual scenario)	Alternative scenario (with GEF project)	Global Environmental Benefits
Component 1 Creating sustainable MLL institutional mechanisms and governance structures	SANParks will continue to face challenges in conservation management due to inadequate institutional capacity, an historic conservation mindset of separating people and nature, a lack of long-term financial planning, and fragmented national and landscape-level strategies.	The GEF project aims to build sustainable MLL mechanisms institutional and governance to ensure collaborative, adaptive, resilient, and strategic management for conservation efforts. This governance structures will ensure stakeholder participation and will build collaboratively visions and landscape level plans for each MLL, ensuring participation of local communities and MLL stakeholders.	The project will create 210,000 ha of new protected areas and will improve effective management of 1,162,100 ha existing protected areas. The project will improve biodiversity

		<p>The expansion of the Protected Area Network, as one aspect of a mosaic of land uses within the landscape, will enhance national efforts towards attaining global conservation targets and commitments. The capabilities of SANParks, MLL governance members and management teams, local community leadership will be increased for effective management of MLL.</p>	<p>management in 630,300 ha outside of protected areas.</p> <p>The project will provide socioeconomic benefits to 1,772 people.</p>
<p>Component 2. Fostering and enhancing sustainable economic opportunities & socio-economic empowerment.</p>	<p>The establishment of MLLs depends on equitable partnerships. However, limited involvement of key groups—such as local communities, the private sector, NGOs, and donors—will continue to restrict opportunities to develop innovative financial mechanisms and leverage additional resources. Without active participation, new revenue streams will remain untapped, and financial benefits risk being unequally distributed, particularly to the detriment of local communities. Without the project, local communities in the project geographies will continue to be excluded from conservation activities and its benefits.</p>	<p>Where local communities are included as custodians in conservation efforts, and they participate in meaningful, equitable benefits that demonstrate the value of the conservation efforts that are being undertaken, they will be able to increase their ability to participate in and drive entrepreneurship opportunities, including economic empowerment of women, in the ecotourism, wildlife, sustainable agriculture and restoration sectors. The project will deliver a portfolio of inclusive and sustainable socio-economic development initiatives, creating MLL-based opportunities for local community enterprises, cooperatives and livelihoods upliftment, with focus on women-led and youth-led initiatives.</p>	
<p>Component 3. Improving inclusive conservation in MLL.</p>	<p>The exclusion of people from conservation leads to fortress conservation and fragmented PAN. Without the project, outdated conservation strategies will continue, resulting in fragmented, small and unconnected Protected</p>	<p>Where stakeholders - local communities, private sector, NGOs, government - are included as custodians in conservation efforts, and they participate in</p>	

	Areas that are not linked to compatible land uses and local communities' economic and sociocultural interests.	meaningful, equitable processes that demonstrate the value of the conservation efforts that are being undertaken, the social licence to operate protected areas and conservation initiatives will develop/be strengthened. The project will deliver an increased area of PAs newly created, and area of existing PAs with improved effective management, through a new inclusive and collaborative conservation model in the 3 MLLs, based on strategic partnerships and capacity building programs.	
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B3 Institutional Arrangement and Coordination with Ongoing Initiatives and Project.

The GBFF and GEF-8 funded projects are part of a unified MLL initiative, sharing institutional arrangements and resources. These institutional arrangements align with SANParks' Vision 2040 and the organisation's governance framework.

The SANParks Executive Committee, CEO, and Board will have ultimate project oversight, ensuring adherence to prudent finance management and good governance according to organisational policies and delegated authorities, the PFMA, and contractual agreements with the GEF Secretariat.

The Institutional and Capability Strategy entails:

1. Establishing a Project Management Unit (PMU) at SANParks Head Office to lead the GEF8 and GBFF projects, coordinating efforts between landscape partners and SANParks departments, and ensuring accountability and the MLL. The PMU will manage the entire project by adhering to best practices in project management.
2. Strengthening partnerships and networks for collaboration and learning among government agencies, NGOs, and community groups.
3. SANParks, as the Lead Executing Agency, will partner with four sub-executing agents, to carry out the interventions and activities. Three of these are at landscape level and one across all landscapes, namely:
 - Sub-executing Agency Barberton MLL
 - Sub-executing Agency Grasslands MLL
 - Sub-executing Agency Addo MLL
 - Sub-executing agency across landscapes - for the 3 Framework Plans and Investment Strategies.

4. Creating three MLL Hubs, one in each landscape, with core contracted human resources to carry out project activities. The word “hub” is used as it is a colloquial term associated with creating a working unit at the heart of delivery in the landscape. Sub-executing agencies are organisations separate from SANParks who will be responsible to deliver certain aspects of the project within each MLLs and the Investment Strategies across all MLLs. The MLL Hubs are the combined human resources of the sub-executing agencies plus SANParks and any other key partners who will drive implementation of the project activities in the MLL.
5. Leveraging staff within sub-executing agencies, seed financing identified human resource requirements, and technical assistants to support the institutional framework and project goals while enhancing staff capacity and landscape-level capabilities through learning, training, and mentorship.

The Figure below outlines how GEF8 funds will flow, the communication and reporting lines, and the delivery organizations and partners at different levels.

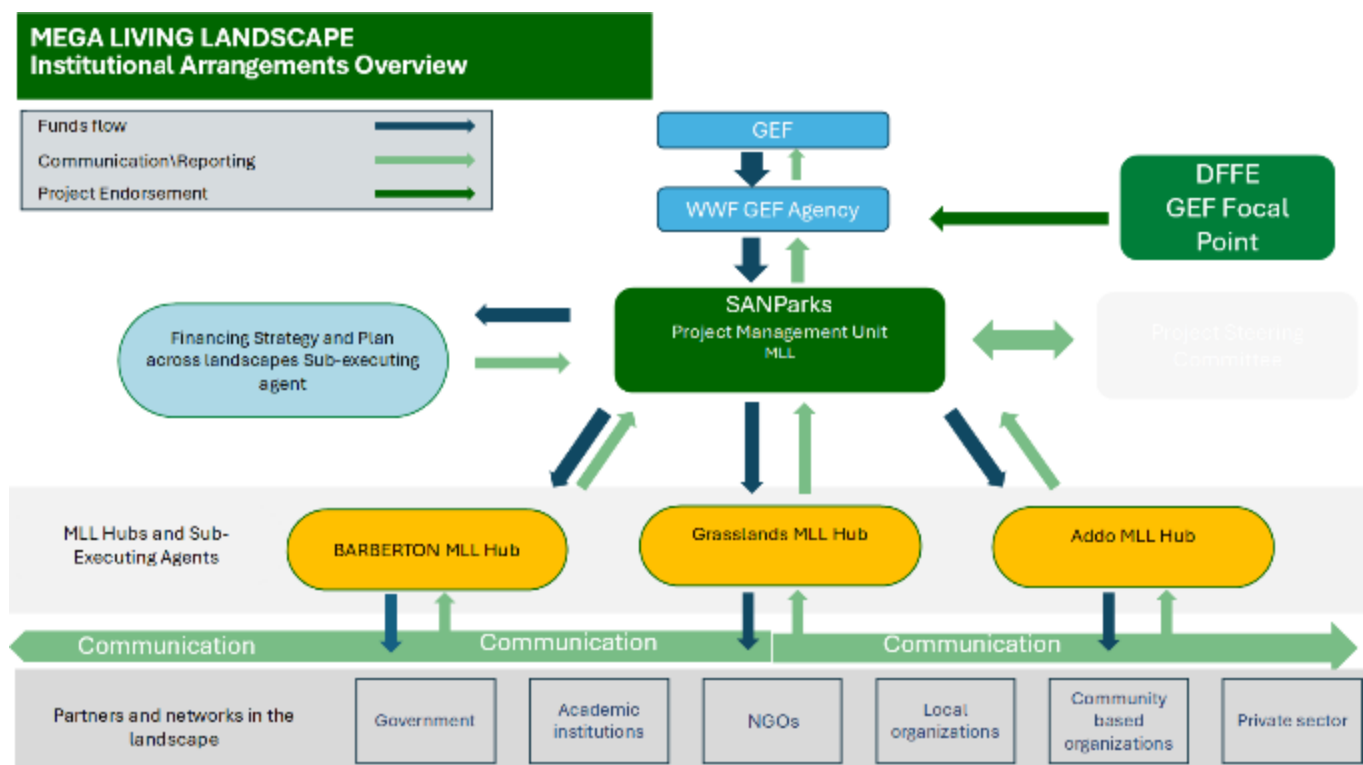


Figure 3: Institutional Arrangements Overview

In addition to the oversight by the SANParks Board, Executive Management Committee, and the CEO, key role players responsible for implementation, project execution, reporting, and monitoring during the six years are:

