**Mainstreaming Sustainable Land and Forest Management in**

**Dry Mountain Landscapes**

***Armenia***

**GEF Agency: United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)**

**Executing Entity: Ministry of Nature Protection**

**GEF Multi-focal Area; GEF Project ID: 5353**

**UNDP PIMS: 4416; UNDP Atlas Project ID:** **00081940 ; UNDP Output ID: 00091048**



**Mid-term Review Report**

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**Contents**

I. Executive Summary 5

II. Armenia Mountain SLM project Mid-term Review Approach 12

A. Mid-term Review Purpose, Objectives and Scope 12

B. Principles for Design and Execution of the Evaluation 14

C. Evaluation Approach and Data Collection Methods 14

D. Limitations to the Evaluation 15

III. Project Overview 15

A. Armenia Mountain SLM project Development Context 15

B. Problems the Armenia Mountain SLM project Seeks to Address 16

C. Armenia Mountain SLM project Description and Strategy 17

D. Implementation Approach and Key Stakeholders 19

i. Implementation Arrangements 19

ii. Key Stakeholders 20

E. Key Milestone Dates 20

IV. Relevance 23

A. Relevance of the Armenia Mountain SLM project Objective 23

i. Relevance to Armenia’s National Priorities and Strategic Goals 23

ii. Relevance to GEF Strategic Objectives 23

iii. Relevance to Multi-lateral Conventions 24

B. Relevance of the Project Approach: Project Strategy and Design 25

V. Project Management and Cost-effectiveness (Efficiency) 26

A. Implementation, Including UNDP Oversight 27

B. Execution (Project Management) 27

C. Partnership Approach and Stakeholder Participation 28

D. Risk Assessment and Monitoring 28

E. Flexibility and Adaptive Management 30

F. Financial Planning by Component and Delivery 30

G. Planned and Actual Co-financing 33

H. Monitoring and Evaluation 33

i. M&E Design 34

ii. M&E Implementation 35

VI. Effectiveness and Results: Progress Toward the Objective and Outcomes 35

*A.* *Component/ Outcome 1: Enabling environment for the marzes in Northeastern Armenia to plan, monitor and adapt sustainable forest and land management* 37

*B.* *Component/Outcome 2: Investment in demonstrating improved sustainable forest and land management practices to reduce pressure on high conservation forests and maintain flow of ecosystem services* 44

C. Impacts and Global Environmental Benefits 54

VII. Key GEF Performance Parameters 54

A. Sustainability 54

B. Catalytic Role: Replication and Up-scaling 56

C. Gender Equality and Mainstreaming 56

VIII. Main Lessons Learned and Recommendations 57

A. Lessons from the Experience of the Armenia Mountain SLM project 57

B. Mid-term Recommendations for Progress Toward Outcomes for the Armenia Mountain SLM project 58

IX. Annexes 62

A. Annex 1: Terms of Reference 63

B. Annex 2: GEF Operational Principles 73

C. Annex 3: Armenia Mountain SLM project Terminal Evaluation Matrix 74

D. Annex 4: Interview Guide 78

E. Annex 5: Rating Scales 83

F. Annex 6: Key Informants Targeted and Interviewed 84

G. Annex 7: Documents Reviewed 87

H. Annex 8: Armenia Mountain SLM Project Financial Tables 88

I. Annex 9: Armenia Mountain SLM project Results Framework Assessed Level of Indicator Target Achievement 89

J. Annex 10: Armenia Mountain SLM project Mainstreaming of UNDP Programme Principles 117

**Acronyms**

APR Annual Project Report

CBD Convention on Biological Diversity

CEO Chief Executive Officer

COP Conference of Parties

CPAP Country Program Action Plan

CPD Country Program Document

CSO Civil Society Organization

DIM Direct Implementation

FAO United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization

FMP Forest Management Plan

FSP Full-size Project

GEF Global Environment Facility

GiZ German Development Cooperation

Ha hectares

HCVF High Conservation Value Forest

IUCN International Union for the Conservation of Nature

KM Kilometers

LDN Land Degradation Neutrality

LSG Local Self Government

M&E Monitoring and Evaluation

NEX National Execution

NGO Non-governmental Organization

NTFP Non-timber forest product

PB Project Board

PIF Project Information Form

PIMS Project Information Management System

PIR Project Implementation Report

PMU Project Management Unit

PSC Project Steering Committee

SLM Sustainable land management

SNCO State non-commercial organization

TOR Terms of Reference

UN United Nations

UNCCD United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification

UNDAF United Nations Development Assistance Framework

UNDP United Nations Development Programme

UNFCCC United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

USA United States of America

USD United States dollars

# Executive Summary

Table 1 Project Summary Data

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Project Title: | Mainstreaming Sustainable Land and Forest Management in Dry Mountain Landscapes | | | | |
| GEF Project ID: | | GEF ID #5353 |  | *at endorsement (Million US$)* | *at completion (Million US$)* |
| Agency Project ID: | | UNDP PIMS #54416  UNDP Atlas Award ID:  UNDP Atlas Project ID: | GEF financing: | $2,977,169 | N/A |
| Country: | | Armenia | IA/EA own: | $900,000 | N/A |
| Region: | | CIS | Government: | $12,427,235 | N/A |
| Focal Area: | | Multi-focal: BD / LD / CCM / SFM | Other: | $662,200 | N/A |
| FA Objectives, (OP/SP): | | GEF-6: | Total co-financing: | $13,989,935 | N/A |
| Executing Entity: | | United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) | Total Project Cost: | $16,125,334 | N/A |
| Other Partners involved: | | Ministry of Nature Protection | Prodoc Signature (date project began): | | December 24, 2015 |
| Operational Closing Date: | | December 24, 2019 |

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND OVERVIEW**

1. The “*Mainstreaming Sustainable Land and Forest Management in Dry Mountain Landscapes”* project is a Global Environment Facility (GEF) - funded project*,* (hereafter referred to as the “Mountain SLM” project). The project officially commenced December 24, 2015 with the UNDP Prodoc signing; the project had received GEF CEO Endorsement June 18, 2015. The project is slated for completion December 24, 2019, but may require a no-cost extension due to a lengthy start-up time, and a dynamic socio-political and institutional context. The project is a GEF multi-focal area project targeting the sustainable forest management, involving the biodiversity, land degradation, and climate change mitigation focal areas. The Armenia Mountain SLM project has GEF funding of $2,977,169 million United States dollars (USD), and planned co-financing of $13,989,935 million USD, for a total project cost of $16,125,334 million USD. The project is implemented under UNDP’s National Execution (NEX) modality, with the Ministry of Nature Protection as the project Executing Agency, while “Hayantar” State Non-Commercial Organization (SNCO) (State Forest Agency) under the Ministry of Agriculture serves as the senior beneficiary. As the implementing agency, UNDP is also responsible for oversight of delivery of agreed outputs as per agreed project work plans, financial management, and for ensuring cost-effectiveness. At policy and strategy level, the Project Board served as a technical advisory committee to guide the project.
2. Armenia Mountain SLM project Description: As stated in the Project Document, the project Armenia Mountain SLM project’s **objective** is “*Sustainable land and forest management in the Northeastern Armenia secures continued flow of ecosystem services*”. The project is structured in two functional components (with 11 outputs), that correspond to the planned outcomes:

* **Component / Outcome 1:** Enabling environment for the marzes in Northeastern Armenia to plan, monitor and adapt sustainable forest and land management.
* **Component 2 / Outcome 2:** Investment in demonstrating improved sustainable forest and land management practices to reduce pressure on high conservation forests and maintain flow of ecosystem services.

