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Project Information Document (PID)

Appraisal Stage | Date Prepared/Updated: 15-Dec-2023 | Report No: PIDA36410

BASIC INFORMATION

A. Basic Project Data

Country	Project ID	Project Name	Parent Project ID (if any)
Armenia	P179988	RESILAND: Armenia Resilient Landscapes Project	
Region	**Estimated Appraisal Date**	**Estimated Board Date**	**Practice Area (Lead)**
EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA	06-Dec-2023	16-Feb-2024	Environment, Natural Resources & the Blue Economy
Financing Instrument	**Borrower(s)**	**Implementing Agency**	**GEF Focal Area**
Investment Project Financing	The Republic of Armenia	Ministry of Environment, Environmental Projects Implementation Unit	Multi-focal area

Proposed Development Objective(s)

The Project Development Objective (PDO) are (i) to increase the area under sustainable landscape management in selected locations and (ii) to promote sustainable economic activities to communities in targeted landscapes in Armenia.

Components

Component 1. Institutional Capacity and Policy Development
Component 2. Landscape Restoration
Component 3. Promoting Communities' Benefits
Component 4. Project Coordination, M&E, and Communication

PROJECT FINANCING DATA (US$, Millions)

SUMMARY

Total Project Cost	9.10
Total Financing	9.10
of which IBRD/IDA	0.00
Financing Gap	0.00

DETAILS

Non-World Bank Group Financing	
Trust Funds	5.45
Global Environment Facility (GEF)	5.45
Other Sources	3.65
SWEDEN: Swedish Intl. Dev. Cooperation Agency (SIDA)	3.65

Environmental and Social Risk Classification

Substantial

Decision

The review did authorize the team to appraise and negotiate

Other Decision (as needed)

B. Introduction and Context

Country Context

1. **Armenia had substantial economic progress in 2017-2019, with an average annual economic growth of 6.8 percent.** However, the economy was hit hard in late 2020 by the worst military confrontation since the early 1990s and a large second wave of COVID-19 pandemic. The effects triggered by these twin shocks resulted in a 7.2 percent contraction in Gross Domestic Product (GDP), one of the sharpest in Europe and Central Asia (ECA) region. The poverty rate rose from 26.4 percent in 2019 to 27.0 percent in 2020. In Yerevan, the poverty rate increased from 25.7 percent in 2019 to 33.4 percent in 2021. In 2021, growth rebounded by 5.8 percent owing to the recovery of the industry and service sectors. In 2022, growth reached 12.6 percent, fueled by the influx of citizens and money transfers, mainly from Russia, following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Armenia is also considered to be one of the most vulnerable countries negatively impacted by climate change.

Sectoral and Institutional Context

2. **Forests and wetlands of Armenia are among the most valuable ecosystems**. Armenia is a mountainous country located between 375 and 4,090 meter and is home to a variety of ecosystems, including semi-deserts, juniper woodlands, deciduous forests, grasslands, and wetlands. It hosts 17,700 species of animals (including over 500 endemic species) and 3,500 species of vascular plants (including 144 endemic species). Armenia is one of 35 global biodiversity hotspots and is part of the Caucasus ecoregion that makes a biogeography bridge between Europe and Asia. Among other ecosystems, wetlands and forests are of highest importance for biodiversity conservation and the mitigation of climate change worldwide.

3. **Armenian forests are among the most threatened ecosystems in temperate biomes, with accelerating degradation, largely attributable to over-exploitation.** Armenia is one of the least forested countries in the

region, with 9.3 percent[1] forest cover largely concentrated in the north-east and south-east of the country. Deforestation and forest degradation are the major environmental problems in the country. According to FAO FRA (2020)[2], during 1990 - 2020 Armenia lost 62,600 ha of forests. Moreover, 11,000 ha of naturally regenerated primary forests was degraded into secondary forests during the same period. The proximate drivers of such degradation are overcutting, overgrazing, mining, and infrastructure development. Degraded forests are increasingly exposed to forest fires, pests, and diseases. The key underlying drivers are economic: high costs of gas and electricity and low-income of the households.