- **WWF USA:** As the GEF Implementing Agency, WWF USA administers and oversees GEF funds and projects, ensuring compliance with GEF and WWF policies. The agency manages relationships with key stakeholders, including the GEF Secretariat, STAP, GEF Council, and other GEF agencies. The agency manages relationships with relevant stakeholders and will be responsible for project funding administration, monitoring execution, and reporting to the GEF.
- **SANParks:** As the Lead Executing Agency, SANParks implements the GEF 8 and GBFF projects within the timeframe, the project plan and budget. The organisation will ensure social-economic and environmental impact at the MLL level and compliance with GEF and WWF policies. SANParks delegated staff also approves project-related institutional arrangements, budgets, and strategies, ensuring formal agreements with various other parties, including collaborators, are executed and reported.
- **Project Management Unit (PMU):** The PMU, established and operating according to policies and governance arrangements approved by the SANParks Board and as required by the GEF, is responsible for project implementation, managing the performance of sub-executing agents, ensuring policy

compliance, managing finances, and reporting progress to the GEF Implementing Agency. It also engages with relevant stakeholders to facilitate project success.

- **Project Steering Committee (PSC):** The PSC provides strategic direction and oversees the strategic partners involved in the projects. It is established via invitation from the SANParks CEO and includes representatives from SANParks, SANBI, DFFE, WWF, MPTA, ECPTA, National Treasury, DALRRD, and Traditional Authorities. The PSC reviews progress in line with GEF guidelines, supports stakeholder engagement, and seeks additional funding to enhance project outcomes, .
- **Technical Committee:** This committee supports the PSC's work, prepares relevant documentation, and addresses detailed aspects of the projects.

Evaluation of Sub-executing Agencies and Decision-Making Process

To identify the best candidates to take responsibility for the project's delivery within each landscape, options for potential sub-executing agencies that test different delivery models were considered. Possible sub-executing agencies were assessed through initial due diligence, and all met the established criteria. Once implementation begins, SANParks will make decisions on appointments transparently with the following process being meticulously followed:

- As set out in the PPG phase, because establishing MLLs is new, a conscious decision was taken to test various partnership delivery models within each landscape.
- **Criteria** were developed for how to identify which organisations could be appointed by SANParks as sub-executing agencies to deliver the project targets within each landscape. The criteria are:
 - **Credibility and Reputation within the landscape:** Assess the organization's consistency, integrity, community engagement, local presence, and staff diversity in terms of culture and language.
 - **Conservation and Socioeconomic Development Expertise:** Evaluate the organization's operational duration, track record, and alignment with GEF8/GBFF project goals.
 - **Governance, Transformation and Financial Systems:** Examine governance, staffing, funding, compliance with procurement standards, financial management practices, and internal controls to prevent fund misuse.
 - **Institutional Contribution:** Consider what the organization brings to the project in terms of community acceptance, co-financing, strategic vision, and leadership.

Seed funding will be provided by the GEF8 and GBFF to create the human resources required for implementation of the MLL initiative in the long term.

Will the GEF Agency play an execution role on this project?

☐ Yes ☒ No_x

This GEF 8 investment to pilot the MLL concept in three sites will leverage the following **opportunities and linkages**:

- **DFFE and Conservation Agencies' Initiatives and Lessons:**
 - White Paper on Conservation and Sustainable Use of SA's Biodiversity
 - National Biodiversity Economy Strategy
 - National Integrated Strategy to Combat Wildlife Trafficking
 - DFFE/UNDP's BioFin initiative
 - Stewardship implementation lessons

The PMU, hosted in SAN Parks, and with the support and oversight of SAN Parks project director and the guidance and support from the PSC, will ensure the project activities are well coordinated with any other DFFE and other conservation agencies initiatives and lessons, complementary to the MLL Initiative.

- **SANParks' Vision 2040 and Strategic Processes:**
 - Rhino Range Expansion Programme and Rhino Conservation Strategy
 - Socio-Economic Transformation (SET) Strategy
 - Land Inclusion Plan and Park Management Plans
 - Climate Change Preparedness Strategy and Plans

The PMU, hosted in SAN Parks, and with the support and oversight of SAN Parks project director, will ensure the project activities are well coordinated with other SANPARKS strategic processes complementary to the MLL Initiative.

- **Previous and Current GEF Investments:**
 - GEF 7 “Catalysing financing and capacity for the biodiversity economy around Protected Areas” near Addo MLL
 - GEF 7 Country Child Project “South Africa Biodiversity Economy and Illegal Wildlife Trade”
 - GEF 5 focused on improving SANParks' Supply Chain Management (SCM) systems
 - GEF 4 “Development, empowerment, and conservation in the iSimangaliso Wetland Park and surrounding region” with innovations from the Rural Enterprise Accelerator Programme (REAP)

The PMU will organize periodic coordination meetings with the PMU of active GEF projects listed above, to inform each other on project advances, and find synergies, coordination needs and solutions to common challenges.

- **Extensive Spatial Planning Work already undertaken by the sector:**
 - Greater Kruger Strategic Development Framework
 - Greater Blyde Master Plan
 - Barberton Makhonjwa’s World Heritage Site listing documents
 - Relevant Biosphere Reserve and TFCA documents

B4 Core indicators

Table 13: Core Indicators

Project Core Indicators		Expected at CEO Endorsement
1	Terrestrial protected areas created or under improved management (hectare)	1,372,100
2	Marine protected areas created or under improved management (hectare)	
3	Area of land and ecosystems under restoration (hectare)	
4	Area of landscapes under improved practices (hectare)	630,300 ha
5	Area of marine habitat under improved practices (hectare)	
6	Greenhouse Gas Emissions Mitigated (metric ton of CO ₂ e)	-57,405,704 tCO ₂ -e
7	Shared water ecosystems under new or improved cooperative management (count)	
8	Globally over-exploited marine fisheries moved to more sustainable levels (metric ton)	
9	Chemicals of global concern and their waste reduced (metric ton of toxic chemicals reduced)	
10	Persistent organic pollutants to air reduced (gram of toxic equivalent gTEQ)	

11	People benefiting from GEF-financed investments disaggregated by sex (count)	1,772 (60% W, 40% M)
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CI 1.1 Terrestrial protected areas newly created. Total: 210,000 ha (Addo: 135,000 ha, Grasslands: 40,000 ha, Barberton: 35,000 ha). Measured via Government gazette notice of PA declaration.

CI 1.2. Terrestrial Protected Areas under improved management effectiveness. Total: 1,162,100 ha (Addo: 1,015,700 ha, Grasslands: 50,000 ha and Barberton: 96,400 ha). The GEF METT will be used. The areas where the hectares will be achieved per MLL have been identified and are deemed feasible after discussion with SANParks and key stakeholders. The specific METT indicators that will be assessed have been specified. The *physical Protected Areas between GEF 8 and GBFF will overlap* but different management improvements will be measured on the same land.

CI 4.1 Area of landscapes under improved management to benefit biodiversity. Total: 630,300 ha (Addo: 283,000 ha, Grasslands: 200,000 ha, Barberton: 147,300 ha). There are 5 different ways that improved management will be measured in the 3 MLLs:

1. Sustainable Rangeland Management Interventions that involve the partnership with Suitable eco-agri partners will be measured in the Barberton & Grasslands MLLs – this covers 157,300 hectares in Barberton, 215,000 hectares in Grasslands and 15,000 hectares in Addo (on the Mohair Empowerment Trust land). The way this will be monitored is through annual assessment of a) Number of hectares where a Grazing Agreement has been signed between Suitable eco-agri partners and the local communal Farmers Association; b) Annual assessment of whether this Grazing Agreement has been implemented as done by Suitable eco-agri partners and verified for purposes of carbon sequestration with the project providing technical support.