1. The project strategic results framework, with expected indicators and targets, is included in the project document (pp. 31-35 of the project document). The project results framework represents the primary foundational element for assessing project results (progress toward the expected outcomes and objective) and effectiveness.
2. According to GEF and UNDP evaluation policies, mid-term reviews are required for all GEF funded full-size projects (FSPs), and the mid-term review was a planned activity of the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) plan of the Armenia Mountain SLM project. As per the evaluation Terms of Reference (TORs) the mid-term review assesses the actual performance and progress toward results of the project against the planned project activities and outputs, based on the standard evaluation criteria: relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, results and sustainability. The evaluation assesses progress toward project results based on the expected objective and outcomes, as well as any unanticipated results. The evaluation identifies relevant lessons for other similar projects in the future, and provides recommendations as necessary and appropriate. The evaluation methodology was based on a participatory mixed-methods approach, which included two main elements: a) a desk review of project documentation and other relevant documents; and b) interviews with key stakeholder conducted during the evaluation field mission to Armenia, as well as additional interviews conducted by phone. The evaluation is based on evaluative evidence from the project development phase through August 31, 2018, when the mid-term review data collection phase was completed. The desk review was begun in May 2018, and the evaluation field mission was completed June 4th – June 8th, 2018.

**FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS ON THE MAIN EVALUATION CRITERIA**

1. With respect to **relevance**, the project is considered ***relevant / highly satisfactory***, as the project clearly supports national priorities related to sustainable forest management, forest and land degradation, and climate change. The project also supports Armenia’s implementation of relevant multilateral-environmental agreements – the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), and United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The project also conforms with GEF focal area strategies and priorities for GEF-5.
2. The project design and strategy are appropriate and relevant for addressing sustainable forest and land management in Armenia, although the project could have increased its relevance by increasing its focus on transformative change at the systemic level relating to rural fuelwood dependency in Armenia, rather than pilot and demonstration activities that are highly limited in scale.
3. Project **efficiency** is rated ***moderately unsatisfactory***. The project’s adaptive management (execution), communication, local stakeholder engagement, and reporting are strong points. Total financial delivery as of the mid-term review (June 2018) was only 21.6% of total funding, although by the 3rd quarter of 2018 this increased to approximately 1/3rd of funding. In terms of time, the project is officially approximately 2/3rds complete, considering Prodoc signature in December 2015 as the official starting point. This indicates that the project is well behind schedule. The project may require a 6-12 month no-cost extension due to some delays at start-up, and slower than planned implementation, especially from late 2017-mid-2018, while the forestry sector was being restructured at the national level. Unless the project starts making more significant progress by early 2019, more intensive and proactive adaptive management may be required, with strong UNDP support, to ensure the project meets its planned outcomes and objective within a reasonable timeframe.
4. GEF funding for project management costs is planned at 4.76%, and so far, the project management costs are only 4.35% of GEF-funded expenditures. Financial management procedures are in-line with international norms, and conform to UNDP policies and procedures. Project co-financing is minimal so far at 0.4% of planned co-financing, though this likely relates to under-reporting, rather than low co-financing delivery; actual non-reported co-financing is likely to be higher.
5. The project’s **effectiveness** is rated ***moderately satisfactory.*** The project activities and outputs should ultimately contribute to the planned outcomes and objective, once more progress is made on implementation. The activities and outputs generated thus far have contributed to the achievement of outcomes. The project strategy is technically sound, but has some challenges in terms of the practical implementation. In addition, without a larger-scale focus on addressing rural fuelwood dependency it is unclear to what extent the implementation of sustainable forest management plans will be effective.
6. Project **results / achievement of overall outcomes** is rated ***moderately unsatisfactory***. The project is likely to achieve 13 results indicator targets, and is uncertain to meet the remaining 11 targets.[[1]](#footnote-1) Key results achieved with project support include:

* Four forest management plans (FMPs) have been updated (for Ijevan, Noyemberyan, Gougarq, and Eghegnut forest enterprises), with the following characteristics:
  + FMPs use integrated protocols for biodiversity considerations (the High Conservation Value Forest (HCVF) concept), ecosystem services (including non-timber forest products, carbon sequestration, water regulation and other services) and indicator bird and butterfly species to monitor ecosystem changes.
  + FMPs include forest inventories and corresponding maps, and an assessment of the exact boundaries of the forest enterprises and their sub-units.
  + FMPs identify and specify management measures for 38,000 ha of HCVF, including protected areas within the forest enterprises.
  + FMPs identify and map 2,000 ha for multi-use regimes involving non-timber forest products (NTFPs) and agro-forestry.
* Implementation of a local sustainable forest and land management capacity building program, with technical trainings involving 35 people from forest enterprises, 50 pasture resource-users (of which 25 were women), and 190 forest resource-users (of which 70 were women).
* Development and implementation of detailed monitoring protocols for bird and butterfly indicator species.
* Restoration of 93 ha of beech forest through coppicing, in Lalvar forest enterprise near Odzun community; initial steps toward restoration of a further 2,000 ha of degraded forest.
* Identification of 1,455 ha of degraded pastureland within five forest enterprises for potential restoration, with preliminary progress toward restoration of 1,000 ha.
* Production and dissemination to needy resource-dependent community members in and near Koghb community of 278 energy efficient stoves that reduce fuelwood use by 25%-30%.
* Installation of solar electrical heating systems in four kindergartens in the forest-dependent communities of Ijevan, Koghb, Koti, and Bagratashen, to reduce fuelwood dependency, and support social development.
* Procurement and establishment of a demonstration facility for production of biomass briquettes from agricultural wastes, to reduce fuelwood dependency in Mets Parni community.
* Support for sustainable livelihoods in forest dependent communities, such as the establishment of forest fruit and berry drying facility in Voskepar village, and a passive solar greenhouse in Ardvi community.
* Significant progress on field research to determine national carbon co-efficients for forest and soil carbon in Armenian forests.

1. The GEF Evaluation Office and UNDP require a rating on project impact, which in the context of the GEF biodiversity and land degradation focal areas relates to actual change in environmental status (e.g. improvements in status of biodiversity, reduced rates of degradation, land restoration, etc.). The impact rating is not highly relevant at the point of the mid-term review of the Armenia Mountain SLM project, since the project is still less than half implemented. However, an impact rating is provided as required for the mid-term review; within the life of the project impact is rated as negligible.
2. Sustainability is one of the five main evaluation criteria, as well as being considered one of the GEF operational principles. A sustainability rating is provided here as required, although sustainability is a temporal and dynamic state that is influenced by a broad range of constantly shifting factors. By definition, mid-term evaluations are not well positioned to provide ratings on sustainability considering that many more activities will be undertaken before project end that may positively or negatively affect the likelihood of sustainability. Based on GEF evaluation policies and procedures, the overall rating for sustainability cannot be higher than the lowest rating for any of the individual components. Therefore, the overall **sustainability** rating for the Armenia Mountain SLM project for this mid-term evaluation is ***moderately likely***, as each of the four components of sustainability are considered moderately likely.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. The 13 key recommendations of the mid-term review are summarized below, with the primary target audience for each recommendation following in brackets. Section VIII.B of the evaluation report on Recommendations provides an additional six lower level recommendations. The report body and Section VIII.B also provide more detail and context for the 13 “key” recommendations.
2. ***Key Recommendation 1:*** Work directly with forest enterprises to complete their FMPs on their own, with support from other stakeholders such as the State Forest Monitoring Center, in order to: i.) increase efficiency of completing FMPs (i.e. avoid private sector technical capacity bottlenecks); ii.) strengthen capacity development of forest enterprises; and iii.) enhance sustainability of project results. [UNDP, PMU]
3. ***Key Recommendation 2:*** Expand the stakeholder consultation process for completing FMPs, with additional input from local resource-users, and other national stakeholders. [PMU, Project Steering Committee, Hayantar]
4. ***Key Recommendation 3:*** Begin implementation of FMPs as soon as possible on a “provisional” basis while waiting for formal government approval of the exact forest enterprise boundaries. [PMU, Hayantar]
5. ***Key Recommendation 4:*** Work closely with other development partners (i.e. GiZ, FAO, etc.) to ensure that forest inventory data collected through the FMP revision process is included in the Forest Management Information System in a timely manner, and that the project’s work is integrated in the development of the National Forest Inventory system. [PMU, UNDP, Hayantar]
6. ***Key Recommendation 5:*** If forest enterprises are restructured (e.g. merged), the project should support this process by aggregating the forest management plans, but not completely re-doing them. [PMU, Hayantar]
7. ***Key Recommendation 6:*** Considering the delays so far, prioritize the regulations to be developed under Output 1.5 in order to focus on the most important ones, while at a higher level supporting the development of a National Forest Policy. [PMU, Hayantar, Ministry of Nature Protection]
8. ***Key Recommendation 7:*** Propose that the State Forest Monitoring Center be shifted to the Ministry of Nature Protection, so that it’s technical capacity can be more effectively used to support sustainable forest management, including the application of new and advanced remote sensing data analysis. [PMU, UNDP, Ministry of Nature Protection]
9. ***Key Recommendation 8:*** Conduct a training needs assessment for each forest enterprise as part of the completion of the forest management plan, to ensure that forest enterprise staff have the capacity necessary to implement the new forest management plans. [PMU]
10. ***Key Recommendation 9:*** As with forest management plans, work directly with the forest enterprises as much as possible to undertake the forest restoration and natural regeneration activities. [PMU, UNDP]
11. ***Key Recommendation 10:*** Ensure sustainable forest pasture management planning incorporates the most recent scientific research on understanding pasture carrying capacity, as well as lessons and good practices from the Clima East project. Assess the relevance and feasibility of applying new and advanced techniques such as the use of remote sensing data to implement sustainable grazing plans. [PMU, UNDP, Hayantar]
12. ***Key Recommendation 11:*** Produce a short knowledge product (such as a 2-4 page brochure) analyzing and indicating exactly how the project has contributed to achievement of the national Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) target. [PMU]
13. ***Key Recommendation 12:*** Install informational and educational sign boards at fruit, nut, and berry collection facilities in all communities near targeted forests, such as Noyemberyan and Voskepar. The sign boards should clearly explain the linkage between the project’s objective of sustainable forest management, and the project’s support for local sustainable livelihoods. [PMU]
14. ***Key Recommendation 13:*** To better document, communicate, and promote the replicability of the activities to reduce fuelwood dependency, conduct a small study to carefully and closely analyze the amount of avoided deforestation resulting from the project’s activities. [PMU, UNDP, Ministry of Nature Protection]