4. **Improved institutional and regulatory frameworks are critical for sustainable forest management.** Forest and forest lands in Armenia are managed by Hayantar SNCO (Armforest – the organization under Ministry of Environment that unites the forest economies) as well as by Specially Protected Nature Areas (SPNA) SNCOs, where forests, among other ecosystems, are also located. The development of forest management plans is a function of MOE, but the implementation is a function of Hayantar SNCO, and this in return is delegated to the forest economies, and their control is implemented by Forest Committee. Neither during development of the forest management plans, nor at the stage of their approval, the forest dependent communities are not involved in these processes. For the second case, the forest management function, as a part of SPNA's management plan, is implemented by a specific Nature Reserve or National Park. This complex and at times overlapping arrangement has resulted in a forest management regime that is not functioning optimally and in the adoption of sustainable forest management. Despite some reforms and improvements within the system, there is considerable scope to improve capacities at all levels to improve quality and efficiency of forest management in the country.

5. **Wetlands are highly productive ecosystems rich with biodiversity.** The water bodies of Armenia make up 492,200 ha or 16.5 percent of the country's area (Ramsar Convention 2022) that provide habitat for a diversity of wildlife species, serve as breeding or feeding place for 40 per cent of all plant and animal species and deliver various ecosystem services such as protection and improvement of water quality, provision of habitat for fish and wildlife, storage of floodwaters, maintenance of surface water flow during dry periods and carbon sequestration.

6. **Wetlands have been the subject of purposeful drainage for over a century.** Despite their values, wetlands in Armenia have been a subject of overuse and purposeful draining (particularly during the Soviet period). Over 30,000 ha of brackish wetlands of Ararat Plain, have been reduced via special drainage system down to less than 2,000 ha, and about 3,000 ha the mountain grassy marshes have been reduced by 80% through increased water extraction. This has resulted in a strong decline in wetland biodiversity (including number of endemic species, threatened species, and a variety of game birds), water retention capacity, carbon storage; and drying up of springs and other wetland areas, which would serve as habitat for many species of flora and fauna. Reduction of the wetlands results in a change of humidity in the lowland semi-desert areas and the highland steppes and meadows. This process, exacerbated by climate change, causes increased droughts and decreased productivity of those grasslands, and creates additional risks for livestock husbandry.

7. **Wetland management**. The wetlands of Armenia are either located at the lands of SPNAs, or on community lands. The ones, which are located within the SPNAs, are managed in frames of the SPNAs'

[1] The figure of current forest cover of Armenia varies in different sources. Here we take the figure obtained by FAO 2010: Global Forest Resources Assessment, The UN Food and Agriculture Organization.
[2] FAO FRA. 2020. FRA Country Reports – Armenia. Rome.

management plans. The wetlands which are located at the community lands, are considered as agricultural lands and are managed by the certain communities accordingly (in the best case for buffalo grazing and in worst case for reed burning and harvesting). Expansion of wetlands' restoration can support in further development of the nature-based tourism, driven by birdwatching, as well as create a reservoir for the game birds, supporting their sustainable harvesting for over 20,000 hunters. However, there is a need for revision of policies related to wetland restoration and maintenance, as well as capacity and institutional development.

8. **The country is exposed to multiple forces of land degradation.** Land degradation severely affects people's livelihood by reducing the availability of vital ecosystem services such as food, wood, water, and soil fertility and thus increase the risks of poverty particularly in rural areas of Armenia. Currently, 82 percent of the land area of Armenia is, to varying extents, exposed to desertification; 27 percent of these lands face extremely severe desertification[3]. Land lost to infrastructure, industry, and similar uses has also increased by 27,230 ha and now represents about 3.5 percent of the total country area. Chemical pollution occurs on 272,000 ha, with most of the land contaminated by mineral substances used in agriculture, and by chemicals in urban areas. Pollution by minerals has increased due to the relative low cost and incorrect application of chemical fertilizers, especially nitrate. Acidification is mainly associated with natural soil properties, but salinization has intensified due partly to poor irrigation practices. The area of overgrazed land now covers about 170,000 ha.

9. **Mining causes direct and indirect impacts on forests and biodiversity.** At the mining site, land preparation and expansion and waste management change abiotic and biotic conditions, and in some cases, transform natural forests and threaten species and ecosystems. As a result of mining activities, about 8,000 ha of land have been degraded with an additional 1,500 ha used to store tailings dumps. Pollutants from these are commonly leached out, affecting waterways and local biodiversity.[4] According to recent data (2018) from the Hydrometeorology and Monitoring Center, 16 rivers in Armenia have been identified as having the highest degree of pollution due to mining activities.[5] There has been an expansion of mining across the country, affecting 34,900 ha of forest land in 2013, primarily in the Lori and Syunik provinces, where primary forested areas of the country are (Syunik constituting 36 percent of all the forests in the country, and Lori and Tavush – 62 percent of forest cover).