2. Fire management plan and restoration plan in the Grasslands MLL over 215,000 hectares (same hectares as above) of land. The way this will be monitored will be a) the approval of a Fire Management and restoration Plan developed by a specialist consultant; b) Implementation of the plan has begun by supporting partners with the project providing technical support.

3. Developing management plans for registered conservancies in the Addo MLL by the Eastern Cape Conservancies Management Association (ECCMA) over 150,000 hectares of land. The way this will be monitored is through a) Approval of the management plan by the landowner / DEDEAT; and b) Annual assessment of implementation of the plan by the ECCMA with the project providing technical support.

4. Risk assessments and management plans in the Addo MLL by the Citrus Industry over 35,000 hectares of land. The way this will be monitored will be a) the approval of a risk assessments and management plan for individual landowners; and b) Implementation of the plan has begun by the landowners and reflected in their audits with the project providing technical support.

5. Degradation mapping and development of a restoration plan in the Addo MLL of 100,000 hectares. The way this will be monitored will be a) the development of Restoration Plan, endorsed by restoration partners; and b) Integration of the Implementation of the plan has begun by carbon developers with the project providing technical support.

CI 6 Greenhouse Gas Emissions Mitigated (metric ton of CO₂e) -57,405,704 tCO₂-e Greenhouse Gas Emissions Mitigated (metric ton of CO₂e) Measured using the Global Ex-Act tool.

The WWF GEF Agency utilized FAO's EX-Ante Carbon-balance Tool (ExAct) for estimating mitigated carbon emissions from project interventions for the Reimagining National Parks for People and Nature - Mega Living Landscapes project. The Ex-Act tool is a land-based carbon accounting tool designed to estimate carbon stock changes, including Green House Gas (GHG) emissions and emission reductions for project interventions during the implementation and subsequent capitalization of the project.

For this project, The EX-ACT tool was used to calculate the Carbon balance looking at emissions emitted and mitigated for a 20 year time period, as implementation of the project will last 6 years with project activities beginning year 2. For the purposes of the tool, the assumption is made that without the project interventions, the three targeted landscapes would face increasing pressure from high-intensity grazing and lead to further degradation, and with the project interventions the landscapes would be managed more sustainably leading to improved grasslands. Given these assumptions, the amount of

direct carbon emissions mitigated would be approximately 8,697,834 tons of CO₂ equivalent (tCO₂-e) during the 6 years of project implementation. Over the 20 years of project impact, the cumulative indirect emissions would be approximately 57,405,704 tCO₂-e.

CI 11 People benefiting from GEF-financed investments disaggregated by sex (count) 1,772 (60% W, 40% M). Socio-economic benefits are embedded within the development of key sectors within the MLLs. By stimulating and growing these sectors and their associated value chains numerous opportunities will emerge including the creation of SMMEs and jobs. Of these sectors, namely restoration, the wildlife economy and communal livestock initiatives, are traditionally male dominated due to land, livestock/wildlife ownership and the physical intensity of their associated jobs. Programmes such as the GEF8 play a significant role in introducing woman to and supporting them within these roles, therefore the suggested GEF gender split principle of 50- 70% was applied across ecotourism, the wildlife economy, environmental education and restoration. However, for livestock initiatives the split is significantly less at 15% this is mostly due to a lack of interest, land and livestock ownership among females. Therefore, an average of 60% W to 40% M is proposed.

The detailed breakdown of beneficiaries per sector is provided in the Results Framework.

B5 Risks to Project Implementation

Table 14: Risks

RISK CATEGORIES	RATINGS	ASSESSMENT AND MITIGATION MEASURES
CONTEXT		
Climate	Moderate	<p>SA's biodiversity contributes significantly to the national economy, local livelihoods, and climate change resilience. The creation of MLLs enables natural ecosystem linkages for climate change mitigation and adaptation. The project will demonstrate that climate change impacts can be mitigated through the creation of large continuous corridors that allow for species migration and adaption.</p> <p>It is expected that site level activities will have a largely positive impact for both people and biodiversity. Climate change and other environmental uncertainties create risks for agriculture. The adoption of sustainable agricultural and rangeland management practices in the three MLLs considerably reduces the risk by introducing far greater levels of resilience into both the ecological base that provides fodder for the animals and animal production, which is based on healthier animals that are more likely to be able to endure periods of drought and other environmental challenges.</p> <p>By restoring ecosystems, the natural capital upon which human livelihoods and economies depend can be safeguarded, the impacts of climate change can be mitigated.</p> <p>It is noted that climate variability may contribute to climate uncertainty. SA is currently experiencing a period of good rainfall, which is likely to be followed by a period of poor rainfall towards the end of project implementation period. This is likely to have an impact on the resilience of people and nature. This would include improved fire management regimes to reduce the incidence of extreme fire events.</p>
Environment and Social	Moderate	<p>Important to the project preparation process is the principle of 'do no harm'. This principle underlies all engagement with communities, landowners and other stakeholders. This requires looking at the social and environmental issues at play in the three MLLs with care and sensitivity and understanding of the many social problems linked to the high levels of inequality and poverty. The ESMF sets out the potential environmental and social risks of the project and how these can be addressed during implementation. It is however noted that risks are context/landscape related and therefore a case-by-case approach should be applied. To mitigate environmental and social risks, site specific ESMPs and SIPs are required as well as the implementation of the project's SEP and GAP. Guidance on preparing site level ESMPs and SIPs is provided in the ESMF.</p>
Political and Governance	Moderate	<p>South Africa has just come through a period of change in its political landscape. More change is possible during the Local Government Elections which will occur midway through project implementation. This could cause some delays in</p>

		implementation during the run up to the elections. The project however has limited influence over national, provincial and local government political shifts. Project implementation will therefore need to sensitively deal with changes in the political landscape at all levels and respond as these unfold in the three MLLs and nationally.
INNOVATION		
Institutional and Policy	Low	<p>The project will build on and employ strategies and activities that have been thoroughly tested and successfully implemented in various previous interventions, including previous GEF investments. Furthermore, lessons learned from these interventions have been considered and integrated into the project's design, significantly reducing the potential for innovation risks.</p> <p>The practical implementation of the MLL concept is still to be tested particularly in respect to sustaining harmonised conservation approach in large expanses of land belonging to multiple owners. Additionally full impact of the project as per theory of change requires commitment and alignment of multiple stakeholder who are currently at different levels in terms of power, influence and interests in the project.</p> <p>To mitigate potential risks that may arise, the design of the project recognises these factors and relevant performance measures of the PMU, the governing structures of the MLLs and sub- executing agencies will be set to intentionally co - create solutions, be inclusive, be collaborative and foster ease of communication with all key stakeholders and role players in order to fortify alignment and commitment levels of all.</p>
Technological	Low	The project does not include technological innovations.
Financial and Business Model	Low	The project does not include Financial and Business Model Innovations. These are covered in the sister GBFF project.
EXECUTION		
Capacity for Implementation	High	<p>Despite institutional weaknesses in some parts of the state, South Africa has a history of close to 30 years of strong project implementation and sustainability within the biodiversity conservation sector.</p> <p>Component 1 of the project focuses on strengthening institutions and building partnerships for collaborative implementation at MLL level. Lessons learned from existing landscape level collaborative platforms that are operational in SA have been incorporated into project design.</p> <p>Furthermore, the capabilities aspects of the project are aimed at the level of the individual within institutions and will contribute to repositioning SANParks and MLLs Hub partners to undertake landscape scale conservation.</p> <p>The policy environment in the sector continues to be robust and enabling. The project contributes significantly to the new White Paper and Biodiversity Economy Strategy.</p>

