

**FINAL MID-TERM EVALUATION FOR
CPD FOCUS AREA #2: SOUND
ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT FOR
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

Richard Carlos Worden

UNDP Consultant

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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

BOS	Bureau of Statistics (GOL)
CBO	Community Based Organizations
CSO	Civil Society Organizations
CPD	Country Programme Document
EE	Energy Efficiency
E&E	Energy and Environment Unit of UNDP Lesotho
FAO	U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization
FA#2	Focus Area #2 of UNDP's CPD (2013-2017)
GHG	Greenhouse Gases
GOL	Government of Lesotho
IPs	Implementing Partners
IWMP	Integrated Watershed Management Project
LREBRE	Lesotho Renewable Energy-based Rural Electrification Project
LRP	Land Rehabilitation Programme (GOL)
MFRSC	Ministry of Forestry, Rangeland and Soil Conservation
MEM	Ministry of Energy and Mines
MOLG	Ministry of Local Government
MTE	Mid-Term Evaluation
NDCs	Nationally Determined Commitments
NGOs	Non-Government Organizations
NSDP	National Sustainable Development Plan (GOL)
RE	Renewable Energy
RET	Renewable Energy Technologies
RVCC	Reducing Vulnerability from Climate Change
SE4ALL	Development of Cornerstone Public Policies and Institutional Capacities to Accelerate Sustainable Energy for All Program
SLM	Capacity Building and Knowledge Management for Sustainable Land Management in Lesotho (SLM) Project
TORs	Terms of Reference
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations' Development Programme

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As stated in the Terms of Reference for this consultancy, the objective of this Mid-Term Evaluation is to “assess how and why an outcome is or is not being achieved in a given country context, within a specific timeframe, and the role that UNDP and other partners have played in this regard.” This outcome-level Mid-Term Evaluation (MTE) of the second (2nd) Focus Area of the current UNDP Country Programme Document (CPD 2013-2017) is intended to help clarify underlying factors affecting the situation, highlight unintended consequences (positive and negative), generate lessons learned, and recommend actions that might be taken to improve performance in future programming. In addition, this MTE assesses the partnership strategy that the UNDP has employed to achieve the desired outcomes under the 2nd Focal Area of the CPD, as well as the extent to which the cross-cutting issues of gender equality and the human rights of vulnerable populations have been addressed in the design, implementation, and monitoring of the UNDP’s Programme. This report contains the findings reached, ‘lessons learned,’ and recommendations made that were based upon the evidentiary basis of information gathered and analyzed over a four-week period from September to October 2016.

The evaluative methods that were applied include: (i) reviewing project documents of pertinent past, current, and planned UNDP (and other donor) interventions, (ii) studying evaluations of past projects going back beyond the initiation of the current CPD 2013-2017 period, and (iii) conducting interviews with UNDP staff, implementing parties, and other key stakeholders using interview summary sheets containing 30-36 questions during semi-structured interviews and focus group meetings. All these sources of evaluation evidence were then triangulated and integrated with the consultant’s own professional knowledge and relevant experience.

An Inception Report was prepared, discussed with UNDP managers, and revised based upon their comments. This report included a proposed Theory of Change, Evaluation Matrix, Framework for Stakeholder Analysis, and Schedule of Tasks and Deliverables. It was submitted on October 6th and finalized on October 10th. Interviews then commenced for the next 10 days until October 21st. A Draft MTE was submitted on October 24th at the Validation Workshop and de-briefing. It was finalized one week after comments on the draft report were received on November 7, 2016.

The following sections of this Executive Summary briefly define the three ‘interlocking’ expected outcomes for Focus Area #2 (Sound Environmental Management for Sustainable Development) of the CPD, the findings reached for each outcome as well as the overall ‘programmatic impact, the four principal ‘lessons learned,’ and recommendations. The UNDP’s ‘partnership strategy’ as well as the two cross-cutting themes of gender equality and the human rights and special needs of vulnerable populations were also assessed. It is hoped that this report will be helpful to the UNDP as it undertakes efforts to develop the next CPD for 2018-2022.

Summary of Expected Outcomes for CPD Focus Area #2: Sound Environmental Management for Sustainable Development

The expected ‘Programme Outcome’ for the Lesotho United Nations Development Assistance Plan (LUNDAP 2013-2017) and the UNDP’s CPD 2013-2017 was: “By 2017 Lesotho adopts environmental management practices for sustainable development that promote a low-carbon, climate-resilient economy and society, sustainably manage natural resources, and reduce vulnerability to disasters.” These three ‘interlocking’ expected outcomes under Focus Area #2 of the CPD were based upon and aligned with the Government of Lesotho’s (GOL) *Vision 2020* and its *National Sustainable Development Plan (NSDP 2012/13-2016/17)*. They were first assessed individually, and then collectively in their programmatic entirety, using the methods described above (and in Section II of this report in more detail) in terms of four evaluative criteria: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability. Those findings are summarized below.

Summary of Findings

The findings below were developed by taking an inductive approach of working from the ‘bottom-up’ from the project or projects under each one of the three outcomes individually to the overall ‘programmatic’ level for CPD Focus Area #2. The findings are organized along the lines of the four evaluative criteria for easier assimilation in reaching an overall rating for each criterion. The ratings attached to each criterion vary slightly from one another, but are all based on the same simple and intuitive four-point scale due to the inherent imprecision and subjectivity involved in reaching evaluation judgments. It should be noted that *none* of the projects were ‘evaluated’ *per se*, but rather were assessed in terms of their combined contributions toward the three individual expected outcomes and overall outcome under the 2nd Focus Area of the CPD.

- ***Relevance***

Outcome 1: Climate-resilient economy and society

Both the closed Lesotho Renewable Energy-based Rural Electrification (LREBRE) Project (2009-2014) and the soon to start Development of Cornerstone Public Policies and Institutional Capacities to Accelerate Sustainable Energy for All (SE4ALL) Program (2016-2020) under the first Outcome were judged to have been moderately relevant to the GOL’s NSDP in terms of contributing toward its objective of “adapting to climate change.” Even though renewable energy technologies (RETs) are climate change *mitigation* instruments, they do have *adaptation* co-benefits as well. This is because RETs reduce some of the demand on biomass that is used by the majority of households in rural areas for heating and cooking, which in turn leads to greater land degradation and exposure to climate change impacts. Given Lesotho’s low GHG emissions and high vulnerability to climate change impacts, greater emphasis should continue to be placed on adaptation, rather than mitigation, measures to enhance Lesotho’s resilience to climate change.

Outcome 2: Sustainable natural resource management

Both the Capacity Building and Knowledge Management for Sustainable Land Management in Lesotho (SLM) and the Reducing Vulnerability from Climate Change in the Foothills, Lowlands and the Lower Senqu River Basin (RVCC) projects were found to be highly relevant to the GOL’s strategic objective of “reversing land degradation and reducing vulnerability to disasters,” as stated in the NSDP. They are also both highly relevant to the CPD’s 2nd Focal Area.

Outcome 3: Reduced vulnerability to natural disasters

The UNDP’s programmatic efforts principally through the recently initiated RVCC Project, but also indirectly through its SLM Project, soon to start SE4ALL Project, and the relevant small demonstration projects sponsored by the Global Environment Facility’s Small Grants Programme (GEF-SGP), are all considered to highly relevant to the 3rd outcome of the 2nd CPD Focus Area. They also contribute directly to the strategic priorities identified by the GOL in the current NSDP and Vision 2020 documents.

Overall Relevance of CPD Focus Area #2

The overall relevance of the second CPD Focus Area is assessed as being highly relevant to both the UN’s strategic priorities, as defined in the CPD and LUNDAP 2013-2017, as well as to the GOL’s national priorities identified in the *NSDP 2012/13-2016/17* and *Vision 2020*.

- ***Effectiveness***

Outcome 1: Climate-resilient economy and society

It is very difficult to assess the effectiveness of UNDP interventions for this outcome given that the LREBRE Project closed in early 2013 just as the current CPD period was beginning, and the SE4ALL Project

has not yet begun implementation. However, the Terminal Evaluation Report for the LREBRE Project cited several project failures that are enumerated in some detail in Section V of this report. Given a number of key similarities in the design of the soon-to-start SE4ALL Project to components of the LREBRE Project that fared poorly, it is not considered unreasonable to expect the SE4ALL Project *may* encounter significant difficulty in achieving its expected outcomes. This is based on the anticipated difficulties inherent in the outcomes to be achieved, such as the novelty of creating a new ‘market’ driven by the private sector, the ‘cost’ in time and effort of working in partnership through multiple GOL institutions, the UNDP’s own cumbersome bureaucratic procedures, and the overly aggressive and unrealistic project targets and milestones contained in the project’s Results Framework. Therefore, based on the poor effectiveness of the LREBRE Project and concerns about the eventual effectiveness of the SE4ALL Project, the overall effectiveness of the UNDP’s interventions in achieving the first expected outcome of contributing toward Lesotho’s efforts to become a low-carbon, climate-resilient economy and society by the end of 2017 are assessed as being modest.

Outcome 2: Sustainable natural resource management

There were three main objectives to be achieved under the first of the three outcomes contributing toward more sustainable natural resources management practices. They were to: (i) develop a viable ‘model’ to overcome the institutional and governance barriers to SLM, (ii) strengthen partnerships, and (iii) integrate SLM into country programmes (e.g., the GOL’s Land Rehabilitation Programme). All three of these objectives were started and partially achieved under the SLM Project. It is arguably true that the concepts and models developed under the SLM Project are “ready for national implementation,” to the extent that there is a willingness on the part of the GOL to do so. Thus, the SLM Project is considered to have achieved its objectives to a substantial degree under its first outcome.

The second expected objective to be achieved under this outcome was to put ‘adequate local and national capacity in place to adapt and scale up proven SLM models and techniques.’ This appears to have only had a marginal impact or level of achievement. And the third expected objective under this outcome was that it would contribute to Lesotho “adopting a programmatic approach to SLM”... [and that the] “enhanced awareness, dialogue, understanding, and analysis of SLM best practices”... [would be] “reflected in strengthened synergistic, multi-sectoral policies, strategies and programmes that would achieve an integrated approach to SNRM.” Based on the weight of all the evidence reviewed, it would appear that this outcome was also only modestly achieved.

In terms of the RVCC Project’s contributions to the adoption of SNRM practices in Lesotho, it is still too early to say for that project. Thus, the overall effectiveness of achieving the expected outcomes that would contribute toward more sustainable management of Lesotho’s natural resources is assessed as being modest to moderate.

Outcome 3: Reduced vulnerability to natural disasters

Given that the main vehicle for achieving the desired outcome of reduced vulnerability to disasters is to be obtained through implementing the RVCC Project, which has only effectively started in mid-2015, it is still premature to assess its effectiveness. A draft National Resilience Framework is in an advanced stage of development, and it is hoped that this will contribute toward reducing Lesotho’s vulnerability to natural disasters, particularly as they are exacerbated by climate change, but that remains to be seen. In addition, the previous contributions made by the SLM Project and approximately three dozen pilot projects dispersed throughout the country under the GEF-funded Small Grants Programme toward achieving this outcome objective have been important, but modest, in terms of their impact or effectiveness. Therefore, the rating for the effectiveness of UNDP’s Programme of contributing toward reducing Lesotho’s vulnerability to disasters, especially those exacerbated by climate change, is assessed as having been modest.

Overall Effectiveness of CPD Focus Area #2

Thus, since the effectiveness ratings for all three of the expected outcomes were ‘modest to moderate,’ the overall relevance of the 2nd CPD Focal Area must be assessed accordingly as ‘modest.’

- ***Efficiency***

Outcome 1: Climate-resilient economy and society

Given that there is no ‘active’ project under this Outcome element for the evaluator to assess in terms of contributing toward creating a climate-resilient economy and society in Lesotho, most of what can be said relates to the assessment of the effectiveness *and* efficiency of the LREBRE Project. These two evaluative criteria were combined in the terminal evaluation of that project; in the case of the soon-to-start SE4ALL Project, it is highly speculative to postulate about its ‘reasonably foreseeable’ efficiency. In the former case, due to all the reasons laid out above under ‘Effectiveness,’ the rating for “Efficiency” in the Terminal Evaluation for the LREBRE Project was “moderately unsatisfactory.” There were some activities in the SLM Project and in GEF Small Grants Projects’ efforts to enhance community-based resilience, with others planned under the RVCC Project. However, these activities do not generate enough impact to change the rating for efficiency. Therefore, based on a thorough review of all the available information provided, including responses to the interview questionnaires, this evaluator assesses efficiency under the 2nd Outcome for CPD Focus Area #2 as modest.

Outcome 2: Sustainable natural resource management

The efficiency of the SLM Project was found to be flawed in the Terminal Evaluation for that project. The PMU was under-staffed with gaps in its technical expertise, there was high staff turnover (particularly for the M&E functions), and no Technical Advisor or Project Director for much of the project implementation phase. Too much money was spent on travel and per diems when better service delivery would have been provided from officers located in the field, closer to the communities. Financial controls should have been better managed so that funds were spent with a commensurate impact on results. This imbalance wasn’t caught until the MTE highlighted this issue, but by then about three quarters of the budget had already been spent.

In terms of the RVCC Project, it is still too early to assess its efficiency. However, there are some early warning signs emerging of similar types of inefficiencies that impeded the SLM Project. These include the lack of a Chief Technical Advisor on-board from the outset, a project that is too ‘front-loaded’ with very difficult technical tasks and very tight deadlines, excessively bureaucratic processes or ‘hurdles’ that they must jump through, overly prescriptive processes or steps for delivering products, slow or little feedback on products delivered or guidance provided to resolve problems and challenges, and onerous reporting requirements. Thus, given the findings of the terminal evaluation for that project, and the fact that none of the interviewees refuted any of its major findings, the overall efficiency of the UNDP Programme in achieving the second outcome of the CPD’s 2nd Focus Area is assessed as having been modest.

Outcome 3: Reduced vulnerability to natural disasters

Due to the relative ‘newness’ of the RVCC Project, it is purely conjectural at this point to assess efficiency under Outcome #3. There are some early signs of an inefficient roll-out of the project (mentioned above) that should be addressed by the UNDP and PMU together, but it is premature to assess this evaluation criterion. Therefore, it is considered ‘non-evaluable’ at this time.

Overall Efficiency of CPD Focus Area #2

Given that the ratings of efficiency for two of the three expected outcomes were ‘modest’ while the third outcome was not evaluable, the overall rating for efficiency under the 2nd Focal Area of the CPD is modest.

- **Sustainability**

Outcome 1: Climate-resilient economy and society

During the LREBRE Project, subsidies for solar household systems (SHSs) were 80%, a level considered not only “unsustainable” in the terminal evaluation, but which were also considered would “likely continue to distort the solar PV market.” In addition, there were perverse incentives for suppliers of SHSs to install ‘cheap’ systems with shoddy installation since all the incentives were oriented toward installing the ‘next’ SHS instead of providing a good quality product and backing it up with good after-sales servicing and spare parts. These decisions to change the ‘business model’ of the project were the result of undue political influences on key decisions made in the early years of project implementation. On a policy level, the evaluation noted that “no progress” had been made to develop the necessary enabling policies at the national level. Thus, there are few, if any, lasting impacts that can be attributed to the contributions made by the LREBRE Project, that were not due to other factors or efforts apart from it, and which were not influenced by it.

Regarding the sustainability of the upcoming SE4ALL Project, there is no way of knowing that now, or even speculating about it. However, that said, the sustainability of the SE4ALL Project will depend to a large degree on the manner in which it is implemented to facilitate and encourage the development of a truly ‘market-driven’ approach with active participation and leadership of the private sector. It is too early to say whether lasting outcomes will be achieved by the end of 2017, but it seems unlikely. It will likely take several years before outcomes achieved by the SE4ALL Project can be assessed. Therefore, the sustainability of the first Outcome is not considered to be evaluable.

Outcome 2: Sustainable natural resource management

The work initiated under the SLM Problem has continued to be served by the initiation of activities under the RVCC Project, which is assisting relevant, albeit admittedly weak, Government institutions to develop their technical capacities to empower local farmer and grazing associations implement SNRM practices that also reduce their vulnerability to disasters and climate change impacts. All these efforts are couched within the overarching framework of the Government’s Land Rehabilitation Programme (LRP) and decentralization reforms. They are likely to continue being areas of emphasis in the next NSDP. Therefore, while it is still not entirely clear whether the decentralization reforms will continue, or if the LRP will succeed in introducing more sustainable SLM practices, the probability that impacts will be sustained is likely.