10. **Expansion of forests has been one of the main goals for Armenia, not only for their protective role, but also to develop forest-related businesses, including the sustainable supply of fuelwood as part of the energy mix in the country.** The Forest Code makes the implementation of forest rehabilitation measures a national priority. In particular, the rehabilitation of clear-cut and partially deforested areas and the promotion of afforestation measures to increase the current low forest cover are prioritized. *The Draft National Forest Development Policy, Strategy and Action Plan 2021-2030 (NFP 2021-2030) identifies priority tasks,* including (i) restoration of degraded forest landscapes, (ii) Increase of the forest cover; (iii) maintenance and development of environmental, social, and economic functions of forests; and (iv) continuous and effective use of forest resources.

11. **Landscape scale restoration**. The landscape scale restoration was never implemented by the country. The lack of integrated approach to the landscape restoration results in the following: (i) the landscape scale

[3] UNCCD. 2017. Armenia - Investing in Land Degradation Neutrality: Making the Case. Bonn, Germany.
[4] See https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/289051468186845846/pdf/106237-WP-P155900-PUBLIC.pdf.
[5] Source: Armenian Ministry of Energy infrastructures and Natural Resources.

restoration was never performed in Armenia; (ii) the forest restoration was mainly resulted in the tree planting without considering the forest ecosystem, the natural succession, and the neighboring ecosystems, which could potentially play a role in forest restoration success. As it was stated above, beside a small-scale pilot project on restoration of brackish marshes in Khor Virap, the wetland restoration was never implemented in Armenia neither as a separate initiative, nor as a component of restoration of another complex landscape (e.g., forest).

Relevance to Higher Level Objectives

12. **The project is fully aligned with Armenia Country Partnership Framework (CPF) 2019-2023, the upcoming CPF 2024-2028.** It fits well with the 2019-2023 CPF's Focus Area 3: Sustainable Management of Environmental and Natural Resources that responds to Armenia's stated goal of protecting the environment, improving the management and governance of natural resources, and managing environmental and climatic risks. The project is also well aligned with the upcoming CPF 2024-2028, where the climate-related aspects are targeted in many objectives, to which the proposed project could strongly contribute. The project is aligned with the World Bank's Evolution Roadmap and its mission of ending extreme poverty and boosting prosperity on a livable planet. The project will contribute to the achievement of the WBG twin goals on a livable planet as it would restore degraded land, enhance carbon sequestration and increase the economic benefits of the relatively poor segment of the society of Armenia, forest communities.

C. Proposed Development Objective(s)

Development Objective(s) (From PAD)

13. The Project Development Objective (PDO) are (i) to increase the area under sustainable landscape management in selected locations and (ii) to promote sustainable economic activities to communities in targeted landscapes in Armenia.

Key Results

14. The following are the indicators to measure the achievement of the PDO and the project's key results:
    (a) Land area under selected sustainable landscape management practices (CRI[6], Ha)
    (b) People benefiting from sustainable economic activities in targeted landscapes (Number, sex disaggregated)

D. Project Description

15. The project follows an integrated landscapes approach to restore forests and wetlands, includes four components and will finance consulting services, non-consulting services, goods, equipment, training, workshops, as well as small works.

Component 1. Institutional Capacity and Policy Development (Estimated budget: US$1,000,000)

16. The project supports integrated landscape management such as restoration of degraded wetland and rebuilding of fragmented forests. Integrated landscape management of such kinds of activities require development of appropriate policies and strengthening institutional capacities.

[6] CRI = Corporate Result Indicator.

Sub-component 1.1: Policy Review and Development

17. **Overview**. The project will finance analysis and revisions of existing policy and legal frameworks for forests, wetlands, and protected areas to help align these with national and international obligations including NDC commitments. The expected outcomes will include a technical report that will describe policy gaps, institutional duplications, and contradictions in the management of forests, wetlands, and protected areas, as well as increasing economic opportunities for communities to decrease the pressure on forest and wetland.

18. **Activities**. The major interventions will include a) provide technical assistance to review overlaps, duplications and contradictions between the major policies and institutions involved in the management of Armenia's forests; b) provide technical assistance to review and improve policies, regulatory and operational guidelines required for the management of landscape restoration and increasing economic benefits of forest dependent communities; c) review guidelines for development of and management of ecotourism; d) provide technical assistance to review and strengthen regulatory and operational guidelines required for community-based wetland management.

