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Midterm Review Final Report:
Strengthening the National Protected Area System of Swaziland (SNPAS)
- PIMS 4932 (GEF ID 5065)



12/12/2018

MIDTERM REVIEW

Inception Report

Project: Strengthening the National Protected Area System of Eswatini (SNPAS)

GEF Project ID: 5065

UNDP Project ID: PIMS 4932

Summary of project information

Country:	Kingdom of Eswatini (Swaziland)
Region:	Africa
GEF Focal Area:	Biodiversity, Strategic Objective 1 (GEF 5)
Implementation modality	National Implementation Modality (NIM)
GEF Agency:	United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
Executing Agency:	The Swaziland National Trust Commission (SNTC)
Project Type:	Full-sized project (FSP)
MTR time frame:	April – August 2018 (35 working days)
In-country mission:	10 - 21 June 2018; and 23 – 27 July 2018
Date of Report:	31 August 2018
Evaluators:	Dr Mandy Cadman (Team Leader) Dr Nicollete Mhlanga-Ndlovu (National Consultant)

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Siyabonga

Cover photo: Blesbok, Malaotja Nature Reserve (Credit: FLP, travel.com, with art effects)

CONTENTS

1	EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	4
1.1	Project Information Table	4
1.2	Project context and description	4
1.3	Summary of Project Progress	6
1.4	MTR Ratings and Achievements Summary Table	8
1.5	Conclusions and Recommendations	10
2	INTRODUCTION	22
2.1	Purpose and Objectives of the MTR	22
2.2	Scope and Methodology	22
2.3	Ethics	25
2.4	Limitations of the MTR	26
3	PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND CONTEXT	27
3.1	Development context	27
3.2	Problems the project set out to address	31
3.3	Project description	32
3.4	Project implementation arrangements	35
3.5	Project timing and milestones	36
3.6	Main stakeholders	37
4	FINDINGS	38
4.1	Project Strategy	38
4.2	Progress to Results	44
4.3	Project Implementation and adaptive management	60
	4.3.1. Management arrangements	61
	4.3.2. Finance and cofinance	70
	4.3.3. Workplanning	79
	4.3.4. Project-level monitoring and evaluation	81
	4.3.5. Reporting	82
	4.3.6. Stakeholder engagement	83
	4.3.7. Knowledge management and communications	84
5	CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	86
5.1	General conclusions: progress to results	86
5.2	Recommendations	90
	5.2.1. What should the project be doing? Principles, Practices, Products	90
	5.2.2. How should the project direct its business: Processes, People, Partnerships	97
	5.2.3. Pathways to sustainability	100
6	ANNEXES	101
1	Terms of Reference (appended separately)	101
2	List of documents reviewed	102
3	Itineraries of in-country missions	103
4	Stakeholders interviewed	106
5	Data evaluation matrix	108
6	MTR Ratings Scales	120
7	Alignment of the project with the Sustainable Development Goals and Aichi Biodiversity Targets	121
8	An explanatory notes on Chiefdom Development Planning	123
9	Indicative CBNRM activities	126
10	Map of the Lubombo Biosphere domain	127
11	Evaluator Code of Ethics forms	129
12	ACRONYMS	131

APPENDED AS SEPARATE FILES		
13	MTR Clearance Form	
14	Management Effectiveness Tracking Tools and Financial Scorecard	
15	MTR Audit Trail	
List of tables		
1	Key steps in the MTR process, as applied to this MTR	24
2	The protected area network of Eswatini	30
3	Project timing and milestones	36
4	SNPAS stakeholders (identified in the Prodoc)	37
5	SMART analysis of the Strategic Results Framework	41
6	Project Objective: Progress to results rating	46
7	Component 1: Progress to results rating	49
8	Component 2: Progress to results rating	52
9	Component 3: Progress to results rating	55
10	Project expenditure at midterm (anticipated and actual)	72
11	Year-on-year expenditure per component (comparison between CDR and project records)	72
12	Comparison of indicative budget allocations (Prodoc) and allocations made by project	74
13	Comparison of within-component allocations (indicative budget and current)	74
14	Comparison of committed and realised cofinance	79
15	MTR Rating and Achievements summary table	87
List of figures		
1	Map of the protected area system of Eswatini	29
2	Map showing locations of landscape clusters	33
3	Summary of project goal, objective, outcomes and outputs	34
4	Organisational structure of SNPAS project (from Prodoc)	36
5	Composition of the Project Management Unit (Prodoc)	66
6	Current composition of the Project Management Unit	66

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1. Project Information Table

PROJECT DETAILS	
Project Name:	Strengthening the National Protected Areas System of Eswatini/Swaziland (known locally as the SNPAS/ENPAS Project)
GEF Project ID:	5065
UNDP Project ID:	4932
Country:	The Kingdom of Eswatini (Swaziland)
Region:	Africa
Implementing Agency:	United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
Executing Agency:	The Eswatini (Swaziland) National Trust Commission (E/SNTC)
Implementation modality:	National Implementation Modality (NIM)
GEF Focal Area:	Biodiversity
GEF Strategic Programme:	GEF-5 Strategy, Objective 1: Improve the Sustainability of Protected Areas
Project Type:	Full-sized Project (FSP)
FINANCIAL DATA	
Funding Source:	GEF Trust Fund
Project Preparation Grant:	US\$ 165,000 (incl. Agency Fee)
GEF Project Grant:	US\$ 5,390,000
GEF Agency Fees:	US\$ 400,000
Co-finance (total):	US\$ 23,600,000
Total project cost:	US\$29,455,000
PROJECT TIMELINES	
PIF Received by GEF:	4 February 2011 (Re-submitted 10/09/12)
PPG approved:	4 December 2012
Project Approved:	2 July 2014
Project duration:	6 years (2014 – 2020)
Project inception workshop:	14 June 2015
Planned date for MTR:	December 2017
Planned date for TE:	October 2020
Date of completion (planned)	31 December 2020
MTR DETAILS	
Timeframe:	April – August 2018
In-country mission:	10 – 21 June 2018; follow-up: 22 – 28 July 2018
Evaluators:	Dr Mandy Cadman (International Consultant and Team Leader); Dr Nicolle Mhlanga-Ndlovu (National Consultant)
Reporting language:	English

1.2. Project description

The Kingdom of Eswatini has biodiversity assets that are disproportionate to its size. With a land area of only 17, 364 km², the country lies at the interface of four physiographic regions, and exhibits a high diversity of ecosystem types that span montane grasslands, forests (montane, riparian and dry types), savanna-woodland mosaics (highland and lowland types), and a diversity of freshwater systems (such as wetlands, marshes, streams and rivers). These ecosystems are home to biodiversity of global significance, including a notable proportion of species that are rare or threatened, especially in landscapes which are not formally protected. The country exhibits one of the largest

intact altitudinal gradients of natural ecosystems in Southern Africa, and is the only place where this gradient occurs across a relatively short distance (about 200 kms)¹.

Swaziland's natural ecosystems provide natural resources, ecological infrastructure and ecosystem services that are essential for addressing issues such as food and water security, poverty alleviation and livelihoods, and building greater socio-ecological resilience, especially in the face of climate change and economic stringencies. The ecological health of three major transboundary river systems (the Nkomati, Mbuluzi and Maputo), depends heavily on how natural landscapes are managed in Eswatini, with implications for regional and international water security. Grasslands and savannas serve as rangelands – and, with about 50% of land used for extensive communal grazing, 12% for subsistence agriculture, and a further 19% for commercial ranching, these landscapes are critical for supporting local livelihoods, food security and economic development. Despite their global, national and local significance, the Kingdom's biodiversity assets are currently under-protected and are being placed at risk by unsustainable land-use practices, land-use conflicts, and other burgeoning socio-economic and environmental pressures.

Until recently, the protected area (PA) estate of Eswatini has accounted for only 3.9%² of the country's land surface. The protected area network includes six national parks (under private and state management), and other private and communal conservation areas – some of which have made a critical contribution to restoring viable populations of previously threatened and even locally-extinct species. Although the PAs are mostly well-located, they are not fully representative of the country's ecological diversity and occur as largely disconnected 'islands', surrounded by heavily-modified production landscapes. Many of Swaziland's protected areas are under-resourced, and lack the technical capacity and scientific knowledge-base to enable effective management. Outside of protected areas, the ecological integrity of natural landscapes is compromised by land degradation, habitat loss and fragmentation caused by unsustainable land-use practices (such as over-harvesting, over-grazing, illegal hunting and poorly-located infrastructural and other developments), and the impacts of invasive alien species and climate change.

The **high-level goal** of the SNPAS Project, *Strengthening the National Protected Area System of Swaziland (now Eswatini)* is to address these issues by expanding the protected area estate and improving its management effectiveness, in the context of a landscape approach to biodiversity conservation. In this approach, a network of strategically-located, ecologically-representative and effectively- managed protected areas is managed as part of a mosaic of land uses (including conservation, restoration, production and subsistence use), and measures are put in place to ensure that all people who live and work in these landscapes participate in their conservation and benefit doing so.

The project is organized under three **components**, which serve to:

- (i) Build an effective **knowledge-based management platform** at national and regional level to address current and emerging threats to protected areas and biodiversity conservation.
- (ii) Implement a landscape approach to **expand the protected area network, involving a diversity of stakeholders**.
- (iii) Strengthen **protected area functioning** through improved **conservation management and operational support**, while delivering livelihood benefits through biodiversity-based Community Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) projects.

The **objective, outcomes and outputs** of the project are summarized diagrammatically here:

¹ Source: PIMS 4932 Project Document

² This was increased to 4.15% in February 2015, with the gazettment under the Eswatini National Trust Commission Act of five new nature reserves (under private land ownership). This took place before SNPAS started.

Summary of project goals, objective, components, outcomes and outputs

Project Goal: to strengthen the management effectiveness of the protected area system of Swaziland		
Project Objective: Effectively expand, manage and develop Swaziland's protected area network in order to adequately protect the biodiversity and landscapes of the country		
Component 1: Knowledge-based management	Component 2: Land scape approach to PA expansion	Component 3: Strengthening PA functioning
Outcome: PA management and biodiversity conservation guided by research and knowledge for improved adaptive management practices within and outside PAs	Outcome: Legally protected PA estate expanded, leading to: maintenance of wildlife populations and ecosystem functioning, biodiversity-compatible land uses in areas surrounding PAs, containment of threats from impacting activities	Outcome: Technical and operational capacity improved
Outputs: 1.1. Biodiversity field surveys, vegetation assessments and tourism assessments carried out to fill information gaps 1.2. GIS-based knowledge and information management system operationalized to support systematic biodiversity planning 1.3. PA and landscape-based management plans (integrating conservation efforts with sustainable economic development practices) developed and implemented	Outputs: 2.1. Gazettement and resourcing of informal PAs as part of the national PA estate 2.2. Selected areas established as new PAs under the SNTC Act, with management structures developed (7 areas) 2.3. Selected areas established as new PAs under the Game Act, with management structures developed (4 areas) 2.4. Selected areas established as new PAs under the Flora Protection Act, with management structures developed (2 areas) and new community conservancies (5), with management developed 2.5. Landscape management plans developed and implemented in 4 landscapes, with management and cooperation structures in place	3.1. Training and capacity development provided to PA staff and stakeholders 3.2. Establishment and implementation of mobile alien invasive removal and processing business 3.3. Wildlife management improved through re-introduction of native species, provision or improvement of equipment and infrastructure, game product development and other sustainable resource use initiatives 3.4. Eco-tourism operations strengthened through improvements to infrastructure, product development, branding and marketing 3.5. Livelihoods and economic opportunities in rural communities enhanced through mechanisms to incentivize involvement in biodiversity-compatible activities

1.3. Summary of project progress

The SNPAS Project has the potential to deliver some important results in advancement of the project objective, and to deliver national and global benefits in line with environmental and development goals. A large volume of work has been undertaken, and a high level of commitment is demonstrated by the SNPAS project team, partners and stakeholder community. The project has generated some 'legacy products', and has delivered some tangible benefits through successful local-scale pilots, but, much of the work has been process-orientated, without measurable contribution to the project's core outcomes and objective. The project has become unfocussed and performance at objective-level is rated as ***Moderately Unsatisfactory*** (meaning that it is largely off-track, and, if the current approach is maintained some of the project outcomes may be delivered, but with major shortcomings).

Performance under *Component 1* (Knowledge Platform) is currently the best (rated as ***Satisfactory***), and has generated some important outputs, including: high quality biodiversity data; vegetation and land-cover maps and other technical products; a Protected Area Financial Sustainability Strategy; and an equipped GIS lab and GIS-based data-sharing portal – these contribute significantly to strengthening knowledge-based planning, development and management of the protected area (PA) estate. However, the data has not been synthesised into a national-level assessment, and the GIS-platform is still not fully operational (due to unresolved problems with administration rights).

Delivery under *Component 2* (PA expansion through the landscape approach) is currently the weakest and is rated as ***Unsatisfactory***. No new protected areas or conservancies have been

established or operationalised (though some 6,700 ha has been earmarked in-principle for future protection); management plans have been drafted for three SNTC-managed national parks (but have yet to be endorsed); and guidelines for new protected area categories have been developed (but have not yet been incorporated into legislation). Support has been provided to five private nature reserves that were newly-proclaimed in 2015 (before the project started), to help demarcate their boundaries with fencing (but this does not form part of an integrated programme to strengthen active conservation management).

Performance under *Component 3* is rated as **Moderately Satisfactory**, with variable delivery under the five outputs. Some successful pilots have been implemented (e.g. de-bushing and clearing of invasive alien species (IAPS), wetland fencing, introduction of the SMART patrolling system in 3 national parks), and these provide important models for consolidation, replication and scaling-up in future. Some investments have been made to upgrade conservation equipment and infrastructure, and eco-tourism facilities, in a scatter of state, communal and private PAs. These have had local impact, but the interventions are currently too piecemeal to have a notable or lasting impact at landscape scale. Plans are currently under development for larger-scale construction of community based eco-tourism facilities at selected sites, but delivery has been hampered by a flawed process. Engagement with communities has been a notable success, though much of this has been directed to the development of Chiefdom Development Plans (CDPs)³ – which are important products in their own right, but do not make measurable contributions to delivery of the project's outcomes or objective-level targets. Some tangible local-scale benefits have been delivered (such as fencing of wetlands to secure water sources), but impacts may not be realised in the lifespan of the project. Community-based training for improved local governance has been delivered to a large number of beneficiaries through the *Transformation for Change* programme, but capacity-development for improved protected area management has been limited and unsystematic.

Overall, *Adaptive Management and Implementation* is rated as **Moderately Unsatisfactory**, as several components are not leading to effective and efficient implementation, and most need corrective action. The project has had a high requirement for adaptive management, but this has generally not been applied appropriately or timeously. Most areas of project management and administration (including governance and implementation arrangements, configuration of the PMU, contract management, work-planning and coordination, knowledge management, and financial management and budgeting) are in need of significant improvement. The project has **excelled** at community engagement, and has involved a wide range of government stakeholders in the project, but stronger working partnerships with stakeholders in the conservation sector are still needed.

Sustainability is currently rated as **Moderately Unlikely**, as there are significant early risks to the sustainability of the project's achievements. These stem from weak integration of the project into the operations of the key agencies responsible for protected areas and biodiversity conservation; gaps in the legislative and policy framework (relating to protected areas, wetland management, control of invasive alien species, land policy, and tourism); constraints on the national fiscus; weak alignment with broader programmes that have related objectives; and current weaknesses in the stakeholder partnerships that the project has built (or not built).

If appropriate adaptive management measures are put in place as a matter of urgency, in accordance with the recommendations of the MTR, the overall performance and delivery could be elevated to **Satisfactory** by project closure.

³ See Annex 8 to the main report for a description of CDPs

1.4. MTR Ratings and Achievements Table

Table 1: MTR Ratings for Project Strategy, Progress to Results, Adaptive Management and Implementation and Sustainability

Measure	MTR Rating	Achievement Description (Brief)
Project Design/Strategy	<p>↑ Project design is conceptually sound and logically coherent, with a clearly articulated objective. It is well-aligned with global strategic objectives of the GEF and UNDP, and relevant to the national development and environmental priorities of Eswatini. The organisational model provides for strong institutional ownership, and governance arrangements, and the stakeholder engagement plan are broadly inclusive. Relevant activities are clearly described, backed by comprehensive information, and the budget is accompanied by clear budget notes to aid work-planning. Environmental and social screening was diligently performed and some gender empowerment indicators have been included in the SRF.</p> <p>↓ The indicator and target framework shows several weaknesses, including a lack of outcome-level indicators; gaps, inconsistencies and overlaps in the framework; inaccurate baselines; unrealistic targets for some indicators; and an absence of any midterm targets. The risk analysis has some significant omissions, and no alternative pathway is mapped if the key assumptions are not met. The scope of the project is over-ambitious, especially as it introduces a new approach to protected area establishment, and key terms are not adequately clarified. The Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool has not been integrated into the M&E framework.</p>	
Progress towards results	<p>OBJECTIVE: Rating: Moderately Unsatisfactory MU</p> <p>Outcome 1: Knowledge platform Rating: Satisfactory S</p> <p>Outcome 2: PA expansion Rating: Unsatisfactory</p>	<p>Ind.1 (PA expansion): HU ↓ No expansion of the protected area estate has been achieved through the intervention of the project, though some land has been earmarked in principle for possible inclusion.</p> <p>Ind.2: Capacity Building programmes: MS ↑ 1 general community training programme has been successfully implemented (Transformation for Change), reaching 944 beneficiaries; <i>Ad hoc</i> training in several aspects of protected area management have been provided for 71 beneficiaries, but no integrated capacity building programmes developed or implemented.</p> <p><i>Revised impact-level indicators (with revised targets), and an entirely new approach is needed to deliver on objective</i></p> <p>Ind.1: Biodiversity Surveys (S) ↑ Biodiversity surveys carried out in 9 Chiefdoms and 3 landscapes (including potential new PAs); new vegetation map produced; Chiefdom boundaries mapped and land-use maps developed; PA financial sustainability plan produced; legal and policy support report completed.</p> <p>Ind.2: GIS-based information system (S) ↑ GIS lab set up; GIS-based platform developed, some GIS training provided (<i>but administration rights still not transferred, and data needs to be uploaded</i>).</p> <p>Ind.3: Landscape plans and management plans(MS) ↑ 3 PA management plans drafted for SNTC parks (<i>still need to be implemented</i>). ↓ No integrated landscape-level plans produced (but indicative land-use maps in 9 CDPs contribute towards this process).</p> <p>Ind.1: New national parks gazetted and operationalised (HU) ↓ No new national parks.</p> <p>Ind.2: New PAs gazetted and operationalised (U) ↓ No new protected areas established (<i>but some land earmarked in principle in CDP maps</i>).</p>

	U	<p>Ind.3: Landscape management plans, structures and standards developed and implemented (MS)</p> <p>↑ 3 PA management plans drafted.</p> <p>↓ No new landscape-scale management structures.</p> <p>↑ Local-scale governance structures for individual wetlands established in communities, Community Trusts trained.</p> <p>↓ No landscape management standards developed .</p> <p>↑ Guidelines for new PA categories established.</p> <p><i>Significant adaptive management with revised targets and entirely new approach is needed</i></p>
	<p>Outcome 3: PA operational effectiveness and conservation management improved</p> <p>Rating: Moderately Satisfactory MS</p>	<p>Ind. 1: Capacity building programmes</p> <p>↑ 1 general community training programme has been successfully implemented (Transformation for Change), reaching 944 beneficiaries.</p> <p>↑ <i>Ad hoc</i> training in several aspects of protected area management have been provided for 71 beneficiaries.</p> <p>↓ No integrated capacity development programmes for PA management developed or implemented.</p> <p>Ind.2: Invasive Alien Species control programmes</p> <p>↑ pilot (600 ha) in Mlawula completed, local-scale clearing .initiated in Mantenga and Malolotja; as well as local-scale clearing in 4 privately-owned nature reserves, and Luzelweni Chiefdom (<i>needs consolidation and strengthening</i>).</p> <p>Ind. 3: Conservation infrastructure programmes</p> <p>↑ Stretches of fencing supplied to Mantenga and Malolotja national parks, and 8 privately-owned national parks; some road repairs; seed funding to 5 PLOs for fencing, IAPS clearing, game management and fire-fighting equipment and donga rehabilitation.</p> <p>Ind.4: Eco-tourism infrastructure, product development and marketing</p> <p>Some tourism infrastructure upgraded at Shewula Mountain Camp, Mhlumeni and Mbuluzi Game Reserve; 5 other community eco-tourism developments are planned, but implementation has been stalled due to a lack of due-diligence.</p> <p>Ind.5: biodiversity-based CBNRM programmes</p> <p>2 Community Liaison officers are active in the field; they are working through the CDP engagement process to identify alternative IGA opportunities; so far only a fruit tree programme has been developed, which has weak linkages to the project outcomes and objective, though is well-received by communities.</p>
Project Implementation and Adaptive Management	<p>Rating: Moderately Unsatisfactory MU</p>	<p>Currently, several aspects are not leading to efficient and effective delivery of the project objective and outcomes, and most need remedial attention – especially the project implementation management and governance arrangements; financial management, budgeting and record-keeping; tracking and realization of co-finance; the size, composition and mode of operation of the PMU; work-planning; the quality of project reporting; and external project communications.</p>
Sustainability	<p>Rating: Moderately Unlikely MU</p>	<p>There are significant early risks to sustainability, including: poor integration of the project into the operations of SNTC; much of the Chiefdom Development Planning work falls outside of the mandate of ENTC and so cannot be sustained by them after project closure; many of the conservation infrastructure and other PAs strengthening activities are being carried out in an unstrategic way, with lots of small-scale interventions scattered across the country;</p>

1.5. General conclusions and recommendations

1.5.1. *Remaining barriers to delivery*

Successful delivery in the SNPAS project has been hampered by a number of interlinked issues that have had cascading and cumulative consequences. In most project reports, the key barriers to delivery have been identified as: (i) the delayed start of the project; (ii) high staff turnover (in the PMU, UNDP and SNTC); (iii) early withdrawal of the primary Responsible Party (Big Game Parks - BGP); and (iv) delays in enactment of the SNTC Amendment Bill, which would have allowed for a more diverse set of categories to expand the PA system with broader stakeholder participation.

In 2016, in a commendable effort to develop an over-arching plan for delivery of the entire project (and to accommodate some of the perceived obstacles to implementation described above), the project crafted a *Project Strategy and M&E Plan*. It includes a SWOT analysis of the four 'landscape clusters', a detailed activity-level set of indicators and targets (with responsibilities and timeframes broadly outlined), a monitoring and reporting plan, and an indicative exit strategy (a 'hand-over' of the project from the PMU to SNTC). The problem with this *Strategy* is that it diverges substantively from the GEF-approved project plan, introducing different outcomes, outputs, and indicators – only some of which overlap with those in the approved Strategic Results Framework. This has resulted in the project losing its core focus on protected areas.

The impact of these issues has been considerable, but the conclusion of this MTR is that the principal **remaining barriers** to successful delivery are:

- **Limited knowledge of the key concepts and best practices** that should be implemented to deliver on the project objective, resulting in loss of focus and inappropriate strategy.
- **Lack of a detailed, integrated plan to deliver the GEF-approved objective and outcomes** (for the whole project and for each landscape cluster), or a **framework to align the work of the different project partners**. This has resulted in inconsistent and inefficient delivery, weak integration across results areas, and complicated implementation arrangements, with resultant misunderstandings.
- **Weak alignment with other PA-and biodiversity conservation programmes** that have related objectives, and present good opportunities for enhancing SNPAS delivery and catalytic impact
- **Weak management capacity and experience**, resulting in inappropriate or ineffective adaptive management to address challenges, inefficient and unproductive expenditure, poor coordination, and unsatisfactory rate of delivery.
- **Lack of adherence to UNDP-GEF best practices (and some rules) for project and programme cycle management and financial control**, resulting in some inappropriate use of funds; confused implementation and governance arrangements; unclear segregation and duties, lines of responsibility and accountability; and limited ownership by SNTC.

If these barriers are addressed, the other perceived obstacles could be successfully overcome to deliver a positive set of results – even if *all* of the intended targets cannot be met. For this to happen, a **Project Recovery Plan** must be put in place as a **matter of urgency**, before too much more time is lost and more budget is spent on activities that do not deliver substantively on the intended outcomes (as approved by the GEF). The key elements of this Project Recovery Plan are outlined below. It will be the responsibility of the Implementing Partner (i.e. the ENTIC), supported by the Project Board (PB), the Project Steering Committee (PSC), UNDP CO and relevant advisors (including the UNDP RTA) – and with appropriately-timed and equitable participation of stakeholders – to flesh out a detailed Recovery Plan that will direct the implementation of the project between now and its closure. It will also fall to the IP, with the support of the PB, to put in place a sensitive stakeholder engagement plan and 'transition strategy' to ensure that all stakeholders understand the need for

the project to be refocussed, and can identify opportunities for productive engagement and project ownership going forward. A comprehensive ‘absorption plan’ (or sustainability strategy), including a resource plan and indicating institutional commitments, should be developed collaboratively by the project partners to enhance the projects sustainability.

1.5.2. Summary of conclusions and recommendations

General conclusions and recommendations are presented below under four sections: (1) What should the project be doing (Principles, Practices, Products); (2) How should the project enact its business (Processes, People, Partnerships); (3) How can the achievements of the project be sustained (Pathways).

In each section, a tiered set of recommendations and important steps is listed, with brief explanatory notes. There may be other effective measures the project can take, but those presented here represent the ‘best minimum set’ identified during the MTR. Lead responsibility of implementation of each recommendation is indicated at the end of each section. Specific responsibility for individual actions will be determined during development of the revised project plan.

1: What should the project be doing? Principles, Practices, Products

KEY OBSERVATION 1: The project must be re-aligned with delivery of the GEF-approved objective and outcomes, guided by an improved indicator and targets framework, clearly-articulated strategic principles, and a comprehensive, over-arching plan for delivery (at project and cluster level)

Key Recommendation 1.1: Strengthen the indicator/target framework and the refine the articulation of some outcomes and outputs, as follows:

- a) **Define a comprehensive set of *impact-level*⁴ indicators at objective and outcome level, with realistic targets.**

At objective level, the following are recommended:

- Increase in extent of land brought under effective conservation management, according to OECM⁵ or IUCN Green Listing Standards⁶ (with time-bound, geographically specific targets set)
- Improvement in financial sustainability of PAs, as measured by increased Financial Sustainability Scorecard scores (or other suitable indicators drawn from the SNPAS PA Financial Sustainability Strategy)
- Improved PA management effectiveness, as measured by increased METT scores (or other objective criteria for measuring PA management effectiveness, drawn from PA management plans)
- Improved systemic and institutional capacity for PA management and planning, measured using the Capacity Development Scorecard (or other suitable criteria)

- b) **Refine the articulation of indicators and outputs under Component 2** to reflect a shift in approach from expanding the protected area estate through gazettelement, to placing land and active conservation management, in compliance with international criteria for Other Effective Conservation Measures (with revision to Indicators 2.1 and 2.2).

⁴ Indicators that measure the change that results from a particular intervention or output.

⁵ Other Effective Conservation Measures, see:

https://www.iucn.org/.../guidelines_for_recognising_and_reporting_oecms_-_january;
<https://www.iucn.org/.../updates-'other-effective-area-based-conservation-measures'>

⁶ See https://www.iucn.org/sites/dev/files/iucn-gl_brochure_integrated_cov_emailing_2.pdf

- c) **Focus future activities in three landscape clusters** – Lubombo, Ngwempisi and Malolotja, (with selected interventions implemented at Mantenga Reserve and occasionally elsewhere, if indicated) – selecting sets of interventions that are best suited to the opportunities presented in these landscapes (all outcomes do not have to be delivered in all clusters and ‘one size does not fit all’).
- d) **Ensure direct alignment between strategic priorities** identified at the Strategic Planning Workshop in 2017, with the outcomes in the refined Prodoc SRF, and the integrated plan for delivery, discussed below.

Responsibility for implementation: (i) Revision of the indicator/target framework to be facilitated by the Strategic Technical Advisor, working closely with support of the UNDP Regional Technical advisor, and inputs from the National Project Manager, relevant experts in the Implementing Partner and other stakeholder institutions. External expert opinion may also be sought, if required. (ii) The Project Board is responsible for ensuring the necessary changes are formally adopted and incorporated into a revised SRF; (iii) The UNDP CO Programme Specialist is responsible for ensuring that the revised SRF is submitted for approval by the RTA, the RCS in Addis Ababa and UNDP-GEF-HQ.

Key Recommendation 1.2: Develop an over-arching, plan for delivery, for the whole project, and for each landscape cluster.

This plan should: a) define strategic guiding principles; (b) Identify what should be done, where, by who, when, how, with what result (output) and in delivery of which outcomes; (c) identify and quantify up-front what inputs are required (e.g. human capacity, budget, enabling conditions), and use this information to enable accurate costing; and, (d) identify alternative pathways for delivery in the event of enabling conditions not being met.

The plan should be directed to deliver the intended outcomes in ways that are strategic (maximising outcomes relative to investment) and that will have lasting impact. The focus should be first on strengthening what already exists, working in a phased way (i.e. identify a smaller set of interventions that can be successfully delivered before scaling-up), and creating strong alignment with other initiatives such as the Transfrontier Conservation Areas (TFCAs), the planned Biosphere Reserves (See maps in [Annex 10](#)), and existing eco-tourism or CBNRM programmes. Importantly, this plan **MUST** be developed within the boundaries set by the remaining budget, and should be used to direct annual and quarterly budgeting.

This plan should be supported by a specific **Partnership and Engagement Framework** (See Section 5.2.2).

Responsibility for implementation: (i) The plan should be developed through a properly facilitated process, led by the Strategic Technical Advisor (see Recommendation 2.1) with support of the UNDP RTA, and involvement of the National Project Manager and project staff, key ENTC staff, and other project partners. (ii) The Project Board is responsible for formal approval and adoption of the plan for delivery.

Recommendations and key activities to guide revision of the indicator/targets framework and develop the overall plan for delivery:

Recommendation 1.2.1: Re-direct areas of work that currently do not deliver substantively on the GEF-approved objective or outcomes

(Responsibility for each activity will be determined during development of the overall plan for delivery)

1: To harness the momentum created through the development of CDPs and harness their potential to support delivery of appropriate CBNRM programmes, SNPAS should:

- a) **Discontinue leading and funding the development of CDPs⁷, and redirect efforts to *identify and support a modest number of conservation-related CBNRM projects* in selected Chiefdoms (for which SNPAS has developed CDPs).**

⁷ The CDP as a product in itself makes only a small contribution to advancing the project’s objective, and the return on investment for SNPAS is too low. SNPAS should also discontinue funding CDP-related training for officials from other agencies, and co-facilitating the National CDP Coordinating Committee.

Note: It is essential that an timely and sensitive process be put in place to manage stakeholder expectations, and to hand over responsibility as quickly as possible to national agencies that carry a mandate for and have budget to lead these processes – i.e. SWADE and MTAD).

Key steps will be to:

- Focus on developing at least one **small set of interlinked CBNRM projects in Ngwempisi Cluster**, centred on the Ngwempisi Wilderness Area and the proposed development of eco-tourism facilities (See [Annex 9](#) for suggestions).
- **Strengthen the existing project at Shewula** (where there has already been investment by SNPAS and other programmes, and where further support is needed to bring the project to full potential), and **consolidate the programme of work being carried out at Mhlumeni** (to consolidate previous investments and complement activities supported through other partners such as Peace parks Foundation and GIZ).
- **Appoint a suitably capacitated ‘CBNRM mentor’/‘technical/stewardship officer’** in each of the targeted landscape clusters, to ensure that the community groups are well supported in the operation of their ecotourism and CBNRM-related activities. (The roles of these officers could be consistent with the Community Liaison Officer positions as described in the Prodoc; they should work in close association with the SNTC Community Outreach Officers and relevant SEA and MoA officers; and should have a strong physical presence in the landscapes where they work. The appointments may not need to be full-time).

As a general principle, alternative livelihood projects should be *directly linked to other areas of project activity*⁸ such as the establishment of new nature reserves, ecotourism products, IAPS clearing, wetland protection, improved rangeland management and so on (examples of indicative activities are provided in [Annex 9](#)), with a clear set of indicators for measuring *impact* (e.g. improved household incomes; number of people employed in new businesses; reduction in number of food insecure days, etc). Each project must have a succinct but well-structured business plan to be developed in collaboration with communities at the start.

- b) **Curtail investment in the *Fruit Tree Project***, with an appropriate **handover strategy** put in place to manage stakeholder expectations and transfer responsibility to more relevant institutions (e.g. MoA, NAMBOARD), and redirect investment to other CBNRM activities (as per Annex 9). (**Responsibility:** National Project Manager)

Recommendation 1.2.2: Consolidate, replicate and scale up successful pilots (e.g. building the biodiversity knowledge base, development of PA management plans, IAPS clearing, wetland protection)

(Responsibility for each activity to be determined during development of the overall plan for delivery)

1: To consolidate and maximise impact of the *knowledge platform* (Component 1), SNPAS should:

- Facilitate incorporation of the biodiversity data and map products that have been generated through SNPAS (consolidated with other available data - e.g. long term ecological monitoring data collected by All out Africa, UNISWA and others) into a **national synthesis of Eswatini’s biodiversity resources**, made available through the GIS-based portal (this could be driven by a small working group convened by the project and led by the SNTC GIS manager and ecologist).
- Ensure that the administration and hosting rights for the GIS-platform are migrated to SNTC** as a matter of urgency – **this should be escalated to an intervention led by UNDP CO (who contracted the consultant), SNTC CEO and the PS.**
- Ensure that appropriate data-sharing agreements are put in place**, and conduct a proactive campaign to encourage data-sharing (GIS SNTC Manager, supported by SNPAs PMU).
- Identify remaining gaps** in the enabling knowledge base and engage relevant partners (SNTC, SEA, STA, the Department of Forestry, UNISWA, SWADE, COSPE etc) under expert guidance of a protected area resource economist, to undertake an *evaluation of ecosystem services provided by national parks* (could

⁸ Or related programmes of work supported by other partners. It is essential that the SNPAS investments are not ‘piecemeal’.

be expanded to other protected areas/landscapes later). The evaluation should build on existing data and expert knowledge.

2: To maximise the impact of **PA management planning** (Component 2, Indicator 3) SNPAS should:

- a) **Fast-track the validation** of the *PA management plans* for Mlawula, Mantenga and Malolotja.
- b) **Facilitate comprehensive training** of SNTC staff and other PA managers to develop, implement and monitor the effectiveness of PA management plans, in national parks and other protected areas.

3: To scale up the impact and sustainability of investments in **IAPS clearing** (Component 3), SNPAS should:

- a) **Consolidate** IAPS clearing/de-bushing activities at carefully targeted sites (e.g. at least in the three SNTC national parks, and possibly neighbouring nature reserves) with emphasis on increased coverage and provision for follow-ups, and development of monitoring guidelines.
- b) **Build the enabling environment for longer-term management of IAPS**, and lay the foundation for Eswatini's full participation regional programmes to control biological invasions⁹ by:
 - Providing funding for a delegation from Eswatini to participate in a **learning exchange** to the Centre for Biological Invasions in Durban (South Africa) to enhance their knowledge of best practices for integrated control of biological invasions. The delegation should include representatives from, *inter alia*, SNTC (ecologists and protected area managers), Department of Forestry, SEA, UNISWA, the NDMA (Natural Disaster Management Agency).
 - Supporting a multi-disciplinary *expert workshop*, led by a suitable regional specialist, to **develop an Integrated Strategy for Control of Biological Invasions in Eswatini** (with national parks as key 'nodes')
 - Supporting development and implementation of an **awareness-raising and education programme** for decision-makers, farmers, and other land managers (e.g. private and communal nature reserves).

4: To scale-up the impact of wetland protection pilots (Component 3), SNPAS should:

- a) Support the development of a **National Wetlands Protection, Management and Rehabilitation Plan/Policy** (feeding in lessons learnt from the wetland protection pilots conducted so far) – the policy should include a set of practical, field-based indicators for monitoring wetland health
- b) **Consolidate wetland protection work** in selected landscape clusters, (prioritising wetlands in or adjacent to conservation areas), and **train wetland management committees and landowners in monitoring wetland health**, develop plans for sustainable harvesting of wetland resources, and use these as a springboard for developing small-businesses linked to sustainable use of wetland resources (this could serve as a catalyst for work to be carried out under the developing Global Climate Fund-supported project in which Tinkhundla Resilience Plans will be developed).

5: To maximise the impact of investments in **conservation and ecotourism infrastructure**, (Components 2 and 3), SNPAS should:

- a) Give **high priority to making significant investments (complemented by contributions from other partners) in the rehabilitation and development of existing and new capital infrastructure**, according to prioritised needs, supported by strong professional management, and 'ring-fenced' budget for maintenance of facilities. In line with the recommendations made in the SNPAS PA Financial Sustainability Report, **top priority** must be given to:
 - **Rehabilitation of SNTC facilities at Mantenga, Malolotja and Mlawula National Parks.** The country's existing national parks should set the benchmark for the standard of conservation and eco-tourism infrastructure in protected areas. The detailed recommendations included in Chapter 5, section 5.9 of

⁹ The regional programme to control biological invasions, that is being developed by CABI (Centre for Agriculture and Bioscience International)

the PA *Financial Sustainability Report* (Prof. Brian Huntley, 2017) should guide this work closely, working in close consultation with Senior Wardens and hospitality managers.

- **Phased development of community-eco-tourism facilities at prioritised sites** (selected in line with biodiversity value, and feasibility), as determined by the financial sustainability studies and business plans (awaiting finalisation), which must be followed strictly (with appropriate community engagement processes put in place to ensure ownership). A likely phasing, would be: (i) In Ngwempisi Cluster, rehabilitate Khelekhele and Khopo and build a rest-facility at Ntfungula (working through the partnership with STA) with these facilities linked by a system of hiking trails (which should link with other trails programmes already operating in the area); (ii) At Shewula and Mhlumeni consolidate infrastructure (and tourism products), complementing investments made by other partners, and working through capacitated institutions who are already active in the area; (iii) Developments at Mvembili and then Mahamba, should form a later phase of the programme, subject to budget availability. (Plan for delivery to be developed by the STA-SNPAS team, under guidance of the PA Financial Sustainability studies and Business Plans, with approval of the Project Board.

Note: the community eco-tourism projects are high-profile and high-risk, and significant prior investments have been made, some without sustained success – it is essential that the SNPAS-supported projects are managed carefully and do not repeat mistakes that were made before.

Key steps will be to ensure that:

- A realistic calculation is made of the **budget** that can be allocated to these developments, without compromising delivery of other outcomes.
 - The **contractual and management arrangements**, lines of reporting and accountability are clarified and formalised.
 - The STA, Microprojects and SNPAS PMU manager **plan jointly** (working to a structured and detailed joint work programme – including tasks, schedules, milestones, responsibilities), and undertake **joint supervision missions**, and **report jointly** on progress to the PSC/PB
 - The role of the **quality assessor** (currently called a ‘Construction Supervisor’) is clarified and formalised (as part of the joint arrangements).
 - SEA should be proactively engaged to ensure **environmental due diligence is being performed**
 - Regular **communication with the beneficiary communities** is maintained (e.g. delegated community representatives should be involved in at least some monitoring missions), and efforts are made to harness capacity that exists in the communities to participate actively in construction (i.e. using local thatchers, carpenters, etc...).
 - The **eco-tourism developments are used as ‘nodes’** around which viable eco-tourism products, or CBNRM-projects, are centred (these may be supported through SNPAS, or other programmes active in the area – including those driven by SNTC, the private sector, TFCA programmes or others).
- b) Consolidate support to private landowners to enhance conservation infrastructure in order to** meet an agreed ‘minimum set’ of standards for essential equipment/infrastructure, through well-tracked a system of matching grants awarded according to specific criteria (within the bounds of the budget that can be made available, guided by proportional allocations in the Prodoc). Priority should be given to:
- Providing support for a workshop with landowners at which the criteria can be developed – guided by the METTs, standards for OECMs, and so on.
 - Consolidating support to landowners who have already received support (prioritising the 5 gazetted private reserves, and informal reserves that have already received support), followed by areas that are named in the Prodoc as important – Muti Muti, Manzenyama etc.

Key Recommendation 1.2.3: Adopt a fresh approach to areas of work in which delivery has been slow (bringing new land under conservation management; strengthening conservation and ecotourism infrastructure, capacity development and CBNRM projects).

(Responsibility for each activity will be determined during development of the revised project plan)

1: To effectively expand the protected area estate, SNPAS should:

- a) **Shift the focus from gazettment¹⁰ of new protected areas, to bringing more land under active conservation management, in compliance with internationally-recognised standards for creating a pathway to protection such as OECMs (Other Effective Conservation Measures) and the IUCN Green Listing Standard.**

Key steps will be to:

- **Strategically prioritise** a modest number of sites at which to work, with key criteria being to:
 - Contribute to strengthening the existing *Transboundary Conservation Area projects* (Malolotja-Somgimvelo, and Lubombo), and lay the foundation for securing nomination of these mountain landscapes as *Biosphere Reserves* (under the UNESCO Biosphere Programme) – this is fully consistent with the objectives of the SNPAS project, maximises the catalytic effect of SNPAS and creates a secure avenue to sustainability for the gains that the SNPAS project can make.
 - Enable communities and other landowners who have committed land for conservation, to be recognised as part of the formal protected area network.

For these reasons it is strongly recommended that:

- i) In Lubombo and Malolotja Clusters, prioritise those sites that form critical nodes (either as core conservation areas or buffers) in the developing Biosphere Reserve domains (See maps¹¹ in [Annex 10](#)) – and that align with priorities already identified in the Prodoc, starting with those that are already ‘informal’ nature reserves or have been earmarked for conservation (e.g. Shewula, Mhlumeni, Mambane).
- ii) In Ngwempisi, select (as a start) one key area that has been assigned for nature conservation in a CDP, and is ranked as being of high biodiversity value (e.g. Luzelweni/Ntfungula, Makhonjwa Mountain), before adding others (It takes a long time to bring a new area under active conservation management).

Key steps will be to:

- **Convene a joint planning session to develop a structured plan** for delivery of this component of work, as follows:
 - Key participants should include SNTC CEO, SNTC DOP and CMU, SNPAS PMU, TFCA and Biosphere programme co-ordinators, relevant conservancies and other key partners .
 - The plan should specify sites, tasks, milestones, responsibilities, stakeholder engagement strategy, costs), and should be practicable, and maximise opportunities for collaboration.
- **Identify a suitable partner**, with demonstrable experience in applying these approaches, to run a training session for the project implementers (training could include learning exchanges to cross-border sites where these methods have been applied).
- **Assign one PMU staff member as the SNPAS Co-ordinator** for this component of work and ensure that they are adequately capacitated to do so.
- Where necessary engage **responsible parties/partners** to augment SNTC capacity to implement this programme of work.

This programme of work will contribute to meeting Objective-level targets and targets under Component 2.

2: To facilitate the establishment of streamlined landscape management structures, SNPAS should:

- a) **Bring key stakeholders in each landscape cluster together in forums that provide a vehicle for information sharing and communication, joint priority-setting and problem-solving, reporting progress and sharing lessons.** (Component 2, Indicator 3)

¹⁰ The SNTC Amendment Bill is unlikely to be enacted in the remaining lifespan of the project. Whilst it is still possible to gazette protected areas under current legislation – SNTC Act and the Game Act – these do not recognise some of the more flexible PA categories

¹¹ It is strongly recommended that the ‘boundaries’ of the Malolotja and Lubombo Clusters be aligned with the domains for the proposed Biosphere Reserves

Key steps will be to:

- Convene a facilitated workshop in each cluster, to introduce the concept, establish stakeholder interest and **set up a Landscape Networking 'Forum'**¹² in each cluster. Where existing governance mechanisms exist (e.g. established conservancies or associations, or community leadership structures that have legitimacy and credibility), these could play a leadership and mentorship role, with facilitation support from SNPAS, rather than setting up new structures.
- Assist with **resourcing the establishment of Secretariat Services for TFCAs and developing Biospheres**, as these over-arching landscape-scale mechanisms will provide the pathway to sustainability for the gains made by SNPAS. This will help build SNTC's capacity to deliver on its mandate to coordinate Eswatini's involvement in TFCAs in the Malalotja and Lubombo landscapes, and to take the lead in the establishment of Biosphere Reserves in these areas. This would maximise the catalytic impact of SNPAS.