**LESSONS**

1. The below lessons have been documented through the mid-term review process:
2. One important lesson is that while the design of projects should embrace a partnership approach as much as possible and build synergies with others’ initiatives, risks to the achievement of expected outcomes increase with the level of dependency on others for inputs. The Armenia Mountain SLM project depended on other development partners for inputs, and when those inputs did not materialize as expected, the project results were put at risk.
3. Another important lesson related to project design is that project designers must consider how expected outputs will actually be completed and by whom, and ensure that there are sufficient resources within the country to successfully complete the expected work in the required timeframe. Alternatively, appropriate budget should be allocated in order to contract expertise from outside the country. The Armenia Mountain SLM project has encountered bottlenecks in achieving outputs due to the limited amount of technical expertise in the country for producing revised forest management plans.
4. A positive lesson for the project is that the project’s M&E plan, including learning and knowledge management activities, was fully and directly budgeted as a specific component of the project (Component 3). This type of budgeting for M&E activities provides transparency and ensure adequate budget is available for M&E.
5. Another positive lesson from the project’s M&E design is that the project includes impact-level biodiversity indicators that are scientifically sound and technically well-developed. This is a positive example for the design of other similar GEF projects in the future.

**ARMENIA MOUNTAIN SLM PROJECT MID-TERM REVIEW SUMMARY RATINGS TABLE**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Evaluation Ratings:** | | | |
| **1. Monitoring and Evaluation** | **Rating** | **2. Implementation & Execution** | **Rating** |
| M&E Design at Entry | S | Quality of UNDP Implementation | MS |
| M&E Plan Implementation | S | Quality of Execution - Executing Agency | S |
| Overall Quality of M&E | S | Overall Quality of Implementation / Execution | MS |
| **3. Assessment of Outcomes** | **Rating** | **4. Sustainability** | **Rating** |
| Relevance | R / HS | Financial Resources | ML |
| Effectiveness | MS | Socio-political | ML |
| Efficiency | MU | Institutional Framework and Governance | ML |
| Overall Project Outcome Rating | MU | Environmental | ML |
| **5. Impact** | **Rating** | Overall Likelihood of Sustainability | ML |
| Environmental Status Improvement | N |  |  |
| Environmental Stress Reduction | N |  |  |
| Progress Toward Stress/Status Change | N | **Overall Project Results** | MS |

**Standard UNDP-GEF Ratings Scale**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Rating Criteria** | **Rating Scale** |
| Relevance | * **Relevant (R)** * **Not-relevant (NR)** |
| Effectiveness, Efficiency, Results, GEF principles, other lower-level ratings criteria, etc. | * **Highly satisfactory (HS):** There were no shortcomings in the achievement of objectives in terms of effectiveness or efficiency * **Satisfactory (S):** There were minor shortcomings in the achievement of objectives in terms of effectiveness or efficiency * **Moderately satisfactory (MS):** There were moderate shortcomings in the achievement of objectives in terms of effectiveness or efficiency * **Moderately unsatisfactory (MU):** There were significant shortcomings in the achievement of objectives in terms of effectiveness or efficiency * **Unsatisfactory (U):** There were major shortcomings in the achievement of objectives in terms of effectiveness or efficiency * **Highly unsatisfactory (HU):** There were severe shortcomings in the achievement of objectives in terms of effectiveness or efficiency |
| Sustainability | * **Likely (L):** Negligible risks to sustainability, with key outcomes expected to continue into the foreseeable future * **Moderately Likely (ML):** Moderate risks, but expectations that at least some outcomes will be sustained * **Moderately Unlikely (MU):** Substantial risk that key outcomes will not carry on after project closure, although some outputs and activities should carry on * **Unlikely (U):** Severe risk that project outcomes as well as key outputs will not be sustained |
| Impact | * **Significant (S):** The project contributed to impact level results (changes in ecosystem status, etc.) at the scale of global benefits (e.g. ecosystem wide, significant species populations, etc.) * **Minimal (M):** The project contributed to impact level results at the site-level or other sub-global benefit scale * **Negligible (N):** Impact level results have not (yet) been catalyzed as a result of project efforts |
| Other | * **Not applicable (N/A)** * **Unable to assess (U/A)** * **Not specified (N/S)** |

# Armenia Mountain SLM project Mid-term Review Approach

1. The mid-term review is initiated by UNDP, in line with the monitoring and evaluation plan of the project. The evaluation was carried out as a collaborative and participatory exercise, and identifies key lessons and any relevant recommendations necessary to ensure the achievement and sustainability of project results.

## Mid-term Review Purpose, Objectives and Scope

1. The **purpose** of the review is to provide an independent external view of the progress of the project at its approximate mid-point, and to provide feedback and recommendations to the GEF, UNDP, and project stakeholders that can help strengthen the project and ensure its success following completion.
2. The **objective** of the mid-term review is to:

* Assess progress toward achievement of expected project results;
* Identify and document lessons that can both improve the sustainability of benefits from this project and aid in the overall enhancement of UNDP and GEF programming globally; and
* Make recommendations regarding specific actions that should be taken to enhance the results of the project.