Outcome 3: Reduced vulnerability to natural disasters

It is widely-acknowledged that the urgent need to reduce the country’s vulnerability to disasters is of the highest importance. These disasters are likely to be exacerbated by changing climatic conditions affecting the timing and amount of rainfall, the expectation of increasing frequent and severe droughts in Lesotho, and the food security ramifications of both of these forecasted trends continuing in the near future. It is therefore highly likely that this issue will remain at the top of the country’s and GOL’s priorities in the next NSDP cycle.

Overall Sustainability of CPD Focus Area #2

While it remains to be seen whether the results achieved under the SE4ALL will be sustained to create a market-driven, private sector-led approach to renewable energy mini-grids in rural areas that are ‘off-grid,’ there is potential there for continued growth in that sector. However, it is little, if any, doubt that emphasis will continue to be placed on efforts to build greater resilience to disasters and climate change impacts through reduced vulnerability and more ‘adaptive capacity’ development in Lesotho, such as through diversification of rural incomes, and better land and water resources management. Therefore, the overall sustainability of efforts to decrease vulnerability to disasters, especially those driven by climate change, are very likely to continue being national and local priorities.

- ***Partnership Approach/Strategy***

It is the ‘UN way’ to work through partnerships with Government institutions to achieve outcomes. Thus, it is ultimately the responsibility of the GOL as the primary implementing partner to achieve those outcomes with the UN’s role as *contributing* toward, and supporting, the GOL’s efforts in achieving them. This approach is crucial to working harmoniously with the GOL to achieve its national priorities, and it ‘pays off’ handsomely in terms of getting good marks for both ‘relevance’ and ‘sustainability.’ However, it comes at a high cost in terms of the ‘effectiveness and efficiency’ of programme implementation and achieving the desired outcomes. Perhaps, this is an unavoidable and necessary ‘cost to pay’ given that there may be no viable alternative approaches. However, a more nuanced approach to this issue might be more useful and helpful. While the desired outcome of the UNDP’s programmes must be aligned with the goals and priorities of the GOL, the *means and mechanisms* to achieve them may be open to consideration of other creative and direct approaches.

For example, to its credit, the RVCC Project has worked more directly with district level offices of GOL ministries, and with local community groups to achieve tangible, measurable results and outcomes. This may result in more positive outcomes than would be achieved by focusing at the national policy level, which has proven to be resistant to rapid progress. This should be emphasized in the upcoming SE4ALL Project. It makes sense to work directly with the private sector to better understand the enabling conditions that will incentivize it to support the introduction of RETs in under-served and remote villages in rural areas. Meanwhile, the UNDP can continue to work with GOL institutions at the national policy and strategy level to assign different risks to those parties best equipped and positioned to manage them. The policy framework must provide an adequate return on investment to private investors, but it must also be in the public’s best interests and meet their needs in an affordable manner.

Thinking more broadly, partnerships can also include closer coordination and collaboration within and between development agencies. Starting with closer coordination and collaboration within the UNDP itself, better results might be achieved if there were even greater coordination and collaboration between the Energy & Environment and the Governance units given that the primary development challenges facing the RVCC and SE4ALL projects are not ‘technical’ in nature so much as they are ‘governance’ challenges. It also *appears* that there could be closer coordination and collaboration within UN ‘family’ of agencies, such as between the UNDP and FAO or WFP. The Integrated Watershed Management Project (discussed later) is a case in point.

Extending this broader conceptualization of ‘partnerships’ beyond the UN, the UNDP may also want to consider more fully developing closer coordination and collaboration with other development agencies, such as the EU and World Bank. For example, the EU is focusing its efforts and resources now on three ‘sectors’ (energy, water, and governance) under its ‘National Indicative Programme’ that are very relevant to the UNDP’s second focal area of the CPD. Quarterly coordination meetings are held, which the UNDP attends. These are useful vehicles to maintain and increase coordination and collaboration to achieve better outcomes, and should be continued and even expanded.

- ***Cross-cutting Issues of Gender Equality and Vulnerable Populations***

It was difficult to find many specific examples or quantified information in project documents or evaluations of past UNDP projects referring to gender equality or special attention having been paid to the needs and rights of vulnerable populations, such as the young or elderly populations, widows or orphans, or people with disabilities. In interviews, questions about both gender equality and vulnerable populations with difficult for many interviewees to answer, with many speaking in vague terms and having trouble thinking of examples that they could point to. The ‘scores’ in the Interview Summary Sheets varied widely as a result, with the ‘average’ score for gender equality being in the low ‘3s’ meaning that most people interviewed felt that the UNDP did a ‘fairly good job’ of considering the special needs and concerns of women in its programs. The scores for

vulnerable populations was lower (in the low '2s') meaning that interviewees had more trouble thinking of instances they could point to as reasons for giving higher marks.

The one exception to this was the GEF-funded Small Grants Programme which gave good marks for both, and was able to point to numerous examples where grants had been awarded to address specific needs of women and vulnerable groups. This was documented in their 'portfolio of projects' and OP-5 and OP-6 Country Strategies. Overall, though, it was difficult to make a case for or against the UNDP's performance or impact when it came to the cross-cutting issues of gender equality or advancing the human rights and special needs or concerns of vulnerable people or groups in Lesotho over the past few years.

Lessons Learned

More important than the ratings themselves are the reasons behind them, as those reasons go a long way toward explaining the consistently and continuing under-performance of the portfolio of projects under this UNDP Programme. The 'lessons learned' basically revolve around the partnership strategy that the UNDP employs to achieve its desired outcomes. These include considering different approaches to the strategic partnerships that UNDP forms with local levels of government agencies, in partnership with NGOs and CBOs. They also involve moving away from an overly 'process-oriented' focus on deliverables ('outputs') and procedural requirements and focusing instead on achieving the desired outcomes within a more flexible results framework. This is particularly true given the high degree of uncertainty and learning that is unavoidable due to the innovative nature of the UNDP's interventions. There is also a need for greater accountability of the GOL's performance, and to continue to work collaboratively with other UN and non-UN agencies (e.g., the EU) working on related projects and activities with the potential to achieve greater results through mutual synergies.

- The first lesson learned addresses the need to continue using the partnership approach to align projects with GOL priorities, but finds that implementing projects through the central government has proven problematic, particularly during the LREBRE Project, when tariffs were doubled and direct contracting procedures with installers of solar household systems were instituted. Getting the private sector to participate in the follow-on RVCC Project will be a critical element of its ultimate success, or failure. This lesson would suggest that a number of alternatives for working with lower (district and community) levels of government agencies, NGOs and CBOs in civil society, and with the private sector in private-public partnerships, need to be considered.
- The second lesson learned is the difficulty of introducing untested and novel approaches to address extremely difficult and 'thorny' development challenges that do not lend themselves to quick or predictable solutions, a fact which should be acknowledged in designing and implementing interventions. Continuing with the example of the SE4ALL Project, the challenge of creating the right incentives to encourage their participation will require an approach of 'trial-and-error' and 'structured learning' where progress is not expected to be linear, and mistakes and mishaps are not punished by overly prescriptive procedures or crushing deadlines that inhibit experimentation and learning-by-doing. Rather than focusing on a number of preliminary steps and interim outputs (e.g., Country Action Agenda and Investment Prospectus) within the first 12 months, it may be wiser to reduce the number and specificity of those processes and deliverables, leaving it up to the PMU to figure out the best ways to achieve the desired outcomes within more reasonable timeframes.
- The third lesson learned is the need for greater accountability of the GOL's performance. Working in partnership with GOL institutions had been problematic and challenging in many cases. Again, the LREBRE Project serves as an example of this. There have consistently been long delays in implementation, lack of adequate personnel and equipment, and the GOL has not passed key pieces of enabling legislation at the national level in a timely manner. Therefore, some sort of accountability or project implementation 'discipline' appears to be warranted in the future to help ensure that GOL ministries and staff are sufficiently motivated to achieve the

outcomes for which they are responsible to achieve, with the UNDP's support. The need for better capacitated and resourced district staff of GOL institutions was cited in all interviews and documents reviewed.

- Finally, the fourth lesson learned involves a number of issues raised in project documents and interviews about project implementation shortcomings and gaps. Among these were consistent remarks or comments of the general under-staffing of project implementation teams, especially a shortage of 'in-house' technical expertise. Logistical issues involving the time, cost, and effort of reaching project sites from project offices located in Maseru was also mentioned as a past mistake that is being corrected in more recent projects. And overly bureaucratic and time-consuming administrative requirements for procurement, reimbursement and disbursement, and reporting actions by the UNDP were reported frequently as being responsible for delays in project implementation. In terms of the long 'gaps' between projects, such as the nearly four-year gap between the end of the LREBRE Project in March 2013 and the follow-on SE4ALL Project that has yet to effectively start was noted by the evaluator as a factor limiting the Programme's overall effectiveness. As a result, the UNDP is essentially working on a project-by-project basis rather than on a continuous, sustained programmatic basis, which undermines the momentum that had been built up by the previous project.

The recommendations of this report flow directly from these 'lessons learned.'

Summary of Recommendations

- The first recommendation is that the UNDP **broaden its conceptualization of its strategic partnerships** with central level GOL institutions. The UNDP should continue to expand the range of partners it works with, and the way in which it works with them. For example, it could work more closely with district or lower levels of GOL ministry staff, community councils and associations of natural resource users at the village level, with the private sector, with other donors, and even within its own family of UN agencies.

For example, the UNDP's CPD is well aligned with the three priority areas of the European Union's National Indicative Programme for Lesotho of water, energy, and governance. The on-going RVCC Project is well aligned with the EU's water resources sector programme of work, as outlined in its 2014 Scoping report.¹ The UNDP's "Deepening Decentralization" Project is closing in 2017, but that work could continue to make a significant contribution to this paradigm-changing transformation of governance in Lesotho if the efforts it began are sustained in the future by the EU. And the new SE4ALL Project should be closely coordinated with the work that the EU is just starting under the first phase of its new Energy initiative. All three areas are not only consistent between the UNDP and EU, but they are also mutually reinforcing and supportive of one another. This is **not** to say that the UNDP should not continue to work with central GOL ministries; just that it might diversify its partnership strategy to include other partners more. While the overarching priorities and objectives of the country, as defined by the GOL, must be closely aligned with the agendas and strategies of the development community, the *means* to implement them does not have to preclude working with others to achieve them.

- The second recommendation of this report is that the UNDP needs to **acknowledge the difficulty of achieving the outcomes it seeks in project documents and reflect them in their results and resource frameworks** so that it doesn't end up over-promising and under-delivering. The development challenges that the UNDP is tackling under CPD Focus Area #2 have proven to be extremely resistant to quick and easy resolution. In many ways, they are generational challenges involving reforms to long-practiced traditions and requiring

¹ EU, "Scoping of Potential Interventions in the Water Sector under 11th EDF in Lesotho;" ARS Progetti S.P.A. for the European Union, January 16, 2014.

changes in individual behaviors by large portions of the population spread out over large areas of the country. Therefore, it is recommended that the UNDP revisit its approach to preparing project documents and results frameworks in a more realistic and achievable way, fully acknowledging the difficulty of the tasks it is undertaking. These overly ambitious targets and goals were amply elucidated in the terminal evaluation of the SLM Project, which stated that “the project design was wildly optimistic in the way it had set its targets, setting up the project to fail.”² A similar situation of overly ambitious targets and deadlines under the new SE4ALL Project is discussed in more detail in Section VII.2 of this report. The UNDP needs to design and implement projects that have a higher probability of successfully achieving their expected outcomes.

- The third recommendation of this report is that the UNDP needs **to hold its implementing partners more accountable for achieving outcomes**. The poor performance and lack of accountability among GOL implementing partners has been noted widely and consistently in project-level evaluations, and in stakeholder interviews, including those among GOL officials who freely admit that the Government is a ‘big part of the problem.’ It is a common practice among multi-lateral development banks to make use of ‘conditionalities,’ when they consider them to be warranted. Passing key pieces of legislation and earmarking public funds as part of counterpart obligations are two such ‘conditions’ that are often placed on the approval and initiation of projects as well as on the release of “fixed and variable” tranches of project funds. Another mechanism that is commonly used is to base future loans or grants on evaluations of past performance by recipients/clients. Therefore, it is recommended that the UNDP consider urging the GEF and other donors to use ‘conditionality’ when preparing loans or grants to the GOL, and evaluate its implementing partners as a ‘common practice’ in all its projects, much like the World Bank does. These steps, and others, might incentivize the GOL to improve its own performance and achievement of mutually agreed-to goals and outcomes.

- The fourth and final recommendation of this report is that the UNDP should **analyze the common threads running through all the evaluations of past projects within this Programme with a view to taking actions to correct consistent shortcomings in project implementation and gaps between projects on all current and future interventions**. Some initial steps appear to have been taken on the RVCC Project in terms of locating more project field facilitators closer to field activities to reduce the logistical obstacles to accessing them and maintaining a more constant presence and closer working relationships with them. In addition to simplifying project design to be more focused on results rather than on processes and deliverables, the UNDP should consider the full range of alternatives in which it might lessen the bureaucratic obstacles and administrative requirements placed on projects while maintaining sufficient oversight and monitoring functions to keep abreast of project progress. Finally, the long gaps in between projects should be minimized through ‘bridging mechanisms’ to maintain programme continuity. The GEF-SGP might well fill this role with small “demonstration” projects. Whatever mechanism is used, it is important to avoid the appearance of doing ‘one-on, one-off’ projects, and not being seen as a dependable development partner by the GOL.

² Troni, J. and Molupe, M.. “Terminal Evaluation of the ‘Capacity Building and Knowledge Management for Sustainable Land Management in Lesotho Project,” p. 18; April 14, 2015.

I. INTRODUCTION

Lesotho is a mountainous, land-locked country of just over 30,600 square kilometres with a population of roughly two million people. Geologically, the lowland plateaus are located in the southern and southwestern regions of Lesotho where nearly 2/3 of the population reside. They are characterized by highly-erodible sedimentary soils with little organic material content and a semi-arid climate.

The lowlands are surrounded on their eastern flank by impressive sandstone escarpments and buttes leading to the foothills and high mountain eco-zones formed by the basaltic Maloti-Drakensburg mountain range covering the eastern two-thirds of the country. These mountain zones are communally owned and used for subsistence rain-fed farming, pastures for grazing that have been degraded by over-use, and the collection of medicinal plants and fuelwood for heating and cooking. The climate in this ‘mountain kingdom’ is harsh with a short growing season and long, cold (sub-zero) winters. The mountain zone is the source of several major rivers (e.g., Orange or Senqu, Caledon, Makhaleng, and Tele, among others) that supply fresh water via impoundment dams and tunnels to South Africa. Despite this, it is also the area where Lesotho’s already high poverty rate (encompassing nearly 60% of the kingdom’s population) is most extreme, and where it is most vulnerable to natural disasters (like drought, crop failure and flooding), which are exacerbated by increasingly unstable climatic changes.

Besides water resources, Lesotho is also rich in renewable energy sources, such as wind and solar, with large potentials for development as alternative sources of power to fossil fuels. While there are many opportunities for greater cooperative efforts to develop them, especially with South Africa, these have not yet been fully harnessed or leveraged due to institutional capacity constraints, weak management, and lack of collaborative approaches. Lesotho faces several environmental challenges, several of which are exacerbated by rapid changes and increasing instability of the world’s climate.

II. BACKGROUND AND SITUATIONAL CONTEXT

In 2000, Lesotho began formulating a national “Vision 2020” document as a long-term (20-year) strategic framework expressing the developmental aspirations of the Basotho people. This vision was validated at a series of national ‘dialogues’ involving stakeholders from all parts of the economy and society. The Vision was officially accepted in 2004. Its goal is: “By the year 2020, Lesotho shall be a stable democracy, a united and prosperous nation at peace with itself and its neighbors. It shall have a healthy and well-developed human resource base. Its economy will be strong, its environment well managed and its technology well established.”