3: To improve capacity for effective PA management, and provision of high-quality eco-tourism services, SNPAS should:

- a) **Adopt a learning-by-doing approach to systematically enhance skills and knowledge, by leveraging the capacity of local and regional partners to provide workplace-based training, promote peer-learning and provide active mentorship**

Key steps will be to:

- **Convene a workshop of key SNPAS partners** to identify and prioritise capacity development needs for improved PA management (in line with broad categories identified in the Prodoc).
- **Identify suitable partners and set in place a structured programme** of 'learning by 'doing'', including field-based learning, exchanges, formal lectures and training sessions, participation in webinars

Potential Partnerships to be pursued could include:

- SGHRA/LC/SNTC/BGP: can provide practical training to strengthen enforcement and monitoring of wildlife crime, and roll out of the SMART patrolling system (a trainer from the South African Wildlife College could also be engaged where necessary)
- All-out-Africa and UNISWA: can assist with field based training for ecological monitoring of key ecosystems in national parks and other conservation-worthy landscapes (the research centre at Mbuluzi could be used as a field base for work in the Lubombo Cluster)
- Dept. Forestry, SEA, private landowners: on-the-ground training in IAPS clearing/de-bushing
- Conservation-Outcomes (an NGO leading biodiversity stewardship and PA expansion and management programmes in northern KwaZulu Natal¹³), could provide mentorship and field-based training in establishing agreements with land owners and communities to bring land under active conservation management; training in meeting OECM or IUCN Green Listing Standard criteria.
- Established lodge operators can provide training in hospitality-related aspects of ecotourism, development of tourism products
- All out Africa: training of field guides

¹² These Forums should bring together all relevant land users in the cluster – private, state and communal. Where there are multiple Chiefdoms – such as Ngwempisi, the first step may be to establish an inter-Chiefdom Forum, and then link that with other landowners.

¹³ Conservation Outcomes: Conservation Outcomes is a South Africa-based non-profit organisation created to provide support to land that is being developed and managed for biodiversity conservation outside of traditional state protected areas. Its focus is on securing remnant biodiversity, ecological integrity and resilience whilst contributing to poverty alleviation and meaningful socio-economic development in rural southern Africa through the development of the conservation and wildlife sector. See www.conservaiton-outcomes.org

2: How should the project direct its business? Processes, People and Partnerships

KEY OBSERVATION 2: *Project implementation arrangements and adaptive strategies need significant corrective action to improve efficiency and cost-effectiveness, transparency and accountability; establish strong and lasting partnerships for effective delivery; and embed SNPAS nationally in all relevant institutions to ensure strong ownership across government, the private sector and civil society.*

Key Recommendation 2.1: As a matter of urgency, strengthen strategic and technical leadership function within the project's organisational structure through appointment of a suitably qualified and experienced, senior Strategic/Technical Co-ordinator¹⁴

Technical competency and experience: It is critical that the RIGHT person is found bring good strategic focus and technical oversight to the project. The incumbent should have demonstrable technical knowledge and experience (minimum 10 years) in: protected area planning and management, biodiversity stewardship, TFCAs, biosphere reserves, community eco-tourism and related agro-ecological community development arenas; strategic planning, project and programme cycle management (especially big-budget, complex, donor-funded projects – e.g. GEF, UNDP, World Bank, GIZ).

Other competencies: Staff supervision and developmental mentorship skills; excellent communication skills (verbal and written). Ideally, this person should be based in Eswatini and should be well-networked in the biodiversity community, with established involvement in other protected area-related programmes (to provide for strategic linkage – which is critical for building a pathway to sustainability to any SNPAS outcomes).

This should be a part-time (approx. 50%) appointment (although time inputs initially may be more intensive), but the person should be able to dedicate a fixed number of days per month, on a flexible basis, to the project, and can be regularly present (physically) to the team. The Advisor should work alongside the ENTC CEO, and be in regular consultation with the PS and the UNDP CO.

Responsibility for implementation: UNDP CO and ENTC CEO/Executive, and Project Board, with participation of the UNDP RTA.

Key Recommendation 2.2: As a matter of priority, strengthen project management capacity and management systems (with special attention to financial management and administration, work-planning and M&E)

1: To improve Financial Management and Reporting, it is recommended that:

a) **Urgently convene a joint supervision mission involving the project RTA, the Senior Advisor for Project and Programme Cycle Management (Mr Sineesh Varghese) and the Programme Associate (Ms Hiwot Gebremeskel) from the UNDP Regional Service Centre in Addis Ababa to work with the PMU, SNTC ExCo, UNDP CO staff; and the GEF OFF to:**

- **resolve all budgeting and financial planning and reporting issues** and help the project develop a revised budget, that is in substantial compliance with the agreed proportional allocations to Components and budget lines in the Prodoc, and aligned with the reconfigured programme of work;
- **develop effective systems and tools** for internal tracking of expenditure;
- provide training in the correct application of the *GEF Guidelines for Project and Programme Cycle Management* and all other relevant UNDP-GEF Financial Control Rules;
- develop a set of standards and a **clear and simple guidelines for results-based M&E and Reporting**

¹⁴ The current Technical Advisor, (or other experts within-country) if still willing, may be requested to provide review inputs on a case-by-case basis – e.g. reviewing specific documents. This will release funds for appointment of the Senior Technical Advisor as detailed in (i) above.

- **Provide specific guidance to the National Project Manager** to strengthen general capacity for project management, M&E and reporting.

Lead responsibility for convening the mission: UNDP CO, in consultation with the IP, and participation of the UNDP RTA and the UNDP Programme Associate. Specific responsibility for individual activities will be determined during the mission.

2: To strengthen project management and ensure effective deployment of PMU staff, the project should:

a) As a matter of priority, revise the staffing structure of the PMU and develop instruments to enhance internal management arrangements

Key steps will be to:

- **Re-size (reduce) and re-configure the staff complement of the PMU**, to be in closer compliance with the structure outlined in the Prodoc, and re-align staff TORs to fit the renewed focus of the project, with a clearer segregation of duties (all changes must be properly documented in a detailed organizational chart, with appropriate contractual amendments/agreements put in place); deployment of the existing managerial staff and CLOs could be creatively adapted to drive forward the re-focussed programme of work (Responsibility: UNDP CO working in close association with SNTC Executive, and Strategic Technical Advisor)
- **Document the revised management arrangements in an organizational chart**, and ensure this is well communicated among partner institutions; set up a team *Code of Practice (or set of Standard Operating Procedures)* for internal lines of reporting, external communications, setting up consultancy contracts/partnership agreements, approval procedures etc...
- Working from the over-arching plan for delivery, **develop a detailed, task-based work plan for the PMU as a whole and for each staff member** and use to inform the development of the Annual Workplans required by UNDP, and guide regular project management team meetings.
- **Upskill the core project staff** to develop a deeper understanding of relevant concepts, through training, learning exchanges and mentorship by the Strategic/Technical Advisor.

Lead responsibility: UNDP CO and ENTC Executive, with involvement of Project STA and UNDP RTA. Responsibility for individual activities to be determined during the post-MTR supervision mission.

b) Strengthen M&E, Reporting, work-planning and knowledge management functions to ensure stronger alignment with project outcomes and more streamlined and coherent operations:

Key steps will be to:

- **Develop a simple but precise M&E/Reporting roster/schedule that indicates:** each Reporting requirement/M&E task; due date; who is responsible; to whom the report must be sent; any requirement for follow up action (and record if this has been done); date approved (if approval required); the output/indicator to which this contributes; date uploaded to the project's knowledge management system. This roster should be maintained electronically, with copies sent to all staff (and the Senior Strategy/Technical Advisor and the PSC Chairperson), and should be updated at least weekly by the NPM.
- Develop a **centralized project information management system**, in which soft and hard copies of all key project documents are stored, with an easy-access guide so that items can be quickly accessed
- Maintain a **consolidated risks and lessons learnt log**, and use this to inform work-planning and adaptive management. (A template for the risks and lessons log should be developed and it should be updated quarterly, ahead of preparation of the next workplan and budget).
- **Streamline the management arrangements for contracts and agreements**, clarifying roles, lines of reporting and accountability and expected deliverables and timelines.
- **Convene a proactive, joint work-planning session with key partners** ahead of preparation of the Annual Workplan each year, and each quarter – this should involve all partners who are responsible for delivery of any components of the overall workplan, and should be held separately from the PSC meetings.

Lead responsibility: National Project Manager, with support of Project STA, ENTC counterparts and UNDP CO

c) Enhance effective project governance by ensuring clear segregation of duties and effective communication between the Project Board and Project Steering Committee

Key steps will be to:

- **Re-visit the TORs of the PB and PSC to ensure clear segregation of duties** - the PB should take lead responsibility for GOVERNANCE, and the PSC should take lead responsibility for TECHNICAL support. The clarified TORs should be accompanied by a simple but clear set of standard operating procedures reflecting lines of communication, responsibility, authority and accountability. The possibility of ad hoc virtual meetings should be considered as a means of expediting decision making, as required.
- **The PB and PSC should hold one joint sitting a year** (as proposed by the PB previously), preferably in December, to consider the AWP and budget and Q1 Workplan and Budget for the next year (to ensure that these are submitted in compliance with deadlines in the UNDP budget cycle)
- **The Secretariat (PMU) must ensure that all documentation for PB and PSC meetings is prepared timeously** and submitted to members at least two weeks ahead of time, to enable members to be adequately prepared for the meeting.
- **The quality of the PB and PSC meeting minutes should be improved by:** *recording for each actionable item* what must be done, by whom, when and with what expected result; and ensuring that all Minutes are signed timeously once they have been approved by the relevant committee. The NPM should also maintain a running log of 'actionable items', and follow-up proactively with responsible parties between meetings.

Lead responsibility: Project Board and Secretariat

d) The SNTC must be empowered to take leadership of the project (within the boundaries of its capacity) to enhance transparent and accountable implementation, and promote stronger institutional absorption of the project:

- **All direct execution duties should be transferred to SNTC** (unless there are circumstances that mitigate against this), with UNDP CO playing an *implementation support role* as outlined in the GEF (2017) Guidelines for Project and Programme Cycle Management. If it is anticipated that Direct Support Services will still be required from UNDP CO, these must be formally requested by the IP, specified and costed out, with approval obtained from the GEF.
- **The National Project Manager should report directly to the SNTC CEO** (with support of the Senior Technical/Strategic Advisor), and should consult regularly with the UNDP CO and the Chairperson of the PB.
- **Empower the SNTC Chief Financial Officer to play a more active role in project budgeting, financial reporting** (working in association with the SNTC CEO, the new Strategic/Technical Advisor, and with support from UNDP CO, after appropriate training in application of UNDP-GEF rules).
- **Take steps to ensure that the institutional identity of the PMU lies with SNTC**, and empower the SNTC CEO (with support of the Senior Technical/Strategic Advisor) to play a stronger line management function (i.e. SNPAS is a GEF-financed, UNDP-supported project led by the SNTC on behalf of the Government of Eswatini).

Responsibilities to be determined during the post MTR supervision mission.

Key Recommendation 2.3: SNPAS must develop strong, working partnerships for implementation with key agents of change in the conservation community, and provide a more dynamic platform for active collaboration and networking between all stakeholders in Eswatini's biodiversity and ecotourism sectors.

- a) **Strengthen existing partnerships** (e.g. STA, SEA, Lubombo Conservancy, SGRA) and nurture new ones with agents of change who can serve as responsible parties or collaborators (e.g. Peace Parks Foundation, Conservation Outcomes, All Out Africa; SWIFT, GIZ).

- b) **Nurture and support partners** through proactive networking, constructive engagement, joint visioning and problem solving, and regular communication.
- c) **Develop a practical Partnership Framework and Engagement Plan** that identifies key partners, describes their roles (relative to the project), lines of responsibility and accountability, and terms of engagement.
- d) **Develop a Communication Strategy** for communicating project progress both internally and externally, using varied media tools (newsletter, email, FB page, mobile phone technology), and other mechanisms for sharing information and promoting collaboration (e.g. Landscape Cluster Forums).

Lead responsibility: National Project Manager and project team, working with support of ENTC counterparts and the project STA

3: Pathways to sustainability

KEY OBSERVATION 3: The SNPAS project is in a state of transition and re-adjustment, and must put in place effective measures to address short-term transition, and an 'absorption plan' to strengthen institutional ownership and promote long term sustainability

Key Recommendation 3.1. The SNTC, PMU, UNDP, and Project Board, supported by the UNDP RTA and the RSC partners, should develop a management response to the MTR, and an action plan to activate the Project Recovery Plan, and ensure that partners and stakeholders remain appropriately informed and engaged.

- a) The steps for developing the Management Response are laid out in the UNDP Guidance Manual for conducting MTRs. *It is recommended* that the findings of the MTR should be thoroughly workshopped by the PMU, SNTC, UNDP, PB and PSC, and the Management Response developed, before a broader consultation process is initiated.
- b) Activation of the Project Recovery Plan involves many steps, all of which are important, and some of which will run concurrently. For each of the recommendations and key steps adopted, responsibility and timelines must be assigned.

The most urgent first steps of the action plan will be:

- **Strengthen Strategic/Technical Capacity** in the project's organisational framework by bringing on board the Senior Technical/Strategic Advisor/Director (**Responsibility:** UNDP, SNTC CEO, PB)
- **Re-configure the PMU and strengthen operational procedures** and technical/management capacity of the PMU (**Responsibility:** SNTC CEO, Strategic/Technical Advisor, UNDP, PB)
- **Convene a joint supervision mission** by the RTA and Programme Support staff from the UNDP Regional Service Centre (**Responsibility:** UNDP CO, with support of UNDP RTA)
- **Resolve governance and implementation arrangements** (**Responsibility:** PB/SNTC CEO/UNDP)
- **Develop a re-focussed project plan** (**Responsibility:** Senior Strategic/Technical advisor, NPM, SNTC, UNDP CO and partners, with support of UNDP RTA), supported by **other frameworks and plans** to guide delivery (i.e. Partnership and Engagement Framework; M&E and Reporting Plan; Communications Strategy; Knowledge Management System)
- **Keep stakeholders well-informed** at appropriate intervals (**Responsibility:** NPM and SNTC leadership)

Key Recommendation 3.2: The project should use participatory methods to develop an 'absorption' strategy/sustainability plan, which identifies measures to mitigate risks to sustainability, and ensures that SNPAS is fully integrated into the vision and operational plans of the ENTC and all relevant partner institutions.

The sustainability plan (which must embrace financial, institutional, social and environmental sustainability) should be developed collaboratively, and should include: objectives, key steps, responsibilities, milestones and timelines, and a resource plan. **Lead responsibility:** National Project Manager and project staff, ENTC Executive, supported by Project STA

INTRODUCTION

2.1. Purpose and Objectives

Midterm Reviews (MTRs) are mandatory for all GEF-financed full-sized projects (FSPs). The overall ***purpose*** of the MTR is to serve as a developmental monitoring tool to assess project performance, identify achievements and challenges, and describe corrective actions to ensure that the intended outcomes are delivered by project end. The MTR is an essential part of the project's ***adaptive management cycle*** and contributes to ongoing improvement and reflexive learning. The MTR also lays the foundation for the project's Terminal Evaluation (TE), although the focus of these two evaluation processes is different¹⁵.

The specific ***objectives*** of the MTR are to:

- review the project's Strategic Results Framework (SRF), with a view to making any recommendations for change
- assess progress towards planned results (objective and outcomes), and make supportive recommendations to enhance delivery (if necessary)
- monitor the implementation of adaptive management
- identify potential risks to sustainability, and recommend suitable mitigation measures for these risks.

The MTR is independent, participatory and collaborative, opening opportunities for discussion and developmental change in the implementation of the project.

2.2. Scope and Methodology

2.2.1. The *scope* of the MTR includes an assessment of:

- **Project design**, including: critical analysis of the project's Strategic Results Framework (SRF) and Theory of Change, to assess the logical coherence of the results chain and the quality and suitability of the indicators and targets (i.e. are they SMART: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound); the extent to which lessons learnt in other projects have been incorporated into project design; the alignment of the project with national development priorities and other relevant programmes; the level of country ownership; the inclusivity of the stakeholder plan; the extent to which stakeholder perspectives were factored into project design; planned sustainability and replication measures; and, the extent to which relevant gender issues and other developmental effects (e.g. livelihood benefits) were factored into project design.
- **Progress towards results**, including: assessment of achievements against planned results using data in project workplans, annual progress reports and PIRs, the applicable GEF Tracking Tools, as well as results verified during the in-country mission; identification of barriers to effective delivery and formulation of appropriate measures to overcome these barriers.
- **Project implementation and adaptive management**, including: project management and governance arrangements; work planning; financial performance and management and realization of co-finance; project -level monitoring and evaluation systems and project reporting; performance of the Implementing Agency and Executing Agency/Implementing Partner; stakeholder engagement; knowledge management and communications.
- **Sustainability**, including: assessment of the robustness of the risks mitigation plan (i.e. are the risks that were identified still relevant and important? Are the risk ratings still accurate? Are the risk mitigation measures appropriate and practical?); identification of issues that may impact on

¹⁵ See UNDP 2014. *Guidance for Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-financed projects*, p v.

sustainability – this sets the stage for the detailed assessment of sustainability that will be undertaken during the terminal evaluation.

- **Conclusions and recommendations**, including: a summary of project highlights, strengths and weaknesses; identification of challenges and potential solutions (i.e. corrective actions for design, implementation and M&E); follow-up actions to reinforce early benefits realized by the project; and, proposals for future directions reinforcing achievement of the project's objective and mitigating risks to sustainability.

In addition, this MTR forms part of a **thematic learning review** (TLR) that UNDP's Ecosystem and Biodiversity (EBD) team is conducting of its global protected area project portfolio (from the GEF 3 – 5 cycles). The thematic learning review sets out to: (i) identify the aggregated outcomes and collective impact of the protected area project portfolio; (ii) advance an understanding of which approaches have worked well and why (and, likewise, the challenges encountered in these projects and how they can be overcome); (iii) identify how the protected area work supported by UNDP contributes to achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and how this delivery can be enhanced in future; (iv) make practical recommendations for strengthening protected area project design, especially in the context of evolving strategic programming directions; (v) strengthen the project evaluation process to enhance data availability, improved knowledge management and reflexive learning; and, (vi) make recommendations for embedding protected area work in the UNDP's future strategic priorities.

2.2.2. Evaluation Team

The Evaluation Team included the team leader (Dr Mandy Cadman, from South Africa), and a national expert (Dr Nicollete Mhlanga-Ndlovu), working in accordance with their respective Terms of Reference (appended in [Annex 1](#)), and an agreed workplan. The two evaluators have worked in close co-operation with the Project Management Unit (or PMU, referred to as the project team, for convenience), the Implementing Partner (IP), the UNDP Country Office (CO) and other relevant stakeholders to develop an MTR that is evidenced-based, comprehensive, accurate and balanced.

2.2.3. Deliverables

The key deliverable of the assignment is the **Final MTR Report**, which complies with the specifications laid out in the UNDP guidance document for conducting midterm reviews (UNDP, 2014). Other deliverables produced ahead of the final report include: the **Inception Report** (submitted 11 May 2018); a **presentation of initial findings** (made during the second MTR mission), and a **draft MTR Report**.

2.2.4. Approach and methods

This MTR was conducted largely in accordance with recommended UNDP-GEF M&E procedures, following a set sequence of steps, as described in the Terms of Reference for the assignment, and in the UNDP Guidance document for conducting MTRs. In a departure from common practice, and for reasons explained in Section 2.4, below, two in-country missions were required for completion of the MTR (in June and July 2018), with a presentation of preliminary findings made only at the end of the second in-country mission (see **Table 1**).

The **approach** to the MTR was participatory, taking perspectives of a representative sample of stakeholders into account. Information on project performance and results was gathered from multiple sources including the project M&E system, tracking tools, field visits, stakeholder interviews, technical reports, project documents, and other independent sources, to facilitate verification through triangulation. Close engagement was maintained with the Project Team, the SNTC CEO, and UNDP CO throughout the process. Every effort was made to ensure that the schedule

of interviews and site visits was as representative as possible of all stakeholder interests and areas of project activity (both technical and geographic).

Table 1: Key steps in the MTR process, as applied to this project

Step	Main activities
Preparation (pre-mission)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-mission preparation and planning (in liaison with the UNDP CO and PMU) • Preliminary document review and preparation of templates and matrices • Preparation and submission of the MTR Inception Report
In-country mission 1 (10 – 22 June)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data gathering (site visits, stakeholder interviews, document analysis) • Preliminary collation of available data • Follow-up interviews
Post-mission data collation, analysis and preparation of draft findings (25 June – 20 July)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uploading of required documents to shared DropBox folder • Review of documents • Skype interviews/Email correspondence • Collation and analysis of data • Preparation for second in-country mission
In-country mission 2 (23 – 27 July)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data gathering and verification (site visits, interviews) • Collation of results • Wrap-up meeting: presentation and discussion of preliminary findings
Finalization of Draft Report (Post-mission)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow-up consultations (Skype/Email) • Analysis of project financial documents • Drafting of MTR Report • Finalization and submission of Draft MTR Report for review
Review of Draft MTR Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNDP CO/SNTC circulate draft for review, collate feedback from stakeholders and send it to consultants for their consideration • UNDP CO/SNTC and PMU begin preparation of management response
Preparation of the Final Report (Post mission)	Consultants incorporate review comments and submit final Midterm Review Report (including an audit trail)
Management Response (post-mission)	Prepared by UNDP-CO, SNTC and Project Team, using the standard template (May be followed by a General Stakeholder Meeting)

Data collection

Data gathering involved a range of modalities including document review and analysis, site visits and interviews with stakeholders, as follows:

- **Review of documentation:** The review included over 100 individual documents, as listed in [Annex 2](#). Some documents were made available electronically (before and after the first mission) and others in hardcopy (during the missions).
- **Site visits:** The itineraries for the two field missions are included in [Annex 3](#) to this Report. The primary focus of the site visits was to verify the reported results, and to conduct formal interviews and informal discussions (to ensure adequate consultation at grassroots level) with project beneficiaries and stakeholders. The selection of project sites was made in consultation with the Project Team and UNDP CO, ensuring that a representative sample of conservation areas under different governance modalities was visited. This included: (i) three SNTC-managed protected areas (Malolotja, Mantenga and Mlawula); (ii) one BGP-managed national park (Mlilwane Game Sanctuary); (iii) three privately owned nature reserves Phophonyane Nature Reserve (proclaimed, in Malalotja Cluster), Dombeya Nature Reserve (informal, near Mafutseni), and Mbuluzi Game Reserve (informal, in Lubombo Cluster); (iv) two community-managed informal conservation areas (with existing eco-tourism facilities) - Shewula Mountain Camp and

Mhlumeni Lodge (both in Lubombo Cluster); and (v) one proposed new conservation area (Ntfungula Mountain, Luzelweni Chiefdom).

- **Stakeholder consultation:** Consultations with key collaborating institutions and civil society organizations were scheduled in Lobamba, Ezulwini, Mbabane, Manzini and other locations, including four Chiefdom meetings, at Shewula (Lubombo), Velezizweni and Luzelweni (Ngwempisi), and Mvembili (Malolotja). The selection of institutions and individuals to interview was made in conjunction with the PMU and the UNDP CO. Parties who could not be interviewed during the in-country missions, were interviewed via Skype. This included: the UNDP-GEF Regional Technical Adviser (Penny Stock, based in the UK); the UNDP-GEF Regional Service Centre Head (Ms Phemo Kgomotso, based in Addis Ababa); the UNDP-GEF Senior Advisor for Project Cycle Management (Sineesh Varghese, based in Addis Ababa); the project's Technical Adviser (Dr Peter Smith, based in Australia), and the Project Management Support Consultant (Professor Brian Huntley, based in South Africa). See [Annex 4](#) for a full list of stakeholders consulted.

Data evaluation matrix

A data evaluation matrix (see [Annex 5](#)) was compiled to guide data analysis. It includes evaluative questions, indicators, sources of data and methodology for data gathering. The matrix is structured under four main sections (Project Strategy, Progress towards Results, Implementation and Adaptive Management, and Sustainability), as prescribed in the UNDP-GEF Guidelines.

In designing the evaluation matrix, attention was given to laying a foundation that can be built on in the Terminal Evaluation (TE), to allow fair comparison between achievements at midterm and project end.

Data analysis and evaluation rating criteria

The results of the MTR assessment are presented using a combination of narrative description, matrices and tables (following UNDP-GEF recommendations as closely as possible), and other visual means. **Ratings** have been awarded separately for: progress towards results, implementation and adaptive management, and sustainability, using the prescribed rating scales presented in [Annex 6](#).

Implementation and adaptive management: Seven aspects of project implementation and adaptive management were assessed (management arrangements, work planning, finance and co-finance, project-level M&E, stakeholder engagement, reporting, and communications). A single rating has been assigned, using the 6-point scale outlined in [Annex 6](#), with justification provided in the narrative of the Report.

Sustainability: The assessment of sustainability at midterm identifies risks (financial, socio-economic, environmental and institutional) that might compromise the achievement of gains made in the project so far, and the longer term sustainability of the project outcomes. A single rating for sustainability has been awarded, using the four-point scale described in [Annex 6](#). To assess the effectiveness of the project's risk mitigation strategy, and identify opportunities for addressing emergent risks to sustainability, the evaluators prepared a consolidated risks-and-issues log, as no consolidated log had been kept by the project to date.

2.3. Ethics

This MTR was conducted without bias, in accordance with the UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluators (signed Evaluation Consultant Code of Conduct Agreements attached in [Annex 11](#)). The anonymity and confidentiality of stakeholders has been ensured and their dignity respected. Consultation processes were appropriately contextualised and culturally-sensitive, with attention

given to issues such as gender empowerment and fair representation for other vulnerable groups. All of the community meetings were conducted in *SiSwati*, with the national consultant serving as translator for the international consultant. To provide stakeholders uninhibited opportunities for providing feedback, UNDP CO and project staff did not participate during interviews, though they assisted by making general introductions at the start of each engagement.

The evaluation was conducted in line with all relevant UNDP and GEF policies and protocols, and according to the requirements described in the Terms of Reference. Although the inputs of stakeholders have helped shape the MTR findings, the evaluation ratings, conclusions and key recommendations are those of the Evaluators, and are not attributable to any individual or institutional stakeholders.

2.4. Limitations of the Midterm Review

The MTR took place over an extended period (April – August 2018), involving two in-country missions (one in June and one in July, totalling 18 days in-country).

The MTR consultants engaged closely with both the UNDP CO and the PMU in the preparations for the MTR, and provided clear guidelines (in the MTR Inception Report, and through email correspondence and a Skype conference) on the types of documentation that would be required for pre-mission review, tasks to be completed (before, during and after the in-country mission), and stakeholders and sites to be included on the mission itinerary. The UNDP-GEF Guidance document on conducting MTRs was made available to the Project Team, to ensure that the purpose, methods and outputs of the MTR process were clearly understood. These issues were also discussed in some detail during the preparations for the MTR, facilitated by UNDP CO and the Project Management Support Consultant¹⁶.

The in-country mission was initially scheduled for April 2018, but had to be postponed due to clashes with significant events on the Kingdom of Eswatini's national calendar, and was re-scheduled for the next available date, 10 – 21 June. Ahead of the in-country mission, the evaluation team prepared and submitted a detailed MTR Inception Report (dated 11 May 2018), and the Project Team was requested to provide information and populate a number of tables and matrices with information relating to project achievements, financing and other aspects of implementation. The project team timeously set up a shared DropBox folder containing some of the project documents (though not all), and worked alongside the UNDP CO to organise the mission itinerary.

Despite the intensive focus on preparing for the MTR, a number of challenges that compromised the effectiveness of the MTR emerged, including:

- The project team had not managed to fill in the required tables and matrices (progress to results, and financial data) ahead of the mission, and this task fell to the evaluators to carry out during and after the mission; this meant that the mission was conducted without a complete picture of the current state of delivery of the project.
- During the in-country mission it became apparent that some critical documents relating to project implementation had not been made available in the DropBox folder (though they had been requested), which meant that the interviews and site visits were conducted without a proper knowledge or understanding of all relevant issues.
- Consolidated financial records were not available beforehand, and the figures that were present during the first mission were confusing.

¹⁶ Given the challenges that have been faced by the project, a Project Management Support Consultant, Professor Brian Huntley, was appointed for a three-month period to provide support to the PMU, specifically with preparations for the MTR. This involved a number of in-country missions and workshops.

- The spread of stakeholders interviewed and sites visited was not adequately representative, and more time would be needed to address this.
- Some of the meetings were organized at short notice, and often the stakeholders being interviewed had not been told beforehand what the purpose of the meeting would be.

The combined effect of this was that, by the end of the mission, the evaluators were unable to accurately assess or verify progress to results, or to formulate a well-informed and balanced set of practicable corrective actions to address the challenges faced by the project, and enhance future delivery.

After consultation with UNDP CO and the SNTC CEO, it was agreed that a follow-up mission would be necessary. In the interim, the UNDP country office undertook to work closely with the National Project Manager to ensure that all necessary documentation was made available to the evaluators, and that critical stakeholders were included in the itinerary for the follow-up mission, which was scheduled for 23-27 July. A large volume of documents was made available by the PMU in the intervening period, but up-to-date, consolidated financial records were only made available after the second in-country mission. To date, there are still some documents that have not been shared (for example, several of the technical reports developed through key consultancies), and many reported 'achievements' could not be reliably verified, either due to inconsistencies in reporting, or because information is not comprehensively consolidated in any one place and so is not easily accessible; the level of detail in the PIRs and workplans was also inadequate to enable verification.

A further challenge was that the project has suffered a high turnover of staff and focal persons (within the PMU, the UNDP and the SNTC), which has led to disrupted institutional memory, and it was sometimes difficult to track lines of decision-making – and accountability – on some key issues.

These limitations notwithstanding, the focus of the evaluators throughout this process has been to work closely with the IP, UNDP, the project team, and all stakeholders, to give fair recognition to project achievements, identify challenges, and map a realistic and constructive path forward.

3. PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND CONTEXT

3.1. Development context and brief description of the project

The Kingdom of Eswatini's endowment of biological riches is disproportionate to the country's size. With a land area of only 17,364 km² – a little smaller than the Kruger National Park in neighbouring South Africa – the Kingdom lies at the interface of four physiographic regions, and exhibits a high diversity of ecosystem types that span montane grasslands, forests (montane, riparian and dry types), savanna-woodland mosaics (highland and lowland types), and a diversity of freshwater systems (such as wetlands, marshes, streams and rivers). These ecosystems are home to biodiversity of global and regional significance, including a diverse array of plant and animal species – a notable proportion of which are rare or threatened, especially in landscapes that are not formally protected or actively managed for conservation. The country exhibits one of the largest intact altitudinal gradients of natural ecosystems in Southern Africa, and is the only place where this gradient occurs across a relatively short distance (about 200 kms).¹⁷

Eswatini's natural ecosystems provide resources, ecological infrastructure and ecosystem services that are essential for addressing issues such as food and water security, poverty alleviation and livelihood creation, and building greater socio-ecological resilience, especially in the face of climate change and economic hardships. The ecological health of three major transboundary river systems (the Komati, Mbuluzi and Maputo), depends heavily on how natural landscapes are managed in

¹⁷ Source: PIMS 4932 Project Document (ProDoc)

Eswatini, with implications for national, regional and international water security. The country's grasslands and savannas serve as rangelands, and, with about 50% of land used for extensive communal grazing, 12% for subsistence agriculture, and a further 19% for commercial ranching, these landscapes are critical for supporting local livelihoods, food security and economic development. Despite their global, national and local significance, Eswatini's biodiversity assets are currently under-protected and are being placed at risk by land degradation, unsustainable land-use practices, land-use conflicts, weak regulation and enforcement, and other burgeoning socio-economic and environmental pressures.

Protected areas in Eswatini

To date, the legally gazetted protected area estate of Swaziland has accounted for only 3.9¹⁸ percent of the country's land surface. The protected area network includes six national parks and at least 20 other private and communal conservation areas, both formal and informal (see **Table 2** and **Figure 1**) – some of these have made a critically important contribution to restoring viable populations of previously threatened and even locally-extinct species. Despite this, the protected area network is not fully representative of the country's ecological diversity, and protected areas occur largely as small, disconnected 'islands', surrounded by heavily-modified production or settled landscapes. Several of Swaziland's protected areas are also under-resourced, lack the technical capacity and scientific knowledge-base to enable effective management, and are vulnerable to variety of pressures that place their ecological integrity and financial sustainability at high risk.

Outside of protected areas, the ecological integrity of natural landscapes is compromised by land degradation, habitat loss and fragmentation caused by unsustainable practices (such as over-harvesting, over-grazing, illegal hunting and poorly-located infrastructural and other developments), the impacts of invasive alien species (which have been declared by His Majesty, King Mswati III, as a national disaster), and the effects of climate change. These drivers of change are exacerbated by issues such as limited economic opportunities for the largely rural population (who rely mostly on subsistence agriculture or livestock keeping for their livelihoods), poverty, and food insecurity, which sometimes forces people to adopt coping responses that cause biodiversity loss, damage to ecosystems and a decline in the productive capacity of land.

Land use and governance

The institutional context for governance and management of land and natural resources in Eswatini is relatively complex. There is a dual land tenure system in which about 30% of the country's land surface is under Title Deed Land (TDL), and the remaining 70% falls under Swazi Nation Land (SNL) – which is held in trust for the nation by the King, and is accessed by communities under the leadership of Chiefs. The distribution of land uses and exploitation of natural resources varies according to the land-tenure system. Swazi Nation Land land is used largely for subsistence farming, which is practiced by some 75% of the population, whilst Title Deed Land is under a variety of land uses including commercial agriculture, industrial development, commercial ranching; plantation forestry, and nature conservation.

Administratively, the country is divided into four regions (Hhohho, Lubombo, Shiselweni, and Manzini). Each region is divided into local government administration centres called '*Tinkhundla*', which are, in turn divided into Chiefdoms (*Umiphakatsi*), which are under traditional governance. Responsibility for land-use planning, management and protection of natural resources is spread among a number of different government ministries, and other state (or parastatal) agencies, and is

¹⁸ This statistic appears in all project documentation and was accurate at the time the Prodoc developed. In February 2015, five privately-owned nature reserves were formally gazetted as protected areas (independently of the project intervention), which increased the extent of land under formal protection to 4.15%

Table 2: The protected area network of Eswatini (from Prodoc)

NAME	Management	Perimeter (km)	Total Area (Ha)	Gazetted Area (Ha)
Gazetted National Parks				
Hlane Royal National Park	BGP	91.4	21,735.8	13,525.8
Mkhaya Game Reserve	BGP	50.2	10,050.2	5,815.5
Mlilwane Wildlife Sanctuary	BGP	58.6	4,582.8	3,862.0
Malalotja National Park	SNTC	75.6	16,292.4	11,255.0
Mlawula Nature Reserve	SNTC	83.6	16,152.3	14,943.4
Mantenga Nature Reserve	SNTC	11.9	716.7	716.7
Total area			69,530.3	50,118.4
Gazetted Nature Reserves				
Libhetse	Private	23.3	1,576	
Emantini	Private	18.1	1,381	
Phophonyane	Private	7.3	140	
Lomati	Private	?	?	
Lubuyane	Private	?	?	
Informal (not gazetted)				
IYSIS	Private	71.5	20,016	-
Royal Jozini Big 6	Private	50.3	12,662	-
Big Bend Conservancy	Private	48.4	13,225	-
Mhlosinga	Private	28.1	3,742	-
Mbuluzi	Private	32.3	2,357	-
Nisela	Private	14.4	1,147	-
Panata	Private	9.1	491	-
Dombeya	Private	8.0	349	-
Nkonyeni	Private	8.2	327	-
Rosecraft	Private	8.8	246	-
Sibetsamoya	Private	6.6	209	-
Area			46,977	
Established community Eco-tourism¹⁹/conservation areas				
NAME	Area (ha)	Perimeter (km)	Adjacent to private PA?	Adjacent to national PA?
Ngwempisi Gorge (Ngwempisi)	11,487	63.6	Yes	No
Mambane (Lubombo)	9,291	58.2	No	No
Shewula(Lubombo)	3,215	38.3	Yes	Yes
Sibebe (Malolotja)	2,856	25.5	No	No
Mahamba	2,104	21.6	No	No
Mhlumeni (Lubombo)	3,000	?	Yes	Yes
Area	31,953			

¹⁹ Community Eco-Tourism areas are relatively rugged, largely natural, intact landscapes that are not well-suited to agricultural production or settlement. Investments in eco-tourism operations have been made at these sites, largely by donors such as the European Union and GIZ (among others), though the established facilities operate at variable levels of success. Although these areas are not actively managed for conservation, they have been identified as being protection worthy and hold potential as future nature reserves.

3.2. Problems the project set out to address

Despite commitment from government, and important contributions made by private landowners and local communities, there are barriers to expanding and managing the protected area network of Eswatini so that it meets its full potential to conserve critical ecosystems, stimulate rural livelihoods, and contribute to the national economic and development agenda. These barriers include: lack of a consolidated, accessible knowledge platform to inform protected area planning and management; inadequate coverage of the protected area network; and limited operational capacity and financial sustainability of the protected area system.

(i) **Consolidated knowledge platform to inform PA planning and management:**

Systematic expansion and wise adaptive management of the PA system (and its surrounding landscapes) requires ready access to the most up-to-date and comprehensive data on biodiversity patterns and ecosystem processes. Although there is a long history of biodiversity survey work being undertaken in Eswatini, this data is not consolidated in any single repository that is readily accessible to a wide range of users for application in systematic biodiversity planning, landscape management, and ecological monitoring. There are also significant gaps in the knowledge base that protected area managers can use to identify and mitigate risks to the protected area system, and to formulate scientifically-based protected area and landscape-based management plans that integrate biodiversity considerations with other factors.

SNPAS seeks to address these issues through: filling knowledge gaps through surveys and assessments; developing tools, skills and systems to share consolidated data and use it for a wide range of applications relevant to expansion and effective management of protected areas, including systematic biodiversity planning, PA management and business planning, ecological monitoring, and the development of science-based policies and strategies for integrated landscape management in Eswatini.

(ii) **Inadequate coverage of the PA network:**

The existing protected area system of Eswatini makes an important contribution to protecting critical biodiversity and ecosystems of national, regional and global importance. However – as is the case in most countries – the PA system was not initially designed with ecological representivity in mind, but, evolved over time, driven by multiple factors. Many of the PAs in the country are small, vulnerable, and isolated; representation of major ecosystems is uneven; the spatial distribution of protected landscapes is skewed. Earlier surveys of protection-worthy areas²⁰ have identified over 40 areas that would be suitable for inclusion in the protected area network, based on biodiversity and ecosystem values, socio-economic value (e.g. tourism potential), resource use potential and cultural/archaeological importance. Incorporating these areas into the PA network would require a more flexible set of PA categories and governance arrangements, involving a wider range of stakeholders than is currently the case.

SNPAS seeks to address these issues through: gazettment of informal PAs and establishment of new PAs and conservancies at prioritised sites, with appropriate governance mechanisms established and operating, and capacity for conservation management (equipment, infrastructure, staffing and management programmes) in place and effective.

²⁰ Reilly, T.E (1979). *A survey of protection-worthy areas of Swaziland*. Swaziland National Trust Commission; Deall, G.B. et al. (2000). *Assessment of the protection value of remaining indigenous forests and woodlands in Swaziland*. Forestry Policy and Legislation Project, Ministry of Agriculture/DANCED; Roques, K. (2002). *Preliminary Field Assessment of Protection Worthy Areas in Swaziland*. Final Report for GEF, SNTC, SEA

(iii) Limited management capacity and financial sustainability of protected areas:

Technical capacity for management of protected areas is unevenly distributed across the PA network, and several PAs are critically under-resourced (with high variability between PAs under different forms of governance). This results in low levels of management effectiveness – despite significant investment by the private sector and baseline government interventions. Other factors limiting the operational effectiveness and financial sustainability of the PA system as a whole include: the complex institutional environment for PA management, and diverse stakeholder interests; inadequacies in the enabling policy framework (e.g. lack of coherent national strategy for IAPS or wetland management); low levels of technical capacity and service-provision (though capacity is generally much better in privately managed PAs); poor maintenance of ecotourism infrastructure in some PAs; lack of marketing strategies or business plans; and limited knowledge of sustainable, conservation-related alternative livelihoods for communities (despite previous efforts to create opportunities linked to eco-tourism through the construction of eco-lodges).

SNPAS seeks to address these issues through: development of systemic, institutional and individual capacities for effective management of PAs and their surrounding landscapes; development and implementation of sustainable financing mechanisms for PAs (that also distribute responsibilities and benefits more equitably amongst stakeholders); development and implementation of tourism plans and infrastructure, and diversification of tourism offerings (especially with improved community participation); and the development alternative livelihood opportunities for rural communities, linked to biodiversity conservation.

3.3. Project Description and Strategy

The high-level **goal** of the SNPAS Project (*Strengthening the National Protected Area System of Swaziland*) is to address the issues outlined above by expanding the protected area estate and improving its management effectiveness, in the context of a landscape approach to biodiversity conservation. In this approach, a network of strategically located, ecologically-representative and effectively managed protected areas is managed as part of a mosaic of land uses (including conservation, restoration, production and subsistence use), and measures are put in place to ensure that all people who live and work in these landscapes participate in their conservation and benefit from doing so. The project is organized under three **components**:

- 1: Operationalizing an effective **knowledge-based management platform** at national and regional level, to address current and emerging threats to protected areas and biodiversity conservation.
- 2: Implementing a landscape approach to **expand the protected area network**.
- 3: Strengthening **protected area functioning** through improved conservation management and operational support.

Under Component 1, the project set out to provide the tools and knowledge required to expand the country's protected area network in a systematic and scientific manner, manage it more effectively, and identify, manage or mitigate the risks to its sustainability.

This would be achieved by:

- **Gathering and consolidating biodiversity and ecosystem-related data** to inform PA planning, management and risk-mitigation.
- Developing and providing operational support for a **GIS-based platform** to store and serve the biodiversity and ecosystem-related data.

- Developing **PA feasibility, management and business plans** and **integrated landscape management plans** (across land-use zones in the landscape clusters), adopting a landscape approach and incorporating field-management and knowledge-based management mechanisms.

Under Component 2, the project set out to facilitate the formalisation and expansion of the current protected area network, working in four high-priority landscape clusters (Lubombo, Mkhaya West, Ngwempisi and Malalotja) which were identified during the PPG (See **Figure 2**) Three of these clusters (Lubombo, Malalotja and Mkhaya West) contain existing national parks (under both state and private management), as well as other privately-owned nature reserves (some of these informal) and conservation-worthy areas on Swazi Nation Land (communal).

This would be achieved by:

- **Expansion** of the PA system through gazettment of existing informal PAs, and establishment of new PAs (in specific areas, as noted in ProDoc, using different legislative tools – SNTC Act, Game Act and Flora Act) (Outputs 2.1. – 2.4)
- **Operationalising** these PAs (as noted in Prodoc) through: establishment of appropriate co-operative management/governance structures; matching grants for conservation infrastructure (e.g. fencing, roads), staffing, wildlife, conservation equipment and machinery (e.g. game capture or anti-poaching equipment); and, the development of programmes for law-enforcement, ecosystem restoration (e.g. wetland rehabilitation and re-introductions of game), in compliance with the management/business plans undertaken in Component 1 (Outputs 2.1 – 2.4)
- **Implementation of landscape-level management plans** within the four landscape clusters, with sustainable **management structures** for conservancies established, and **co-operation agreements** in place for joint law-enforcement, ecosystem restoration (e.g. IAPS clearing); stocking rates, forest product harvesting quotas, harvesting permits and enforcement structures, field-based ecological monitoring. (Output 2.5)

Figure 2: Map showing landscape clusters (from 2016 Project Strategy)



Under Component 3, the project set out to **build the capacity of agencies** responsible for management of Eswatini's protected landscapes (including SNTC, BGP, private landowners, NGOs and community authorities), by **boosting technical and operational capacity**, and **enhancing the financial sustainability** and profitability of the PA network (working in PAs under all forms of governance), with benefits for local livelihoods and broader socio-economic growth and development.

