GEF-7 PROJECT IDENTIFICATION FORM (PIF)

PROJECT TYPE: Full-sized Project
TYPE OF TRUST FUND:GEF Trust Fund

PART I:

Project Information

Project Title:	Philippine Rise Integrated Conservation for Enduring Legacies through Ecosystem Support Services (PRICELESS)		
Country(ies):	Philippines	GEF Project ID:	10568
GEF Agency(ies):	Conservation International	GEF Agency Project ID:	
Project Executing Entity(s):	Department of Environment and Natural Resources- Biodiversity Management Bureau	Submission Date:	23 March 2020
GEF Focal Area(s):	Biodiversity	Project Duration (Months)	60

A. INDICATIVE FOCAL/NON-FOCAL AREA ELEMENTS

Programming Directions	Trust Fund	(in $)	
		GEF Project Financing	Co-financing
BD-2-7	GEFTF	3,662,844	10,364,000
Total Project Cost		3,662,844	10,364,000

B. INDICATIVE PROJECT DESCRIPTION SUMMARY

Project Objective: By 2025, the Philippine Rise Marine Resource Reserve of 352,390 hectares, consisting of a 49,684 hectares Strict Protection Zone and a 302,706 ha Multiple Use Zone, is conserved and better managed, protecting globally significant biodiversity while facilitating the sustainable use of its marine resources and generating livelihood benefits for adjacent communities

Project Components	Component Type	Project Outcomes	Project Outputs	Trust Fund	(in $)	
					GEF Project Financing	Co-financing
Component 1: Improved management of the Philippine Rise Marine Resource Reserve (PRMRR), meeting e-NIPAS (Expanded National Integrated Protected Area System) requirements.	Technical Assistance	Outcome 1.1: Improved management effectiveness of the 352,390 hectare PRMRR Target: # of ha under improved management; the 352,390 ha PRMRR improves its METT score by 20 points from a baseline of 51/102	Output 1.1.1: Multi-sector and multi-agency functional Protected Area Management Board established and operational. Output 1.1.2: PRMRR Management Plan finalized to include biodiversity, spatial zoning, physical detection system and enforcement,	GEFTF	945,000	1,900,000

			communication, education, public awareness (CEPA), protected area financing, and M&E approved with multi-stakeholder input taking into account gender, indigenous people (IP) and local community considerations. Output 1.1.3: Republic Act or draft legislative measure filed to be considered by Philippine Congress to institutionalize the protection of the PRMRR. Output 1.1.4: Decision-making protocols, operational manual, and checklists agreed to among all relevant agencies and stakeholders ensuring speedy and effective decision-making and action to guide the operation of the Protected Area Management Board (PAMB) and the protected area fund that finances PRMRR management.			

Component 2: Improved protection of the PRMRR Strict Protection Zone (SPZ) through awareness-raising, education, and enforcement of laws within the strict protection zone.	Technical Assistance and Investment	Outcome 2.1: Improved management and protection of biodiversity within the 49,684 ha of the Strict Protection Zone of the PRMRR Target: The Benham Bank, or 49,684 ha of the PRMRR, is under improved management (ha)	Output 2.1.1: Biodiversity data and other information gaps addressed to develop specific protection measures for the recently submitted KBA of the entire PRMRR Output 2.1.2: Information management system designed and in place (under National Mapping and Resource Information Authority or NAMRIA) . Output 2.1.3: Communication, education, and public awareness (CEPA) materials produced, socialized, and disseminated that inform people about the value and biodiversity and fisheries importance of the area. Output 2.1.4: Community awareness raising conducted, targeted to elicit compliance with laws.	GEFTF	945,000	1,000,000

			Output 2.1.5: Enforcement measures put in place, including patrolling and better monitoring of illegal activities through detection systems, within the SPZ.			
Component 3: Sustainable resource use and livelihoods incentivized and enforcement improved in the Multiple Use Zone of the PRMRR.	Technical Assistance and Investment	Outcome 3.1: Sustainable resource use incentivized within the PRMRR multiple use zone, covering 302,706 ha Target: % of users operating in the multiple-use zone that adopt sustainable practices (TBD during PPG phase) Outcome 3.2: Enforcement improved in the PRMRR multiple use zone Target: % of users complying with extractive use laws within the multiple use zone (TBD during PPG phase)	Output 3.1.1: Fishing productivity and income increased Output 3.1.2: Strategies developed and implemented for livelihood alternatives, biodiversity-friendly enterprises (BDFEs), and biodiversity-based value chains (BBVCs) Output 3.1.3: Incentive programs designed and piloted to promote compliance with resource-use rules and regulations. Output 3.2.1: Mechanism designed and deployed for inter-agency enforcement coordination. Output 3.2.2:	GEFTF	1,503,423	6,900,800

			Enforcement measures put in place in the multiple use zone per management plan.			
Component 4: Monitoring and Evaluation plans inform adaptive management		**Outcome 4.1:** Monitoring and evaluation in place and used to facilitate adaptive management Target: 100% of required reports and evaluations completed	**Output 4.1.1:** Monitoring and evaluation plan developed **Output 4.1.2**: Monitoring and evaluation plan implemented **Output 4.1.3:** Final report on monitoring and evaluation plan **Output 4.1.4:** Knowledge Management plan designed and implemented	GEFTF	95,000	45,000
				Subtotal	GEFTF	3,488,423	9,845,800
				Project Management Cost (PMC)	GEFTF	174,421	518,200
				Total Project Cost		3,662,844	10,364,000

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

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

Sources of Co-financing	Name of Co-financier	Type of Co-financing	Investment Mobilized	Amount ($)
Recipient Country Government	DENR, BFAR, DOST, PN	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	$10,164,000
GEF Agency	CI	Grant	Investment Mobilized	200,000
Total Co-financing				$10,364,000

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

GEF Agency	Trust Fund	Country/ Regional/ Global	Focal Area	Programming of Funds	(in $)		
					GEF Project Financing (a)	Agency Fee (b)	Total (c)=a+b
CI	GEFTF	Philippines	Biodiversity	(select as applicable)	3,662,844	329,656	3,992,500
Total GEF Resources					3,662,844	329,656	3,992,500

E. PROJECT PREPARATION GRANT (PPG)

Is Project Preparation Grant requested? Yes ☒ No ☐ If no, skip item E.

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

GEF Agency	Trust Fund	Country/ Regional/Global	Focal Area	Programming of Funds	(in $)		
					PPG (a)	Agency Fee (b)	Total c = a + b
CI	GEF TF	Philippines	Biodiversity	(select as applicable)	150,000	13,500	163,500
Total PPG Amount					150,000	13,500	163,500

F. PROJECT'S TARGET CONTRIBUTIONS TO GEF 7 CORE INDICATORS

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

Project Core Indicators		Expected at PIF
1	**Terrestrial protected areas** created or under improved management for conservation and sustainable use (Hectares)	
2	**Marine protected areas** created or under improved management for conservation and sustainable use (Hectares)	352,390
3	Area of **land restored (**Hectares)	
4	Area of **landscapes under improved practices** (excluding protected areas)(Hectares)	
5	Area of **marine habitat under improved practices** (excluding protected areas) (Hectares)	
	Total area under improved management (Hectares)	352,390
6	**Greenhouse Gas Emissions Mitigated** (metric tons of CO2e)	
7	**Number of shared water ecosystems** (fresh or marine) under new or improved cooperative management	
8	Globally over-exploited **marine fisheries** moved to more sustainable levels (thousand metric tons)(Percent of fisheries, by volume)	
9	**Reduction**, disposal/destruction, phase out, **elimination** and avoidance of **chemicals of global concern** and their waste in the environment and in processes, materials and products (thousand metric tons of toxic chemicals reduced)	
10	Reduction, avoidance of emissions of **POPs to air** from point and non-point sources (grams of toxic equivalent gTEQ)	
11	Number of **direct beneficiaries disaggregated by gender** as co-benefit of GEF investment	3000 men and 2000 women

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

The size of the MPA which is the PRMRR is based on the Presidential Proclamation #489, s2018.

G. PROJECT TAXONOMY

Please fill in the table below for the taxonomic information required of this project. Use the GEF Taxonomy Worksheet provided in Annex C to help you select the most relevant keywords/ topics/themes that best describe this project.

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
☒ **Influencing models**			
	☒ **Transform policy and regulatory environments**		
	☒ **Strengthen institutional capacity and decision-making**		
	☐ **Convene multi-stakeholder alliances**		
	☒ **Demonstrate innovative approaches**		
	☐ **Deploy innovative financial instruments**		
☒ **Stakeholders**			
	☐ **Indigenous Peoples**		
	☒ **Private Sector**		
		☐ Capital providers	
		☐ Financial intermediaries and market facilitators	
		☐ Large corporations	
		☐ SMEs	
		☒ Individuals/Entrepreneurs	
		☐ Non-Grant Pilot	
		☐ Project Reflow	
	☒ **Beneficiaries**		
	☒ **Local Communities**		
	☒ **Civil Society**		
		☒ Community Based Organization	
		☒ Non-Governmental Organization	
		☒ Academia	
		☐ Trade Unions and Workers Unions	
	☒ **Type of Engagement**		
		☒ Information Dissemination	
		☒ Partnership	
		☒ Consultation	
		☒ Participation	
	☒ **Communications**		
		☒ Awareness Raising	
		☒ Education	
		☒ Public Campaigns	
		☒ Behavior Change	
☒ **Capacity, Knowledge and Research**			
	☒ **Enabling Activities**		
	☒ **Capacity Development**		
	☒ **Knowledge Generation and Exchange**		
	☒ **Targeted Research**		
	☒ **Learning**		
		☒ Theory of Change	
		☒ Adaptive Management	
		☒ Indicators to Measure Change	
	☒ **Innovation**		
	☒ **Knowledge and Learning**		
		☒ Knowledge Management	

		☒Innovation	
		☒Capacity Development	
		☒Learning	
	☒**Stakeholder Engagement Plan**		
☒**Gender Equality**			
	☒**Gender Mainstreaming**		
		☒Beneficiaries	
		☒Women groups	
		☒Sex-disaggregated indicators	
		☒Gender-sensitive indicators	
	☒**Gender results areas**		
		☒Access and control over natural resources	
		☒Participation and leadership	
		☒Access to benefits and services	
		☐Capacity development	
		☒Awareness raising	
		☒Knowledge generation	
☒**Focal Areas/Theme**			
	☐**Integrated Programs**		
		☐Commodity Supply Chains (Good Growth Partnership)	
			☐Sustainable Commodities Production
			☐Deforestation-free Sourcing
			☐Financial Screening Tools
			☐High Conservation Value Forests
			☐High Carbon Stocks Forests
			☐Soybean Supply Chain
			☐Oil Palm Supply Chain
			☐Beef Supply Chain
			☐Smallholder Farmers
			☒Adaptive Management
		☐Food Security in Sub-Sahara Africa	
			☐Resilience (climate and shocks)
			☐Sustainable Production Systems
			☐Agroecosystems
			☐Land and Soil Health
			☐Diversified Farming
			☐Integrated Land and Water Management
			☐Smallholder Farming
			☐Small and Medium Enterprises
			☐Crop Genetic Diversity
			☐Food Value Chains
			☐Gender Dimensions
			☐Multi-stakeholder Platforms
		☐Food Systems, Land Use and Restoration	
			☐Sustainable Food Systems
			☐Landscape Restoration
			☐Sustainable Commodity Production
			☐Comprehensive Land Use Planning
			☐Integrated Landscapes
			☐Food Value Chains
			☐Deforestation-free Sourcing
			☐Smallholder Farmers
		☐Sustainable Cities	
			☐Integrated urban planning
			☐Urban sustainability framework
			☐Transport and Mobility