To operationalize this Vision 2020, the Government of Lesotho (GOL) has prepared a number of medium-term plans over time since 2004, such as poverty reduction strategies (PRS) and interim national development frameworks (INDF). The current National Sustainable Development Plan (NSDP) was adopted in March of 2012 and will be effective until the end of the GOL fiscal year 2016/17. Nearly half of the 156-page NSDP is devoted to its “Strategic Framework,” consisting of six ‘six “strategic areas,”’ which are:

1. Create High, Shared, and Employment-Generating Growth
2. Develop Key Infrastructure
3. Enhance skills base, technology adoption and Foundation for Innovation
4. Improve Health, Combat AIDS and Reduce Vulnerability
- 5. Reverse Environmental Degradation and Adapt to Climate Change**
6. Promote Peace, Democratic Governance and Effective Institutions

The fifth (5th) Strategic Area of the NSDP is to: “Reverse Environmental Degradation and Adapt to Climate Change.”³ It consists of eight (8) “Strategic objectives and actions,” which are to:

1. Reverse land degradation, desertification and improve watershed management
2. Increase biodiversity conservation and promote sustainable use
3. Strengthen range management institutions and range carrying capacity⁴
4. Improve national resilience to climate change
5. Promote and increase the greening of the economy
6. Improve land use administration and management
7. Improve the delivery of environmental services
8. Improve environment and climate change governance

Reflecting the primacy of the current NSDP as the GOL’s principal plan to operationalize Vision 2020, the NSDP is the foundational document *to* which all UNDP interventions, strategies, and plans are aligned, and *from* which they all flow. Therefore, flowing directly from the NSDP is the Lesotho United Nations Development Assistance Plan (LUNDAP, 2013-2017). Five of the six strategic areas (all except “Develop Key Infrastructure”) of the NSDP are being supported by UN member agencies, which recognize their distinct, but complementary, roles as part of the *Delivering as One (DaO) Program Framework* with its five organizing ‘principles,’ which the UN family of agencies adopted in 2009

In response to the 5th Strategic Area of the NSDP, the LUNDAP stated that it would support the efforts of the GOL to reverse land degradation and vulnerability to disasters through the realization of its fourth (4th) outcome. Primary responsibility for contributing to this outcome has been assumed by the UNDP, which has followed up on this commitment through a number of interventions to realize the desired outcomes in the second Focus Area of its Country Programme Document (CPD 2013-2017). As stated in the “Results and Resources Framework” of the CPD for Focus Area #2, those outcomes are: “by [the end of] 2017, Lesotho adopts environmental management practices for sustainable development that:

- Promote a low-carbon, climate-resilient economy and society,
- Sustainably manage natural resources, and
- Reduce vulnerability to disasters.”⁵

Upper Linkages in the Theory of Change

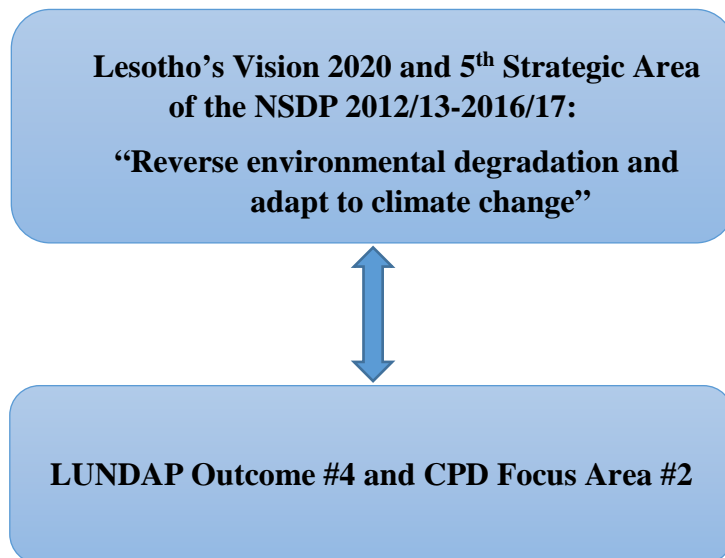
This relationship between the GOL’s stated long-term development aspirations in its Vision 2020 and its environmentally focused 5th strategic objective of the current NSPD are shown in relation to the expected ‘outcomes’ of the UN and UNDP, as stated in the LUNDAP and CPD 2013-2017. This relationship of that portion of the Theory of Change (TOC) or outcome model is presented below in Figure 1.

³ GOL, ‘*National Strategic Development Plan (NSDP 2012/13 – 2016/17)*,’ pp. 125-129, 2014.

⁴ This ‘strategic objective and action’ was listed under Section 5.5 of the NSDP on p. 130, but not among the other seven in the Executive Summary of the NSDP. In addition, the issue of climate change is not mentioned under “sound environmental policies and physical land use planning” as a prerequisite enabling long-term sustainable economic growth. However, these are minor differences in the NSDP that are not considered to be substantively inconsistent or incongruent with one another.

⁵ UN, “*Lesotho United Nations Development Assistance Plan (LUNDAP, 2013 – 2017)*, p. 2; December 2012.

Figure 1: Upper Linkages of the TOC between the GOL and UNDP



Lower Linkages in the Causal Chains of the Theory of Change

The three desired outcomes under the second focal area of the CPD were: (i) promoting a low-carbon, climate-resilient economy and society, (ii) sustainably managing its natural resources, and (iii) reducing its vulnerability to disasters). These outcomes were to be accomplished through three primary projects (the SE4ALL, SLM, and RVCC projects, respectively). In addition, there have been four dozen small projects awarded grant funds by the GEF's Small Grants Programme (GEF-SGP) since its initiation in 2008 supporting innovative approaches to problems in each of these areas. However, two significant changes in the causal links of the Theory of Change are proposed in this report.

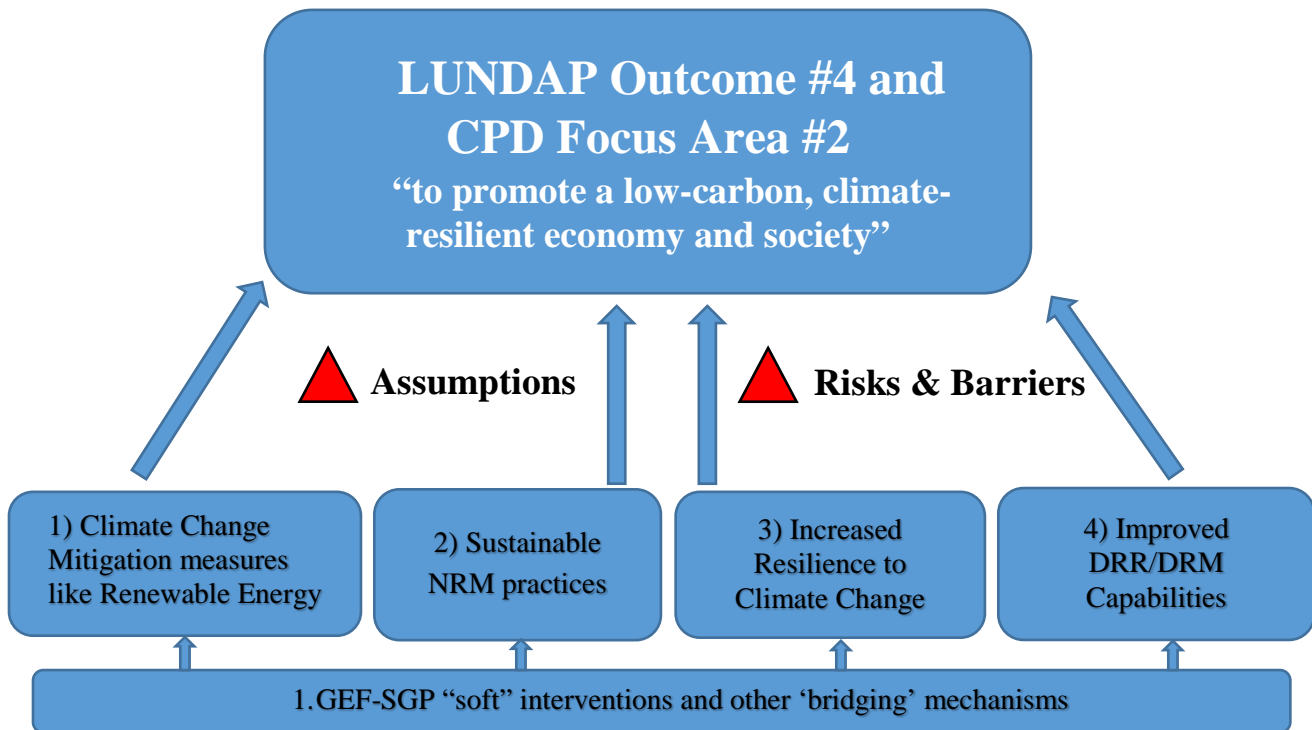
First, the desired outcome of “promoting a low-carbon, climate-resilient economy and society” may be a higher-order outcome derived from the other two outcomes that contribute toward the desired overall CPD outcome for Focus Area #2. There is little doubt that sustainable land management practices contribute toward creating a more ‘climate-resilient economy and society,’ and “reducing vulnerability to disasters.”

In addition to these outcomes, climate change mitigation efforts and outcomes, such as promoting the enabling conditions for the expanded use of renewable energy technologies (RETs) and other means to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, also support and contribute to creating a more ‘climate-resilient economy and society.’ That is what is meant by “promoting a low-carbon economy and society.”

However, the other half of this desired outcome is to create a “climate-resilient economy and society.” This is usually understood to mean longer-term climate change adaptation measures taken in anticipation of climate change impacts, such as more intense and irregularly timed storms and/or longer droughts. It is also distinct from activities to “reduce vulnerability to disasters,” which is often taken to mean sudden and unforeseen natural disasters, many of which are now magnified by climate change. This desired outcome is normally addressed by improving disaster risk reduction or management (DRR/DRM) capabilities, such as developing early warning systems and better-coordinated disaster prevention, preparation, immediate response, and recovery and reconstruction capabilities.

In other words, all four of these activities (i.e., climate change mitigation efforts like promoting RETs in rural areas, instituting sustainable NRM practices, implementing climate change adaptation measures to address slow-onset impacts, and improving DRR/DRM capabilities to reduce vulnerability to sudden disasters) all contribute toward creating a more climate-resilient economy and society. Therefore, the TOC model now reflects that rearrangement of these four elements under the higher-level development outcome to promote the creation of a low-carbon, climate-resilient economy and society in Lesotho. Figure 2 reflects this proposed hierarchy of desired outcomes under the LUNDAP and CPD:

Figure 2: Proposed Linkages between the LUNDAP/CPD and Interventions



This revised TOC model now depicts four outcomes that logically lead to the reformulated desired outcome of “promoting a more climate-resilient economy and society.” This reformulated outcome is not perfectly symmetrical with the CPD outcome, nor with the 5th strategic area of the NSDP, as both are presently stated. However, the current CPD outcome is not completely aligned with the NSDP either, which makes no mention of a ‘low-carbon, climate-resilient economy and society.’ Nevertheless, it is substantively consistent and logically aligned with the NSDP. In a sense, the UNDP’s stated outcomes under Focus Area #2 are ‘ahead of the curve’ of the NSDP in that they anticipate the emerging importance of climate resilience, which is likely to become more prominent in the next NSDP 2018-2022. Similarly, this revised TOC model is also substantively consistent and logically aligned with the CPD and NSDP.

It also includes two other subtle, but important, expansions. First, the revised outcome model elevates DRR/DRM to its rightful place alongside the other three elements and distinguishes it from climate change adaptation or resilience interventions, which assume a longer planning horizon of months or years. DRR/DRM has not received the attention it merits to date as a sub-component of “reduced vulnerability to climate change.” Furthermore, DRR/DRM does nothing to “reduce vulnerability to climate change;” rather, it represents the

disaster response and recovery measures that are taken just before, during, and after disasters strike. The second expansion of the outcome model elements is the rephrasing of the ‘sustainable *land* management’ (SLM) element to include *water* resources as well under the modified heading of ‘sustainable *natural resources* management.’

Finally, these modifications to the TOC model reflect nothing more than the consultant’s perception of the UNDP programme’s causal links that are hypothesized will lead to the desired outcomes. However, it is not important what this consultant, or any consultant for that matter, thinks about the TOC. What *is* important is that the UNDP managers and staff continue to refine the TOC “in close consultation with relevant stakeholders and partners.”⁶ In turn, this effort can have large and important implications for keeping the UNDP’s flexibility and focus on outcomes rather than on inputs, activities, and outputs that are commonly found in many results and resource frameworks of donor-funded projects.

Key Assumptions and Risks to Creating the Enabling Conditions under 2nd CPD Focus Area

The key assumptions and risks or barriers to creating the enabling conditions under CPD Focus Area #2 to achieve its desired outcomes were identified in the Inception Report. This was done at the level of the three outcomes of the TOC model postulated at that time. Those assumptions and risks remain valid. (Key assumptions and risks were not identified for the proposed DRR/DRM element since it was not considered at that time. However, they should be developed if that element is incorporated into a revised outcome model.) Since that report is attached as an annex of this Draft Mid-Term Evaluation, those key assumptions and risks or barriers to creating the enabling conditions required are not repeated here, and can be referenced there for those interested. While the assumptions behind what is needed to create the enabling conditions to achieve outcomes varied across the three elements of the desired outcomes under the 2nd Focus Area of the CPD, there was one constant and consistent barrier to creating them: an inadequate degree of good governance.

The larger ‘root causes’ blocking the development of a climate-resilient economy and society, and leading to degradation of natural resources, and vulnerability to climate change impacts are quite distinct for each one of these elements of the CPD outcome. The “lack of a coordinated national climate change policy or the cross-sectoral integration or ‘mainstreaming’ of environmental concerns” was cited in the CPD as one of the principal impediments blocking the country from following an environmentally sustainable and resilient development [‘green’] pathway.⁷

However, there are many other, well-known and understood root causes standing in the way of Lesotho developing a climate-resilient economy and society, such as endemic poverty and unemployment, an HIV/AIDS epidemic, socio-economic inequalities, and access to information, among many others. In the case of natural resource degradation, many of the same root causes appear, plus the surprising lack of irrigated agriculture and control over livestock grazing patterns. Finally, lack of government capabilities, resources, and public awareness outreach campaigns are at the root of Lesotho’s almost complete lack of “adaptive capacity” to deal with its exposure and vulnerability to natural disasters and man-made ones. (As the head of the World Bank’s Global Facility for Disaster Risk Reduction (GFDRR) stated recently: “Natural hazards exist, but disasters are mostly man-made.”⁸)

⁶ UNDP, “*Outcome-level Evaluation: A Companion Guide to the Handbook on Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluating for Development Results*,” p.14, December 2011.

⁷ UNDP, “*Draft country programme document for Lesotho (2013-17)*,” p.3, undated.

⁸ World Bank/GFDRR, *Building Resilience: Integrating Climate and Disaster Risk into Development*, 2013. ...

Creating the enabling conditions necessary for Lesotho to build a climate-resilient economy and society will require capacitating the Government’s ability to develop a supportive policy platform that is integrated and coordinated across ministerial ‘silos’ and agendas, as well as building its capacity to deliver services to targeted end user groups. In the case of reversing natural resource degradation, that would largely be a matter of effectively implementing the new national rangelands resources management policy and action plan among farmers who also herd domesticated animals, rebuilding the functional capacities of GOL agricultural extension services and non-governmental bodies like grazing and managed resource associations (GAs and MRAs), and continuing the decentralization reforms with the aim of achieving a balance between traditional forms of local control with evolving democratic local governance structures.⁹

In terms of creating the enabling conditions needed to reduce Lesotho’s vulnerability to disasters, particularly those being magnified by the effects of climate instability, this will require enacting a “whole-of-government” climate change policy and implementation plan, developing or contracting the required technical and informational capabilities, and building the ‘know-how,’ coordination, and resources/assets of the disaster preparedness and emergency response community within the country as well as mutual assistance agreements with neighboring countries. These are but a few of the many activities and initiatives that are needed for Lesotho to become a more climate-resilient economy and society. However, we next turn our attention to the primary purpose of this report to assess and evaluate the expected outcomes of CPD Focus Area #2 by the end of 2017 in a set of findings based on evaluable evidence. In addition, lessons learned and recommendations are made.

III. EVALUATION SCOPE AND OBJECTIVES

Scope of Mid-Term Evaluation

Monitoring and Evaluation (M & E) includes processes, systems and tools to analyze performance of an organization’s development interventions. The monitoring function identifies the status of a project with regard to its activities and expected outputs, as well as its compliance with estimated timeframes for reaching milestones and cost parameters. Evaluation uses empirical evidence (mostly gathered from monitoring data plus inputs from implementing partners and key stakeholders through interviews, focus groups, and surveys) to identify to what extent outcomes and impacts have been achieved.

The timeframe for this MTE coincides with the effective period of the CPD 2013-2017, extending beyond the timeframe of 2013-2015 stipulated in the Terms of Reference.¹⁰ This was done for two reasons. First, it proved to be very difficult for interviewees to distinguish between outputs and outcomes achieved in that short timeframe and those achieved since then up to the present. Second, the information was readily available to assess outputs and outcomes outside of that tight timeframe, thereby facilitating an assessment that it was hoped would be more useful and relevant to future programming of the follow-on UNDP and CPD set to start next year. And finally, it provided the only means to analyze contributions made by the UNDP and its implementing partners and stakeholders for two of the three current elements of the CPD Focus Area #2 outcomes: the 1st element to “promote a low-carbon, climate-resilient economy and society,” and the 3rd element to “reduce vulnerability to disasters.” There was no apparent ‘down-side’ to expanding the timeframe of the analysis to coincide with the CPD.