		A key mitigant against this risk is that the project has placed the building of institutional capabilities across the public, private, NGO and community sectors as key outputs across components of the project.
Fiduciary	Moderate	<p>The conservation sector has an excellent track record of financial responsibility as does SANParks which is a government entity with decades of clean audit reports. As part of the project preparation phase, a due diligence of SANParks and potential sub-executing entities was undertaken.</p> <p>Challenges with procurement within the public sector are being addressed through the selection of carefully vetted sub-executing partners from the NGO sector who can more nimbly and efficiently facilitate these processes.</p>
Stakeholder	Moderate	<p>This project is not likely to experience significant stakeholder engagement challenges. The project design team has engaged with an extensive range of stakeholders across the three MLLs and nationally. Stakeholders consulted have demonstrated a high level of interest in the project and willingness to engage and participate. It is however important to note that engaging with communities requires a facilitative approach to build and maintain trust.</p> <p>A detailed SEP has been developed to guide implementation. This includes guidance on applying the project's Grievance Redress Mechanisms, enabling stakeholders to report any concerns that may emerge during project implementation.</p> <p>Furthermore, the ESMP includes a detailed Social Inclusion Plan to facilitate engagement with all stakeholders, particularly vulnerable groups (women, youth and communities in traditional authority areas).</p>
Other	Not rated	N/A
Overall Risk Rating	Moderate	<p>The overall risk rating is Moderate. The large percentage of the risk categories above have been rated moderate, with some being rated low. The overall risk rating was determined based on two methods. Firstly, a weighted average calculation of the risks was done. There are a total of 9 risks - 1 high, 3 low and 5 moderate. Where low = 1 point, moderate = 2 points and high = 3 points; added up this = 16/9 risks = 1.8. As 1 = low and 2 = moderate, it was logical to make the overall risk rating moderate. Secondly a qualitative view was taken where the Impact on Project Quality should the risk event occur and the Likelihood of a risk event occurring were considered together.</p>

C. ALIGNMENT OF GEF-8 PROGRAMMING STRATEGIES AND COUNTRY/REGIONAL PRIORITIES

This catalytic GEF-8 investment to pilot MLLs aligns with GEF-8 programming strategies and country priorities:

- **Contributing to the GEF8 Biodiversity Focal Area Objective 1: Improve Conservation, Sustainable Use, and Restoration of Natural Ecosystems**
 - The project adopts an integrated landscape management approach through the establishment of the MLLs, integrating investments in protected areas and sustainable production and sustainable socioeconomic initiatives. This strategy supports large-scale mosaics combining conservation, sustainable use, and production systems, using multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder tools to address biodiversity loss drivers.
 - Protected areas exist within mixed-use landscapes facing pressures from agriculture, and other sectors. The integrated approach of this project aims for durable conservation outcomes by aligning ecological, economic, and social objectives. It emphasizes cross-sectoral policy coherence, local economic development, and institutional collaboration, recognizing the role of Local Communities and promoting their participation and rights.
 - The Project is demonstrating global biodiversity benefits, using recognized criteria (e.g., species richness, ecological integrity), including integrated strategies will including protected area expansion, Strengthening the effectiveness, financial sustainability, and coverage of protected areas, supporting IP&LCs in co-management models, socioeconomic activities, governance, capacity building, and ensuring that protected areas remain a core land-use strategy, aligned with GBF Target 3.
- **Aligning with Country Priorities:**
 - The National Development Plan (NDP) 2030 emphasises environmental and biodiversity protection to address South Africa's critical development challenge of accelerating growth while reducing inequality.
 - The White Paper on Conservation and Sustainable Use of SA's Biodiversity and its four pillars.
 - The National Biodiversity Strategic Action Plan (NBSAP).
 - SANParks' Vision 2040 which provides the framework for Mega Living Landscapes is a transformative strategy to guide the future of conservation in South Africa. It envisions a future where nature, heritage, and conservation are integral to every South African's life, and where human well-being is deeply intertwined with environmental health and sustainability.
 - South Africa's National Protected Area Expansion Strategy (NPAES) provides a comprehensive framework to expand the country's protected areas to ensure ecological sustainability and resilience to climate change.
- **Supporting Multilateral Agreements:**
 - The Convention on Biodiversity, specifically the 2022 COP15 GBF agreement, includes target 3: conserve and manage at least 30% of the world's lands, inland waters, coastal areas, and oceans, restore 30% of degraded lands by 2030, and secure \$200 billion per year for biodiversity.
 - The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, referencing the 2022 COP27.
 - The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).
- **Aligning with KMGBF Targets:**
 - Supporting South Africa's contribution to **KMGBF's Target 3 through** the expansion and improved management of protected areas and landscapes under improved management to benefit biodiversity. The project's component 3 will also contribute in a lesser extent to other KMGBF Targets, i.e., Targets **1** on spatial planning for land, **2** on ecosystem restoration, **4** on species conservation, and **6** on invasive alien species.

- The project intentionally supports IP&LC groups and ensures their participation in decision-making, access to justice, and information related to biodiversity for all, thus contributing to the fulfilment of **KMGBF Target 22**. Further, the project is designed to be gender inclusive across all project components, advancing South Africa's commitment to **KMGBF Target 23**.

D. POLICY REQUIREMENTS

Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

We confirm that gender dimensions relevant to the project have been addressed during Project Preparation as per GEF Policy and are clearly articulated in the Project Description (Section B).

☒ Yes

1) Does the project expect to include any gender-responsive measures to address gender gaps or promote gender equality and women's empowerment?

☒ Yes

If the project expects to include any gender-responsive measures to address gender gaps or promote gender equality and women empowerment, please indicate in which results area(s) the project is expected to contribute to gender equality:

- ☐ closing gender gaps in access to and control over natural resources;
- ☒ improving women's participation and decision-making; and/or
- ☒ generating socio-economic benefits or services for women.

2) Does the project's results framework or logical framework include gender-sensitive indicators?

☒ Yes

Despite decades of efforts, progress in improving women's lives remains inconsistent and off track, particularly in South Africa. Environmental benefits and burdens affecting human capabilities and social conditions are inequitably distributed between women and men.

South Africa is a highly unequal and patriarchal society characterised by high levels of gender-based violence, poverty, and exclusion. Women continue to be economically, socially, and politically marginalised due to societal norms that hinder their access to opportunities. South Africa ranks 18th on the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index, scoring ninth overall for political empowerment. However, this has not translated into gender parity across other dimensions.

Guided by policy documents such as the Global Environment Facility Policy on Gender Equality and its accompanying guidelines, WWF's Statement of Principles on Gender Equality, and other relevant WWF documents, the Gender Analysis investigated core areas including:

1. Gender roles, responsibilities, and time use
2. Patterns of power and decision-making
3. Access to and control over knowledge, assets, and resources
4. Gaps and opportunities in South African laws/regulations/policies on gender and GBV/SEAH related to the project

Understanding exclusion is critical to designing gender-responsive and socially inclusive interventions. This GEF 8 Gender Action Plan aligns with the project's Environmental and Social Safeguards Framework and the Stakeholder Engagement Plan, emphasising the inclusion of marginalised groups in project implementation.

Quantitative and qualitative data collection methods were utilised, including documentary review, stakeholder engagement, field visits, key informant interviews, and focus group discussions. Primary data collection occurred in August and September 2024 across three MLLs, involving 97 women and three men from 12 villages and three towns. Respondents were largely unemployed, except for Greater Addo groups engaged in construction, natural resource management, and restoration activities.

The Gender Action Plan includes actions to ensure gender responsiveness and social inclusion:

- Provision for gender equality and women empowerment indicators in the Project Results Framework and budget.
- Consideration of the GAP alongside the Environmental and Social Safeguards Framework and the Stakeholder Engagement Plan during implementation.
- Regular gender mainstreaming training for project staff and partners.
- Prioritisation of gender and social inclusion issues at the MLL level.
- Allocation of sufficient project capacity and resources.
- Measures to avoid, mitigate, or manage adverse gender impacts.
- Utilisation of traditional, religious, and community leaders as entry points for gender mainstreaming.
- Facilitate full participation and decision-making capacity of women and marginalised groups in project activities.
- Development of project-appropriate capabilities and socio-economic activities through community consultation.
- Monitoring and reporting on gender mainstreaming.
- Ensuring project grievance mechanisms address gender equality and social inclusion.
- Creation of thematic exposure visit opportunities between MLLs.
- Considering a broader definition of gender beyond binary definitions.