			☐ Buildings
			☐ Municipal waste management
			☐ Green space
			☐ Urban Biodiversity
			☐ Urban Food Systems
			☐ Energy efficiency
			☐ Municipal Financing
			☐ Global Platform for Sustainable Cities
			☐ Urban Resilience
	☒ **Biodiversity**		
		☒ Protected Areas and Landscapes	
			☐ Terrestrial Protected Areas
			☒ Coastal and Marine Protected Areas
			☐ Productive Landscapes
			☒ Productive Seascapes
			☐ Community Based Natural Resource Management
		☒ Mainstreaming	
			☐ Extractive Industries (oil, gas, mining)
			☐ Forestry (Including HCVF and REDD+)
			☒ Tourism
			☐ Agriculture & agrobiodiversity
			☒ Fisheries
			☐ Infrastructure
			☐ Certification (National Standards)
			☐ Certification (International Standards)
		☒ Species	
			☐ Illegal Wildlife Trade
			☒ Threatened Species
			☐ Wildlife for Sustainable Development
			☐ Crop Wild Relatives
			☐ Plant Genetic Resources
			☐ Animal Genetic Resources
			☐ Livestock Wild Relatives
			☐ Invasive Alien Species (IAS)
		☒ Biomes	
			☐ Mangroves
			☒ Coral Reefs
			☐ Sea Grasses
			☐ Wetlands
			☐ Rivers
			☐ Lakes
			☐ Tropical Rain Forests
			☐ Tropical Dry Forests
			☐ Temperate Forests
			☐ Grasslands
			☐ Paramo
			☐ Desert
		☒ Financial and Accounting	
			☐ Payment for Ecosystem Services
			☐ Natural Capital Assessment and Accounting
			☐ Conservation Trust Funds
			☒ Conservation Finance
		☐ Supplementary Protocol to the CBD	
			☐ Biosafety

			☐ Access to Genetic Resources Benefit Sharing
	☐ **Forests**		
		☐ Forest and Landscape Restoration	
			☐ REDD/REDD+
		☐ Forest	
			☐ Amazon
			☐ Congo
			☐ Drylands
	☐ **Land Degradation**		
		☐ Sustainable Land Management	
			☐ Restoration and Rehabilitation of Degraded Lands
			☐ Ecosystem Approach
			☐ Integrated and Cross-sectoral approach
			☐ Community-Based NRM
			☐ Sustainable Livelihoods
			☐ Income Generating Activities
			☐ Sustainable Agriculture
			☐ Sustainable Pasture Management
			☐ Sustainable Forest/Woodland Management
			☐ Improved Soil and Water Management Techniques
			☐ Sustainable Fire Management
			☐ Drought Mitigation/Early Warning
		☐ Land Degradation Neutrality	
			☐ Land Productivity
			☐ Land Cover and Land cover change
			☐ Carbon stocks above or below ground
		☐ Food Security	
	☐ **International Waters**		
		☐ Ship	
		☐ Coastal	
		☐ Freshwater	
			☐ Aquifer
			☐ River Basin
			☐ Lake Basin
		☐ Learning	
		☐ Fisheries	
		☐ Persistent toxic substances	
		☐ SIDS : Small Island Dev States	
		☐ Targeted Research	
		☐ Pollution	
			☐ Persistent toxic substances
			☐ Plastics
			☐ Nutrient pollution from all sectors except wastewater
			☐ Nutrient pollution from Wastewater
		☐ Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis and Strategic Action Plan preparation	
		☐ Strategic Action Plan Implementation	
		☐ Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction	
		☐ Large Marine Ecosystems	
		☐ Private Sector	
		☐ Aquaculture	
		☐ Marine Protected Area	
		☐ Biomes	

			☐ Mangrove
			☐ Coral Reefs
			☐ Seagrasses
			☐ Polar Ecosystems
			☐ Constructed Wetlands
	☐ **Chemicals and Waste**		
		☐ Mercury	
		☐ Artisanal and Scale Gold Mining	
		☐ Coal Fired Power Plants	
		☐ Coal Fired Industrial Boilers	
		☐ Cement	
		☐ Non-Ferrous Metals Production	
		☐ Ozone	
		☐ Persistent Organic Pollutants	
		☐ Unintentional Persistent Organic Pollutants	
		☐ Sound Management of chemicals and Waste	
		☐ Waste Management	
			☐ Hazardous Waste Management
			☐ Industrial Waste
			☐ e-Waste
		☐ Emissions	
		☐ Disposal	
		☐ New Persistent Organic Pollutants	
		☐ Polychlorinated Biphenyls	
		☐ Plastics	
		☐ Eco-Efficiency	
		☐ Pesticides	
		☐ DDT - Vector Management	
		☐ DDT - Other	
		☐ Industrial Emissions	
		☐ Open Burning	
		☐ Best Available Technology / Best Environmental Practices	
		☐ Green Chemistry	
	☐ **Climate Change**		
		☐ **Climate Change Adaptation**	
			☐ Climate Finance
			☐ Least Developed Countries
			☐ Small Island Developing States
			☐ Disaster Risk Management
			☐ Sea-level rise
			☐ Climate Resilience
			☐ Climate information
			☐ Ecosystem-based Adaptation
			☐ Adaptation Tech Transfer
			☐ National Adaptation Programme of Action
			☐ National Adaptation Plan
			☐ Mainstreaming Adaptation
			☐ Private Sector
			☐ Innovation
			☐ Complementarity
			☐ Community-based Adaptation
			☐ Livelihoods
		☐ **Climate Change Mitigation**	
			☐ Agriculture, Forestry, and other Land Use
			☐ Energy Efficiency
			☐ Sustainable Urban Systems and Transport
			☐ Technology Transfer
			☐ Renewable Energy
			☐ Financing

			☐ Enabling Activities
		☐ **Technology Transfer**	
			☐ Poznan Strategic Programme on Technology Transfer
			☐ Climate Technology Centre & Network (CTCN)
			☐ Endogenous technology
			☐ Technology Needs Assessment
			☐ Adaptation Tech Transfer
		☐ **United Nations Framework on Climate Change**	
			☐ Nationally Determined Contribution
		☐ **Climate Finance (Rio Markers)**	☐ Paris Agreement ☐ Sustainable Development Goals ☐ Climate Change Mitigation 1 ☐ Climate Change Mitigation 2 ☐ Climate Change Adaptation 1 ☐ Climate Change Adaptation 2

PART II: PROJECT JUSTIFICATION

1a. *Project Description.* Briefly describe:

The GEF PRICELESS Project seeks to increase legal protection for the PRMRR, listing it as a National Integrated Protected Area System (NIPAS) protected area to be overseen by a Protected Area Management Board (PAMB). The PAMB will be in a position to harmonize conflicting mandates and agendas between the various institutions currently tasked with management.

The GEF PRICELESS project will also address key data and information gaps to enable appropriate management, including gaps relating to key biodiversity, fisheries/resource uses, and associated threats. This will enable the PAMB to execute the necessary protected area enforcement and awareness-raising efforts, and thus foster compliance with laws and enhanced appreciation for the value of PRMRR biodiversity and marine resources. Management grounded in robust data and information will also facilitate fishing communities' access to benefits from sustainable fishing and alternative livelihoods. Finally, the GEF PRICELESS project will provide a model for the Philippines and elsewhere for achieving offshore marine resource and ecosystem protection targets, including those related to biodiversity within the CBD, and add a large, highly biodiverse and unique ecosystem to the world's KBA and EBSA systems.

The business as usual scenario can be characterized as increasing habitat risk and degradation and loss of biodiversity, within what is now a pristine and distinctly unique offshore marine ecosystem. These problems are attributable to Illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, ~~foreign vessel intrusion,~~ and marine resource extraction and degradation, and the threats of population growth and attendant economic pressures, compounded by climate change which may further impact the PRMRR by reducing coral cover. Growing interest in fishing, oil, gas and mineral extraction is intensifying the level of threat to this highly biodiverse and unique ecosystem and

system of seamounts, and economic interests will become ever more difficult to thwart without much stronger protection and enforcement. Local populations are highly dependent on fishing with limited alternatives once fisheries decline. The seasonal nature and low productivity of fishing drives unsustainable practices and increased poverty/food insecurity during the off season.

Barriers to addressing these problems include a lack of data and information; a lack of awareness and understanding of the value of biodiversity and marine resource among communities and government agencies; the lack of sufficient legal protection for the PRMRR including centralized authority and management to oversee it, which results in on-going lack of funding and other resources; the lack of enforcement effort and coordination across government and local actors; and a dearth of income/livelihood options from fishing or other alternatives.

1) <u>The global environmental and/or adaptation problems, root causes and barriers that need to be addressed</u>

<u>Philippines Rise Biodiversity</u>

The Philippine (Benham) Rise is a 24.2 million-hectare area of the continental shelf located east of Luzon Island. 10.8 million hectares is within the Philippine EEZ (about 12% of the total EEZ); the 13.5-million-hectare area located outside the EEZ was formally claimed by and granted to the Philippines in 2013 by the UN, providing exclusive rights to its seabed and subsoil. The overlying waters in the extended claim remain high seas.

Fishers from Catanduanes, south of the Philippine Rise, call this area “kalipungawan” which is a known fishing ground since pre-colonial times. The Philippine Rise undersea feature extends beyond the Philippine EEZ and the extended area is about 10 million hectares. The Philippine Government commissioned expeditions to study and map this extension which was later claimed as part of the Philippine continental shelf that the UNCLOS granted in 2012. Between 2014-2016, the Philippine Department of Science and Technology funded further research in the Philippine Rise. A staunch environment advocate, Senator Loren Legarda supported further funding for the Philippine Rise in 2016, which led to its declaration as an Ecologically and Biologically Significant Area (EBSA) by the CBD in the same year. President Rodrigo Duterte formally renamed Benham Rise as the Philippine Rise in 2017 under Executive Order #25. He further issued Presidential Proclamation #468 in 2018 to establish the Philippine Rise Marine Resource Reserve which is a 352,390-hectare area within which is a 49,684-hectare strict protection zone. There have been yearly expeditions since 2014 to the Philippine Rise to assess its biodiversity, productivity, and oceanography where marine features are simply unmatched elsewhere in the Philippines. To date, the discovery of the Benham Caldera which measures ~150km in diameter is the largest caldera in the world[i] and the Philippine Government has listed Philippine Rise as one of their priority protected areas.

Scientific expeditions starting in 2013 documented significant biodiversity in the area with lush marine communities in mesophotic reefs down to at least 150 meters of the Benham Bank

Seamount, as well as potentially vast mineral and natural gas deposits under the seabed. Surveys revealed beds of seaweeds (*Caulerpa* sp.) at 90m and at least 200 reef fish species in a small area. Tuna and billfishes constitute the major fisheries of the Philippine Rise (PR); the area is part of the migratory path and spawning area of the Pacific bluefin tuna (*Thunnus orientalis*). Both the bigeye tuna (*Thunnus obesus*) and the Pacific bluefin tuna in the area are listed as Vulnerable in the IUCN RedList of Threatened Species. The Philippine Rise area is also where the Kurushio current originates, influencing climate dynamics over the expanse of the northern Pacific.

Under the National Coast Watch Council Secretariat's National Research Program on Marine and Ocean Resources in the Benham Rise Region 2016-2022, scientific exploration on the summit of the Benham Bank Seamount in 2014 yielded the first account of offshore mesophotic coral reef biodiversity for the country. The reef is found to harbor a significant large contiguous coral reef area that is in relatively pristine condition. Excellent cover (75-100%) of mostly tiered, thick, rigid and foliose *Porites rus* coral was found in the mesophotic depths of 60m. Commonly found in the area is also the blue coral (*Heliopora coerulea*), which is now considered a vulnerable coral species globally according to the IUCN Redlist. The bottom also exhibits varying relief and rugosity. The prominent sponges were arborescent in growth form and the sediments have a coarse surface and are biogenic in origin which shelters mostly aerobic infauna. Initial findings infer that the nearby reefs appear to be less diverse than the shallower fringing reefs of the Philippines' Pacific Seaboard (Nacorda et al., 2015).

Associated fish fauna consisted of 60 bony fishes and three cartilaginous species. Despite the depth, the majority (13 families) of reef fish species were commercially important food fish – snappers (Lutjanidae), emperors (Lethrinidae), groupers (Serranidae), trevallies (Carangidae) and surgeonfishes (Acanthuridae). Estimated fish biomass ranges from 17 to 102 metric tons per square kilometer. The area also exhibited a high diversity of butterflyfishes (Chaetodontidae*)* with 9 species per unit area of reef (Nanola et al. from UP Mindanao). Recent expeditions in 2018 and 2019 by the UP MSI and DENR Biodiversity Management Bureau (BMB) found 177 species of reef fish in the Benham Bank and that the species accumulation curve has not yet plateaued. Additional expeditions with increased deployments and fish surveys may therefore identify even more species in the area – and help designate new key biodiversity areas (KBAs).