⁹ GOL. For a much fuller discussion of this process, see the “*National Decentralization Policy*,” February 2014.

¹⁰ UNDP, “*Terms of Reference: Midterm Evaluation of Country Program Outcomes*,” Section 3.4, p.8, 2016.

Therefore, this assessment also incorporates pertinent information about the *Lesotho Renewable Energy-Based Rural Electrification (LREBRE) Project* that ended in early 2013 just as this new CPD was taking effect. On the other side of that time spectrum, it also analyzes the proposed approach that is planned for the *Development of Cornerstone Public Policies and Institutional Capacities to Accelerate Sustainable Energy for All (SE4ALL) Project*, which has not yet begun operations. In between, the analysis assesses aspects of the completed *Capacity Building and Knowledge Management for Sustainable Land Management in Lesotho (SLM) Project*, which was evaluated in 2015, and the *Reducing Vulnerability from Climate Change in the Foothills, Lowlands and the Lower Senqu River Basin (RVCC) Project*, which has only begun to be actively implemented since mid-2015, but has not been evaluated yet. None of these projects will be ‘evaluated’ strictly speaking, but their outputs and outcomes (or expected outputs and outcomes) will be assessed within the larger *programmatic* perspective of assessing the overall performance of the 2nd Focus Area of the current CPD in terms of the four evaluation criteria, described in the next section of this report.

This evaluation also assesses the partnership strategy that the UNDP has employed to achieve the desired outcomes under this Focal Area of the CPD, as well as the cross-cutting issues of addressing the special needs and rights of women (gender equality) and other vulnerable populations.

Objectives of Mid-Term Evaluation

As stated in the Terms of Reference for this consultancy, its objective was to:

- “assesses how and why an outcome is or is not being achieved in a given country context,
- within a specific timeframe, and
- the role that UNDP and other partners have played in this regard.

Outcome evaluations are also intended to:

- help to clarify underlying factors affecting the situation,
- highlight unintended consequences (positive and negative),
- generate lessons learned, and
- recommend actions to improve performance in future programming.”

IV. APPROACH AND METHODS

Approach

The approach this MTE has taken is based upon the Theory of Change (TOC), which is depicted in Figures 1 and 2 with a full narrative. Thus, this assessment describes the causal network of linkages between inputs, activities, and outputs that contribute toward bringing about the positive changes in development outcomes or results that have occurred, or which are expected to occur by the end of 2017. However, ‘outcomes’ are not simply the sum of outputs delivered through UNDP programmes and projects. Rather, outcomes are changes in the performance of institutions, or in the behavior of individuals and groups to which the UNDP has contributed. By supporting processes and building the capacities of implementing partners and relevant stakeholders, the UNDP is held accountable for contributing to, or facilitating, processes that bring about those changes. As such, achieving those outcomes is ultimately not the responsibility of the UNDP, but rather of the UNDP programme’s IPs and stakeholders to achieve—with the UNDP’s support.¹¹

¹¹ UNDP, ‘*Outcome-level Evaluation: Companion Guide to the Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating for Development Results for Programme Units and Evaluators*,’ p.3; December 2011.

A TOC is a process of deconstruction, of the ‘backward mapping’ of outcomes that have been achieved, or which are expected to occur as a result of concluded, on-going, or planned interventions within the stated timeframe of analysis. Thus, the starting point for this TOC is Lesotho’s Vision 2020 and the NSDP 2013-2017, both of which were described in Section II. From an evaluation perspective, they are the foundational documents *to* which all UNDP interventions, strategies, and plans are aligned, and *from* which they all flow. It is the 5th strategic area of the NSDP which is most relevant to this assessment: “to reverse environmental degradation and adapt to climate change.” From this NSDP strategic goal flowed the three elements of the 2nd Focus Area of the UNDP’s CPD 2013-2017. The means to achieve those stated outcomes were through both “soft” assistance activities, supported by the GEF’s Small Grant Programme, and GEF grants to support the implementation of large projects in each one of the three elements of the CPD.

- **“Soft” Assistance Activities through the GEF-Small Grants Programme (SGP)**

Policy advice and technical assistance is provided to government (GOL) institutions (principally to the MFRSC) with GEF support. These ‘soft’ assistance activities are aimed at six GEF “focal areas,” the most relevant of which are climate change (CC), land degradation (LD), and biodiversity conservation (BD). To date, the GEF Small Grants Programme (SGP) has initiated (“registered”) 48 community project grants worth over US \$1.7 million in grants that have been awarded to local communities through NGOs and CBOs.¹²

Distribution of project grants for each focal area by agro-ecological zone. Source: Project Portfolio. 2014 - GEF SGP Office. UNDP. Lesotho.					
GEF Focal Areas	Number of Projects per Agro-Ecological Zone				By GEF FA
	Lowlands	Foothills	Mountains	Senqu River	
Biodiversity	4	3	2	2	11
Climate change	8	3	1	-	12
Protection of waters & wetlands	-	-	1	-	1
Land degradation	3	3	9	-	15
Chemical hazards (POPs)	3	-	1	-	4
MF	2	2	-	-	4
CD	1	-	-	-	1
Total	21	11	14	2	48

¹² GEF-SGP, “Country Programme Strategy for OP6 (2015-2018),” p. 5; July 2016.

As can be seen from the table below (adopted from Table 1 of the GEF-SGP Country Programme Strategy for OP6), the GEF-SGP has placed a notable emphasis on small-scale soil and water conservation, biodiversity conservation/protection, and climate change projects benefitting more than 4,500 recipients. The table below shows GEF-SGP projects by “agro-ecological zone” and by GEF Focal Area since 2008. A more narrowly defined timeframe in which to analyze this “soft” assistance coincides with the current CPD, the period covered by this Mid-Term Evaluation. Since 2013, the GEF-SGP has awarded grants to seven projects: three CC projects, two LD projects, and one BD and CD project each. The GEF-SGP office is now issuing new calls under OP6 for project proposals from NGOs and CBOs, for which it has been capacitating them in project preparation processes this year. In interviews with SGP staff, they have stated that they expect to start a number of new projects in 2017 once proposals are submitted, evaluated, and awarded.

- ***Project-based Direct Implementation Modality***

In addition to this ‘soft’ assistance, the other primary mechanism by which the UNDP has implemented activities under the current CPD has been through GEF-funded projects. This modality has both positive and negative implications. On the positive side, they are grants covering the ‘incremental costs of activities that provide global environmental benefits’ that might otherwise impede or block a country from undertaking proposed interventions that provide external benefits. As such, they do not need to be paid back, as is the case with loans from multi-lateral development banks (MDBs). Second, they typically support large projects with fairly long implementation timeframes. And third, they are focused on environmental problems that are relevant to addressing the challenges facing Lesotho.

On the negative side, they tend to be very cumbersome and time-consuming to prepare, and it normally takes several years to get projects appraised and approved before they can start to be implemented. Once they become operational, there are additional, rigorous environmental and social safeguards, procurement, financial management, monitoring, and reporting requirements to comply with. And lastly, there are onerous and slow processes for authorizing and approving work plans, budgets, procurement of products and services, etc. These are ‘problems’ that the GEF itself recognize and acknowledges, and is working to reduce or eliminate, but that process is still progressing.

Some of the projects included in this mid-term evaluation have been implemented and are now closed, such as the *Capacity Building and Knowledge Management for Sustainable Land Management in Lesotho (SLM) Project*, and the *Lesotho Renewable Energy-Based Rural Electrification (LREBRE) Project*. They are included in the analysis because they are relevant to assessing the performance of Focal Area #2 of the CPD. However, they have had terminal evaluations done already, and will not be ‘evaluated’ again here. However, they provide important inputs to the Theory of Change and a better understanding about what has ‘worked and not worked’ in previous interventions that should provide useful insights for future programming by the UNDP as part of the next LUNDAP and CPD cycles.

There are other projects which have just started in the past year, or which are about to launch, that are also included in this analysis, but they will not be ‘evaluated,’ in a strict sense of that term. These include the *Reducing Vulnerability from Climate Change in the Foothills, Lowlands and the Lower Senqu River Basin (RVCC) Project* and the *Development of Cornerstone Public Policies and Institutional Capacities to Accelerate Sustainable Energy for All (SE4ALL) Project*. The RVCC Project has only been operational since mid-2015, and the SE4ALL Project is about to become operational in late 2016 or early 2017. Thus, it is not possible or appropriate to evaluate them in terms of *outcomes*, but rather in terms of the actual *outputs* (in the case of RVCC) or “reasonably foreseeable” contributions (in the case of SE4ALL) that they will make toward achieving the desired outcomes stated in CPD Focus Area #2.

Finally, there are a few projects that are related to or ancillary to the efforts and desired outcomes of the projects mentioned above, such as the FAO-GEF *Strengthening Capacity for Climate Change Adaptation Project*, and the European Union's (EU) *Global Climate Change Alliance (GCCA) Programme* as well as the EU's new renewable energy initiative in Lesotho. These projects, among others, provide context.

These projects, as well as 'soft' assistance activities, will be analyzed within the larger, strategic *programmatic* context of CPD Focus Area #2: Sound environmental management practices for sustainable development. Thus, the combined efforts and outcomes that have been achieved to date, or are reasonably expected to be achieved before the end of 2017, will be analyzed at the programmatic level. But first, the evaluation methods and techniques that have been used are described in the next section.

Data Collection and Analysis Methods

The data collection methods that have been used in this assessment include both primary and secondary information obtained through a variety of means. A set of three Interview Summary Sheets of approximately 30 – 35 questions were prepared for each one of the Outcome elements. These ISSs were used in semi-structured interviews with roughly 20 individuals, and in small focus group discussions when multiple individuals were involved simultaneously due to time constraints. No undue influence of one individual 'enforcing' responses on the others was apparent during any of the focus group interviews.

Most ISS questions were formulated to allow for quantifiable responses along a four-point scale from one to four. This seemed to work well, and was done to allow for a limited quantification of responses, given the very small sample size of respondents. The interviews were conducted over a two-week period from October 11th until the 24th when an initial draft report was due for submission to UNDP. The purpose of this quantification was to provide more 'power' to the findings developed from the 'averaged' responses, and to minimize the anecdotal nature of reporting only individual responses.

A few "open-ended" questions (at least one for each evaluative criteria) were asked to obtain any additional information that the interviewee wished to share. These were also collected together to gain a better understanding of recurring comments or larger common themes running across different respondents. By asking the same, or similar, questions of different interviewees, it was possible to tease out biases due to organizational affiliation or self-serving motivations. As expected, there was not adequate time during the consultancy to conduct surveys or any extensive outreach to stakeholders beyond the ministerial implementing partners (IPs).

The results from these interviews were then triangulated with evaluative evidence obtained from various secondary information sources, such as project design documents and previous evaluations of projects. By comparing subjective primary information gained from interviews and focus group discussion with these secondary sources of factual project information, it has been possible to corroborate the two sources with personal observations and previous knowledge to arrive at more evidence-based findings. The findings are developed inductively (that is, from the 'bottom-up') from project level analysis to programmatic findings, just the opposite as the deductive manner of developing the Theory of Change or Outcome model.

This assessment of actual and expected outcomes by 2017 adopts the four evaluative criteria set forth in the Terms of Reference,¹³ which are universally used in professional evaluations. They are: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability. They are all assessed in terms of outcomes achieved under CPD Focus Area #2.

¹³ UNDP, *Terms of Reference: Midterm Evaluation of Country Program Outcomes*, section 4, pp.8-10, 2016.

The ratings used to summarize each one of those criteria in each of the three Outcome elements use a four-point rating scale ranging from a “High” score (H) to “Substantial or Significant” (S), to “Moderate or Modest” (M), and finally to “Marginal or Negligible” (N). For the criterion of “Sustainability,” the ratings range from “Likely,” “Moderately Likely,” “Moderately Unlikely,” to “Unlikely.” Where some criteria under the three outcomes could not be ‘evaluated’ or assessed adequately, a score of “Not Evaluable” (NE) was assigned. We now move to a discussion of those evaluation findings.

V. EVALUATION FINDINGS

First Outcome of CPD Focus Area #2: Climate-Resilient Economy and Society

The findings for the first of the three Outcome elements involves “promoting a climate-resilient economy and society.” It is assessed in terms of the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability that the activities of the UNDP and its IPs contributed toward its achievement. The primary means by which this outcome was to be achieved are the *Lesotho Renewable Energy-Based Rural Electrification (LREBRE) Project* that ended in early 2013, and the *Development of Cornerstone Public Policies and Institutional Capacities to Accelerate Sustainable Energy for All (SE4ALL) Project*, which is about to begin implementation. These efforts were complemented by two GEF-SGP grants to construct a biogas digester in 2007 and to promote renewable energy technologies (RETs) at a centre for teenage mothers in 2013.

One of the most salient facts worth noting here before discussing the findings is the long gap of nearly four years between these two GEF projects. While not a ‘finding’ *per se*, the lack of continuity of UNDP efforts to promote the introduction and adoption of renewable sources of energy (principally solar PV energy) has been a key impediment to achieving that objective during the period of this CPD. The need for ‘bridging mechanisms’ is discussed later in this report under “Lessons Learned” and “Recommendations.”

- **Relevance**

Both projects (LREBRE and SE4ALL) have only been moderately relevant to Lesotho’s NSDP in terms of contributing toward part of its objective of “adapting to climate change.” Renewable energy technologies (RETs) are climate change *mitigation* instruments in that they reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions otherwise caused by coal-fired power plants producing electricity. However, Lesotho’s generation of GHG emissions are miniscule compared to large emitters like the China, the United States, and the Republic of South Africa (RSA), which emit 25.4%, 14.4%, and 1.1% of global GHG emissions. By way of contrast, the RSA emissions of nearly 463 metric tons of carbon dioxide (MtCO₂), which are just over 1% of total global emissions, are roughly 225 times as much as Lesotho’s 2.07 MtCO₂ of GHG emissions.¹⁴ Lesotho’s emissions are expected to rise, especially in rural areas where more than ¾ of the nation’s people live, but less than 9% have access to electricity in their homes. This fact is a good reason for the UNDP and the EU (among others) to promote RETs.

In terms of “promoting a low-carbon, climate-resilient economy and society,” both projects are directly relevant to the CPD’s desired outcome. However, given its low GHG emissions and high vulnerability to the impacts of climatic instability, placing greater emphasis on the adaptation side than the mitigation side would appear to be warranted in terms of enhancing Lesotho’s resilience to climate change. In terms of the relevance of GEF-SGP grants, one-fourth of the projects (12/48) awarded grants to date have been climate change projects, and three out of the seven since 2013, the period of the current CPD. However, two of those three grants were

¹⁴ WRI/CAIT, CAIT Climate Data Explorer at www.cait.wri.org. World Resources Institute, 2016.

awarded for renewable energy projects: a centre for teenage mothers promoting RETs, and a method to make biofuel and agricultural inputs from sewage water microalgae developed by the National University of Lesotho.

Thus, taken together, the UNDP's Programme is only modestly relevant to Lesotho's NSDP, due to the fact that the concept of promoting a "low-carbon, climate-resilient economy and society" was not mentioned in the NSDP, which focuses more on sustainable land management issues as well as climate change and vulnerability to disasters. It only touched upon the issue of "greening" the economy without specifying how it would go about doing that. However, this Programme is substantially relevant to the UNDP's CPD Focus Area #2 Outcome since that included the concept of promoting a low-carbon, climate-resilient economy and society.

- *Effectiveness*

It is only possible to remark on the effectiveness of the LREBRE Project since it has been closed since early 2013, and all of the decisions and actions taken that adversely affected its ultimate success occurred much earlier in project implementation (that is, in 2007 and 2008). Furthermore, it is only possible to postulate on the potential effectiveness of the SE4ALL Project since it has not yet begun implementation. In that sense, this goes beyond typical 'evaluation' parameters. However, there are important similarities *and* differences in the design of the two projects that lend some credence to some 'reasonably foreseeable' concerns that *might* arise, and results that *might* be achieved, by the SE4ALL Project. These similarities include a focus on the introduction of renewable energy technologies (RETs) and accessories like LED and CFL light bulbs and other 'cleaner' fuel sources at district level energy centres, and the use of government subsidies to stimulate private sector investment in underserved rural areas and after-market sales servicing functions. One of the fundamental differences between the two projects is that the SE4ALL Project will sell electricity to customers rather than a rooftop (SHS) system, and maintenance of the mini-grids will be the responsibility of the operators, not the customers, as was the case with the LREBRE Project.