Investments would focus on:

- **Systematic capacity development and training** for improved conservation management provided to key personnel in SNTC, BGP, private PAs, SNL communities, NGOs and conservancies
- **Invasive alien** clearing programmes .
- **Strengthening of PA wildlife management** through implementation of wildlife reintroduction programmes (and associated equipment, infrastructure, game product development and marketing and other sustainable wildlife resource use initiatives).
- **Strengthening PA ecotourism** through improved eco-tourism infrastructure and equipment (e.g. camps and trails), product development, branding and marketing across all forms of PA (to improve revenue generation).
- **Employment of suitably trained community liaison officers** (from target landscapes) to co-ordinate and develop **community-based conservation initiatives** and to monitor biodiversity in community-led PAs; provide matching grants for selected residents to establish conservation friendly businesses or conservation initiatives in their PAs/landscapes.

Activities would take place in existing protected areas and critical landscapes outside of the existing protected area system that contain protection-worthy biodiversity.

A simplified representation of the **objective, outcomes and outputs** of the project are summarized in **Figure 3**.

Project Goal: to strengthen the management effectiveness of the protected area system of Swaziland		
Project Objective: Effectively expand, manage and develop Swaziland's protected area network in order to adequately protect the biodiversity and landscapes of the country		
Component 1: Knowledge-based management	Component 2: Land scape approach to PA expansion	Component 3: Strengthening PA functioning
Outcome: PA management and biodiversity conservation guided by research and knowledge for improved adaptive management practices within and outside PAs	Outcome: Legally protected PA estate expanded, leading to: maintenance of wildlife populations and ecosystem functioning, biodiversity-compatible land uses in areas surrounding PAs, containment of threats from impacting activities	Outcome: Technical and operational capacity improved
Outputs: 1.1. Biodiversity field surveys, vegetation assessments and tourism assessments carried out to fill information gaps 1.2. GIS-based knowledge and information management system operationalized to support systematic biodiversity planning 1.3. PA and landscape-based management plans (integrating conservation efforts with sustainable economic development practices) developed and implemented	Outputs: 2.1. Gazettement and resourcing of informal PAs as part of the national PA estate 2.2. Selected areas established as new PAs under the SNTC Act, with management structures developed (7 areas) 2.3. Selected areas established as new PAs under the Game Act, with management structures developed (4 areas) 2.4. Selected areas established as new PAs under the Flora Protection Act, with management structures developed (2 areas) and new community conservancies (5), with management developed 2.5. Landscape management plans developed and implemented in 4 landscapes, with management and cooperation structures in place	Outputs: 3.1. Training and capacity development provided to PA staff and stakeholders 3.2. Establishment and implementation of mobile alien invasive removal and processing business 3.3. Wildlife management improved through re-introduction of native species, provision or improvement of equipment and infrastructure, game product development and other sustainable resource use initiatives 3.4. Eco-tourism operations strengthened through improvements to infrastructure, product development, branding and marketing 3.5. Livelihoods and economic opportunities in rural communities enhanced through mechanisms to incentivize involvement in biodiversity-compatible activities

Figure 3: Summary of project goals, objective, components, outcomes and outputs

3.4. Project Implementation arrangements

This project is executed under the **National Implementation Modality (NIM)**, in which the GEF channels funds through its **Implementing Agency (IA) – UNDP** – for the agreed programme of work, as reflected in the Project Document, which has been endorsed by the GEF CEO and signed by representatives of UNDP and the Government of Eswatini. Under this arrangement, UNDP remains accountable to the GEF for overall project delivery, and is responsible for providing high-level oversight, technical and logistical support to the project's **Implementing Partner** (the IP, or Executing Agency, EA). Under NIM, the Implementing Partner (IP) – in this case the **Swaziland National Trust Commission (SNTC)**, a public entity under the Ministry of Tourism and Environmental Affairs (MTEA) – assumes overall responsibility for day-to-day implementation or execution of the project, in accordance with the project's agreed Strategic Results Framework (SRF) and budget, and following the terms laid out in the Letter of Agreement (LoA) between UNDP and the IP.

NIM makes provision for the Implementing Partner to contract other suitably capacitated entities as '**Responsible Parties**' (RPs) to carry out aspects of the agreed work programme (as service providers), in accordance with UNDP protocols (with compliance monitored by UNDP and the Project Board). In the case of SNPAS, **Big Game Parks (BGP)** – a private, non-profit Trust – was named as the primary Responsible Party, working in accordance with duties and budgets detailed in the SRF, and a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the SNTC. Big Game Parks²¹ committed cofinance (US\$ 9.8 million) as parallel funding (cash and in-kind), conditional upon its participation as envisaged in the project agreement. Certain project outputs were assigned to Big Game Parks in the SRF, within two of the prioritised landscape clusters (Mkhaya and Ngwempisi). *Note: this arrangement has not been realized during implementation, as will be explained in Section 4.*

The **project governance and management arrangements** envisaged in the ProDoc are illustrated in **Figure 4**. This model includes:

- A **Project Board (PB)**, for overall project governance and oversight, chaired by the Permanent Secretary of the MTEA, and involving decision-makers in the King's Office, key government ministries, the senior supplier (UNDP), and technical representatives from relevant government entities (including SNTC and BGP).
- A **Project Steering Committee (PSC)**, chaired by the CEO of the SNTC, and envisaged as the technical advisory arm of the Project Board - including relevant technical experts from key stakeholder institutions in government, the private sector, civil society and traditional governance institutions
- A **Project Management Unit (PMU)**, comprising a National Project Manager (NPM), Finance and Administrative Officer (FAA), and four Community Liaison Officers (CLOs), who were to be sourced from communities within the priority landscape clusters, and physically located within these. Two technical 'Project Managers' (one appointed within SNTC and one within BGP) would provide technical guidance to the NPM and to the two institutions responsible for implementing SNPAS-related activities. The NPM would report through the SNTC CEO to the Chairperson of the PB, and in close communication with the Programme Specialist in the UNDP CO.
- **Technical Advisors (TAs)**, in addition to the technical guidance of the two 'Project Managers' and the Steering Committee, the PMU would be supported by a Project Technical Advisor (TA,

²¹ Big Game Parks owns and manages, by Royal Warrant, three of the country's protected areas (Hlane Royal National Park, Mlilwane Wildlife Sanctuary and Mkhaya Game Reserve), all of which are self-sustaining on privately-generated revenues. BGP is the officially designated Administrative and Management Authority of the Game Act and CITES (and other associated conventions and agreements on wildlife) and represents the nation on all such fora. BGP answers directly to the Head of State, His Majesty King Mswati III, and performs its mandate through the King's Office.

appointed on a limited-time, consultancy basis), the UNDP Regional Technical Advisor (RTA), with other technical backstopping from the UNDP CO and the UNDP Regional Service Centre.

Note: This model has not been implemented as envisaged – see Section 4.3 for an explanation

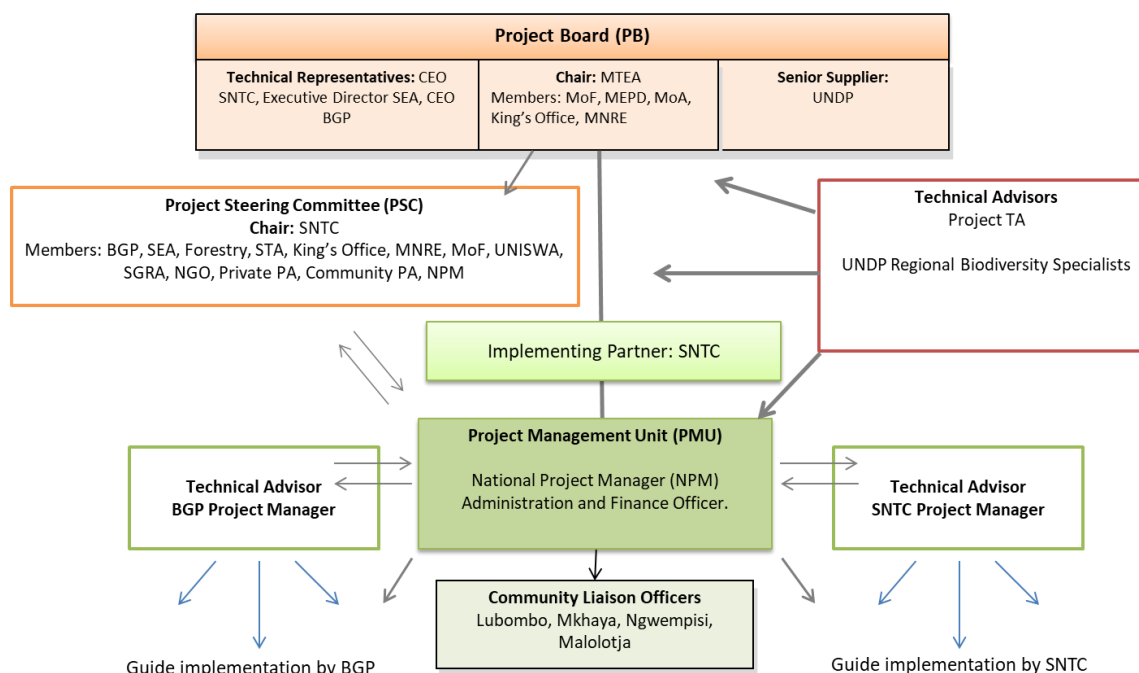


Figure 4: Organisational structure of SNPAS envisaged in Prodoc

3.5. Project timing and milestones

The project document was endorsed by the GEF CEO in July 2014, and the grant agreement was signed in October 2014, with a six-year time frame for implementation (2014 – 2020). Project inception was delayed, with the Inception Workshop taking place in mid-2015, and a full complement of staff in office only by October 2015 – a full year after the grant agreement was signed. A summary of the key milestones in the project cycle is provided in **Table 3**. The MTR was planned to take place at the end of 2017, but was delayed to 2018. Project closure is anticipated in December 2020.

Table 3: Milestones in the SNPAS project cycle

Milestone in the project cycle	Date
Government request to GEF	4 February 2011
PIF approved	10 October 2012
CEO-endorsement of ProDoc	2 July 2014
LPAC meeting	22 August 2014
Delegation of Authority letter	2 October 2014
Grant agreement signed	3 October 2014
Project Inception Workshop	14 June 2015 (planned date: January 2015)
Staff appointments	October 2015
Planned date of MTR	December 2017
Actual date of MTR	April – August 2018
Planned date of TE	1 October 2020
Anticipated project closure	31 December 2020

3.6. Main stakeholders

The key **agencies responsible for implementation/execution** of the project were identified in the Prodoc as: The Ministry of Tourism and Environmental Affairs (MTEA); the Swaziland National Trust Commission (SNTC); and Big Game Parks (BGP). The Prodoc also identifies a comprehensive list of **project stakeholders** in government, the private sector, civil society organisations and rural communities - who play a direct or indirect role in biodiversity conservation and the management of protected (or conservation-worthy) landscapes – and outlines roles for each of these in the implementation of SNPAS (see **Table 4**). *Note: Some of these stakeholders have not been engaged during project implementation, and others – that were not originally envisaged – have been included (See Section 4 for an explanation).*

His Majesty, King Mswati III, is the ultimate custodian of the Kingdom of Eswatini's wildlife and natural resources, and the Kingdom of Eswatini Constitution (Act no.1 of 2005), which is the supreme law of the country, provides that the state will protect and make rational use of its land, mineral and water resources (including its fauna and flora), and shall take appropriate measures to conserve and improve the environment for present and future generations. The King's Office, or its delegated representative(s), is, therefore, a key stakeholder in any programme or project concerned with management, protection or sustainable use of environmental resources. For this reason, the King's Office was identified as a key participant on the Project Board and Project Steering Committee.

Table 4: Key SNPAS stakeholders, as identified in the ProDoc

STAKEHOLDER	Type of institution	ROLES in the SNPAS project (envisaged in the Prodoc)
<i>Primary role-players responsible for implementation/execution of the project</i>		
Ministry of Tourism and Environmental Affairs (MTEA) Signatory to grant agreement	National government ministry	Government signatory to the grant agreement; overall leadership and coordination of implementation; co-finance; day-to-day execution of activities; technical inputs and capacity building; marketing and infrastructure development; facilitating expansion and development of PA system under SNTC Act
Swaziland National Trust Commission (SNTC) Implementing Partner	Public entity under the MTEA	Leadership and coordination of implementation of the project; day-to-day operational execution; co-finance; technical inputs and capacity building; marketing and infrastructure development; facilitating expansion and development of the PA estate the SNTC Act.
Big Game Parks (BGP) Responsible Party	Private trust (mandated by Royal Warrant)	Leadership and coordination of implementation of the project; co-finance; day to day operational execution technical inputs and capacity building; marketing and infrastructure development; facilitating expansion and development of the PA system under the Game Act.
<i>Key partners</i>		
Swaziland Environment Authority (SEA)	Public entity under the MTEA	Executing and implementing project activities; technical support and capacity building; cofinance
Ministry of Natural Resources and Energy (MNRE)	National Government Ministry	Technical inputs and capacity building; facilitating development of PAs.
Ministry of Agriculture (MoA)	National Government Ministry	Technical inputs and capacity building; cofinance; implementing project activities.
University of Swaziland	Academic/research institution	Biodiversity surveys and ecological research; technical consulting and capacity building; implementing project

STAKEHOLDER	Type of institution	ROLES in the SNPAS project (envisaged in the Prodoc)
(UNISWA)		activities; formal training and education.
Lubombo Conservancy (LC)	Civil society organisation	Support for expansion and development of different forms of PAs; Technical consulting and capacity building; executing project activities; co-finance.
Swaziland Game Ranchers Association (SGRA)	Civil society organisation	Support for development and expansion of different forms of PAs; technical consulting and capacity building; executing project activities; facilitating co-ordination and co-operation.
All Out Africa Foundation	Civil society organisation (NPO)	Biodiversity surveys, ecological research and monitoring; technical consulting and capacity building; field training and education; executing project activities
Private Protected Areas	Private landowners (PLOs); conservancies	Support for development and growth of different forms of PAs; executing project activities; technical consulting and capacity building; co-finance.
Communities (Swazi National Land)	Traditional leadership structures; citizens	Support for development and growth of different forms of PAs; technical consulting and capacity building; implementing project activities

4. FINDINGS

4.1. Project Strategy (as per the Prodoc)

4.1.1. Analysis of the Strategic Results Framework

The SNPAS project was designed according to a **logical framework** approach, and did not include an explicit Theory of Change (ToC) – although the description of the project rationale and the GEF alternative to the baseline scenario lays the foundation for an implicit Theory of Change. Logical framework analysis is an objective-orientated approach to project planning in which a clear, systematic pathway is mapped for achieving a development objective. The SNPAS project document adheres to all the principles and requirements of a project designed through a logical framework approach.

Strengths of the design are:

- ↑ The project objective is **well-aligned** with the **global strategic objectives of the GEF and UNDP**, making an important contribution to achievement of the **Sustainable Development Goals** (SDGs 1, 13, 15, 16, 17), the **Aichi Biodiversity Targets** (ABTs 1, 5, 9, 11, 12, 14, 19, 20); and, the UNDP Ecosystems and Biodiversity Strategy priorities under Strategic Programme 2 (See [Annex 7](#) for more detail); and is consistent with meeting Eswatini's commitments under a number of **international multilateral agreements** and conventions to which the country is a signatory (including the CDB, UNFCC, and UNCDD).
- ↑ The project concept, objective, and outcomes are **directly relevant to national development and environmental objectives in Eswatini**, providing an important vehicle for delivery for: (i) the strategic objectives in the *King's Vision 2022* and the *National Development Plan* (NDP) for safeguarding Eswatini's natural assets, stimulating economic growth, developing human capacity and integrating environmental management and development planning; and, (ii) implementing the *National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan* (NBSAP), particularly in relation to eradication and management of invasive alien species.
- ↑ The project's design **builds on** earlier assessments and efforts to identify **protection-worthy areas** for inclusion in an expanded protected area network; consolidate and enhance the

sustainability of **community-managed eco-tourism projects** in protection-worthy areas (e.g. Shewula, Ngwempisi and Mambane); and, shows strong linkages to the developing **Transfrontier Conservation Area** programmes, including: the Malolotja-Songimvelo, Lubombo Conservancy-Goba, Ndumu-Mambane and Jozini-Pongola TFCAs.

- ↑ The project's **results chain** is theoretically sound, and logically coherent, and – if implemented as laid out in the SRF, with all underlying assumptions fulfilled – would present an effective route for delivery of the intended outcomes.
- ↑ The project **objective** is clearly articulated, and links logically to the **three components** under which the project outcomes and outputs are arranged.
- ↑ The Prodoc provides a comprehensive analysis of the environmental, institutional and socio-economic **context** in which the project is to be implemented, and includes a thorough **stakeholder analysis and engagement plan**.
- ↑ **Project activities** that can lead to delivery of the intended outputs and outcomes, have been clearly described, and are well-supported by **information and resource material** that is included in Annexes to the Prodoc (for example, on financial sustainability mechanisms for PAs and alternative Income Generating Activities – IGAs – for rural communities).
- ↑ The project **budget** is accompanied by detailed notes to guide workplanning and operational budgeting (*Note: that these have not been followed is not a flaw of the design*).
- ↑ The **organisational structure and governance arrangements** outlined in the ProDoc (in which implementation of project activities would be incorporated into the operations of the IP and primary RP – and other partners – under guidance of project managers based within these institutions) provides for strong institutional ownership and longer-term sustainability (*Note: that this has not happened during implementation is not a fault of the project design*).
- ↑ **Environmental and social risks** were clearly identified up-front, through application of the Environmental and Social Screening Procedure, and detailed mitigation measures were identified; gender-empowerment issues were built into project design, with gender-disaggregated targets set under the capacity development indicator in Component 3.

Weaknesses of the design are:

- ↓ The **indicator and target framework shows several weaknesses**, including that:
 - (i) Although the indicators and targets are mostly clearly articulated and comply with *some* SMART criteria (i.e. they are specific and measurable, and some are achievable), all are output- or even activity-level indicators – **no OUTCOME or IMPACT-level indicators** are provided (despite the statement to the contrary under paragraph 146 of the Prodoc); this is especially problematic under the project objective.
 - (ii) The **objective-level indicators** are inadequate for measuring results under all three components of the objective: i.e. expansion, development, and management of the protected area system; the capacity-development indicator is especially inappropriate, as it does not measure impact (i.e. a change in capacity-levels for effective PA management), but rather a number of programmes developed (i.e. an output).
 - (iii) The **targets for expansion of the PA estate are unrealistic** and would be difficult (if not impossible) to achieve in the designated timeframe, even if all enabling conditions were

in place. For example – adding four gazetted national parks, and bringing at least 6 new areas under active conservation management **and** having them declared as protected areas is entirely unrealistic, especially considering that the project also sets out to deliver several other outcomes – it takes a long time to bring an area up to full operational capacity as a national park.

- (iv) There are **inconsistencies in the indicators and targets** given in the narrative of the Prodoc (under Section II: Project Strategy), the SRF and the elaboration of indicators provided in Table 11 in the Prodoc. This makes for a highly confusing situation – which targets should be followed?

For example, in the narrative on page 45 of the Prodoc (Paragraph 137), the following targets are set for expansion of the PA estate: 13 gazetted PAs (under SNTC, BGP and Forestry), 5 agreements for the establishment of new informal PAs (giving a total of 18 new protected/conserved areas). However, in the SRF, the targets set are: at least 4 informal PAs gazetted as national parks; at least 6 new PAs gazetted, and at least 3 landscape management structures (e.g. conservancies) established (a total of 13 protected/conserved areas).

- (v) There are **gaps and overlaps in the indicator/target framework**: *For example*, under the objective, there are **no indicators** for measuring improvement in financial sustainability – a clear measure of operational effectiveness; some indicators **conflate multiple issues** (e.g. PA management plans, landscape management plans and landscape management structures are combined under Indicator 3 in Component 2); others are **partially-overlapping** (for example, the production of PA and landscape management plans appears under both Components 1 and 2 – with different targets; and there are different targets for the same indicator (number of capacity building programmes) under both the Objective (3 programmes) and Component 3 (at least 8); some targets also make reference to standards or instruments that are not clearly explained anywhere in the project document, which makes them **vague** and **unmeasurable**.

- (vi) There are **no midterm targets** for any indicators, which makes it hard to assess whether the project is 'on track' to meet the end-of-project targets.

- (vii) The **baselines** for some of the indicators are not accurate. This is not helpful, as it creates the impression that there are no models to build on and that all new programmes have to be developed from scratch.

For example, under Component 2, Indicator 3 includes the number of **landscape management structures** that are in place, and the baseline is recorded as zero. However, there are a number of well-established co-operative structures for landscape-scale management in effect, such as the Lubombo Conservancy – this brings together the management of two national parks (Mlawula – under SNTC, and Hlane – under BGP), private landowners (e.g. Mbuluzi Game Reserve) and community trusts (such as Shewula); the Phophonyane Conservancy in Malalotja Cluster; Community Trusts, and other defined forums such as the Komati and Mbuluzi River Catchment Management Programmes and Fire Management Forums. These provide useful models for establishing integrated landscape management structures, and the project could achieve its objective easily by strengthening these. Similarly, under Component 3, Indicator 3 (No. of tourism programmes), the baseline is given as zero – yet, there are a number of programmes in which prior investment has been made, or that are currently operating (e.g. the trails programmes operating in Ngwempisi) that could be built upon to deliver the project's outcomes.

See **Table 5** for a full analysis of the indicator and target framework.

Table 5: SMART analysis of the Indicator and targets framework

	Indicator	MTR SMART analysis					Baseline and target	Assessment
		S	M	A	R	T		
OBJECTIVE	Ind. 1: Increase in PA system	Y	Y	N	Y	N	Baseline: 3.9 (4.15%) EOP target: Legally gazetted At least 6%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appropriate as an objective-level indicator (i.e. it measures an impact) Target is unrealistic No midterm target set
	Ind. 2: No. of capacity building programmes	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Baseline: 0 EOP target: At least 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> output-level indicator not relevant at objective level as it does not provide a measure of IMPACT
General comments Appropriate objective-level indicators would be: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Increase in number of protected areas brought under effective conservation management, according to OECM or IUCN Green Listing Standards (with time-bound, geographically specific targets set) Improvement in financial sustainability of PAs, as measured by increased Financial Sustainability Scorecard scores Improved PA management effectiveness, as measured by increased METT scores Improved systemic and institutional capacity for PA management and planning, measured using the Capacity Development Scorecard 								
COMPONENT 1: Knowledge platform	Ind. 1: No. of biodiversity field surveys	Y	Y	Y	-	N	Baseline: 0 At least 6 PA and 3 landscape-level biodiversity surveys carried out	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> output-level indicator (i.e. it does not measure a change – or outcome – resulting from biodiversity surveys being carried out) Baseline misleading – other biodiversity surveys have been carried out, some of them in the last five years Wording of target imprecise: should the surveys be carried out in gazetted PAs – i.e. the 6 national parks? What is meant by ‘landscape’?
	Ind. 2: No. of information management systems	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Baseline: 0 EOP: 1 GIS-based knowledge and information system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is an output-level indicator There should be more emphasis on measures that indicate that system is operational and informing planning and management
	Ind. 3: No. of landscape management plans						Baseline: 0 EOP: 4 landscape based management plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is an output-level indicator so is not relevant at outcome level It is repeated under Component 2, Indicator 3 (with a different target) Although the number of plans is specific, the scale at which the plans should be developed is not clear
COMPONENT 2: Expand	Ind. 1: No. of informal PAs established as national PAs						Baseline: 0 EOP: At least 4 PAs gazetted and managed as national parks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relevant as an outcome-level indicator but unrealistic Indicator and target need to be redefined with a more realistic target set
	Ind. No. of new PAs gazetted and operationalized						Baseline 0: EOP: At least 6 new PAs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suitable as an outcome-level indicator but unrealistic Indicator needs to be redefined with a more realistic target (see general comment below) No measure is given for assessing if a PA has been effectively ‘operationalized’ – need two indicators, with different targets Target unrealistic

	Ind. 3: No. of streamlined PA and landscape management structures and standards developed						Baseline: 0 EOP: At least 3 streamlined management structures and management plans implemented based on international standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a compound indicator; should be separated into three. The target includes PA management plans, which are already captured under Component 2, Indicator 3 not clear what measure for implementation of these plans/structures/standards will be used The international standards referred to in the target should be specified (e.g. meeting OECM or IUCN Green Listing Standards) or standards for Conservancies
<p>General comment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For reasons that are explained in the narrative of the Report, it will be necessary to redefine the indicators and targets set for expansion of the protected area system – the focus of the indicators should shift away from gazettelement and towards bringing a minimum number of prioritised sites under active conservation management, or working to get them compliant with the internationally-recognised criteria for ‘Other Effective Conservation Measures’ (IUCN), or the IUCN Green Listing Standard – as appropriate The three issues that are currently combined under Indicator 3 need to be separated out, with emphasis given to measuring the EFFECT of these plans/structures/standards (rather than their number) 								
COMPONENT 3: Strengthened PA functioning	Ind. 1: No. of training programmes developed						At least 8 programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Output-level indicator – need an indicator that can be used to measure the IMPACT of the capacity development programmes (e.g. number of beneficiaries of training/learning exchanges etc) and a measure of improved capacity
	Ind. 2: No. of invasive alien species control programmes						At least 1 sustainable IAPS programme in each PA category	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Output-level indicator – emphasis should not be on number, but coverage and effectiveness No measures of impact No measure of sustainability provided
	Ind.3: No. of conservation infrastructure and equipment programmes						At least 1 conservation infrastructure programme in each PA category	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Output-level indicator Compound indicator – should be disaggregated Not clear what is meant by a ‘programme’
	Ind.4: No. of ecotourism infrastructure, product development or marketing programmes						At least 1 ecotourism infrastructure, product development or marketing programme in each PA category	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Output-level indicator Compound indicator – should be disaggregated Not clear what is meant by a ‘programme’ Measures for sustainability needed (de-emphasise the <i>number</i>)
	Ind. 5: No. of CBNRM programmes developed						At least 4 CBNRM co-ordinators employed and capacitated and at least 2 sustainable CBNRM programmes developed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Output-level indicator Indicator needs to be re-worded to reflect an outcome, with targets that measure IMPACT - e.g. social development indicators such as increased household incomes, reduction in no. of food insecure days etc; no. of people participating in biodiversity-based businesses Target is compound –need separate indicators/measures for the employment and capacitation of CBNRM co-ordinators, and implementation of CBNRM programmes

- ↓ The design is **over-ambitious** in terms of the extent by which it aims to increase the PA estate (i.e. adding 71,973 ha – substantially more than the current gazetted network). The heavy emphasis on *gazettement* of new protected areas (or existing informal ones), as opposed to *strengthening* existing PAs, or bringing land under *active conservation management*, has also presented a challenge. Whilst it might be theoretically possible to gazette a number of new protected areas, this might not equate with bringing the land under active and effective conservation management. The knock-on effect of the emphasis on reaching an over-ambitious target for expansion is that budget and effort are spread rather too thinly across a large number of sites (in a ‘broad and shallow’ approach) – this dilutes the impact that can be made at each site or under each outcome.
- ↓ The project attempts not only to increase the size and effectiveness of the PA network, bringing in a wide range of stakeholders, and generating livelihood opportunities for local communities (an ambitious goal in itself), but attempts to do this through a new approach which is relatively new in Eswatini – the **landscape approach**. This concept is theoretically sound, in keeping with international trends and best practices, and could be applied in Eswatini (even with some adaptation), and using it is not a design flaw. However, the readiness and capacity of local stakeholders to embrace the concept and apply it meaningfully has proved a challenge. It would have been better to trial the implementation of the landscape approach in one landscape cluster (where the enabling conditions are most likely to be met, and where the probability of success is greatest – e.g. Lubombo), and then to focus activities at other sites on strengthening operational effectiveness, developing eco-tourism opportunities or developing alternative Income Generating Activities for local communities linked to conservation of CBNRM.
- ↓ **Some inconsistencies in the wording of Outcomes is apparent** (e.g. the Outcome for Component 2 is different in the narrative – page 45, paragraph 137) and the SRF; and **overlaps in the wording of Outputs** (e.g. between Output 2.2 and 3.2) have led to lack of clarity among the implementation community. Several of the outputs are composites of multiple outputs, and some are worded as outcomes. The outputs are complex – especially under Component 2 and could have been restructured so that they are easier to understand and report against. For example, under Component 2, it might have been better not to structure the Outcomes around the piece of legislation used to gazette the protected areas, but rather around the kind of result: i.e. different outputs for establishment or gazettement of PAs (informal, new); no of PAs brought to operational effectiveness; etc.
- ↓ The success of the project strategy depends on **three key assumptions** being fulfilled, and no alternative pathway is mapped to accommodate a situation in which all three assumptions are not met. Although the project includes a detailed **risks analysis**, this did not anticipate three key risks that have emerged and which have led to stalled progress: (i) the SNTC Amendment Bill has stalled (meaning that a more flexible set of PA categories is not available for the project to implement), and efforts to advocate for its enactment through the project – or even to actively pursue gazettement through existing legislation – have created tensions in the stakeholder community; (ii) Big Game Parks has withdrawn from the project, creating uncertainty, and resulting in a significant loss of capacity for implementation in two landscape clusters; and, (iii) the underlying principle on which the project design is based (the landscape approach), has not been well understood in the SNPAS community, leading to confusion. These issues were not anticipated in project design and effective mitigation strategies have been lacking.
- ↓ The project **Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) plan** is the standard plan that appears in most Prodocs. A weakness of this plan is that it does not specifically incorporate use of the METTs as a key part of the M&E framework.

4.2 Progress to Results

The SNPAS Project (PIMS 4932) has the potential to deliver some important results in advancement of the project objective, but, at midterm the overall progress to results is not what it should be. This is **not** a reflection of the level of commitment and effort invested in the project by the project team and others in the SNPAS community – to the contrary, a large volume of work has been undertaken, but much of it has been peripheral to achievement of the project objective and key outcomes, or has been too piecemeal to make an impact at objective level.

As a preface to the discussion of progress to results, it should be noted that the project has suffered multiple challenges since its inception. These include:

- i) **A delayed start** (although the grant agreement was signed in October 2014, the Inception Workshop took place in June 2015, and the full project team was only assembled by October 2015).
- ii) **High turnover of project staff** (including the National Project Manager, one of the Technical Project Managers, and all of the community liaison officers); significant rotation in UNDP staff who provide project cycle management support (including the DRR, three different Regional Technical Advisors, and a change in the UNDP CO Programme Specialist); changes in senior management of the Implementing Partner (with both a new CEO and Director of Parks appointed during the lifespan of the project); and a change in GEF Operational Focal Point within the Ministry.
- iii) **Withdrawal soon after project inception of the primary Responsible Party, Big Game Parks**, who would have contributed important knowledge, experience and direct capacity for implementing some 40% of project activities (and had also committed significant cofinance) – and indecision over how to deal with this situation.
- iv) **Stalling of the process to amend the SNTC Act**, and issues relating to institutional mandates with regard to gazettment of protected areas (making it difficult to achieve one of the key objective-level targets, and outcome-level targets under Component 2).

Along with other significant factors (such as over-ambitious project targets; gaps in relevant technical capacity and management experience on the project team; diverse and sometimes competing stakeholder interests and expectations; and, several other challenges discussed under Section 4), these setbacks have resulted in slow and inconsistent delivery, uncertainty regarding some aspects of project implementation, and a loss of focus on the core business of the project.

There is a significant mismatch between the project plan outlined in the Prodoc, and the one to which the SNPAS team is working – the latter being a **Project Strategy and M&E Plan** that was developed by the team and adopted by the Steering Committee on 2 August 2016²² (Note: This document was only shared with the MTR evaluators after the first in-country mission). This *Strategy* represents a commendable effort to develop an over-arching plan for delivery of the entire project (and to accommodate some of the perceived obstacles to implementation described above). It includes a SWOT analysis of the four 'landscape clusters', a detailed activity-level set of indicators and targets (with responsibilities and timeframes broadly outlined), a monitoring and reporting plan, and an indicative exit strategy (a 'hand-over' of the project from the PMU to SNTC).

The problem with this *Strategy* is that it **diverges substantively from the GEF-approved project plan**. Although it includes some *elements* from the original project plan, it defines a different set of outcomes and outputs, indicators and targets, without linking these back to the SRF. These are organised under two main Components, one related to community-focussed 'Landscape Cluster

²² The PSC meeting took place on 1 and 2 August at Simunye Country Club and was attended by 9 voting members of the PSC. There is no reference to the *Strategy* in meetings of the Project Board.

Strategies’, and the other to ‘Landowner Engagement Strategies’ (incorporating both SNTC- and privately-managed protected landscapes) – with the Community Landscape Cluster Strategies being the dominant component.

The scale of divergence from the GEF-approved SRF is large enough to trigger the need to register a formal project amendment – something which has never been done. The GEF rules on project amendments²³ define a major change as ‘a change in project design or implementation that has a significant impact on the project’s objectives or scope’ – the 2016 *Strategy* clearly does this. Projects with major amendments need to be **re-endorsed by the GEF CEO**.²⁴ Unfortunately, the project team has been using this *Strategy* to guide its work-planning and project reporting, and the alignment between this and the original project plan is weak. This **has contributed to the project losing focus on its core business.**

It is in this *Strategy* that the development of 20 Chiefdom Development Plans (see Annex 8) appears as a specific output under the heading Good Community Governance, along with many other outputs that are not entirely consistent with the original project plan, and many that are additional to it (these will be referred to under relevant sections of the Report, below). The *Strategy* also introduces some unfortunate misconceptions,²⁵ which have led to weak integration between community-focussed interventions, and those centred on protected areas (whether owned by the state or private landowners). This has shifted the emphasis of the project away from protected area expansion and strengthening, and has diverted much of the time and resources of the project into activities that fall outside of the scope of SNPAS – as conceived in the approved Prodoc.

It is the **task of the MTR to evaluate project performance against the GEF CEO-endorsed project plan**. In the absence of a formal amendment to this plan being endorsed by the GEFSec, **the project plan in the Prodoc is binding**. It is for this reason that, despite the large volume of work that has been undertaken in line with the project’s 2016 *Strategy*, overall project performance is rated as **Moderately Unsatisfactory**.

That said, the **project has notched up some important successes** (especially under Component 1), and has initiated or implemented some good pilots that can, with appropriate adaptive management, lead to delivery of a significant proportion of the intended outcomes – detailed recommendations for a ‘Project Recovery Plan’ are made under Section 5.

4.2.1. How progress was assessed

Progress was assessed by using the prescribed matrix to record indicator-level progress for the objective and outcomes. The full matrix is long and detailed, to enable a more complete understanding of the assigned ratings and the need for corrective action – it will be made available as a stand-alone file. The results of the analysis are presented below under separate sections for the objective and each of the three components (**Tables 6 to 9**). The tables records for each indicator the baseline level, end-of-project (EOP) targets (no midterm targets were specified in the SRF), and

²³ GEF (2017). Guidelines for Project and Programme Cycle Management. GEF/C.52/Info.06, AND, GEF 2006. Rules, Procedures and Objective Criteria for Project Selection, Pipeline Management, Approval of Subprojects, and Cancellation Policy, GEF/C.30/3, December 2006.

²⁴ For full-sized project requiring re-endorsement, the proposed amendment must be circulated for 4 weeks on the GEF web for Council members to review it. If 4 or more Council members oppose the amendment, the project must go back to a Council meeting before going for CEO re-endorsement.

²⁵ Key amongst these are that: the ‘Landscape Cluster Strategies’ focus on Chiefdoms, to the exclusion of land under other forms of tenure (e.g. privately owned land, or state-run national parks). This is inconsistent with the landscape approach, the essence of which is to strive for integrated landscape management that involves a diversity of landowners and users, across administrative boundaries.

results achieved to date, using data sourced from the ProDoc and SRF, scorecards, APRs and PIRs, technical reports, other M&E documents. These results were verified during the missions (or through document analysis) and discrepancies between the results reported in the latest PIR and verified results, have been noted. (In some cases it was not possible to verify reported results due to lack of information)²⁶.

The achievement data was used to determine the ‘**Midterm Level Assessment**’, using a colour-code for ‘achieved or nearly achieved’ (green), ‘could be achieved’ (yellow), and ‘not on target to be achieved’ (red), with brief comments on the need for adaptive management or new approaches to achieve the end-of-project (EOP) targets. An ‘**MTR Achievement Rating**’ has been awarded for the project objective and the indicators under each outcome, using the rating scales described in [Annex 6](#), table 1). A brief explanation is provided to justify the ratings that have been assigned.

4.2.2. Summary of progress achieved at midterm

Project objective

Progress under the project objective is ***Moderately Unsatisfactory*** (meaning that, following the current path, there would be major shortcomings in terms of achieving the objective-level targets).

The objective-level performance indicators in the SRF centre on **PA expansion** (increasing the extent of land under legal protection to at least 6% of Eswatini’s land surface, with attention given to improved ecological representation and more diverse governance models), and **strengthening** (through improved capacity for effective management of protected areas and surrounding landscapes).

No expansion of the protected area estate has been realized as a result of the project’s intervention, though some 6,700 ha of communal land has been earmarked, in principle, for future inclusion. A comprehensive community development training programme has been implemented (the ‘Transformation for Change’ programme, involving 994 people, just under half of whom were women), but a coherent set of capacity development programmes for improved management of the protected areas estate has yet to be developed. Some *ad hoc* PA management-related training has been given to a limited number of beneficiaries.

The Project Implementation Reports (PIRs) create the impression that delivery of targets under Indicator 1 for the project objective (PA expansion) is ‘on track’ or even ‘achieved’, but the MTR could not support this assessment (see **Table 6** and the explanatory notes below) – and some of the other reported achievements could not be verified, or were found to be incorrect.

Table 6: Project Objective – Progress to Results Ratings

Objective: Effectively expand, manage and develop Eswatini’s protected area network			
Overall achievement rating: Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)			
Indicator 1: Legally protected PA system increased			
Baseline:	Current status	MTR Rating	Probability of completion
4.15%			
EOP target:	No change	HU	Unlikely. Change of indicator, targets and
PA system covers at			

²⁶ The progress to results matrix should have been populated with data ahead of the in-country mission, so far as possible, and the project team was asked to assist with filling in parts of the matrix. However, things did not work out this way, and the matrix had to be populated by the evaluators, based on information gathered throughout the missions, and verified wherever possible by checking with the project team (or other relevant stakeholders), or by cross-checking between documents. Collating verifiable information with which to populate the matrix was a challenging and time-consuming task.

least 6%			strategy required.
Indicator 2: Number of capacity building programmes developed for improved PA management			
Baseline: None EOP target: At least 3 PA capacity building programmes	Current status	MTR Rating	Probability of completion
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No formal programmes for improved PA management, but some <i>ad hoc</i> training provided in aspects such as: GIS, law enforcement, SMART patrolling system, development of PA management plans for SNTC, SNPAS-PMU and SGRA beneficiaries – approximately 77 people in total, 47 from SGRA, 30 from SNTC and SNPAS-PMU); one formal training programme for community beneficiaries (Transformation for Change – 994 beneficiaries in 10 Chiefdoms) and other general training (for an additional 508 people) related to Chiefdom Development Planning, fruit tree cultivation and so on – see Notes, below 	MU	Likely, with a new approach (learning-by-doing) and a heavy focus on PA management related issues.

Explanatory notes:

Indicator 1: PA expansion

- The PIRs (and other project reports) have reported this target to be ‘on track’ (60% achievement in 2016, and 100% achievement in 2017), citing that **5 protected areas have been added** to the PA estate during the lifespan of the project. The MTR has revealed that the Gazettement Notice for proclamation of these five PAs (Phophonyane, Lubanye, Lomati, Libhetse and Emantini), is dated 16 February 2015 (four months before project inception took place in June 2015) – and it is evident that the process to secure gazettelement pre-dated the project by a significant margin. Although the gazettelement of these protected areas represents an important expansion of the protected area estate, and provides a good springboard for the project’s PA strengthening activities, the expansion itself *cannot be claimed as an output of the SNPAS project*.
- The 2017 PIR reported that the gazetting process for **new protected areas at Shewula and Luzelweni** has been initiated, with papers submitted to the relevant authorities (by inference, as a result of the efforts of the project). No supporting documentation for this reported result was presented during the MTR, and none has been traced since, so it *could not be verified*.

Indicator 2: PA Capacity Development Programmes

Training for PA management: The training that has been provided is valuable and relevant. But, it cannot yet be considered to represent systematic capacity development for improved PA management, across the spectrum of PA governance models. The number of beneficiaries is also relatively small – especially in comparison to those benefitting from more general training related to Chiefdom Development Planning and other aspects of community governance and development.

To date, relatively small investments have been made in the following training:

- Use of the SMART-patrolling system** - **13** representatives from SNTC (1 x Director of Parks, 2 ecologists, 1 IT officer, 9 park wardens and rangers) were trained at the SA Wildlife College in South Africa
- Law Enforcement Training** (no details known) - **51** beneficiaries (3 from SNTC and 47 from SGRA) were trained by BGP at Mlilwane (organised by SGRA, paid for by SNPAS); beneficiaries were

drawn from the SGRA membership, including informal reserves, conservancy members and a diversity of game and game-livestock farms

- **GIS training** - **13** beneficiaries from the SNPAS-PMU and SNTC (with an additional 3 people – SNTC and SNPAS-PMU – trained in Kenya on use of the GIS-platform)
- **PA management planning** – learning-by-doing as part of the development of PA management plans for SNTC parks (unknown number of beneficiaries in SNTC)
- **Leadership and Self-Development** training provided to **16** SNTC beneficiaries in senior and middle management (relationship to PA management unclear, no details available)

There is no consolidated report (or even individual workshop reports) available on the training that has been carried out, so it is hard to assess their full relevance to delivery of the project outcomes, their realized or potential impact, or whether measures are in place for replication or scaling-up.

Training linked to the Community Development: The project has invested significantly both in time and resources (cash and human capital) in training at the Chiefdom level, on issues related to local governance, CBNRM, development planning, business and financial management, and the project has gone to great lengths to ensure adequate representation of women and youth. The training includes:

- **‘Transformation for Change’** training (**29** separate workshops between 2016 and 2017, reaching **944** beneficiaries – 474 of whom were women – in 10 Chiefdoms) in issues such as the roles of Inner Councils in Development; Roles of the CDC in development; CBNRM; Good Governance; Communication; Group Dynamics and Formation; Meeting Management; Socio-economic Rights and the Human Rights Based Approach to Development; Leadership in Sustainable Development; Gender Equity in Development; Conflict Management; Decision Making; Land Use Plans.
- **General training for Community Trust trustees** (2 workshops, involving **78** beneficiaries – 39 of whom were women – from 10 Chiefdoms) in issues such as the roles of Community Trusts, eco-tourism, business planning, CBNRM, financial management, and including some awareness-raising relating to biodiversity conservation, wetland protection, SNTC programmes.
- **National Chiefs Workshop** (national) on leadership, roles of Chiefs and Chiefdom Development Committees (**46** beneficiaries – targets for women could not be met here, due to prevailing customs).
- Technical training related to **cultivation of fruit trees** (**434** people – 188 of whom were women – in 7 Chiefdoms).

These trainings were facilitated with the participation of numerous partner organisations including: the SNPAS PMU, SNTC, SEA, SWADE, MoA, SEDCO, MTAD, the Lubombo Conservancy, project consultants.

No detailed report on this training is available, so it is hard to assess its full relevance to delivery of the project outcomes. Whilst this training holds **great value** for the recipient communities and agencies, and helps build a solid platform for engaging communities in integrated landscape management and the development of viable biodiversity-based businesses, it does not contribute in any substantive or measurable way to strengthened capacity for protected area management (though awareness of the importance of biodiversity, wise resource management, wetland protection, and the need for protected areas has been raised).

Component 1

Progress under this Component is currently the most advanced, and is rated as ***Satisfactory*** (i.e. the outcome is expected to achieve most of its end-of-project targets, with minor shortcomings) – see **Table 7** - although the **route** to delivery has been fraught with challenges.