Dispersal simulations show that the coastal regions of eastern Luzon have very little ecological connection to the PR. Conversely, the PR is only weakly connected to the eastern coast. This puts a very high priority on protecting this area and the network of seamounts within it. To improve its resilience however, networks of protected seamounts should be established, defined as one or more KBAs to recognize highest biodiversity value and importance and ensure special protection measures are in place under the already declared Strict Protection Zone within the Philippine Rise Marine Resource Reserve. Dispersal simulation can also be used to determine connectivity of the Philippine Rise to other seamounts.

The PR is a significant spawning ground. The Benham Rise together with the Babuyan Group of Islands in Northern Luzon form the southwestern part of the only known spawning area of the Pacific bluefin tuna. It is also used as a nursery area by juvenile tunas based on the catch of 1-2 kg individuals by purse seine operating in the northern and northeastern portion of Luzon from

March to May of each year. Other tropical tunas, including the skipjack, yellowfin, and bigeye, also use the Benham Rise region as a spawning and nursery area, evidenced by catches of gravid individuals and small (1-2 kg) juveniles. There is evidence based on a series of tagging studies (SPC tagging experiments) that tunas from the North West Pacific migrate southwards to supplement tuna population of the West Pacific East Asia region (Flores, 2013; ISC Pacific Tuna Working Group, 2014).

Given the biodiversity, ecological, and other important features mentioned above, the Philippine Rise was recognized as an Ecologically and Biologically Significant Area (EBSA) in 2016 through the Convention on Biological Diversity. The following specific criteria were applied for identifying marine EBSAs in need of protection in open-ocean waters and deep-sea habitats:

1. Uniqueness or Rarity
2. Special importance for life history stages of species
3. Importance for threatened, endangered or declining species and/or habitats
4. Vulnerability, Fragility, Sensitivity, or Slow recovery
5. Biological Productivity
6. Biological Diversity
7. Naturalness

For more details on the EBSA criteria, please see: cbd.int/doc/meetings/mar/ebsaws-2014-01/other/ebsaws-2014-01-azores-brochure-en.pdf.

The Bureau of Fisheries Administration (BFAR) recently released their Fisheries Administrative Order (FAO 263 s2019) subdividing the Philippine EEZ and internal seas into 12 Fisheries Management Areas (FMA). The Philippine Rise is within FMA 1, which comprises 50,534,500 hectares (~25% of the Philippine EEZ). The Presidential Proclamation 489 series of 2018 set up the 352,390 hectares (ha) PRMRR, with a Strict Protection Zone (SPZ) of 49,684 ha to protect the Benham Bank. The PRMRR area outside the SPZ has been designated as a Special Fisheries Management Area (SFMA) to be co-managed by BFAR and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR). This legislation specifically prohibits the "destruction or disturbance of the marine ecosystems, including but not limited to its mesophotic coral reefs, wildlife or any other marine life". It also helps set the stage for defining KBAs, use restrictions, and enforcement activities within the PRMRR, designating the SPZ as a no take area and a 302,706 ha Multiple-Use Zone where sustainable use is permitted. The entire PRMRR was submitted to the World Database on Protected Areas and proposed as a KBA in May of 2020.

The Philippine Rise is also an important fishing ground to the tuna hand liners and ring netters from Infanta and Real (Quezon Province), Baler (Aurora Province), and from Catanduanes Province, and other fishers from the Northern Philippine Pacific Seaboard. Fishing is very seasonal (mainly done during summer months) due to unfavorable weather conditions, especially during the monsoon months. A limited number of handline fishers for demersal/deep sea and tuna species operate in the PRMRR and surrounding area. Capacity for fishing is limited, with fishing occurring mainly in the periphery of Benham Bank and Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs) deployed not very far from the Bank. There are currently no available fish production estimates exclusive for PRMRR as vessels land their catches in the various sites of Quezon, Bicol, Aurora, Samar, and as far as General Santos City in Mindanao, about 1,000 km to the south. Despite a limited fishing season

and limited data availability, BFAR reports growing fishing pressure as the human population increases.

The marine capture fisheries of the Philippine Rise as a whole significantly contribute to the production of its surrounding coastal provinces, with total production (2017) of about 136,566 metric tons from both municipal and commercial fisheries; this is about 7% of the national total. The bulk comes from the province of Quezon where most of the commercial ring net and handline fishing vessels operating in the Philippine Rise are registered. A total of 119 small to medium scale fishing vessels operate in the area, of which 92 are handline vessels and 27 are ring net vessels (Regional Fisheries Office 4A). The area is similarly important to the Bicol Region's Fisheries. Major species caught in the area in 2017 include skipjack (556MT) and yellowfin (506MT) tuna caught by ring net and handline fishing. Within the PRMRR, the interim management board is looking at options for zoning for fishing, other resource extraction, which will help further define permissible uses within the multiple use zone of the newly declared PRMRR.

Velos et al. (no date)[1] studied the extent of municipal fishing undertaken by fishermen from Infanta, finding that despite high nearshore productivity, offshore fishing in Benham is increasing because it is a lucrative business that complements nearshore income during seasons of low catch. The high productivity, aggregating fish stocks, and the unique biodiversity found in the SPZ of the PRMRR are now becoming increasingly vulnerable to overfishing -- representing the major concern and significant threat to Philippine Rise biodiversity. PR marine biodiversity threats will be addressed by the GEF PRICELESS project through better protection, management and sustainable use of the PRMRR. The GEF PRICELESS project will develop the first MPA model including offshore protection for the country, and the PRMRR will be the first marine offshore and mesophotic PA included in the National Expanded Protected Area System, covering a globally important, highly biodiverse and ecologically recognized EBSA and soon to be KBA. The project will catalyze a new kind of very large-scale marine resource protection effort within the Philippine EEZ, and offer a scalable model for other offshore marine ecosystems important for biodiversity and for food security in the Philippines and elsewhere. [2]

<u>Biodiversity Threats, Causes and Barriers to Address those Threats</u>
In May of 2018, the interim Protected Area Management Board (PAMB), led by the DENR with representation from other government agencies, academia, and other partners, identified the following as the greatest threats to biodiversity and ecosystem health in the Philippine Rise:

- *IUU fishing:* Illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing consists of: (a) use of fine-meshed nets for ring nets, and (b) catching of juvenile fishes. Despite increasing efforts to regulate and control access, IUU fishing remains a significant challenge across such a large area, where interest in fishing access for fishing is growing quickly.

[1] Velos, Mary Joyce P. Cabasan, Joey P. Garcia, Joseph Benedict T., Arceo, Hazel O., Villanoy, Cesar L. (no date). *Look to the East : The Role of the Philippine Rise in Small-Scale Fisheries*.
[2] Wagner D, Friedlander AM, Pyle RL, Brooks CM, Gjerde KM and Wilhelm T'A (2020) Coral Reefs of the High Seas: Hidden Biodiversity Hotspots in Need of Protection. Frontiers in Marine Science 7:567428. doi: 10.3389/fmars.2020.567428

- *Marine resource extraction and degradation:* Resource extraction and degradation from oil, gas and mineral industries is also on the rise as part of opening up new areas like the PR. Increasing interest in the PR has been noted in the SPZ or Benham Bank area, due to emerging data about potential oil, gas, and mineral deposits. This exploration is part of the Philippine economic growth and development strategy, but is also restricted by law and subject to environmental and resource management regulations and policies.

- *Climate change impacts:* As noted in the 3rd Interim PAMB meeting in July 2019, evidence of drowned corals at depths of 40 meters and 80 meters may support hypotheses relating to a history of glacial periods and requires further studies on climate change. This aspect of the PRMRR requires further research, some of which is underway, but results will take time to reveal meaningful trends. In any case, climate change impacts seen in coral reef ecosystems around the world serve as a harbinger of decline in the PR.

- *Population pressure and increasing pressure on fish stocks:* Increased fishing pressure from ~~local, national, and i~~ vessels has been recorded in catch data. The impact of this increasing pressure has been documented as observed declines in key commercial species, and as biodiversity loss from bycatch and habitat degradation.

The threats described above are linked to several barriers, the first of which is **limited data and information** are available to better classify and prioritize the protection of rare, threatened, and unique biodiversity. Further, little is known about the threats and pressures from fishing and other extractives. This information is needed to bolster the case for the KBA already submitted, and potentially to define additional KBAs within the PRMRR; to define protection measures for critical habitats and species within the appropriate sections of the PRMRR management plan currently under development; and to rationalize resource management in the multiple use portion of the PRMRR.

A related barrier is **incomplete understanding and awareness of the importance of marine biodiversity and fisheries for food security**, and how the PRMRR sustains these significant ecosystem values. Additional biodiversity and fisheries data and additional monitoring and tracking of ongoing fishing and resource extraction would help communicate the value of and growing threats to the area. Improved information will provide the basis for aligning government and community perspectives, and help design interventions to modify behaviors, such as adoption of lower-impact fishing gear, zoning to protect sensitive habitats, and developing income-generating alternatives to fishing.

Perhaps the most critical barrier is **insufficient legal recognition or institutionalization of the PRMRR as a full-fledged protected area**. Incomplete legal establishment precludes the area from receiving necessary enforcement, management and financial resources from government. A series of steps are required to secure full protected area status, as described further in the Baseline Section 2 below.

Another barrier is **poor coordination of PRMRR management across multiple agencies tasked with enforcement, resulting in inadequate enforcement**. Though efforts have been increasing in

the general region, additional attention and investment in safeguarding marine biodiversity and ecosystems is particularly needed in the SPZ, to enforce the no take area. Enforcement efforts should also take better advantage of engaging local people given their familiarity with the area, fishers and their practices.

Finally, **two related barriers are the limited options for income generation and food security in communities.** Fishers lack financing for equipment required for more sustainable fishing practices, resulting in the use of illegal gear and lower yields, as well as infrastructure such as refrigeration and fish aggregating devices (FADs). Fishers have few other sources of income during the stormy season when weather conditions preclude fishing. The project will explore market opportunities to develop alternatives to fishing and encourage more sustainable resource use. Recent studies suggest potential for ecotourism, such as reef or FAD diving, but these and other options need to be subjected to rigorous market analyses.

2) Baseline scenario and any associated baseline projects

Much of the Philippine Rise has yet to be explored, such that the management vacuum and growing threats risk irreversible loss of globally and nationally important biodiversity and ecosystems. BFAR has initiated research to help better track fishing pressure, in particular related to the status of tuna resources in the area, including the assessment of these resources and the level of its exploitation within identified periods of time. The Mines and Geoscience Bureau (MGB) of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has proposed a 5-year research program to assess and map its deep water areas, to determine the potential mineral resources that are found within the boundaries of PRMRR. Other government research programs will focus on ocean chemistry; genetic diversity of corals and sponges; shallow coral reef ecosystems; mesophotic reef fish assemblages; demersal fishes; plankton; and other oceanographic dimensions. The government also has established an early warning system – this is part of the weather agency's network of research and observation systems to build its database on weather patterns in the area, all in the service of developing a robust set of data for weather forecasting algorithms.

The information described above will contribute to biodiversity and ecosystem knowledge, but leave important gaps with respect to PRMRR management needs– in particular what are the keystone species and their habitat requirements; a more comprehensive list of globally threatened and endangered species; and a more robust understanding of current and future threats to PRMRR biodiversity and ecosystems. A critical deficit is the integration of required data on biodiversity, ecosystems and threats, including status and trends in fishing pressure, to inform management of the PRMRR.

Crucially, the PRMRR lacks full protection under Philippine law. Presidential Proclamation 489, which declared the Philippine Rise as a marine resource reserve, was only the first step required for formal protection. The 2018 Expanded National Integrated Protected Area System (e-NIPAS) Act requires each protected area to be separately recognized under a Republic Act approved by congress. The e-NIPAS Act empowers a Protected Area Management Board (PAMB) to manage a NIPAS protected area and engage local communities, NGOS, politicians, and government agencies

(Republic Act 11038, 2018). Recognition under a Republic Act unlocks access to the Integrated Protected Area Fund (IPAF), which provides funding for a NIPAS protected area through its PAMB. The e-NIPAS Act also strengthens enforcement, as it prohibits the use and possession of destructive fishing gear and expands the mandates of the Department of Justice (DOJ) to appoint special prosecutors handling cases specifically related to protected areas. It also assists in the training of wardens and rangers in arrests and criminal procedures (https://ph.oceana.org/press-center/press-releases/expanded-protected-area-law-signed)/.

