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Integrated Approach to Management of Forests in Turkey, with Demonstration in High Conservation Value Forests in the Mediterranean Region (PMIS: 4434) Mid-term Evaluation Inception Report

Implementing Agency: United Nations Development
Programme (UNDP)

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I. Introduction

The project, *Integrated Approach to Management of Forests in Turkey, with Demonstration in High Conservation Value Forests in the Mediterranean Region* (SFM GEF Project) in collaboration with the General Directorate of Forestry (GDF) is a 5-year long (2013-2018) GEF Full Size Project. The project has a unique structure with its multi-focal area objectives (Climate Change Mitigation, Sustainable Forest Management and Biodiversity) which provides opportunities to implement activities in a holistic way for integrating forests with environmental and land use policies, rural development, wood and non-wood products and services. More particularly, the project aims to demonstrate approaches to generating, measuring, reporting on, and verifying carbon, biodiversity and socio-economic benefits generated through this integrated approach at five Mediterranean forest sites (over a total area of 450,000 ha). The project consists of three main components:

- **Component 1** - Policy and institutional framework for integrated forest management within landscape;
- **Component 2** – Implementation of forest-based GHG mitigation and carbon sequestration tools within landscape; and
- **Component 3** – Strengthening protection of high conservation value forests in Mediterranean landscape.

This Mid Term Evaluation (MTE) is initiated by the UNDP Turkey as the Implementation Agency for this project and it aims to provide managers (at the Project Implementation Unit, UNDP Turkey Country Office and UNDP-GEF levels) with strategy and policy options for more effectively and efficiently achieving the project's expected results and for replicating the results. It also provides the basis for learning and accountability for managers and stakeholders. The evaluation will assess progress made thus far toward the expected outcomes and overall objectives, and will assist in ensuring the project is on track to achieve the maximum possible results by the time of project closure. The evaluation will be carried out as a collaborative and participatory exercise, and will draw on lessons and experiences from the GEF portfolio, to provide relevant recommendations for the remaining implementation period.

The MTE will involve four primary methodological elements:

- 1) Desk review of project documentation, and development of the inception report
- 2) In-country field visit, including visits to project field sites, and qualitative interviews with key stakeholders at the national and local levels, including: UNDP Country Office, project team, GDF, project partners, and any other stakeholders as deemed necessary.
- 3) Drafting of the MTE report, and circulation to evaluation participants for additional feedback and input, as appropriate
- 4) Finalization of the evaluation report and follow-up with the project team and stakeholders

II. Methodology of data collection

The MTE will set-up a collaborative and participatory approach in order to ensure close commitment with the Project Team, government counterparts, the UNDP Country Office(s), UNDP-GEF Regional Technical Advisers, and other key stakeholders.

Three main sources of primary data and information will be examined:

1. A wide variety of documents covering project design, implementation progress, monitoring, amongst others:
 - a. Project document and CEO Endorsement.
 - b. Inception report
 - c. Periodic project reports including Project Implementation Reviews (PIRs), project budget revisions, technical reports produced during the project implementation.
 - d. Baseline GEF focal area Tracking Tool submitted to the GEF at CEO endorsement, and the midterm GEF focal area Tracking Tool completed before the MTE field mission begins.
 - e. Other relevant reports, documentation, assessments, etc.
2. Face-to-face consultations with a wide range of stakeholders, using “semi-structured interviews” with a key set of questions in a conversational format. The questions asked will aim to provide answers to the points described in the following section. Triangulation of results, i.e. comparing information from different sources, such as documentation and interviews, or interviews on the same subject with different stakeholders, will be used to corroborate or check the reliability of evidence.
3. Direct observations of project results and activities at a selection of field sites¹ within the five forest enterprise directorates, covered by the project:
 - i. Köyceğiz Forest Enterprise Directorate, Muğla Regional Directorate
 - ii. Gazipaşa Forest Enterprise Directorate, Antalya Regional Directorate
 - iii. Gülnar Forest Enterprise Directorate, Mersin Regional Directorate
 - iv. Pos Forest Enterprise Directorate, Adana Regional Directorate
 - v. Andırın Forest Enterprise Directorate, Kahramanmaraş Regional Directorate

Stakeholders interviewed either in-person or via Skype will include amongst others:

- Project team (Ankara and field-based)
- Chair of Project Steering Committee (Deputy Under Secretary)
- Project Steering Committee Deputy General Director GDF
- UNDP Country Office
- Two Forest Enterprise Directorates/Regional Directorates
- Relevant regional directorates two FEDs
- Central Union of Forest Cooperatives
- Nature Conservation Center
- YADA Foundation
- The Gold Standard Foundation/TREES Foundation

¹ The two sites selected will likely be (i) Gazipaşa Forest Enterprise Directorate, Antalya Regional Directorate and (ii) Köyceğiz Forest Enterprise Directorate, Muğla Regional Directorate.