Table 7: Component 1: Progress to results ratings

Component 1: Knowledge-based management platform operationalised to address current and emerging threats to PAs and biodiversity conservation			
Overall achievement rating: Satisfactory (S)			
<i>Indicator 1: no. of biodiversity surveys</i>			
Baseline: 0	Current status	MTR Rating	Probability of completion
EOP target: At least 6 PA and 3 landscape-level surveys	Mostly achieved <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9 biodiversity surveys carried out at Chiefdom level at sites that hold potential as new protected areas (with attention to the following sites: <i>Malolotja Cluster</i>: Bulembu, Makhonjwa (Mvembili), Ekuvenjelweni, <i>Ngwempisi Cluster</i>: Luzelweni, Velezizweni, Sigcineni ; <i>Lubombo Cluster</i>: Shewula, Jilobi, Mambane) 1 biodiversity survey carried out at one informal PA - Dombeya Private Nature Reserve (by landowner, under catalytic funding for PLOs) Marxan/Cluz complementarity analysis in three landscapes (Malolotja, Ngwempisi and Lubombo), to identify top priority sites for inclusion in PA system New vegetation map and landcover maps for Eswatini produced; boundaries for 32 Chiefdoms mapped 	S	Highly Likely
<i>Indicator 2: No. of information systems at regional and national level</i>			
Baseline: None	EOP target Current status	MTR Rating	Probability of completion
EOP target: 1 GIS-based information management system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GIS-based portal for biodiversity and ecosystem data has been developed, user manuals developed, and some training has been provided to selected stakeholders (however, portal cannot be activated as admin rights have not yet been transferred – this situation remained unresolved at the time of the MTR) GIS lab in SNTC equipped Map digitiser purchased for the Ministry of Agriculture 	S	Possible, but hosting and administration rights must be transferred to SNTC
<i>Indicator 3: No. of landscape-based management plans</i>			
Baseline: 0	Current status	MTR rating	Probability of completion
EOP target: 4 landscape-based management plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 PA management plans developed for SNTC-managed national parks (awaiting validation) – Malolotja, Mantenga and Mlawula (also reported under Component 2) No integrated landscape management plans have been produced (although notional land-use maps have been produced for 5 Chiefdoms – with a further 4 in process, as part of CDPs; a planning study has been undertaken in Ngwempisi and boundaries of 32 Chiefdoms have been mapped) 	MS	Possible, but with significant adaptive management

Explanatory notes:

Much of the work under this Component has been carried out through consultancies, both international and local. Whilst the management of these contracts has been problematical (with two contracts being terminated, and one international consultant withdrawing from a third contract),

and have incurred significant expense, the project has delivered some important ‘legacy’ products and information, including:

- A comprehensive Biodiversity Survey Report including high-quality data and a rapid systematic complementarity assessment of the landscape clusters.
- A new vegetation and landcover map for Eswatini.
- Maps of Chiefdom boundaries (also identifying areas where boundary disputes occur)
- An updated and improved biodiversity data base and GIS-based portal for serving data (with an equipped GIS laboratory established in SNTC).
- An updated and consolidated Socio-Economic Study of the four landscape clusters with recommendations for future action.
- A Legal Analysis and Guidelines for future drafting of nature conservation legislation.
- Management Plans (awaiting validation) for three SNTC-managed national parks.
- A PA Financial Sustainability Report and Strategy.

(Of these, only the Biodiversity Survey Report, the Socio-Economic Study Report, the Financial Sustainability Report, and the GIS-based portal were viewed by the MTR evaluators).

Indicator 1: Surveys

Biodiversity surveys: The project has invested significant resources and effort in undertaking detailed biodiversity surveys at selected sites (all on Swazi Nation Land) in three of the target landscapes. This involved international and local consultants, and numerous community biodiversity enumerators. Some of the biodiversity surveys repeated work which had been completed as recently as 2013 through the Eco-Business Planning carried out under the Eco-Lubombo Programme – and this seems like an unnecessary duplication of effort. The management of the consultancy contracts was problematical, requiring much more time than the ToRs (and budget) provided for, and the International Consultant ultimately withdrew from the consultancy due to internal tensions. That said, the biodiversity data collected is comprehensive and in many cases has generated new knowledge, and the process through which it was collected engaged community representatives gainfully (local biodiversity enumerators were paid), and helped provide in-service capacity development in respect of improved biodiversity knowledge. The biodiversity survey work has made an important contribution to strengthening the baseline of information available for planning PA expansion and guiding management, and has had the added benefit of engaging stakeholders and raising general awareness of the rich biodiversity assets in Eswatini. It is critical that all of the data is uploaded to the GIS-based portal, and that the prioritisation of community sites be used to guide project activities.

Financial Sustainability Assessment: The project commissioned the development of a Financial Sustainability Strategy through a consultancy. The first consultant’s contract was terminated after some time, due to poor delivery. A second consultant has produced a comprehensive and thoroughly researched report, dated 8 November 2017 (reviewed during the MTR), which is *one of the most valuable specialist reports* to come out of the SNPAS project. This Report presents contextual information and practical recommendations under the following categories: Protected Area Management Plans, Business Plans and Financial Plans; Community Based Natural Resource Management and the Landscape Approach; the Value of Protected Areas, Ecosystem Services and the Biodiversity Economy; the Tourism Economy; Eco-Tourism and CBNRM Opportunities; Game Ranching Options; Other Income-Generating Activities ; the establishment of a Conservation Trust Fund for Eswatini; Approaches to Protected Area Financial Sustainability (including use of the Financial Sustainability Scorecard for M&E, and an Implementation Strategy). The Report includes a detailed analysis of the concepts and models on which a sustainable financing strategy for Eswatini’s PA system can be based, and reviews experiences and lessons learned from across southern Africa,

as the basis for specific recommendations relating to the intended outputs, outcomes and impact of the SNPAS project. This document should be used to guide the programme of work carried out under Component 3.

Indicator 2: GIS-based platform

The GIS-based data portal will provide a powerful platform for sharing and serving a wide range of conservation-related data. However, for its potential to be realized – or for it to be of use at all – it is essential that the administration and hosting rights (which are still vested in the Kenya-based consultant who developed the portal) are transferred fully to the GIS Manager in SNTC.

Indicator 3: Landscape management plans

PA Management Plans: Three PA management plans for SNTC PAs have been developed through a consultancy, adopting a learning-by-doing approach – these management plans will comply with international standards for best practice, and include zonation plans, PA management planning guidelines, performance targets, monitoring measures and templates to assist with the development of management plans in other proclaimed PAs in the country.

Landscape Plans:

- A **Landscape planning and land-use consultancy** was commissioned, but the quality of the outputs was weak and did not give enough attention to biodiversity conservation – the contract was ultimately terminated, after several time extensions that came at significant extra cost, were granted. The boundaries of 32 chiefdoms have been mapped, and land-use plans have been developed (and validated) for these Chiefdoms – however, these land-use maps were not included in the documentation made available to the MTR evaluators.
- **Chiefdom Development Plans (CDPs):** The project has poured a significant amount of time, effort and resource into leading the development, writing and launching of Chiefdom Development Plans (See [Annex 8](#) for a description of Chiefdom Development Planning). In its *2016 Strategy*, the project set itself a target of delivering 20 CDPs, of which five have been launched and another four are in the pipeline – a high achievement. CDPs have been presented in PIRs and other project reports as delivering on the project outcomes under the indicator on ‘landscape-based management plans’ and, viewed on its own, the production of these CDPs has been a notable achievement.

Whilst CDPs are important community development planning instruments, and may represent an important first step in contributing to the development of broader landscape-based management plans, they do not, **themselves** represent integrated landscape management plans of the type SNPAS should be delivering - and cannot be regarded as meeting the targets under this indicator. The decision to engage with communities through the CDP process has been appropriate and strategic, but this should have been with the purpose of **mainstreaming** the project objectives, promoting an awareness of biodiversity conservation, and identifying conservation-related community-based projects. Instead the project has taken on the responsibility for leading (and funding) the development, writing and launching of these plans, and this has become one of the primary activities to which the PMU gives its time (with 7 staff members dedicated to this process).

Component 2

Delivery under this component is the weakest at present (See **Table 8**), for a variety of reasons – some of which have been outside of the control of the project (e.g. issues relating to legislation and mandates and unrealistic targets), and others of which relate to the diversion of energies into the

Chiefdom Development Planning process as an end in itself, rather than as a stepping stone to delivering the project outcomes. The main outputs that have been delivered under this outcome are the draft management plans for the three SNTC-managed national parks. Progress is rated as **Unsatisfactory**, because most of the targets for the outcome will not be delivered if the current approach is maintained. (With significant adaptive management, a much more positive outcome is possible – see Section 5 for Recommendations).

Table 8: Component 2: Progress to Results Ratings

Component 2: Expansion of the PA system through operationalising the landscape approach			
Overall achievement rating: Unsatisfactory (U)			
<i>Indicator 1: No. of informal PAs established as national parks</i>			
Baseline: 0 EOP target: At least 4 informal PAs gazetted and managed as national parks	Current status	MTR Rating	Probability of completion
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No informal PAs gazetted and managed as national parks 	HU	Unlikely
<i>Indicator 2: No. of new PAs gazetted and operationalised</i>			
Baseline: None EOP target: At least 6 new PAs are established, gazetted and managed for biodiversity conservation	Current status	MTR Rating	Probability of completion
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No new PAs established, gazetted or managed for biodiversity conservation (though areas have been identified for future establishment as nature reserves) 	U	Unlikely, though a new approach could yield positive results
<i>Indicator 3: No. of streamlined PA and landscape management structures and standards developed</i>			
Baseline: 0 EOP target: At least 3 streamlined landscape plans, structures and management plans implemented	Current status	MTR rating	Probability of completion
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 PA management plans developed for SNTC-managed national parks (awaiting validation) – Malolotja, Mantenga and Mlawula (also reported under Component 2) No integrated landscape management plans have been produced (although notional land-use maps have been produced for 31 Chiefdoms a Landscape Programme study has been undertaken in Ngwempisi and boundaries of 32 Chiefdoms have been mapped) 	MS	Possible, with a change of approach and significant adaptive management

Explanatory notes:

Indicator 1:

Expansion of the PA estate:

- In the PIRs, this target is reported as being 'on track' (60% achievement in 2016), or 'achieved' (100% in 2017) – with the gazettment of Phophonyane, Lubuyane, Emantini and Libhetse presented as evidence in support of this. The MTR found, however, that the gazettment notice for these PAs as nature reserves (not national parks) was published in February 2015, before the project inception workshop had even taken place, and that the process leading to gazettment

was initiated by the landowners some years before the project was developed, and was not supported through investment (or technical support) from SNPAS.

Strengthening conservation management in new PAs: Although SNPAS has not succeeded in securing the gazettement of any new national parks, the project has made some investments in improving conservation management (or operational effectiveness) in four privately-owned nature reserves that were gazetted in February 2015, and this contribution is recognized by the MTR as progress under Indicator 1. The project has made financial contributions towards fencing of Phophonyane, Emantini, Lubuyane and Libhetse Nature Reserves. Landowners have made substantial parallel investments in this fencing, but this could not be quantified during the MTR as the project is not tracking this (but should do so in future, as support of this type should be provided as matching grants).

Indicator 2:

Establishment of new PAs:

- In the 2017 PIR, it is reported that progress towards this target is 'on track', due to the **gazettement** of Lomati Nature Reserve (privately owned). However, the MTR found that the Lomati Nature Reserve was gazetted in February 2015 (at the same time as Phophonyane, etc) and support from the SNPAS project did not form part of this process.
- The 2017 PIR (and other internal reports) report that gazettement papers have been prepared and submitted for **new nature reserves at Luzelweni and Shewula**. It was also not possible to verify this during the MTR as no supporting documentation was presented during the missions, and no records could be traced upon further investigation.
- An internal project report (undated, and submitted to the MTR consultants after the first mission) reports that PA '**feasibility studies**' were undertaken for establishing nature reserves at Shewula, Jilobi and Ngwempisi), but this is not reported in any PIRs and no feasibility studies were presented for review during the MTR, so this result also could not be verified. It is not clear if these studies have been undertaken through the project or as part of the baseline studies done for the PPG, or some other process.
- In the **Chieftdom Development Plans** (CDPs), a number of protection-worthy areas (accounting for a collective 6,701 ha of land) have been identified by communities as those that can be set aside for nature conservation – in project M&E documents these sites are reported as new 'protected areas' or 'conservancies' although they are not under any form of active conservation management. Securing the willingness of traditional leaders and community members to establish nature reserves is an important achievement. But, it is over-ambitious to report that the protected area estate has been expanded – the 'nature conservation areas' demarcated on the land-use maps in the CDPS are still 'notional' and there is a lot of work to be done before they are secured for conservation or brought under **active conservation management** (which would be the aim of the project). What this means is that the enormous amount of time, money and effort that has been poured into developing, writing, printing and launching the CDPS contributes minimally to delivery under this Indicator – i.e. the return on investment for the project is relatively small (though not without importance).
- The PIRs (2016 and 2017) report that a **legal and policy support consultant** has developed **agreement forms** to be used in preparing for gazettement, and that forms have been filled in for four PAs (no names provided) and submitted to the Principal Secretary. These results **could not be verified** during the MTR as no documentation was presented for review, and follow-up investigations provided no further clarity. (No details on this process were made available during the MTR, and no outputs from the consultancy were included in the document pack).

Indicator 3:

There is no common understanding in the SNPAS community of the difference between: PA management plans vs landscape management plans (or even the scale at which 'landscape' should be applied); land-use maps vs land-use plans; streamlined landscape programmes and streamlined landscape management structures; or conservancies and protected areas. No clear definitions of these are provided in the Prodoc, and the terms are used loosely and interchangeably in the project reports and workplans. This has resulted in some confusion in the reporting under this outcome.

- As reported in the 2017 PIR, three **PA management plans** (which are consistent with international standards) have been developed for the 3 SNTC reserves - this represents an important advance in facilitating greater PA management effectiveness. The plans will provide good models for the development of management plans in other PAs in future, to bring the standard of management in the PA network up to a consistent standard. Only the Inception Report for this consultancy was shared during the MTR, not the management plans themselves, but it is understood that the plans have been completed and await validation.
- A **Landscape Planning Assessment consultancy** was commissioned by the project, but, after a number of lengthy (and costly) extensions, the contract was ultimately terminated due to poor delivery (none of the outputs of the consultancy – which apparently include 31 Chieftdom land-use plans, were presented before or during the MTR). The 2017 PIR reports that a Landscape Planning Assessment consultant has been hired, but no outputs of this consultancy were presented as part of the MTR Document Pack, and it is not known what the current status of the consultancy is. (Subsequently, it has been discovered that a Landscape *Programmes* consultancy was commissioned, and that this has produced a report on a landscape programme for the Ngwempisi Cluster – see the discussion below).
- **Landscape Management Programmes:** A consultant was contracted to develop Landscape Management Programmes, and a report has been prepared for Ngwempisi (though this report was not supplied to the MTR evaluators, and had to be sourced independently). This Report provides a useful overview of the landscape and CBNRM processes in Eswatini in general and Ngwempisi in particular; outlines some useful landscape programming principles; summarises the land degradation issues in Ngwempisi; and includes some broad activities to be undertaken to address the problem, it is written as if it is a Landscape Management Plan *strategy* rather than a plan meant for on the ground implementation. Some of the listed actions are too generalized and some targets are unrealistic and will be hard to measure. However, this Report could feed in usefully to development of an integrated Landscape Management Programme for this cluster, especially if SLM, CBNRM, conservation and eco-tourism issues are dealt with in an integrated manner (and if land that is under private management is also included).
- The project has successfully helped put in place **local-scale community management structures** at specific locations, such as the Wetland Management Committees at Ntondozi and Malanti. Currently, no '**streamlined landscape management structures**' have been put in place at landscape scale – these would be institutional mechanisms for co-ordinated planning and management (following international standards), in landscapes that incorporate both formal and informal protected areas, other protection-worthy land, and land under other types of land-use and different forms of land tenure.

Component 3

Delivery under this Component is ***Moderately Satisfactory***, as, under the current approach, some end-of-project targets may be achieved, but with significant shortcomings (See **Table 9**). A lot of *effort* has been expended under this Component, and some good pilots have been implemented (e.g. introduction of the SMART patrolling system and equipment in SNTC-managed national parks, invasive alien clearing activities, support to private land owners for improved conservation

management, wetland protection). It is a pity that no report on the introduction of the SMART patrolling system – and other surveillance-enhancing systems – has been written up, although reports are available for the wetland fencing and IAPS clearing). The approach under this Component has been unstructured, with little linkage between different kinds of activity. Some of the work programme is led by requests from stakeholders, and other aspects have misdirected (resulting in wasted time, effort and resources, and disappointments for stakeholders). The community eco-tourism infrastructure projects are a dominant part of the work programme, but progress has been limited to date. A more strategic, planned and focussed approach could significantly improve delivery, and restructuring of the workplan and the budget will be necessary.

Table 9: Component 3: Progress to Results Ratings

Component 3: Strengthening PA functioning through improved conservation management and operational support			
Overall achievement rating: Moderately Satisfactory (MS)			
<i>Indicator 1: Number of training programmes developed</i>			
Baseline: 0	Current status	MTR Rating	Probability of completion
EOP target: At least 8 PA management capacity building programmes	<p>Currently, no systematic capacity-building programmes have been developed or implemented</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ad hoc training has been provided in GIS, SMART-patrolling, Law enforcement, and PA management planning, for a total of 77 beneficiaries – 47 from the SGRA and the balance from SNTC and the SNPAS PMU – see Notes) A large number of training workshops have been facilitated for some 1,500 beneficiaries (largely linked to the CDP process) 	MS	Possible, with a more strategic approach that leverages institutional partnerships and promotes learning-by-doing
<i>Indicator 2: Number of invasive alien species control programmes</i>			
Baseline: None	Current status	MTR Rating	Probability of completion
EOP target: At least 1 sustainable control programme in each PA management category	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One IAPS clearing pilot has been carried out at Mlawula Nature Reserve (collectively 600 ha cleared) Bush-clearing and IAPS clearing undertaken at a number of sites in 4 private reserves, Mantenga Nature Reserve and Luzelweni Chiefdom – exact nature and extent unknown 	MS	Possible, with a more strategic and focussed approach; current efforts cannot be regarded as sustainable
<i>Indicator 3: No. of conservation infrastructure or equipment programmes</i>			
Baseline: 0	Current status	MTR rating	Probability of completion
EOP target: At least 1 programme per PA management category	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Catalytic grants of E400,000 each have been used for investments in conservation infrastructure and equipment on five privately-owned nature reserves (not gazetted) according to individual needs – properties include Mbuluzi (Lubombo Cluster), Rosecraft Wild Horizons (Ngwempisi Cluster), Mhlatuze Wilds, Mhlosinga and Dombeya (the last three not in any of the targeted clusters- see explanation for details) Fencing of 19 wetlands (not in PAs, but scattered across 8 Chiefdoms), covering 150 ha of wetlands (with community wetland management committees 	MS	Possible, with a more strategic approach

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> established in some cases Fencing in Mlawula (15 kms) and Malolotja (87 kms) - not yet started, but fencing bought Road rehabilitation in Malolotja (2 kms completed) SMART patrolling system (and equipment) introduced in three SNTC national parks 		
Indicator 4: No. of ecotourism infrastructure, product development or marketing programmes			
Baseline: 0 EOP target: At least 1 programme per PA management category	Current status	MTR Rating	Probability of completion
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tourism infrastructure upgraded at communally-managed Shewula Mountain Camp (through the programme of work implemented by COSPE) Rehabilitation of traditional beehives homestead at SNTC HQ/Museum building Various eco-lodge development projects initiated in Chiefdoms (but put on hold to enable due diligence in terms of financial and business planning and completion of EIAs) Water pipe upgraded at the communally-managed Mhlumeni Bush Camp (Lubombo Cluster) Campsite upgraded at Mbuluzi Game Reserve (as part of catalytic funding programme) <p>Technical and financial support provided for the Magadzavane-Mlawula Challenge walk</p>	MS	Moderately likely, with a more strategic and focussed approach, following the recommendations in the Financial Sustainability Strategy
Indicator 5: No. of CBNRM programmes			
Baseline: 0 EOP target: at least 4 CBNRM coordinators appointed and 2 sustainable CBNRM programmes developed	Current status	MTR Rating	Probability of completion
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CLOs appointed (originally 4, now 2) Fruit trees (peach, mango, litchi) have been distributed to some 900 households in 7 Chiefdoms in the Ngwempisi, Malolotja and Mkhaya West Clusters Women's groups have been formed (with a view to sustainable harvesting of wetland resources – no details available) 	MU	Possible, with significant adaptive management

Explanatory notes

Indicator 1: Training

Detail has been discussed under the Objective, Indicator 2.

The 2016 and 2017 PIRs report that a Consultant has been contracted to develop capacity building programmes and manuals. Instead of appointing a consultant, the Project TA and the PSC have recommended that a structured 'learning-by' doing approach be taken, leveraging institutional partnerships both within Eswatini and neighbouring countries to build appropriate capacity. Section 5 includes specific recommendations in this regard.

Indicator 2: Invasive alien species clearing programmes

The project undertaken de-bushing and clearing of Invasive Alien Plant Species (IAPS) at a limited number of sites in SNTC-managed national parks, privately-owned nature reserves and some sites on SNL land. The 2017 PIR reports this target to be 'On track' (at about 60% delivery) as 'sustainable' IAPS clearing projects are ongoing at Mlawula, Phophonyane Nature Reserve and Luzelweni. Of these, only the pilot at Mlawula could be verified; the IAPS clearing being carried out at

Phophonyane has had neither financial nor technical support from SNPAS. The clearing activities at Luzelweni were not inspected (and nor was any detailed information provided on this activity), although it is understood that some eucalyptus trees have been removed to make way for fruit orchards. No co-ordinated, overall report on all SNPAS-supported IAPS-clearing has been written – although the IAPS clearing pilot at Mlawula has been well documented. Through the seed funding programme for private landowners, clearing activities have been undertaken at Rosecraft, Dombeya, Mbuluzi and Mhlatuze Wilds reserves (all informal). These activities are captured in a separate activity report (for the PLO seed funding programme, but are not consolidated with other IAPS-clearing results elsewhere, making it difficult to assess the full extent and likely impact of these programmes. (The clearing activities at Dombeya and Mbuluzi were inspected during the MTR). It was also established during the MTR that some clearing of invasive aliens has been initiated at both Malalotja and Mantenga National Parks.

The well-documented pilot at Mlawula holds good potential to feed into a scaled-up, systematic IAPS clearing/de-bushing programme in the Lubombo Cluster. But, the sustainability of this activity – and the clearing that has taken place on the PLO sites – is currently unlikely, as, without consolidation, follow-up, and IAPS-clearing on adjacent properties, re-infestation is highly likely. Although the on-site, local impacts of the de-bushing/clearing operations have been impressive, with a visible improvement in environmental status, the landscape-scale and temporal impact of these operations is likely to be low. Clearing has taken place at numerous small and geographically widely-separated sites, with relatively low amounts of resources made available for the work, and no obvious follow-up plan in place. A much more strategic, co-ordinated and systematic IAPS-clearing programme is needed, with more resources made available for this critical activity – biological invasions represent one of the biggest single threats to the integrity of the protected area network in Eswatini and the importance of IAPS-clearing in the SNPAS work programme and budget needs to be escalated – with links to integrated capacity development programmes (See Recommendations) and beneficiation programmes (such as the production of cattle fodder from *Dichrostachys*) as small-business opportunities for surrounding communities (under Output 3.5).

Indicator 3: Conservation infrastructure and equipment programmes

The project is making important investments in conservation infrastructure and equipment in a diversity of state-run, private and communal protected areas and conservation-worthy landscapes. However, the approach to other infrastructure and equipment development is rather piecemeal and demand-led (with various proponents making proposals according to their needs) – whilst all of these may be legitimate, and each recipient has clearly benefitted from the investments, there is no apparent overall plan guiding the infrastructure development investments and no consolidated report in which they are summarized or described (covering all PA management categories – a report is available on the investments that have been made on privately-owned land). This is a pity, as some important achievements (e.g. the introduction of the SMART-patrolling system and associated surveillance equipment such as night-vision binoculars, camera-traps and so on), does not feature obviously in any reports. It is, therefore, difficult to develop a full picture of the extent of these investments or to make an accurate assessment of their likely impact and sustainability. The current spread of activities also does not form a coherent or structured *programme* of investment in conservation infrastructure and equipment, and, the overall improvement in management effectiveness will be variable, and, in some cases, limited.

Investments have been made as follows:

- **Catalytic (seed) funding provided to PLOS:** through a formal call for proposals, five private landowners were allocated lump sums (E400,000/\$30,000 each) for investment in conservation equipment and infrastructure (in addition to IAPS clearing and de-bushing, which is reflected under Component 2, above), as follows:

- **Rosecraft Wild Horizons:** game fencing, rehabilitation of access road
- **Dombeya:** fire-fighting equipment, game capture equipment, purchase of game (4 giraffes), conducting a biodiversity survey
- **Mbuluzi :** purchase of bush-clearing equipment, upgrades to campsite and ranger satellite camp
- **Mhlatuze Wilds:** rehabilitation of dongas
- **Mhlosinga:** Game fencing
- **Fencing of SNTC-run parks:** fencing has been purchased for both Mlawula (15 kms) and Malolotja (87 kms) Reserves (to close critical gaps in their perimeter fences) – status not known
- **Road upgrades** are being carried out at Malolotja, but to date only 2kms of a badly-eroded 20km road have been upgraded
- **Wetland fencing programme:** In 8 Chiefdoms (6 in Ngwempisi, 1 in Malolotja and 1 in Lubombo), 17 wetlands (with a collective extent of 150 ha) have been fenced to protect them; these are not necessarily located in the designated ‘conservation areas’, but are scattered throughout the relevant landscapes. In some cases only a proportion of the total number of wetlands in the area has been fenced. The Wetland Fencing operations provided short-term work opportunities for community members, and through the process awareness of the ecological importance of wetlands and the need for their conservation has been raised. In each of the targeted communities, wetland management committees have been established. This activity has been well-documented in a consolidated report on Wetland Fencing. There is great scope for consolidating the wetland fencing programme, and linking it to the development of sustainable harvesting quotas of wetland species used for medicines or for production of sleeping mats, crafts etc, and to develop small business opportunities – especially for women. This is the type of CBNRM project that SNPAS should be facilitating under Output 3.5.
- **SMART patrolling system and surveillance equipment:** SMART gadgets, and surveillance equipment was supplied to SNTC parks, and rangers were trained in use of the system.

Indicator 4: Ecotourism infrastructure, product development and marketing

It has been difficult to form a comprehensive picture of the achievements under this indicator, as no comprehensive report on tourism infrastructure and product development has been prepared by the project – activities are reported in a number of separate documents. The approach under this outcome has also been rather diffuse, unstrategic, and demand-led, with various project partners submitting proposals for funding. Whilst all of these may have merit, it is not possible for SNPAS to fund every eco-tourism related initiative that project partners wish to see implemented in the country, and the result is piecemeal investment in a number of scattered initiatives whose viability and sustainability might be low. .

Some progress has been made, as follows:

- **Shewula Mountain Camp** (communal), Lubombo Cluster: upgrades to ablution facilities, kitchen, chalets, housing for gas bottles, pathways, facilities at viewpoints and purchase of furniture and camp fencing (upgrades still incomplete) – work carried out by NGO service provider, COSPE, working in association with Lubombo Conservancy
- **Mhlumeni Camp** (communal), Lubombo Cluster: camp fencing, installation of a water line
- **Mbuluzi Game Reserve** (private), Lubombo Cluster: upgrade of campsite (kitchen and ablution facilities) – under catalytic seed funding to private landowners
- **Other eco-lodge developments** (Ngwempisi: Khelekhele, Khopo, Ntfungula, Mvembili, Mahamba, Mambane): contracts have been issued by the Swaziland Tourism Agency (through their partner Microprojects) to construction companies to erect facilities at sites in Ngwempisi cluster, and Mahamba. However, planning, coordination and due diligence in respect of these development has been problematical and the Chairperson of the Project Board has placed these

developments on hold until appropriate feasibility studies, EIAs, financial and business plans have been developed – this only after construction had already been commenced. The institutional arrangements for managing this area of work are complex and confusing (see Page 53 for a detailed explanation) both in terms of delivery and financial management. This has led to some wasteful and fruitless expenditure, and disappointments in stakeholder communities.

- **Upgrades to the traditional homestead at the SNTC Head Offices in Lobamba:** No details were available to describe the extent of these upgrades, nor how it delivers on the project outcomes, or how it was prioritised over other possible tourism infrastructure upgrades in the national parks – though an increase in tourism is cited in one project report as an intended impact.

The recommendations in the PA Financial Sustainability Report should guide this programme of work closely in future, within the limits enabled by the remaining budget, and in the context of the re-focussed approach of the project, post-MTR.

Indicator 5: Community Based Natural Resource Management

Appointment of CBNRM officers: The project document made provision for appointment of four community liaison officers (CLOs), who were to be drawn from local communities in the target landscapes, and based in these landscapes. Their primary role would be to help identify and nurture CBNRM projects linked to PAs and improved management of natural landscapes. Originally, four CLOs were appointed, but all left the project and had to be replaced. Two new CLOS have been appointed, but they are based in Lobamba and have a spread of duties, including assistance with roll-out of CBNRM activities, Chiefdom Development Planning and other activities.

The fruit tree project: In an effort to implement CBNRM projects that can improve livelihoods of communities in the target landscapes, and relieve pressures on biodiversity, SNPAS has implemented a fruit tree project, in which fruit tree saplings (peach, litchi and mango) have been distributed to some 900 households in 7 Chiefdoms. Technical training in the establishment of orchards has been provided.

The objectives of the project are stated as: ensuring fruit farming effectiveness and efficiency as well as strengthening fruit commercialisation, for sustainability. The project has been executed in a systematic manner, with involvement of numerous partners (e.g. SEDCO, MoA, NAMBoard), and has generally been well-received in the beneficiary communities. Whilst this project is consistent with outcomes and outputs defined in the project's own *2016 Strategy*, its alignment with the community livelihood outcomes anticipated in the Prodoc is not strong – it is not clear how the introduction of the fruit trees will relieve pressures on biodiversity in any measurable way (though this is implied in the detailed Fruit Tree Project Report that has been prepared by the project team), and its relationship to improving landscape management in areas around PAs by engaging communities in conservation-related business opportunities is unclear. Regardless of its alignment, the likelihood of it making any measurable difference to household incomes, or food security, in the lifespan of SNPAS is extremely low, as the trees are still saplings and will unlikely generate and significant harvest over the next few years.

Had SNPAS been an agricultural development project, the selection of fruit-growing as an IGA would have made sense. But, for a project focussed on strengthening protected areas and promoting biodiversity-compatible land uses and integrated landscape management with benefits for local communities, there are more obvious choices of CBNRM activity – some of these are outlined in the *Financial Sustainability Report* and other documents that are available to the project on biodiversity-compatible IGAs. E.g. bee-keeping; producing winter fodder from sickle bush (a de-bushing beneficiation project); crafts (linked to a sustainable wetland management programme), and so on.

The fruit tree project is another example of an activity which has its own merits, and that has absorbed time, effort and resource, but bears little direct relation to achieving the outcomes of SNPAS.

4.3. Adaptive Management and Implementation

It is acknowledged that this project has probably faced more than its fair share of challenges (see Section 4.2, Progress to Results), and that this has impacted on implementation. The requirement for adaptive management has been high, but this has been exercised with limited success. Overall, the rating given for adaptive management and implementation is **Moderately Unsatisfactory**, as implementation of several components is not leading to efficient and effective implementation and adaptive management, and most require significant remedial action. This represents one of the key barriers to the project achieving its intended outcomes, but, it must be noted that a much more ***positive outcome will be possible*** if the recommended corrective measures are put in place as a matter of urgency.

On the positive side:

- ↑ there is a high level of commitment from the MTEA, SNTC, UNDP CO, the PMU, and key project partners to steer the project to a successful conclusion
- ↑ the project has made a notable contribution to bringing stakeholders together who have not previously worked collaboratively
- ↑ several measures have been put in place to provide support to the project team, including: having a highly experienced Technical Advisor on board; appointment of a dedicated Project Management Support Consultant (in the run-up to the MTR); and a higher-than-usual level of supervisory support from the UNDP CO.
- ↑ the SNPAS team and partners proactively convened a Strategic Planning Workshop at the end of 2017 to assess the current state of progress, re-assess priorities, develop a clear Theory of Change and make recommendations for a re-focused set of strategic interventions that should enhance delivery, post-MTR.

On the other hand:

- ↓ the adaptive management measures put in place have not always been the most appropriate, due to the divergence between the outcomes, outputs, indicators and targets in the Prodoc and the *2016 Project Strategy*
- ↓ the project team is long on commitment, enthusiasm and effort, but short on appropriate technical capacity and managerial experience (for a protected area expansion and strengthening project of this size and complexity)
- ↓ the advice of those who have been paid to provide support and guidance to the project has often not been followed – several recommendations made repeatedly by both the Technical Advisor and the Project Management Support consultant are echoed again in this MTR (although the evaluators have formulated these recommendations independently)
- ↓ delivery rate is slow, and with just under half of the project budget spent at midterm, the project has yet to deliver its key objective-level outcomes
- ↓ the response times for putting adaptive measures in place is slow – for example, BGP withdrew from the project in November 2015, but this situation has not yet been dealt with decisively, leading to uncertainty and lack of direction
- ↓ many aspects of the implementation arrangements are not working effectively or efficiently and are in need of significant remedial action (e.g. management and governance arrangements, budgeting and financial administration, communications, and aspects of M&E)

Specific issues are described in more detail below.

4.3.1. Management and implementation arrangements:

The MTR team had a difficult task working out what the current project management, implementation and governance arrangements are, as these have diverged significantly from what stands in the Project Document. The changes do not appear to be documented anywhere – or it was difficult to track down any documents in which these are recorded. Careful review of the LPAC (Local Project Appraisal Committee) meeting Minutes, the DoA (Delegation of Authority) letter (issued by the UNDP-GEF Executive Director to inform the UNDP CO of the grant being approved by the GEF-CEO), the Letter of Agreement (LoA) between the UNDP and the Implementing Partner, the Inception Workshop Report, and all Project Board and Project Steering Committee Minutes, provided no real clarity on the situation either.

Implementation Modality and Arrangements: According to the Prodoc and the Delegation of Authority Letter (Dated 2 October 2014), this project is implemented under National Implementation Modality. However, the UNDP CO seems to have managed the project in its early stages as if it were under Direct Implementation Modality (DIM), and is still performing a number of direct execution duties – UNDP appoints all of the project staff directly under UNDP service agreements, issues all contracts to consultants, and performs a significant volume of direct procurement (e.g. of goods and materials).

The UNDP Internal Control Framework²⁷ requires that in projects under NIM, there is a clear and appropriate separation between project oversight²⁸ (the usual role of UNDP) and direct project execution (which is the role of the Implementing Partner), and UNDP may not unilaterally make a decision to provide direct project services in a NIM project. In exceptional circumstances (which must be considered and approved by the GEFSec), the IP may formally request UNDP to provide direct execution duties, and this should be clearly reflected at project concept stage (i.e. in the PIF), or before or at CEO endorsement²⁹. In the case of SNPAS, direct project services (and their costs) were not specified in the PIF or the Prodoc. The Letter of Agreement (LoA) between UNDP and SNTC does not specify any direct project services (or their costs), and no evidence can be found of such a request being made – or approved – after the Prodoc was endorsed. Whilst it is not unusual for UNDP to provide HR or procurement support to projects (especially where this can lead to more efficient delivery), the fact that the UNDP CO continues to perform direct project services raises a number of issues: (i) Direct Project Costs are being recovered from the project by UNDP, without the necessary agreements for this being in place; (ii) there is a lack of clear separation of implementation and execution functions, and segregation of duties between UNDP CO and the SNTC – this makes it hard to track decision-making and determine lines of reporting and accountability, especially with respect to financial management; (iii) it is difficult to make a fair assessment of the performance of either the UNDP CO and the Implementing Partner, or to hold the IP fully to account for the course the project has taken, especially with respect to financial management; (iv) the institutional identity and reporting lines of the Project Management Unit become muddled, which compromises institutional ownership by the IP and confuses the project staff and the stakeholders.

Execution duties must be migrated as fully as possible to SNTC in the second half of the project, with the SNTC CEO empowered to take more responsibility and have more direct supervision over the PMU.

²⁷ GEF (2012) Minimum Fiduciary Standards: Separation of Implementation and Executin Functions in GEF Partner Agencies. GEF/C.41/06/Rev.01

²⁸ For a list of project cycle support functions, see GEF (2017)

²⁹ If direct project services are requested and approved by the GEFSec after CEO-endorsement, these must be captured in a Letter of Agreement, which specifies the nature and extent of the requested services, and their costs.

Responsible Party: Big Game Parks was named in the Prodoc as the primary Responsible Party for implementation of SNPAS activities in the Mkhaya West and Ngwempisi Clusters. A representative from BGP attended the early Project Board and PSC meetings, but, by June 2015 BGP had registered reservations about their participation in the project (for a variety of reasons), and, by November 2015, a formal letter of withdrawal was submitted by BGP to the Chairperson of the Project Board. This withdrawal, and its implications, has been discussed at numerous Project Board and Project Steering Committee meetings, correspondence has been passed between the relevant parties, and a number of meetings have been convened in efforts to resolve the underlying issues. BGP's withdrawal represents an unfortunate loss for the project for several reasons: (i) the considerable protected area knowledge, experience and capacity they would have contributed; (ii) BGP own, and manage three of the country's national parks – which should also be beneficiaries of the project under Component 3, and are significant agents of change in the conservation sector (given their mandate from the King's Office); and (iii) BGP had committed parallel funding (co-finance) to the project. The PMU has been driving implementation in Ngwempisi Cluster and has also initiated some activities in Mkhaya West, but, no sustainable adaptive strategy had been put in place to accommodate the loss of the Responsible Party.

Project Governance: The project governance arrangements envisaged in the Prodoc include a Project Board and Project Steering Committee, as is usual in UNDP-supported projects.

The Project Board is responsible for, *inter alia*, providing overall guidelines and operational procedures for the project, taking management or governance decisions, reviewing and monitoring workplans and progress against targets, addressing any relevant project issues raised by the National Project Manager or the Project Steering Committee and providing guidance on corrective actions and management measures that may be necessary to address emergent risks. The Board is chaired by the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Tourism and Environmental Affairs and draws members from the King's Office, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Economic Planning and Development, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Energy, the Swaziland Environment Authority (the GEF Operation Focal Point), and UNDP (Senior Supplier), with secretariat functions performed by the National Project Manager. The SNTC CEO also serves on the Board in a technical capacity. (It was originally envisaged that the BGP CEO would also participate).

The Project Steering Committee was intended as the technical arm of the Project Board, with its primary role being to provide the technical guidance needed to ensure realisation of the project's objective, outcomes and outputs. The PSC is chaired by the SNTC CEO, and draws its members from some 15 government ministries and other state or parastatal institutions, civil society organisations, private individuals (landowners), and representatives of community trusts. The detailed Terms of Reference for the PSC includes other functions, such as providing support for procurement of professional service providers (e.g. reviewing draft terms of reference), ensuring that work-planning is technically sound, facilitating co-ordination of implementation activities across institutions, and negotiation solutions to any problems encountered with stakeholders and partners.

On the face of it, the PB and PSC seem to be operating as intended. Both committees meet regularly (the PB has met nine times during the lifespan of the project and the Project Steering Committee has met 24 times) to review workplans, budgets and reports; provide oversight and guidance, and take decisions as required. Meeting Minutes are kept (although their *quality* is variable) and are readily accessible for inspection.

However, the MTR has revealed that the functioning of the PB and PSC is not proceeding as smoothly as it should. Some of the key issues include:

- ***The segregation of roles and duties between the PB and PSC has become blurred***, and lines of communication, reporting, responsibility and accountability are not always clear (or are not

clearly understood by all members) – this leads to miscommunications, misunderstanding, duplication and redundancy of efforts, and some considerable frustration among members. During the MTR it has emerged that at least some of the members are not familiar with the detailed Terms of Reference for these two committees.³⁰

- ***The PSC has assumed a much more active management role***, exercising authority over decisions relating to procurement and budgeting, and executing sign-off on deliverables and reports (produced by the project team and service providers), whereas what it should be doing is making *recommendations* to the Board. Whilst there may be some advantages to a close oversight role being played by the PSC, this introduces too many layers of decision-making, and the overall effect has been that decision-making and sign-off is often greatly delayed, producing inefficiencies that impact negatively on delivery rate of the project.

The reasons for this include that: (i) the PSC has a large number of members, and it is difficult to form a quorum, so sign-off cannot be granted at a particular meeting, and decision-making has to be deferred to the next meeting (documents are also not circulated for sign-off by round-robin). This sometimes has serious consequences, such as causing delays in submission of requests for release of funds at the start of each year; (ii) decision-making on the PSC is by consensus – something which is not always possible to achieve given that there is a diverse spectrum of perspectives and interests on the PSC.

Other knock-on effects of the PSC playing an active management role are that: PSC members who are direct beneficiaries of the project are also taking decisions regarding budgets and expenditure (introducing the potential for conflicts of interest to emerge); and, the ability of the PB to discharge its roles fully is sometimes compromised, as decisions are not always communicated to the Board Chairperson.

- ***Lack of follow-through (or slow response-times)***: Inspection of the PB and PSC minutes shows that follow-through on actionable items, or issues raised, is often slow – this results in inefficient decision-making, uncertainty and delayed delivery, and some issues (some of them of critical importance) go unresolved for long periods. In other cases, there seems to be no follow-up on items raised in the Minutes (i.e. not all matters actioned at one meeting are reflected under ‘Matters Arising’ in the next meeting).

For example:

- (i) In the PSC Minutes, the issue of setting up an MoU between SNPAS/SNTC and the Lubombo Conservancy was first noted in Item 10 of Minute 5 (October 2015), and has been raised in several other Minutes subsequently. At the time of the MTR, this issue had still not been resolved.
- (ii) In the PB Minutes, the issue of the withdrawal of BGP as a Responsible Party was first noted in Minute 3 (23 October 2015), and in almost every Minute subsequently. Resolutions get taken, and courses of action are plotted, and yet this issue (or its implications) has never been satisfactorily resolved.
- (iii) In PB Minute 2 (June 25 2015), the Board called for the development of a Communication Strategy for the project – yet no such strategy has ever been developed.

Whilst the reasons for this might be multiple, and accountability for action might lie with several people or institutions, it is the role of the PMU – which also serves as Secretariat for the PB and PSC – to ensure that: (a) Actionable items are recorded precisely in the Minutes, noting WHO is responsible for action, WHAT they should do, with what expected result, and by WHEN; (b) The NPM should proactively track progress with regard to these items, checking up with responsible

³⁰ Locating the detailed TORs for these committees proved challenging during the MTR.

parties between meetings and - in consultation with the PB or PSC Chairpersons, or other relevant authorities – put in place appropriate measures to ensure that action is being taken. If this is already happening, then the PB/PSC Chairpersons need to investigate what other reasons may account for slow response times, and put appropriate corrective measures in place.

- ***Distribution and quality of documentation presented at meetings:*** It was noted by some stakeholders that supporting documents for meetings are not always distributed timeously ahead of the meeting, and that this seems to be becoming a more regular occurrence. This means that members are unable to give reports their proper attention before going into the meeting. Sometimes this results in meetings being unable to reach decisions or, results in decisions being made without adequate information or briefing.
- ***Rules and procedures not always well understood:*** It is evident that the PB and PSC have sometimes taken financial decisions without full knowledge of applicable UNDP-GEF rules³¹ (e.g. the maximum allowable variance on expenditure on any budget line, without requiring higher approval). The attendance records for PB meetings show that a representative of UNDP has not always been present (probably due to rotation of staff), and UNDP also did not participate in the SteerCo until recently. It is the role of UNDP to ensure that all UNDP-GEF rules and procedures are applied correctly, and that that all PB and PSC members – or anyone taking management or governance decisions – be fully informed of all relevant UNDP-GEF rules and procedures. This is especially important when there has been high turnover of staff (project, UNDP, IP). A better knowledge of the rules, and full familiarity with the contents of the Project Document, would enable more informed decision-making and more appropriate and timeous adaptive management.
- ***Non-quorate meetings:*** It was noted by some PSC members that they do not always manage to attend meetings, for a variety of reasons. This is not something peculiar to SNPAS – in small countries it is usual for a limited number of over-stretched officials to represent their departments on multiple committees, and for commitments on the national calendar to take precedence. For the non-government representatives, whose participation is voluntary, it might not always be possible to attend meetings because of their paid work or business commitments – this might apply particularly when meetings are arranged at short notice, or when participants are frustrated by an apparent lack of positive outcomes from the meeting. What this means is that the National Project Manager needs to play an active role in stronger, proactive engagement to encourage more effective participation and networking, and the PMU needs to ensure that meetings are organised with fair notice, and that all necessary documentation is circulated well ahead of time to enable maximum productivity.