Three of the required steps have been completed thus far for the PRMRR as part of the process of becoming a full-fledged PA under the NIPAS:

- A Presidential Proclamation (Presidential Proclamation 489 in 2018).
- Maps and Technical Description of the area (embedded in Presidential Proclamation 489).
- Public notification and consultations (conducted by DENR and BFAR in key communities in Infanta, Quezon and in Naga, Camarines Sur).

Remaining steps to complete for full-fledged PA designation under NIPAS include:

- A Protected Area Suitability Assessment (PASA): The PRMRR has already qualified as an EBSA, but more information is required characterizing its biodiversity, ecosystems, and resource uses/threats, including from within the Benham Bank, which will also help contribute to the PRMRR listing it as a KBA within the PRMRR. Assessment guidelines are stipulated in DENR Memorandum Circular/Order 1993-17.
- Development and endorsement of a management plan for PRMRR: Thus far, a plan has been drafted, a policy harmonization workshop completed, potential management arrangements between DENR and BFAR assessed, and the creation of various working committees across key stakeholders is also underway. However, biodiversity, marine resource and other key data and information gaps need to be addressed to complete the management plan. Other needs include: more refined zoning including permissible uses with guidelines to prevent and mitigate threats; reconciliation of mandates between the many overlapping and conflicting agencies and policies related to PRMRR management; and integration of local authorities and mandates specific to PRMRR.
- Endorsement of the PAMB. An interim structure or PAMB is now in place, but the permanent membership selection needs to take place, the operating guidelines and means of managing the PRMRR need to be developed to support the PAMB once formalized, and a Special Order from the DENR Secretary is then needed to authorize the members' engagement in the Management Board.
- A Republic Act must then be drafted, with political support sought from congressional representatives to have it endorsed, along with associated meetings and discussions to help refine it such that it can be endorsed. The draft Act must then be submitted to Congress.

Without the GEF PRICELESS project, the PRMRR will not have the resources or support to strengthen its status under e-NIPAs. The PRMRR will also continue to lack sufficient biodiversity and fisheries data/impact information for effective management; will not unlock long term financing needed for management and enforcement provided through e-NIPAS status; and will continue to suffer a lack of understanding and appreciation of the importance of biodiversity and

fisheries sustained by the PRMRR to food security and income. Collectively, these missed opportunities and deficiencies will continue to exacerbate vulnerability of marine biodiversity and ecosystem health to the growing threats facing the PRMRR.

The business as usual scenario features continued inadequacy of enforcement, especially in the SPZ, due among other factors to conflicting mandates of the various agencies tasked with enforcement. For example, a new Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) program, Beyond Horizon Radar (2019), monitors vessels through an automatic identification system; the Philippine Navy also tracks vessels entering the PRMRR, but these two systems are not coordinated and neither focuses on the SPZ. In parallel, the National Security Council (NSC) has installed marker buoys and does surveillance and monitoring for the Philippine Rise in general, but also does not focus on the SPZ; the PCG also plans to establish a buoy base in Casiguran, Aurora, while the Philippine National Police (PNP) Maritime Group plans to procure a patrol vessel based in Casiguran. Without coordination, all these potential contributions to enforcement result in redundancies, inefficiencies, and potential conflicts. Policies and procedures for better coordination have been identified as key gaps by all of these agencies, as well as the need for a clearer hierarchy of authority and decision making to avoid inefficiency and conflict. Making the PAMB permanent would greatly assist in resolving these issues, as would an Inter-agency enforcement team with a single enforcement plan developed to cover the SPZ and MUZ.

A final aspect of the baseline scenario is the lack of livelihood options to reduce fishing and fisheries related threats. Overfishing and unsustainable fishing of nearshore areas is fueling increasing fishing pressure in offshore areas, including the SPZ. As fishing income is only available for part of the year, there are seasonal gaps in income and food security. In addition to more FADs, other options to be explored include ecotourism, savings groups, and incentive agreements, as well as social insurance schemes; more information about these approaches will be gathered during the PPG phase.

Table 2. Existing Programs and Projects of BMB linked to Philippine Rise (source: DENR-BMB)

Project Name	Years (Start-End)	Budget (USD)	Donor(s)	Brief description on links to this GEF project
CMEMP (Nationwide Coastal and Marine Ecosystems Management Program)	2018-2028	96,521,280.00 (projected figure)	DENR DENR BMB DENR Regional Offices	This Program will establish a well-connected network of MPAs to ensure the effective and sustainable management of coastal resources and implement sustainable management of coastal and marine resources to contribute to food security and improve human well-being of the coastal communities
PROTECT-WPS (Predicting Responses between Ocean Transport and the Ecological Connectivity of Threatened	2019-2020	125,894.57	DENR BMB	The project will establish and update baseline data in the Kalayaan Island Group (KIG) through biodiversity surveys and valuation of ecosystems goods and services, determine community structuring and biogeography of selected taxa among habitats in the KIG and

ecosystems in the West Philippine Sea)				understand ecosystem connectivity by looking at the genetic connectivity of selected species among habitats in KIG using genetic analyses
Philippine Priority Seascapes Documentaries and Interstitials	2019-2020	77,623.93	DENR BMB	To develop Documentaries and Interstitials on PH Priority Seascapes such as the Western Philippine Sea and PR and disseminate them through a nationwide CEPA campaign
SECURE Philippine Rise (Securing the Eastern Corridor: Understanding the resiliency of Reef Environments in the Philippine Rise Region)	2017-2019	581,051.88	DENR BMB	To assess the state of the coral reef communities including the Benham Bank and estimate the degree of reef connectivity horizontally along the eastern coast of Luzon as influenced by persistent western boundary currents such as the Kuroshio flowing off the Bicol Shelf break and the Isabela Coast
CARE-CaDREs (Coastal Assessment for Rehabilitation Enhancement – Capability Development and the Resiliency of Ecosystems)	2016-2019	4,075,220.18	DENR	To update nationwide baseline data of the state of coastal and marine habitats and quantitatively assess factors/pressures contributing to the state and health of our coastal and marine ecosystems for identifying site-specific management and among others, conduct capacity building by training trainers for livelihood opportunities and monitoring & evaluation of environmental impact to assure sustainability of said activities
SMARTSeas (Strengthening Marine Protected Areas to Conserve the Marine Key Biodiversity Areas in the Philippines)	2012-2017 (extended to 2020)	8,000,000.00	UNDP; GEF	To strengthen the conservation, protection, and management of marine key biodiversity areas (KBAs) in the Philippines

3) <u>The proposed alternative scenario with brief description of expected outcomes and components of the project</u>

The objective of GEF PRICELESS is to have the Philippine Rise Marine Resource Reserve of 352,390 hectares, inclusive of its 49,684 hectares Strict Protection Zone and a 302,706 ha multiple use zone, be conserved and better managed by 2025, protecting globally significant biodiversity and threatened species while facilitating the sustainable use of its marine resources and generating livelihood benefits for adjacent communities. The GEF PRICELESS Project will address environmental problems and barriers through work under three project components, taking place over a five year period.

Component 1 focuses on improving management of the PRMRR as a whole and addresses the barrier of insufficient protection of the PRMRR by securing designation as a full-fledged protected area under e-NIPAS. Becoming a fully designated protected area under NIPAS provides additional enforcement and unlocks funding and other critical resources for managing the PRMRR. The

PRMRR in the alternative scenario under GEF PRICELESS becomes the first mesophotic (deep sea) coral reef to become a NIPAS MPA.

Outcome 1.1 is Improved management effectiveness of the entire PRMRR, a 352,390 hectare marine protected area. Work under this outcome will focus on meeting e-NIPAS requirements and on enhanced inter-agency coordination. The first step is Output 1.1.1, where a multi-sector and multi-agency functional Protected Area Management Board (PAMB) is established and made operational, thus putting in place the authority recognized by government under e-NIPAS for co-management. This brings together government agencies, politicians, NGOs, indigenous people (where applicable) and other groups for shared decision making. Output 1.1.2, a finalized PRMRR management plan, includes biodiversity, spatial zoning, physical detection system and enforcement, communication, education, public awareness (CEPA), protected area financing, and has M&E approved with multi-stakeholder input taking into account gender, indigenous people, (IP) and local community considerations. This output addresses gaps in the current draft management plan related to biodiversity, fisheries and threats, meeting the standard for government endorsement and approval under e-NIPAS. Under Output 1.1.3, a Republic Act or draft legislative measure is prepared for consideration by the Philippine Congress to institutionalize the protection of the PRMRR, which is the final step under e-NIPAS. In Output 1.1.4, decision-making protocols and an operational manual are agreed to among all relevant agencies and stakeholders ensuring speedy and effective decision-making and action to guide PAMB operations.

Component 2 focuses on improving protection of the 49,684 ha Strict Protection Zone (SPZ), addressing threats to marine biodiversity and habitat, and addressing the barriers of a lack of sufficient information about biodiversity and fishing pressure/threats, a lack of understanding about biodiversity's importance, and inadequate protection and enforcement for the SPZ and adjacent areas. The SPZ is almost the entire plateau of the Benham seamount where the benthic (or bottom) biodiversity features are concentrated. Information gaps and communication strategy is particularly needed to further inform policy/management, strengthen enforcement, and gain support from stakeholders with improved appreciation of the Benham Rise.

While outputs are indeed applicable to the MUZ also, this area is mainly for sustainable fisheries for stakeholders involved or complying with the management measures. The MUZ surrounding the SPZ is already with deeper waters (several hundred meters) not easily accessible to conventional scientific studies.

Outcome 2.1 consists of Improved management and protection of biodiversity within the 49,684 ha of the Strict Protection Zone of the PRMRR. To achieve this outcome, Output 2.1.1 addresses gaps in biodiversity data and information about threats to develop specific protection measures for the PRMRR. Output 2.1.2 includes an information management system designed and in place (under the National Mapping and Resource Information Authority -NAMRIA- within DENR) to store and utilize biodiversity data and track threats for better planning and management. Output 2.1.3 includes communication, education, and public awareness (CEPA) materials produced, socialized and disseminated to inform people in communities and government agencies about the

biodiversity and fisheries values of the area. Output 2.1.4 builds on this to focus on community awareness-raising designed to prompt compliance with laws. Output 2.1.5 puts in place enhanced enforcement measures, including patrolling and better monitoring of illegal activities through detection systems at sea and through remote surveillance. This will involve local fishers as part of the patrolling framework, as part of co-management, including installation of marine transponders in boats and training to spot and report non-compliance.