19. **Approach**. The main principles of the subcomponent include stakeholder feedback, monitoring, data collection and analysis that inform the nature, extent, and outcome of the review and update of policy gaps and institutional overlaps.

Sub-component 1.2: Institutional Capacity Development

20. **Overview**. The project will finance a range of important and necessary capacity-building activities and awareness raising programs. The relevant training, therefore, will be delivered to the suitable departments and structural units of the Ministry of Environment, forest economies, protected areas, and communities.

21. **Activities.** Capacity development activities will be provided to operational and technical staff as well as to community representatives, through on-the-job training, workshops, seminars etc., on a range of topics related to integrated landscape management and alternative livelihood business models. The training modules will be developed for three different levels: (i) policy and decision makers, (ii) local administrations responsible for implementation of landscape management, and (iii) communities around restored landscape activities and protected lands. The relevant training, therefore, will be delivered to the suitable departments and structural units of the Ministry of Environment, forest economies, protected areas, and communities. In addition, the project will finance the purchase and installation of necessary tools, software, and equipment. The project will support awareness activities on the global and local benefits of wetlands and other landscape management issues.

22. **Approach**. The capacity development will follow the process of (i) engaging stakeholders on capacity development; (ii) assessing capacity assets and needs; (iii) formulating a capacity development response; (iv) implementing a capacity development response; and (v) evaluating capacity development.

Component 2: Landscape Restoration (Estimated budget: US$5,500,000)

23. The component describes the main actions and approaches of forest and wetland restoration in Ararat Plain, Lori Plateau Lakes and in vicinity of Lake Sevan in Gegharkunik province.

Sub-component 2.1: Forest Restoration

24. **Overview**: The subcomponent will finance a restoration of degraded forests and improvement of forest management. The expected outcome from this subcomponent will include the increased forest interior, diversified forest ecosystems, improved conditions for forest biodiversity, and increased resilience of the forest ecosystems towards climatic stresses. The target areas will include fragmented deciduous forests of Lori and Syunik provinces and degraded coniferous plantations around Lake Sevan in Gegharkunik province. The project will not be involved in Community Land Formalization and/or other similar activities.

25. **Activities:** The subcomponent's actions in Lori and Syunik provinces include planting of the indigenous trees and bushes, sowing of the seeds of the same species, fencing of the critical sites to prevent the livestock penetration, and accompanying monitoring of the biodiversity's recovery in the restored ecosystems. In the surroundings of Lake Sevan, the pilot action will include a transformation of the monoculture pine plantation into fully functioning ecosystems, via removing the infected pine trees and planting the deciduous trees and bushes.

26. **Approaches:** The main approach of the forest restoration will be based on the principles of: (a) use of ecosystem services as much as possible using a modeling approach; (b) involvement of the local communities into the restoration process whenever relevant; (c) restoration of fragmented forest areas to increase the forest interior and decrease the forest edge and the negative edge effect; (d) use of indigenous tree species only; and (e) careful planning of the supply of restoration work by saplings. The mentioned approaches will contribute to decrease of the restoration costs and increase of the restoration's efficiency and sustainability.

Sub-component 2.2: Wetland Restoration

27. **Overview**: Considering the general principles of water level management and vegetation management, as well as the lessons learned from a pilot project implemented in Khor Virap sanctuary, this component would finance activities such as on i) diversification of wetland habitats; ii) restoration of degraded wetlands and transitioning existing wetlands to closed water-use system; iii) decrease of water extraction and ensuring seasonal flooding, where feasible, iv) setting up food plots to provide additional high-energy food resources for wildlife; v) control encroachment of non-native plants that are detrimental to functional wetland ecosystems; and vi) monitoring of bioindicators of the state of wetland ecosystems for tracking the efficiency of the conservation efforts during implementation of the project and beyond it. The expected outcomes include restored brackish marshes and developed schemes for restoration of the wetlands.

28. **Activities**: Specific activities to restore the wetlands will include : (a) development of the short-term and long-term goals for the selected sites in regards of biodiversity restoration, i.e., the list of the indigenous species that are aimed to return after restoration of the habitat; (b) design of the wetland to be restored, considering the habitat requirements of the targeted biodiversity, water-plants to be sawed and potential for carbon sequestration; (c) revision of the water supply; and identification of the sources of seeds of the water-plants; (d) modelling the benefits of the wetlands' restoration including carbon sequestration; (e) construction works and sawing of the selected water-plant species; and (f) monitoring of the biodiversity recovery in the restored ecosystems.