1. The **scope** of the review is as outlined in the TORs. The review compares planned outcomes of the project to actual outcomes and assesses the actual results to determine their contribution to the attainment of the project’s overall objective. It also evaluates the efficiency of project management, including the delivery of outcomes and activities in terms of quality, quantity, timeliness and cost efficiency as well as features related to the process involved in achieving those outputs and the impacts of the project. The evaluation also addresses the underlying causes and issues that contributed to targets not adequately achieved.
2. The evaluation covers the following aspects of the project, integrating the GEF’s Operational Principles, as appropriate:

* Project design, development (including decision-making and gender mainstreaming), risk assessment / management, and preparation
* Stakeholder ownership and drivenness
* Project timing and milestones
* Implementation and execution arrangements, including GEF Agency oversight
* Stakeholder participation and public awareness
* Communications
* Partnership approach
* Work planning, financial management/planning, co-financing
* Flexibility and adaptive management
* Progress toward results outcomes and impacts
* Gender integration and mainstreaming in implementation
* Sustainability
* Catalytic role: Replication and up-scaling
* Monitoring and evaluation (project and results levels) compliance with UNDP and GEF minimum standards, including SMART criteria for indicators
* Lessons learned
* Impact and Global Environmental Benefits

1. In addition, the UNDP requires that all evaluations assess the **mainstreaming of UNDP programming principles**, which include:

* UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF)/Country Program Action Plan (CPAP) / Country Programme Document (CPD) Linkages
* Poverty-Environment Nexus / Sustainable Livelihoods
* Disaster Risk Reduction / Climate Change Mitigation / Climate Change Adaptation
* Crisis Prevention and Recovery
* Gender Equality / Mainstreaming
* Capacity Development
* Rights-based Approach

1. Evaluative evidence will be assessed against the main UNDP and GEF evaluation criteria, as identified and defined in Table 1 below:

Table 2. GEF and UNDP Main Evaluation Criteria for GEF Projects

|  |
| --- |
| **Relevance** |
| * The extent to which the activity is suited to local and national development priorities and organizational policies, including changes over time. * The extent to which the project is in line with the GEF Operational Programs or strategic priorities under which the project was funded. * Note: Retrospectively, the question of relevance often becomes a question as to whether the objectives of an intervention or its design are still appropriate given changed circumstances. |
| **Effectiveness** |
| * The extent to which an objective has been achieved or how likely it will be achieved. |
| **Efficiency** |
| * The extent to which results have been delivered with the least costly resources possible; also called cost-effectiveness or efficacy. |
| **Results** |
| * The positive and negative, foreseen and unforeseen changes to and effects produced by a development intervention. * In GEF terms, results include direct project outputs, short to medium-term outcomes, and longer-term impact including global environmental benefits, replication effects and other local effects. |
| **Sustainability** |
| * The likely ability of an intervention to continue to deliver benefits for an extended period of time after completion: financial risks, socio-political risks, institutional framework and governance risks, environmental risks * Projects need to be environmentally, as well as financially and socially sustainable. |

## Principles for Design and Execution of the Evaluation

1. The review was conducted in accordance with the GEF M&E Policy,[[2]](#footnote-2) which includes the following principles for evaluation: Credibility, Utility, Impartiality, Transparency, Disclosure, and Participation. The review was also conducted in line with United Nations Evaluation Group norms and standards.[[3]](#footnote-3) The review provides evidence‐based information that is credible, reliable and useful. The review follows a participatory and consultative approach ensuring close engagement with government counterparts, and with the UNDP project teams. The review was carried out in accordance with the guidance outlined in the UNDP Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating for Development Results,[[4]](#footnote-4) and in accordance with the evaluation guidance as outlined in the GEF M&E Policy.

## Evaluation Approach and Data Collection Methods

1. The review methodology was based on a participatory mixed-methods approach, which included two main elements: a) a desk review of project documentation and other relevant documents; and b) interviews with key stakeholder conducted during the evaluation field mission to Armenia. The review is based on evaluative evidence from the project development phase through August 31, 2018, when the mid-term review data collection phase was completed. The desk review was begun in May 2018, and the evaluation field mission was completed June 4th - June 8th, 2018.
2. The mid-term evaluation matrix, describing the indicators and standards applied with respect to the evaluation criteria, is attached as Annex 3 to this report. The interview guide used to provide a framework for qualitative data collection is included as Annex 4 to this evaluation report. The standard UNDP-GEF rating tables and rating scale applied is included as Annex 5 to this report. The list of individuals interviewed is included as Annex 6 to this report.
3. The evaluation was carried out in accordance with the guidance outlined in the UNDP Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating for Development Results,[[5]](#footnote-5) and in accordance with the evaluation guidance as outlined in the GEF M&E Policy.
4. The collection of evaluative evidence was based on two primary data collection methodologies:
5. Desk review of relevant documentation (list of documents reviewed included as Annex 7 to this report).
6. Semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders
7. As such, the mid-term review process involved four main steps, some of which overlapped temporally:
8. Desk review of project documentation
9. Organization of field mission and completion of key stakeholder interviews
10. Analysis of data, follow-up to address any data gaps, and drafting of the evaluation report, then circulation to evaluation participants for additional feedback and input
11. Finalization of the evaluation report and follow-up with the project team and stakeholders
12. Key stakeholders targeted for interviews were intended to represent the main project stakeholders, partners and beneficiaries, and those most knowledgeable about various aspects of the project. The evaluation also sought to include a representative sample covering all different types of stakeholders, including national and local government, civil society, local communities, and the private sector.

## Limitations to the Evaluation

1. All evaluations face limitations in terms of the time and resources available to adequately collect and analyze evaluative evidence. For the Armenia Mountain SLM project mid-term, there were no additional notable limitations. Wherever possible the evaluation has tried to draw on multiple data sources for triangulation of evaluation findings. Altogether the evaluation challenges were manageable, and the evaluation is believed to represent a fair and accurate assessment of the project.

# Project Overview

## Armenia Mountain SLM project Development Context

1. This section contains a brief description of the project development context. It draws from the project document, which contains more extensive and detailed information.
2. Armenia is entirely (29,743 km2) within the Caucasus Ecoregion. Armenia is located at the junction of the biogeographic zones of the Lesser Caucasus and the Iranian and Mediterranean zones and exhibits both a great range of altitudinal variation (from 375 m to the 4,095 m peak of Mt. Aragats) and a diversity of climatic zones. This altitude and relief peculiarities have important implications for the climate of Armenia, which is notable for its aridity nature. Precipitation ranges between 200 – 1,000 mm per year. The country is roughly divided into 4 landscape types: Deserts and semi-deserts, Mountain steppes, Forests, thin forests and shrubs, and sub alpine meadows.
3. This has resulted in a diversity of landscapes and ecological communities with a distinct flora and fauna, including many regionally endemic, relict, and rare species. The country also lies on bird migration routes of international importance. on the small territory of the country there are about 3,800 species of vascular plants, 428 species of soil and water algae, 399 species of mosses, 4,207 species of fungi, 464 species of lichens, 549 species of vertebrates and about 17,200 species of invertebrates. The biodiversity of Armenia is notable for high endemism: about 500 species of fauna (about 3% of the fauna) and 144 species of flora (3.8% of total flora) are considered endemics. In the Red Book of Plants of Armenia (2010) 452 species of vascular plants (11.89 % of the flora of Armenia) and 40 species of fungi (1.05% of the biota of Armenia) are registered. Of them 141 species of plants and 6 species of fungi were assessed as Critically Endangered (CR) by IUCN criteria and they need urgent protection. In the Red Book of Animals of Armenia (2010) 308 species, including 155 vertebrates and 153 invertebrates are registered. Of them 50 species of invertebrates and 62 species of vertebrates were assessed as Critically Endangered (CR); they need urgent protection.
4. The forests of Armenia cover 334,100 ha (11.5% of a historic coverage of 30%), which includes 283,600 ha of natural forests and 50,500 ha of plantation forests. Forests of Armenia outside of official protected areas are managed by the state, through “Hayantar” State Non-Commercial Organisation (SNCO – state-owned enterprises) and its sub-ordinated eleven forest enterprises of the Ministry of Agriculture. Oriental beech (*Fagus orientalis*), the Georgian oak (*Quercus iberica*), the oriental oak (*Quercus macranthera*), the Caucasian hornbeam (*Carpinus caucasica*) and the pine tree (*Pinus kochiana*) form 97.2% of the forested territory in Armenia. Armenian forests include a number of endemic and rare species.
5. Across much of the country, landscapes face moderate to severe deforestation and overgrazing pressures, corresponding in high rates of erosion, increasing soil salinity, lowered soil fertility, and loss of biodiversity. 64% of the country’s forests are located in North East Armenia, which is the target of this project. The forest of the North-eastern Armenia is made up of two marzes (provinces/counties), namely Tavush and Lori, covering 649,300 ha. From a socio-economic perspective, Tavush Marz covers 270,400 ha and has a human population of approximately 132,000, living in 5 urban and 57 rural communities. 52.6% of the population lives in urban areas. Referring to Armenian social snapshot and poverty report (2014), 27.7% of the population in Tavush Marz is poor, out of which 2.5% is extremely poor. Lori Marz covers 378,900 ha with a human population of approximately 234,700 people, living in 8 towns and 122 villages (59% urban, 41% rural). About 38.6 % of the population in Lori Marz is poor, and among these, 2.7% is extremely poor.
6. Forest enterprises of North-eastern Armenia, together with “Dilijan” National Park that is included in the national protected area system, occupy 253,500 ha, of which forest-covered areas occupy 215,337 ha (including approximately 203,500 ha or 94.6% natural forests and silviculture of 11,500 ha or 5.4%).