The Terminal Evaluation Report for the LREBRE Project submitted to UNDP on July 23rd, 2013 by Majority World Technology cited a number of project failures in terms of:

1. Poor technical quality of solar household systems (SHSs) due to inadequate quality control mechanisms, and a perverse 'Performance Incentive Grant' scheme that paid installers 90% of the total contracted amount at the time of installation. This undermined any incentive for them to ensure their continued utilization or to provide after-sales servicing of the installed SHSs.
2. Installation of only 1,537 SHSs out of a target of 5,735, or just over 25%. Of the installed units, the Evaluation Team estimated that less than half were still working or providing adequate levels of service, and that many more systems would fail sooner than normally expected.
3. A Credit Guarantee Scheme that was created with GEF resources did not function as intended because it was affected by the change in connection fee policy ("direct contracting"), that was introduced by the GOL. As a result, the Performance Incentive Grant Scheme was not created because the National Rural Electrification Fund (NREF) that was supposed to be the core fund for the scheme resourced by the World Bank under the Electricity Access Pilot Projects (EAPP) was withdrawn in 2007. Attempts were made to secure additional funding from the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) and GOL but these did not bear fruit. Thus, the Terminal Evaluation team correctly found the Credit Guarantee Scheme and the Performance Incentive Grant Scheme to have been "non-functional" by the project's end.
4. Market-distorting financial subsidies that reached 84% of the cost of SHSs (customers paid only 16% of the cost of SHSs), which were compounded by repayment collection rates of less than 30%. This extraordinarily high subsidization has distorted customers' price expectations for future purchases, undermining the growth of a viable market in the future.

5. Radical changes to the project design and implementation approach (e.g., project selection of “far-flung and remote off-grid villages” with low incomes and high costs to access and service, increasing the maximum subsidy from 40% to 80% in the first full year of project implementation (2008), and ‘direct contracting’ of installers by the GOL, etc.) suggested that key decisions were made on the basis of political calculations by GOL officials, in some cases against the wishes of the Project Steering Committee and the UNDP, which “intently debated” these decisions by the GOL at the time in light of the project’s barrier removal activities being “shifted from a market-based approach.”
6. Slow progress in creating the enabling national energy policy framework, such as GOL approvals of the National Energy Policy (in draft since 2003 until its approval in 2015), a National Renewable Energy Policy (prepared under the JICA-funded AAP in 2013, but not yet endorsed by the GOL), a National Rural Electrification Master Plan (which was still not developed at the time of the terminal evaluation), or funding of the National Renewable Energy Fund (which never materialized after the cancellation of the EAPP by the World Bank).
7. Finally, the failure to put in place an adequate monitoring system to measure reductions of carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions, sales of paraffin and petrol, and adverse health effects resulting from exposure to indoor air contaminants associated with their use.

Consequently, the evaluation stated that: “Overall, it is not possible to determine the degree to which the project attained the stated Global or Development objectives as an effective monitoring system was not maintained and key indicators were either not identified during the baseline study or were not updated [italics added].”¹⁵ That is a stunning statement to find in a terminal project evaluation. None of these findings have been disputed by interviewees during this consultancy, and many of the issues raised in the terminal evaluation were included in the SE4ALL Project Document as “barriers” and “lessons learned” from the LREBRE Project.¹⁶

The concern this raises for the SE4ALL Project is that it replicates several of the key aspects of the LREBRE Project, such as creating a US \$1.2 million Financial Support Scheme (FSS) that will be available to private sector investors through the Department of Energy within the Ministry to serve as a Performance-Based Incentive (PBI) fund to subsidize RE systems that will be paid directly to energy providers. This appears to be very similar to the Credit Guarantee Scheme (CGS) and Performance Incentive Grant Scheme (PIGS) that failed under the LREBRE Project.

Secondly, the Project Document states that it “will promote a market-driven approach to encourage the participation of the private sector to generate electricity in the rural areas through RETs.”¹⁷ However, it does not provide any analysis showing if there is sufficient ‘effective demand’ (that is, people able and willing to pay for RE) given that the only ‘cost’ to individuals (not the “externalized social costs” of continued natural resource degradation) of freely collecting fuel wood now is their time and effort.

The 10 energy centres to be established under the SE4ALL Project will be run by investors, operators, and developers incentivized by public (GOL) subsidies to attract investors and facilitate their establishment and operation. Each Centre is then supposed to serve as a ‘hub’ to at least 5 surrounding ‘satellite’ non-grid villages. The viability of this ‘hub-and-spoke’ approach has never been tried before in Lesotho, and the only example of a single Clean Energy Centre is in Lekokoaneng village in Berea District. That Centre cost US \$110,000 to build

¹⁵ Majority World Technology, “Terminal Evaluation Report for the LREBRE Project, pp. 6-7, July 2013.

¹⁶ UNDP, “Project Document for the... [SE4ALL] Project,” pp. 20-21, undated.

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 29.

and stock, is run by the Central Farmers Association, and has only been operational since the second half of 2015.¹⁸ The current status of this Centre more than a year later is not known by those interviewed, nor mentioned in any documents reviewed. In addition, there are no references or statements made about any demand-side analyses or studies of this “market-driven approach” in the SE4ALL Project Document.

Given past experience with the GOL’s reticence to approve national RE and rural electrification policies as part of an integrated national energy policy, the expectation that “cornerstone policies and strategies” will be “completed and approved by the Government within 12 months of project initiation” (Outcome 1) seems overly optimistic. Likewise, the expectation (that is, the ‘target’) of “improving the capacity of the GOL and energy stakeholders for decentralized clean energy planning and decision-making on the basis of quality [nation-wide] energy data” within 12 months (Outcome 2) also appears unrealistic, especially when that energy information system will include the water and land/agricultural ‘nexus’ into the data collection efforts that will be located in the Bureau of Statistics, as agreed by UNDP in its “Responses to Council Recommendations.”¹⁹ Finally, Outcome 3 of “establishing a village-based energy service delivery system for replication nationally,” including all four sub-outcome ‘outputs’ that need to be accomplished in order for Outcome 3 to be achieved, within 18 months seems ill-advised. Instead, a phased approach of “structured learning and adaptive management” would seem to make more sense given the difficulty and novelty of establishing a functional ‘market’ for a new technology, and the difficulty and lassitude of working in partnership with Government institutions that are admittedly weak and vulnerable to political pressure.

Perhaps most importantly, not one of the ‘barriers’ mentioned in the SE4ALL Project Document clearly addressed this issue of undue political influence on project decisions and actions, not did it clearly define the governance structures and decision-making processes of the Project Steering Committee. Given the experience of the LREBRE Project, that would appear to be a dangerous oversight warranting the adoption of some bulwark to guard against it in the SE4ALL Project. One such action that is commonly taken by other MDBs is the use of “*conditionality*.” That is, certain conditions are placed on the recipient government either before a project can start, such as passing certain key pieces of legislation and meeting its financial commitments, or later during implementation of the project if certain thresholds are crossed. The lack of control over key decisions was one of the fundamental reasons underlying most of the key failures of the LREBRE Project, which are not discussed in either the “barriers” or “lessons learned” sections of the SE4ALL Project Document. Due to this unwillingness to discuss sensitive topics or put conditions on disbursements, there are no apparent preventive or remedial structures or processes in place that would be adequate to prevent decisions being made again due to political expediency. Thus, it would seem reasonable and prudent for the UNDP to anticipate some difficulties achieving the expected outcomes of the SE4ALL Project given the difficulty of tasks, the novelty of creating new ‘markets’ driven by the private sector, the ‘cost’ in time and effort of working in partnership through other institutions, and the UNDP’s own demanding bureaucratic procedures and aggressive project targets and milestones.

In contrast, the dozen or more small grants projects to date under the GEF-SGP appear to have been implemented efficiently. This is likely because they are much smaller, simpler, and well defined to ensure that expected results are achieved. However, due to their limited size and scope, and their dispersed locations throughout the country (i.e., 21 in the Lowlands, 11 in the Foothills, and 14 in the Mountain zone), their impacts are outweighed by the other GEF-supported projects. Therefore, the overall effectiveness of the UNDP’s Programme first Outcome is assessed as modest.

¹⁸ Ibid, p. 18.

¹⁹ Ibid, pp. 13-14.

- *Efficiency*

Given that there is no ‘active’ project under this Outcome element for the evaluator to assess in terms of contributing toward creating a climate-resilient economy and society in Lesotho, all that can be said relates to the assessment of the effectiveness *and* efficiency of the LREBRE Project. These two evaluative criteria were combined in the terminal evaluation of that project; in the case of the soon-to-start SE4ALL Project, it is highly speculative to postulate about its ‘reasonably foreseeable’ efficiency. In the case of the LREBRE Project, due to all the reasons laid out above under ‘Effectiveness,’ the rating for “Efficiency” in the Terminal Evaluation for the LREBRE Project was “moderately unsatisfactory.”

Based on a thorough review of all the available information, and responses to the interview questionnaire, this evaluator finds no reason to differ from that assessment. Regarding the latter case of the SE4ALL Project, there are simply no grounds upon which to make an assessment at this time. To do otherwise would be purely conjectural. That said, given the reasons stated above regarding the difficulty and novelty of the task, and the unavoidable ‘costs’ associated with working in any partnership, this project is expected to be a ‘learning-by-doing’ exercise replete with errors, miscalculations, and ‘wrong turns taken’ in a process of gradually getting to better decisions, approaches, and eventually to better results and outcomes. That makes it all the more important for the UNDP to take a phased, ‘structured learning,’ and adaptive management approach to the difficult tasks imbedded in the SE4ALL Project. Thus, based on the efficiency of the LREBRE Project, efficiency under the 2nd Outcome for CPD Focus Area #2 is assessed as only having been modest.

- *Sustainability*

The Terminal Evaluation of the LREBRE Project was generous in its assessment, particularly in some of its ratings for “Sustainability,” arguing that the GOL had made “substantial progress” in terms of its socio-economic sustainability due to the “high interest from politicians to capture political credits of the project in the lead-up to local and national elections.” This was counter to their finding that 80% subsidies for SHSs were “unsustainable” and would “likely continue to distort the solar PV market.” They rated the institutional and governance sustainability as “moderately likely” despite the fact that they stated that “no progress” had been made in developing the enabling policies at the national level, and that “this ultimately contributed to weaken the project’s transformative potential and sustainability.”²⁰ They were also quite critical of undue political influences on key decisions during the project’s implementation. Thus, there are few, if any, lasting impacts that can be attributed to the contributions made by the LREBRE Project, that were not due to other factors or efforts.

Regarding the sustainability of the upcoming SE4ALL Project, there is no way of knowing that now, or even speculating about it. However, that said, the sustainability of the SE4ALL Project will depend on the degree to which it is implemented to facilitate and encourage the development of a truly ‘market-driven’ approach with the active participation and leadership of the private sector. This will also depend on the willingness of the GOL to resist the temptation to “shift the design of the project from a market-driven, performance-based approach to a Government-led social-welfare type project,”²¹ as it did under the LREBRE Project, according to the Terminal Evaluation. To guard against this possibility, the UNDP or GEF has taken precautions, and might want to place conditions on the release of grant funds, such as approving key pieces of enabling legislation, committing GOL funds, or in the contingency that certain decisions are taken that would be deleterious to the project’s design or implementation, from the UNDP’s or GEF’s perspectives, of withholding or suspending disbursements.

²⁰ Majority World Technology, “*Terminal Evaluation Report for the LREBRE Project*”, pp. 41-42, July 2013.

²¹ *Ibid*, p. 14.

Thus, it is not possible to rate the sustainability of the UNDP's Programme to contribute toward Lesotho's goal of becoming a climate-resilient economy and society based solely on the LREBRE Project experience. On the eve of the launch of its major new initiative, it is too soon to say what lasting outcomes will be achieved by the end of next year. In fact, it will likely be several years before the outcomes achieved by the SE4ALL Project are assessed, and that feedback can be incorporated into the CPD covering the mid-2020s.

Major Contributions of non-UNDP Institutions

- ***Phase I of the Energy Sector Programme***

The European Union (EU) is about to begin implementing the first phase of its three-pronged programme of support to the energy, water, and governance sectors in Lesotho under the 11th European Development Fund (EDF11) replenishment. The 'indicative budget' for the energy sector part of this programme is envisaged to become operational in early 2017 with an initial financing of seven million Euros to provide modern, clean, affordable and reliable energy to underserved rural areas. It is intended to build upon the National Energy Master Policy by creating a better enabling environment to encourage large scale private sector involvement in those areas. The policy platform begun with the NEMP is expected to be expanded with an Electrification Master Plan, focusing on underserved rural areas, and then aligning these two policies with the Climate Change Policy (which is being developed now), under a follow-up second phase of the energy sector programme. Phase II would finance mini-grid renewable energy technologies (RETs) and energy efficiency household devices like cookstoves with a follow-on package of an additional 21 million Euros through 2020.

The overall thrust of this programme of work complements the work that the UNDP began under the LREBRE Project, and which it hopes to expand upon with the new SE4ALL Project. In addition, it also addresses the energy-water-land conservation nexus by substituting RETs for biomass as a cooking and heating source, thereby enhancing soil fertility and water infiltration. These are practices that the UNDP attempted to promote under the Sustainable Land Management (SLM) Project as well as through some of its work to reduce the country's vulnerability to climate change impacts (under the RVCC Project). Thus, the three focus areas of the EU's National Indicative Programme (NIP) in the water, energy, and governance sectors are not only complementary to one another, but they are also complementary to the three expected outcomes under the second focal area of the UNDP's CPD. Given the interest shown by both the EU and the UNDP to coordinate their programming and collaborate on implementation, this should create synergistic effects between the programmes of both organizations. Combined, they should contribute to the priorities and goals of the NSDP.

Second Outcome of CPD Focus Area #2: Sustainable Management of Natural Resources

Achieving the second element of the CPD was addressed through numerous GEF-SGP land degradation and biodiversity conservation small grant projects, and two large GEF-supported projects: the *Capacity Building and Knowledge Management for Sustainable Land Management in Lesotho (SLM) Project* (September 2009 – December 2015), and the *Reducing Vulnerability from Climate Change in the Foothills, Lowlands and the Lower Senqu River Basin (RVCC) Project*, a six-year project which started in mid-2015. While the RVCC Project would not appear at first to be relevant to sustainable natural resource management (SNRM) due to its title, its goal is that "sustainable land management will provide a strong base for sustainable development in Lesotho while providing a range of global benefits to the region."²² Likewise, many of actions taken and results achieved

²² UNDP, "Project Document for the... [RV2CC] Project: Brief Description, p.1; undated.

under the SLM Project were also relevant to reducing the country's vulnerability to climate change impacts. The two projects are mutually reinforcing in that sense, although they occur at opposite ends of the CPD timeframe, one project having started well before the CPD took effect and the other which will end well after the CPD is replaced by the next one.

- **Relevance**

Both projects (i.e., SLM and RVCC) are highly relevant to the GOL's strategic objective of "reversing land degradation and reducing vulnerability to disasters," as stated in the NSDP. They are also both highly relevant to the CPD's 2nd Focal Area. All interview respondents also concurred by assigning the highest scores possible to the relevance of the UNDP's work in SNRM. Of the 48 small grant projects awarded since 2008 by GEF-SGP, more than $\frac{3}{4}$ (38/48) were relevant: 11 Biodiversity Conservation, 12 Climate Change, and 15 Land Degradation projects. Since 2013, six of the seven GEF-SGP projects have been in these three areas as well.

- **Effectiveness**

The SLM Project had three outcomes it was seeking to achieve. The first was to 'overcome institutional and governance barriers to SLM,' strengthen partnerships, and integrate SLM into GOL programmes, namely the Land Rehabilitation Programme (LRP). One of the first major undertakings of the SLM Project was to generate digitized maps to clearly delineate boundaries and establish a SLM system based on objective environmental data such as vegetation cover, plant species distribution, and carrying capacity for livestock in each area in order to base land-use decisions on accurate information. As the Terminal Evaluation for the project pointed out, "This represented a significant departure from conventional management approaches." It was intended to inform discussions among the three pillars of the 'governance model' the project was promoting by involving: (i) community-based groups, such as grazing associations (GAs), (ii) the hierarchy of village, area, and principal chiefs, and (iii) members of the Community Councils. Each one of these 'participants' had differentiated roles, but with shared decision-making powers, a difficult task which is still being worked out as the decentralization process is phased in over time. The Terminal Evaluation made several excellent observations about the fact that 'non-linear progress is to be expected' with frequent "set-backs and great difficulties" when moving from a baseline situation in which grazing decisions are controlled by chiefs to a new, more democratic model of shared decision-making processes in consultation with community-based groups and Community Councils.²³ Three District Project Implementation Forums were also held, showing promise of becoming effective social cohesion and consultation mechanisms.