See Gender Analysis and Gender Action Plan in separated Documents attached.

Stakeholder Engagement

We confirm that key stakeholders were consulted during Project Preparation as required per GEF policy, their relevant roles to project outcomes has been clearly articulated in the Project Description (Section B) and that a Stakeholder Engagement Plan has been developed before CEO endorsement.

Select what role civil society will play in the project:

Member of Advisory Body; Contractor: ☒ Yes

Member of PSC: ☒ Yes

Executor or co-executor: ☒ Yes

A comprehensive stakeholder analysis was undertaken during the PPG phase. Based on this analysis, a Stakeholder Engagement Plan that ensures inclusivity during project implementation and participation of the full spectrum of stakeholders in the Reimagining National Parks for People and Nature – Mega Living Landscapes Project has been developed. See Annex F: Stakeholder Engagement Plan, this details on the project's action plan for stakeholder involvement and participation. The project approach to stakeholder involvement and participation during project implementation is briefly summarised below.

The project unites stakeholders, including government, civil society, local communities, women and youth, and the private sector to ensure inclusive and participatory planning, decision-making, monitoring, and knowledge-sharing. Engagement processes within each MLL will build on legitimate and credible existing institutional frameworks, considering local customary norms. Within the first six months of project implementation, further consultations and verification of the initial stakeholder mapping will be conducted, ensuring the inclusion of traditional leadership, Indigenous Knowledge communities, the People and Parks Forum, indigent communities, and individuals.

The project's stakeholder engagement approach is premised on the principles outlined in the table below.

Table 15: Stakeholder engagement approach

Principle	Stakeholder participation will:
Value Adding	be an essential means of adding value to the project
Inclusivity	include all relevant stakeholders
Accessibility and Access	be accessible and promote access to the process
Transparency	be based on transparency and fair access to information; main provisions of the project's plans and results will be published in local mass-media
Fairness	ensure that all stakeholders are treated in a fair and unbiased way
Accountability	be based on a commitment to accountability by all stakeholders
Constructive	seek to manage conflict and promote the public interest
Redressing	seek to redress inequity and injustice
Capacitating	seek to develop the capacity and capabilities of all stakeholders
Needs Based	be based on the needs of all stakeholders
Flexible	be flexibly designed and implemented
Rational and Coordinated	be rationally planned and coordinated, and not be ad hoc
Excellence	be subject to ongoing reflection and improvement

The project's design incorporates several approaches to ensure ongoing and effective stakeholder participation throughout project's implementation. The principles to facilitate involvement and active participation of different stakeholders in project implementation are summarised in the table contained in section B5 above.

See the Project Stakeholder Engagement Plan in a separated document attached.

Private Sector

There will be private sector engagement in the project.

☒ Yes

Its role been described and justified in the section B project description. During the PPG phase this will be further unpacked.

☒ Yes

The project will develop and maintain equitable partnerships with the private sector to create nature-based tourism and wildlife offerings in and around protected areas within the three MLLs. This includes supporting and developing Small, Micro, and Medium Enterprises (SMMEs). Bespoke Community Public-Private Partnerships (C-

PPPs) will be explored for tourism initiatives as appropriate, facilitating entrepreneurial and employment opportunities and generating sustainable revenue streams for targeted communities in traditional authority areas.

Through strategic investment plans for restoration, the project will foster private sector partnerships linked to corporate socio-economic development (SED) and enterprise development (ED) obligations, as well as emerging opportunities related to environmental, social, and governance (ESG) obligations. These plans will also attract private sector investment partners where there are opportunities to profit from biomass utilisation (e.g., charcoal, biochar, woodchips production) and generate carbon credits, potentially including biodiversity credits and biodiversity impact bonds.

Environmental and Social Safeguards

We confirm that we have provided information regarding Environmental and Social risks associated with the proposed project or program, including risk screenings/ assessments and, if applicable, management plans or other measures to address identified risks and impacts (this information is presented in Annex E).

☒ Yes

Please provide overall Project/Program Risk Classification = Moderate

Given its location, activities, and potential impacts, the project is categorised as Category B for Environmental and Social Safeguards risk. The project activities' precise scope and location will be determined during implementation, and therefore, site-specific social and environmental impacts can only be estimated based on current information.

The following WWF Environmental and Social Safeguards Standards apply to the project:

- Stakeholder Engagement
- Grievance Mechanisms
- Protection of Natural Habitats
- Community Health and Security.

Depending on site-based activities, the following standards may also apply:

- Involuntary Resettlement and Restriction of Access
- Cultural Resources.

These are triggered on a precautionary basis. The ESMF guides actions if these Standards are confirmed through an annual ESS Screening process.

The Standard on Indigenous People is not triggered, as no self-identifying Indigenous peoples reside within the three MLLs. While the Khoi-San, South Africa's Indigenous Peoples, were assimilated into colonial and apartheid society, the ESMF includes a Social Inclusion Planning Framework to engage all social groups and vulnerable community members appropriately. Given Africa's complex social, cultural, and political contexts, the project adopts a social inclusion approach to address issues facing marginalised and vulnerable groups. The SIPF will ensure that the needs and interests of all social groups and land-user collectives within local communities inform project implementation. If the annual ESS Screening identifies self-identifying Indigenous people, an Indigenous Peoples Plan will be developed per WWF's SIPP, GEF policy, and relevant national laws.

The ESMF includes a Process Framework and a SIPF aligned with the SEP and the GAP. See the ESMF and Safeguards Categorization Memo in Annex F attached.

E. OTHER REQUIREMENTS

Knowledge Management

We confirm that an approach to Knowledge Management and Learning has been clearly described during Project Preparation in the Project Description and that these activities have been budgeted and an anticipated timeline for delivery of relevant outputs has been provided.

☒ Yes

This GEF 8-funded Mega Living Landscapes (MLL) project emphasises robust knowledge management to enhance conservation efforts, foster collaboration, and ensure sustainable development. The project aims to create a dynamic and collaborative environment by integrating a portfolio of knowledge management interventions. The project will establish a comprehensive knowledge-sharing platform to consolidate best practices and lessons learned.

The project will establish formal collaborative partnerships to strengthen knowledge management further. Potential strategic partners will be identified, including conservation organisations, local governments, and private stakeholders. Partnership agreements will be developed and formalised, facilitating regular meetings and joint initiatives that ensure continuous engagement and effective knowledge exchange.

Another key component of the project is fostering knowledge sharing and resource mobilisation. Joint knowledge-sharing events and resource mobilisation activities will be organised, leveraging collective expertise and securing additional funding. The project will also conduct Community of Practice (CoP) workshops, and lessons learnt events. Growing the CoP membership is essential for a diverse and engaged community. CoP membership will be promoted to conservation professionals, community members, and policymakers through membership drives and outreach activities.

The strategic approach to knowledge management empowers stakeholders, enhances conservation efforts, and drives sustainable development, ensuring the project's success and long-term impact.

Socio-economic Benefits Yes

We confirm that the project design has considered socio-economic benefits to be delivered by the project and these have been clearly described in the Project Description and will be monitored and reported on during project implementation (at MTR and TER). Details of the numbers of direct beneficiaries are set out in the Results Framework and are not repeated here.