## Problems the Armenia Mountain SLM project Seeks to Address

1. In the beginning of the 1990s, with the end of subsidized energy following independence and the energy crisis due to the closure of nuclear power plants and the military blockage of the country, most of the rural and urban population were forced to use wood for cooking and heating resulting in significant levels of deforestation in north-eastern Armenia, in particular. Although, the rate of deforestation has decreased in the past decade as compared to the 1990s due to the efforts by the Government to address the issue, research suggests that around 630,000 m3 of timber is still illegally logged in Armenia annually. Although comprehensive data on timber consumption is unavailable, a number of studies suggest that households are the largest consumer of domestic forest products, through their reliance on fuelwood for heating. This means that forest policy reforms, supply and demand solutions, and institutional issues are all, by implication, social issues as well.
2. The project also identifies small-scale illegal logging, irregular grazing (over or under grazing) regimes, fragmentation from infrastructure, poaching, and climate change as key threats to Armenia’s forests and forest biodiversity.
3. The project document identifies four main barriers to sustainable forest management in Armenia. These are:

* *Barrier 1: Inadequate planning, regulatory and institutional framework for Integrated Forest and Land Resource Management*
* *Barrier 2: Minimal experience among key government and civil society stakeholders in developing and implementing SFM practices on the ground*
* *Barrier 3: The lack of incentives and benefits to local communities to participate in forest management and conservation.*
* *Barrier 4: Financial*

## Armenia Mountain SLM project Description and Strategy

1. As stated in the Project Document, the project Armenia Mountain SLM project’s **objective** is “*Sustainable land and forest management in the Northeastern Armenia secures continued flow of ecosystem services*”. The project is structured in two components, that correspond to the planned outcomes. The two components consist of eleven outputs:

* **Component / Outcome 1:** Enabling environment for the marzes in Northeastern Armenia to plan, monitor and adapt sustainable forest and land management.
* Output 1.1:Forest management plan guidelines/protocols updated for mainstreaming ecosystem, climate risks and biodiversity considerations into forest management planning in North-east Armenia
* Output 1.2:Geo-spatial information systems support forest inventory and mapping for forest management planning, development, implementation and monitoring
* Output 1.3:Revised forest management plans integrate considerations of biodiversity, ecosystem services, climate mitigation, and community resource use.
* Output 1.4: System for effective monitoring and enforcement of forest management plans, including clear delineation of roles and responsibilities of key partners and management of participatory processes in forest development
* Output 1.5: Recommendations for national policy and regulations for facilitating adoption of sustainable forest management practices
* Output 1.6: Enhanced capacity for sustainable land and forest management within key agencies and communities
* **Component 2 / Outcome 2:** Investment in demonstrating improved sustainable forest and land management practices to reduce pressure on high conservation forests and maintain flow of ecosystem services.
* Output 2.1: Designation of HCVF covering 85,000 ha of current production and protection forests for species conservation and climate mitigation
* Output 2.2: Restoration of forests and pasture lands, and rehabilitation of multiple use forestlands through community forest resource management
* Output 2.3: Alternative livelihood programs for local communities as incentive to conserve forests and biological resources
* Output 2.4: Integrated strategy for management of firewood collection and distribution from forests
* Output 2.5: Carbon stock assessments and coefficients for key forest types in NE Armenia

1. The project is focused in two regions in the north-east of the country, where a majority of Armenia’s forest resources are located: Tavush Marz and Lori Marz. Figure 1below indicates the location of these regions, and the coverage of Armenia’s forests.

Figure 1 Armenia's Forest Coverage and Project Target Regions

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  |  |

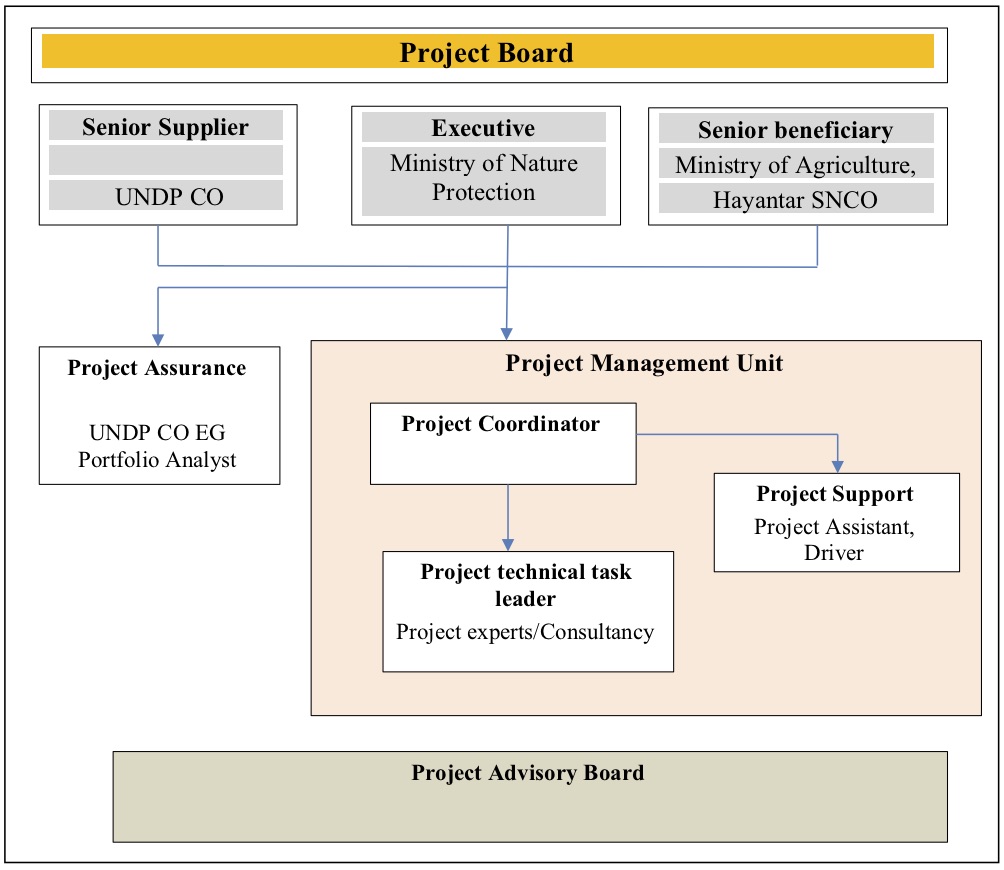
1. The project strategic results framework, with expected indicators and targets, is included in the project document (pp. 31-35 of the Prodoc). The project results framework represents the primary foundational element for assessing project results (progress toward the expected outcomes and objective) and effectiveness.
2. The project officially commenced December 24, 2015 with the UNDP Prodoc signing; the project had received GEF CEO Endorsement June 18, 2015. The project is slated for completion December 24, 2019, but may require a no-cost extension due to a lengthy start-up time, and a dynamic socio-political and institutional context. The project is a GEF multi-focal area project targeting the sustainable forest management, involving the biodiversity, land degradation, and climate change mitigation focal areas. The Armenia Mountain SLM project has GEF funding of $2,977,169 million USD, and planned co-financing of $13,989,935 million USD, for a total project cost of $16,125,334 million USD. The project is implemented under UNDP’s National Execution (NEX) modality, with the Ministry of Nature Protection as the project Executing Agency, while “Hayantar” SNCO (State Forest Agency) under the Ministry of Agriculture serves as the senior beneficiary. As the implementing agency, UNDP is also responsible for oversight of delivery of agreed outputs as per agreed project work plans, financial management, and for ensuring cost-effectiveness. At policy and strategy level, the Project Board served as a technical advisory committee to guide the project.