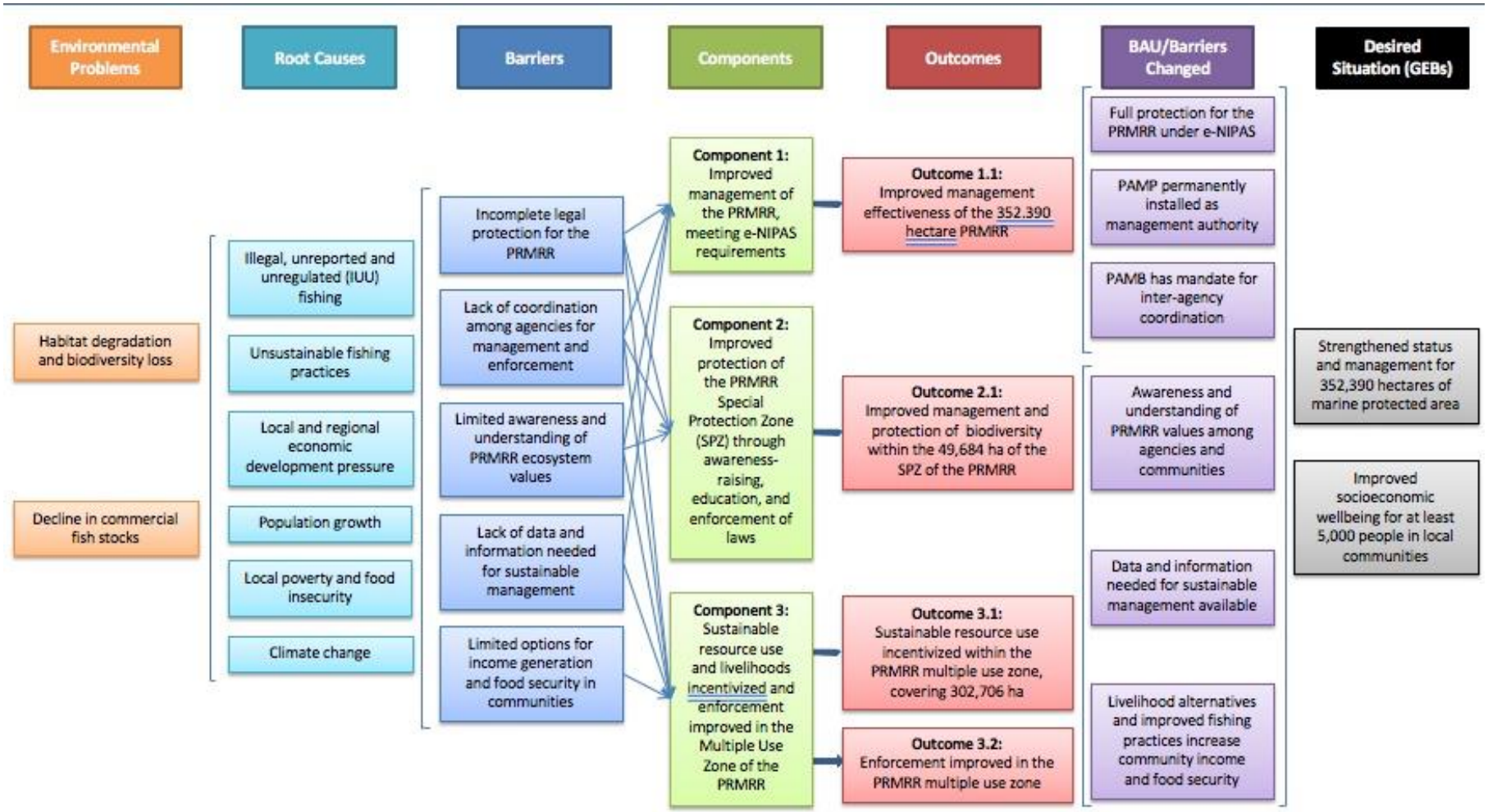
Component 3 focuses on sustainable resource use and livelihoods as well as greater enforcement within the 302,706 ha Multiple Use Zone of the PRMRR. This will address barriers relating to inter-agency enforcement coordination and the lack of alternatives to unsustainable fishing. Alternatives pursued will include promoting adoption of sustainable practices, aligned with the updated management plan, and environmentally compatible economic activities outside the fishing sector. The combination of improved enforcement of resource use regulations and improved livelihood alternatives will reduce pressures related to unsustainable and IUU fishing and marine resource exploitation.

Outcome 3.1 consists of sustainable resource use incentivized. This is achieved through Output 3.1.1 increasing fishing productivity and income from fishing and fish-related products. Work includes safety training to ensure that nearshore communities can safely access them offshore, as well as additional equipment/small scale infrastructure related to refrigeration among other investments and training to develop additional fisheries-related products for sale. For Output 3.1.2 the Project will focus on developing and implementing livelihood alternatives, biodiversity-friendly enterprises (BDFEs) and biodiversity-based value chains (BBVCs). This work includes the development of biodiversity-friendly enterprises such as ecotourism, subject to further market and feasibility analysis during the PPG phase. Output 3.1.3 focuses on incentive programs to promote compliance with rules and regulations. Biodiversity conservation is thus advanced with livelihood interventions by positioning the latter as part of an agreement (Conservation Agreements), in which access to enhanced benefits are a function of compliance with protected area regulations. CI-Philippines has been promoting income diversification among fishing communities in the VIP and Iloilo. Coupled with conservation agreements, these income diversification initiatives for fishing families aim to reduce pressures on fisheries. Benefits can include livelihood investments as well as social benefits such as health insurance and educational support, as well as facilitated savings groups. For example, the national Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) provides cash for work through local government as a poverty alleviation program; fishers are considered among the poorest of the poor in the Philippines. BFAR also has a large support program for fishers, providing fishing gear, FADs and insurance coverage. The PRMRR financing strategy and management plan will include alignment with such programs to reinforce incentives for compliance with rules and regulations.

Outcome 3.2 focuses on better enforcement within the PRMRR multiple use zone, which requires particular attention to the application of sustainable practices. This requires a significant amount of inter-agency coordination, the mechanism for which will be designed and deployed as Output 3.2.1. Subsequently Output 3.2.2 will include enforcement measures to monitor, detect, and deter illegal activities and prohibited practices.

Component 4 focuses on monitoring and evaluation. During the PPG phase, the project will develop a monitoring and evaluation plan that aligns with GEF and CI requirements. The plan will be included in the Project Document and will monitored during implementation. The project will also design a Knowledge Management plan for the implementation which will also be included in the Project Document.

PRICELESS: Theory of Change



The core proposition of the Theory of Change for this project holds that putting in place the conditions for the PRMRR to fully qualify as an MPA under e-NIPAS will result in improved management, financial sustainability, and human wellbeing benefits. Currently, loss of habitat and biodiversity and declining commercial fish stocks are the consequences of a set of barriers that result in management deficiencies. These barriers include incomplete legal protection (i.e. not fully recognized under e-NIPAS), lack of coordination among agencies with overlapping mandates relating to natural resource management and law enforcement, and the related issues of inadequate data and information to inform management, limited awareness of PRMRR ecosystem values, and a dearth of sustainable livelihood options for local communities. These barriers to effective management preclude effective response to IUU fishing and unsustainable fishing practices, compounded by poverty, population growth, economic development pressure, and climate change. To change this situation, the project will invest directly in addressing these barriers through the strengthening of management arrangements such that the Protected Area Management Board (PAMB) is the recognized authority, including a mandate to coordinate the activities of other agencies (e.g. the navy, coast guard, and policy for law enforcement, and the Biodiversity Management Bureau and the Bureau of Fisheries administration for sustainable resource management). The project will support the compilation of a robust data and information base needed to inform planning and management, which will also provide the basis for an awareness and education campaign to ensure that government agencies and local communities understand and therefore protect and sustainable use the ecosystem services of the PRMRR. The project will further facilitate sustainable use by supporting the identification and adoption of improved fishing practices as well as sustainable livelihood options outside the fishing sector. Thus, the Theory of Change posits that investment in strengthened management arrangements, improved data and information, education and awareness, and sustainable economic alternatives will result in stronger status and management of the MPA and improved income and food security for communities, effectively addressing the drivers currently leading to habitat degradation, biodiversity loss, and stock declines.

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

The PRICELESS Project will expand marine ecosystem protection, closely aligned with Aichi Target 11.[3] Marine PA achievement at the ASEAN level currently is just 3.4% of the 10% target. The activities under the Project will contribute to the overarching aim of reducing threats related to resource extraction, and also contribute to biodiversity mainstreaming.

The PRMRR's rich benthic and pelagic species biodiversity and productivity have been confirmed as a conservation priority through recent formal recognition. It is part of a larger Fisheries Management Area, has been designated under the CBD criteria as an EBSA, and has been submitted and is expected to soon be listed as a KBA and in the WDPA. Given its focus on offshore areas, an under represented marine ecosystem, PRICELESS helps fill a significant gap in global biodiversity protection, particularly given the scale and size of the effort, and helps reverse otherwise historical trends of neglecting high seas biodiversity and ecosystems (see footnote 2).

The PRICELESS Project aligns with the GEF-7 biodiversity focal area strategy goal BD-2-7 (maintaining globally significant biodiversity in seascapes). GEF investments will contribute to the second of the three objectives identified in the CBD COP 13 Guidance to the GEF (Address direct drivers to protect habitats and species), in particular Theme 2 under this objective: Improving Financial Sustainability, Effective Management, and Ecosystem Coverage of the Global Protected Area Estate. The Project covers each sub-theme under Theme 2. The PRICELESS Project increases coverage and improves management of habitats/ecosystems by formalizing the PRMRR and especially by improving management of the SPZ zone. PRICELESS also will satisfy e-NIPAS requirements and thus ensure that enforcement, technical, and financial support is provided to sustain effective management beyond the life of the project. The Project will also strengthen institutional capacity for PA management, securing more robust legal status and institutional support as well as community engagement in co-management.

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

Activities projected under the baseline will leave information gaps, incomplete legal protection for the PRMRR, a management and enforcement vacuum, and a lack of alternatives to unsustainable fishing for local communities. The Project budget will cover the incremental costs of addressing these areas.

[3] By 2020, at least 17 per cent of terrestrial and inland water, and 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services, are conserved through effectively and equitably managed, ecologically representative and well connected systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, and integrated into the wider landscapes and seascapes.

Additional information is needed to fully document the globally significant biodiversity and ecosystems in the PRMRR, as well as other management factors such as fishing pressure and other threats. The GEF investment will fill data and information gaps that will not be filled by on-going work of the government, particularly as much of this work is focused on fisheries production rather than biodiversity conservation. Other gaps likely to persist include those related to greater awareness and understanding about the importance of biodiversity and ecosystems in the PRMRR, which are not expressly prioritized or funded.

The most pressing gap to be addressed relates to completing the process to strengthen legal protection under e-NIPAS. There is no other source of funding for this critical investment, which in turn limits access to other sources including the Government of the Philippines. Moreover, a designated management authority cannot be installed until this step is completed. The GEF investment through PRICELESS will establish the PAMB as the recognized authority to avoid conflict, duplication of efforts, and ensure better management effectiveness

Co-financing for this project will be detailed and confirmed during the PPG phase, as COVID-19 has diverted the attention of decision-makers within key government agencies during initial project concept development. Based on discussions with technical agency staff in DENR and BFAR, a minimum of USD 10 million as co-financing is anticipated; once allocations for enforcement efforts, fisheries infrastructure/production support, and marine research efforts are fully captured, this figure may substantially increase. Committed amounts will be refined during the PPG phase and documented through written confirmation.

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

The PRICELESS project will secure conservation and improved management of offshore marine biodiversity and ecosystems within the 352,390 ha PRMRR area, and benefit at least 5,000 people who comprise the population of people living in coastal areas who currently rely most on the area's resources.

PRICELESS will track improved management of both the 49,684 ha SPZ, and ensure that sustainable resource use is incentivized with greater enforcement in place within the 302,706 ha PRMRR multiple use zone. The target of 352,390 ha under improved management will be tracked as an improvement of the PRMRR METT score, seeking an increase of 20 points from a baseline of 51.

The core group of beneficiaries are 5,000 people who depend directly on fishing in the Philippine Rise; this group will benefit from the PRICELESS project through increased opportunities for income related to sustainable fishing as well as other livelihoods, thereby reducing pressure on marine resources. During the PPG phase additional beneficiaries will be enumerated, including those linked to fishery supply chains and alternative sectors (e.g. ecotourism); at this time all beneficiary groups will also be disaggregated by gender.

7) Innovation, sustainability and potential for scaling-up

As the first offshore MPA to complete the e-NIPAS process, achieving increased legislative protection for the PRMRR will represent a significant innovation. This will set an important precedent for MPA establishment, thereby expanding access to financial, technical and enforcement resources. Moreover, the marine ecosystems and biodiversity targeted by the Project are under-represented in the Philippines and the global MPA network, including seamounts, nutrient upwelling areas, and highly productive fisheries among other resources.

Other lessons relevant to innovation will relate to management for multiple benefits as well as potential increases in productivity through better protection. The PAMB will offer an instructive model for formalizing co-management and ensuring that multiple interests are involved; specific innovative features of the PAMB mandate include balancing competing agency agendas, and incorporating biodiversity and ecosystem management into shared priorities across those agencies.

