



Summary of Environmental and Social Safeguards Management Framework for the Reimagining National Parks for People and Nature - MLL Project (GEF 8) and the Reimagining National Parks for People and Nature—Leveraging Durable Financing Mechanisms for MLLs Project (GBFF)

SANParks' Vision 2040

SANParks (South African National Parks), in discussion with stakeholders, has developed a strategy for the future of conservation called *Vision 2040*. Vision 2040 aims to take care of biodiversity *and* benefit people. The goal is to include everyone, protect the environment, and create jobs—especially in rural areas. It follows South Africa's national goals for helping the planet and its people.

What are Mega-Living Landscapes (MLLs)?

One of Vision 2040's main ideas is to create **Mega-Living Landscapes**, or **MLLs**. These are large areas of land where:

- Biodiversity is protected,
- People can still live and work,
- Animals, plants, and humans can all thrive together,
- Jobs are created through nature-friendly businesses, and
- Everyone is treated fairly, including local communities

MLLs aim to **reverse the damage** that has been done to nature, and make sure that **everyone who benefits from the land helps to protect it**. Money for these projects comes from:

- **GEF (Global Environment Facility)**
- **GBFF (Global Biodiversity Framework Fund)**

They are helping fund two big projects:

1. **GEF 8 Project** – Focuses on planning for and building the first MLLs.
2. **GBFF Project** – Focuses on making sure there is enough money to keep these MLLs running for a long time.

WWF - US, serves as the **GEF Project Agency**, providing design and implementation support to GEF projects, with full accreditation regarding GEF policies, rules, and procedures.

What Will the GEF 8 Project Do?

The GEF 8 Project wants to:

- Create **3 big MLL areas** (Greater Addo, Eastern Grasslands and Barberton-Makhonjwa), covering about 2 million hectares,
- Help **local communities**, especially **women and young people**, start nature-friendly businesses, and
- Make sure people and nature can live peacefully together.

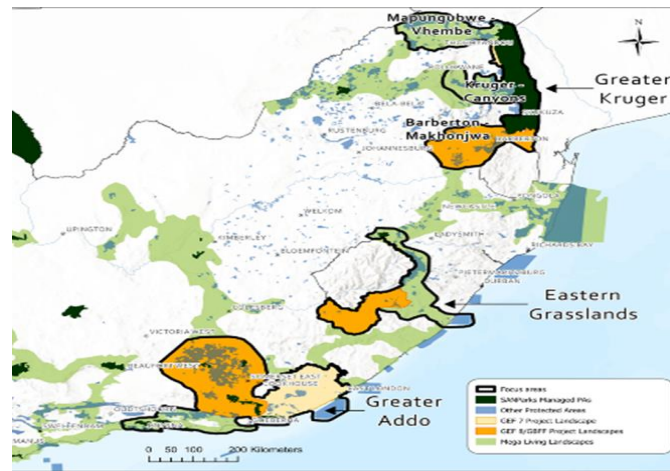


Fig 1: three Project MLLs (areas in orange)

Main Parts of the GEF 8 Project:

1. **Planning for and running the MLLs**
 - Set up local offices (called MLL Hubs)
 - Train local leaders and SANParks teams to manage the land well
2. **Creating Nature-Friendly Jobs**
 - Help people build businesses that don't harm nature
 - Make sure locals benefit from the land around them
3. **Protecting Nature Together**
 - Add new protected areas
 - Improve how current protected areas are run
 - Include local people in decisions
4. **Learning and Tracking Progress**
 - Share what's working (and what's not)

What Will the GBFF Project Do?

The GBFF Project focuses on raising **money and support**. It is about making sure MLLs have the funds to keep going forever, even after these big projects end.

How? By testing different types of funding, like:

- **Biodiversity credits** (businesses pay to help nature)
- **Carbon funding** (to fight climate change)
- **Public-private partnerships** (businesses and communities working with government)

GBFF's Main Goals:

1. **Set up smart funding systems**
 - Help SANParks find and manage more money
2. **Put plans into action**
 - Make sure the MLLs are running and protecting nature
3. **Involve Local Communities**
 - Make sure local communities help to lead and benefit from the MLLs
4. **Track results**
 - Note how the projects are going and share updates

Keeping the Projects Safe and Fair (Safeguards)

The GEF has rules to make sure the projects:

- Don't harm people or the environment,
- Include everyone in decisions,
- Have clear plans and budgets,
- Listen to people's concerns, and
- Solves problems fairly if something goes wrong.

This is called **Environmental and Social Safeguards (ESS)**. **What does this process look like?**

- **Step 1:** Ask people for their opinions before the project starts.
- **Step 2:** Share project plans publicly (online, and in communities).
- **Step 3:** Keep talking to communities while the project is running.