- Yale School of Forestry

Evaluative evidence will be assessed against the primary GEF evaluation criteria:

- 1) *Relevance* – the extent to which the activity is suited to local and national development priorities and organizational policies, including changes over time.
- 2) *Effectiveness* – the extent to which an objective has been achieved or how likely it is to be achieved.
- 3) *Efficiency* – the extent to which results have been delivered with the least costly resources possible.
- 4) *Results/impacts* – the positive and negative, and foreseen and unforeseen, changes to and effects produced by a development intervention. In GEF terms, results include direct project outputs, short-to medium term outcomes, and longer-term impact including global environmental benefits, replication effects and other, local effects.
- 5) *Sustainability* – the likely ability of an intervention to continue to deliver benefits for an extended period of time after completion. Projects need to be environmentally as well as financially and socially sustainable.

The information collected, including documentary evidence, interviews and observations, will be compiled and organized according to the questions asked in the assessment

Ratings will be provided on relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and results, based on the standard UNDP-GEF six-point ratings scale (below).

- **Highly satisfactory (HS):** The project had no shortcomings in the achievement of its objectives in terms of relevance, effectiveness, or efficiency
- **Satisfactory (S):** The project had minor shortcomings in the achievement of its objectives in terms of relevance, effectiveness, or efficiency
- **Moderately satisfactory (MS):** The project had moderate shortcomings in the achievement of its objectives in terms of relevance, effectiveness, or efficiency
- **Moderately unsatisfactory (MU):** The project had significant shortcomings in the achievement of its objectives in terms of relevance, effectiveness, or efficiency
- **Unsatisfactory (U):** The project had major shortcomings in the achievement of its objectives in terms of relevance, effectiveness, or efficiency
- **Highly unsatisfactory (HU):** The project had severe shortcomings in the achievement of its objectives in terms of relevance, effectiveness, or efficiency

Ratings for sustainability will be based on a four-point scale: Unlikely (U), moderately unlikely (MU), moderately likely (ML), and likely (L).

III. Assessment of evidence

The MTE will evaluate the following aspects of the project as outlined in the MTE's ToR:

1) Project Concept

- a. *Project relevance and strategy:* The extent to which the project is suited to local and national development priorities and organizational policies, including changes over time as well as the extent the activities contribute towards attainment of global environmental benefits:
 - i. How and why project outcomes and strategies contribute to the achievement of the expected results. Examine their relevance and whether they provide the most effective way towards results. Do the outcomes developed during the inception phase still represent the best project strategy for achieving the project objectives (in light of updated underlying factors)? Consider alternatives. Were the relevant country representatives, from government and civil society, involved in the project preparation? Does the recipient government maintain its financial commitment to the project?
- b. *Preparation and readiness* Are the project's objectives and components clear, practicable and feasible within its timeframe? Were the capacities of executing institution and counterparts properly considered when the project was designed? Were lessons from other relevant projects properly incorporated in the project design? Were the partnership arrangements properly identified and the roles and responsibilities negotiated prior to project approval? Were counterpart resources (funding, staff, and facilities), enabling legislation, and adequate project management arrangements in place at project entry?
- c. *Stakeholder participation during project preparation* Did the project involve the relevant stakeholders through information-sharing, consultation and by seeking their participation in the project's design?
- d. *Underlying Factors/Assumptions:* Assess the underlying factors beyond the project's immediate control that influence outcomes and results. Consider the appropriateness and effectiveness of the project's management strategies for these factors. Re-test the assumptions made by the project management and identify new assumptions that should be made. Assess the effect of any incorrect assumptions made by the project
- e. *Project organization/Management arrangements:* Were the project roles properly

- assigned during the project design? Are the project roles in line with UNDP and GEF programme guides? Can the management arrangement model suggested by the project be considered as an optimum model? If no, please come up with suggestions and recommendations
- f. *Project budget and duration* Assess if the project budget and duration were planned in a cost-effective way?
 - g. *Design of Project Monitoring and Evaluation system* Examine whether or not the project has a sound M&E plan to monitor results and track progress towards achieving project objectives. Examine whether or not the M&E plan includes a baseline (including data, methodology, etc.), SMART indicators and data analysis systems, and evaluation studies at specific times to assess results and adequate funding for M&E activities. Examine whether or not the time frame for various M&E activities and standards for outputs are specified.
 - h. *Sustainability and replication strategy* Assess if project sustainability and replicability strategy was developed during the project design? And assess its relevance
 - i. *Gender perspective:* Extent to which the project accounts for gender differences when developing project interventions. How gender considerations are mainstreamed into project interventions?