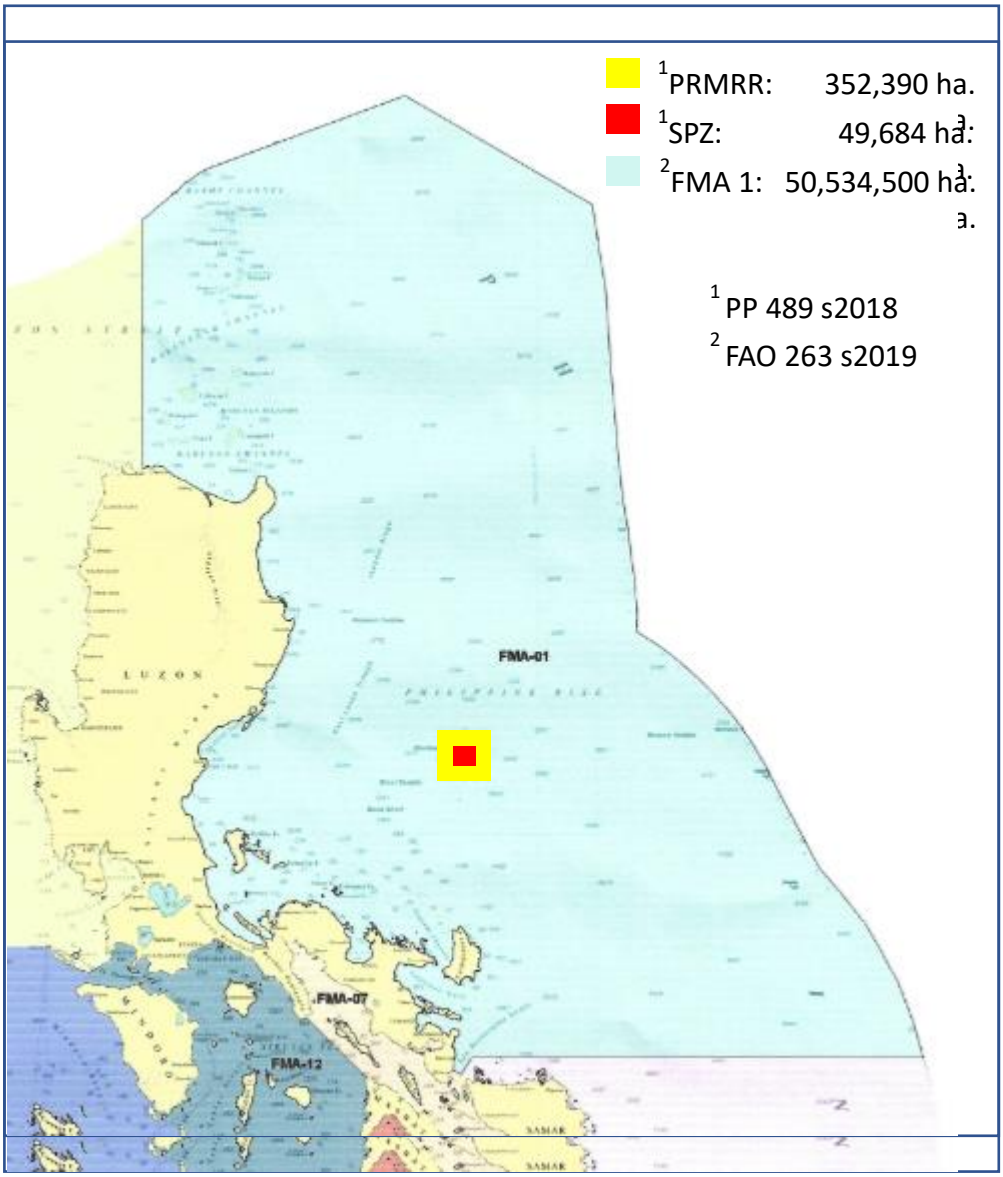
Financial and institutional sustainability of the PRICELESS project will be a direct result of declaration as an e-NIPAS protected area. With this status, the PAMB of the PRMRR will retain 75% of user fees to cover management costs (25% accrues to the government), and receive direct support for employee salary coverage from government. The PAMB will have the authority to raise funds through other forms of financing, and to collect fees from the public and from the private sector, including ecotourism, fishing, and mining, oil and gas exploration.

Experience gained by all agencies and stakeholders involved in the PRICELESS project will generate numerous lessons learned to inform scale-up of offshore and onshore marine resource conservation efforts, as well as transboundary efforts (e.g. Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction-BBNJ). In particular, over large geographies mechanisms and strategies to coordinate enforcement and engage the fishing sector are especially critical, such that PRICELESS learnings will be highly pertinent to marine conservation at scale elsewhere.

As management is improved and coordinated across zones and among agencies, the PRMRR zoning and management model may be scaled up to include the entire FMA 1, and potentially down towards FMA 2, which covers the entire Pacific seaboard of the Philippines, where the Philippine Government has already financed research expeditions. FMA 6, which, together with FMA 1 comprise what was previously identified as the North Philippine Seascape, is another avenue for expansion, including a DENR NIPAS proposed for World Heritage Site status. Thus, PRICELESS represents a crucial step towards management, conservation, and enforcement of an enormous portion of the Philippines EEZ, one FMA at a time.

1b. *Project Map and Coordinates.*

The Philippine Rise Marine Resource Reserve (PRMRR) and its Strict Protection Zone (SPZ) are detailed in Presidential Proclamation #489 of 2018. The PRMRR is in Fisheries Management Area (FMA) 1, defined in Fisheries Administrative Order #263 of 2019.



The proposed Project area (map courtesy of NAMRIA through BFAR).

2. *Stakeholders.* Select the stakeholders that have participated in consultations during the project identification phase:

☐ Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities;
☒Civil Society Organizations;
☒Private Sector Entities;
☐If None of the above, please explain why.

Development of the PRICELESS Project concept has involved the interim PAMB, BFAR and DENR. Consultative meetings with coastal communities and fisherfolk (men and women) have been conducted to capture the issues they are facing now and anticipate facing with and without the envisioned management interventions. DENR also consulted NGOs Haribon Foundation, Daluhay, Marine Environment Resources Foundation, Inc, and Rare Philippines together with CI Philippines to develop the concept.

BFAR convened private sector entities in stakeholder consultations to elicit their concerns, notably fisher organizations Pinagsamang Maliliit na Mangingisda ng Dinahican (PIMAMADI), Samahan ng Kapitan ng Mangingisda ng Dinahican (SAKAMADI), Samahan ng Maliliit na Mangingisda ng Lamon Bay (SAMAMALAB), Infanta Pacific Coast Fishermen Association (IPCFA), Nagkakaisang Mamamayan at Mangingisda Naninirahan sa Dinahican (NAGMAMANADIN).

During the PPG phase, the project will expand efforts to involve all stakeholders and affected groups in the project design effort. This includes a wider set of government agencies and a more expansive set of beneficiaries and project-affected resource-user groups, and targeted engagement of sub-groups to ensure representation of different perspectives (e.g. differentiated by gender, age group, and principal livelihoods). This effort will include an analysis of possible overlap with Indigenous Peoples, in consultation with the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples.

For project implementation, the project will design a Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP) that aligns with CI-GEF Agency policies and guidelines during the PPG phase. The SEP will detail the stakeholders consulted in the PIF and PPG phases, the stakeholders that will be involved in project implementation, and the processes that will be applied to ensure comprehensive participation. The table below provides an initial indication of key elements of these processes.

Stakeholder	Impact of project on stakeholder group	Means of consultation/involvement during project execution	The means and timing of engagement	The means of information dissemination
Government agencies – DENR, BFAR, Philippine Coast Guard, Philippine Navy, etc.	Respective mandates will need to be harmonized for effective biodiversity conservation	Inter-agency meetings through the Interim PAMB	Scheduled consultations upon approval by the GEF Secretariat	Dedicated communication through the usual govt correspondence like email, social media, etc.
Academic and research institutions – The Marine Science	Research inputs will be needed and a long-term research program	FGDs or roundtable discussion	Scheduled consultations upon	Dedicated communication through the usual

Institute; Enverga University; Aurora State College of Technology	will be needed for the PRMRR		approval by the GEF Secretariat	govt correspondence like email, social media, etc.
Private sector companies (fisheries related)	Fishing sector will be required by BFAR to become members of fishing organizations. Operations will be affected by management interventions in the PRMRR and need to become active players that will be engaged by the project. The project will also ensure that private sector partners will be engaged to ensure that livelihoods are alternative and not additional.	FGDs or roundtable discussion	Scheduled consultations upon approval by the GEF Secretariat	Dedicated communication through the usual govt correspondence like email, social media, etc.
Local Government Units – in regions 2, 3, 4a, and 5 of the Philippines	The primary governance institution of local stakeholders. They will be essential partners to engage local stakeholders and critical also in the communications campaign of the project. LGUs can also provide key support in terms of gender development, climate change adaptation, and alternative livelihood opportunities for the project to benefit their local constituents.	Area visits or community gatherings on-site	Scheduled consultations upon approval by the GEF Secretariat	Awareness-raising activity and information sharing during the area visit.
Fisherfolk organizations, including women, youth and CSOs - Pinagsamang Maliliit na Mangingisda ng Dinahican (PIMAMADI), Samahan ng Kapitan ng Mangingisda ng Dinahican (SAKAMADI), Samahan ng Maliliit na Mangingisda ng Lamon Bay (SAMAMALAB), Infanta Pacific Coast	As with the private sector, management regulations will affect the fishing sector. Alternative livelihoods and conservation agreements are key to engage this group positively. Preferential rights to fishing in the MZ can also be key to their participation and compliance to regulations	Area visits or community gatherings on-site	Scheduled consultations upon approval by the GEF Secretariat	Face-to-face interactions and group activities during the area visit

Fishermen Association (IPCFA), Nagkakaisang Mamamayan at Mangingisda Naninirahan sa Dinahican (NAGMAMANADIN)				

3. *Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment.* Briefly include below any gender dimensions relevant to the project, and any plans to address gender in project design (e.g. gender analysis). Does the project expect to include any gender-responsive measures to address gender gaps or promote gender equality and women empowerment? yes ☒ /no ☐ / tbd ☐ ; If possible, 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. Will the project's results framework or logical framework include gender-sensitive indicators? yes☒ /no ☐ / tbd ☐

Recent literature highlights the significant role women play in the ocean sphere and related to fisheries and fisheries products, markets and trading. Due to underlying social inequalities and a lack of representation in decision-making bodies, women's important role and contributions to the management and use of ocean resources are often unrecognized.

In most of the Asian countries, women are actively involved in many aspects of fisheries. Fishing, including aquaculture, and their associated downstream activities, like fish processing, are among the most depressed economic activities. Women from poor fisher households are involved in fish processing and distribution, aquaculture, small-scale artisanal fishing and fish mongering, but less often in commercial fishing using bigger vessels.

Women also contribute to the generation of wealth, the preservation of aquatic ecosystems, and the maintenance of households and communities in rural and coastal regions. They make up half the workforce and play a prominent role in fisheries and aquaculture economies around the world (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations [FAO], 2018; The World Bank, 2012).

For the tuna fisheries sector of the Philippines, Dr. Marieta Sumagaysay of The National Network on Women in Fisheries in the Philippines, Inc., showed evidence on gender differences in the tuna value chain. Specifically:

- Fishers have limited information to improve fishing; in the processing chain, there is equal access of both sexes to trainings and capacity development and equal access to occupy supervisory positions; however, female traders have less access to profitable markets
- In fishing, women are discouraged to join fishing trips due to conflict with household roles; there are still beliefs that women do not have enough skills and stamina compatible with fishing; cultural beliefs still prevail that it is unfavorable (even unlucky) for women to board fishing boats

- Females engaged in the processing of frozen tuna are more knowledgeable about tuna fishery regulations than their male counterparts. However, the reverse is true to those engaged in tuna value added products. There is no gender differential in canned tuna processing.
- In Trading, positive beliefs about women traders may result to entry of more women in trading business and better appreciation of the women's role in tuna value chain
- In fishing, men dominate almost all tasks, except for record keeping of finances, making payments, recording catch. There are a few tasks however where women are starting to be visible. Women in municipal fisheries are more aware of fisheries-related projects than their male counterpart
- On the fishing side, mothers generally decide on food, budget, and community involvement; both parents decide on education & discipline; husbands decide on fishing-operations except in marketing the catch where wife's participation is recognized
- Both male and female processing workers decide on matters related to children, school, work, family planning and health and membership in organizations
- Male traders decide on work matters but usually turn over earnings to wives who manage the household budget. Female traders decide on matters pertaining to trading operations but consult spouse out of respect to the position of man as head of the household.

The draft PRMRR Management Plan does not include any mention of gender considerations. To correct this deficiency, the Project will introduce activities and measures to the Management Plan, and reinforce this by mainstreaming gender considerations in all Project activities. Consultation processes will be structured to ensure that perspectives from all genders are included (e.g. ensuring representation in meetings; separate Focus Group Discussions; timing that accommodates household schedules; etc.). In particular, activities will be designed specifically to address gender gaps with respect to developing and carrying out new value chain opportunities under Component 3. During the PPG phase these considerations will be captured in a Gender Mainstreaming Plan that will align with CI-GEF policies.

The PRICELESS project could continue to reinforce gender roles in the fisheries sector as identified above.

The PRICELESS project will support gender representation in the PAMB and target women fishers for sustainable livelihood activities.The project will consider the following gender specific interventions. During the PPG phase, a gender analysis will be conducted to inform the role of women in fisheries in the region and how the project is likely to affect women, and to identify gender responsive measures/activities to address gender gaps and promote gender equality.