ANNEX A: FINANCING TABLES

GEF Financing Table

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 \$)			
					Grant/Non-Grant (For NGL Projects Only)	GEF Project Grant	Agency Fee	Total GEF Financing
WWF-US	GETF	Africa	Biodiversity		N/a	8,874,312	798,688	9,673,000
Total GEF Resources								9,673,000

Project Preparation Grant (PPG)

Is Project Preparation Grant requested? ☒ Yes

GEF Agency	Trust Fund	Country/ Regional/Global	Focal Area	Programming of Funds	(in \$)		
					PPG	Agency Fee	Total PPG Funding
WWF-US	GEFTF	Africa	Biodiversity	BD STAR Allocation	273,000	27,000	300,000
Total PPG Amount							300,000

Sources of Funds for Country STAR Allocation

GEF Agency	Trust Fund	Country/ Regional/Global	Focal Area	Source of Funds	Total
(Select)	GEF TF	Africa	Biodiversity	BD STAR Allocation	10,000,000
Total GEF Resources					10,000,000

Focal Area Elements

Programming Directions	Trust Fund	(in \$)	
		GEF Project Financing	Co-financing
BD-1-1	GET	8,874,312	62,042,930
Total Project Cost		8,874,312	62,042,930

Confirmed Co-financing for the project, by name and type

SOURCES OF CO-FINANCING	NAME OF CO-FINANCIER	TYPE OF CO-FINANCING	INVESTMENT TYPE	TOTAL (USD)
NGO	Conservation South Africa	In-Kind	Recurrent Expenditure	850,000

NGO	Environmental & Rural Solutions	In-Kind	Recurrent Expenditure	114,000
NGO	Environmental & Rural Solutions	Grants	Investment Mobilized	163,000
NGO	Wilderness Foundation Africa	In-Kind	Recurrent Expenditure	1,720,396
NGO	WWF South Africa	In-Kind	Recurrent Expenditure	846,053
NGO	WWF South Africa	Grants	Investment Mobilized	2,657,548
WWF GEF Agency	WWF US	In-Kind	Recurrent Expenditure	1,064,917
NGO	Care for Wild	In-Kind	Recurrent Expenditure	34,905,071
NGO	Care for Wild	Grants	Investment Mobilized	2,564,691
Recipient Country Government	SANParks	In-Kind	Recurrent Expenditure	9,712,810
Recipient Country Government	SANParks	Grant	Investment Mobilized	7,444,444
TOTAL CO-FINANCING				62,042,930

ANNEX B: ENDORSEMENTS

Name of GEF Agency Coordinator	GEF Agency Coordinator Contact Information
Renae Stenhouse	renae.stenghouse@wwfus.org
Name of Agency Project Coordinator	Agency Project Coordinator Contact Information
Isabel Filiberto	isabel.filiberto@wwfus.org

Compilation of Letters of Endorsement

See document attached

ANNEX C: PROJECT RESULTS FRAMEWORK

Note: due to the alignment between this project and the GBFF project, it is advisable to also read the GBFF Results Framework. Because more budget is allocated under the GBFF for local community benefits, most local beneficiaries appear in the GBFF Results Framework.

Key to the Table below:

1. There are 3 Mega Living Landscapes (MLL) – Barberton-Makhonjwa, Grasslands and Greater Addo – with targets often disaggregated per MLL.
2. PMU = Project Management Unit, which is the nationally located Unit within SANParks for the project, fulfilling normal GEF PMU responsibilities.
3. MLL Hub = within each MLL a Unit (called a Hub) is created which is responsible for delivering the activities within each MLL. These Hubs contain staff from the sub-executing agent and contracted human resources to fulfil the project activities at the landscape level.
4. As this is the 6-year project, with the mid-term review occurring in Q4 of year 3.
5. This Table only provides targets for what this project with its resources can reasonably achieve and be assessed against. It does not reflect the higher expectations of all involved in the establishment of MLLs and the multiplying impacts of stakeholders.
6. Figures generally are not cumulative, except for the total column which is cumulative as it adds all the amounts up to get a total over the 6 years.
7. The Project Objective level of this Table only reflects the core GEF indicators – hectares and beneficiaries. The Component and Outcome levels below provide targets and measures towards achieving the targets at the objective level.
8. Outcome 3.1 Area (ha) of PAs Areas under improved management effectiveness involves the improvement of METT scores from the baseline.
 - 8.1. At the Objective level the quantum of hectares when the METT score has improved is also measured.
 - 8.2. A detailed list of each PA and their METT scores will be provided when the assessment occurs.
9. Under Outcome 3.1 – Areas of landscape under improved management to benefit biodiversity, the means of assessment and verification include:
 - 9.1. #hectares of sustainable agriculture land where a) grazing agreements between communal farmers and partners in Barberton and Grasslands or development of sustainable grazing plans have been developed & are being implemented. In Greater Addo # hectares where grazing agreement integrated into the Mt Zebra Camdeboo Protected Environmental in Greater Addo.
 - 9.2. # hectares with restoration plan (including fire management) in the Grasslands MLL – measured by a) the approval of a Fire Management and Restoration Plan developed by a specialist consultant; b) Implementation of the plan has begun by supporting partners with the project providing technical support.
 - 9.3. # hectares of land covered by management plans for registered conservancies in the Greater Addo MLL by the Eastern Cape Conservancies Management Association (ECCMA) – measured by a) Approval of the management plan by the landowner / DEDEAT; and b) Annual assessment of implementation of the plan by the EECMA with the project providing technical support.
 - 9.4. # hectares covered by restoration plan in the Greater Addo MLL – measured by a) the development of Restoration Plan, endorsed by restoration partners; and b) Integration of the Implementation of the plan has begun by carbon developers with the project providing technical support.
 - 9.5. # hectares covered by implemented citrus risk assessment and management plan. Measured by
 - 9.6. Identify, audit and prioritise viable communal land, land reform properties and traditional authorities for the wildlife economy, conservation and sustainable agriculture. i.e. understand ownership/land tenure (e.g. Private, Communal, Land reform, Traditional authorities); understand current land use practices; and supportive policy environment to inform compatible land use mosaic supporting wildlife and conservation economies.
 - 9.7. Prioritize land audits for open and adjacent areas to conservation/protected areas to enable appropriate co-management agreements through various stewardship/protected area models.

- 9.8. Prioritize land reform farms and communal land for diversified biodiversity opportunities and stewardship incentives.
10. Under component 2 (socio-economic benefits) the following applies:
- 10.1. Projects are subject to extensive consultation with local communities.
 - 10.2. The Social Impact Assessment Report is often used to verify the beneficiary numbers and impacts.
 - 10.3. SMMEs are assessed using the Social Impact Report. The Table assumes that only one beneficiary is counted per SMME, even though an SMME may benefit more than one individual. The Social Impact report will provide this information.
 - 10.4. Where people are trained, they will undertake a competencies test. It is assumed that 80% will pass the test, to be counted as a beneficiary.
 - 10.5. Where people participate in the environmental education programme, it is assumed that there is an 80% increase in awareness, to be assessed by the Social Impact Report.
 - 10.6. Socio-economic benefits will include economic growth, poverty reduction, education, skills development, and job creation, especially opportunities in conservation, tourism, and biodiversity economy.
 - 10.7. SMMEs and Community-Based Institutions (CBIs) are assessed using the Social Impact Report. The Table assumes that only one beneficiary is counted per SMME, even though an SMME may benefit more than one individual. The Social Impact report will provide this information.
 - 10.8. Training for the supported SMMEs and CBIs will include technical, leadership, and business management skills, leadership learning exchange, mentorship, and coaching to ensure business sustainability and competitiveness.
 - 10.9. Assistance to the SMMEs and CBIs within the MLLs, especially those neighbouring the national parks, to include business conceptualisation, development of feasibility studies and bankable business plans for identified businesses by emerging enterprises.
 - 10.10. Facilitation of collaborations and linkages with Municipalities IDP initiatives, private game farms and commercial farmers.
 - 10.11. Assisting communities neighbouring parks and nature reserves with the development of beneficiation schemes.
 - 10.12. Where communities participate in the co-management agreements and beneficiation schemes, the Social Impact Report will measure whether they indicate improved livelihoods.
11. GEF 8 results are reflected here, while those funded by GBFF finance are reflected in the GBFF Results Framework. Despite the GEF 8 and GBFF projects both implementing similar socio-economic interventions, beneficiaries are not double counted.