As project implementation progressed, Income Generating Activities (IGAs) were tested (with mixed results) to diversify farm incomes and enhance food security in rural areas. The Terminal Evaluation indicated that while it was difficult to determine whether the target of 5% of households had benefitted from the IGA activities, there was strong anecdotal evidence of continued interest and support in further developing them by communities acting on their own volition, even in cases where earlier efforts had failed. There were other instances where communities pooled their own resources to pay for required investments. There was no information provided in the evaluation, nor mentioned in the interviews, regarding whether partnerships with relevant GOL institutions had been strengthened by the project. However, it was clear from the information presented that new 'partnerships' had been forged with Community Councils and community-based groups.

²³ Troni, J. and Molupe, M.; "Terminal Evaluation of the 'Capacity Building and Knowledge Management for Sustainable Land Management in Lesotho Project,'" p. 55; April 2015.

Thus, taken all together, these three objectives under the first expected outcome of developing a viable ‘model’ to overcome the institutional and governance barriers to SLM, strengthen partnerships, and integrate SLM into country programmes (i.e., the LRP) were started and partially achieved under the SLM Project. However, the difficulty of making such a significant shift in paradigm from the traditional ways of range management to a more participatory one should not be underestimated. It is a process of delicately balancing the socially accepted roles and authority of chiefs with the gradual process of democratization and decentralization that is still on-going today in Lesotho. This is discussed in further detail under the ‘Sustainability’ sub-heading. Nor should the difficulty of strengthening partnerships and integrating more sustainable land-use practices into national programmes be under-appreciated. It is arguably true that the concepts and models developed under the SLM Project are “ready for national implementation,” to the extent that there is a willingness on the part of the GOL to do so. Thus, the SLM Project is considered to have achieved its outcome to a significant degree. Now, it will be up to the GOL to carry the ball over the try-line, with the continuing support and assistance of the UNDP’s RVCC Project.

The second outcome objective of the SLM Project was to put ‘adequate local and national capacity in place to adapt and scale up proven SLM models and techniques.’ This appears to have only had a marginal impact or level of achievement. There were no apparent indications from the documentation or personal observations that the local or national capacities of the Department of Range Resources Management inside the Ministry of Forestry, Rangelands, and Soil Conservation (MFRSC) had been strengthened as a result of project interventions. In addition, the Department rated the effectiveness of the UNDP’s programme, encompassing both the SLM Project and the RVCC Project (to a far lesser degree), as only having been ‘modestly effective.’ For example, it was noted that because the *SLM Toolkit* was finalized so late in the project, there was insufficient time to develop and implement a dissemination strategy, a ‘missed opportunity.’ Probably not a single extension officer or ‘range rider’ has seen the excellent “*SLM Toolkit*” that had been prepared with UNDP support, according to interviews. However, there is still time left between now and the end of 2017 to disseminate the concepts and methods described so well in the *Toolkit* to targeted audiences, but these should be translated into very simple Sesotho language, and be easily reproducible as brief black-and-white hand-outs that can be widely distributed at low cost to end-users.

Thus, as stated in the Strategic Results Framework, it can only be said that a ‘modest’ or ‘marginal’ impact or level of effectiveness was achieved. However, the outcome itself is written in a way that posits too much responsibility on the UNDP programme to “put in place” resources and capacities over which it has no control, and which it can and should only contribute toward and support in its partnership with the GOL.

Another expected outcome of the SLM Project was that it would contribute to Lesotho “adopting a programmatic approach to SLM... [and that the] “enhanced awareness, dialogue, understanding, and analysis of SLM best practices”... [would be] “reflected in strengthened synergistic, multi-sectoral policies, strategies and programmes that would achieve an integrated approach to SNRM.”²⁴ If ever there was a list of extremely ambitious expected outcomes, this would be on that list. Needless to say, it is a poorly written outcome statement not only in its over-reach, but also in its confusion of ‘outputs,’ such as ‘policies, strategies and programmes,’ with ‘outcomes.’ Policies, strategies and programmes are ‘means or mechanisms’ by which the outcome of realizing an “integrated approach to SNRM” might be achieved. They are not ‘outcomes’ in and of themselves in that they do not “reflect any change in positive development conditions resulting from an intervention.”²⁵ That

²⁴ UNDP, “*Project Document for the... [SLM] Project: Strategic Results Framework,*” pp. 45, undated.

²⁵ UNDP, “*Outcome-level Evaluation: Companion Guide to the Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating for Development Results for Programme Units and Evaluators,*” p.3; December 2011.

said, the relevant evaluation question remains: to what extent have the UNDP's interventions (through both the SLM and RVCC projects and relevant GEF-SGP grants) *contributed to* achieving an integrated approach to SNRM practices in Lesotho?

The SLM Project supported the integration of SLM in two related national policies: National Rangelands Resources Management Policy (and its accompanying Action Plan), which were approved by the Cabinet in 2014; and the National Soil and Water Conservation Policy, which is still awaiting approval by the GOL. (The evaluator was told during interviews that this policy is 'nearly ready' for consideration by the Cabinet, needing only a Validation Workshop, before it is submitted for approval by the Cabinet, which is expected to happen in 2017). However, these are also not 'outcomes,' but rather key 'outputs' which will hopefully lead to changes in organizational performance or in new, sustainable behaviors and practices of those people involved in farming or grazing activities in rural areas.

The SLM Project also developed a Country Strategic Investment Framework (CSIF) for SLM in 2013. (The CSIF is now called the "Lesotho Sustainable Land and Water Management Strategic Investment Programme.") The Terminal Evaluation noted that the CSIF had been submitted to Ministry of Development Planning for its inclusion in the next NSDP, and that there was some "potential that the CSIF would be used to mainstream SLM into the next iteration [of the NSDP]." However, it later stated that, "the decision to leave Outcome 3 (policy) behind meant that there was no time left to develop a process to institutionalize the CSIF, risking that it remains a strategy on paper."²⁶ Based on the evidence reviewed through a review of documents, interviews with relevant GOL officials, UNDP staff, and key stakeholders, it appears that this outcome was only modestly achieved.

In terms of the RVCC Project's contributions to the adoption of SNRM practices in Lesotho, it is still 'early days' for that project. Even though the Project Document states that this US \$36 million project started in January 2015, it only effectively started operations six months later in June 2015. After its actual launch in June 2015, it has been slowed down considerably by a change in Project Manager and Chief Technical Officer in the first 6-8 months of the project. It has taken nearly six months since then to hire a new PM, and there is still no replacement for the CTO. The project team is now busy preparing three baseline assessments, forming a socio-economic unit, and building a national "geo-based, climatic, agro-ecological, and hydrological information system" (GIS-based PMIS). According to the Results Framework, all of these outputs are already behind schedule, and expenditures on key outputs are far below estimates, according to the three quarterly Progress Reports reviewed. Why all of this must be done in the first year of the project, and why a fully integrated, nationwide GIS-based PMIS is needed for a project that is focused in a very specific part of the country (i.e., the foothills, lowlands, and Lower Senqu River Basin) is not clearly explained. Furthermore, unless these targets and milestones are adjusted to better reflect the reality of the situation, the project appears destined to under-perform. This issue will be discussed further later in this report.

Thus, overall, in terms of the effectiveness of achieving the expected outcomes under the second element of the CPD Focus Area #2, the UNDP Programme to contribute toward the sustainable management of Lesotho's natural resources is assessed as being modest to moderate.

- ***Efficiency***

The Terminal Evaluation of the SLM Project lays out a very persuasive argument and well-documented evidence base to support its finding of the overall efficiency of the SLM Project, both in terms of its

²⁶ Troni, J. and Molupe, M.; "Terminal Evaluation of the 'Capacity Building and Knowledge Management for Sustainable Land Management in Lesotho Project,'" p. 69; April 2015.

implementation processes and its financial management, as “unsatisfactory.”²⁷ For those readers interested in a full explanation, they are referred to Section 3 of the SLM Terminal Evaluation. A summary of their findings is provided below since they were found to be persuasive, and were not disputed by any of the individuals interviewed during this consultancy.

The evaluation team based their low efficiency rating on seven factors. These factors included: the quality and quantity of project management, the effectiveness and efficiency of coordination mechanisms between the project management unit (PMU) and its implementing partners (IPs), the efficiency of implementation by IPs and of the oversight support provided by the PMU and UNDP, and the impact of project design and the lack of a Theory of Change on project implementation efficiency. They also analyzed the efficiency of the project’s financial management system and its implementation.

The first of their findings was that the PMU was under-staffed with gaps in its technical expertise, high staff turnover (particularly for the M&E functions), and no Technical Advisor or Project Director for much of the project implementation phase. Second, weaknesses in designing the Project Results Framework meant that much ‘airtime’ was given to amending indicators and targets, with the result that the project was significantly scaled back 10 months later, wasting time, money, and effort. Third, the decision to deploy field officers to the project sites, located far from the project and ministry offices in Maseru, was delayed over a year, until August of 2013, resulting in project funds being inefficiently spent for much longer than needed. More cost-effective budget control should have highlighted this issue sooner. Fourth, there were no formalised structures for collaboration between staff from the two principal ministries involved (MFLR and MAFS), to ensure coordinated service delivery to communities, a concern that was raised by the Mid-Term Evaluation, but never effectively resolved. Fifth, too much money was spent on travel and per diems when better service delivery would have been provided from officers located in the field, closer to the communities. Sixth, there could have and should have been much greater interaction between the UNDP and the PMU to discuss challenges and provide suggestions and guidance on how to resolve them, particularly in the early stages of project implementation when it mattered the most. And seventh, financial controls should have been better managed. Funds spent without a commensurate impact on results was a key risk that should have been caught early in the implementation process. It wasn’t until the MTE highlighted this issue, but by then about three quarters of the budget had been spent meaning that there were insufficient funds left in the project budget to support its recommendations.

In terms of the RVCC Project, it is still too early to assess its efficiency. However, there are some early warning signs emerging that are similar to those found by the SLM Project Evaluation Team. These include the lack of a Chief Technical Advisor on-board at the outset of this project to assist the Project Manager, especially in the first year of a project that is ‘front-loaded’ with very difficult technical tasks and overdue deliverables. It was pointed out that there have been difficulties contracting qualified consultants to carry out the baseline assessments and to build the GIS-based PMIS, all of which are technically demanding challenges.

The project has also noted excessive bureaucratic ‘hurdles’ they must jump through, overly prescriptive processes or steps for delivering products, slow or little feedback on products delivered or guidance provided in resolving challenges, and onerous reporting requirements. So far, the project has a very high ‘burn rate’ for the PMU as a percentage of total project expenditures, running at over 84%. That is not uncommon for a project just starting up, but this project has been ‘officially’ operational for nearly two years since January 2015, and ‘effectively’ operational since June of 2015. These early warning signs do not bode well for the project’s future effectiveness or efficiency, and should be addressed by the UNDP and the PMU.

²⁷ Ibid, pp. 11, and Section 3 (pp. 67-77).

In addition, the Project Results Framework has some obvious omissions and errors, and some serious problems in terms of being overly ‘front-loaded’ and ambitious in setting targets and deadlines for extremely difficult tasks and outcomes well beyond the project’s control that have proven resistant to successful resolution on other projects in the past, such as integrating new concepts and approaches into national government strategies and programmes. Finally, there *appears* to be no attempt or deliverable in the Results Framework addressing one of the two disaster risk reduction/disaster risk management (DRR/DRM) issues mentioned in the CPD, which is to build up a comprehensive early warning system (EWS) and recovery capabilities in Lesotho to respond to disasters in a phased manner.

The overall efficiency of the UNDP Programme in achieving the second element of the CPD’s 2nd Focus Area (to contribute toward sustainable natural resource management in Lesotho) is assessed mainly on the basis of the SLM Project. Given the findings of the terminal evaluation for that project, and the fact that none of the interviewees have refuted any of its major findings, the Programme’s efficiency is assessed as modest.

- ***Sustainability***

When one realizes that the Project Document for the SLM Project was conceptualized and written more than five years before the GOL issued its first *National Decentralization Policy* (NDP) in 2014, one can appreciate the influence and impact of the model it advanced that have been sustained over time. The three pillars of its ‘governance model’ presaged the balance that is now being sought in the NDP between the traditional roles played by chiefs and emerging democratically elected and community-based decision-making structures.²⁸

Continuity toward this outcome objective is also being served by activities under the RVCC Project, which is promoting the application of climate science to reduce the vulnerability of local farmer and grazing associations by encouraging them to adopt SNRM practices and by strengthening the technical capacities of pertinent GOL agencies to manage natural disasters and climate change impacts. All of these efforts are couched within the overarching framework of the Government’s Land Rehabilitation Programme (LRP), and the broader national strategies and policies that will be more formally integrated into the next NSDP. If that is accomplished, it would go a long way in sustaining the ‘governance model’ and science-based approach to SNRM promoted by UNDP. Therefore, while it is still not entirely clear whether the decentralization reforms will continue, or if the LRP will succeed in introducing more sustainable practices, risks to the sustainability of this element of the CPD are considered moderate, and the probability that impacts will be sustained is likely.

Major Contributions made by non-UNDP Institutions

- ***FAO’s Integrated Watershed Management Project (IWMP)***

The Food and Agriculture Agency (FAO) of the UN has undertaken two major projects relevant to both sustainable natural resource management, and reducing Lesotho’s vulnerability to disasters. The first project, the *Integrated Watershed Management Project*, was implemented by FAO in partnership with the Ministry of Forestry and Land Reclamation (MFLR, now called the MFRSC) from 2007 to 2011. A ‘review’ of the project was conducted between January and March of 2012, and a report of its findings presented in March 2012. The project’s outputs were compared with those achieved by MFLR (as it was called then) in the previous 4-year period. The implementation period of the IWMP occurred prior to the current CPD, and thus, to the relevant period for this evaluation. However, the findings, lessons learned, and recommendations are instructive to the UNDP’s current and planned interventions in these areas, and therefore warrants a brief summation here.

²⁸ GOL, “*National Decentralization Policy*,” p. 6, February 2014.

IWMP activities were implemented in five of Lesotho's 10 districts. The goal of the project was "to improve food security at household level." Its objective was the "creation of employment through engagement of local communities in the rehabilitation of degraded lands."²⁹ Soil and water conservation activities constituted the majority of IWMP interventions. Soil conservation interventions included building over 1,800 kilometres (km) of contour stone lines (137% of target), over 345,000 cubic metres of gully prevention structures (85%), 160 rainwater run-off diversion furrows (61%), and rehabilitating 459 hectares of 'marginal lands' (116% of target). In terms of water conservation measures implemented, these included 24 dams (65%), 103 ponds (56%), 328 roof water tanks (71%), and 138 water storage tanks (66%).³⁰ In terms of forest and rangeland management activities, the IWMP contributed to over 10 million 'forest' trees and nearly 186,000 fruit trees being planted, and the reseeded of over 21,000 hectares of degraded rangelands.

In addition to the land rehabilitation component of the IWMP was a 'Poverty Alleviation' Component. This entailed hiring unskilled local laborers to carry out many of the project's activities under the direction and supervision of MFLR district staff. Work groups of about 50 laborers each, including women, were engaged for 20 working days at a stipend of 975 Rand for the period. By the project's end, nearly 388,000 laborers had been employed under the project's "work-for-pay" scheme and paid more than 366 million Rand.³¹

All-in-all, the IWMP accomplished a great deal 'on-the-ground' working in partnership with the MRLR and its district office staffs, and utilizing local labor through its "work-for-pay" scheme. However, the project was not without its flaws and shortcomings. Chief among these was a site selection process that was made in a 'patchwork' fashion by Community Councils in a non-scientific manner. Therefore, one of the main recommendations of the author of the Review was to change the basis for site selection to a science-based approach, taking a more holistic watershed or catchment basin perspective, in consultation with district councils and key stakeholders. A second important recommendation was a call for more collaboration and coordination between a broader set of GOL staff, resources, and assets. The author recommended expanding the multi-disciplinary approach that was taken within the forestry, range, and soil and water conservation departments of the Ministry to include staff from other relevant ministries, such as agriculture, horticulture, and social services. Since these ministries also have a 'field presence' of staffs with resources and assets, forming teams at the district level was considered only a 'matter of collaboration. The third important recommendation made concerned the lack of an up-to-date, integrated GIS-based management information system (MIS) and adequate trained staff in its operation for M&E purposes.