- Sensitize and empower women as well as men to address underlying causes of coastal and marine biodiversity loss. Mainstream gender into coastal and marine biodiversity policies and programs, and coastal/marine biodiversity into national gender policy / programming as well as key sectoral policies, especially land, water, agriculture, fisheries.
- Build on women's primary roles in coastal resource and fisheries management, improve their access to coastal and marine resources and promote their equal voice in decision-making processes so as to incentivize more sustainable use of ecosystems and biodiversity.
- Engage women (as well as men) in coastal resource and fisheries management initiatives

- Ensure that alternative sustainable livelihoods work for women by taking account of their use of ecosystems
- Support women (as well as men) to further develop and apply their knowledge, capacities and voice in implementing biodiversity policies and programmes, including fostering women's leadership and scientific contributions.
- Alleviate the disproportionate burden for women by decreasing the time spent by women in performing certain tasks, such as collecting valuable resources including fuel, food and water, and increasing time for education and income generating activities.

The project will include a social and environmental safeguards system that conforms to the safeguards system employed under the CI-GEF agency, adapted to fit the particular attributes of the Project. A designated CI gender and safeguard specialist will play an active role reviewing all safeguards plans and monitor the implementation of those plans. PRICELESS will also invest in the capacity of the PAMB and local organizations to comply with safeguard requirements, mitigate social and environmental risks, and encourage the inclusion of marginalized groups as stakeholders and beneficiaries. The designated gender and safeguard specialist will lead training and capacity building interventions. The project design will include completion of gender analyses and gender action plans, the development of gender-responsive indicators and the setting of ambitious, yet realistic, targets for women's participation and access to benefits. These activities are intended to result in improvement in women's participation in both PRMRR decision-making and in livelihood improvement projects, resulting in an increase in women's confidence and decision-making, and increased socio-economic benefits for both women and men.

4. *Private sector engagement.* Will there be private sector engagement in the project? (yes ☒ /no ☐). Please briefly explain the rationale behind your answer.

The third component of the project mainly involves incentivizing sustainable resource use within the PRMRR multiple use zone, and the private sector will play a role in supporting small scale livelihood alternatives, primarily by helping the project identify and pilot viable options. Fishing Associations will play an important role in engaging fisherfolk to trial sustainable methods and models to enhance productivity, and as conduits for information in the Project's education and awareness efforts. Feasibility assessment and value chain analysis for alternative livelihoods and other biodiversity friendly enterprise will rely on private sector actors for information and input. Ultimately, relationships between the PAMB and the private sector will be an important factor in successful MPA management, therefore the Project will prioritize efforts to generate positive and constructive interactions between them.

Previously CI has engaged corporate partners in fisheries work by engaging their corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs. For example, energy company First Gas Philippines supported marine conservation work by providing enforcement logistics to the bantay dagat (sea wardens), enabling more regular patrolling; First Balfour supported livelihood strengthening for MPA managers that included skills development, product improvement, and construction of a livelihood center from recycled materials. During the PPG phase, CI will engage these and other private sector partners to provide opportunities to support project implementation. Overall, the project will ensure that private sector partners will be engaged to contribute to alternative livelihoods and not additional livelihoods.

5. *Risks*. Indicate risks, including climate change, potential social and environmental risks that might prevent the project objectives from being achieved or may be resulting from project implementation, and, if possible, propose measures that address these risks to be further developed during the project design (table format acceptable).

Risks	Risk Mitigation Measures
Change in prioritization within government in its interest in conserving and managing the PRMRR once the change-over in administration happens after 2022	Active pursuit of the Republic Act, and if not possible, Executive Order or Presidential Proclamation in that order of preference. Clear inclusion of PRMRR as part of the long-term agenda of the agencies involved, not limited to DENR and BFAR, is required. Another way to mitigate this risk is to include long term protection of the PRMRR into the Philippine Development Plan post-2022.
Legislative act targeted by the project is not adopted, and permanent protection is not as easily provided.	Very recent developments in Congress have indicated support for the Act, and also suggested the potential for a new Marine Resource Reserve Act for Philippine Rise, which would be better than an Executive Order and offer the same protection as a Republic Act. These options will be further explored during the PPG phase to further clarify risks/opportunities.
Uncontrolled and unabated incursion of poachers due to lax national government enforcement of existing measures.	Strong mandate and explicit prohibition of ~~foreign~~ poachers is included in the draft Management Plan 2019-2029 of PRMRR. The PRICELESS project will aim to ensure this is endorsed, as well as strengthened via biodiversity and marine ecosystem information additions. Existing coordination of laws and enforcement enhancements will be included as tasks undertaken by the PAMB, also formalized in the PRICELESS project.
Loss of trust by local government units and fisherfolk communities thereby resulting in their low level of engagement with the government agencies.	Continuous follow-up and active engagement with local government officials and the leaders of organized fisherfolk communities will take place within the Project, including ensuring their active involvement in the day-to-day management of PRMRR as part of the PAMB. This will be articulated in the Stakeholder Engagement Plan.
Sudden escalation of climate change impacts not limited to coral bleaching but also the disruption of regular tidal movements and weather patterns that are affected by and also affecting the PRMRR	Monitoring and assessment including the development of forecasting tools are underway, and can help develop a deeper understanding of the interplay of the marine ecosystem of PRMRR with the impacts of weather and climate in the environs of the PRMRR. This knowledge will also be included in the updated management plan, and may suggest additional zoning/other interventions.

Climate Risk and Related Disasters

The project identified low-moderate climate risks and these risks included coral bleaching and strong typhoons owing to increased temperatures. Local communities are vulnerable and have low capacity to respond to typhoons and especially coral bleaching where there is a lack of awareness. The management of the MPAs will improve ecosystem resilience to climate risks and management plans will incorporate climate readiness such as early warning systems for the local population. During the PPG Phase, the project will engage government agencies, specifically the

Climate Change Commission, the DENR, and the BFAR to discuss the climate risks and how the project will address these risks.

COVID-19 Risk Analysis

The full impact of COVID-19 on the region is still largely unknown due to there being no clear end date to the crisis.

Fisheries/Aquaculture: In 2018, FAO estimated that 30.8 million people in Asia were engaged in the primary sector of marine and inland capture fisheries (FAO,2018). Millions more were involved in secondary activities, such as post-harvest processing and marketing, in which women predominate. The pandemic has directly impacted almost all of these people (FAO, 2020). According to the South East Asian Fisheries Development Center (2020), the rapid spread of the COVID-19 pandemic during the first quarter of 2020 not only in the region but also throughout the world, has impacted the region's fish production from marine capture and aquaculture. Fishing operations at sea encountered difficulties due to the national lock-down measures in many countries that prohibit fishers from going out to sea to fish. Meanwhile, fish farmers have also been limited to work outside of their homes to halt any further spread of the virus.
Tourism: South Asia is highly dependent on travel and tourism, especially as a generator of jobs (estimated at 47.7 million in 2019). In May 2020, the World Travel and Tourism Council predicted the crisis will result in at least a 42 percent drop in international tourist arrivals and a 25 percent drop in domestic tourism across SAR. Based on these assumptions, the region as a whole could lose 10.77 million jobs and US$52.32 billion in GDP from the impact of COVID-19 (World Bank, 2020).

There are tourist resorts along the coast of Quezon in particular, the municipality where most of the (tuna) fishers of Philippine Rise come from. As far as the COVID-19 lockdown is concerned, this affected the traffic of tourist in the area and throughout the country. IUU fishing has also been recorded in several places. For example, commercial fishing have been apprehended in municipal waters where they are prohibited to operate. They capitalize on the situation and become opportunistic, but the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) enforcement personnel recognized this and have increased their enforcement efforts and thus catch these illegal fishers. Further, other municipal fishers venture to neighboring municipalities without permits, or simply go out during the lockdown period without the necessary permit. Local enforcement units are also able to apprehend them.

Financing: In terms of financing, overall government budgets have increased to emphasize on COVID-19 recovery. However, for the Department of Natural Resources, the proposed 2021 budget is consistent with 2020 numbers (2020: 25.495 billion pesos; 2021: 25.5 billion pesos).

Availability of Technical Expertise and Capacity and Changes in Timelines

With respect to availability of technical expertise and capacity, the CI-Philippines Country Program is committed to supporting DENR-BMB on several fronts to ensure continued delivery during the PPG and Project Implementation stages. CI-Philippines has technical staff in country, and benefits from support from regional and global CI expertise, particularly in key areas such as management planning, stakeholder engagement, and gender mainstreaming. CI has developed COVID-19 response strategies and protocols to protect staff as well as counterparts in communities, local civil society organizations, and government agencies. Moreover, CI is well adjusted to remote work and online interactions, and in facilitating access for others to interactions requiring connectivity.

In the immediate future, government agencies will continue to be preoccupied with adjusting to COVID conditions. However, DENR-BMB is strongly committed to this project, and the interim PAMB also has a strong interest in seeing this project come to fruition. Therefore, the partners are confident that by the time the PPG phase will begin, relevant actors will have adjusted to the "new normal", such that key engagement and consultation processes can proceed, with the requisite precautions in place.

Local fishing associations are anticipated to play an important role in community engagement and deploying sustainable fishing practices. Engagement with these associations in the COVID-19 context will require particular attention to precautions; the partners view this as an opportunity to support the associations and their members in strengthening their response to COVID and embracing safety practices. Thus the project will help the civil society sector adjust to the pandemic.

The project beneficiaries – coastal community members – rely predominantly on fishing. Economic shocks caused by the pandemic may have a severe impact on communities whose livelihoods and food security already are precarious as a consequence of baseline conditions. While this may present challenges for the project (i.e. people working hard to survive may have limited time and attention to respond to engagement efforts), it also reinforces the urgency of project activities relating to livelihood diversification and increased fishing productivity. This also reinforces the importance of community involvement in MPA planning and management processes.

The impact on related projects identified in the baseline will be assessed during the PPG. Planned research and survey efforts are less likely to be affected, such that project activities relating to addressing information and data gaps may be unimpeded. Although subsequent engagement and participatory planning processes may be complicated by the need to adhere to safety protocols, at present the project partners believe that the timeline for the project itself will remain viable.

Stakeholder Engagement Process

The partners are highly sensitive to the challenges of stakeholder engagement in general, and during COVID-19 pandemic in particular. CI will support DENR-BMB and BFAR in stakeholder

engagement and work in the field during the PPG phase, relying on its safety measures. CI has employed a full time risk and safety officer, who has developed an institutional COVID-19 response plan. This plan includes weekly country updates on the status of COVID-19 cases, and how the Country Program is impacted; office protocols for both staff and visitors (currently no visitors are permitted in any office, but this will be adjusted on a case by case basis pending local conditions); and detailed protocols for work with communities. Each project site is rated monthly in terms of the types of risk (e.g. meetings in the field, meetings in an office, other field activities where our staff or partners are involved in outdoor actions like tree planting, farming, fishing, etc.), and mitigation approaches and guidelines for each type. An internal team at CI HQ reviews all protocols and is able to deploy flexible resources to support safety equipment for partners and communities (CI is also developing an emergency fund to help communities and people at risk where they work).

When the project team develops the Stakeholder Engagement Plan during the PPG phase, they will draw on CI's dedicated COVID-19 response capacity to inform specific planning for COVID-risk mitigation. In addition, the Plan will align with protocols and guidelines maintained by the Philippines Government, and apply any additional measures required by other partners and stakeholders.

Enabling Environment

During consultations with various government agencies while preparing this PIF, contact points have signaled that this project remains a strong priority. Combined with the wider policy commitments of the Government to which this Project offers direct and significant contributions, these signals leave the project partners confident that the enabling environment in terms of government support and participation remains highly favorable.

Financing

The development of this project identified significant potential co-financing from government, but the current emphasis among agencies on adjusting to the pandemic precluded reaching commitments on details. The partners will finalize co-financing arrangements during the PPG phase, drawing on a wide range of committed government allocations to several agencies. With that, successful execution of the project is at a low risk from co-financing challenges, as the project itself will lead to increased access to government funds for MPA management after securing full protected status for the PRMRR under e-NIPAS.