GEF 8 Results Framework							Targets						
No.	Indicator	Indicator Definition	Method/ source	Who Responsible	Disaggregation	Baseline	YR1	YR2	YR3	YR 4	YR5	YR 6	Total for project
Objective Level Indicator													
Project Objective: Pioneer the establishment of three Mega Living Landscapes (MLLs), including a mosaic of Protected Areas and production landscapes, to conserve biodiversity rich land, foster sustainable economic opportunities for local communities and build robust conservation management institutions, thereby demonstrating the transformative potential of the MLL concept.													

GEF 8 Results Framework

							Targets						
No.	Indicator	Indicator Definition	Method/ source	Who Responsible	Disaggregation	Baseline	YR1	YR2	YR3	YR 4	YR5	YR 6	Total for project
1	Terrestrial protected areas newly created (# ha) (GEF Core indicator 1.1) (annual additional ha in brackets).	# of hectares declared	PA declaration notice in terms of NEM: Protected Areas Act	MLL Hubs and PMU and partner NGOs	By MLL	0			65 000			145 000	210 000
2	Terrestrial protected areas under improved management effectiveness (#ha) (GEF Core Indicator 1.2.)	Improved Management Effectiveness: #ha where there is any increase in METT score, all areas of the IUCN protected area will count as improved	METT tool completed years 3 and 6. The name, WDPA ID, size, IUCN protected area category (Categories I–VI) 10, and METT score (see link below) should be indicated. The Sub-Indicator will be calculated based on the protected areas that show an increase in METT score. In cases where the protected area does not fit IUCN criteria (e.g., ICCAs), “Other Category” should be noted. METT score	MLL Hubs and PMU	By MLL	By MLL			318,647			1 162 100	1 162 100
3	Area of landscapes under improved management to benefit biodiversity (GEF Core Indicator 4.1.)	(a) #ha covered by signed and implemented grazing agreement (b) #ha covered by and implemented Restoration Plan (incl fire management) (c) #ha covered by implemented management plans for registered conservancies (d) #ha covered by implemented citrus risk assessment and management plan (e) #ha covered by degradation maps and related restoration plan, where carbon developers have begun implementation	Various methods to assess improvements in sustainable agriculture, restoration economy, wildlife economy and in citrus industry. See detailed notes above Table.	MLL Hubs and PMU	N/A	N/A	0	0	393 000	0	80 000	157 300	630 300

GEF 8 Results Framework

							Targets						
No.	Indicator	Indicator Definition	Method/ source	Who Responsible	Disaggregation	Baseline	YR1	YR2	YR3	YR 4	YR5	YR 6	Total for project
4	People benefiting from GEF-financed investments (GEF Core Indicator 11)	Number of people who receive targeted support or assistance from the GEF-financed project. Beneficiary should be aware they are receiving support and/or use specific resources. (Note: 1 SMME = 1 beneficiary)	A Social Impact Report is done in years 2, 4 & 6 to measure the number of beneficiaries. Records of individuals against ID numbers to avoid double-counting. For training: records of training & competency test which assumes that 80% pass.	MLL Hubs and PMU	MLL Hubs and PMU		58	468	365	524	169	188	1 772
4.1	People benefiting from training	Number of trained people	Records of training and competencies achieved	As below	As below	0	8	36	52	40	16	0	152
4.2	People benefiting from jobs and community entrepreneurial opportunities through development of the tourism economy	Number of jobs created for local communities and SMMEs through development of the tourism economy	Number of beneficiaries as recorded in socio-economic impact report	MLL Hubs	By gender (50% W)	0	0	0	5	10	5	5	25
4.3	Communal livestock owners & traditional community residents with improved livelihoods due to improved sustainable agriculture	Number of communal livestock owners & traditional community residents with improved livelihoods through sustainable agriculture.	Number of beneficiaries as recorded in socio-economic impact report	MLL Hubs	See below	0	50	260	140	140	140	0	730
4.4	People benefiting from training and community entrepreneurial opportunities through development of the wildlife economy	Number of people trained and SMMEs through development of the wildlife economy	Records of training and competencies achieved. AND Number of beneficiaries as recorded in socio-economic impact report.	MLL Hubs	By MLL By gender (50% W)	0	0	8	8	10	8	19	53

GEF 8 Results Framework

							Targets						
No.	Indicator	Indicator Definition	Method/ source	Who Responsible	Disaggregation	Baseline	YR1	YR2	YR3	YR 4	YR5	YR 6	Total for project
4.5	People benefiting from community entrepreneurial opportunities unlocked in restoration economy and environmental awareness	Number of SMMEs through development of the restoration economy and numbers of people with increased environmental awareness.	Number of beneficiaries as recorded in socio-economic impact report.	See below	See below	0	0	162	160	322	0	162	806
5	Greenhouse Gas Emissions Mitigated	Greenhouse Gas Emissions Mitigated (metric ton of CO2e) Measured using the Global Ex-Act tool.		PMU	-	0	-	-	-	-	-	57,405,704	57,405,704

Outcome Level Indicators

Component 1: Creating sustainable MLL institutional mechanisms and governance structures

Outcome 1. 1 1.1 MLLs established through inclusive institutional and governance structures (MLL Hubs), vision and planning frameworks.

6	Level of progress to achieve Vision & Framework Plans in the three MLL landscapes	Progress: see methods	<p>Progress will be assessed according to completeness along the following scale: Incomplete= 0 Partially complete: .5 Mostly complete: .75 Complete: 1</p> <p>The progress will be measured against milestones expected at each year: Y1: (#) Development of TORs for consultancy issued by MLI Hub. Y2: (#) Draft Framework Plans finalized Y3: (#) Framework Plans endorsed by collaborative platform Y4-6: (#) Framework Plans under implementation</p>	MLL Hubs and PMU	By MLL	None	3	3	3	3	3	3	3 plans
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GEF 8 Results Framework

							Targets						
No.	Indicator	Indicator Definition	Method/ source	Who Responsible	Disaggregation	Baseline	YR1	YR2	YR3	YR 4	YR5	YR 6	Total for project
7	Collaborative multistakeholder platforms	Number of collaborative multistakeholder platforms that meet annually with participation of the majority of the participants	Records of collaborative platforms as established in each of the 3 MLLs	MLL Hubs	By MLL. By gender (50% W)	None	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Outcome 1.2: Capabilities of SANParks, MLL governance members and management teams, local community leadership increased for effective management of MLL.													
8	Training courses designed	Number of training courses designed	Training course designed	PMU (with support of SANParks Learning and Development Unit)	None	None	3	0	0	0	0	0	3
Component 2: Fostering and enhancing sustainable economic opportunities & socio-economic empowerment													
Outcome 2.1: Increased biodiversity-positive sustainable socio-economic empowerment and development, owned by local stakeholders and benefiting local communities in the 3 MLLs.													
9	Percent increase in tourism numbers	Tourism: increase in tourist visitors to AENP.	As recorded in socio-economic impact report. Tourism commercialization strategy for north-western part of AENP to stimulate tourism.	MLL Hubs	By MLL	None	0	Baseline survey	0	5% increase	0	10% increase	10% increase
10	Progress towards restoration strategic investment plan and program as approved by MLL Hub	Strategic investment plan: MLL restoration investment plans and guidelines developed to stimulate restoration economy.	Progress assessed by 1) restoration strategic investment plan developed; 2) Progress report on implementation in years 4 and 6.	MLL Hubs	By MLL	None	0	3	0	0	0	0	3
Component 3: Improving Inclusive Conservation in the MLLs													
Outcome 3.1 Increased area of PAs newly created, and area of existing PAs with improved effective management, delivered through a new inclusive and collaborative conservation model in the 3 MLLs.													
11	TOTAL Number of Protected Area (PA) submissions across project (annual additional ha in brackets).	Submission: Project Management Unit submits submission for declaration of new PAs to govt per National Environmental Management Protected Areas Act (NEMPAA).	Submission documentation	MLL Hubs and PMU and partner NGOs	By MLL	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	9
12	Biodiversity Management Plans Developed	Number of Biodiversity Management Plans Developed	Biodiversity management plan developed	MLL Hubs and PMU	N/A	0	0	3	0	4	0	0	7
Component 4: Knowledge management.													
Outcome 4.1: Increased awareness & knowledge amongst SANParks & key MLL partners on relevant MLL topics and experiences.													