## Implementation Approach and Key Stakeholders

### Implementation Arrangements

1. The Armenia Mountain SLM project is implemented through UNDP’s national implementation modality (NIM); the Ministry of Nature Protection is the implementing partner (i.e. “executing agency”). The main beneficiary partner is the Armenian State Forest Enterprise, “Hayantar” SNCO, under the Ministry of Agriculture. The UNDP Armenia Country Office acts as the GEF implementing agency for the project, and supports project implementation activities in accordance with UNDP rules and procedures and in line with the GEF requirements. The UNDP country office ensures project accountability, transparency, effectiveness and efficiency in implementation. UNDP provides the Implementing Partner with the major support services for the activities of the project in accordance with UNDP corporate regulations, such as: (i) Identification and/or recruitment of project personnel; (ii) procurement of goods and services; (iii) financial services.
2. Figure 2 below provides and overview of the management arrangements and structure.

Figure 2 Armenia SFM Project Management Arrangements



1. A Project Board was constituted as the executive decision-making body for the project. The Project Board is responsible for making consensus-based decisions, in particular when guidance is required by the Project Coordinator. The Project Board plays a critical role in project monitoring and evaluations by assuring the quality of these processes and associated products, and by using evaluations for improving performance, accountability and learning. The Project Board ensures that required resources are committed. It will also arbitrate on any conflicts within the project and negotiate solutions to any problems with external bodies. According to the Prodoc, “Members of the Project Board will consist of key national government representatives, UNDP senior official and other stakeholders.” Further specific responsibilities of the Project Board are described starting on p. 83 of the Prodoc.

### Key Stakeholders

1. The stakeholders for the project are the key public institutions related to forest management, plus forest resource users. The Prodoc includes a full analysis of project stakeholders, which can be found beginning on p. 55 of the Prodoc. The most significant public institutions related to forest management are:

* Multiple divisions and departments of the Ministry of Agriculture
* “Hyantar” SNCO (Armenian National Forestry Enterprise)
* State Forest Monitoring Centre SNCO
* State Forestry Monitoring Council
* Multiple divisions and departments of the Ministry of Nature Protection
* Biodiversity Policy Division
* Bio-resources Management Agency
* Environment Legal Department
* State Environmental Inspectorate
* State non-commercial organizations (e.g. Dilijian National Park SNCO)
* Tavush and Lori Marz Administrations
* Forest community Local Self Governments (LSGs) in Tavush and Lori Marzes

## Key Milestone Dates

1. Table 3 below indicates the key project milestone dates. The project is planned for a 48-month implementation period.

Table 3 Armenia Mountain SLM project Key Milestone Dates[[6]](#footnote-6)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Milestone** | **Expected Date [A]** | **Actual Date [B]** | **Months (Total)** |
| 1. PIF Submission | N/A | March 26, 2013 |  |
| 2. GEF Secretariat PIF Review | April 8, 2013 | March 29, 2013 | 0 (0) |
| 3. Revised PIF Submission | N/A | April 11, 2013 | 0.5 (0.5) |
| 4. GEF Secretariat PIF Second Review | April 25, 2013 | April 25, 2013 | 0.5 (1) |
| 5. GEF Secretariat PIF Final Review – PIF and PPG Technical Clearance | N/S | May 15, 2013 | 0.5 (1.5) |
| 6. PPG Approval | N/S | September 12, 2013 | 4 (5.5) |
| 7. STAP Review | N/S | October 1, 2013 | 0.5 (6) |
| 8. GEF Council Approval | N/S | November 1, 2013 | 1 (7) |
| 9. CEO Endorsement Request First Submission | May 2015 | May 26, 2015 | 19 (26) |
| 10. GEF CEO Approval | June 26, 2015 | June 18, 2015 | 1 (27) |
| 11. Implementation Start (UNDP Prodoc signature) | January 2016 | December 24, 2015 | 6 (33) |
| 12. Inception Workshop | March 2016 | June 17, 2016 | 6.5 (39.5) |
| 13. PMU Established (project staff contracted) | March 2016 | June-July 2016 | 0.5 (40) |
| 14. Mid-term Evaluation | January 2018 | June 2018 | 24 (54) |
| 15. Terminal Evaluation | November 2019 | N/A | N/A |
| 16. Project Operational Completion | December 24, 2019 | N/A | N/A |
| 17. Project Financial Closing | December 2020 | N/A | N/A |

1. The Project Information Form (PIF) was first submitted to the GEF Secretariat in March 2013, and the project began implementation in June 2016 with the inception workshop and establishment of the PMU. This represents a total project development and approval phase of approximately 39-40 months, or almost 3.5 years – not including any time spent on concept development prior to the PIF. Six months elapsed from Prodoc signature to the inception workshop, a period that should normally be limited to three months. The PPG phase required the full allowed 18 months (actually 19). There is also an unexplained gap of 4 months from technical clearance of the PIF (May 2013) to approval of the PPG (September 2013). Because of the timing of the work program approval cycles of the GEF Council, the project faced a gap of 5.5 months (partially overlapping with the above 4 months) from technical clearance to GEF Council Approval (work program inclusion).
2. The mid-term review was conducted in June 2018. The project is currently expected to finish December 24, 2019 (48 months after Prodoc signature). The project would then be financially closed at the end of UNDP’s fiscal year, December 31, 2020.
3. The project was expected to begin implementation (Prodoc signature) in January 2016, and the Prodoc signature was completed December 24, 2015; however, project operations did not fully get underway until the 3rd quarter of 2016, and during implementation there have been additional delays in project activities due to the changing political and institutional context. Therefore total delays as of the mid-term review equate to approximately 6-9 months.
4. Although the project began formal implementation at the expected time, the delays encountered indicate that the project completion date may need to be extended. This evaluation recommendation that in approximately the 1st quarter of 2019 the Project Steering Committee should be prepared to consider a possible 6-12 month extension from the currently planned completion of December 2019. Ideally the project would finish in the 4th quarter of 2020, in order to take advantage of the 2020 summer field season for forest and biodiversity monitoring, as well as other activities that are dependent on the summer field season.

***EVALUATION FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS***

# Relevance

1. With respect to **relevance**, the project is considered ***relevant / highly satisfactory***, as the project clearly supports national priorities related to sustainable forest management, forest and land degradation, and climate change. The project design and strategy were appropriate and relevant, although the project could have increased its relevance by increasing its focus on fundamental change at the systemic level relating to rural fuelwood dependency in Armenia, rather than pilot and demonstration activities that are highly limited in scale. The project also conforms with GEF focal area strategies and priorities for GEF-5.

## Relevance of the Armenia Mountain SLM project Objective

### Relevance to Armenia’s National Priorities and Strategic Goals

1. As described in the project’s Project Information Form (PIF) (there were no changes at the CEO Endorsement Request stage), the project was consistent with multiple national priorities and strategies. These included the National Forest Policy and Strategy of the Republic of Armenia (2004), and the National Action Programme to Combat Desertification (2002).
2. The project is in line with the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) for Armenia, which aimed to enable Armenia to better address the key environmental challenges including climate change and natural resource management. The project contributes to this outcome as one of the projects within the UNDAF period devoted directly to mainstreaming environmental considerations in sector and local-level strategies and plans, and improved sustainable forest management. The project is also in line with UNDP Country Programme (2010 – 2015) National Priority 4: Promote effective management of natural resources in line with sustainable development principles.

### Relevance to GEF Strategic Objectives

1. The GEF has limited financial resources so it has identified a set of strategic priorities and objectives designed to support the GEF's catalytic role and leverage resources for maximum impact. Thus, GEF supported projects should be, amongst all, relevant to the GEF's strategic priorities and objectives. The project was approved and is being implemented under the strategic priorities for GEF-5 (July 2010 – June 2014).[[7]](#footnote-7) The project’s objective is directly in line with and supportive of the GEF-5 strategic objectives for land degradation, biodiversity, climate change, and sustainable forest management, outlined in Table 4 below.