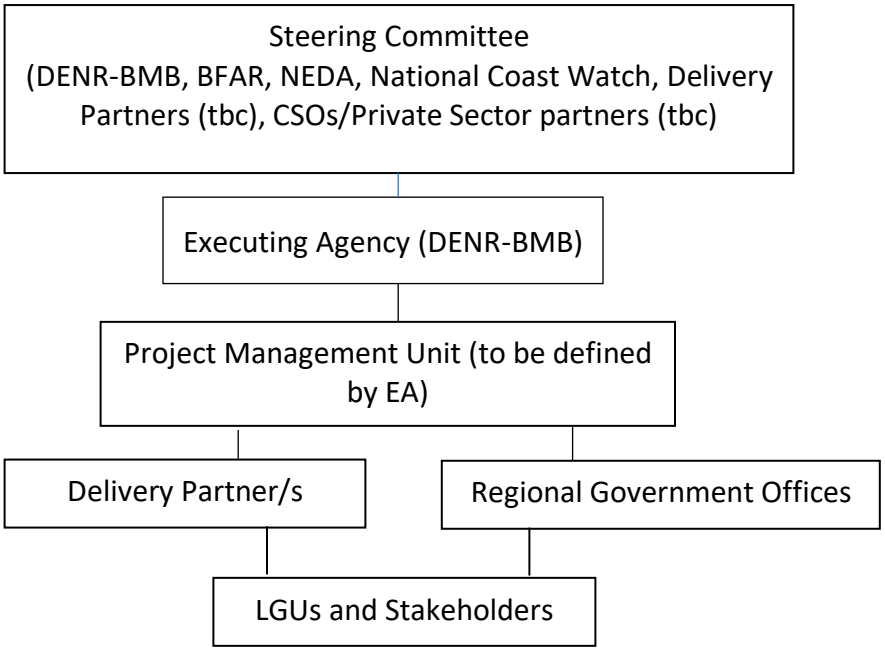
Future Risk of Similar Crises/Opportunities

Several features of the project will help mitigate the future risk of similar crises:

- Development of organizational capacity with respect to crisis response (among fishing associations as well as government agencies).
- Enhanced sustainability of fishing activities, mitigating the risk of shocks to food supplies and income for communities linked to resource declines.

- Livelihood diversification will reinforce household resilience against shocks, and enable local people to better address health needs in general.
- Stronger ecosystem health through improved MPA management will contribute to socioeconomic and ecological resilience against climate change.

6. *Coordination.*
CI is the GEF Implementing Agency, and will provide oversight to the DENR as the Executing Agency in line with GEF, CI and NENR policies and procedures. The full name of the Executing Agency is the Department of Environment and Natural Resources- Biodiversity Management Bureau (DENR-BMB). As the Executing Agency, the DENR-BMB will be responsible for establishing the Project Management Team that will work with the Implementing Agency to ensure that all the key components of the Project are realized within the indicated budget and timeframe articulated in this PIF.
The indicative implementation arrangement is as follows:



The Steering Committee will be composed of the Executing Agency (DENR-BMB), BFAR, Delivery Partners (to be determined during the PPG phase), National Economic Development Authority, National Coast Watch (also representing other enforcement agencies), and representation from academic and research institutions. The PMU will be selected by the EA and will report directly to the EA. The PMU will include a dedicated M&E specialist and manage day-to-day implementation of the project, including project reporting. The Delivery Partners will directly implement project activities on the ground in close coordination with the regional offices of the DENR and BFAR, working closely with local government units and their constituent stakeholders.

The main government agency that the Executing Agency will coordinate with is the BFAR. Per the recently issued FAO #263 of 2019, BFAR is working with fisher associations and federations and other groups to define and deploy FMA management. The PRMRR is within FMA 1 and will harmonize its program with the fisheries sector and the other activities and initiatives of government agencies as itemized below:

Initiative	Coordination
Protecting priority coastal and marine ecosystems to conserve globally significant Endangered, Threatened, and Protected marine wildlife in southern Mindanao (GEFID: 10536)	There is a good link between this project and PRICELESS in terms of protecting and managing marine ecosystems for threatened marine species. Given this focus, PRICELESS can also learn in real-time as this project is implemented, though noting that the threatened species in focus could be different between project sites. The approach and methodology will be of interest.
Natural Capital Accounting and Assessment: Informing development, planning, sustainable tourism development and other incentives for improved conservation and sustainable landscapes (GEFID: 10386)	Methodologies here can be utilized to estimate the total economic value of the PRMRR. More importantly, incentives identified here may also be replicated for the PRMRR to improve stakeholder well-being and their stronger participation in the conservation and management of the PRMRR.
Strengthening the Marine Protected Area System to Conserve Marine Key Biodiversity Areas in the Philippines (SMARTSeas PH) (GEFID: 4810)	This project involves CI Philippines as a local responsible partner that implemented the project in the Verde Island Passage, one of the five sites of the project in the Philippines. Most relevant to the PRICELESS project are 2 components of SMARTSeas PH relating to MPA network development and establishment and BDFEs. An MPA network can potentially be developed for PRICELESS in the coastal areas that can be coupled with the incentives using BDFEs. An offshoot of the PRICELESS project can also initiate the development of a network of seamount MPAs in the Philippines Rise.
DA-BFAR initiative on distribution of fish aggregating devices and the conservation and management of Tuna Conservation Zones	Currently, this is done through the Interim Protected Area Management Board established under RA 11084; with the establishment of the inter-agency institutional structure in Component 1 of this Project, enhanced cooperation and collaboration will be expected.
The Philippine Navy and Philippine Coast Guard's regular patrolling activities in PH Rise	Currently, this is done independently by each of the agencies. While the PCG has an intermittent patrolling schedule, the PN holds a more regular schedule which is twice a month; with the establishment of the inter-agency institutional structure in Component 1, enhanced cooperation and collaboration will be expected.
DOST-PCAARRD's support for R&D Programs for PH Rise	This support will continue notwithstanding the presence of the Interim Protected Area Management Board; with the establishment of the inter-agency institutional structure in Component 1, the results of R&D programs will be further taken up for its policy implications and guidance for long-term conservation and sustainable use of PRMRR.

7. *Consistency with National Priorities*. Is the project consistent with the National strategies and plans or reports and assessments under relevant conventions? (yes ☒ /no ☐). If yes, which ones and how:

The Project is aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (5, 7-9, 12-17) and selected targets therein. The main focus is on SDG 14 (Life Below Water) but will also touch on SDG 13 (Climate Action), and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions).

The implementation of the PRICELESS Project, particularly Component 1 on better managing the PRMRR multiple-use zone and strict protection zone, is aligned with the Aichi Target 11 on the establishment of marine protected areas of at least 10% of the total land area to be met by the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity.

The Project's second component on protecting the SPZ through awareness-raising and education, largely corresponds with Aichi Target 1 on increasing the awareness of people on the values of biodiversity, and Aichi Target 2, integrating these values into national and local development plans.

The PRICELESS Project aligns with and will contribute to the implementation and achievement of the Philippine Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan 2015-2028, particularly with respect to the following targets:

- Target 7 - by 2028, as a result of improved conservation, ecosystem services provided by key biodiversity areas will be enhanced
- Target 8 - by 2028, fish stocks of economically important species will be maintained
- Target 9 - by 2028, there will be an annual increase of at least 5% in biodiversity conservation-related jobs (ecotourism, sustainable agriculture, ecosystem restoration
- Target 12 - by 2028, capacity for biodiversity conservation of public and private sector groups in terrestrial and marine PAs/KBAs will be strengthened
- Target 20 - by 2028, there will be a 20% increase from 2015 levels in the coverage of established MPAs/sanctuaries across various aquatic habitats

The Project will also contribute to the Regional Strategic Action Plan for Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines, which addresses six transboundary problems including: unsustainable exploitation of fish, habitat degradation and community modification, climate change, marine pollution, freshwater shortage, and alien and invasive species.

Among the targets in the overall strategic framework of the Philippine Development Plan (2017-2022), the Project will have direct impacts on the following:

- There will be greater trust in government and in society
- Individuals and communities will be more resilient
- Filipinos will have a greater drive for innovation

The Project will directly contribute to National PA Master Plan goals, particularly the target of 2 million additional hectares in the national PA System. Effective management of the Philippine Rise will contribute to the target of "4 million hectares marine protected areas efficiently managed."

The Project also supports the Sustainable Development Strategy for the Seas of East Asia (SDS-SEA) Implementation Plan and is aligned with its outcomes as follows:

- 1.2 MPAs, MPA networks and other conservation measures are scaled up and managed effectively across the East Asian region, enhancing the protection and conservation of marine biodiversity and threatened migratory marine animals
- 2.2 Innovative projects/approaches developed and implemented in collaboration with national and local governments, decreasing vulnerability of coastal communities, applying blue economy solutions and improving food security and livelihood options in highly vulnerable coastal areas.

- 3.2 Marine pollution reduced among PEMSEA Partner Countries from land-based and sea-based sources, including marine debris, plastics/ micro-plastics and nutrient pollution.
- 5.3 Targeted research projects providing scientific data, tools and methodologies for application in planning and decision-making processes for scaling up SDS-SEA implementation.
- 6.1 Improved access to sources of public and private sector financing, including sector based ocean investment funds and other innovative investment mechanisms.
- 6.3 Socio-economic and ecological benefits and changes in ecosystem health and resilience resulting from blue economy investment realized and shared with regional and international partners for further scaling up investments.

8. Knowledge Management. Outline the "Knowledge Management Approach" for the project and how it will contribute to the project's overall impact, including plans to learn from relevant projects, initiatives and evaluations.

Knowledge management is included as part of an outcome to improve information about biodiversity and ecosystems within the PRMRR, but is also included to ensure communication of the many lessons learned that are anticipated from this project. The knowledge management approach for the PRICELESS Project includes lessons generated by the DENR, BFAR, and the PAMB as they move through the process of becoming a formal, long term protected MPA under e-NIPAS. The lessons learned will be shared as widely and effectively as possible across the government agencies and organizations involved in the PRMRR and its management. A target of 20 agencies/organizations to reach is sought, and the Project will host at least two workshops sharing key lessons learned from the project to help replicate and scale up results in other coastal and offshore MPAs.

The project will also produce a series of fact sheets and an overall report of lessons learned to help advance the field of offshore MPA designation and management, listing all tools and approaches used and evaluating them for their potential for application elsewhere. The Project will also seek to build greater alignment and cooperation between the various actors supporting large-scale ocean conservation through a series of bi-annual partner convenings.

The PRICELESS Project will produce lessons learned to be shared across DENR, BFAR and other agency networks working on setting up an e-NIPAS protected area. The experience gained from this work will be summarized into a report, and shared with the many agencies and organizations involved in PA management considering a similar approach. This will help scale up results, and help justify additional support from the Philippine government. The project will also share lessons at formal events and gatherings such as, among others, the Asia Pacific Coral Reef Symposium (upcoming June 2022 in Singapore), the World Fisheries Congress (upcoming in September 2021, Australia), the annual Biodiversity Conservation Society of the Philippines Symposium, and the East Asian Seas Congress (upcoming in 2021) that is spearheaded by the PEMSEA. Further, DENR and BFAR hold regular national conferences where the PRICELESS project can be presented. These include events like the Month of the Ocean (May), Month of Biodiversity (September), and the Fisheries Congress (September). As CI is an active partner of the CTI-CFF, lessons from PRICELESS can also be discussed at the Seascapes Working Group and the Fisheries Working Group of the CTI-CFF.

Other lessons learned, such as livelihood benefits and means of providing alternatives to fishing, as well as improved access ~~via FADS and other market options~~ improving income generation from fisheries, will also be summarized and shared via a report with government agency and NGO networks. This and all of the Project's work to improve MPA management effectiveness builds upon efforts of PEMSEA, as well as other regional networks and projects contributing to the overall improvement of coastal and marine resource management in the Philippines and in SE Asia.

The PRICELESS project will learn from existing initiatives (e.g. SMARTSeas project), specifically looking at lessons learned to design an effective and efficient steering committee. In addition, the project will learn from existing initiatives on how to best coordinate with government agencies.

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

A. RECORD OF ENDORSEMENT OF GEF OPERATIONAL FOCAL POINT (S) ON BEHALF OF THE GOVERNMENT(S):
(Please attach the Operational Focal Point endorsement letter(s) with this template. For SGP, use this SGP OFP endorsement letter).

NAME	POSITION	MINISTRY	DATE *(MM/dd/yyyy)*

[i] Barretto, J., R. Wood and J. Milsom 2020. Benham Rise unveiled: Morphology and structure of an Eocene large igneous province in the West Philippine Basin. Marine Geology 419: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.margeo.2019.106052