Technical Support: The PMU has little experience in protected area governance, expansion or management, and is not well-networked in the conservation sector (locally, regionally or globally). Most of the PMU staff have prior experience, and obvious skill and knowledge and well-established networks, in agriculture-related fields, or community development. This means that the PMU lacks the frame of reference needed to guide the choice of adaptive management strategies.

In its design, the project provided for strong technical support to the team at several levels:

³¹ UNDP Financial Rules and Regulations (Reg. no. 16.05) state that, although the administration of project resources should be carried out in terms of the financial rules, practices and procedures of the appointed Implementing Partner, this is only to the extent that they do not contravene any of the rules of principles of the Financial Regulations of the UNDP. Where there is a divergence, the rules of the UNDP shall apply.

- (i) The PSC was intended as the technical advisory arm of the Project Board. This would be populated with key technical experts from agencies involved in fields such as protected area management, landscape planning, CBNRM, and eco-tourism.
- (ii) The two Technical Project Managers (one BGP, one SNTC) were intended to be technical experts in PA planning and operational management.
- (iii) The project has had the services of a highly experienced international Technical Advisor – Dr Peter Smith. It is difficult for Dr Smith to play a more hands-on role, as he is based in Australia and is on a limited-days contract. Despite this, he has provided extensive and comprehensive written inputs (including formal reports, comments on individual documents, and a trove of several hundred emails) and has undertaken four in-country missions to Eswatini. However, his advice has often not been followed.
- (iv) The project has hired the services of another technical expert, Prof Brain Huntley, in two capacities – (a) to undertake a financial sustainability and business-planning study, and, (b) to serve as a dedicated project management support consultant for three months in the run-up to the MTR. Several of his recommendations also seem to have gone unheard.

Project Management Unit:

In the ProDoc, the composition of the PMU includes two ‘core staff’ (a *National Project Manager*, assisted by a *Finance/Administrative Officer*), working with support of four *Community Liaison Officers* (CLOs). This PMU was meant to receive technical guidance from two *Technical Project Managers*, one appointed within SNTC, and the other within the RP (BGP).

The *key responsibility of the PMU*, which would be hosted by SNTC, would be day-to-day oversight and co-ordination of project activities being implemented by the IP (SNTC), RP (BGP) and any other service providers contracted by government to deliver on the project outputs. The NPM would report through the SNTC CEO (who is also the Chairperson of the PSC) to the Chairperson of the PB, working in close consultation with the assigned Programme Specialist in the UNDP CO. The NPM’s key roles would be to oversee and co-ordinate the production of project outputs (as per the Prodoc), liaise with all stakeholders to build partnerships and ensure smooth delivery, provide administrative and technical backstopping to facilitate work carried out by partners and consultants, take lead responsibility for project M&E and reporting (including financial plans and reports), and document lessons learnt. The two technical ‘project managers’ would provide technical guidance to the NPM and to the two institutions primarily responsible for implementing SNPAS-related activities – they would report directly to the conservation managers within their respective institutions, and to the NPM. The CLOs would be sourced from communities within the priority landscape clusters and physically located within these to promote the development of CBNRM programmes under Component 3 of the project. (See **Figure 5**)

A strong feature of this model is that it provides for strong institutional ownership and integration of the project activities and outputs into the operational plans of the institutions leading implementation. The CLOs would also be more immediately accessible to the communities they serve, which would foster stronger project ownership at grass-roots level.

It is unfortunate that these arrangements have not been implemented.

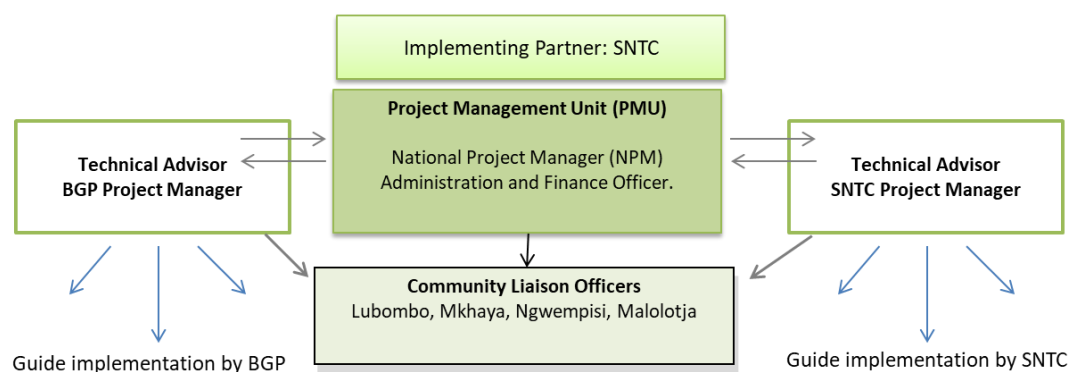


Figure 5: Proposed composition of the Project Management Unit (Prodoc)

The PMU that is in operation now is staffed by 12 people (See Figure 6), all of whom draw their salaries directly through the project, and are physically located within the PMU situated at the SNTC precinct in Lobamba. Seven of the staff (the NPM, the Finance/Admin Officer, the project driver, two project managers and two CLOs) are appointed directly by UNDP on UNDP Service Contracts (appointed on one-year contracts, renewable on performance). The five CDP Officers (who are billed as ‘interns’, though they draw a monthly salary and have been with the project continuously for 18 months) are appointed via the SNTC.

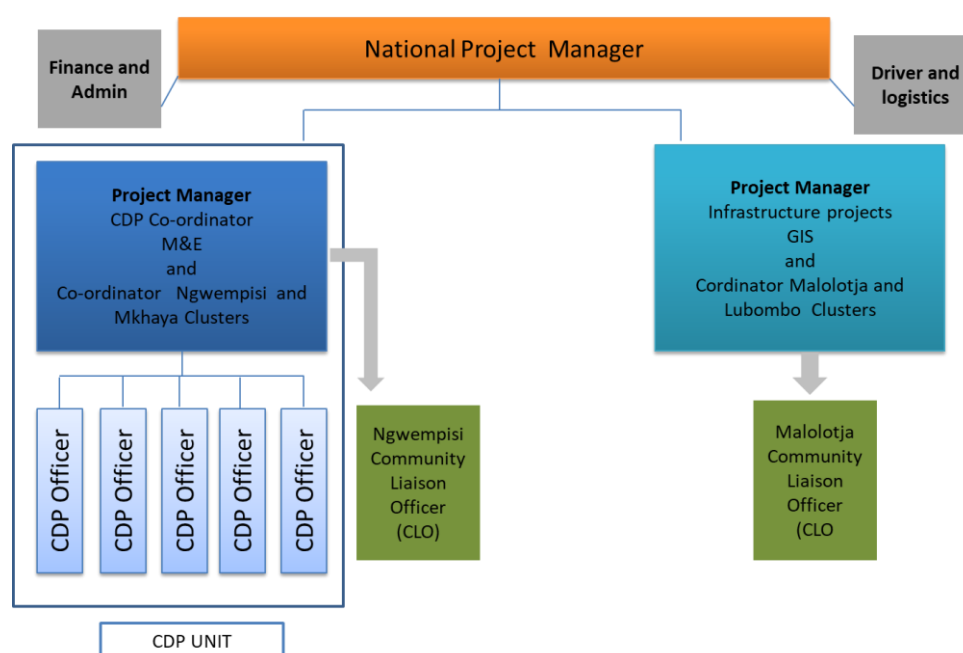


Figure 6: Current staff complement of the Project Management Unit

The staffing structure includes a distinct CDP Unit (involving one of the Project Managers, five CDP Officers - interns, some of the time of the two CLOs, and the NPM). The advertised Terms of Reference for the positions of NPM and the two Project Managers are more-or-less consistent with those in the Prodoc. In practice, it is difficult to establish exactly how roles are distributed among the three management positions in the PMU, but it is evident that these are not consistent with the advertised ToRs. One of the Project Managers is responsible for M&E, co-ordination of activities in two of the landscape clusters, and production of CDPs. The second Project Manager oversees

activities in the Malalotja landscape cluster, and is responsible for managing infrastructure-related projects and GIS-related activities. The CLOs, who are managed directly by the two Project Managers under overall guidance of the National Project Manager, have a diversity of functions, including the production of CDPs, and the CDP Officers are dedicated to the CDP function.

The evolution of this organisational structure has been driven at least in part by the programme of work outlined in the *2016 Project Strategy*, which set out to deliver at least 20 Chiefdom Development Plans (a tall order, even if this was the only output of the project), and a wide range of other community development programmes – all of which have high community engagement requirements. The *Strategy* also includes an outcome on employment of youth, with a target of 100 by project end, and the 12 full-time staff of the PMU are counted as contributing to this target in project reports. However, there is no provision for such a large PMU in the Prodoc (or need for it), and this growth should not have been approved – not only are the resource demands too high, but the development of CDPs is not the mandate of the project's Implementing Partner, under which the PMU should sit (this falls under the Ministry of Tinkhundla Administration and Development).

It is understood that when BGP withdrew from the project, it was decided to appoint both project managers in the PMU – this is unfortunate, as the second Project Manager position could have been appointed in another Responsible Party, once one had been identified (for example, in Lubombo Cluster). The evolution of a CDP Unit within the PMU has arisen due to the misplaced emphasis on leading the development of CDPs (which carries a high workload).

Institutional identity of the PMU: The institutional identity of the PMU lies with UNDP, even though it is physically located within the SNTC precinct, next door to the SNTC head office. With the exception of the CDP officers, all of the PMU are employees of UNDP. Although the PMU members often introduce themselves to stakeholders as representing SNTC, many stakeholders – including some within SNTC – identify them as representing UNDP – which is understandable, given that the staff email signatures all bear the UNDP logo, and show no affiliation to SNTC. This confused institutional identity has knock-on effects, some relating to building institutional ownership of the SNPAS project within SNTC, and others relating to lines of decision-making and accountability. There is insufficient clarity about line management functions, and several stakeholders stated during interviews that they were confused as to who is leading the project (UNDP or SNTC).

Management/implementation approach: Part of the explanation for the growth of the PMU might be that the PMU is carrying out a significant proportion of the project activities at ground level³², instead of this being led mostly by the relevant SNTC staff, or other institutions working as responsible parties or service providers. Some activities are certainly 'outsourced' via MoUs, contracts, letters of agreement and calls for proposals to individuals, consultants or companies.

Management systems: The processes for managing work executed by consultants, service providers and project partners are extremely complex, involving long and convoluted lines of 'command' and reporting, and many different parties operating at multiple levels, under a multiplicity of MoUs, contracts, Letters of Agreement and other arrangements. There is no structured (or documented) framework in place that shows how the work of all the different parties fits together to contribute to delivery of the outputs and outcome, and weak alignment between work being carried out under SNPAS, and related programmes of work in the same landscapes, carried out by SNTC, SEA or other conservation-related programmes (e.g. Eco-Lubombo Programme, the transfrontier conservation initiatives, eco-tourism or ecological research and monitoring programmes being carried out by NGOs and private entities).

³² Given that leading the development of CDPs carries a high workload, involving intensive community engagement, and that the PMU was planning to develop at least 20 CDPs, it might have seemed logical to appoint a team of people to deliver on this goal.

Contract management: SNPAS has faced many challenges relating to management of consultancy contracts, with several requiring extension, and some resulting in termination. In some cases this has been due to poor delivery, and in others because of miscommunications, interpersonal issues and a reactive style of management. Some of the key issues include: (i) ToRs are often unrealistic (i.e. the volume of work required is not possible in the amount of time set, or the required work has not been accurately costed out) – this results in delays in delivery, and additional costs being incurred; (ii) there are changes in requirements after contracts have been activated, or some contracts lapse (without complete delivery), due to other problems with planning or cashflow; (iii) there are many different agencies responsible for issuing and monitoring the contracts and lines of reporting and responsibility are not always clear. For example, consultants are mostly contracted directly by UNDP (working from ToRs developed by the project); COSPE and some private landowners are contracted by the project through SNTC; many other contractors (e.g. for fencing, roadworks, building etc) are contracted for individual pieces of work at specific sites (e.g. road works in Malolotja, electrical installations at Khelekhele, eco-lodge construction at five different sites) – some are contracted by STA and others by SNPAS.

This complexity brings with it a high administrative burden and increases the number of points at which things can go wrong – especially as there is no overarching framework that shows how all the different contractual services interface with one another, or with work that is being implemented directly by the SNPAS PMU. This hampers effective work planning, implementation and coordination.

Although some of the contracts and MoUs refer to joint workplans, the Annexes in which these are meant to be located are mostly empty, and the explanation given is that everyone is working from the SNPAS annual and quarterly workplans, which do not include specific tasks or milestones for delivery. Add to this the requirement for the PSC and the PB to sign off on all ToRs, reports and deliverables, and the often-slow disbursement of funds, and this makes for a situation that is fraught with inefficiencies and duplications, difficult to handle, and prone to misunderstandings – with severe consequences for project delivery, and negative impacts on stakeholder relations.

Some examples are given below, to highlight some of the problem areas.

Example 1³³: Contractual arrangements for construction of community eco-lodges

The project has as one of its outputs, the development of eco-tourism infrastructure, product development and marketing programmes in protected areas under different forms of governance (SNTC, private, community). The implementation arrangements for the construction of these lodges requires coordination among at least nine different entities: SNTC, the SNPAS PMU, STA, Microprojects, a Construction Supervisor (consultant), the Contractor, SEA (environmental due diligence), and the SNPAS business-planning consultant.

SNTC/SNPAS has delegated responsibility to STA, as a project partner, for appointing service providers and managing these projects, under a standing MoU between the SNTC and STA. In partnership with Microprojects (another parastatal agency), STA ran a procurement process (in which the SNPAS PMU participated) to appoint contractors to upgrade existing eco-tourism lodges in Ngwempisi cluster at Khelekhele and Khopo³⁴, and to develop a new facility at Ntfungula Mountain (Luzelweni Chiefdom) and Mahamba Gorge (not in any of the target landscape clusters). STA issued the contracts, to be implemented under technical management by Microprojects, with

³³ Note: the chain of events described in this example was not reflected clearly in the project reports available to the evaluators. It has been reconstructed based on information obtained through interviews and review of contracts and other documents, with information verified through triangulation.

³⁴ These had been built previously, under STA leadership with funds from the EU, but needed upgrading.

SNPAS/SNTC responsible for paying the contractors directly for delivery of services. The contracts include no details of the scope of work to be carried out, building plans, milestones for delivery, or any other details – though these are presumably captured elsewhere. Whilst the SNPAS Infrastructure Project Manager is playing an oversight role, it was deemed necessary to also appoint a ‘Construction Supervisor’ (also on the SNPAS account), although it is not clear how their role interfaces with that of either the STA/Microprojects contract supervisors or the SNPAS Project Manager.

Unfortunately, the contractor started work before a proper feasibility study, business plan or EIA was carried out. To complicate matters further, the project had, in parallel, commissioned the development of financial sustainability and business plans for these sites, but the contractors were appointed and commenced their work before these plans could be submitted. As a result of the confusion, and the lack of due diligence, the Chairperson of the SNPAS Board placed these projects on halt. This has resulted in the contractor (whose contract has since lapsed) being compromised) and the community is confused and dissatisfied. Clearly, this kind of situation does not lead to timeous and efficient delivery of project outputs and a more streamlined set of arrangements, which must be monitored by the PMU, will be necessary to avoid these kinds of problems in future.

Example 2: Catalytic seed funding to private land owners who manage informal nature reserves

In an effort to catalyse PA strengthening activities on nature reserves managed by private landowners, the project advertised a call for proposals in the local press. Applicants were invited to submit formal proposals as part of a competitive process to receive a lump sum of money for investment in conservation management infrastructure/equipment and programmes, in line with the SNPAS outputs under Components 2 and 3 (e.g. fencing, game-capture and fire management equipment, IAPS clearing, and so on).

Whilst a formal, well-documented and transparent process for distributing funds to beneficiaries is necessary, and it is understood that a formal bid process was chosen to speed up disbursement, a *competitive* process in which some landowners ‘win’ and some ‘lose’ is not consistent with achieving the objectives of the project. Other problems with this approach include the following: (i) The system introduced yet another layer of contracts and agreements between SNTC and the successful applicants that had to be set up and monitored; (ii) The application process was onerous (not many landowners have prior experience of developing formal proposals) and off-putting – made worse by changes in formats that were introduced along the way; (iii) although the call for proposals included a set of criteria, some of these were vague, making it difficult for the applicants to know what was required (e.g. applications were meant to be ‘exemplary’ and ‘demonstrate best practice’ – without any explanation of what this *means*); and (iv) reporting requirements placed an unnecessarily heavy administrative burden on the beneficiaries (for example – it was expected by the PMU that individual employment contracts should be issued for all labourers involved in implementation activities, and that progress should be reported using the logframe format used by the project); and (v) the terms of the award are not being applied as advertised, creating uncertainty and compromising delivery – for example, the Call for Proposals states that awards will be made for a period of up to two years, yet, grants seem to have been made on a once-off basis, for a period of less than a year.

All of the activities supported through this process have merit and have generated obvious local-scale benefits for those nature reserves involved. However, the nature of the process is such that the investments have been spread thinly across a wide geographic area, so that impact at landscape scale is diluted, and the contribution to strengthening the PA network within the prioritised landscapes is sometimes marginal.

Example 3: Engagement of COSPE to implement activities in the Lubombo Cluster

The Lubombo Conservancy (an established association between three protected areas – Mlawula (SNTC), Mbuluzi (private), Hlane Royal National Park (BGP) and the Shewula and Mhlumeni informal nature reserves (under community trusts), expressed early interest in being directly involved in the implementation of SNPAS-related activities in the Lubombo Cluster. The Lubombo Conservancy had previous involvement in the CEPF-funded Eco-Lubombo Programme, which developed and implemented an approach called Eco-Business Planning for advancing the goals of both conservation and community development – it is through this process that the Mhlumeni community became positively engaged in conservation, and through which the Mhlumeni Bush Camp was established.

It was decided that the Lubombo Conservancy must sign an MOU in order to be involved in implementation, but this process has run into many obstacles, and slow progress has been made (for reasons that could not be established by the MTR). The Lubombo Conservancy had an existing working relationship with COSPE, an international NGO which has had a long presence in the Lubombo region (including involvement in the Eco-Business Planning project), and which had the administrative capacity to receive and manage funds, and technical capacity to carry out some of the work. A Letter of Agreement was signed between SNTC and COSPE to implement SNPAS-activities in the Shewula and Mhlumeni communities.

Several problems were encountered: i) the programme of work was meant to start in June and end in December 2017, but funds were only transferred in September, causing significant delays and placing COSPE under unreasonable time pressure to deliver the agreed outputs; (ii) there is no clarity regarding the programme of work, milestones for delivery and agreed allocation of budget, as the Annexes to the LoA in which these should appear are empty; (iii) the SNPAS PMU was also active in the same areas as COSPE, but details of the implementation arrangements were not well documented and there was no common understanding regarding points of interface of work programmes; (iv) lines of communication and accountability were complex and confusing for the community beneficiaries, leading to misunderstandings, confusion and frustration, and creating a difficult working environment for COSPE; and (v) the terms and provisions of the LoA were not well understood by the monitoring team from the PMU, and the report they compiled included some unsubstantiated conclusions regarding a perceived misuse of funds³⁵ (which was incorrect).

These issues highlight the need for a more streamlined, unambiguous and supportive approach to contract/partnership management.

4.3.2. Financial performance and realization of co-finance

The MTR assessment of financial performance and management is based on an analysis of the following documents:

- Quarterly and annual budgets and financial reports for the period 2015 – 2018 (up to Q2)
- The Combined Delivery Reports generated by ATLAS for the years 2105 – 2017
- The external Auditor's Reports for 2015 – 2017 (including the project's assets registers)

³⁵The SNTC-COSPE agreement makes clear provision (in Clause 3) for COSPE to manage the finances allocated to it in accordance with its own institutional financial rules and regulations, and (in Clause 5) for COSPE to hire subcontractors (NGOs and/or consultants) to carry out aspect of the agreed work programme; The PMU monitoring team reported, however, that COSPE had breached financial protocols of the UNDP-GEF (though the procedures followed had been in keeping with their own internal regulations, as specified in the LoA), and that they had not been entitled to use funds to hire consultants, and may have to reimburse monies spent – which is incorrect.

- A consolidated Excel spreadsheet, summarising budget allocations and expenses, reflected against the original project budget (from the Prodoc), and indicating the amount the project has left to spend
- Four *Letters of Cofinance* (appended to the GEF-endorsed Prodoc)

Following analysis of the documents, extensive follow-ups were made with relevant parties. To ensure that assessment presented below is correct in terms of UNDP-GEF financial control rules and best practices, the following senior advisors were consulted: the UNDP Senior Advisor for Project Cycle Management (who is based in the Regional Service Centre in Addis Ababa); the project's current Regional Technical Advisor; and the UNDP Principal Advisor for Ecosystems and Biodiversity (who is based at UNDP headquarters in New York). It is important to note that a full set of financial documents was only available after the second in-country mission, so no interim conclusions relating to financial performance were presented at the wrap-up meeting.

Analysis of financial performance

The project exercises due diligence with respect to financial planning and reporting insofar that annual and quarterly budgets and financial reports are prepared and submitted for review by the PSC and PB. The external Auditor (who is the Auditor-General of the Government of Eswatini) has issued an unqualified audit report each year, although in both 2015 and 2016 specific items of concern (rated as moderate risks) were noted, as follows:

- In 2015 there were significant variances in the expenditures reflected in internal project documents, FACE forms and the Combined Delivery Reports (CDRs), pointing to the need for closer guidance and supervision.
- In 2016, there was a large payment which had not been provided for in the budget to a single company (Esibayeni Lodge), raising the risk of misappropriation of funds. The Auditor instructed that Board approval should be sought in future for all single payments exceeding E250,000 to make sure that all expenditure falls within budget.

Despite the clean audits, a careful analysis of the project's financial documents showed that budgeting and financial administration needs corrective action, and that budget and expenditure needs to be re-aligned with delivery as stipulated in the Prodoc. It has proved difficult to perform a meaningful and accurate analysis of expenditure against budget, or to calculate a disbursement rate, or even assess the efficiency with which resources are being used to generate the intended outputs and outcomes, for reasons explained below:

Consolidated expenditure figures (see **Table 10**) were only available to the end of 2017, at which time total project expenditure amounted to \$2,600,396 (according to project internal records) or \$2,644,033 (according to audited Combined Delivery Reports). This represents about 48.24% of the total GEF grant (\$5,390,000), which is an acceptable level of expenditure at midterm. Expenditure in the first two years (2014 and 2015) was well below budget (as the project only got out of the starting blocks in Q3 of 2015). Thereafter, the project has done well to pick up the disbursement rate, though expenditure still lags behind the ambitious level that was anticipated in the Prodoc (\$4,529,971, representing 84% of the total budget).

What is concerning is that, with a little over half of the budget left to spend, and only 2.5 years left to run, the project has yet to deliver most of its *substantive* outcomes.

Table 10: Project expenditure at mid-term (anticipated and actual)

Component	Prodoc		Project		
	Budget amount	Anticipated disbursement	Budget Amount (project figures)	Actual expense* (rounded) - project	Actual expense - CDRs
1: Knowledge platform	660,000	496,205	1,180,688	912,574	760,003
2: Expansion	2,000,000	1,873,100	1,864,239	760,517	760,360
3: Strengthening	2,460,000	1,964,000	1,978,707	748,736	760,365
4: Project Management Costs	270,000	196,666	311,346	181,890	311,278
Total	5,390,000	4,529,971	5,334,980	2,605,564	2,644,033

Note: *There are discrepancies in reported totals between the project's consolidated expenses spreadsheet and the audited amounts reflected in the CDRs. See tables below for further discussion.

General issues limiting a more detailed assessment of the financial performance include:

- **Inconsistencies and errors in documents:** Quarterly and annual budgets and financial reports include inconsistencies and errors – such as incorrect ATLAS codes, missing codes, misallocation of expenses under different components and budget lines (i.e. not following the allocations indicated in the Budget Notes in the Prodoc) – and allocation and coding inconsistencies between the project's budgets/reports and the Combined Delivery Reports (CDRs).
- **Inconsistencies in reported expenditure:** There are variances in expenditure reflected in annual financial reports, the consolidated spreadsheet prepared for the MTR evaluators by the PMU, and the Combined Delivery Reports generated by ATLAS (see Table 11) – this makes it difficult to know exactly which figures should be used. Given that the CDRs have been audited, these have been taken to be the most accurate, but, this is not the data being used by the project to work out its budgets (or against which they are recording their expenses internally). Whilst most of the allocation discrepancies relate to distribution of costs between Component 1 and Project Management Costs, there is also a discrepancy in total project expense reflected as at 31 December 2017.

Table 11: Year-by-year expenditure per component, showing comparison between CDR and project records

Component	2014	2015		2016		2017		Totals	
		CDR	Project	CDR	Project	CDR	Project	CDR	Project
1	155	68,805	144,069	354,349	410,540	336,849	357,964	760,003	912,574
2	0	53,970	53,965	102,471	102,471	603,924	603,924	760,365	760,360
3	0	23,870	11,418	157,152	155,030	582,288	582,288	760,365	748,736
4 (PMC)	48,922	68,305	639	142,452	31,718	100,521	100,555	311,278	181,834
TOTALS	49,078	214,950	210,091	756,424	699,759	1,623,582	1,644,731	2,644,033	2,603,504

- **Budget adjustments:** Working out how the project is performing against budget is equally challenging. The budget to which the project is working has been adjusted significantly from the original indicative budget in the Prodoc and the UNDP-SNTC LoA – these budget allocations are shown in Table 12, in the rows labelled 'Prodoc.' As best as can be determined, the following changes have been made:
 - Initially, an adjustment to the year-to-year allocations was necessary to compensate for the delayed start of the project (and consequent low expenditure in 2014 and Q1&2 of 2015). This is understandable, but should have amounted simply to a shift of funds between financial years – total allocations to the three Components, and proportional allocations under specific budget lines within the Components should have remained unchanged.

- (ii) In March 2017, a budget adjustment³⁶ (indicated in Table 11 in rows labelled ‘Amendment 2017’) was made in ATLAS, to compensate for high over-expenditure on a number of budget lines under Component 1 (particularly International Consultants - \$276,106 spent:budget \$15,000; training workshops and conferences - \$81,317 spent:budget \$10,000; Travel – 100,938 spent:budget \$6,000). At the time, several budget lines under Component 2 (under which progress was slow at the time) were underspent, and funds were re-allocated from here to Component 1. An amount of \$441,571 (equivalent to 8.2% of the total GEF grant), was moved into Component 1 from Component 2 – this represents a 67% increase in the funds allocated to Component 1, and a 22% reduction in the funds available for Component 2 – with important implications for the amount of resource available for establishing and operationalising protected areas (one of the key objective-level outcomes of this project).
- (iii) Since March 2017, the project has continued to manage the budget flexibly, amending budget allocations to fit expenditure patterns, and adjusting allocations to support more favoured activities – without any obvious reference to the Budget Notes in Prodoc, and without tracking expenditure against targets for delivery. Whilst it is normal for some adaptive management of the budget to be necessary during implementation, the scale of change in the SNPAS budget is grand – and ongoing. Almost every original allocation (for Components and individual budget lines within the Components) has been changed – sometimes by wide margins. Table 12 shows the allocations to Components that are currently applied by the project in the rows labelled ‘Current.’

Table 12 shows that a further re-allocation of budget has been made **between Components**, with increases to Components 1, 2, and 4 (project management costs), and a decrease in the allocation to Component 3. The increased allocation to Component 1 is equivalent to 9.6% of the total GEF grant, and the decrease in Component 2 (\$441,970) represents 8.1% of the total grant amount. These transfers between Components fall only marginally below the threshold that would trigger the need for a major project amendment and the need for GEF CEO re-endorsement³⁷ – this does not present best-practice in budget management, especially since the transfers have been made mainly to offset unnecessary and avoidable over-expenditure.

Within Components, significant adjustments have also been made (See Table 13), with large cuts to essential budget lines (e.g. the budget lines for upgrading conservation management equipment and infrastructure under Component 2 have been cut by some 58%), in favour of budget lines for activities such as workshops, printing and travel (which have been increased by more than 100%).

³⁶ This adjustment was requested via email correspondence. The Programme Associate in the UNDP Regional Service Centre in Addis Ababa requested that a formal GEF budget amendment form be filled in and submitted. A copy of this document could not be found in the project files during the MTR.

³⁷ According to the GEF rules, budget re-allocations among components in the project with amounts involving 10% of the total project grant or more, OR the introduction of new budget items/or components that exceed 5% of original GEF allocation are considered major project amendments. Projects with major amendments need to be CEO (re)approved/(re)endorsed. FSP projects with major amendments have to be circulated for 4-weeks on the GEF web, for the Council members’ review. If 4 or more Council members oppose against the endorsement, the project has to go back to the Council meeting before the CEO endorsement. Otherwise the CEO (re)endorses the project.

Table 12: Comparison of Indicative budget allocations (Prodoc) with changes made during implementation

Year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Totals
Component 1								
Prodoc	160,634	165,135	87,636	82,800	82,800	81,000	0	660,000
Revision 2016	0	144,069	410,540	Not specified				1,101,571
Current	0	144,069	410,540	357,964	268,144	0	0	1,180,688
Component 2								
Prodoc	400,666	596,867	585,667	289,000	101,500	26,300	0	2,000,000
Revision	155	53,965	102,471	Not specified				1,558,030
Current	155	53,965	102,471	603,924	639,882	309,568	154,271	1,864,239
Component 3								
Prodoc	37,000	705,000	769,000	453,000	308,000	188,000	0	2,460,000
Revision	0	11,408.01	155,030	Not specified				2,460,000
Current	0	11,408.01	155,030	582,288	532,499	502,600	194,871	1,987,707
Project Management Costs								
Prodoc	86,666	36,666	36,667	36,667	36,667	36,667	0	270,000
Revision	48,922	693.65	31.718	Not specified				270,000
Current	48,922	693.65	31.718	100,555	28,571	75,884	25,000.00	311,346

Table 13: Comparison of within-component allocations between the indicative budget (Prodoc) and the current budget being used by the project

Budget line	Prodoc \$	Current \$ - rounded	Incr/Decr	Difference \$ - rounded
COMPONENT 1				
International consultants	15,000	236,501	+	221,501
Local Consultants	516,000	455,280	-	60,720
Contractual services - companies	105,000	13,892	-	91,108
Equip/Furn	5,000	58,432	+	53,432
Comms & Audio	1,000	18,300	+	17,300
Supplies	0	2,495	+	2,495
Training/workshops/conferences	10,000	177,643	+	167,643
Prof. Services	2,000	0	+	2,000
Audio and Print	1,000	35,783	+	35,783
Travel and DSA	6,000	98,151	+	98,151
Contract. Services	0	33,171	+	33,171
Miscellaneous	0	24,243	+	24,243
Forex	0	26,791	+	26,791
Total for component	660,000	1,180,688	+	520,688
Budget line	Prodoc \$	Current \$ - rounded	Incr/decr	Difference \$ - rounded
COMPONENT 2				
International Consultant	0	112,811	+	112,811
Contractual Services	0	99,765	+	99,765
Local Consultants	48,000	232,471	+	184,471
Contract. Serv - Companies	455,000	517,439	+	63,439
Machinery and Equipment	1,445,000	653,439	-	791,770
Training/workshops/	10,000	34,717	+	34,717

Budget line	Prodoc \$	Current \$ - rounded	Incr/ Decr	Difference \$ - rounded
conferences				
Prof Services	18,000	89,918	+	71,918
Travel	22,000	33,817	+	11,817
Travel 2	0	26,895	+	26,895
Comms and Audio	0	3,403	+	3,403
Audio and Print	2,000	48,466	+	46,366
Miscellaneous	0	1,306	+	1,306
Forex	0	9,599	+	9,599
Totals	2,000,000	1,864,239		441,970
COMPONENT 3				
Local Consultants	270,000	271,274	incr	1,274
Contractual Services	595,000	452,071	-	142,929
Machinery/Equipment	1,555,000	642,025	-	912,975
Training/workshops/ conferences	19,000	468,630	+	449,630
Comms and Audio	0	5,193	+	5,193
Info Tech	0	1,484	+	1,484
Audio and Print	0	2,973	+	2,973
Miscellaneous	0	760	+	760
Prof Services	6,000	56,141	+	50,141
Travel	15,000	78,375	+	63,375
Forex	0	223	+	223
Totals	2,460,000	1,978,707	-	472,293
COMPONENT 4 (PSC)				
Local consultants	210,000	180,216	-	29,784
Machinery and Equipment	50,000	37,694	-	12,306
Print and publ	1,000	0	-	1,000
Travel	9,000	10,581	+	1,581
Management and Reporting Services	0	20,732	+	20,732
Comms and Audio	0	12,205	+	12,205
Miscellaneous	0	2,246	+	2,246
Supplies	0	47,728	+	47,728
Forex	0	58	+	58,98
Totals	270,000	311,346	+	41,346

There are several sources of **inefficiency in the financial management system**, and resources are not always being deployed in the most cost-effective way to deliver the intended outcomes. Some of the key issues include:

- **High variances between budget and expenditure:** It is normal for there to be some variance between budget and expense in a large, complex project spanning several years. However, in the SNPAS annual and quarterly financial reports, there is a consistent pattern of over-expenditure on some budget lines (often things such as consultancy fees, travel, workshops, DSA, printing), and under-expenditure on others, across the entire budget. The reports do not always include explanatory notes, but, where they are given, under-expenditures are explained with notes to the effect of 'the stationery cost less than anticipated', or 'the consultant did not submit their invoice in this period', and over-expenditures of anything less than 20% are noted as being 'within an acceptable limit.' The PB and PSC have noted these variances with concern, and have appealed to the project team to address the problem, but the pattern persists. Over-expenditure is largely on items such as travel, DSA, workshops and conferences, printing and audio, and under-expenditure on items relating to PA strengthening and expansion. What this points to is limited capacity to anticipate costs accurately, and to align workplans with budget. It is also clear

that the proportional allocations to different project activities (reflected in the Prodoc budget notes), are not being used to guide budgeting or work-planning.

- **High project management costs:** Usually, Project Management Costs (PMCs) represent the actual costs associated with the unit executing the project on the ground, and include provisions for items such as staffing (project manager, technical advisor, financial administrator), supervision of project activities, financial administration and stakeholder communications, in keeping with items specified in Table B of the PIF³⁸. PMCs are usually met with GEF finance (to a maximum of 5% of the total GEF grant³⁹ in full sized projects), supplemented through co-financing sources⁴⁰. A component of the project management costs can also be costed out under the project activities, *in keeping with* items anticipated in the budget notes in the Prodoc.

The SNPAS Prodoc made provision for the salaries of the National Project Manager and the Finance/Admin Assistant to be costed under the PMC Component, along with other project administration and management expenses⁴¹. The costs of hiring the two Technical Project Managers were provided for under Component 1, with supplementation from cofinance sources, and the CLOs were costed out under Component 3 (for tasks relating to the identification and development of CBNRM programmes – it is unclear whether these positions were ever intended to be full-time or not).

PMCs are being allocated inconsistently in the project's internal financial reports, and at variance with allocations in the CDRs, and it is hard to assess whether or not they are still within the 5% maximum. The PM component of the operational budget also does not give an accurate reflection of the real costs of maintaining the PMU, which is staffed by 12 people. The salaries of all staff except the National Project Manager are costed out under project activities (mostly under the 'Local Consultants' budget lines), and there are also substantial 'hidden' costs associated with the large staff complement – these include computer equipment, office furniture, travel and DSA. This erodes the budget that is available for hiring other experts and service providers when required, or for delivering other core outcomes.

- **Processing of financial transactions is slow**, and this affects delivery of outcomes. The PMU has difficulty securing approval of budgets and financial reports on time (i.e. meeting deadlines in the UNDP budget cycle, which commences in January each year). This causes delays in the transfer of funds from the UNDP to the project, especially at the start of each year – with impacts on disbursement and rate of project delivery. In progress reports it is often stated that funds were 'transferred late' by UNDP at the start of the year – but the real problem is that the required reports and plans are not submitted in time to allow timeous transfer (at least some of this delay stems from difficulties associated with arranging PSC and PB meetings in the first quarter). Delayed transfers cause cash flow shortages that set off a chain of other problems, such as late transfers to service providers and contractors, who then cannot complete their assigned work on time, or are placed under unrealistic pressure to complete the agreed work in a shorter time period. (For example, in 2017, COSPE⁴² expected to receive funds in June, but payment was only transferred in September. A similar problem arose with transfers of funds to

³⁸ For a list of permissible project management costs, see GEF (2017) Guidelines on the Project and Programme Cycle Policy. GEF/C.52/Inf.06.

³⁹ GEF (2017) Guidelines on the Project and Programme Cycle Policy. GEF/C.52/Inf.06, page 37

⁴⁰ For example, in the case of SNPAS, the UNDP co-finance letter appended to the CEO-endorsed Prodoc specified a cash amount of \$100,000 to be allocated to project management, which could be supplemented by other co-finance sources.

⁴¹ It should be noted that Prodoc Budget Note 23 made provision for purchase of a project vehicle, but this cannot be costed out under the PMC component of the budget under GEF rules. See GEF 2017/C.52/Inf.06, page 41.

⁴² COSPE is an international NGO which is implementing some project activities in the Lubombo Cluster, under a Letter of Agreement with SNTC, and in partnership with the Lubombo Conservancy

the private landowners who were allocated catalytic seed funding). To compensate for cash flow shortages, the project sometimes requests UNDP to carry out direct procurement on their behalf – which results in complications of its own.

- **Weak tracking of costs relative to outputs:** It is hard to track the efficiency with which funds are being utilised, and to work out the proportional spend on different kinds of activities, because of the way costs are distributed across the budget. *For example*, Output 3.2 relates to the implementation of invasive alien plant control programmes in different categories of protected areas. Whilst a discrete pilot, for which it is possible to calculate a cost, has been implemented at Mlawula, other Invasive Alien Species clearing programmes have been implemented at a number of different sites under the catalytic grants to private landowners. However, the funds received by these landowners have been (legitimately) used for a range of PA strengthening activities, including fencing, the purchase of equipment as well as IAPS clearing. It, therefore, becomes difficult to track how much resource has been dedicated to IAPS clearing as a whole (combining IAPS clearing in all categories of PA). Similarly, the high costs (both direct and indirect) of developing CDPs are distributed right across the project budget, so it is difficult to calculate the proportional spend on these products relative to delivery of core outcomes related to protected area expansion and strengthening.
- **High transport and DSA costs:** The project's travel and DSA costs are high, and allocations to travel have been increased significantly in the budgets that the PMU prepares. Partly, this has been necessitated by the high community engagement demands of the CDP process and the associated training, and the fact that there is a large number of PMU staff who need to be travel to the field where they are carrying out direct implementation or monitoring activities. To meet the transport requirements, the project has acquired a fleet of 4 vehicles. One of these vehicles was purchased directly by UNDP (as part of their cofinance), but the others seem to have been purchased through the GEF grant⁴³. All of these vehicles also need to be maintained and fuelled – again, something that was not anticipated in the original budget. (Ironically, one of the barriers to on-site implementation of activities in the SNTC-managed national parks is a shortage of vehicles, and a more strategic allocation of at least some of the vehicles to the PAs may need to be considered – i.e. base at least one vehicle in the field to facilitate SNPAS-related work there).
- **Venues for meetings and workshops:** A large proportion of the SNPAS budget is spent on workshops, conferences and meetings, many of which take place at lodges, hotels and country clubs, such as the Piggs Peak Hotel, Maguga Lodge, Esibayeni Lodge and others. Whilst the use of such facilities may sometimes be necessary, the project should be preferentially using conference and meeting venues available within the protected area network – this is captured in the Prodoc on page 41 – in order to maximise use of these venues and direct as much revenue towards the PAs as possible. The high expenditure on workshops and meetings (including PSC and PB meetings, which should incur minimal costs) erodes the budget available for delivery of core outputs and outcomes, and more effort to contain these costs is required.
- **High consultancy costs:** The project shows heavy reliance on consultancies, the management of which has proved problematical (see page 53 for detailed discussion). This has caused not only delayed delivery of outputs and frustrations among the contracted parties and the project stakeholders, but has resulted in financial inefficiencies, and some fruitless and wasteful

⁴³ It should be noted that the use of GEF funds to purchase vehicles is strongly discouraged as such costs are normally expected to be borne by co-finance. Any request to use GEF funding to purchase project vehicles must be justified. The Secretariat assesses such requests and decides whether to approve them. GEF (2017)/C.52/Inf.06). The Prodoc budget notes specify the purchase of one vehicle.

expenditure. Many contracts issued by the project have had to be extended repeatedly, incurring significant extra cost and resulting in long delays in delivery of outputs; some contracts have been terminated, with part payments made to the service providers, and then new consultants have been hired to deliver the outstanding outputs (at significant additional costs).

- ***Demand-led project planning:*** Much of the work-planning (outside of the CDP process) is demand-led – stakeholders and partners submit proposals that fit with their needs and goals, rather than the investment following a detailed, structured plan. This has resulted in uncoordinated and piecemeal investments scattered across the landscape, without any strategic prioritisation to determine which of these activities would be the most effective route for delivering the **project's** outcomes. Although the individual proposals all have their own merits, and may have local-scale benefits, their cumulative impact in terms of delivering on the project outcomes, is likely to be small.
- ***Weak alignment and linkages:*** Alignment between SNPAS and other important PA-related programmes is weak – this has led to a high level of inefficiency in terms of use of resources and duplication of work in some cases. The budget ends up being spread far too thinly over too many developments throughout the country, without being able to elevate each PA to a higher level of effectiveness. Stronger alignment would enable resource-pooling and greater collective impact.

An over-riding concern is that some basic UNDP-GEF fiduciary rules have been broken. For example

- allowing for a 5% **administration fee** for the SNTC (although this has now been reversed).
- a 20% **ceiling for variance from budget** has been considered as 'acceptable', yet the UNDP-GEF limit is 5% .
- **Interns**, who draw salaries, have been appointed for more than 6 consecutive months (although they are on 3-month, renewable contracts). This is not in compliance with UNDP rules. Although the interns are appointed through SNTC, UNDP financial rules must be applied where the SNTC rules diverge from those of UNDP⁴⁴.
- **Direct Project Costs** are being recovered from the project by UNDP, yet no GEFSec-approved agreement for this is in place. Only if this approval has been granted, can Direct Project Costs be recovered from the project by UNDP. In all cases where a project is under NIM, UNDP must recover any costs of delivering project cycle management services from the Agency Fee, which is allocated in addition to and separate from the GEF project grant, according to the prescribed fee structure⁴⁵.

Realization of cofinance

At GEF CEO-endorsement, letters of cofinance were issued by the GEF Agency (UNDP), three government agencies (SNTC, STA and SEA), and a private trust (Big Game parks), committing a collective \$23,600,00 in cash and kind (see Table 14 for a breakdown). At midterm, the reported figures for realized co-finance are low (7.9%), although this is certainly an under-representation as tracking of cofinance by the PMU is currently not effective. No system seems to be in place for regular meetings with the partners to ensure strategic alignment of cofinance to deliver the project outcomes.

The commitment of cofinance made by Big Game Parks was conditional upon their participation in the project as anticipated in the Prodoc – their withdrawal means that this cofinance can no longer

⁴⁴ UNDP Financial Rules and Regulations (Reg. no. 16.05)

⁴⁵ See GEF (2012): Fee Policy for GEF Partner Agencies Policy: F1/PL/03

be realized, an unfortunate loss as it represents some 40% of the total cofinance that was committed.

In the project files that were availed to the MTR, a letter committing parallel funding through the Eco-Lubombo Programme (funded by GIZ) was found. It is not clear why this was not factored into the cofinance for the project – especially since GIZ is funding the current Support Programme for the Lubombo TFCA, with which SNPAS should be closely aligned (but currently is not).