Table 4 GEF-5 International Waters Strategic Objectives Supported by the Armenia Mountain SLM project

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Objectives** | **Outcomes** | **Indicators** | **Core Outputs** |
| BD-2: Mainstream biodiversity conservation and sustainable use into production landscapes seascapes and sectors | 2.1 Increase in sustainability of managed landscapes and seascapes that integrate biodiversity conservation | Indicator 2.1: Landscapes and seascapes certified by internationally or nationally recognized environmental standards that incorporate biodiversity considerations (e.g. FSC, MSC) measured in hectares and recorded by GEF tracking tool. | 2.1. National and sub-national land-use plans that incorporate biodiversity and ecosystem services valuation |
| LD-2: Forest Landscapes: Generate sustainable flows of forest ecosystem services in drylands, including sustaining livelihoods of forest dependent people | 2.3 Sustained flow of services in forest ecosystems in drylands | Indicator 2.3 Increased quantity and quality of forests in dryland ecosystems | 2.3 Suitable SFM interventions to increase/maintain natural forest cover in dryland production landscapes |
| LD-3: Integrated Landscapes: Reduce pressures on natural resources from competing land uses in the wider landscape | 3.1 Enhanced cross-sector enabling environment for integrated landscape management | Indicator 3.1 Policies support integration of agriculture, rangeland, forest, and other land uses | 3.1 Integrated land management plans developed and implemented |
| CCM-5: Promote conservation and enhancement of carbon stocks through sustainable management of land use, land-use change, and forestry | 5.2 Promote Conservation and enhancement of carbon stocks through sustainable management of land use, land use change and forestry | Indicator 5.2: Hectares restored | 5.2 Number of tons of CO2 equivalent (tCO2e) avoided and/or sequestrated |
| SFM/REDD+-1: Forest Ecosystem Services: Reduce pressures on forest resources and generate sustainable flows of forest ecosystem services | 1.2 Good management practices applied to existing forests | Indicator 1.2.1: Forest area under FSC certification measured in hectares.  Indicator 1.2.2: Enhanced carbon sinks from reduced forest degradation. | 1.2 Forest area (hectares) under sustainable management, separated by forest type |

### Relevance to Multi-lateral Conventions

1. The project is relevant to multiple GEF-supported multilateral environmental agreements. With respect to the UNCCD, the project was relevant to the *10-year UNCCD Strategic Plan,* especially Strategic Objective 2: To improve the condition of affected ecosystems, particularly Expected impact 2.1: Land productivity and other ecosystem goods and services in affected areas are enhanced in a sustainable manner contributing to improved livelihoods; and Strategic Objective 3: To generate global benefits through effective implementation of the UNCCD, specifically Expected impact 3.1: Sustainable land management and combating desertification/land degradation to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and the mitigation of climate change.
2. The project responds to a number of needs identified in Armenia’s *Second National Communication under the United Nations Framework on Climate Change* (2010) namely (i) Establish natural ecosystems’ monitoring system and conduct studies on climate change impacts thereon; (ii) Based on the international experience in application of modern technologies, develop a system for consistent monitoring of the “LULUCF” sector, and assessment of GHG emissions from the sector; and (iv) Include carbon accumulation assessment in forest management plans.
3. The project contributed to *Armenia’s Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan* (BSAP) through support to the following objectives: (i) To develop mechanisms which mitigate economic activities that negatively affect biodiversity, while ensuring that a more realistic market value is placed on biological resources; (ii) To increase internal and external investments in order to conserve and regenerate landscapes and biodiversity; and (iii) To conserve, regenerate and sustainably use forest resources, with a resulting increase in healthy forested areas.
4. With respect to relevance to Armenia’s implementation of the CBD, the project supports multiple Aichi biodiversity targets. These include:

* Target 2: By 2020, at the latest, biodiversity values have been integrated into national and local development and poverty reduction strategies and planning processes and are being incorporated into national accounting, as appropriate, and reporting systems.
* Target 5: By 2020, the rate of loss of all natural habitats, including forests, is at least halved and where feasible brought close to zero, and degradation and fragmentation is significantly reduced.
* Target 15: By 2020, ecosystem resilience and the contribution of biodiversity to carbon stocks has been enhanced, through conservation and restoration, including restoration of at least 15 per cent of degraded ecosystems, thereby contributing to climate change mitigation and adaptation and to combating desertification.

## Relevance of the Project Approach: Project Strategy and Design

1. Overall the project strategy and design is relevant to addressing the threats, and barriers identified in the project document. However, there are a couple of minor points worth mentioning about the project design.
2. In terms of operational aspects there are two key issues. First, the project was designed based on the assumption that other partners, namely GIZ, would be providing certain aspects. On the one hand this approach has potential benefits, but ultimately GIZ did not provide the inputs expected at the project design phase. Therefore, one important lesson is that while the design of projects should embrace a partnership approach as much as possible, and build synergies with others’ initiatives, risks to the achievement of expected outcomes increase with the level of dependency on others for inputs.
3. Second, the project design expected to complete the revised and updated forest management plans using third-party external experts, who were to be contracted by the project in order to support Hayantar. However, the limited amount of technical expertise in the country has created a bottleneck in terms of the project producing the necessary number of forest management plans. There are only a few groups of technical experts available to work on the forest management plans, and any one group is only able to work on 1-2 forest management plans at a time. International expertise is too expensive for the project to contract (and would possibly not be able to adequately complete the work, in terms of familiarity with the Armenian forestry context and being able to work in the local language). Thus, another important lesson related to project design is that project designers must consider how expected outputs will actually be completed and by whom, and ensure that there are sufficient resources within the country to successfully complete the expected work in the required timeframe. Alternatively, appropriate budget should be allocated in order to contract expertise from outside the country.
4. There is also one consideration in relation to long-term achievement of the objective and sustainability of results. The overarching, fundamental issue with respect to sustainable management of forests in Armenia is the national fuelwood demand by rural communities. The project design aims to pilot a few different approaches to reducing fuelwood demand, and increasing the efficiency of energy use in local communities. However, the piloted project activities (e.g. energy efficient stoves, micro-solar, biomass briquettes) would all need to be massively scaled up to actually lead to significant impact for Armenia’s forests. Therefore, the key issue to be addressed is not a lack of options for fuelwood alternatives or efficiency, but rather the resources, capacity, and political will at the national level to fundamentally shift the system of rural energy needs to a more sustainable approach. Perhaps affecting the situation like this, at the systemic level, would have been beyond the capacity of a project of this scale. Yet, any intervention that does not directly target this systemic level will miss the chance to be fully relevant to addressing the issue of sustainable forest management in Armenia.

# Project Management and Cost-effectiveness (Efficiency)

1. Project **efficiency** is rated ***moderately unsatisfactory***. The project’s adaptive management (execution), communication, local stakeholder engagement, and reporting are strong points. The project team is professional and technically well-qualified. Total financial delivery as of the mid-term review (June 2018) was only 21.6% of total funding, although by the 3rd quarter of 2018 this increased to approximately 1/3rd of funding. In terms of time, the project is officially approximately 2/3rds complete, considering Prodoc signature in December 2015 as the official starting point. This indicates that the project is well behind schedule. The project may require a 6-12 month no-cost extension due to some delays at start-up, and slower than planned implementation, especially from late 2017-mid-2018, while the forestry sector was being restructured. Many GEF projects receive no-cost extensions of approximately 6 months, so a 6-12 month extension for the Armenia Mountain SFM project would not be highly unusual, but the project should not be extended longer than 12 months in order to ensure overall cost-effectiveness. In addition, unless the project starts making more significant progress by the end of 2018, more intensive and proactive adaptive management may be required, with strong UNDP support, to ensure the project meets its planned outcomes and objective within a reasonable timeframe.
2. GEF funding for project management costs is planned at 4.76%, and so far, the project management costs are only 4.35% of GEF-funded expenditures. Financial management procedures are in-line with international norms, and conform to UNDP policies and procedures. Project co-financing is minimal so far at 0.4% of planned co-financing, though this likely relates to under-reporting, rather than low co-financing delivery; actual non-reported co-financing is likely to be higher. UNDP provides adequate oversight as the implementing agency, as indicated by timely and comprehensive reporting, and good guidance on gender mainstreaming.