Other recommendations were made regarding public education and outreach (PEO) mechanisms to introduce SNRM concepts and methods into school curriculum and interactive radio broadcasts between 'experts' and callers. And some technical recommendations were made involving more careful selection of lower water-consuming species of tree and grasses as sources of animal fodder, mitigation of wind erosion by using trees and tall shrubs as "wind breaks" to reduce soil loss due to non-hydric forces, greater use of regularly-timed, fixed-location photo monitoring to more objectively evaluate rangeland conditions over time, and placing more emphasis on preventing or slowing down land-slumping and landslides through better control of gully and rill formation, and the destructive sheeting of rainwater. The 'lessons' that can be learned from this project are directly relevant and instructive to the implementation of the UNDP's RVCC Project.

- *EU's Water Sector Programme of Work under EDF11*

²⁹ Tennyson, L., "Review and Assessment of Integrated Watershed Management Project," p. 7; FAO, March 2012.

³⁰ Ibid, pp. 45-46.

³¹ Ibid, pp. 17-18.

The European Union has also begun to work in the water sector as one part of its National Indicative Programme triad of energy, water, and governance. This work in the water sector encompasses all aspects of an integrated watershed (the EU uses the synonymous term of ‘catchment’) management approach, which it hopes will contribute substantially to Lesotho’s efforts to adapt to climate change. Its water programme also contains large elements pertaining to water supply and sanitation infrastructure needs in urban areas, but these are less pertinent to the UNDP’s second focal area, which prioritizes poor rural populations. Like the energy sector where an overarching sector policy is in place (the NEMP), the water sector also has a sound policy base, but it is not sufficiently complemented by supportive related policies and strengthened decentralized governance structures in the areas of rangeland pastoral management and irrigation policies and mechanisms, such as public-private partnerships (PPPs) and catchment management joint committees (CMJCs), that would promote more effective and comprehensive watershed management practices.

A scoping study conducted for the EU in 2014 noted that the “sustainability of Lesotho’s water resources is seriously threatened by very high levels of soil erosion, which if not halted will lead to a catastrophic collapse of the water economy.... The causes are a combination of destructive land use practices, especially with respect to unsustainable tillage operations, soil nutrient mining, and unregulated grazing.”³² The report continued to state that: “Instead of growing crops for household food self-sufficiency [through rain-fed agricultural methods], farmers should be encouraged to use water for crops that have added value potential [e.g., horticultural crops like vegetables].”³³ The strategic advantage of this shift in the ‘value chain’ for Lesotho is it could use its own water resources to grow crops that Basotho farmers could then sell to South African consumers instead of importing them from South Africa with the water that it had sold to South Africa. In other words, Lesotho could transform its rural subsistence farming communities and improve their living standards through irrigation and integrate them into the broader regional economy. This powerful idea could provide poor farmers with both the means and motivation to adopt more sustainable land and water conservation practices, which is exactly what the expected outcomes of the UNDP’s second focal area are attempting to contribute toward achieving.

Third Outcome of CPD Focus Area #2: Reducing Vulnerability to Disasters

Given the large overlap of the two UNDP GEF-funded projects mentioned in the previous section (i.e., the SLM and RVCC projects), much of what is discussed in this section on the 3rd element of the CPD’s second focal area regarding activities, outputs, and outcomes achieved has already been stated. Therefore, that information will not be repeated. The main difference between the two sections is thus a matter of *emphasizing* the activities, outputs, and outcomes achieved by the RVCC Project rather than those of the SLM Project or GEF-SGP. In addition, information relevant to disaster risk reduction/disaster risk management (DRR/DRM) is also included in this section.

- ***Relevance***

The UNDP’s programmatic efforts principally through the recently initiated RVCC Project, but also indirectly through its SLM Project, soon to start SE4ALL Project, and the relevant small demonstration projects sponsored by the GEF-SGP, are all highly relevant to this 3rd element of the CPD Focus Area #2, and contribute directly to the strategic priorities identified by the GOL in the current NSDP and Vision 2020 documents.

³² A.R.S. Progetti S.P.A., “*Final Report: Scoping of Potential Interventions in the Water Sector under 11th EDF in Lesotho*,” p. 4; January 16, 2015.

³³ *Ibid.*

- *Effectiveness*

Given that the main vehicle for achieving the desired outcome of reduced vulnerability to disasters is to be obtained through implementation of the RVCC Project, which only effectively started in mid-2015, it is premature to assess its effectiveness. As mentioned in the previous, there are some worrisome early signs of difficulties and challenges in the implementation of that project in its second year of operation that should be addressed jointly by the UNDP and PMU. The contributions made by the SLM Project and approximately three dozen pilot projects dispersed throughout the country under the GEF-SGP toward achieving this outcome objective have been important, but modest, in terms of their impacts.

The CPD mentioned that DRR/DRM considerations would be “integrated into sectoral plans, and a more comprehensive disaster early warning and recovery system [EWS] would be built up in a phased manner.”³⁴ Furthermore, in the Results and Resources Framework, the CPD mentions that the GOL would “implement DRR policy and legislation,” and that the UNDP’s contribution would be to provide “Technical assistance to DRR coordination and implementation,” with the Programme’s output being an “operational EWS in place.”³⁵ There has been no *apparent* progress made in that regard to date, and no activities to achieve it are identified in the RVCC Project’s Results Framework. The only evidence of activity on this front was noted in an interview with the Disaster Management Agency (DMA), which pointed out that the UNDP had contracted a consultant to help it develop its National Resilience Strategic Framework earlier this year. Financial assistance to support ‘validation workshops’ in three districts is complementing that technical assistance. The next step in this process is to develop the mechanisms and procedures required to solicit funds from donors and development banks for a ‘Resilience Fund’ that will be used to award grants for community-based resilience projects, and to develop the operational processes required to disburse funds and track performance and results achieved. It would appear that the DMA is a long way from putting an operational EWS in place by the end of 2017.

Therefore, the rating for the effectiveness of UNDP’s Programme contributing toward reducing Lesotho’s vulnerability to disasters, especially those exacerbated by climate change, is assessed as modest.

- *Efficiency*

Again, given the relative ‘newness’ of the RVCC Project, it is purely conjectural at this point to assess efficiency. There are some early signs of an inefficient roll-out of the project that should be addressed by the UNDP and PMU together, but it is premature to assess this evaluation criterion. Therefore, it is considered to be non-evaluatable at this time.

- *Sustainability*

It is widely-acknowledged that the urgent need to reduce the country’s vulnerability to disasters is of the highest importance. In addition, given the fact that these disasters are likely to be exacerbated by changing climatic conditions affecting the timing and amount of rainfall, the expectation of increasing frequent and severe droughts in Lesotho, and the food security ramifications of both of these forecasted trends continuing in the near future, it is highly likely that this issue will remain at the top of the country’s and GOL’s priorities in the next NSDP cycle.

³⁴ UN, “Draft country programme document for Lesotho (2013-17),” p. 4, undated.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7.

Major Contributions made by non-UNDP Institutions

- **FAO’s Climate Change Adaptation Project**

The FAO has initiated a follow-on project to the IWMP with a US \$3.6 million GEF grant called the “Lesotho: Strengthening Capacity for Climate Change Adaptation through Support to Integrated Watershed Management Programme” (CCA-IWMP). The objective of this four-year, US \$8.4 million project is two-fold: (i) to implement sustainable natural resource management and conservation practices, and (ii) strengthen diversified livelihood strategies focusing on crop, livestock and agro-forestry systems in selected watersheds at the community level. The purpose of both objectives is to reduce these communities’ vulnerability to climate change impacts and enhance their adaptive capacity for its “demonstration effect” on other communities.

Summary of Outcome Ratings for All Three Elements of CPD Focus Area #2

One of the primary purposes of this Mid-Term Evaluation was to determine the contributions and progress made toward achieving the *programmatic* outcome objectives for Focus Area 2 of the UNDP’s CPD 2013-2017 for Lesotho. The desired outcomes under CPD Focus Area #2 were to be achieved as a result of Lesotho adopting (sustainable) environmental management practices by the end of 2017 that would: (i) promote a low-carbon, climate-resilient economy and society, (ii) sustainably manage its natural resources, and (iii) reduce its vulnerability to disasters. These three ‘interlocking’ elements were examined inductively in this section, building up from an assessment of the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability of each element toward an overall assessment of programmatic achievements in terms of those four criteria.

The first three criteria were rated along a four-point scale from “High,” “Substantial or Significant,” “Moderate or Modest” (moderate being slightly better than modest), to “Marginal or Negligible.” For the criterion of “Sustainability,” the ratings range from “Likely,” “Moderately Likely,” “Moderately Unlikely,” to “Unlikely.” Those criteria not deemed to be evaluable are indicated as such. The summary criterion of “Overall Impact” represents an intuitive and imprecise judgement made about the ‘impact’ of each element, as well as the overall impact of the programme, based on an assessment of all four criteria taken together. The following table provides an overview of these ratings for each one of the three CPD Focus Area #2 Outcome elements as well as for the overall programme.

Summary Table of Ratings by Outcome Element and for Overall Programme

Criteria	Outcome #1	Outcome #2	Outcome #3	Overall Programme
Relevance	High	High	High	High
Effectiveness	Modest	Moderate	Modest	Modest
Efficiency	Modest	Moderate	Not Evaluable	Modest
Sustainability	Not Evaluable	Likely	Likely	Likely
Overall Impact	Modest	Moderate	Modest	Modest

The overall **relevance** of the UNDP Programme was rated as ‘High’ because this was consistently found to be the case in reviewing past project evaluations, in interviews with implementing partners and key stakeholders, and in the judgment of the evaluator due to the fact that projects and other ‘soft’ assistance were provided on the basis of the Government’s and the country’s needs and priorities, in accordance with UNDP’s comparative advantages and development ‘niche.’ Relevance for Element #1 was rated slightly lower (“Substantial”) because in this case, the CPD was not completely aligned with the current NSDP, which did not directly mention the promotion of renewable energy and RE technologies as one of its eight “strategic objectives or areas.”

The overall **effectiveness** of the first and third elements was rated as “modest,” and as “moderate” for the 2nd element of sustainable NRM. Therefore, the overall effectiveness of the UNDP’s Programme was rated accordingly. However, it should be re-emphasized that much of the reason for this is attributable to overly ambitious outcome objectives given two critical factors. First, the ‘UN way’ of working through partnerships, and secondly, the difficulty and novelty of the tasks and outcomes to be achieved. This is discussed in the next section on ‘lessons learned.’

The overall **efficiency** of the UNDP Programme was also rated as being ‘modest.’ However, much of the reason for this can be attributed to the UNDP’s own bureaucratic procedures and requirements. This was a refrain heard constantly in interviews. Not only among implementing partners and project managers (as was expected *a priori*), but even among UNDP staff, and in many project documents and evaluations reviewed as part of this consultancy. In the view of this consultant, the UNDP appears to be overly ‘process oriented’ and prescriptive in the requirements it imposes on the implementation of projects. That is, the UNDP states the desired outcome (objective) that it expects to occur as the result of project activities, which is fine. However, it then describes *how* it expects (or contractually ‘requires’) the project to contribute to its achievement. This is where it steps onto the prerogative of the implementing partners in over-prescribing the tasks and deliverables, and how they are to be achieved, instead of setting the objectives and targets, and then leaving it up to the IPs to figure out how to get there. This issue is discussed in the next section on ‘lessons learned.’

Finally, the individual element ratings, as well as the overall programmatic rating, for **sustainability** was assessed as being “likely.” This was largely due to the positive effect of their ‘high relevance.’ Meaning that because the UNDP’s Programme is relevant to the GOL’s and country’s highest priorities and needs, it is more likely that those efforts will be sustained by the GOL, which will also encourage development agencies like the UNDP to continue supporting their efforts. That is the ‘benefit’ of high relevance.

VI. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES OF GENDER EQUALITY AND VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

It was difficult to find many specific examples or quantified information in project documents or evaluations of past UNDP projects referring to gender equality or special attention having been paid to the needs and rights of vulnerable populations, such as the young or elderly populations, widows or orphans, or people with disabilities.

In interviews, questions about both gender equality and vulnerable populations with difficult for many interviewees to answer, with many speaking in vague terms and having trouble thinking of examples that they could point to. The ‘scores’ in the Interview Summary Sheets varied widely as a result, with the ‘average’ score for gender equality being in the low ‘3s’ meaning that most people interviewed felt that the UNDP did a ‘fairly good job’ of considering the special needs and concerns of women in its programs. The scores for vulnerable populations was lower (in the low ‘2s’) meaning that interviewees had more trouble thinking of instances they could point to as reasons for giving higher marks.

The one exception to this was the GEF-funded Small Grants Programme which gave good marks for both, and was able to point to numerous examples where grants had been awarded to address specific needs of women

and vulnerable groups. This was documented in their ‘portfolio of projects’ and OP-5 and OP-6 Country Strategies. Overall, though, it was difficult to make a case for or against the UNDP’s performance or impact when it came to the cross-cutting issues of gender equality or advancing the human rights and special needs or concerns of vulnerable people or groups in Lesotho over the past few years.

VII. LESSONS LEARNED

More important than the ratings themselves are the reasons behind them, as those reasons go a long way toward explaining the consistently and continuing under-performance of the portfolio of projects under this UNDP Programme. These ‘lessons learned’ basically revolve around the partnership strategy that the UNDP employs to achieve its desired outcomes, and an over focus on deliverables (‘outputs’) and procedural requirements rather than on achieving the desired outcomes, given the high degree of uncertainty and ‘learning’ that is unavoidable due to the innovative nature of the UNDP’s interventions.

1. *Thinking about Different Approaches to Partnership Strategies*

In terms of the ‘modest’ effectiveness and efficiency that has been consistently achieved by recent UNDP projects as part of its ‘environmental’ programme (that is, under CPD Focus Area #2), the ‘UN way’ of working is through partnerships with admittedly weak Government institutions to achieve those outcomes. It is ultimately the responsibility of the Government as the primary implementing partner to achieve them; the UNDP is only supposed to *contribute* toward, and support, the GOL’s efforts to achieve them. While this approach is crucial to working harmoniously with the GOL to achieve its national priorities, and ‘pays off’ handsomely in terms of getting good marks for both ‘relevance’ and ‘sustainability’, it comes at a high cost in terms of the effectiveness and efficiency of programme implementation and achieving its stated outcomes. Perhaps, this is an unavoidable and necessary ‘cost’ given that there may be no viable alternative approaches. However, a more nuanced approach to this issue might be more useful and helpful. While the desired outcome of the UNDP’s programmes must be aligned with the goals and priorities of the GOL, as is the case with all other major donors, the *means and mechanisms* to achieve them may be open to considering more creative and direct approaches.

For example, it may be possible for UNDP projects to work more directly with district level offices of GOL ministries, and with local community groups to achieve tangible, measurable results and outcomes instead of focusing at the national policy level, which has proven to be resistant to rapid progress. The Integrated Watershed Management Project implemented by FAO with GEF support is a good example of a project that did precisely that. The IWMP achieved impressive ‘on-the-ground’ results of rehabilitating large areas of rangeland, introducing practical water and soil conservation techniques and methods, and sensitizing and training many thousands of local people in their application while also providing temporary (and admittedly unsustainable) poverty alleviation benefits. It may be a useful model for the RVCC Project. The same might be considered in terms of the upcoming SE4ALL Project working more directly with the private sector to introduce RETs in under-served and remote villages in rural areas. The evaluation for the SLM Project said as much when it stated that, “Implementation would have worked better had it been based on a *meaningful* partnership model, delegating authority to competent agencies within [the GOL] and the private sector where the expertise and experience lies.”³⁶

³⁶ Troni, J. and Molupe, M.; “*Terminal Evaluation of the ‘Capacity Building and Knowledge Management for Sustainable Land Management in Lesotho Project,*” p. 18; April 2015.

'Partnerships' do not have to be limited to only working with central GOL ministries. As mentioned above, they UNDP has worked before with lower levels of government agencies and community-based organizations, and will soon make its second attempt at working with the private sector in Lesotho through the SE4ALL Project. However, thinking more broadly, partnerships can also include closer coordination and collaboration within and between development agencies. Starting with closer coordination and collaboration within the UNDP, given that the primary development challenges faced by, or facing, all of four of the projects reviewed for this assessment (i.e., LREBRE, SLM, RVCC, and SE4ALL), are not 'technical' matters so much as they are 'governance' challenges. Therefore, closer coordination and collaboration between the Energy & Environment Unit and the Governance Unit implementing the *Deepening Decentralization Programme* under CPD Focal Area #3 (Good Governance and Accountable Institutions) may be synergistic.