Table 14: Comparison of committed and realised cofinance

Source	Type of agency	Type of CoF	Amount US\$ (at endorsement)	Amount US\$ Realized (MTR)	%
UNDP (IA)	GEF Agency	Cash grant	200,000	unknown	unknown
SNTC (IP)	Government Agency	Cash and in-kind parallel finance	11,400,00	700,000	6.1
SEA	Government Agency	Cash and in-kind parallel finance	2,200,000	40,000	1.8
Big Game Parks (RP)	Private Trust	Cash and in-kind parallel finance	9,800,000	withdrawn	n/a
Totals			23,600,000	740,000	7.9%

4.3.3. Work planning

The project team diligently prepares annual and quarterly workplans, and these are presented to the PSC and PB for their review and approval. It is evident, however, that the project finds it difficult to adhere to the workplan in any given quarter, and it is not clear how the work-planning process is conducted. With the exception of the development of CDPs, the approach seems poorly coordinated. There is consistently weak delivery (or non-performance – as reflected by expenditure) under several activities (mostly related to protected area expansion or strengthening), which are to be carried over from one quarter to the next, without any clear indication of what should have been done. The work programme also does not seem to be adapted to reflect the inputs of the Technical Advisor or recommendations contained in other reports (e.g. mission reports of the project management support consultant).

The MTR has identified the following factors which are contributing to this situation:

- The project is using the **generic workplan format** used in GEF-funded interventions – these are budgeting instruments more than they are practical workplans, mapping out broad activities against which budget is allocated. Activities listed in the SNPAS workplans are often (though not always) generic, and include items such as: Conduct vegetation assessments; Purchase biodiversity equipment; Create awareness of biodiversity and benefits of PAs; Mobilize existing PAs; Awareness raising, Community Trainings, Protect Wetlands, build capacity and provide guidance to PLOs on gazetting, and so on. Purchase umbrellas without any supporting narrative.
- There are **too many conflicting and contradictory workplans and strategies** that have been developed over the lifespan of the project, with no system in place to indicate how they all interface. (At the end of the day, the SRF and project plan in the Prodoc is the only plan that has been approved by the GEF, yet this does not seem to be guiding work-planning).
- There is a weak **relationship between the activities in the workplans and delivery of the project's outcome-level targets or outputs** (as stipulated in the SRF). It is apparent that the overall plan guiding the development of the annual/quarterly workplans is the internal *Project*

Strategy and M&E Framework that was developed in 2016 – this has created confusion, as the outcomes, outputs, indicators and targets in the SRF and the *Strategy* are substantially different (despite some overlaps).

Despite using the *Strategy*, the Project still has **no detailed work-planning and scheduling tool** that outlines: (i) well-defined, step-wise tasks and related benchmarks/milestones for delivery of the established indicators and targets for the project outcomes (i.e. including details of what specific tasks will be carried out, by whom, to implement the generic ‘activities’, the sites at which these will take place, when, and with what intended result); (ii) how the work programmes of the different PMU staff and all other parties involved in implementation fit together.

- At the end of 2017, a new effort was made to develop a ***Theory of Change*** (ToC) for SNPAS to re-focus the project on its original objective, identify revised strategic priorities that align the project’s GEF-endorsed outputs and outcomes), and develop a practicable workplan based on reliable financial information. The crafting of his Theory of Change has carried high transaction costs, involving both a multi-stakeholder workshop and internal PMU workshops, and significant investments of time and effort by a specialist consultant, the project’s Technical Advisor, the PMU staff and SNPAS stakeholders. The workshop participants have plotted the current state of delivery against the intended SRF indicators, and developed a revised set of strategic objectives, with recommended actions to deliver the desired outcomes.

The ***positive side*** of this process is that it has led to the acknowledgement that many of the activities that are currently in the SNPAS work programme have merit, and would be ‘nice to have’, but they do not contribute directly to achieving the intended outcomes of the project, or even to providing a tangible ‘SNPAS legacy.’

On the other hand: (i) the project’s *2016 Strategy* has not been shared with the consultant contracted to lead the development of the ToC; (ii) the revised strategic objectives (See Box 1) and activities have been identified in the absence of accurate, consolidated financial data (which has only now been compiled as part of the MTR process), and may not be financially *feasible*; (ii) a number of the identified activities and targets may not be *achievable* (e.g. establishing 7 new community-managed PAs and getting them all up to full functionality and delivering economic benefits by project closure is an unrealistic goal); and (iii) the new strategic objectives have not yet been explicitly aligned with the existing SRF, and only contribute to delivery of SOME of the indicators. The new ‘vision’ for the project also largely excludes one critically important set of stakeholders (private landowners) who have the capacity to deliver some quick wins and serve as important agents of change for the project. This represents a **substantive change to the scope** of the project, which could trigger the need for a formal amendment approved by the GEF.

Yet, the PMU is already using the new strategic objectives (and recommended activities) to develop the project’s current workplans and assign budget. The danger of this is that the project is again setting off in a ‘new direction’, instead of focussing on what can be done, in 2.5 years to deliver at least a significant proportion of the GEF-approved outcomes. The Theory of Change should be mapping the casual pathways for doing this, by identifying current barriers, drivers and enablers of change, how the project can influence the drivers/enablers to generate outputs, the impacts these should have and how they can lead to a desired end state. Critically, the ToC also needs to identify the assumptions on which the causal pathway depends, and what should be done if the assumptions are not met.

- The **general efficiency of work-planning** is compromised by other factors, including: (i) the project has no centralized knowledge management and information system where information can be readily accessed by anyone at any time. This means that progress reported in any particular activity report (e.g. the Invasive Alien Clearing Pilot in Mlawula), may not be known to partners who are engaged in related activities elsewhere in the landscape; (ii) there are long delays in addressing emergent issues and challenges, which makes it difficult to plan proactively and adapt workplans appropriately; (iii) a proportion of the work-planning is demand-led, based on proposals received, and so cannot be anticipated in advance. These projects tend to be poorly-integrated with the overall plan for delivery of the intended outcomes.

Box 1: Revised SNPAS Strategic Objectives proposed at the strategic planning workshop (taken from draft Progress/Workshop Report, undated)

SO1: A substantial area of land dedicated to community conservation areas that are locally managed, that are maintained in healthy condition with equitably distributed economic benefits to the whole community, and where conservation and economic roles of the conservation areas are widely accepted and supported by the community (with 7 proposed new sites spread across all four landscape clusters)

SO 2: State-owned and privately-owned PAs are under effective management by 2020 (with a focus on the development of management plans, improvements to infrastructure, and strengthened management capacity)

SO3: At least five financially sustainable and operationally functional community-led and partner supported ecotourism lodges and trails established with 35% occupancy rates by 2020

SO4: An operational and regularly curated and updated biodiversity Geographical Information System is established and administered and maintained by SNTC

SO5: A clearly-defined and budgeted invasive alien plants control programme implemented a pilot projects under a highly trained IPAS supervisor contracted by SNTC for selected sites in Malolotja, Mantenga and Mlawula, with 1,000 ha cleared and controlled in each reserve by 2020

SO6: Application of the landscape approach drives biodiversity conservation and poverty alleviation in at least four Chiefdoms (this relates to the development and implementation of Chiefdom Development Plans)

4.3.4. Project -level monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems

The Project Board is responsible for high-level monitoring of project performance and delivery (through review of the project's M&E instruments), with the PSC ensuring that these instruments are technically sound⁴⁶. On the Project Board, the Senior Beneficiary (SNTC) is responsible for monitoring progress against targets and quality criteria⁴⁷, and the Senior Supplier (UNDP, supported by SEA) is responsible for ensuring that the technical feasibility of the project is maintained.⁴⁸ Quality assurance functions (monitoring overall compliance and adherence to quality standards, ensuring effective risk mitigation, and adherence to expected results) is delegated within the PB to the UNDP.⁴⁹ Day-to-day monitoring of implementation is the responsibility of the National Project Manager, based on the agreed indicators and targets set out in the SRF and Annual Work Plans. Some aspects of the SNPAS M&E system are operating well, but others are not leading to efficient or effective monitoring of project performance – an essential requirement for proactive and appropriate adaptive management.

On the positive side:

⁴⁶ See Item 3.2 of the Project Board Terms of Reference, and Item 2 of the PSC Terms of Reference, as approved in the first meetings of these committees).

⁴⁷ PB TOR, item 4.2

⁴⁸ PB TOR, item 4.3

⁴⁹ PB TOR, item 4.6

- The project team puts a **great deal of effort** into M&E activities that are largely in compliance with standard M&E plan used in UNDP-supported, GEF-financed projects (see Table 18, page 78 & 79 of the Prodoc). Key M & E activities have included: an Inception Workshop (14 June 2015) and Report; Quarterly Workplans and Reports; Annual Progress Reports and Project Implementation Reports; Combined Delivery Reports; annual financial audits (external); and visits to field sites to monitor the implementation of specific activities.
- The project uses a **combination of narrative reports and other standard templates** (such as Excel spreadsheets) to present M&E data.
- In addition to the standard M&E instruments, the project compiles **activity-specific monitoring reports**, some of which are extremely detailed (e.g. Monitoring Reports for the activities implemented by COSPE in Lubombo Cluster, and the private landowners, under the seed funding programme).
- In 2016, the project developed and adopted the *Strategy and M&E Framework* for monitoring **activity-level performance** – this was a proactive step that is consistent with good practice. (However, the divergence between this framework and headline indicators in the SRF, has resulted in significant gaps and inefficiencies in the system, and has led to the project going off-track – see discussion below).

On the other hand:

- The **segregation of M&E responsibilities at PB and PSC level** has become unclear, and this compromises effective decision-making to ensure that the project stays on track (which it has not done).
- The M&E instruments **use the terms ‘output’ and ‘outcome’ interchangeably**, and most measurement of progress is being carried out at the activity level (the project has not developed any impact-level indicators)
- The **project lacks a systematic approach to data collection and monitoring of indicators** for different outputs; there is no overarching tool that links information across results areas, at different spatial scales or through different implementation avenues (e.g. IAPS clearing by private landowners is being monitored separately from IAPS clearing led by the PMU at Mlawula or Luzelweni); and there is no tool that shows how the multiplicity of M&E instruments that is being produced links together.
- There is **no explicit system for tracking the cost of M&E**, so the cost-effectiveness of the M&E function cannot be assessed
- The **M&E system being used by the project is not directly aligned with the SRF**. The *2016 Strategy and M&E Framework* introduces new outcomes and outputs (with no clear distinction drawn between these), and has developed a large number of activity-level indicators, without linking these back to the headline indicators for delivery of outputs and outcomes in the approved SRF. This has contributed significantly to the project losing focus on its core business and pouring investments into activities that do not contribute *substantively* to delivery of the overall project objective.

4.3.5. Reporting

SNPAS generates a large volume of reports – which must take a lot of time and effort to produce. The basic requirements of the GEF reporting system are being met (e.g. the required reports are submitted), but there are several concerns relating to the quality, timeliness and coordination of reporting. The reporting system used by the project seems unnecessarily complex and onerous (both for the PMU and other project implementers). Particular points for noting include:

- There are **multiple reports** produced by many different people, but it is not clear how they relate to one another, and there is **little cross-linkage across results areas**. In the course of the

MTR the evaluators have reviewed well over a 150 different documents, including narrative reports, monitoring reports, project board minutes, steering committee minutes, project management unit minutes, tracking tools, workplans and budgets, financial reports, annual project progress reports, quarterly reports, project implementation review reports, audit reports, consultants reports, activity reports, landscape cluster reports, contractor's contracts – and others.

- Progress reporting is mostly **activity-based** rather than results-orientated; qualitative rather than quantitative; and vague (e.g. progress is reported as 'steps have been taken to speed up delivery'; invasive alien clearing programmes are ongoing'; eco-tourism infrastructure is being developed').
- In the PIRs and progress reports, **delivery is generally over-estimated**, and results that have not been generated through the project are sometimes included. In some cases, the same progress is presented in different reports, sometimes repeated from one year to the next
- There is **limited continuity** between reporting periods to track activity against each output and outcome.
- There is **inadequate attention to detail**, which comprises both the quality and utility of many reports. Many documents (or, at least, those that were supplied for the MTR) are unsigned (including minutes of meetings, which are not binding without a signature), some are undated, and yet others bear contradictory dates; and there is often no indication of sources of information, or cross-reference to other relevant documents. Some of the documents presented for the MTR still had tracked-changes edits marked up on them, even though they were drafted as long as a year ago.
- There is a **long lag-phase** in delivery of some reports, and the approval process through which reports have to pass is multi-layered and time-consuming.
- It is not clear how **lessons learnt** from the adaptive management process are being documented, fed into future workplanning, shared with and internalised by key partners, or communicated to the wider stakeholder base (i.e. outside of the PSC or MOU members) – although in an undated 'Progress Report' submitted for review during the MTR, there is an effort to list lessons learnt.

4.3.6. Stakeholder engagement

The project interacts with a large number of different stakeholders, drawn from multiple sectors in government, business and civil society. The project team should be **congratulated for the enormous success of their community engagement**. They show considerable talent and enthusiasm for community facilitation, and they are well-respected and welcomed in their stakeholder communities. This is a strength which should be harnessed and directed to deliver the intended outcomes in future.

Some of the **other strengths** of the stakeholder engagement are:

- The **Project Board** is actively chaired by the Principal Secretary of the Ministry of Tourism and Environmental Affairs, which is an indication of **strong country ownership**.
- The **Steering Committee involves a diversity of government and other non-government organisations** which support the project objectives. This assists the project in raising awareness, securing buy-in and institutional ownership, sharing information, and promoting collaboration. It also provides a platform through which the complementary capacities of different institutions can be leveraged to drive the implementation of the project.
- The project has brought the **environmental and tourism divisions** of the Ministry into active collaboration with each other, and with other ministries and programmes with which there was little active engagement before.

- The project has formalised numerous partnerships through **Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs)** – including with SWADE, MTAD, Surveyor General, STA, SEA, RSP, SEDCO, UNISWA, NDMA, UNICEF, and Microprojects – which helps build a platform for sustainability.

On the other hand:

- At the operational level, the **project is poorly integrated into the SNTC**, and broader ownership at national level is limited.
- **Partnerships are heavily skewed in favour of the delivery of CDPs** (e.g. with SWADE, MTAD and others), rather than the critical agents of change in the PA and nature conservation arena, who could help the project deliver on its *core outcomes* (e.g. Peace Parks Foundation, GIZ Lubombo TFCA Support Programme, All Out Africa, formal Conservancies). This is not to say that the community-development partnerships are not important, but the **emphasis** has been misplaced. For example, the partnership with SWADE and MTAD (whose core mandate is supporting community development) should have served to help SNPAS gain easy access to communities through the CDP process. Instead, the project has assumed responsibility for leading and funding the development of CDPs, and even facilitates the National CDP Coordination Committee, which has enabled SWADE and MTAD to shed some of their responsibilities to SNPAS. In contrast, the establishment of an MoU with the Lubombo Conservancy (which brings together state, private and communal land managers in a priority landscape cluster) has been under discussion for 2.5 years, but is still not satisfactorily resolved).
- **There is too much emphasis on number of MOUs** (which an indicator in the *2016 Strategy*) rather than on their **quality** or **effectiveness** – this raises the risk of setting up ‘paper partnerships’, rather than emphasising active, operational engagement.
- There is no **explicit stakeholder engagement strategy** outlining who to engage with, why, how and when, and **no partnership framework** that outlines roles, terms of engagement, and lines of accountability – many of the stakeholders are unaware of what the others are doing, or how their participation might contribute to the overall project objectives – for the project as a whole, and in each of the targeted landscape clusters.
- **A few key stakeholders have disengaged** from the project (unfortunately, including the King’s Office and Big Game Parks).

4.3.7. Knowledge management and communications

Much of the project’s communications activity has centred on the **development and launching of Chiefdom Development Plans** – including engagements with the media (newspapers, Swazi TV and national radio), and public launch events and awareness days.

The project also participates in a number of **general awareness raising activities** to promote the project and the importance of biodiversity conservation. These have included:

- Special events, such as the National Trade Fair (2015); World Environment Day (2016 – 2018) and World Wetlands Day (2017 and 2018); the Magadzavane–Mlawula Challenge Walk (2016 and 2017) and Chiefdom Open Days (e.g. Ngwempisi Open Day, 2017)
- Social media presence (i.e. Facebook page).

The project **does not have a coherent communication strategy** (though this was requested by the Project Board in its first meeting in 2015), and there are no indicators in place to measure the effectiveness of the communication and awareness-raising activities in which the project has invested.

The project **does not have an effective, centralised knowledge management system** through which hard and soft copies of all relevant project documents are readily accessible. During the MTR, it

proved difficult and time-consuming to access a full set of relevant project documents (including all M&E instruments, reports, contracts, technical outputs delivered by consultants, and so on), and this significantly compromised the productivity of the evaluators. The absence of a well-archived knowledge management system hampers M&E and Reporting, communication of results to stakeholders, and timeous and appropriate adaptive management.

4.4. Sustainability

Currently, the sustainability of many project interventions is rated as ***Moderately Unlikely***, meaning that there are significant early risks that key outcomes will not be sustained after project closure, although some outputs and activities will likely continue. It should be noted, though, that with a significant change of approach, a robust pathway to sustainability could be built.

The project is not keeping a consolidated risks log, as is required in the M&E Plan (Prodoc page 79) – although in some reports risks are noted (such as the withdrawal of Big Game Parks as a Responsible Party). This compromises the project’s capacity to respond quickly to emergent issues, and implement adequate solutions. (The risks and issues log compiled by the MTR evaluators as the start of the review could be used as a starting point by the project team).

Some of the key risks to sustainability are:

Financial risks: The economic climate in Eswatini is currently unfavourable, and SNTC – like other state institutions – is operating under financial stringency measures. This poses a high risk to sustainability of the SNPAS outcomes, under the current approach. One of the effective routes for addressing this is for SNTC – and its partners – to leverage the power of diverse partnerships to access alternative revenue sources and ensure strategic and cost-effective distribution of limited resources. Currently, the project is not aligning its activities with related conservation and protected-area programmes to capitalise on the funding opportunities they may present – this limits the likelihood of financial sustainability. Strict application of the recommendations in the *Financial Sustainability Strategy* (and the linked Business Plans) would reduce the financial risks to sustainability significantly.

Institutional risks and governance risks: A key ingredient for sustainability is for all agencies mandated with responsibility for managing and safeguarding Eswatini’s biodiversity and protected areas to take full ownership of SNPAS and to integrate its objectives and outcomes into their institutional goals and operational plans. For a variety of reasons (which include the institutional identity of the PMU, the approach to implementation, governance management arrangements, and issues related to institutional mandates), success in this arena has been limited – in particular, the project is not well integrated into SNTC.

Sustainability of some interventions is currently at risk due to gaps and uncertainties in the enabling legislative and policy environment (related to protected areas, control of invasive alien species, tourism, land use and land tenure). The project has been advocating for changes to the protected area legislation (dealing with gazettment and mandates), but this has triggered some stakeholder concerns – with negative impacts for project implementation and sustainability of the project’s outcomes. This situation could be alleviated by: (i) adopting a different approach to achieving the project’s protection targets, without triggering legislative or institutional issues; and (ii) strengthening the enabling policy environment for addressing the drivers of land degradation.

Social risks: The project has invested heavily in building good relations with stakeholders in rural communities, and strong ownership at community level bodes well for sustainability. A close working partnership between the public entities within the MTEA (SNTC, STA and SEA) is also a

positive development, but ownership among other stakeholders is not evenly distributed, partly due to the skewed stakeholder engagement pattern that the project has adopted to date. With its focus on community development and its associated processes, the project has not given adequate attention to building strong working partnerships within the conservation sector, and this poses a high risk to sustainability. An over-riding social risk to sustainability is the prevalence of old mindsets that favour ‘working in silos’ and an apparent reluctance to trying new approaches – often during the MTR, the evaluators were told ‘people do not like to share data’, or ‘the landscape approach doesn’t work here.’

Environmental sustainability: One of the most significant risks to the ecological integrity of Eswatini’s protected landscapes (and other areas of protection-worthy land) is infestation by invasive alien species, and the cascading sequence of impacts associated with this. SNPAS has invested in IAPS clearing at a number of pilot sites, but the sustainability of this work is currently weak, and a more strategic and integrated approach to this component of the work is required.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Progress to Results

5.1.1. Achievement Ratings: Conclusions

The SNPAS Project holds the potential to address the interlinked challenges and risks faced by people and ecosystems of Eswatini in an integrated way – it is important that the project succeeds.

A large volume of work has been undertaken, and a high level of commitment is demonstrated by the SNPAS project team, its partners and the broader stakeholder community. Some important progress has been made that is in line with delivery of the project objective, but, overall, the project has lost focus and most of the key outputs and outcomes have yet to be delivered. The greater proportion of time and resources has been directed towards activities and outputs that have merit in their own right, but do not deliver substantively on the project objective. Performance at objective-level is, therefore, rated as **Moderately Unsatisfactory** (meaning that if the current path is maintained some of the project outcomes may be delivered, but with major shortcomings).

Performance under *Component 1* (Knowledge Platform) is currently the best (rated as **Satisfactory**). The project has produced a number of important ‘legacy products’ (high quality biodiversity data, vegetation and landcover maps, and other technical information; an equipped GIS lab and a GIS-based data portal; a PA Financial Sustainability Strategy) that can support knowledge-based planning, development and management of the PA estate. However, the data has not been synthesised into a national-level assessment, and the GIS-platform is still not fully operational (due to problems with administration rights).

Delivery under *Component 2* (PA expansion through the landscape approach) is currently the weakest and is rated as **Unsatisfactory**. No new protected areas or conservancies have been established or operationalized (though some 6,700 ha have been earmarked in-principle for future protection); management plans have been drafted for three SNTC-managed national parks; and guidelines for new protected area categories have been developed (but have not yet been incorporated into policy or legislation). Support has been provided to five private nature reserves that were newly proclaimed in 2015 (before the project started) to help demarcate their boundaries with fencing, but this does not form part of an integrated programme to strengthen active conservation management in line with global criteria.

Performance under *Component 3* is rated as **Moderately Satisfactory**, with variable delivery under the five outputs. Some successful pilots have been implemented (e.g. de-bushing and clearing of

invasive alien species; wetland fencing), and these provide important models for consolidation, replication and scaling-up in future. Some investments have been made to upgrade conservation equipment and infrastructure, and eco-tourism facilities, in a scatter of state, communal and private PAs. These have had local impact, but the interventions are currently too piecemeal to have a notable or lasting impact at landscape scale. Plans are currently under development for larger-scale construction of community based eco-tourism facilities at selected sites, but delivery has been hampered by a flawed process. Successful engagement with communities has been a notable feature of this Component, though much of this has been directed to the development of Chiefdom Development Plans – which are important products in their own right, but do not make measurable contributions to delivery of the outcome-level targets. Some tangible local-scale benefits have been delivered (such as fencing of wetlands to secure water sources), but impacts may not be realised in the lifespan of the project. Community-based training for improved local governance has been delivered to a large number of beneficiaries through the *Transformation for Change* programme, but capacity-development for improved protected area management has been limited and unsystematic.

Overall, *Adaptive Management and Implementation* is rated as **Moderately Unsatisfactory**, as several components are not leading to effective and efficient implementation, and most need corrective action. The project has had a high requirement for adaptive management, but this has generally not been applied appropriately or timeously. Most areas of project management and administration (including governance and implementation arrangements, configuration of the PMU, contract management, work-planning and coordination, and financial management and budgeting) are in need of significant improvement. The project has excelled at community engagement, and has involved a wide range of government stakeholders in the project, but stronger working partnerships with stakeholders in the conservation sector are needed.

Sustainability is currently rated as **Moderately Unlikely**, as there are significant early risks to the sustainability of the project's achievements. These stem from weak integration of the project into the operations of the key agencies responsible for protected areas and biodiversity conservation (especially SNTC); gaps in the legislative and policy framework (relating to protected areas, wetland management, control of invasive alien species, land policy, and tourism); constraints on the national fiscus; weak alignment with other programmes that have related objectives; and current weaknesses in the stakeholder partnerships that the project has built (or not built).

If appropriate adaptive management measures are put in place as a matter of urgency, the overall performance and delivery could be **Satisfactory** by project closure.

A summary of the MTR ratings, with brief explanations under the four categories that were assessed, is provided in **Table 15**.

Table 15: Summary of MTR Ratings for Project Strategy, Progress to results, Adaptive Management and Implementation and Sustainability

Measure	MTR Rating	Achievement Description (Brief)
Project Design/Strategy	↑	Project design is conceptually sound and logically coherent, with a clearly articulated objective. It is well-aligned with global strategic objectives of the GEF and UNDP, and relevant to the national development and environmental priorities of Eswatini. The organisational model provides for strong institutional ownership, and governance arrangements, and the stakeholder engagement plan are broadly inclusive. Relevant activities are clearly described, backed by comprehensive information, and the budget is accompanied by clear budget notes to aid workplanning. Environmental and social screening was diligently performed and some gender empowerment indicators have been included in the SRF.

	<p>↓ The indicator and target framework shows several weaknesses, including a lack of outcome-level indicators; gaps, inconsistencies and overlaps in the framework; inaccurate baselines; unrealistic targets for some indicators; and an absence of any midterm targets. The risk analysis has some significant omissions, and no alternative pathway is mapped if the key assumptions are not met. The scope of the project is over-ambitious, especially as it introduces a new approach to protected area establishment, and key terms are not adequately clarified. The Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool has not been integrated into the M&E framework.</p>	
Progress towards results	<p>OBJECTIVE:</p> <p>Rating: Moderately Unsatisfactory MU</p>	<p>Ind.1 (PA expansion): HU ↓ No expansion of the protected area estate has been achieved through the intervention of the project, though some land has been earmarked in principle for possible inclusion</p> <p>Ind.2: Capacity Building programmes: MS ↑ 1 general community training programme has been successfully implemented (Transformation for Change), reaching 944 beneficiaries; <i>Ad hoc</i> training in several aspects of protected area management have been provided for 71 beneficiaries, but no integrated capacity building programmes developed or implemented</p> <p><i>Revised impact-level indicators (with revised targets), and an entirely new approach is needed to deliver on objective</i></p>
	<p>Outcome 1: Knowledge platform</p> <p>Rating: Satisfactory S</p>	<p>Ind.1: Biodiversity Surveys (S) ↑ Biodiversity surveys carried out in 9 Chiefdoms and 3 landscapes (including potential new PAs); new vegetation map produced; Chiefdom boundaries mapped and land-use maps developed; PA financial sustainability plan produced; legal and policy support report completed</p> <p>Ind.2: GIS-based information system (S) ↑ GIS lab set up; GIS-based platform developed, some GIS training provided (<i>but administration rights still not transferred, and data needs to be uploaded</i>)</p> <p>Ind.3: Landscape plans and management plans (MS) ↑ 3 PA management plans drafted for SNTC parks (<i>still need to be implemented</i>) ↓ No integrated landscape-level plans produced (but indicative land-use maps in 9 CDPs contribute towards this process)</p>
	<p>Outcome 2: PA expansion</p> <p>Rating: Unsatisfactory U</p>	<p>Ind.1: New national parks gazetted and operationalised (HU) ↓ No new national parks</p> <p>Ind.2: New PAs gazetted and operationalised (U) ↓ No new protected areas established (<i>but some land earmarked in principle in CDP maps</i>)</p> <p>Ind.3: Landscape management plans, structures and standards developed and implemented (MS) ↑ 3 PA management plans drafted ↓ No new landscape-scale management structures ↑ Local-scale governance structures for individual wetlands established in communities, Community Trusts trained ↓ No landscape management standards developed ↑ Guidelines for new PA categories established</p> <p><i>Significant adaptive management with revised targets and entirely new approach is needed</i></p>
	<p>Outcome 3: PA operational effectiveness and conservation management</p>	<p>Ind. 1: Capacity building programmes ↑ 1 general community training programme has been successfully implemented (Transformation for Change), reaching 944 beneficiaries ↑ <i>Ad hoc</i> training in several aspects of protected area</p>

	<p>improved</p> <p>Rating: Moderately Satisfactory MS</p>	<p>management have been provided for 71 beneficiaries</p> <p>↓ No integrated capacity development programmes for PA management developed or implemented</p> <p>Ind.2: Invasive Alien Species control programmes</p> <p>↑ pilot (600 ha) in Mlawula completed, local-scale clearing initiated in Mantenga and Malolotja; as well as local-scale clearing in 4 privately-owned nature reserves, and Luzelweni Chiefdom (<i>needs consolidation and strengthening</i>)</p> <p>Ind. 3: Conservation infrastructure programmes</p> <p>↑ Stretches of fencing supplied to Mantenga and Malolotja national parks, and 8 privately-owned national parks; some road repairs; seed funding to 5 PLOs for fencing, IAPS clearing, game management and fire-fighting equipment and donga rehabilitation</p> <p>Ind.4: Eco-tourism infrastructure, product development and marketing</p> <p>Some tourism infrastructure upgraded at Shewula Mountain Camp, Mhlumeni and Mbuluzi Game Reserve; 5 other community eco-tourism developments are planned, but implementation has been stalled due to a lack of due-diligence</p> <p>Ind.5: biodiversity-based CBNRM programmes</p> <p>2 Community Liaison officers are active in the field; they are working through the CDP engagement process to identify alternative IGA opportunities; so far only a fruit tree programme has been developed, which has weak linkages to the project outcomes and objective, though is well-received by communities</p>
Project Implementation and Adaptive Management	<p>Rating: Moderately Unsatisfactory MU</p>	<p>Currently, several aspects are not leading to efficient and effective delivery of the project objective and outcomes, and most need remedial attention – especially the project implementation management and governance arrangements; financial management, budgeting and record-keeping; tracking and realization of co-finance; the size, composition and mode of operation of the PMU; work-planning; the quality of project reporting; and external project communications.</p>
Sustainability	<p>Rating: Moderately Unlikely MU</p>	<p>There are significant early risks to sustainability, including: poor integration of the project into the operations of SNTC; much of the Chiefdom Development Planning work falls outside of the mandate of SNTC and so cannot be sustained by them after project closure; many of the conservation infrastructure and other PAs strengthening activities are being carried out in a unstrategic way, with lots of small-scale interventions scattered across the country;</p>

5.1.2. Remaining barriers to delivery

Successful delivery in the SNPAS project has been hampered by a number of interlinked issues that have had cascading and cumulative consequences. In most project reports, the key barriers to delivery have been identified as: (i) the delayed start of the project; (ii) high staff turnover (in the PMU, UNDP and SNTC); (iii) early withdrawal of the primary Responsible Party (Big Game Parks - BGP); and (iv) delays in enactment of the SNTC Amendment Bill, which would have allowed for a more diverse set of categories to expand the PA system with broader stakeholder participation.

In 2016, in a commendable effort to develop an over-arching plan for delivery of the entire project (and to accommodate some of the perceived obstacles to implementation described above), the project crafted a *Project Strategy and M&E Plan*. It includes a SWOT analysis of the four 'landscape

clusters', a detailed activity-level set of indicators and targets (with responsibilities and timeframes broadly outlined), a monitoring and reporting plan, and an indicative exit strategy (a 'hand-over' of the project from the PMU to SNTC). The problem with the *Strategy* is that it diverges substantively from the GEF-approved project plan, introducing different outcomes, outputs, and indicators – only some of which overlap with those in the Strategic Results Framework. This has resulted in the project losing its core focus on protected areas.

The impact of these issues has been considerable, but the conclusion of this MTR is that the principal **remaining barriers** to successful delivery are:

- **Limited knowledge of the key concepts and best practices** that should be implemented to deliver on the project objective, resulting in loss of focus and inappropriate strategy.
- **Lack of a detailed, integrated plan to deliver the GEF-approved objective and outcomes** (for the whole project and for each landscape cluster), or a **framework to align the work of the different project partners**. This has resulted in inconsistent and inefficient delivery, weak integration across results areas, and complicated implementation arrangements, with resultant misunderstandings.
- **Weak alignment with other PA-and biodiversity conservation programmes** that have related objectives, and present good opportunities for enhancing SNPAS delivery and catalytic impact
- **Weak management capacity and experience**, resulting in inappropriate or ineffective adaptive management to address challenges, inefficient and unproductive expenditure, poor coordination, and unsatisfactory rate of delivery.
- **Lack of adherence to UNDP-GEF best practices (and some rules) for project and programme cycle management and financial control**, resulting in some inappropriate use of funds; confused implementation and governance arrangements; unclear segregation and duties, lines of responsibility and accountability; and limited ownership by SNTC.

If these barriers are addressed, the other perceived obstacles could be successfully overcome to deliver a positive set of results – even if *all* of the intended targets cannot be met. For this to happen, a **Project Recovery Plan** must be put in place as a **matter of urgency**, before too much more time is lost and budget is spent on activities that do not deliver substantively on the intended outcomes (as approved by the GEF). The key elements of this Project Recovery Plan are outlined below. It will be the responsibility of the Implementing Partner (i.e. the ENTIC), supported by the Project Board (PB), the Project Steering Committee (PSC), UNDP CO and relevant advisors – and with appropriately-timed and equitable participation of stakeholders – to flesh out a detailed Recovery Plan that will direct the implementation of the project between now and its closure. It will also fall to the IP, with the support of the PB, to put in place a sensitive stakeholder engagement plan and 'transition strategy' to ensure that all stakeholders understand the need for the project to be refocussed, and can identify opportunities for productive engagement and project ownership going forward.

5.2. Summary of conclusions and recommendations

General conclusions and recommendations are presented below under four sections: (1) What should the project be doing (Principles, Practices, Products); (2) How should the project enact its business (Processes, People, Partnerships); (3) How can the achievements of the project be sustained (Pathways to Sustainability).

In each section, a tiered set of recommendations and important steps is listed, with brief explanatory notes. There may be other effective measures the project can take, but those presented here represent the 'best minimum set' identified during the MTR. Lead responsibility for each recommendation is indicated in each section.

5.2.1. What should the project be doing? Principles, Practices, Products

KEY OBSERVATION 1: The project must be re-aligned with delivery of the GEF-approved objective and outcomes, guided by an improved indicator and targets framework, clearly-articulated strategic principles, and a comprehensive, over-arching plan for delivery (at project and cluster level)

Key Recommendation 1.1: Strengthen the indicator/target framework and the refine the articulation of some outcomes and outputs, as follows:

- a) Define a comprehensive set of *impact-level*⁵⁰ indicators at objective and outcome level, with realistic targets.

At objective level, the following are recommended:

- Increase in extent of land brought under effective conservation management, according to OECM⁵¹ or IUCN Green Listing Standards⁵² (with time-bound, geographically specific targets set)
 - Improvement in financial sustainability of PAs, as measured by increased Financial Sustainability Scorecard scores (or other suitable indicators drawn from the SNPAS PA Financial Sustainability Strategy)
 - Improved PA management effectiveness, as measured by increased METT scores (or other objective criteria for measuring PA management effectiveness, drawn from PA management plans)
 - Improved systemic and institutional capacity for PA management and planning, measured using the Capacity Development Scorecard (or other suitable criteria)
- b) Refine the articulation of indicators and outputs under Component 2 to reflect a shift in approach from expanding the protected area estate through gazettelement, to placing land and active conservation management, in compliance with international criteria for Other Effective Conservation Measures (with revision to Indicators 2.1 and 2.2).
- c) Focus future activities in three landscape clusters – Lubombo, Ngwempisi and Malolotja, (with selected interventions implemented at Mantenga Reserve and occasionally elsewhere, if indicated) – selecting sets of interventions that are best suited to the opportunities presented in these landscapes (all outcomes do not have to be delivered in all clusters and ‘one size does not fit all’).
- d) Ensure direct alignment between strategic priorities identified at the Strategic Planning Workshop in 2017, with the outcomes in the refined Prodoc SRF, and the integrated plan for delivery, discussed below.

Responsibility for implementation: (i) Revision of the indicator/target framework to be facilitated by the Strategic Technical Advisor, working closely with support of the UNDP Regional Technical advisor, and inputs from the National Project Manager, relevant experts in the Implementing Partner and other stakeholder institutions. External expert opinion may also be sought, if required. (ii) The Project Board is responsible for ensuring the necessary changes are formally adopted and incorporated into a revised SRF; (iii) The UNDP CO Programme Specialist is responsible for ensuring that the revised SRF is submitted for approval by the RTA, the RCS in Addis Ababa and UNDP-GEF-HQ.

Key Recommendation 1.2: Develop an over-arching, plan for delivery, for the whole project, and for each landscape cluster.

This plan should: a) define strategic guiding principles; (b) Identify what should be done, where, by who, when, how, with what result (output) and in delivery of which outcomes; (c) identify and quantify up-front what inputs are required (e.g. human capacity, budget, enabling conditions), and use this information to enable

⁵⁰ Indicators that measure the change that results from a particular intervention or output.

⁵¹ Other Effective Conservation Measures, see:

https://www.iucn.org/.../guidelines_for_recognising_and_reporting_oecms_-_january;
<https://www.iucn.org/.../updates-'other-effective-area-based-conservation-measures'>

⁵² See https://www.iucn.org/sites/dev/files/iucn-gl_brochure_integrated_cov_emailing_2.pdf

accurate costing; and, (d) identify alternative pathways for delivery in the event of enabling conditions not being met.

The plan should be directed to deliver the intended outcomes in ways that are strategic (maximising outcomes relative to investment) and that will have lasting impact. The focus should be first on strengthening what already exists, working in a phased way (i.e. identify a smaller set of interventions that can be successfully delivered before scaling-up), and creating strong alignment with other initiatives such as the Transfrontier Conservation Areas (TFCAs), the planned Biosphere Reserves (See maps in [Annex 10](#)), and existing eco-tourism or CBNRM programmes. Importantly, this plan MUST be developed within the boundaries set by the remaining budget, and should be used to direct annual and quarterly budgeting.

This plan should be supported by a specific **Partnership and Engagement Framework** (See Section 5.2.2).

Responsibility for implementation: (i) The plan should be developed through a properly facilitated process, led by the Strategic Technical Advisor (see Recommendation 2.1) with support of the UNDP RTA, and involvement of the National Project Manager and project staff, key ENTC staff, and other project partners. (ii) The Project Board is responsible for formal approval and adoption of the plan for delivery.

Recommendations and key activities to guide revision of the indicator/targets framework and develop the overall plan for delivery:

Recommendation 1.2.1: Re-direct areas of work that currently do not deliver substantively on the GEF-approved objective or outcomes

(Responsibility for specific activities will be determined during the development of the project delivery plan)

1: To harness the momentum created through the development of CDPs and harness their potential to support delivery of appropriate CBNRM programmes, SNPAS should:

- a) **Discontinue leading and funding the development of CDPs⁵³, and redirect efforts to *identify and support a modest number of conservation-related CBNRM projects* in selected Chiefdoms (for which SNPAS has developed CDPs).**

Note: It is essential that an timely and sensitive process be put in place to manage stakeholder expectations, and to hand over responsibility as quickly as possible to national agencies that carry a mandate for and have budget to lead these processes – i.e. SWADE and MTAD).

Key steps will be to:

- Focus on developing at least one **small set of interlinked CBNRM projects in Ngwempisi Cluster**, centred on the Ngwempisi Wilderness Area and the proposed development of eco-tourism facilities (See Annex 9 for suggestions).
- **Strengthen the existing project at Shewula** (where there has already been investment by SNPAS and other programmes, and where further support is needed to bring the project to full potential), and **consolidate the programme of work being carried out at Mhlumeni** (to consolidate previous investments and complement activities supported through other partners such as Peace parks Foundation and GIZ).
- **Appoint a suitably capacitated ‘CBNRM mentor’/‘technical/stewardship officer’** in each of the targeted landscape clusters, to ensure that the community groups are well supported in the operation of their ecotourism and CBNRM-related activities. (The roles of these officers could be consistent with the Community Liaison Officer positions as described in the Prodoc; they should work in close association with the SNTC Community Outreach Officers and relevant SEA and MoA officers; and should have a strong physical presence in the landscapes where they work. The appointments may not need to be full-time).

⁵³ The CDP as a product in itself makes only a small contribution to advancing the project’s objective, and the return on investment for SNPAS is too low. SNPAS should also discontinue funding CDP-related training for officials from other agencies, and co-facilitating the National CDP Coordinating Committee.

As a general principle, alternative livelihood projects should be *directly linked to other areas of project activity*⁵⁴ such as the establishment of new nature reserves, ecotourism products, IAPS clearing, wetland protection, improved rangeland management and so on (examples of indicative activities are provided in [Annex 9](#)), with a clear set of indicators for measuring *impact* (e.g. improved household incomes; number of people employed in new businesses; reduction in number of food insecure days, etc). Each project must have a succinct but well-structured business plan to be developed in collaboration with communities at the start.

- b) Curtail investment in the *Fruit Tree Project***, with an appropriate ***handover strategy*** put in place to manage stakeholder expectations and transfer responsibility to more relevant institutions (e.g. MoA, NAMBOARD), and redirect investment to other CBNRM activities.

Recommendation 1.2.2: Consolidate, replicate and scale up successful pilots (e.g. building the biodiversity knowledge base, development of PA management plans, IAPS clearing, wetland protection)

(Responsibilities for specific activities to be determined during development of the project delivery plan)

1: To consolidate and maximise impact of the *knowledge platform* (Component 1), SNPAS should:

- c)** Facilitate incorporation of the biodiversity data and map products that have been generated through SNPAS (consolidated with other available data - e.g. long term ecological monitoring data collected by All out Africa, UNISWA and others) into **a national synthesis of Eswatini's biodiversity resources**, made available through the GIS-based portal (this could be driven by a small working group convened by the project and led by the SNTC GIS manager and ecologist).
- d)** **Ensure that the administration and hosting rights for the GIS-platform are migrated to SNTC** as a matter of urgency – ***this should be escalated to an intervention led by UNDP CO (who contracted the consultant), SNTC CEO and the PS.***
- e)** **Ensure that appropriate data-sharing agreements are put in place**, and conduct a proactive campaign to encourage data-sharing (GIS SNTC Manager, supported by SNPAs PMU).
- f)** **Identify remaining gaps** in the enabling knowledge base and engage relevant partners (SNTC, SEA, STA, the Department of Forestry, UNISWA, SWADE, COSPE etc) under expert guidance of a protected area resource economist, to undertake an *evaluation of ecosystem services provided by national parks* (could be expanded to other protected areas/landscapes later). The evaluation should build on existing data and expert knowledge.

2: To maximise the impact of *PA management planning* (Component 2, Indicator 3) SNPAS should:

- a)** Fast-track the validation of the *PA management plans* for Mlawula, Mantenga and Malolotja.
- b)** Facilitate comprehensive training of SNTC staff and other PA managers to develop, implement and monitor the effectiveness of PA management plans.

3: To scale up the impact and sustainability of investments in *IAPS clearing* (Component 3), SNPAS should:

- a)** **Consolidate** IAPS clearing/de-bushing activities at carefully targeted sites (e.g. at least in the three SNTC national parks, and possibly neighbouring nature reserves) with emphasis on increased coverage and provision for follow-ups, and development of monitoring guidelines.
- b)** **Build the enabling environment for longer-term management of IAPS**, and lay the foundation for Eswatini's full participation regional programmes to control biological invasions⁵⁵ by:

⁵⁴ Or related programmes of work supported by other partners. It is essential that the SNPAS investments are not 'piecemeal'.

⁵⁵ The regional programme to control biological invasions, that is being developed by CABI (Centre for Agriculture and Bioscience International)

- Providing funding for a delegation from Eswatini to participate in a **learning exchange** to the Centre for Biological Invasions in Durban (South Africa) to enhance their knowledge of best practices for integrated control of biological invasions. The delegation should include representatives from, *inter alia*, SNTC (ecologists and protected area managers), Department of Forestry, SEA, UNISWA, the NDMA (Natural Disaster Management Agency).
- Supporting a multi-disciplinary *expert workshop*, led by a suitable regional specialist, to **develop an Integrated Strategy for Control of Biological Invasions in Eswatini** (with national parks as key 'nodes')
- Supporting development and implementation of an **awareness-raising and education programme** for decision-makers, farmers, and other land managers (e.g. private and communal nature reserves).

4: To scale-up the impact of wetland protection pilots (Component 3), SNPAS could:

- a) Support the development of a **National Wetlands Protection, Management and Rehabilitation Plan/Policy** (feeding in lessons learnt from the wetland protection pilots conducted so far) – the policy should include a set of practical, field-based indicators for monitoring wetland health
- b) **Consolidate wetland protection work** in selected landscape clusters, (prioritising wetlands in or adjacent to conservation areas), and **train wetland management committees and landowners in monitoring wetland health**, develop plans for sustainable harvesting of wetland resources, and use these as a springboard for developing small-businesses linked to sustainable use of wetland resources (this could serve as a catalyst for work to be carried out under the developing Global Climate Fund-supported project in which Tinkhundla Resilience Plans will be developed).