Every year, there will be checks to make sure the ESS as set out in the **Environmental and Social Safeguards Management Framework (ESMF)** are appropriately applied. The ESS relevant to the project are set out in the table below:

Environmental and Social Safeguards (ESS)	When applicable	Applicable for GEF 8 project	Applicable for GBFF project
Stakeholder Engagement	Always	Yes	Yes
Grievance Mechanisms	Always	Yes	Yes
Environmental and Social Risk Management	Always	Yes	Yes
Protection of Natural Habitats	Sometimes	Yes	Yes
Involuntary Resettlement and Restriction of Access	Sometimes	Yes ¹	Yes
Community Health and Security	Sometimes	Yes	Yes
Indigenous people	Sometimes	No	No
Cultural Resources	Sometimes	Dependent on site-based activities	Dependent on site-based activities
Pest Management	Sometimes	Dependent on site-based activities	Dependent on site-based activities

The **ESMF** provides reasons for the applicability of each safeguard as well as guidance on actions to be undertaken to comply with the ESS during implementation. The Project Management Unit will confirm that these safeguards do apply as part of the process of developing the Environmental and Social Safeguards Management Plans (with mitigation measures) required for all project activities.

How Risky Are These Projects?

Within the GEF, each project is given a **risk category**:

- **Category A:** High risk (big impact – needs full investigation)
- **Category B:** Medium risk (some impact – needs a partial review)
- **Category C:** Low risk (little or no impact – no review needed)

The GEF 8 and GBFF projects are **Category B**, meaning:

- There may be some environmental or social impacts.
- But these can be managed or prevented with good planning.

How Were These Projects Designed?

The projects were designed by:

- Researching similar projects,
- Talking to a wide range of stakeholder groups including local communities,

¹ Note that the WWF Standard on Involuntary Resettlement incorporates both physical resettlement and restrictions on access to resources. While no involuntary resettlement is expected in this project (and GEF resources cannot support activities leading to involuntary resettlement), restriction of access to resources may result when areas are brought under more regulated biodiversity management or land-use.

- Hosting design workshops in each MLL, and
- Visiting the areas where MLLs will be set up.

SANParks and its consultant team listened to ideas, answered questions, and used that information to improve the project.

Possible Risks of the MLL Project (What Could Go Wrong?)

Even though the MLL project has many good goals, there are some things that could go wrong if not handled properly. Here's what those are:

Social Risks (How It Could Affect People)

1. **People may not know how to speak up or ask for help.**
Some people might not be able to report problems because of things like language, distance, lack of internet, or not knowing their rights.
2. **Some project workers might not know how to follow the rules.**
The people running the project might need more training, especially on how to treat people and the environment fairly.
3. **People might lose access to land they use.**
Creating new protected areas could mean people can't use some areas they rely on for farming, firewood, or gathering food.
4. **Changes in power could cause arguments.**
Deciding who controls land might upset the balance of power in communities, especially between traditional leaders and local land groups.
5. **Wildlife could hurt people or their property.**
Communities near parks already have problems with animals damaging crops or property or injuring people. More protected land could increase these problems.
6. **Violence or danger is possible.**
People working in the field might face danger from poachers or experience gender-based violence.
7. **Business projects might not help everyone.**
In the past, some money-making conservation projects ended up helping only a few people, while others were left worse off.
8. **Money doesn't always reach local people.**
Funds meant to help local communities often get stuck at higher levels and don't make it to the people who need it.
9. **Old unfair systems could stay in place.**
If the money and power are not shared fairly, the project could make existing inequalities worse.

Environmental Risks (How It Could Affect Nature)

1. **Helping people with nature-based farming and animals could hurt nature.**
If not done carefully, raising animals near protected areas can damage habitats or use too much water.
2. **Fires need to be managed properly.**
Fires are natural in grasslands, but if not planned for correctly, they can be dangerous.
3. **Projects might not really help the environment.**
Some jobs created near parks might still hurt nature, especially if they unintentionally allow illegal hunting or overuse of resources.
4. **Mixing wild animals with livestock can be risky.**
If wild animals and livestock are raised too close together, diseases can spread between them and to humans.

5. Tourism can damage nature too.

Building hotels or attractions for tourists can hurt the environment if not planned carefully.

How Will These Risks Be Managed?

- The project **ESMF** sets out a plan to help prevent or reduce these problems.
- Money has been set aside to take **preventative actions**, like training people, listening to communities, and making sure rules are followed.
- The idea is **to identify, avoid and mitigate problems before** they start, or respond effectively where they are unanticipated.