GEF 8 Results Framework

							Targets						
No.	Indicator	Indicator Definition	Method/ source	Who Responsible	Disaggregation	Baseline	YR1	YR2	YR3	YR 4	YR5	YR 6	Total for project
13	Working & learning sessions of PMU and MLL Hub staff & implementing partners.	Number of working sessions of PMU & MLL Hubs staff & implementation partners - 3 per year (2 face-to-face and 1 online) where they undertake collaborative planning & share lessons and knowledge.	Records of the Working Sessions – notes, presentations	PMU and MLL Hubs	By MLL By gender (50% W)	0	3	3	3	3	3	3	18
		MLL Indaba	Records of the Indaba – notes, presentations, media briefings	PMU	By institution & gender (50% W)	N/A				1			1
14	Number of knowledge and communication products	Knowledge: studies/evidence products that are developed for use internally and with external stakeholders for learning purposes. Communication products: outward facing documents used for awareness-raising and information sharing	Overlap/double-counting will be avoided between KM and comms products.	PMU and MLL Hubs	By institution & gender (50% W)	N/A	1	1	1	2	1	2	8
Component 5: Monitoring and evaluation													
Outcome 5.1: Effective, informed, and adaptive project management.													
15	Project Progress Reports, including financial reports, completed and / or supported (including mid-term and final evaluations).	Number of Project Progress Reports, including financial reports, completed and / or supported (including mid-term and final evaluations). Number of progress reports are cumulative.	Reports – evaluation documents	PMU M&E	Progress reports	0	2	2	2	2	2	2	12
					Mid-term evaluation	0				1			1
					Final evaluation	0						1	1
16	Working sessions where reflections are worked into AWP and/or theory of change	Number of working sessions: teams will hold at minimum one workshop per year to reflect on M&E data, and other reflections on what works, doesn't work, and how to improve the project moving forward	Reflection notes from working sessions. Incorporation of the reflection exercise into each MLL AWP means lessons learned and revised project logic result in adaptations to strategic interventions & activities. Findings from working sessions (3.1 above) fed into Annual Work Plan (AWP) – targets are Per MLL	Each MLL Hub Landscape Coordinator	1 per MLL starting in year 2 reflecting lessons from year 1 in year 2's AWP.	0	0	3	3	3	3	3	15

ANNEX D: STATUS OF UTILIZATION OF PROJECT PREPARATION GRANT (PPG)

Provide detailed funding amount of the PPG activities financing status in the table below:

Project Preparation Activities Implemented	GETF/LDCF/SCCF Amount (\$)		
	Budgeted amount	Amount spent to date	Amount committed
Project Development and Design (National consultancies to develop technical situation analysis, project options and capacity of executing partners assessments, travel cost for consultants and local experts, and technical workshops)	67,950	44,167	23,783
Gender and Safeguards Assessments (including Safeguards Disclosure activities)	141,090	106,096	34,994
Stakeholder Engagement	90,960	90,960	-
Total	300,000	241,223	58,777

ANNEX E: PROJECT MAP AND COORDINATES

See document attached

ANNEX F: ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL SAFEGUARDS DOCUMENTS INCLUDING RATING

See document attached

ANNEX G: BUDGET TABLE

(See attached document)

ANNEX I: RESPONSE MATRIX TO COUNCIL MEMBERS COMMENTS

COUNCIL MEMBER COMMENT	AGENCY RESPONSE
<p>United States Comments</p> <p>1• All biodiversity is important for nature conservation. There is not an internationally recognized definition for megadiversity and thus it should not be included as a rationale for receiving GEF funding.</p> <p>Denmark/Norway Comments</p> <p>2• The Application states that the stakeholder engagement has been excellent (page 29). However, it seems like Indigenous Peoples and Local communities have not been consulted (page 31, page 11 section 3)?</p> <p>3• The Application provides a good background in general to the key problems behind conservation and social-/economic development, however it doesn't clearly describe the main reasons to why the 3 project areas are currently not being well managed. A bit more background information for these areas specifically would be beneficial.</p> <p>4• This would also provide more information to the logic behind the ToC and outcomes which are, in part, not fully clear (ex. page 19 section Outcome 1.1, page 21 Component 2).</p> <p>5• There are three main components of this project. Regarding component 3 "Increase knowledge sharing on the benefits of Mega Living Landscapes (MLL) amongst society". Is there already extensive knowledge about MLL's positive benefits that can be shared at the start of the project, or will the potential benefits of this specific project be shared? If the latter, the project needs to carefully monitor the "benefits" and have a plan for how to communicate results as the project is ongoing (real-time Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning)</p> <p>6• Risk mitigation strategies: there is not sufficient description of how to mitigate mentioned risks.</p> <p>7• Annex E: Rio markers: the project is marked as significant (1) for Biodiversity. Shouldn't the project be marked as principle (2)? (The OECD-definition of principal is "an activity can be marked as principal when the objective (biodiversity) is explicitly stated as fundamental</p>	<p>1. Post PIF and as contained in the CEODoc, the key biodiversity of the 3 Mega Living Landscapes has been described which clarifies that the rationale for receiving GEF funding is not because SA is a megadiverse country. See the section "Environmental Context" which references SA's National Biodiversity Assessment (NBSAP, 2018) providing data such as the fact that half of the 1,021 ecosystem types are threatened with 22% of endemic taxa are threatened with extinction. The development of the 3 Mega Living Landscapes will contribute an additional 4.4% of land under conservation as part of SA's commitment to meeting 30x30.</p> <p>2. Post PIF and as part of the PPG phase stakeholder engagement between April and October 2024 involved more than 100 consultation sessions, including bespoke engagement with women and youth within local communities inform the Gender Analysis and Action Plan, and traditional authorities' resident in the MLLs. Local communities are the primary beneficiaries and are important stakeholders to this project. They will be part of the regular landscape collaboration platform meetings. Please see the section "Project stakeholders." and Annex D "Stakeholder Engagement Plan".</p> <p>3 and 4. Additional paragraphs have been added to the section "Barriers" to explain better why the 3 MLLs are not currently being well managed, which also provides a better explanation for the logic of the TOC as it relates to outcome 1.1 (vision and plans) and outcome 2 (socio-economic). See "Barriers" section.</p> <p>5. Since the PIF this has been explained further in the CEO ER document with Knowledge management becoming component 4. MLL is a new concept in SA and as such there is not extensive knowledge about MLL's positive benefits that can be shared at the start of the project. The intention is to align Knowledge Management and M&E so that learnings inform adaptive management. To facilitate landscape level collaborative reflective, planning, and lesson and knowledge sharing, landscape level stakeholders will convene regularly using the collaborative platforms they have collectively established. These MLL platforms will be key conduits of learning and sharing which will occur across sectors and stakeholder groups, with a gender sensitive approach. If knowledge and lessons are shared across society, with the intention to show how the policy/implementation gap can be addressed, this will have a transformative impact at the local level. To facilitate cross project collaborative planning, reflection, lesson and knowledge sharing, staff and</p>

<p>in the design of, or the motivation for, the activity.”)</p>	<p>implementing partners will convene three times per annum. Based on this approach, the project will develop and maintain a project monitoring, evaluation, reporting and learning framework to monitor and report on project implementation, and document best practices to support replication to MLLs across the country. This framework will combine the value of monitoring against indicators with reflective process monitoring and more open-ended processes for obtaining explanatory data and evaluative insights (for example case studies), enabling consideration for the complexity and non-linearity inherent in implementing a project of this nature. The project monitoring, evaluation, reporting and learning framework will facilitate project accountability including on safeguards and gender aspects, communication of success stories and areas that need attention, guide annual planning and learning. SANParks will utilize the lessons learnt from the creation of these three MLLs in the creation of the other five MLLs.</p> <p>6. Further description of how to mitigate the risks has been added to the Risk Table under the section "Risks to project implementation" and highlighted in yellow.</p> <p>7. Thanks for your comment. In the CEO ER document, the project has been now marked as principle (2) for Biodiversity.</p>
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ADDITIONAL ANNEXES

See document attached