5: To maximise the impact of investments in conservation and ecotourism infrastructure, (Components 2 and 3), SNPAS should:

- a) Give **high priority to making significant investments (complemented by contributions from other partners) in the rehabilitation and development of existing and new capital infrastructure**, according to prioritised needs, supported by strong professional management, and 'ring-fenced' budget for maintenance of facilities. In line with the recommendations made in the SNPAS PA Financial Sustainability Report, **top priority** must be given to:
 - **Rehabilitation of SNTC facilities at Mantenga, Malolotja and Mlawula National Parks.** The country's existing national parks should set the benchmark for the standard of conservation and eco-tourism infrastructure in protected areas. The detailed recommendations included in Chapter 5, section 5.9 of the PA *Financial Sustainability Report* (Prof. Brian Huntley, 2017) should guide this work closely, working in close consultation with Senior Wardens and hospitality managers.
 - **Phased development of community-eco-tourism facilities at prioritised sites** (selected in line with biodiversity value, and feasibility), as determined by the financial sustainability studies and business plans (awaiting finalisation), which must be followed strictly (with appropriate community engagement processes put in place to ensure ownership). A likely phasing, would be: (i) In Ngwempisi Cluster, rehabilitate Khelekhele and Khopo and build a rest-facility at Ntfungula (working through the partnership with STA) with these facilities linked by a system of hiking trails (which should link with other trails programmes already operating in the area); (ii) At Shewula and Mhlumeni consolidate infrastructure (and tourism products), complementing investments made by other partners, and working through capacitated institutions who are already active in the area; (iii) Developments at Mvembili and then Mahamba, should form a later phase of the programme, subject to budget availability. (Plan for delivery to be developed by the STA-SNPAS team, under guidance of the PA Financial Sustainability studies and Business Plans, with approval of the Project Board.

Note: the community eco-tourism projects are high-profile and high-risk, and significant prior investments have been made, some without sustained success – it is essential that the SNPAS-supported projects are managed carefully and do not repeat mistakes that were made before.

Key steps will be to ensure that:

- A realistic calculation is made of the **budget** that can be allocated to these developments, without compromising delivery of other outcomes.

- The **contractual and management arrangements**, lines of reporting and accountability are clarified and formalised.
 - The STA, Microprojects and SNPAS PMU manager **plan jointly** (working to a structured and detailed joint work programme – including tasks, schedules, milestones, responsibilities), and undertake **joint supervision missions**, and **report jointly** on progress to the PSC/PB
 - The role of the **quality assessor** (currently called a ‘Construction Supervisor’) is clarified and formalised (as part of the joint arrangements).
 - SEA should be proactively engaged to ensure **environmental due diligence is being performed**
 - Regular **communication with the beneficiary communities** is maintained (e.g. delegated community representatives should be involved in at least some monitoring missions), and efforts are made to harness capacity that exists in the communities to participate actively in construction (i.e. using local thatchers, carpenters, etc...).
 - The **eco-tourism developments are used as ‘nodes’** around which viable eco-tourism products, or CBNRM-projects, are centred (these may be supported through SNPAS, or other programmes active in the area – including those driven by SNTC, the private sector, TFCA programmes or others).
- b) Consolidate support to private landowners to enhance conservation infrastructure in order to** meet an agreed ‘minimum set’ of standards for essential equipment/infrastructure, through well-tracked a system of matching grants awarded according to specific criteria (within the bounds of the budget that can be made available, guided by proportional allocations in the Prodoc). Priority should be given to:
- Providing support for a workshop with landowners at which the criteria can be developed – guided by the METTs, standards for OECMs, and so on.
 - Consolidating support to landowners who have already received support (prioritising the 5 gazetted private reserves, and informal reserves that have already received support), followed by areas that are named in the Prodoc as important – Muti Muti, Manzenyama etc.

Recommendation 1.2.3: Adopt a fresh approach to areas of work in which delivery has been slow (bringing new land under conservation management; strengthening conservation and ecotourism infrastructure, capacity development and CBNRM projects).

(Responsibility for specific activities will be determined during development of the project delivery plan).

1: To effectively expand the protected area estate, SNPAS should:

- a) Shift the focus from gazette⁵⁶ of new protected areas, to bringing more land under active conservation management, in compliance with internationally-recognised standards for creating a pathway to protection such as OECMs (Other Effective Conservation Measures) and the IUCN Green Listing Standard.**

Key steps will be to:

- **Strategically prioritise** a modest number of sites at which to work, with key criteria being to:
 - Contribute to strengthening the existing *Transboundary Conservation Area projects* (Malolotja-Somgimvelo, and Lubombo), and lay the foundation for securing nomination of these mountain landscapes as *Biosphere Reserves* (under the UNESCO Biosphere Programme) – this is fully consistent with the objectives of the SNPAS project, maximises the catalytic effect of SNPAS and creates a secure avenue to sustainability for the gains that the SNPAS project can make.
 - Enable communities and other landowners who have committed land for conservation, to be recognised as part of the formal protected area network.

⁵⁶ The SNTC Amendment Bill is unlikely to be enacted in the remaining lifespan of the project. Whilst it is still possible to gazette protected areas under current legislation – SNTC Act and the Game Act – these do not recognise some of the more flexible PA categories

For these reasons it is strongly recommended that:

- In Lubombo and Malolotja Clusters, prioritise those sites that form critical nodes (either as core conservation areas or buffers) in the developing Biosphere Reserve domains (See maps⁵⁷ in Annex 10) – and that align with priorities already identified in the Prodoc, starting with those that are already ‘informal’ nature reserves or have been earmarked for conservation (e.g. Shewula, Mhlumeni, Mambane).
- In Ngwempisi, select (as a start) one key area that has been assigned for nature conservation in a CDP, and is ranked as being of high biodiversity value (e.g. Luzelweni/Ntfungula, Makhonjwa Mountain), before adding others (It takes a long time to bring a new area under active conservation management).

Key steps will be to:

- **Convene a joint planning session to develop a structured plan** for delivery of this component of work, as follows:
 - Key participants should include SNTC CEO, SNTC DOP and CMU, SNPAS PMU, TFCA and Biosphere programme co-ordinators, relevant conservancies and other key partners .
 - The plan should specify sites, tasks, milestones, responsibilities, stakeholder engagement strategy, costs), and should be practicable, and maximise opportunities for collaboration.
- **Identify a suitable partner**, with demonstrable experience in applying these approaches, to run a training session for the project implementers (training could include learning exchanges to cross-border sites where these methods have been applied).
- **Assign one PMU staff member as the SNPAS Co-ordinator** for this component of work and ensure that they are adequately capacitated to do so.
- Where necessary engage **responsible parties/partners** to augment SNTC capacity to implement this programme of work.

This programme of work will contribute to meeting Objective-level targets and targets under Component 2.

2: To facilitate the establishment of streamlined landscape management structures, SNPAS should:

- a) **Bring key stakeholders in each landscape cluster together in forums that provide a vehicle for information sharing and communication, joint priority-setting and problem-solving, reporting progress and sharing lessons.** (Component 2, Indicator 3)

Key steps will be to:

Convene a facilitated workshop in each cluster, to introduce the concept, establish stakeholder interest and **set up a Landscape Networking ‘Forum’**⁵⁸ in each cluster. Where existing governance mechanisms exist (e.g. established conservancies or associations, or community leadership structures that have legitimacy and credibility), these could play a leadership and mentorship role, with facilitation support from SNPAS, rather than setting up new structures.

- Assist with **resourcing the establishment of Secretariat Services for TFCAs and developing Biospheres**, as these over-arching landscape-scale mechanisms will provide the pathway to sustainability for the gains made by SNPAS. This will help build SNTC’s capacity to deliver on its mandate to coordinate Eswatini’s involvement in TFCAs in the Malalotja and Lubombo landscapes, and to take the lead in the establishment of Biosphere Reserves in these areas. This would maximise the catalytic impact of SNPAS.

3: To improve capacity for effective PA management, and provision of high-quality eco-tourism services, SNPAS should:

⁵⁷ It is strongly recommended that the ‘boundaries’ of the Malolotja and Lubombo Clusters be aligned with the domains for the proposed Biosphere Reserves

⁵⁸ These Forums should bring together all relevant land users in the cluster – private, state and communal. Where there are multiple Chiefdoms – such as Ngwempisi, the first step may be to establish an inter-Chiefdom Forum, and then link that with other landowners.

- a) **Adopt a learning-by-doing approach to systematically enhance skills and knowledge, by leveraging the capacity of local and regional partners to provide workplace-based training, promote peer-learning and provide active mentorship**

Key steps will be to:

- **Convene a workshop of key SNPAS partners** to identify and prioritise capacity development needs for improved PA management (in line with broad categories identified in the Prodoc).
- **Identify suitable partners and set in place a structured programme** of 'learning by 'doing', including field-based learning, exchanges, formal lectures and training sessions, participation in webinars

Potential Partnerships to be pursued could include:

- SGHRA/LC/SNTC/BGP: can provide practical training to strengthen enforcement and monitoring of wildlife crime, and roll out of the SMART patrolling system (a trainer from the South African Wildlife College could also be engaged where necessary)
- All-out-Africa and UNISWA: can assist with field based training for ecological monitoring of key ecosystems in national parks and other conservation-worthy landscapes (the research centre at Mbuluzi could be used as a field base for work in the Lubombo Cluster)
- Dept. Forestry, SEA, private landowners: on-the-ground training in IAPS clearing/de-bushing
- Conservation-Outcomes (an NGO leading biodiversity stewardship and PA expansion and management programmes in northern KwaZulu Natal⁵⁹), could provide mentorship and field-based training in establishing agreements with land owners and communities to bring land under active conservation management; training in meeting OECM or IUCN Green Listing Standard criteria.
- Established lodge operators can provide training in hospitality-related aspects of ecotourism, development of tourism products
- All out Africa: training of field guides

5.2.2. How should the project direct its business? Processes, People and Partnerships

KEY OBSERVATION 2: Project implementation arrangements and adaptive strategies need significant corrective action to improve efficiency and cost-effectiveness, transparency and accountability; establish strong and lasting partnerships for effective delivery; and embed SNPAS nationally in all relevant institutions to ensure strong ownership across government, the private sector and civil society.

Key Recommendation 2.1: As a matter of urgency, strengthen strategic and technical leadership function within the project's organisational structure through appointment of a suitably qualified and experienced, senior Strategic/Technical Co-ordinator or Director⁶⁰

It is critical that the RIGHT person is found bring good strategic focus and technical oversight to the project.

Technical competency and experience: the incumbent should have demonstrable technical knowledge and experience (minimum 10 years) in: protected area planning and management, biodiversity stewardship, TFCAs, biosphere reserves, community eco-tourism and related agro-ecological community development arenas; strategic planning, project and programme cycle management (especially big-budget, complex, donor-funded projects – e.g. GEF, UNDP, World Bank, GIZ).

⁵⁹ Conservation Outcomes: See www.conservation-outcomes.org

⁶⁰ The current Technical Advisor, (or other experts within-country) if still willing, may be requested to provide review inputs on a case-by-case basis – e.g. reviewing specific documents. This will release funds for appointment of the Senior Technical Advisor as detailed in (i) above.

Other competencies: Staff supervision and developmental mentorship skills; excellent communication skills (verbal and written). Ideally, this person should be based in Eswatini and should be well-networked in the biodiversity community, with established involvement in other protected area-related programmes (to provide for strategic linkage – which is critical for building a pathway to sustainability to any SNPAS outcomes).

This should be a part-time (approx. 50%) appointment (although time inputs initially may be more intensive), but the person should be able to dedicate a fixed number of days per month, on a flexible basis, to the project, and can be regularly present (physically) to the team. The Advisor/Director should work alongside the SNTC CEO, and be in regular consultation with the PS and the UNDP CO.

Responsibility for implementation: UNDP CO and ENTC CEO/Executive, and Project Board, with participation of the UNDP RTA.

Key Recommendation 2.2: As a matter of priority, strengthen project management capacity and management systems (with special attention to financial management and administration, workplanning and M&E)

1: To improve Financial Management and Reporting, it is recommended that:

a) **Urgently convene a joint supervision mission involving the project RTA, the Senior Advisor for Project and Programme Cycle Management (Mr Sineesh Varghese) and the Programme Associate (Ms Hiwot Gebremeskel) from the UNDP Regional Service Centre in Addis Ababa to work with the PMU, SNTC ExCo, UNDP CO staff; and the GEF OFP to:**

- **resolve all budgeting and financial planning and reporting issues** and help the project develop a revised budget, that is in substantial compliance with the agreed proportional allocations to Components and budget lines in the Prodoc, and aligned with the reconfigured programme of work;
- **develop effective systems and tools** for internal tracking of expenditure;
- provide training in the correct application of the *GEF Guidelines for Project and Programme Cycle Management* and all other relevant UNDP-GEF Financial Control Rules;
- develop a set of standards and a **clear and simple guidelines for results-based M&E** and Reporting
- **Provide specific guidance to the National Project Manager** to strengthen general capacity for project management, M&E and reporting.

Lead responsibility for convening the mission: UNDP CO, in consultation with the IP, and participation of the UNDP RTA and the UNDP Programme Associate. Specific responsibility for individual activities will be determined during the mission.

2: To strengthen project management and ensure effective deployment of PMU staff, the project should:

a) **As a matter of priority, revise the staffing structure of the PMU and develop instruments to enhance internal management arrangements**

Key steps will be to:

- **Re-size (reduce) and re-configure the staff complement of the PMU**, to be in closer compliance with the structure outlined in the Prodoc, and re-align staff TORs to fit the renewed focus of the project, with a clearer segregation of duties (all changes must be properly documented in a detailed organizational chart, with appropriate contractual amendments/agreements put in place); deployment of the existing managerial staff and CLOs could be creatively adapted to drive forward the re-focussed programme of work
- **Document the revised management arrangements in an organizational chart**, and ensure this is well communicated among partner institutions; set up a team *Code of Practice (or set of Standard Operating Procedures)* for internal lines of reporting, external communications, setting up consultancy contracts/partnership agreements, approval procedures etc...

- Working from the over-arching plan for delivery, **develop a detailed, task-based work plan for the PMU as a whole and for each staff member** and use to inform the development of the Annual Workplans required by UNDP, and guide regular project management team meetings.
- **Upskill the core project staff** to develop a deeper understanding of relevant concepts, through a training, learning exchanges and mentorship by the Strategic/Technical Advisor.

Lead responsibility: UNDP CO and ENTC Executive, working in close consultation with project staff and with support of project STA and UNDP RTA. Responsibilities for specific activities to be determined during post-MTR supervision mission.

b) Strengthen M&E, Reporting, work-planning and knowledge management functions to ensure stronger alignment with project outcomes and more streamlined and coherent operations:

Key steps will be to:

- **Develop a simple but precise M&E/Reporting roster/schedule that indicates:** each Reporting requirement/M&E task; due date; who is responsible; to whom the report must be sent; any requirement for follow up action (and record if this has been done); date approved (if approval required); the output/indicator to which this contributes; date uploaded to the project's knowledge management system. This roster should be maintained electronically, with copies sent to all staff (and the Senior Strategy/Technical Advisor and the PSC Chairperson), and should be updated at least weekly by the NPM.
- Develop a **centralized project information management system**, in which soft and hard copies of all key project documents are stored, with an easy-access guide so that items can be quickly accessed
- Maintain a **consolidated risks and lessons learnt log**, and use this to inform work-planning and adaptive management. (A template for the risks and lessons log should be developed and it should be updated quarterly, ahead of preparation of the next workplan and budget).
- **Streamline the management arrangements for contracts and agreements**, clarifying roles, lines of reporting and accountability and expected deliverables and timelines.
- **Convene a proactive, joint work-planning session with key partners** ahead of preparation of the Annual Workplan each year, and each quarter – this should involve all partners who are responsible for delivery of any components of the overall workplan, and should be held separately from the PSC meetings.

Lead responsibility: National Project Manager, with support of project STA, ENTC counterparts, UNDP CO

c) Enhance effective project governance by ensuring clear segregation of duties and effective communication between the Project Board and Project Steering Committee

Key steps will be to:

- **Re-visit the TORs of the PB and PSC to ensure clear segregation of duties** - the PB should take lead responsibility for GOVERNANCE, and the PSC should take lead responsibility for TECHNICAL support. The clarified TORs should be accompanied by a simple but clear set of standard operating procedures reflecting lines of communication, responsibility, authority and accountability.
- **The PB and PSC should hold one joint sitting a year** (as proposed by the PB previously), preferably in December, to consider the AWP and budget and Q1 Workplan and Budget for the next year (to ensure that these are submitted in compliance with deadlines in the UNDP budget cycle)
- **The Secretariat (PMU) must ensure that all documentation for PB and PSC meetings is prepared timeously** and submitted to members at least two weeks ahead of time, to enable members to be adequately prepared for the meeting.
- **The quality of the PB and PSC meeting minutes should be improved by:** *recording for each actionable item* what must be done, by whom, when and with what expected result; and ensuring that all Minutes are signed timeously once they have been approved by the relevant committee. The NPM should also maintain a running log of 'actionable items', and follow-up proactively with responsible parties between meetings.

Responsibility: Project Board and Secretariat

d) The SNTC must be empowered to take leadership of the project (within the boundaries of its capacity) to enhance transparent and accountable implementation, and promote stronger institutional absorption of the project:

- **All direct execution duties should be transferred to SNTC** (unless there are circumstances that mitigate against this), with UNDP CO playing an *implementation support role* as outlined in the GEF (2017) Guidelines for Project and Programme Cycle Management. If it is anticipated that Direct Support Services will still be required from UNDP CO, these must be formally requested by the IP, specified and costed out, with approval obtained from the GEF.
- The **National Project Manager should report directly to the SNTC CEO** (with support of the Senior Technical/Strategic Advisor), and should consult regularly with the UNDP CO and the Chairperson of the PB.
- **Empower the SNTC Chief Financial Officer to play a more active role in project budgeting, financial reporting** (working in association with the SNTC CEO, the new Strategic/Technical Advisor, and with support from UNDP CO, after appropriate training in application of UNDP-GEF rules).
- **Take steps to ensure that the institutional identity of the PMU lies with SNTC**, and empower the SNTC CEO (with support of the Senior Technical/Strategic Advisor) to play a stronger line management function (i.e. SNPAS is a GEF-financed, UNDP-supported project led by the SNTC on behalf of the Government of Eswatini).

Responsibilities to be assigned during post-MTR supervision mission.

Key Recommendation 2.3: SNPAS must develop strong, working partnerships for implementation with key agents of change in the conservation community, and provide a more dynamic platform for active collaboration and networking between all stakeholders in Eswatini's biodiversity and ecotourism sectors.

- Strengthen existing partnerships** (e.g. STA, SEA, Lubombo Conservancy, SGRA) and nurture new ones with agents of change who can serve as responsible parties or collaborators (e.g. Peace Parks Foundation, Conservation Outcomes, All Out Africa; SWIFT, GIZ).
- Nurture and support partners** through proactive networking, constructive engagement, joint visioning and problem solving, and regular communication.
- Develop a practical Partnership Framework and Engagement Plan** that identifies key partners, describes their roles (relative to the project), lines of responsibility and accountability, and terms of engagement. The Framework should also outline clear criteria with which any project supported by SNPAS should comply.
- Develop a Communication Strategy** for communicating project progress both internally and externally, using varied media tools (newsletter, email, FB page, mobile phone technology), and other mechanisms for sharing information and promoting collaboration (e.g. Landscape Cluster Forums).

Responsibility: National Project Manager and project team, working with support of ENTC counterparts and project STA

5.2.3. Pathways to sustainability

KEY OBSERVATION 3: The SNPAS project is in a state of transition and re-adjustment, and must put in place effective measures to address short-term transition, and an 'absorption plan' to strengthen institutional ownership and promote long term sustainability

Key Recommendation 3.1. The SNTC, PMU, UNDP, and Project Board, supported by the UNDP RTA and the RSC partners, should develop a management response to the MTR, and an action plan to activate the Project Recovery Plan, and ensure that partners and stakeholders remain appropriately informed and engaged.

- The steps for developing the Management Response are laid out in the UNDP Guidance Manual for conducting MTRs. **It is recommended** that the findings of the MTR should be thoroughly workshopped

by the PMU, ENTC, UNDP, PB and PSC, and the Management Response developed, before a broader consultation process is initiated.

- b) Activation of the Project Recovery Plan involves many steps, all of which are important, and some of which will run concurrently. For each of the recommendations and key steps adopted, responsibility and timelines must be assigned.

The most urgent first steps of the action plan will be:

- Strengthen Strategic/Technical Capacity in the project's organisational framework by bringing on board the Senior Technical/Strategic Advisor/Director (**Responsibility:** UNDP, SNTC CEO, PB)
- Re-configure and strengthen the operational procedures and technical/management capacity of the PMU (**Responsibility:** ENTC CEO, Strategic/Technical Advisor, UNDP, PB)
- Convene the joint post-MTR supervision mission by the RTA and Programme Support staff from the UNDP Regional Service Centre (**Responsibility** UNDP CO)
- Resolve governance and implementation arrangements (**Responsibility:** PB/ENTC CEO/UNDP)
- Develop a re-focussed project plan and other supporting frameworks and plans (**Responsibility:** Senior Strategic/Technical advisor (lead), NPM, ENTC, UNDP CO and partners)
- Keep stakeholders well-informed at appropriate intervals (Responsibility: NPM and ENTC leadership)

Key Recommendation 3.2: The project should use participatory methods to develop an 'absorption' strategy/sustainability plan, which identifies measures to mitigate risks to sustainability, and ensures that SNPAS is fully integrated into the vision and operational plans of the SNTC and all relevant partner institutions.

The sustainability plan (which must embrace financial, institutional, social and environmental sustainability) should be developed collaboratively, and should include: objectives, key steps, responsibilities, milestones and timelines, and a resource plan. **Lead responsibility:** National Project Manager and project staff, ENTC Executive, supported by Project STA

Annex 1: ToR for the MTR Report (Appended as a separate file)

Annex 2: List of documents reviewed during the MTR

<i>No</i>	<i>Report Name</i>	<i>No of reports</i>
1.	PIF and UNDP Initiation Plan	1
2.	Approved UNDP Project Document (supported by GEF approval documents, DoA Letter, UNDP-SNTC LoA	4
3.	UNDP Environmental and Social Screening Results.	1
4.	Relevant GEF tracking tools (METT and Financial Sustainability Scorecards) – completed for 6 PAs	Composite spreadsheet
5.	Project Inception Report	1
6.	Any MOU's or other contractual arrangements relating to project implementation (MOUs between SNTC and: SG; ESRI; COSPE; STA; SEA; UNISWA, SWADE).	7
7.	Co-financing Commitment Letters (Main letter, SNTC, SEA, BGP and SNTC).	5
8.	All Project Implementation Reports (PIRs x2) and Annual Progress Reports (APRs x3).	5
9.	Quarterly progress reports (x12); workplans and budgets (x11) and any other narrative progress reports or monitoring reports (x15).	38
10.	Financial Reports (x3 annual and x9 quarterly reports), Audit Reports (x3).	18
11.	Financial and Administration Guidelines used by the Project.	5
12.	Oversight mission reports (e.g. by Technical Adviser x2) and Prof Brian Huntley (x4).	6
13.	Minutes of Project Board (x8) and Project Steering Committee meetings (x23).	31
14.	Minutes of any other relevant meetings (e.g. Project Appraisal Committee; Workshop to amend the Strategic Results Framework, Project Management Unit meetings x 26).	26
15.	Specialist Reports developed by project consultants (x6).	6
16.	Contracts with private land owners (x5).	5
17.	Contracts with contractors (x5).	5
18.	Project communications products or other documents relating to project outputs (e.g. newsletters, press releases, technical reports, quarterly indicators (x2) manuals, CDP (x6) etc...).	6
19.	Project operational guidelines (financial, administrative etc...).	5
20.	Various correspondence	multiple
Supporting documents:		
21.	UNDP Country Program Action Plan (CPAP) for Swaziland.	1
22.	The National Development Strategy of Eswatini (including the King's Vision 2022).	1
23.	Swaziland's National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan.	1
24.	UNDP (2014). Guidance Document for conducting Midterm Reviews of GEF-financed projects	1
25.	GEF (2017) Guidelines for Project and Programme Cycle Management	1
26.	Other publications as cited in the footnotes of the report	multiple

Annex 3: In-country Mission Itineraries

Date in 2018	Time	Name of Institution/Site	Location	Purpose
MISSION 1				
Mon 11	08.00 – 10.00	SNPAS PMU	Lobamba	Introductory (group) meeting (12 staff)
	10.00 – 11.00	SNTC CEO, Dr Cliff Dlamini	Lobamba	Introductory Individual Meeting
	11.30 – 13.00	UNDP CO	Mbabane	Introductory (group) Meeting with UNDP CO representatives (RR, DRR, PS)
	14.00 – 15.30	SNTC, Thulani Methula	Lobamba	Introductory Meeting with Director of Parks (also former project manager)
	15.30 – 17.00	SNTC	Lobamba	Meeting with SNTC Conservation Management Unit (Senior Wardens, Ecologist, GIS manager, Community Outreach and Environmental Education Manager)
Tues 12	09.00 – 10.30	MTEA Permanent Secretary, Mr Emmanuel Dlamini	Mbabane	Individual Meeting with the Project Board Chairperson – Permanent Secretary
	11.30-13.00	STA (Sipho Simelane) SEA (Simon Matsebula)	Mbabane	Group Meeting, as representatives of the PSC, and partners for Khelekhele, Khopho, Mahamba, Ntfungula and Mvembili Projects
	14.30 – 16.00	MTEA – Forestry: Solomon Gamedze, Nkosinathi Cele	Mbabane	Meeting to discuss IAPS and forest protection
		MTEA - GEF OFP: Hlobisile Sikhosana	Mbabane	Interview: alignment
Wed 13	10.30 – 14.00	Lubombo Conservancy/ Mbuluzi Game Reserve/SGRA: Tal Fineburg	Mbuluzi Game Reserve, Lubombo Cluster	Site visit (private game reserve) and stakeholder interview (Lubombo Conservancy/Game Ranchers Association); visit to IAPS clearing sites, upgraded campsite and research centre
	15.00 – 19.00	Shewula Community	Shewula Mountain Camp	Site visit to community nature reserve and eco-lodge, community interviews
Thurs 14	09.00 – 11.00	SNTC: Mlawula National Park	Magadzavane, Lubombo Cluster	Site visit to state-managed national park; inspect IAPS clearing, meet with Senior Warden and staff
	14.00 – 15.00	SNTC: Mantenga Nature Reserve	Ezulwini	Site visit to SNTC-managed national park; interviews with park management and staff

Date in 2018	Time	Name of Institution/Site	Location	Purpose
	15.00 – 17.00	UNDP – Programme Specialist and Policy Analyst: Gugulethu Dlamini; Sithembiso Gina	Mbabane	Interview with current and past Programme Analysts
Fri 15	09.00 – 10.30	Velezizweni Community	Velezizweni Chiefdom, Ngwempisi Cluster	Meeting with community
	14.00 – 16.30	COSPE : Bheki Maduma; Richard Masemole	Lobamba	Meeting with responsible party (NGO) working in Lubombo Cluster
Sat 16	09.30 – 13.00	Luzelweni Chiefdom	Luzelweni Chiefdom	Group interview and site visit to Ntfungula Mountain
Sun 17	Compilation of data			
Mon 18	10.00 – 12.00	SNTC: Malolotja Nature Reserve	Malolotja	Site visit to SNTC-managed national park and TFCA area; interviews with park warden and tourism staff
	14.00 – 16.30	Mvembili Community	Mvembili Chiefdom (Malolotja Cluster)	Group interview
Tues 19	09.00 – 12.00	Mr Matt MacGinn, Dombeya Private Nature Reserve	Mafutseni	Site visit to private nature reserve and stakeholder interview (recipient of catalytic seed funding)
	18.00 – 20.30	UNDP : Lars Tushuizen, Gugulethu Dlamini	Mbabane	Strategy meeting with DRR and Programme Analyst
Weds		SNTC	Lobamba	Follow-up interviews (separate meetings) with CEO and Director of Parks
Thurs		NMP, PM		
MISSION 2:				
Mon23	13.00 – 17.00	Rod de Vletter	Phophonyane Falls Nature Reserve, Piggs Peak (Malolotja Cluster)	Site visit to private nature reserve proclaimed in 2015, interview private land owner and former co-ordinator of Eco-Lubombo Programme
Tue 24	13.00 – 14.30	Mhlumeni Community Trust and staff	Mhlumeni Mountain Camp	Site visit to community eco-tourism facility and interviews with staff and community trust members
	15.00 – 17.00	Lubombo Conservancy : Community Representative - Nomsa Mabila	Magadzavane, Mlawula National Park	Interview and Mhlumeni site Visit
		Lubombo TFCA :Seth Maphalala		Interview and Mhlumeni site visit
Wed 25	09.00 – 10.30	MTAD: Mlangeni Gamedze, Cebisile Ginindza	Ministry of Tinkhundla Administration and	Interviews (Chiefdom Development Planning)

Date in 2018	Time	Name of Institution/Site	Location	Purpose
			Development	
	11.30 – 13.00	SWADE: Norman Mavuso and Lyn Khota	Manzini	Interviews (Chiefdom Development Planning)
	14.30 – 15.00	MTEA Legal Advisor: Constance Dlamini	Mbabane	Interview
	16.00 – 17.30	SNPAS PMU: Fikile Mazibuko (FAA)	Ezulwini	Interview: Project Finance and Admin Officer
	18.30 – 20.30	Kim Roques, Director All out Africa Foundation	Ezulwini	Interview (Director of NGO, former warden at Mlawula)
Thurs 26	09.30 – 10.30	SNTC: Zakhe Dlamini (GIS officer)	Lobamba	Demonstration of GIS lab, data portal and SMART patrolling system
	11.00 – 12.00	SNTC: Mandla Makhanya (TFCA Coordinator)	Lobamba	TFCA/Mlawula Park Warden
	14.00 – 15.00	MTEA Principal Secretary	Mbabane	debrief
	16.30 – 17.30	UNDP: Lars Tushuizen and Gugulethu Dlamini	Mbabane	Preparation for wrap up
Fri 27	08.30	SNTC EXCO	Lobamba	Debrief
	11.00	UNDP, SNTC and project managers	Lobamba	Group Debrief
	13.00	SNPAS PMU	Lobamba	Team Debrief
	15.00 – 17.00	Big Game Parks: Mrs Liz Reilly and Ann Reilly	Mlilwane Game Sanctuary	Interview and site visit to BGP national park

BGP: Big Game Parks; MTEA: Ministry of Tourism and Environment Affairs; SNPAS PMU: SNPAS Project Management Unit; SNTC: Swaziland National Trust Commission; STA: Swaziland Tourism Association; SEA: Swaziland Environment Authority; UNDP CO: United Nations Development Programme Country Office; TFCA: Transfrontier Conservation Area; SWADE: Swaziland Water and Agriculture Development Enterprise; MTAD: Ministry of Tinkhundla Administration and Development

Annex 4: List of Stakeholders Interviewed during the MTR

Stakeholder name	Institution/community	Role/position
Mr Emmanuel Dlamini	Ministry of Tourism and Environmental Affairs (MTEA)	Permanent Secretary (Chairperson: SNPAS Project Board)
Ms Hlobisile Skhosana	MTEA	GEF Operational Focal Point
Ms Constance Dlamini	MTEA	Legal Advisor
Mr Solomon Gamedze	MTEA (Forestry)	Senior Forestry Officer & Head of Forestry; SNPAS PSC member
Mr Nkosinathi Cele	MTEA (Forestry)	Forester
Mr Israel Dessalegné	UNDP CO	Resident Representative
Mr Lars Tushuizen	UNDP CO	Deputy Resident Representative
Ms Gugulethu Dlamini	UNDP CO	Programme Analyst (SNPAS focal point)
Ms Sithembiso Gcina	UNCP CO	Policy Advisor (and former SNPAS focal point)
Ms Penny Stock	UNDP	Regional Technical Advisor
Ms Phemo Kgomotso	UNDP (Regional Service Centre for Africa)	Head of EBD : Africa Regional Service Centre, Addis Ababa
Mr Sineesh Varghese	UNDP (Regional Service Centre for Africa)	Senior Advisor: Project Cycle Management
Ms Midori Paxton	UNDP (New York)	Principal Technical Advisor and Head: Ecosystems and Biodiversity, UNDP-GEF Unit
Dr Peter Smith	Climate Change/Ecological Consultant and Chair: IUCN Oceania Regional Commission on Ecosystem Management	Project TA
Professor Brain Huntley	<i>Emeritus</i> Professor and Independent Biodiversity Consultant	Project Management Support Consultant (to SNPAS PMU), and Financial Sustainability consultant
Dr Cliff Dlamini	Swaziland National Trust Commission (SNTC)	Chief Executive Officer (and Chairperson: PSC)
Mr Thulani Methula	SNTC	Director of Parks (and former SNPAS National Project Manager)
Mr Ngwane Dlamini	SNTC	Senior Warden, Malolotja Nature Reserve
Mr Mandla Makhanya	SNTC	Senior Warden, Mlawula Nature Reserve
Mr James Kunene	SNTC	Senior Warden, Mantenga Nature Reserve
Mr Sandile Gumedze	SNTC	Ecologist
Mr Bozake Dlamini	SNTC	GIS Manager
Mr Teddy Dlamini	SNTC	National Environmental Education Officer
Mr Mduduzi Dlamini	SNTC	Maintenance Manager, Mlawula Nature Reserve
Mr Mboni Masilela	SNTC	Community Outreach Officer, Mlawula Nature Reserve
Mr Sipho Simelane	Swaziland Tourism Authority	Member of Project Steering Committee
Mr Sipho Matsebula	Swaziland Environment Authority	Member of Project Steering Committee
Mrs Liz Reilly	Big Game Parks	Owner
Ms Ann Reilly	Big Game Parks	Managing Director
Ms Cebisile Ginindza	MTAD	Training Officer
Mr Mlangeni Gamedze	MTAD	M&E Coordinator
Gcina Dlamini	SNPAS PMU	National Project Manager
Ms Nontobeko Mlangeni	SNPAS PMU	Project Manager
Mr Saneliso Makhanya	SNPAS PMU	Project Manager
Mr Leonard Shabangu	SNPAS PMU	Driver/Logistics
Ms Fikile Mazibuko	SNPAS PMU	Finance & Administration Assistant

Mr Lindokuhle Vilikati	SNPAS PMU	Community Liaison Officer
Mr Lungelo Dlamini	SNPAS PMU	Community Liaison Officer
Mr Thabiso Matsebula	SNPAS PMU	CDP Officer (IAPS Control)
Ms Nolwazi Dlamini	SNPAS PMU	CDP Officer (Wetlands)
Mr Sizwe Mabhonca	SNPAS PMU	CDP Officer (GIS)
Ms Sihle Dlamini	SNPAS PMU	CDP Officer (Income Generation)
Ms Thandeka Ndlela	SNPAS PMU	CDP Officer (M&E)
Mr Bheki Maduma	COSPE	Focal Person for SNPAS activities
Mr Richard Masemola	COSPE	Project Officer (Community engagement & wetland rehab)
Mr Norman Mavuso	SWADE	Field Coordinator
Ms Lyn Khota	SWADE	National Project Director: Smallholder Market-Led Project
Mr Seth Maphalala	SNTC/GIZ	Co-ordinator: GIZ Lubombo TFCA Support programme
Ms Nomsa Mabila	GIZ Lubombo TFCA Support Programme	Technical Officer (and Community representative for Lubombo Conservancy)
Mr Tal Fineburg	Lubombo Conservancy (LC)/ Swaziland Game Ranchers Association & Mbuluzi Game Reserve	Chairperson of LC, Deputy-Chair of SGRA, and Manager: Mbuluzi Game Reserve (private game reserve), and PSC Member
Mr Matt Mac Ginn	Dombeya Game Reserve	Owner (private nature reserve and recipient of seed funding)
Mr Rod de Vletter	Phophonyane Falls Nature Reserve	Owner (private nature reserve), PLO representative on PSC, and member of Eswatini Biosphere Programmes Steering Committee
Kim Roques	All Out Africa	Director (and former SNTC focal person during PPG for SNPAS)
Community engagements: Lubombo Landscape Cluster		
Shewula Chiefdom		
Princes	Majongozi Sifundza, Bernard Sifundza	
Chiefdom Development Committee	Michael Magagula, Eric Mahlalela, Samuel Mabila, Themba Sifundza, Ellen Dlamini, Glayds Malambe, Gladys Maseko, Khanyisile Hlatswako, Busisiwe Mabela, Doris Mahlalela (also Trust member)	
Community Development Trust	Juluka Masiya, Janet Mahlalela, Grace Mahlalela, Thandi Mhlanga (Shewula Mountain Camp)	
Langa Chiefdom:		
Mhlumeni Community Trust	Ms Florence Matsenjwa (Vice Chairperson); Ms Busisiwe Maziya (Treasurer)	
Other representatives	Nature Guide: Mhlumeni Bush Camp	
Community engagement: Ngwempisi Landscape Cluster		
Velezizweni Chiefdom		
Inner Council Members	Samson Lukhele, Simon Vilane, Jotham Dlamini	
Bucopho	Mliba Mabuza	
Mgijimi	Bernard Jele	
CDC Members	Mlungisi Nxumalo (Chairperson), Dudzile Lukhele, Gertrude Dlamini, Samson Lukhele, Jownekile Tsela, Somin Vilane, Thobile Xaba (RSP)	
Community Trust members	Gertrude Dlamini, Sellinah Shiba	
Luzelweni Chiefdom		
Chief	Babe Sotunwane Sacolo	
Indvuna	Moi Moi Ntshalintshali	
Inkhosikati	Khanyisile Sacolo	
Inner Council	Julius Sacolo, , Siboniso Sacolo, Samson Hlope, Samson Ntshalintshali, Juliana	

	van Vuuren, Sarah Seyama
Chieftdom Development Committee	Richard Sacolo, Bongani Sacolo, Agnes Sacolo, Mandal Sacolo, Busisiwe Sacolo, Happy Sacolo, Virginia Sacolo, Kanyisile Sacolo, Lesiah Ntshalinshali, Lisaya Nstanlinshali, Maria Ntshalinshlai, Winile Gwebu, Lindiwe Nkonyane, Sarah Seyama
Malolotja Landscape Cluster	
<i>Mvemibili Chieftdom</i>	
Inner Council Members	Sheila Sibindzi (also Chairperson of Community Trust), Sihlobo Mavuso, Stephen Shabangu
Timpshini Inkhundla	Nelson Mamba
Bucopho	Dumisile Dlamini, Abednego Dlamini
Chieftdom Development Committee	Annastacia Shongwe, Mduduzi Mndzawe, Ncobili Dlamii, Asau Gwebu, John Dlamini, Zeblon Dlamini, Mzwakali Dlamini, Mfanufikile Dlamini, Thokozile Dlamini
Community Police	Mandla Mnisi

Annex 5: MTR Data Evaluation Matrix

Evaluative questions	Specific issues/follow-up questions	Indicators	Sources of data	Data gathering modality
PROJECT STRATEGY: To what extent is the project strategy relevant to country priorities, country ownership and the best route to the expected results?				
1.Relevance				
Does the project align with strategic objectives of the UNDP (globally and nationally)?	How does the project align with the UNDP CPAP and other aspects of country-programming for Swaziland?	Clear relationship with priorities identified in the CPAP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNDP CPAP for Swaziland • ProDoc • Stakeholder inputs 	Document analysis, interviews
	How does the project support achievement of the SDGs and Aichi Biodiversity Targets (specify)	Evidence of alignment between project objective/outcomes and SDG targets and ABTs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Documents • Agenda 2030 • CBD Strategy for Biodiversity 2011 - 2020 	Document analysis
	How does the project support achievement of the priorities outlined under Strategic Programme 2 of the UNDP EBD Strategy?	Evidence of alignment between the project objective/outcomes and priorities identified in the Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Documents • UNDP EBD Strategy 2012 - 2020 	Document analysis
How relevant is the project to national development and environmental objectives in Swaziland	How does the project support national development priorities?	Evidence of alignment with priorities identified in Swaziland's National Development Plan and the King's Vision 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Swaziland's National Development Plan and the King's Vision 2022 • Stakeholder inputs 	Document analysis and interviews
	How does the project align with Swaziland's National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan	Evidence of alignment with goals and targets set in the NBSAP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Swaziland's National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan • Stakeholder inputs 	Document analysis and interviews
	How does the project align with other relevant national strategies and policies? (e.g. on addressing invasive alien species)	Evidence of alignment with priorities identified in strategies/policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevant policies/strategies • Stakeholder inputs 	Document analysis and interviews
How does the project align with other initiatives to strengthen protected areas in Swaziland	Does the GEF investment in the project add to an existing baseline of investment in strengthening protected areas in SZ? (IF so, how?)	Project investment that has incremental value over baseline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ProDoc baseline analysis • Financial reports 	Document analysis
	Does this project fill gaps that are currently not being addressed through	Evidence of complementarity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peer review and stakeholder inputs 	Document analysis and interviews

Evaluative questions	Specific issues/follow-up questions	Indicators	Sources of data	Data gathering modality
	other avenues? (If so, how?)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ProDoc 	
	Have lessons learnt from other relevant projects been incorporated into project design? (Elaborate)	Evidence supplied in Prodoc	ProDoc	Document analysis
	Is the project likely to provide relevant lessons and experience to help shape other PA-strengthening and expansion activities in future? (Elaborate)	Indicators will be emergent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PIRs and other project reports Stakeholder inputs 	Document analysis and interviews
Is there strong country-ownership of the project?	With which national legislation, strategies and policies is the project aligned? (List and specify how the project is aligned)	Consistency with national legislation/policies	ProDoc Relevant legislation/policies Stakeholder inputs	Document analysis and interviews
	What was the level of stakeholder ownership during project design? (Elaborate)	Evidence of stakeholder involvement	ProDoc Agreements Stakeholder inputs	Document analysis and interviews
	How are national stakeholders engaged in project implementation? (Elaborate)	Evidence of stakeholder involvement	Meeting minutes and reports Partnership agreements	Document analysis and interviews
	Have capacities of the implementing parties and their counterparts been properly taken into account? (provide evidence)	Extent to which stakeholders are able to deliver on commitments	Stakeholder inputs	Interviews
6. Robustness of project design				
Is the results chain clearly and correctly formulated?	Are the project's objectives, outcomes, components and outputs clearly articulated and logically linked? (Elaborate)	Degree of vertical coherence in results chain	Prodoc	Document analysis
	Does the project have an explicit Theory of Change which can be used to verify the project logic? (If not, make recommendations)	Description of a theory of change	Prodoc and other project documentation	Document analysis
	Do the indicators and targets comply with SMART criteria? (Detailed analysis of the indicator framework)	Adherence to SMART criteria	ProDoc and SRF Detailed analysis of indicator and targets framework	Document analysis
	Have any impact indicators been	Presence of impact indicators in	Prodoc	Document analysis

Evaluative questions	Specific issues/follow-up questions	Indicators	Sources of data	Data gathering modality
	identified? (If yes, describe)	SRF		
	Are the project activities and outputs practicable and feasible within the project's timeframe? (Detailed analysis of SRF)	Comparison of planned vs actual implementation	Prodoc and project progress reports and PIRs Project team inputs	Document analysis and interviews
Does the project have a robust and effective risk management strategy	Are the correct enabling conditions in place to expand the PA estate through a landscape approach in Swaziland? (Elaborate on answer)	Enabling legislation and institutional arrangements	Specialist reports and other project documents Stakeholder inputs	Document analysis, interviews, site visits
	Have risks and assumptions been correctly identified and rated accurately? (detailed risk strategy analysis)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completeness of the identification of risks and assumptions Quality of information systems put in place to identify risks Evidence that risk mitigation measures are being followed 	Project documents ESSP Project team inputs	Document analysis and interviews
	Are the risk mitigation measures realistic and practicable? (Detailed risk strategy analysis)			
Have gender empowerment and other developmental effects been factored into project design?	Was a gender assessment carried out during the design of the project? (If so, were emergent issues built into project design?)	Gender-specific issues built into project design	Project documents ESSP Project team inputs	Document analysis and interviews
	Were any gender-specific issues triggered during the mandatory Environmental And Social Screening Procedure (ESSP)? (If so, what steps have been taken to address these issues?)	Evidence of gender-specific issues built into the risk mitigation strategy or project design	Project documents ESSP Project team inputs	Document analysis and interviews
	Were any other social impacts triggered during the ESSP, and, if so, what measures were taken to mitigate these in project design?	Evidence of other social impact issues built into the risk mitigation strategy or project design	Project documents ESSP Project team inputs	Document analysis and interviews
	Were any gender specialists/representatives consulted during project design? (If yes,	Evidence of consultation with gender specialists during PPG	Prodoc, Project Inception Report	Document analysis