It also *appears* that there could be more coordination and collaboration within UN 'family' of agencies, such as between the UNDP and FAO or the WFP. For example, the successful experience of the Integrated Watershed Management Project implemented by FAO was barely mentioned in the RVCC Project Document, were not mentioned in the Terms of Reference for this consultancy, and were not provided or mentioned in any interviews with UNDP staff. It might have been a good model to use when designing the RVCC Project, but that does not *appear* to have happened.

Extending this broader conceptualization of 'partnerships' beyond the UN, the UNDP may also want to consider more fully developing closer coordination and collaboration with other development agencies, such as the EU and World Bank. For example, the EU is focusing its efforts and resources now on three 'sectors' (energy, water, and governance) under its 'National Indicative Programme' that are very relevant to the UNDP's 'environment' Programme. Quarterly meetings are taking place between the donor community to discuss these interventions. These meetings are attended by E&E Unit staff of UNDP. That is a good idea. In addition, the World Bank is about to begin assisting the GOL to develop its next NSDP for 2018-2022, which the Bank will use to then inform the design of its own Country Partnership Strategy (CPS) with Lesotho. That is also relevant to the UN as it begins to prepare its next LUNDAP and UNDP develops its own CPD over that same period. Presenting a 'united front' of donor assistance to the GOL, and carefully coordinating interventions, may make it more likely that the UNDP successfully achieves its desired outcomes. It may also help to create greater accountability on the GOL's part to 'hold up its end of the bargain' in achieving those results. These kinds of 'partnerships' were never mentioned in any of the interviews conducted with UNDP staff, nor in any of the UNDP documents reviewed for this consultancy. It may be worth considering.

2. Challenge of Implementing Innovative Approaches to Difficult Problems

The second critical 'lesson learned' from this review and analysis of UNDP programme experiences that has adversely affected the 'effectiveness' and 'efficiency' of all the projects and other interventions reviewed during this consultancy is the difficulty of introducing untested and novel approaches to address extremely difficult and 'thorny' development challenges. These challenges include trying to catalyze investments by the private sector to essentially create a 'new market' for RET services in rural communities, introducing more sustainable NRM practices over an enormous portion of the country (at the landscape or water catchment scale), or reducing vulnerability to disasters and enhancing the resiliency of the country to the increasingly destructive impacts of climate change. These are all incredibly difficult challenges, that do not lend themselves to quick or predictable solutions, a fact which should be acknowledged in designing and implementing interventions.

It is one thing to implement a project with a proven track record of success, and a well-understood outcome model, with tight milestones and very detailed and prescriptive deliverables; it is an entirely different matter when trying out new, innovative approaches to address highly resistant and complex development challenges. Such challenges require 'trial-and-error' and 'structured learning' approaches where progress is not expected to be linear, and mistakes and mishaps are not punished by overly prescribed procedures or steps defining how to

achieve the desired outcomes, or crushing deadlines that inhibit experimentation and learning-by-doing. Again, the SLM Terminal Evaluation minced no words in reflecting upon that project's design that, "Benchmark experiences are plenty in Lesotho, yet the project design was wildly optimistic in the way it had set its targets, setting up the project to fail."³⁷ Such interventions take time and require long, sustained commitments by donor agencies, with *realistic* expectations and *achievable* outcomes. These two factors have combined to create a situation in which sub-optimal performance and unrealized objectives are an almost certainty from the start.

For example, the new SE4ALL Project to be launched later this year or early next year is expected to help develop 'cornerstone policies and strategies' that catalyze private sector investment in village-based electrical mini-grids to rural areas that are not economically accessible to the power grid (that is, 'off-grid' villages). The first outcome involves developing an approved 'Country Action Agenda' after 'extensive stakeholder consultations.' In addition, the CAA must be aligned with the "Guidelines for Developing SE4ALL Action Agendas in Africa" following consultations held with neighboring countries. This is expected to be completed within the first 12 months. Secondly, the project must develop a 'SE4ALL Investment Prospectus (IP)' that is approved and adopted following 'extensive stakeholder consultations.' The IP must "integrate technical, financial, and implementation requirements for achieving a set goal and delineate annual funding requirements for capital investments, technical assistance, and capacity development..." Third, 'strategies and investment plans' must be developed with equally daunting and overly-prescriptive requirements that include "implementing a whole range of innovative investments,... preparation of feasibility studies, inventories of RE potential, setting up testing and quality control systems, capacity development of stakeholders, etc." All this within the first 12 months of a 6-year project!

The second outcome (and project component) is equally demanding and overly-prescriptive, requiring deliverables such as: (i) a national energy survey; (ii) a fully-integrated, national database and management information system incorporating energy, water, and agricultural/land-use data, (iii) installation of energy modelling software in the Department of Environment and Bureau of Statistics to track GHG emission reductions, and (iv) harmonization of all these outcomes within the proposed National Energy Policy and new Climate Change Strategy. Again, all this to be achieved through partnerships in the first 12 months.

By this point, most people would have lost sight of the fundamental goal of the project, which is basically to construct and operate 10 village-based RET Centres linked to five 'satellite' villages each to demonstrate the potential of RETs to meet the energy needs of isolated 'off-grid' rural communities. Constructing and operating these 10 village-based RET Centres linked to 50 satellite villages is expected to be achieved within the first 18 months of the SE4ALL Project. This might appear to many observers as a recipe for disaster, and is indicative of the reasons behind many of the low marks received for effectiveness and efficiency of UNDP projects under this programme in past *project* evaluations as well as in this *programmatic* assessment.

3. Need for Greater Accountability of the GOL's Performance

It has become apparent from reading past project evaluations and in interviews for this assessment that working in partnership with GOL institutions had been problematic and challenging in many cases. Issues revolving around long-stymied national policies and politically motivated decisions have been referred to constantly. Concerns about the lack of technical or scientific factors bearing on decisions regarding site selection for project interventions was mentioned in all three terminal evaluations of the LREBRE, IWMP, and SLM projects. In the LREBRE Project, the doubling of the Credit Guarantee Scheme's maximum level of the subsidy

³⁷ Ibid, p. 18.

to purchasers of the solar household systems was ascribed to political factors among members of the Project Steering Committee (PSC). This was confirmed by several interviewees. Even in the otherwise successful IWMP implemented by FAO, the final ‘review and assessment’ report prominently noted that: “Since inception of the Project, the District Councils have selected the sites where field activities are implemented. The process needs to be revisited and changed to a science based procedure for site selection in consultation with District Councils and Primary Stakeholders.”³⁸

Delays in implementation and the failure to pass key pieces of enabling legislation at the national level by the GOL, such as policies for Renewable Energy, Rural Electrification, Soil and Land Management, and Climate Change, have been common refrains and references made in interviews and project documents. As recently as this year, the 1st Quarter Progress Report of the RVCC reported that three Members of Parliament (MPs) from the three Community Councils in the pilot project districts had expressed their interest in becoming members of the District Project Coordinating Committee (DPCC). However, the PSC members unanimously agreed that the DPCC should remain as it was constituted, and that they would keep the MPs abreast of project activities via other means.³⁹ The design for the new SE4ALL Project does not appear to have adequate, if any, safeguards in place to guard against this type of political interference from re-occurring in the implementation of this new project that were so deleterious to the poor results achieved under the LREBRE Project.

Therefore, some sort of accountability or project implementation ‘discipline’ appears to be warranted in the future to help ensure that DOL ministries and staff are sufficiently motivated to achieve the outcomes for which they are responsible to achieve with the UNDP’s support. One such comment that was made during an interview was the question of why only the UNDP’s efforts and achievements were being evaluated, and not those of the GOL implementing partners and key stakeholders as well? It seemed a fair question begging an answer, and is a subject that will be taken up in the final section of this report.

4. Common Shortcomings and Long Gaps in Project Implementation

There were a number of issues raised in project documents and interviews regarding project implementation shortcomings and gaps. Among these were a general under-staffing of project implementation teams, especially a shortage of ‘in-house’ technical expertise. In addition, logistical issues involving the time, cost, and effort of reaching project sites from project offices located in Maseru were mentioned almost universally as a major reason constraining projects from maintaining a more continuous ‘presence’ in the field. The need for better capacitated and resourced district staff of GOL institutions was also mentioned prominently. And onerous and time-consuming procedures for procurement, reimbursement, disbursement, and reporting required by UNDP were mentioned among all projects as having been a major constraint on efficient project implementation.

Finally, the long ‘gaps’ between projects were noted by the evaluator as a factor limiting the Programme’s overall effectiveness. There has been a gap that is nearing four years between the end of the LREBRE Project in March 2013 and the follow-on SE4ALL Project that has yet to effectively start, and there was a 1½ year gap between the close of the SLM Project in December 2014 and the start-up of the RVCC Project in mid-2015. As a result, the UNDP is essentially working on more of a project-by-project basis than on a continuous, sustained programmatic basis. These long gaps between UNDP interventions also undermine any momentum that had been built up by the previous project, and leave both the GOL and Basotho people questioning the UNDP’s constancy to purpose and its value as a ‘trusted development partner,’ as one interviewee put it.

³⁸ FAO, “*Review and Assessment of the Integrated Watershed Management Project*,” p. 38, March 2012.

³⁹ UNDP, “*1st Quarter Progress Report of the RV2CC Project*,” Section 2.7.2, April 2016.

VIII. EVALUATION RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations of this report flow directly from the ‘lessons learned’ presented in this assessment and correspond to the four areas mentioned in the previous section. The purpose of these recommendations is to suggest possible courses of action that may improve project performance and future programming decisions.

1. Broaden the Conceptualization of Strategic Partnerships

The current partnership strategy of the UNDP working through GOL ministries as its primary implementing partner is fraught with difficulties and delays. The UNDP should therefore consider the full range of options and alternatives to its current partnership approach. The UNDP should consider expanding the range of partners it works with, and the way in which it works with them. For example, it could work more closely with district or lower levels of GOL ministry staff, community councils and associations of natural resource users at the village level, with the private sector, with other donors, and even within its own family of UN agencies. While the priorities and objectives of the country, as identified by the GOL, must be closely aligned with the agendas and strategies of the development community, the means to implement them does not have to preclude working with others, in addition to Government institutions, to achieve them. As an American governor once said about the means of providing public services, “The government does not have to pick up the garbage; it just needs to ensure that the garbage gets picked up.” Likewise, the UNDP has to work in harmony with the GOL to help it achieve its objectives; however, it does not have to work exclusively with GOL ministries to achieve them.

2. Acknowledge the Difficulty of Achieving Expected Outcomes in Project Documents and Results and Resource Frameworks

The development challenges that the UNDP is tackling under CPD Focus Area #2 have proven to be extremely resistant to quick and easy resolution. In many ways, they are generational challenges involving reforms to long-practiced traditions and requiring changes in individual behaviors by large portions of the population spread out over large portions of the country. They will not be resolved quickly or easily.

The experience of the past five years of this Programme is littered with a litany of unfulfilled expectations (‘outcomes’), missed deadlines, lost opportunities, and the inefficient use of scarce resources. However, some of that is due to unrealistic expectations and deadlines that have been imposed on projects by overly-prescriptive and process-oriented project documents and results frameworks. Over-designed projects have tied the hands of project teams and forced them to spend valuable time, money, and effort focused on delivering outputs instead of allowing them the flexibility and prerogative to figure out how best to achieve the expected outcomes. Instead of just indicating what the expected outcomes are, and the timeframes in which they are expected to be achieved, these prescriptive documents require them to follow a very defined series of activities and set of deliverables while holding their ‘feet to the fire’ to achieve the expected results. That is wrong. The project implementation team and its partners should have more control over the *way or means* by which they achieve the desired outcomes. Then, they can be held accountable for their achievement, or non-attainment.

The overly-demanding (some have called them “unreasonable, unrealistic, or wildly optimistic”) and process-oriented requirements and deadlines for achieving these extremely difficult outcomes through innovative, and in some cases, untested and unpopular approaches only appears to be *increasing* with the most recent project documents (i.e., for the RVCC and SE4ALL projects). Given the poor record of sub-optimal results achieved over the past few years, this pattern is unlikely to change, and may in fact worsen.

Therefore, it is recommended that the UNDP revisit its approach to preparing project documents and results frameworks in a more realistic and achievable way, fully acknowledging the difficulty of the tasks it is undertaking. The UNDP should also take into consideration the manner in which it must work through other organizations, many of which are admittedly weak, in partnership to achieve them. This is a path that would

seem to lead to more successful projects and outcomes, rather than continuing to take the same approach and expecting a different result. The UNDP should design projects that have a higher probability of being successful than of failing to meet their expected outcomes.

3. Hold Implementing Partners More Accountable for Achieving Outcomes

The poor performance and lack of accountability among GOL implementing partners has been noted widely and consistently in all of the project evaluations reviewed. It has also been acknowledged by almost all of those interviewed, including more than half of the GOL officials who freely admitted to the Government being a ‘big part of the problem.’ This can also be verified by the inability or unwillingness of the GOL to pass key pieces of legislation, such as national policies that are relevant to achieving the outcomes desired under all three elements of the UNDP’s Programme. In some cases, draft policies that are crucial to creating the enabling policy platforms needed to achieve these outcome elements have been ‘locked up’ for several years awaiting Government approval (e.g., the National Renewable Energy Policy has been in draft form since 2013). The Government has shown little interest in responding to donors’ continued requests and assistance to move these policies forward. For their part, donors do not *appear* to have fully utilized persuasive arguments, found the right ‘pressure points,’ or used moments when they had maximum leverage to obtain these advances.

The moments when the donor community has maximum leverage to extract the required reforms or policies from the Government are when new loans or grants are being negotiated. It is a common practice among MDBs to make use of ‘conditionality,’ when it is warranted. Passing key pieces of legislation and earmarking public funds as part of their counterpart obligations are two such ‘conditions’ that are often placed on the approval and initiation of projects as well as on the release of tranches of project funds. Another mechanism that is commonly used is to base future loans or grants on evaluations of past performance by recipients/clients. For instance, the World Bank not only evaluates the performance of its own staff and management in the planning and implementation of every project it undertakes, but also the performance of its implementing partners and the recipient Government as well. These self-evaluations by Bank staff or consultants are then ‘validated’ for every project by an Independent Evaluation Group within the World Bank Group. They are ‘evaluated’ for roughly one-fourth of all projects, focusing mostly on ‘high-risk’ or ‘problematic’ projects, sectors, and/or countries. The UNDP could consider using ‘conditionality’ when preparing loans or grants to the GOL, and evaluate its implementing partners as ‘common practice’ for all its projects. These steps, and others, might incentivize the GOL to improve its own performance and achievement of mutually agreed-to goals and outcomes.

4. Analyze Project Implementation Shortcomings and Gaps to Reduce them

First, the UNDP should analyze the common threads running through all the evaluations of these past projects with a view to taking actions to correct them in current and future interventions. First, some initial steps appear to have been taken on the RVCC Project in terms of locating some project implementation staff (e.g., project field facilitators) closer to field activities to reduce the logistical obstacles to accessing them and maintaining a more constant presence and closer working relationships with partners in project operations. However, as the only active project under the Programme now, it still appears to be under-staffed, especially in terms of having adequate technical expertise ‘in-house.’ And given the complexity, difficulty, and novelty of the ‘market-driven, private sector led’ approach of the SE4ALL Project that is programmed to start later this year or early next, such ‘in-house’ technical and financial expertise will be even more critical to its ultimate success.

Secondly, in addition to simplifying project design to be more focused on results rather than processes and defined deliverables, the UNDP should consider the full range of alternatives in which it might lessen the bureaucratic obstacles and administrative requirements placed on projects while maintaining sufficient oversight and monitoring functions to keep abreast of project progress. For instance, once annual work plans and budgets are approved, activities and expenditures within the boundaries of those programmed activities and budgets

should be left up to projects to determine. Nearly everyone interviewed and most past project evaluations mentioned this issue of overly bureaucratic processes unnecessarily impeding project progress. The UNDP should look for ways to alleviate as much of this burden as it can.

Finally, the long gaps in between projects being implemented within the overall programmatic context was noted in the previous section of this report. Some sort of 'bridging mechanism' should be identified and implemented to maintain programme continuity and minimize these 'gaps' between projects. Such mechanisms might simply involve better forward planning on the part of the UNDP, or they might involve reserving some level of funding maintained in an escrow account to pay for follow-on activities by implementing partners after one project closes and the next commences. Whatever mechanism is used, it is important to avoid the 'one-on, one-off' effect of implementing programmes on a project-by-project basis instead of being a more continuous, sustained effort over longer periods of time. This type of long-term commitment and sustained presence 'on-the-ground' is needed if the UNDP is to be seen as a dependable development partner by others.

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