2) Project Implementation

Project's Adaptive Management

- a. *Monitoring Systems:* Assess the monitoring tools currently being used: Do they provide the necessary information? Do they involve key partners? Are they efficient? Are additional tools required? Ensure the monitoring system, including performance indicators, at least meets GEF minimum requirements. Apply SMART indicators as necessary. Apply the GEF Tracking Tool and provide a description of comparison with initial application of the tool. Assess whether or not M&E system facilitates timely tracking of progress towards project's objectives by collecting information on chosen indicators continually; annual project reports are complete, accurate and with well justified ratings; the information provided by the M&E system is used to improve project performance and to adapt to changing needs.
- b. *Risk Management:* Validate whether the risks identified in the project document and PIRs are the most important and whether the risk ratings applied are appropriate. If not, explain why. Describe any additional risks identified and suggest risk ratings and possible risk management strategies to be adopted Assess the project's risk

- identification and management systems:
- i. Is the UNDP-GEF Risk Management System appropriately applied?
 - ii. How can the UNDP-GEF Risk Management System be used to strengthen the project management?
- c. *Work Planning*: Assess the use of the logical framework as a management tool during implementation and any changes made to it. Ensure the logical framework meets UNDP/GEF requirements in terms of format and content. What impact did the retrofitting of impact indicators, if such have on project management; Assess the use of routinely updated work plans; Assess the use of electronic information technologies to support implementation, participation and monitoring, as well as other project activities; Is work planning processes result-based? If not, suggest ways to re-orientate work planning.
- d. *Financial management*: Consider the financial management of the project, with specific reference to the cost-effectiveness of interventions. (Cost-effectiveness: the extent to which results have been delivered with the least costly resources possible. Also called cost-effectiveness or efficacy). Any irregularities must be noted. Is there due diligence in the management of funds and financial audits? Did promised co-financing materialize? (Please fill the form on co-financing attached table 1).
- e. *Reporting*: Assess how adaptive management changes have been reported by the project management; Assess how lessons derived from the adaptive management process have been documented, shared with key partners and internalized by partners.
- f. *Delays*: Assess if there were delays in project implementation, then what were the reasons? Did the delay affect the achievement of project's outcomes and/or sustainability, and if it did affect outcomes and sustainability then in what ways and through what causal linkages?

Contribution of Implementing and Executing Agencies

- a. Assess the role of UNDP and General Directorate of Forestry (GDF) against the requirements set out in the UNDP Handbook on Monitoring and Evaluating for Results. Consider:
 - i. Field visits
 - ii. Participation in Steering Committee
 - iii. Project reviews, PIR preparation and follow-up o
 - iv. Skill mix
 - v. Operational support
- b. Assess the contribution to the project from UNDP and GDF in terms of "soft" assistance (i.e. policy advice & dialogue, advocacy, and coordination) and suggest

measures to strengthen UNDP's and GDF's soft assistance to the project management.

Stakeholder Participation, Partnership Strategy

- a. Include an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the approach adopted by the project and suggestions for improvement if necessary;
- b. Consider the dissemination of project information to partners and stakeholders and if necessary suggest more appropriate mechanisms;
- c. Identify opportunities for stronger partnerships.

Implementation of replication approach

Sustainability: extent to which the benefits of the project will continue, within or outside the project scope, after it has come to an end. Look at factors such as establishment of sustainable financial mechanisms, mainstreaming project objectives into the broader development policies and sectoral plans and economies or community production;

3) Project Results (Outputs, Outcomes and Impact)

Progress towards achievement of intended outcomes/measurement of change: Progress towards results will be based on a comparison of indicators before and after (so far) the project intervention, e.g. by comparing current conditions for development of Protected Areas management effectiveness, financial sustainability and capacity to the baseline ones.

IV. PROPOSED EVALUATION WORK PLAN

The evaluation will involve four phases, which correspond to the below work plan. The evaluation is expected to take 30 working days spanning approximately eight weeks.

Mid-term Evaluation Indicative Work Plan

	15-25 August	4-15 Sept	10-20 Oct	22-31 Oct	10-15 Nov
I. Inception Report: Desk review, development of methodology, updating time table, drafting mission programme. Incorporating comments received from UNDP Country Office.	3 days				
II. Data Collection, Field Visit Preparation, and Document Review		5 days			
II. In-country field visits, interviews, preliminary mission findings briefing(s), debriefings with project partners and providing aide memoire. Delivering a presentation on aide memoire (finding(s) and recommendation(s)) to Project			10 days		

Partners.					
III. Evaluation report drafting and circulation				5 days	
IV. Finalization of the MTE Report in line with the comments received from the relevant stake holders regarding the Draft MTE Report.					2 days