The **Stakeholder Engagement Plan** is a guide that explains how the project will **talk to and work with people in the community** throughout the project. Further, it sets out the stakeholder engagement process undertaken to design the project, including a list of all the stakeholders, including community members, landowners and land rights holders, traditional leaders, government officials and the private sector. Stakeholder engagement is not just one meeting—it's a **continuous process**. This plan works together with two other important documents:

- The **Gender Action Plan**, which provides guidance on to ensure **both women and men are treated fairly**, and
- The **Social Inclusion Planning Framework (SIPF)**, which helps include **all groups of people**, especially those who might be left out, including youth and other vulnerable groups.

If the project affects vulnerable groups (like **Indigenous Peoples**), the **Social Inclusion Planning Framework (SIPF)** says the project must have their **Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC)** before moving forward. This means that vulnerable groups (including indigenous peoples) have the **right to make their own decisions** and to say yes or no after fully understanding what the project is about. The SIPF sets out the process for securing FPIC.

Stakeholders will be involved in the project as set out in the diagram below:

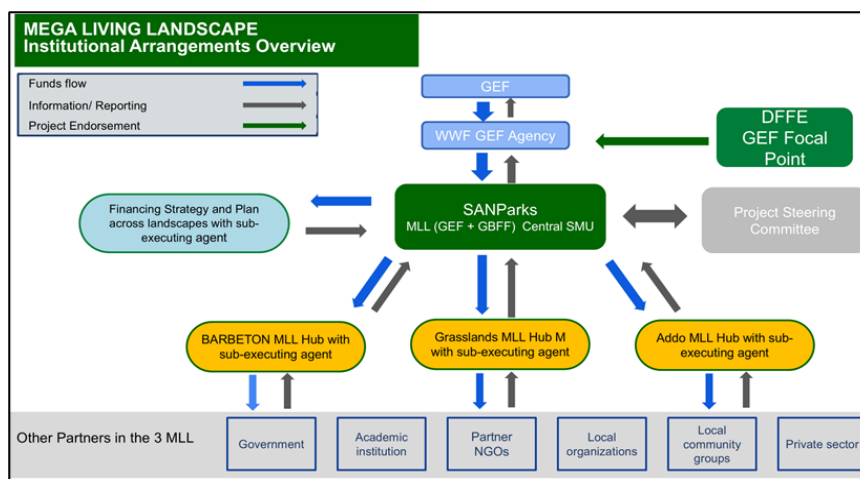


Fig 2 – Institutional arrangements

It is important to include and **listen to different voices**. The project plans to:

- **Use and where needed, improve** ways that communities and other stakeholders already share ideas and make decisions.
- In each MLL area, a **collaborative platform** will be set up so that communities and other stakeholders can come together to help plan and run the project.
- During the first year, each MLL Hub will create a **Stakeholder Engagement Plan** and a **Social Inclusion Plan** to guide how they work with local groups.

- The project will make sure that **all kinds of stakeholder groups are included**—like traditional leaders, landowners, community members, and groups that don't usually get heard.
 - They'll also try to make sure that **no one is left out**, by:
 - Helping people understand their role
 - Avoiding confusing words
 - Using local languages as far as possible so everyone understands.
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What Happens If There's a Problem? (The Project Grievance Redress Mechanism – GRM)

The MLL projects may affect people living in or near project areas. There is a system to help people **ask questions, share suggestions, or report problems**. This is called a **Grievance Redress Mechanism, or GRM**.

How Does the Project GRM Work?

There are **three steps** you can follow if you have a complaint:

1. **Start with the Project Team** (SANParks – information provided at the end)
 2. If not solved, go to **WWF-GEF**
 3. If still not solved, go to the **GEF Secretariat**
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The Project GRM Must Be:

- **Fair** – Everyone is treated the same
 - **Independent** – Decisions aren't influenced by anyone
 - **Easy to Use** – Simple language and instructions
 - **Quick to Respond** – Problems are solved fast
 - **Open to Everyone** – All people, including vulnerable groups, can use it
 - **Responsible** – You'll always get an answer, and you can appeal if needed
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What Can You Report?

- **Fraud, corruption**, or someone doing something wrong
 - **Environmental damage** (like pollution or harming animals/plants)
 - **Workers being treated badly**
 - **Abuse or harassment** (especially gender-based violence)
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Respecting Cultures


The project team will make sure the process **respects local cultures** and is fair for **everyone**, especially those who may need extra help. Project staff will be **trained** on how to handle complaints the right way within the first year.

Where Can You Send Complaints or Suggestions?

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Full project documents can be downloaded from the SANParks website at:

<https://vision2040.sanparks.org/>