Evaluative questions	Specific issues/follow-up questions	Indicators	Sources of data	Data gathering modality
	describe, including the results of the engagement)			
	Does the project include any indicators or targets for social effects such as livelihood benefits, job creation, improvement in incomes, good governance? If not, should the SRF be adjusted to include these? (make recommendations if so)	Social benefits built into indicator framework	ProDoc	Document analysis
	Has any budget been allocated to address gender-relevant outcomes/outputs/activities? (Describe if yes; if no, is it necessary? – make recommendations if so)	Gender-specific allocations in budget	Project Budget	Document analysis
Stakeholder participation plan and partnership arrangements				
Has project design been informed by meaningful stakeholder engagement?	Did the ProDoc include a comprehensive and accurate stakeholder engagement plan, and has this been useful in guiding the establishment of effective project partnerships? (Provide details to support answer)	Coherence between planned and actual stakeholder engagement Examples of supported partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prodoc • Progress reports • Records of stakeholder meetings • Stakeholder inputs 	Document analysis and interviews
	Were stakeholder views taken into meaningful account during project development processes? Were stakeholders engaged in decision-making around project design? (Provide evidence)	Tangible evidence of activities to include stakeholder inputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project documents • Stakeholder inputs 	Document analysis and interviews
	Does the project's stakeholder engagement plan include measures for dealing with conflict?	Conflict resolution measures		
PROGRESS TOWARDS RESULTS: To what extent have the objective and expected outcomes been achieved thus far?				
What is the current level of achievement with regard to the project objective?		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in extent of legally protected PA network • Number of capacity 	This will be assessed based on completion of the progress towards results matrix (See Table 2 of the main body of this Report), and the MTR Summary Table (Table 6 in the	

Evaluative questions	Specific issues/follow-up questions	Indicators	Sources of data	Data gathering modality
		building programmes developed for improved PA management	main body of this Report) which will be completed for the objective and each of the three outcomes. Sources of information will include the Project Document, Project work plans and progress reports (APRs, PIRs, Tracking Tools and Scorecards) and results verified during the in-country MTR mission through site visits and interviews.	
What is the current level of achievement with regard to the 3 outcomes of the project?		Outcome-level indicators identified in the Strategic Results Framework		
What is the likelihood of the end-of-project targets being met for the objective and each of the outcomes?		Outcome-level indicators identified in the Strategic Results Framework		
What is the current level of delivery under each of the project outputs?		Targets set in annual workplans	APRs, PIRs, Annual Narrative Reports, annual workplans	Document analysis, interviews, site inspections
PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION and ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT:				
Management arrangements				
Are effective project governance arrangements in place?	Are the project management and governance arrangements that were envisaged in the ProDoc in effect and functioning well? (Explain any discrepancies and any improvements that may be necessary)	Existing project governance arrangements	Terms of Reference for PB, PSC	Document analysis Interviews
		Evidence of regular meetings	Minutes of PB and PSC meetings	
		Quality of meeting Minutes	Staff contracts and partnership agreements	
	Does the Project Board and Steering Committee meet regularly with well-kept minutes? Do decisions taken at these meetings result in meaningful and timely guidance being fed into project implementation? (Elaborate)	Evidence of alignment between workplans and PB/PSC resolutions and recommendations	PB and PSC Minutes Project workplans and progress reports	
	Are responsibilities and reporting lines clear? If not, what can be done to remedy this?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Documented evidence of effective reportingTerms of Reference	Project reports, meeting minutes, other project documents Stakeholder inputs	
Is the support from the GEF Partner Agency (UNDP) of a high standard and provided in an	Does the UNDP-CO assist with identifying problems and assist with finding solutions?	To be evaluated based on interviews with relevant parties		

Evaluative questions	Specific issues/follow-up questions	Indicators	Sources of data	Data gathering modality
efficient way?	Is the Technical Adviser able to provide effective and adequate support to the project team? (If not, recommend a solution)	Technical Advise received timeously and informing workplans	Inputs form PMU, UNDP CO and TA	Interviews
Is the performance of the executing agency and other responsible parties of a high standard?	Is the Project Management Unit operating with a full complement of staff and is it adequately accommodated and resourced? Identify any shortcomings and recommend solutions	Assessment will be based on evidence observed during the mission		
	Is there an adequate focus on results-based management? If not, how can this be improved?	Quality of results-based reporting	Project reports (APRs, quarterly reports, annual narrative reports, PIRs, tracking tools	Document review
	How has the withdrawal of Big Game Parks from the project implemented on project execution and how is this being addressed? What can be done in future?	To be addressed through interviews with relevant stakeholders		
Work Planning				
Is project implementation proceeding according to plan?	Have any delays been experienced with project start-up and implementation? If so, describe these, explain the causes and indicate if the issues have been resolved	Progress against planned delivery	Project reports SRF Project team/partner inputs	Document review, interviews
	Has adaptive management been necessary to ensure that the project stays on track to deliver the intended outcomes? If so, explain what changes have been necessary, how they have been accommodated and what the impacts of these changes will be.	Changes (planned or implemented) in project strategy (as reflected in SRF)	Project progress reports, PIRs, SRF Project team/partner inputs	Document review, interviews
Are work-planning processes effective, and guided by the SRF and the results of APRs, PIRs	Are work-planning processes results-based? (In not, make recommendations to adjust)	Inclusion of results-based indicators in workplans	Workplans	Document analysis

Evaluative questions	Specific issues/follow-up questions	Indicators	Sources of data	Data gathering modality
and GEF Tracking Tools	Is the Strategic Results Framework being used to direct work-planning? If not recommend how this can be improved	Alignment between SRF and workplans	SRF, APRs, PIRs	Document analysis
	Are the GEF Tracking Tools (METT, FSC and CDSC) being used meaningfully to direct work-planning? If not, recommend how this can be done	Alignment between workplans and issues triggered in the METT and FSC	METT, FSC and workplans	Document analysis
Finance and Co-finance				
Are the project's financial resources being used efficiently?	Is expenditure in line with budget allocations? (Explain any variances)	Alignment between planned and actual expenditure	Project budget, financial reports, audit reports	Document analysis
	Is expenditure in compliance with incremental cost criteria and UNDP norms and protocols? (Explain any variances)	Clean audit reports and compliance with criteria	Project budget, financial reports, audit reports	Document analysis
	Is project implementation working out to be as cost-effective as planned (actual vs planned expenditure)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alignment between planned and actual expenditure Evidence that expenditure is within cost-levels considered acceptable in similar contexts 	Project budget, financial reports, audit reports Project team inputs	Document analysis and interviews
	Have any variances between planned and actual expenditure been adequately explained?	Explanations in financial reports	Financial reports	Document analysis
	Is the project striking an appropriate balance between use of local and international capacity?	Disaggregated procurement data Contractual arrangements	Procurement records, expenditure reports	Document analysis
Are adequate financial controls in place?	Does the project exhibit due diligence in the management of project funds, including the completion of annual audits (independent)? (Explain answer)	Evidence of adequate financial controls (accuracy of financial reporting) Clean Audit reports	Financial reports Procurement Plan Audit Reports	Document analysis
	Is a comprehensive procurement plan in place and effective? (If not, why not? What will be done to address	Procurement plan guiding procurement	Procurement plan Contracts	Document analysis

Evaluative questions	Specific issues/follow-up questions	Indicators	Sources of data	Data gathering modality
	this?)			
	Are the accounting and financial systems in place adequate for informing adaptive project management and for producing timely and accurate financial information? If yes, describe. If not, what can be done to address this?	Timelines and quality of financial reports Budget adjustments in line with reporting	Annual workplans and budgets Financial reports	Document analysis
Has envisaged co-finance been realized?	Were counterpart resources in place and adequate at project inception	Financial records Funds transferred	Project budgets, financial records, cofinance commitment letters	Document analysis and interviews
	Has leveraging of co-finance happened as planned? If not why not, and how is this being accommodated?	Co-finance commitments Realized co-finance	Inputs from project team/partners	
	Is co-finance being accurately tracked? (If so, how?) – see Co-finance Table	Co-financing table regularly updated		
	Is co-finance being used strategically to help achieve the project objective and outcomes?	Evidence of contribution made by co-finance Expenditure by outcome		
Project-level M&E Systems				
Do the M&E tools that are currently in use provide the necessary information to inform project planning and implementation?		Evidence of reports informing work-planning/budgeting	APRs, PIRs, and other project reports	Document analysis
Are any additional tools required to improve the project M&E system? (If so, specify)		Gaps in M&E system	Project reports Stakeholder feedback	Document analysis, interviews
How are project partners and stakeholders involved in M&E processes? If not, how could they be made more participatory?		Evidence of stakeholder involvement	Stakeholder engagement records/plan Stakeholder feedback	Document analysis, interviews
Is the project SRF being used effectively as an M&E tool?		Use of SRF indicators and targets in reporting	SRF and project reports	Document analysis
Has enough time and budget been allocated for effective implementation of the M&E system?		M&E information collected and reported	M&E system (all progress reports and PIRs) Financial reports	Document analysis
Stakeholder engagement				
Is there effective collaboration between institutions	Has the project established effective partnerships with implementing	Examples of supportive partnerships	• Project documents and	Document analysis, interviews and site visits

Evaluative questions	Specific issues/follow-up questions	Indicators	Sources of data	Data gathering modality
responsible for implementation?	partners - list these	Partnership agreements	reports <ul style="list-style-type: none"> PIRs Partnership agreements/MoUs Inputs of project partners and stakeholders 	
	Which of the partnerships is proving most effective in helping the project deliver its outcomes?			
	Have any partnerships not worked as envisaged? If so why not and how is this being accommodated?(Specific attention to be paid to the withdrawal of Big Game Parks from the project, how it is being accommodated, and how this might affect project delivery)			
	Are stakeholders being meaningfully engaged in implementation and project decision-making? How is this being achieved? (if not, what can be done to remedy this)	Records of stakeholder involvement		
	Is the project keeping a record of all stakeholder engagements and using this to update the stakeholder engagement plan?	Meeting records Continually updated stakeholder engagement plan		
Has the project meaningfully addressed the needs and interests of local stakeholders (communities, civil society, private landowners)	How is the project supporting the needs of relevant stakeholders? (Provide examples). Recommend how this could be improved, if necessary.	Social benefit indicators built into SRF or PIRs Improvements in capacity level Stakeholder opinion	Progress reports and PIRs Capacity Development Scorecard scores Stakeholder inputs	Document analysis, interviews and site visits
	What is the general attitude of local stakeholders to the project? Do they support its objective? Has this changed during implementation (if so, how?)	Stakeholder opinion	Stakeholders	Interviews
	What do the different groups of stakeholders perceive to be the importance/impact of the project in their lives? (Positive/negative)	Tangible evidence of impacts Stakeholder opinion	Stakeholders	

Evaluative questions	Specific issues/follow-up questions	Indicators	Sources of data	Data gathering modality
	What can be done to build stronger project ownership amongst local communities and other stakeholders? (if this is necessary)	Stakeholder opinion	Stakeholders	
Reporting				
Are project reports being prepared to a high standard and in a timely fashion? How could the quality of reports be improved (if necessary)?		Timeliness and information content of reports	Project reports	Document analysis and interviews
How well is the project team and its partners fulfilling GEF reporting requirements (e.g. APRs, PIRs, Tracking Tools)?		Completion of all relevant reports	Project team/partner inputs	
Are issues and risks that are identified in project reports being tracked and used to inform workplans?		Risks and issues logged Adjustment to workplan in line with reports		
Are project reports effectively distributed to relevant stakeholders?		Evidence of distribution		
How are lessons learnt being captured and reported?		Lessons learnt log Evidence of reporting		
Communications				
Is internal communication with project stakeholders regular and effective?	What methods are being used for communication with internal stakeholders about project outcomes/activities?	Evidence of communication (e.g. reports circulated; memos, etc...)	Project reports Stakeholder inputs	Document analysis, interviews
	How is feedback from internal stakeholders fed back into project implementation?	Evidence of feedback being incorporated into project implementation	Stakeholder inputs	Interviews
	Is a knowledge management system in place to ensure that technical reports etc are made available for use	Operational knowledge management system	Project records Stakeholder inputs	Document analysis and interviews
Are proper means of external communication in place and effective?	What measures are in place to communicate with external stakeholders about the project and its activities? (e.g. is there a webpage, social media releases, newsletters?)	Evidence of communication mechanisms (media releases, webpage, social media presence, stakeholder meetings, awareness-raising campaigns)	Communications products	Document analysis

Evaluative questions	Specific issues/follow-up questions	Indicators	Sources of data	Data gathering modality
SUSTAINABILITY:				
Are there any financial risks that may jeopardise successful completion of the project and sustainability of its outcomes after project closure?	Will adequate financial resources be available to maintain activities or scale them up after the GEF investment ends? (if so, what are the likely sources)	Committed funds Donor agreements	Institutional budgets Donor agreements Stakeholder inputs	Document analysis and interviews
	What measures can be put in place to mitigate any financial risks to sustainability?	Will be emergent		
Are there any socio-economic risks that may jeopardize successful delivery of project outcomes or their sustainability after project closure?	Are there and social or political risks in the country that may pose a risk? (Specify)	Will be emergent	Stakeholder inputs	Interviews
	Is it likely that stakeholder ownership (including by the government) will be sustained into the future?	Stakeholder opinion	Stakeholders	Interviews
	Do stakeholders see it as in their interests to sustain the activities/outcomes of the project?	Stakeholder opinion		
	Is there sufficient stakeholder/public awareness to of the project's long-term benefits?	Stakeholder opinion		
	Are mechanisms in place to ensure that the project's outcomes are mainstreamed into the economy or community livelihoods?	Knowledge management system or communication strategy		
Are there any institutional risks that may jeopardize successful delivery of project outcomes or their sustainability after project closure?	Do the legal frameworks, policies and institutional structures within which the project operates pose any risks to sustainability? (Pay special attention to the SNTC Amendment Bill)	National strategies and budget commitments to sustain benefits Donor agreements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevant national documents • Donor agreements • Staffing data and plans • Partnership agreements • Capacity Development Scorecards • Stakeholder inputs 	Document analysis and interviews
	Is their high-level political will and commitment to sustain/scale up the project outcomes into the future?	Political commitment Roll-out arrangements		
	Is there adequate technical capacity in partner institutions to maintain the	Evidence of skills transfer		

Evaluative questions	Specific issues/follow-up questions	Indicators	Sources of data	Data gathering modality
	project outcomes? (especially maintenance of the knowledge-based platform)	Staff with dedicated responsibility in place		
	What measures are in place to maintain the partner networks to ensure sustainability	Partnership agreements		
	How is the project contributing to lasting capacity development to sustain the project's outcomes?	Numbers of institutions/individuals trained Sustained improvement in Capacity Development Scorecard scores		
Are there any environmental risks that may jeopardize successful delivery of project outcomes or their sustainability after project closure?	Does infestation by invasive alien species pose a risk to sustainability of project outcomes? How can this be mitigated?	Extent of infestation by invasive alien species	Policy documents and other relevant literature Stakeholder inputs	Document analysis, interviews
	Does the country have an active policy to address the impacts of climate change?	Existence of an active climate change response strategy	Policy documents	
	Are biodiversity conservation priorities being built into land-use planning and decision making to ensure that habitat integrity of protected areas and high value landscapes is not compromised?	Evidence of integration of biodiversity priorities into spatial planning and land-use decision making	Relevant land use planning policies or spatial plans	

Annex 6: Ratings scales used to assess progress to results, project implementation and adaptive management and Sustainability

Table 6.1. : Progress towards results rating scale (UNDP, 2014)

Rating	Criteria
Highly Satisfactory (HS)	The objective/outcome is expected to achieve or exceed its end-of-project targets, without major shortcomings. The progress can be presented as 'good practice'
Satisfactory (S)	The objective/outcome is expected to achieve most of its end-of-project targets, with only minor shortcomings
Moderately Satisfactory (MS)	The objective/outcome is expected to achieve most of its end-of-project targets, with significant shortcomings
Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)	The objective/outcome is expected to achieve its end-of-project targets, with major shortcomings
Unsatisfactory (U)	The objective/outcome is expected not to achieve most of its end-of-project targets
Highly Unsatisfactory (HU)	The objective/outcome has failed to achieve midterm targets, and is not expected to achieve any of its end-of-project targets

Table 6.2.: Project implementation and adaptive management rating scale (UNDP, 2014)

Rating	Criteria
Highly Satisfactory (HS)	Implementation of all seven components is leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive management. The project can be taken as an example of 'good practice.'
Satisfactory (S)	Implementation of most of the seven components is leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive management, except for a few that are subject to remedial action
Moderately Satisfactory (MS)	Implementation of some of the seven components is leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive management, with some components requiring remedial action
Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)	Implementation of some of the seven components is not leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive management, with most requiring remedial action
Unsatisfactory (U)	Implementation of most of the seven components is not leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive management
Highly Unsatisfactory (HU)	Implementation of none of the seven components is leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive management

Table 6.3.: Sustainability Rating Scale (UNDP, 2014)

Rating	Criteria
Likely (L)	Negligible risks to sustainability, with key outcomes on track to be achieved by project closure and expected to continue into the foreseeable future
Moderately Likely (ML)	Moderate risks to sustainability, but expectations are that at least some outcomes will be sustained due to progress towards results at midterm
Moderately Unlikely (MU)	There is significant risk that key outcomes will not carry on after project closure, although some outputs and activities should carry on
Unlikely (U)	There are severe risks that project outcomes and key outputs will not be sustained

Annex 7: Alignment between the SNPAS Project and UNDP strategic priorities

6.1. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The project contributes directly towards achievement of the following SDG targets:

SDG 1 (No poverty), target 1.5, to build the resilience of the poor and those in vulnerable situations, by reducing their exposure and vulnerability to climate-related extreme events, and other economic, social and environmental shocks and disturbances

SDG 13 (Climate Change), Target 13.1: Strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate related hazards (i.e. through increased capacity for wetland and rangeland management)

SDG 15 (Life on Land), targets 15.1 (ensure conservation and sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems and their services), 15.a (mobilize resources to conserve and sustainably use biodiversity and ecosystems), and 15.c (combat poaching and trafficking of protected species)

SDG 16 (Strong Institutions), target 16.7, to ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels (served by integrated landscape planning and strengthening community management forums and other landscape management structures and systems)

SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals), Target 17.9 (implement effective and targeted capacity building to support national plans to implement the SDGs) and 17.17 (encourage and promote effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships)

6.2. The Aichi Biodiversity Targets

The project contributes to achievement of the following ABTs:

ABT 1: Increased awareness of the value of biodiversity (achieved through awareness-raising campaigns; training and capacity building; mainstreaming the importance of protected areas and biodiversity conservation into development planning processes at Chiefdom level, and making people aware of steps they can take to conserve biodiversity and ecosystems – such as wetland protection).

ABT 5: Reduce habitat loss, through programmes to secure new areas for conservation, and the implementation of integrated landscape management plans that reduce fragmentation and degradation of natural habitats.

ABT 9: Invasive alien species prevented and controlled through programmes to remove targeted problem species.

ABT 11: Protected areas are strengthened through expansion (to improve coverage and ecological representation, and include areas of high importance for biodiversity and delivery of ecosystem services); capacity building to ensure effective and equitable management (through strengthened financial sustainability, improved capacity for science-based adaptive management, and the adoption of more inclusive governance models involving communities and civil society).

ABT 14: Ecosystem services are safeguarded through measures to restore and protected ecosystems that supply essential services (e.g. wetlands), taking into account the needs of women (and especially women) who depend on these ecosystem services.

ABT 19: Sharing of information and knowledge is enabled through measures to fill knowledge gaps, consolidate data and make it widely accessible and applied (i.e. through the GIS-based data portal)

ABT 20: Mobilization of resources (through development of a sustainable financing implementation plan for PAs and through securing leveraged co-finance and commitments for current and future activities)

6.3. Alignment with the UNDP Ecosystems and Biodiversity Strategy 2012 - 2020

- a) **Strengthening protected area systems and their ability to conserve biodiversity through:**
 - Improvement in protected area policies and the broader policy environment to enable effective management of PAs (e.g. guidelines for a diverse set of protected area categories; development of integrated policies for management of wetlands and invasive alien species; development of PA Financial Sustainability Strategy and PA management and business plans)
 - Improve management effectiveness by preventing and mitigating threats (through development of an updated and consolidated database and making this accessible through a GIS-based data portal), upgrading management planning (through the development of PA and landscape-based management plans) and building capacity for improved ecological monitoring
 - Strengthening capacity (for conservation management; planning, financial management and service provision; eco-tourism development; law enforcement)
- b) **Promoting access to innovative and effective financial mechanisms, through:**
 - Supporting the development of business plans for PAs and community eco-tourism operations, and developing a suite of eco-tourism-related products to diversify income streams
 - Identifying a diverse portfolio of sustainable financing mechanisms
 - Strengthening financial planning for PAs (through institutional and policy interventions)
 - Securing leveraged funds to support ongoing PA strengthening (through partnerships)
- c) **Enabling protected areas to secure local and sustainable livelihoods by:**
 - Partnering with indigenous and local communities (conservancies surrounding targeted PAs) to identify conservation-related business opportunities, and build capacity for IGAs based on biodiversity-compatible land uses/business concepts
 - Strengthening governance systems through capacitation of community environmental management forums, to promote active conservation and to identify CBNRM activities that can also generate income (e.g. sustainable harvesting of reeds for craft production)
 - Mitigating and preventing threats to natural resources (by strengthening capacity for integrated landscape management and promoting conservation as a viable land use).

Annex 8: An explanatory note on Chiefdom Development Plans

The Government of Eswatini places high priority on facilitating sustainable rural economic development to alleviate poverty and improve the quality of life of its citizens. As part of this process, significant investment has been channelled through the **Swaziland Water and Agricultural Development Enterprise (SWADE)**,⁶¹ a parastatal agency mandated to empower communities to improve their quality of life through projects in commercial agriculture and other related enterprises. SWADE plays a facilitation role, coordinating the engagement of all relevant stakeholders in the process through an approach called Chiefdom Development Planning.

What is Chiefdom Development Planning (CDP)?

CDP is a framework for community planning that has been developed by SWADE to empower communities to plan for holistic, integrated development and improvement –the approach is currently unique to Eswatini. The outstanding features of this process are that it is centred on the aspirations of the beneficiaries; involves the participation of multiple stakeholders (including households and tradition leaders, government institutions, development partners and the private sector); and combines traditional and modern development approaches (that include socio-economic profiling; environmental analysis and mitigation; infrastructure investment planning; geo-spatial planning and local economic development planning). CDP is a multi-stage process requiring, on average, about one year to complete.⁶²

Box: Summary of key steps in the development of a Chiefdom Development Plan

- **Community Mobilisation** (100 days): Introduction meetings; Establishing Communication Structures; Community profiling; Stakeholder Analysis; Training for Transformation
- **Envisioning** (15 days): Development of Vision by community; Consolidation by CDC; Presentation of Vision by CDC to TA; Adoption by Chief and Princes Vision and Mission Statements, Values and Objectives accepted by TA; Trainees List; Elected Task Team.
- **Facilitate Presentation of Draft Plan to TA for approval** (10 days): Workshop TA, CDC and SDCs on the Draft Plan and presentation to Chief; Princes and community; design and print approved CDP document Approved CDP signed off by Inner Council/ Princes and Chief, Designed and printed.
- 7. **Facilitate development of SLED strategy** (30 days): Train task team on SLED strategy; Allocate resources – Land Use Planning; Development of SLED strategy and prioritize (rank) strategic focus areas; Workshop strategies; Develop Land Use Plan Map; Strategic Focus Areas endorsed by relevant governance structures.
- 8. **Facilitate Launching of CDP** (3 days): Write up and print CDP booklets; Prepare Posters, Banners; arrange venues; invite stakeholders; CDP Launched by Chief, CDP booklets issued.
- 9. **Facilitate Marketing** of launched CDP (2 days)

The Chiefdom Development Plan: The end product of the CDP process is a **Chiefdom Development Plan**, a publication including contextual information, an indicative land-use map (representing community opinion), and lists of programmes and projects that have been prioritised by the community to implement the plan (including intended outcomes, indicators, target dates, risks, a list of strategic partners, and an estimate of costs).

Implementation and sustainability: When the SWADE mandate to facilitate (and fund) the development of CDPs ends, implementation should be led by communities, under the watch of the **Ministry of Tinkhundla Administration and Development (MTAD)**, with the support of SWADE (and other relevant partners). The Swaziland National Trust Commission has no mandate – or budget to facilitate the development of CDPs, though it can participate in the process in areas of its interest through its community outreach and environmental education programme.

⁶¹ The Swaziland Water and Agricultural Development Enterprise (SWADE) is a government company established by the Government of Swaziland in 1999 to facilitate the planning and implementation of the Komati Downstream development Project (KDDP) and Lower Usuthu Smallholder Irrigation Project (LUSIP) and any other large water and agricultural development project that Government may assign.

⁶² SWADE (2011a). Chiefdom Development Planning as a framework for sustainable rural development. Mbabane; Siwela, M & Mosisi, M. 2012. A Case Study Evaluating The Process Of The Chiefdom Development Planning In The Lower Usuthu Smallholder Irrigation Project (LUSIP), Eswatini, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa)

Experience has shown that for the CDPs to be sustainable, it is necessary to put in place a large number of coordinated plans and activities, including: a resource mobilization plan supported by the government and executed by the Community Development Committee (CDC); an exit strategy (to facilitate handover to MTAD), to be drawn up in collaboration with stakeholders; capacity building plan for the CDCs. In addition, a programme of impact studies should be agreed upon by the CDP stakeholders, and sufficient funds secured to allow for several studies to be conducted periodically and the results thereof used for the improvement of the CDP process and the implementation of the CDP projects (Siwela & Mosisi, 2011).

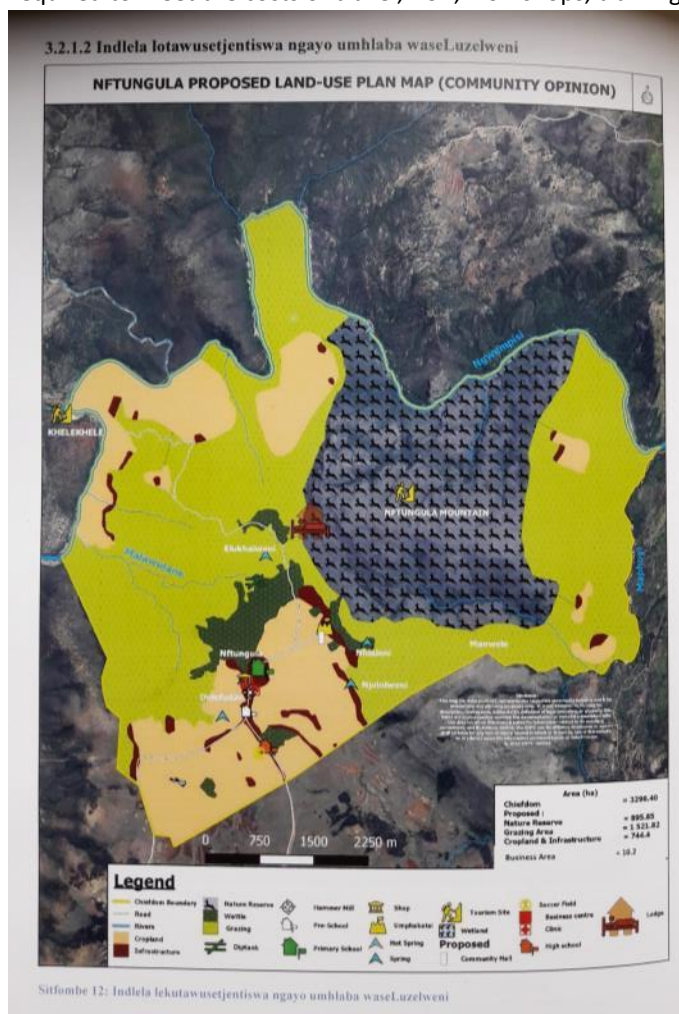
Chiefdom Development Planning and the SNPAS Project

In 2016, the SNPAS team adopted the CDP process as an avenue for engaging with communities, to identify land for conservation, implement sustainable land management and identify livelihood development opportunities. This was a wise, appropriate and strategic decision. Ideally, SNPAS should have entered into an agreement with SWADE, to participate in the process as a stakeholder in order to mainstream the project's objectives and outcomes, and work with communities to identify opportunities for strengthening conservation management, with associated livelihood benefits.

Instead, the project set itself a target of developing 20 CDPs by project end, and entered an MoU with SWADE to partition responsibility for leading (and funding) the development of CDPS in areas of mutual interest. In other parts of the country (in which SWADE was not active), SNPAS assumed lead responsibility for facilitating the CDP process, coordinating the inputs of all the partners and meeting the costs. To date, 5 CDPs have been launched by SNPAS, and another 4 are under development.

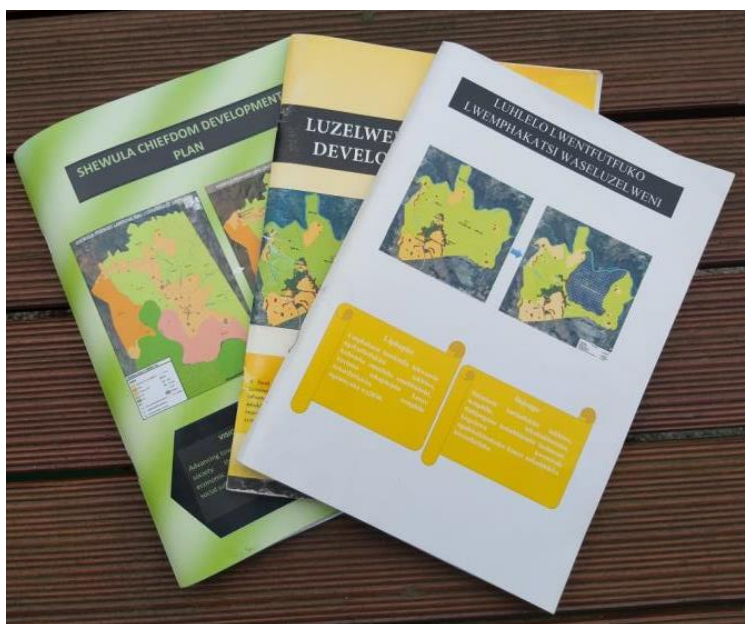
During the course of the project, much time, effort and money has been invested in developing and applying the CDP process in the project landscape clusters. Because of the nature of the process, which has high community engagement needs, and requires participation of multiple stakeholders, significant resources are required to meet the costs of travel, DSA, workshops, training, printing and communications, and the PMU has

needed a large team to coordinate the process. The project has also assumed responsibility for developing and printing the CDP booklets, launching them publicly, and for setting up and facilitating the operation of a National CDP Coordinating Committee. Each CDP takes from 8 to 12 to be completed. The inheritors of the products are the communities and the Ministry of Tinkhundla Administration and Development – not the SNTC, who carries no mandate for this work (other than to engage in the process through their community outreach and environmental education programme).



Left: Example of an indicative land-use map taken from the Luzelweni Chiefdom Development Plan (which has been facilitated through SNPAS). The map reflects community opinion relating to future land use, and the location of infrastructural developments and intended conservation areas.

Below: examples of CDP booklets produced by the SNPAS team



Below: example of a list of programs/projects included in a CDP

Table 15: Summary of programs/ projects to be implemented for rangeland management

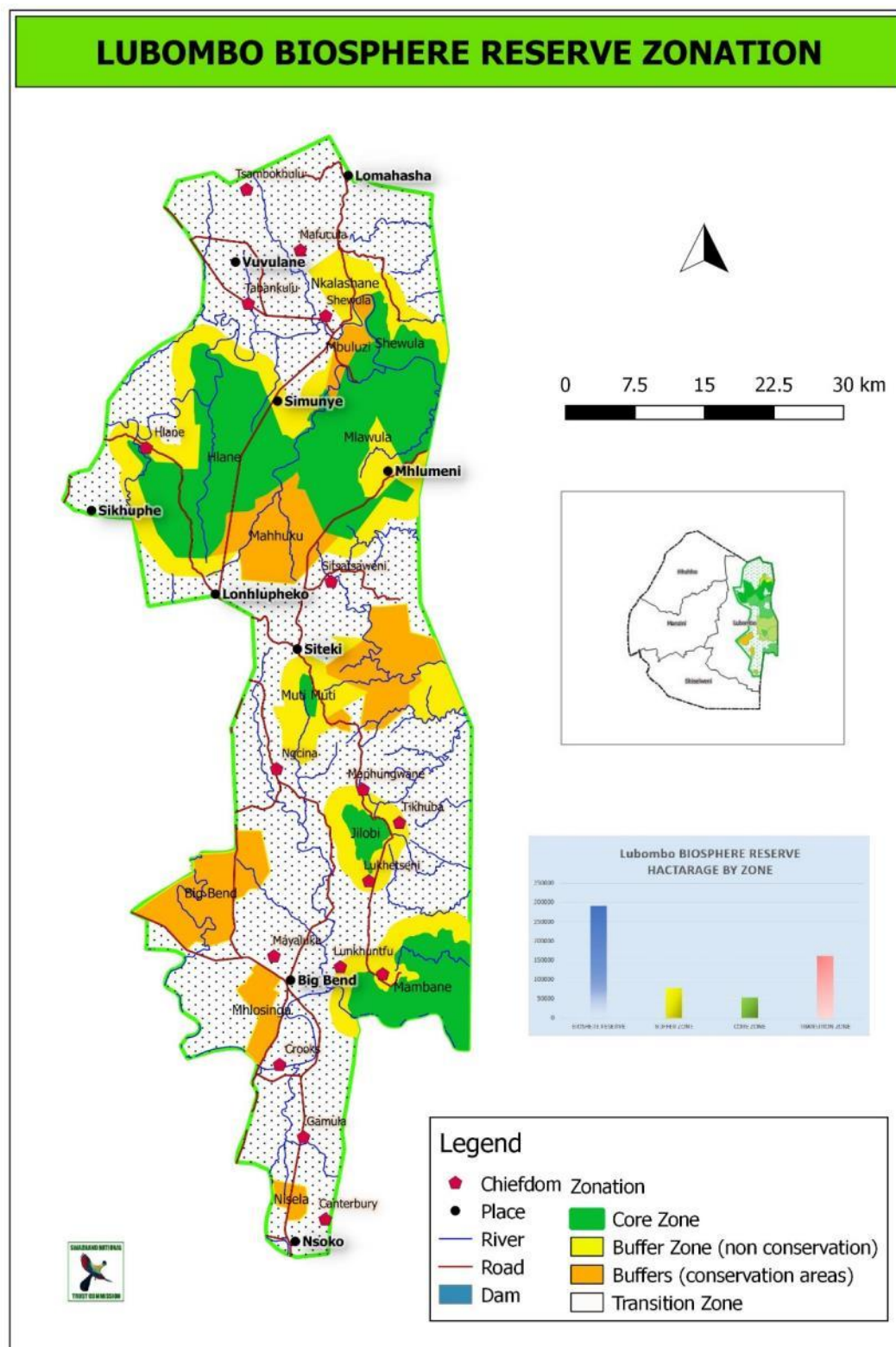
Program/ Outcome	Project	Target date	Strategic Partners	Risk Analysis	Costs Estimates
1.1: Improved management of rangelands by 2025 Indicator: Number of effectively managed grazing areas Baseline: 0 Target: 2	1.1.1: Undertake training of farmers on proper rangeland management 1.1.2: Control grazing 1.1.3: Facilitate for the development of range management guidelines/ policies 1.1.4: Facilitate for strategic land use 1.1.5: Establish water infrastructure in grazing areas 1.1.6: Promote livestock commercialisation 1.1.7: Rehabilitate grazing lands	2025	MoA Microprojects SEA, SME, SMI	Risk: Inco-operation of livestock owners. Management Action: Education on benefits of proper range management	1, 000, 000.00
Total					1, 000, 000.00

Annex 9: Indicative CBNRM activities, building on CDPs

- **mainstream integrated landscape management programmes** in the relevant communities through partnerships with SEA and the MoA (who carry the mandate for this work), by consolidating, replicating and scaling up activities such as IAPS clearing and de-bushing (with links to beneficiation projects that can generate alternative livelihoods); wetland protection, management and monitoring (with links to the development of sustainable harvesting plans and small business opportunities for women – for example craft production); sustainable rangeland management and rangeland rehabilitation through introduction of SLM technologies (with links to small business opportunities for trained teams to undertake donga rehabilitation); and forest rehabilitation (with links to indigenous tree nursery projects and small business opportunities based on sustainable harvesting of non-timber forest products). (This delivers on Outputs 3.2, 3.3 and 3.5 in the SRF)
- establish partnerships (involving communities, SNTC, and other state, private and NGO partners) through which communities can realise their aspirations to **establish new conserved areas** (e.g. Ntfungula in Ngewmpisi) **or bring existing informal areas** (e.e. Shewula and Mhlumeni Nature Reserves) **under active conservation management** – in compliance with international standards for recognition as Other Effective Conservation Measures (OECMs), or through application of the IUCN Green Listing Standard (This delivers on Outputs 2.1 and 2.2 – modified – of the SRF)
- **upgrade existing eco-tourism infrastructure and products** at selected sites (such as Shewula, Mhlumeni, Khelekhele, Khopo, Ntfungula in compliance with the recommendations in the Financial Sustainability Strategy and the Business Plans that are currently under development (with potential links to small business opportunities for field guides, catering and other service providers, agro-ecological projects to produce food for guests, etc) – Outcome 3, Indicator 4,
- **adapt existing successful governance models** (e.g. Lubombo Conservancy) to establish effective **landscape forums** for co-operation between Chiefdoms (working through structures that have legitimacy, credibility and a mandate), conservancies and other managers of land under biodiversity conservation (Outcome 2, Indicator 3)
- **facilitate capacity building** of involvement of Community Trusts (and other relevant representatives) in learning-by-doing programmes for improved conservation management (see recommendations under ‘Capacity Development Programmes’), through learning exchanges, peer learning and mentorship, learning exchanges (Outcome 3, Indicator 1)

Annex 10: Map showing domains of proposed Biosphere Reserves in Eswatini

Map 1: Lubombo



Annex 11: Evaluator Code of Conduct Agreement Forms

Evaluators/Consultants:

1. Must present information that is complete and fair in its assessment of strengths and weaknesses so that decisions or actions taken are well founded.
2. Must disclose the full set of evaluation findings along with information on their limitations and have this accessible to all affected by the evaluation with expressed legal rights to receive results.
3. Should protect the anonymity and confidentiality of individual informants. They should provide maximum notice, minimize demands on time, and respect people's right not to engage. Evaluators must respect people's right to provide information in confidence, and must ensure that sensitive information cannot be traced to its source. Evaluators are not expected to evaluate individuals, and must balance an evaluation of management functions with this general principle.
4. Sometimes uncover evidence of wrongdoing while conducting evaluations. Such cases must be reported discreetly to the appropriate investigative body. Evaluators should consult with other relevant oversight entities when there is any doubt about if and how issues should be reported.
5. Should be sensitive to beliefs, manners and customs and act with integrity and honesty in their relations with all stakeholders. In line with the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, evaluators must be sensitive to and address issues of discrimination and gender equality. They should avoid offending the dignity and self-respect of those persons with whom they come in contact in the course of the evaluation. Knowing that evaluation might negatively affect the interests of some stakeholders, evaluators should conduct the evaluation and communicate its purpose and results in a way that clearly respects the stakeholders' dignity and self-worth.
6. Are responsible for their performance and their product(s). They are responsible for the clear, accurate and fair written and/or oral presentation of study limitations, findings and recommendations.
7. Should reflect sound accounting procedures and be prudent in using the resources of the evaluation.

MTR Consultant Agreement Form

Agreement to abide by the Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN System:

Name of Consultant: _____ Dr Mandy Cadman _____

Name of Consultancy Organization (where relevant): _____ N/A _____

I confirm that I have received and understood and will abide by the United Nations Code of Conduct for Evaluation.

Signed at _____ Port Elizabeth, South Africa _____ (Place) on _____ 10/04 2018 _____ (Date)

Signature: _____

M-J. Cadman

Evaluators/Consultants:

8. Must present information that is complete and fair in its assessment of strengths and weaknesses so that decisions or actions taken are well founded.
9. Must disclose the full set of evaluation findings along with information on their limitations and have this accessible to all affected by the evaluation with expressed legal rights to receive results.
10. Should protect the anonymity and confidentiality of individual informants. They should provide maximum notice, minimize demands on time, and respect people's right not to engage. Evaluators must respect people's right to provide information in confidence, and must ensure that sensitive information cannot be traced to its source. Evaluators are not expected to evaluate individuals, and must balance an evaluation of management functions with this general principle.
11. Sometimes uncover evidence of wrongdoing while conducting evaluations. Such cases must be reported discreetly to the appropriate investigative body. Evaluators should consult with other relevant oversight entities when there is any doubt about if and how issues should be reported.
12. Should be sensitive to beliefs, manners and customs and act with integrity and honesty in their relations with all stakeholders. In line with the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, evaluators must be sensitive to and address issues of discrimination and gender equality. They should avoid offending the dignity and self-respect of those persons with whom they come in contact in the course of the evaluation. Knowing that evaluation might negatively affect the interests of some stakeholders, evaluators should conduct the evaluation and communicate its purpose and results in a way that clearly respects the stakeholders' dignity and self-worth.
13. Are responsible for their performance and their product(s). They are responsible for the clear, accurate and fair written and/or oral presentation of study limitations, findings and recommendations.
14. Should reflect sound accounting procedures and be prudent in using the resources of the evaluation.

MTR Consultant Agreement Form

Agreement to abide by the Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN System:

Name of Consultant: _____Dr Nicollete Mhlanga-Ndlovu_____

Name of Consultancy Organization (where relevant): _____Independent Consultant_____

I confirm that I have received and understood and will abide by the United Nations Code of Conduct for Evaluation.

Signed at _____Johannesburg_____ (Place) on _____10/04/18_____ (Date)



Signature: _____

Annex 12: Acronyms

ABT	Aichi Biodiversity Target
APR	Annual Project Report
AWP	Annual Work Plan
BGP	Big Game Parks
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CDC	Chiefdom Development Committee
CDP	Chiefdom Development Plan/Planning
CDSC	Capacity Development Scorecard
CO	Country Office (of the UNDP)
COSPE	An international NGO working for social and environmental change
CPAP	Country Programme Action Plan (of the UNDP)
DoA	Delegation of Authority
EA	Executing Agency
EBD	Ecosystems and Biodiversity
ESSP	Environmental and Social Screening Procedure
FSC	Financial Sustainability Scorecard
GEF	Global Environment Facility
IA	Implementing Agency
LoA	Letter of Agreement
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MoA	Ministry of Agriculture
METT	Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MTAD	Ministry of Tinkhundla Administration and Development
MTEA	Ministry of Tourism and Environmental Affairs
NBSAP	National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan
NDP	National Development Plan
NIM	National Implementation Modality

OFP	Operational Focal Point
PA(S)	Protected Area (System)
PB	Project Board
PIF	Project Identification Form
PIR	Project Implementation Report
PMU	Project Management Unit
PPG	Project Preparation Grant
ProDoc	Project Document
PSC	Project Steering Committee
RTA	Regional Technical Advisor
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SEA	Swaziland (Eswatini) Environment Authority
SNTC	Swaziland (Eswatini) National Trust Commission
SRF	Strategic Results Framework (formerly known as a logical framework or logframe)
STA	Swaziland (Swaziland) Tourism Authority
SWADE	Swaziland Water and Agricultural Development Enterprise
TA	Technical Advisor
UNCCD	United Nations Convention for Combating Desertification
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNISWA	University of Swaziland (Eswatini)

Annex 13: MTR Clearance Form (appended)

Annex 14: Management Effectiveness Tracking Tools (appended)

Annex 15: Audit Trail (appended)