29. **Approaches**: The main approaches to the wetland restoration include (a) community participatory approach (b) covering habitat requirements of various specialized species of plants and animals; (c) use of the

most optimal opportunities for water supply. The restoration will be supported by biodiversity monitoring to track the efficiency of the intervention.

Sub-component 2.3: Mining Site Restoration

30. **Overview**. The project will finance restoration of the forest ecosystems on two targeted abandoned mining sites: a relatively small scale abandoned open pit in Tandzut (Lori province) – 3.1 ha of the ore, which is washed down by rain, contributing in acidification of the streams and rivers below, and an abandoned waste-ore disposal site in Northern Kapan (Syunik province) – 49 ha of fragmented ore disposal areas, where in some patches the arid scrublands started growing. Also, the project will finance feasibility study of abandoned mining site Kavart – about 61 ha of open pit and waste ore disposal. The expected outcome includes created conditions, which initiate natural restoration of the forest ecosystem on 52.1 ha, prevention of the soil and water contamination, and better connectivity of the forest ecosystem.

31. **Activities**. The project activities include restoring abandoned waste-ore disposal site in Northern Kapan (Syunik province) and abandoned open pit in Tandzut (Lori province). It will also include conducting feasibility studies for abandoned Kavart mining site (Syunik province). The initial soil test in Northern Kapan waste ore disposal site and Tandzut open-pit mining site indicate that the chemical compositions are within the acceptable range, even though the acid drainage exists in Tandzut site. Therefore, decontamination may not be needed, however there will be another round of the soil test. In Northern Kapan side the soil is stable, although leveling may be needed followed by the reforestation activities. In addition to the soil test, a quick assessment will be conducted for both Northern Kapan and Tandzut mining reclamation sites to determine the scope of the project interventions and the associated costs to reclaim the lands. In Tandzut site stability checking could be needed followed by leveling of the soil layers, and terracing, finalizing the actions by the reforestation. Feasibility study on Kavart abandoned mining site will be conducted, including analysis of geomorphology, hydrology, soil analysis, environmental and social analysis, as well as financial analysis. Considering the high steepness of Kavart area, reforestation here may not be the most optimal scenario for reclamation, and the alternative scenarios should be investigated.

32. **Approach**. The main approach for the restoration of natural forest ecosystems on the mining sites will be based on the principles of: (a) simulation of the natural leaching process for development of the proper soil layers; (b) use of indigenous pioneer tree and bush species to secure soil stability; (c) careful engineering planning of the areas logistics and acid drainage; (d) monitoring of the whole process. The described principles will contribute to a decrease of the possible risks of forest restoration at the completely destructed sites.

Component 3: Promoting Communities' Benefits (Estimated Budget: US$1,900,000)

33. The component described the major actions directed to increasing community economic benefits from the creation of more green jobs, and economic benefits from Non-Timber Forest Production and ecotourism from restored forests and wetlands landscapes.

Sub-component 3.1: Improving Community Based Forestry Management

34. **Overview**. The expected outcomes of the sub-component would be decreased pressure from communities on forest and wetlands. The project will finance economic activities that could create green jobs and enhance benefits from landscape restoration activities including agroforestry, commercialization of the traditional use of non-timber forest products – NTFPs.

35. **Activities.** The project interventions of the subcomponent include (i) providing technical assistance to review and strengthen the legal basis for participation of the forest-dependent communities in landscape management of forestry and/or sanctuary; (ii) increasing community economic benefits through the development of agroforestry and commercialization of traditional use of non-timber forest products – NTFPs such as collection and processing of wild fruits, berries, edible and medicinal herbs, edible mushrooms; and (iii) construction of infrastructures that could reduce pressure on forest resources: this infrastructure will be selected based on certain criteria including cost effectiveness, level of communities needs and impact on reducing pressure on forest. The initial list of activities proposed by communities and local administration includes water points at the buffer zone for the community livestock, livestock access road, etc.

36. **Approach.** While the main approach of the revision includes gap analysis, development of suggestions, and their discussion with relevant stakeholders, the development of the non-timber forest products and other alternatives should be based on the principles of sustainability and will be supported by the system of monitoring of the objects of wild harvest (fruits, berries, herbs, edible mushrooms, and others).

Sub-component 3.2: Ecotourism Development

37. **Overview.** The project will support ecotourism activities both in wetlands and forest areas. The expected outcomes will include developed infrastructure for ecotourism, improved knowledge and skills of the local communities in ecotourism and hospitality. The project will give due attention to minority communities.

38. **Activities.** Development of ecotourism in both forests and wetlands will include construction and renovation of birdwatching and other wildlife watching trails, hiking and horse-riding trails including ; trail-entry spots with info-materials, info-boards on the trains, watching towers for birds and other wildlife, trail markers for easy navigation, and so on); (c) market analysis, (d) development of promotion and information infrastructure on the trails (e.g., trail-entries, info-boards, watching towers, trail markers, etc.; and (e) developing benefit sharing framework to enhance the benefits of communities.

39. **Approach**. The general approach will be strong community engagement, involvement of the private sector and developing benefit sharing between communities, forestry enterprises, state sanctuaries, and developers.

Component 4. Project Management, M&E, and Communication (Estimated budget: US$700,000)

40. This component will finance the operational costs of the Project Implementation Unit (PIU) in the Ministry of Environment (EPIU), to carry out project management functions. Support will be provided for procurement, financial management (FM), the management of environmental and social standards, coordination, and communication activities. It will also support the reporting, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) functions.

Project Beneficiaries

41. **The Project will aim to bring benefits to a wide range of stakeholders including the public and private sectors, as well as a wider population**. Direct beneficiaries at the national level include the Ministry of Environment, including its Department of Protected Areas and Biodiversity, Department of Bioresource Management, Department of Forest Policy, Department of Climate Policy, Forest Committee, and Hayantar SNCO, as well as the Ministry of Territorial Administration, Ministry of Economy, and the State Tourism Committee. At the local level, beneficiaries include stakeholders of the Vanadzor, Stepanavan, Tashir, and

Kapan Forestry Enterprises, as well as Margahovit, Gyulagarak, Caucasian Rose-Bay, Zangezur and Khustup sanctuaries. Direct beneficiaries also include selected communities that will participate in the Project activities. The benefits will have the social and gender dimension noting the vulnerability of the most exposed groups and focus on reducing such vulnerability accordingly. The project interventions will also bring substantial benefits to the private sector, with opportunities in trade, tourism, and hospitality areas.

Legal Operational Policies

	Triggered?
Projects on International Waterways OP 7.50	No
Projects in Disputed Areas OP 7.60	No

Summary of Assessment of Environmental and Social Risks and Impacts

42. The overall risk is classified as substantial. Environmental and Social Standards (ESSs) ESS1, ESS2, ESS3, ESS4, ESS6, ESS8, and ESS10 are considered as relevant. The environmental risk of the Project is rated as substantial. The social risk is classified as moderate.

43. To manage the risks draft versions of the Environmental and Social Commitment Plan (ESCP), Labor Management Procedures (LMP), and an initial Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP) have been prepared prior to appraisal. A draft of site-specific Environmental and Social Management Plan (ESMP) for the abandoned site at Northern Kapan will be prepared and disclosed prior to circulation of the project to the Board. Armenian and English versions of the SEP and ESCP were disclosed on the EPIU website on December 1, 2023. All documents will be consulted on with key stakeholders at central and site level. The documents will be revised to incorporate feedback from the consultations and redisclosed.

E. Implementation

Institutional and Implementation Arrangements

44. **The key implementing agency would be the Environmental Project Implementation Unit (EPIU) of the Ministry of Environment, with a dedicated Project Implementation Team housed inside the EPIU**. The EPIU will coordinate the implementation of the project with HayAntar SNCO (State Non-Commercial Organization) and the SPNA SNCOs (Specially Protected Nature Area SNCOs) as well as with the respective departments in the Ministry of Environment the Department of Specially Protected Areas of Nature and Biodiversity Policy Department and the Department of Forest Policy. The EPIU will also secure cooperation with the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure to work with communities where the project will be implemented. The EPIU will coordinate the activities on eco-tourism with the Tourism Committee of the Ministry of Economy. The EPIU will also contract specialized international and national NGOs to be involved in implementation of the project activities. A Project Steering Committee will be established to coordinate activities across ministries and agencies. Project Operational Manual (POM) will be developed and approved to regulate details of the processes and procedures, as well as roles and responsibilities of the institutions.

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