## Implementation, Including UNDP Oversight

1. UNDP is the GEF Agency responsible for the project, and carries general backstopping and oversight responsibilities. Implementation by UNDP is considered **moderately satisfactory**. As outlined in the project document, “As GEF Implementing Agency, UNDP is ultimately accountable and responsible for the delivery of results, subject also to their certification by the Ministry of Nature Protection, as Implementing Partner. UNDP shall provide project cycle management services that will include the following:

* Providing financial and audit services to the project
* Overseeing financial expenditures against project budgets,
* Ensuring that activities including procurement and financial services are carried out in strict compliance with UNDP/GEF procedures,
* Ensuring that the reporting to GEF is undertaken in line with the GEF requirements and procedures,
* Facilitate project learning, exchange and outreach within the GEF family,
* Contract the project mid-term and final evaluations and trigger additional reviews and/or evaluations as necessary and in consultation with the project counterparts.”

1. To the mid-term, UNDP has provided adequate project support and guidance, but the current level of implementation implies that the project may have benefited from stronger support to identify adaptive measures for more rapid implementation. Considering the challenging national context, going forward, more intensive engagement and support from UNDP may be required to keep the project moving ahead at an adequate pace. Some of the project activities have been delayed by the ongoing forest sector reforms, as well as by the government changes that occurred in 2018. This is understandable, but the project cannot be delayed indefinitely by external contextual factors. To keep the project moving forward UNDP may need to provide support through high level engagement with the Ministry of Nature Protection, in order to find a mutually agreeable path for rapid implementation during the second half of the project. This evaluation recommends that UNDP provide intensive supervision and support for the project to ensure the project continues to move rapidly ahead by early 2019 at the latest.

## Execution (Project Management)

1. The project is executed under UNDP’s National Implementation (NIM) modality, with the Ministry of Nature Protection as the key national implementing partner. In practice, project management is handled by a project manager contracted directly by UNDP, working on behalf of the Ministry of Nature Protection. Project execution is considered **satisfactory**. The Armenia Mountain SLM project PMU is characterized by highly professional project management, good technical qualifications, timely reporting, strong engagement of local stakeholders, and transparent communication.
2. To minimize risks to implementation in the second half of the project, the PMU will need to carry out highly pro-active workplanning that incorporates multiple alternatives and innovative back-up options for key activities, in order to achieve the desired environmental outcomes. This might include, for example, revising the budget between activities in order to increase expand activities that are not delayed, and cancel activities that are delayed indefinitely.

## Partnership Approach and Stakeholder Participation

1. The project has had a good partnership approach and stakeholder participation, particularly at the local level. The project appears to have established positive working relationships with staff of the Ijevan and Noyemberyan Forest Enterprises in the field, and with local resource users in the local communities of Tavush, Koghb, Voskepar, Odzun, Ardvi and Mets Parni. In addition, the project has partnered with local NGOs to support some project activities at the local level, such as “Huysi Kamurj” (Bridge of Hope) (for installation of solar panels on schools), “Verelq” NGO (for design and production of energy efficient stoves), and Koghb Art School for environmental education and awareness raising activities.
2. At the national level the engagement of partners has been slightly less productive, although national partners indicated that coordination and communication has continued to significantly improve, . Other key donors, such as GIZ and FAO are also supporting development of the forestry sector in Armenia, and there has been some coordination between the project and these initiatives, but there may be opportunities for strengthening the collaborative approach to ensure that all development partners are mutually re-enforcing each other’s efforts, in coordination with the Ministry of Nature Protection. For example, the Armenia Mountain SLM project could be more strongly engaged in providing data inputs to the GIZ effort on the Forest Management Information System, while GIZ could provide more support for the strengthening of forest management plans (as originally foreseen during the project design phase). The project could also more effectively engage the State Forest Monitoring Center on the development of the forest management plans.

## Risk Assessment and Monitoring

1. The Armenia Mountain SLM project document includes the project risk analysis (Annex 1, p. 93 of the UNDP Prodoc). The risk analysis highlighted seven risks, five of which were rated “moderate” and two of which were rated “high”. The project risk analysis was not updated at the inception phase, although the inception report does include a copy of the Prodoc risk assessment table. The Prodoc also included an annex (Annex 4 of the Prodoc, p. 109) for the UNDP Environmental and Social Screening which can also be used to identify risks, but the annex was submitted as a separate document.
2. During project implementation risks are monitored quarterly through UNDP’s Atlas risk log, and annually through the PIR. No critical risks were identified in the 2017 or 2018 PIRs.
3. Table 5 below provides an update as of the MTR of the risks previously identified in the Prodoc, as well as an addition risks that have emerged since the project started.

Table 5 MTR Risk Analysis Update

| **Risk Origin** | **Risk** | **Prodoc Rating** | **MTR Update** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Prodoc Risk Analysis | Proposed enabling legal and institutional framework is not modified/adopted or adoption is not timely. | Moderate | No change, current risk level appears to be **HIGH.** The forestry sector institutional reforms have been slow (e.g. transfer for Hayantar to Ministry of Nature Protection), and have caused the project implementation to be slower than planned. Some aspects of the reform have been completed, but there are still other aspects that are in-progress, some of which could significantly affect the project outputs. For example, there is the possibility that the originally existing individual government Forest Enterprises will be merged into regional branches, which would affect the project’s revised Forest Management Plans. |
| Prodoc Risk Analysis | Conflicts and misunderstandings among public institutions, private sector partners, NGOs and resource users undermine partnership approaches and implementation of cooperative governance arrangements | Moderate | Current risk level appears to be **LOW**. This is not currently a significant issue facing the project. However, the project has not yet progressed much into actual implementation of modified forest management practices, and the risk may become more significant as the project progresses. |
| Prodoc Risk Analysis | Land owners/users float planning regulations leading to multiplication of illegal logging and overgrazing | High | Current risk level appears to be **LOW**. This is not currently a significant issue facing the project, but the project has not yet progressed much into actual implementation of modified forest management practices. However, it seems unlikely that illegal logging and overgrazing would increase as a result of project activities. |
| Prodoc Risk Analysis | Low buy-in from communities to the Livelihood Support Scheme | Moderate | Current risk level appears to be **LOW**. This is not currently a significant issue facing the project. |
| Prodoc Risk Analysis | Increased negative attitude of the local community towards forest management due to enforcement of restrictions of access to and subsistence collection of firewood | High | Current risk level appears to be **LOW**. This is not currently a significant issue facing the project. However, the project has not yet progressed much into actual implementation of modified forest management practices, and the risk may become more significant as the project progresses. |
| Prodoc Risk Analysis | Elite capture power at local levels so that the marginalized groups will have lesser authority to wield planning and generating benefits. | Moderate | No change, current risk level appears to be **MODERATE**. This is not currently a significant issue facing the project. |
| Prodoc Risk Analysis | Climate change risk: pasture and forest degradation caused by CC passes the point when the consequences cannot be dealt with through adaptation measures. | Moderate | No change, current risk level appears to be **MODERATE**. The severity of this risk will only be able to assessed over the long-term. In the short-term, thus far during project implementation, there have not been major new developments in terms of climate-related impacts. |
| New Risk | Technical capacity available in the country is not sufficient for the project to produce revised sustainable forest management plans in the time necessary to support implementation of the plans before project completion. | N/A | This is a risk the project is currently facing relating to the timely completion of the planned forest management plans; this risk is considered **MODERATE** at this time, but the risk may increase if more efficient approaches are not identified. |

## Flexibility and Adaptive Management

1. Flexibility is one of the GEF’s ten operational principles, and all projects must be implemented in a flexible manner to maximize efficiency and effectiveness, and to ensure results-based, rather than output-based approach. Thus, during project implementation adaptive management must be employed to adjust to changing circumstances.
2. In general, the project is being implemented in an adaptive manner, with adjustments to workplanning and budgeting as necessary, depending on the changing national circumstances and context. Budget revisions have been made throughout the implementation period, in accordance with UNDP and GEF procedures, requirements and guidelines.
3. One key area where adaptive management has been required relates to the key project result of producing updated and revised Forest Management Plans. The project design originally envisaged the project contributing to and strengthening Forest Management Plans that were going to be mainly generated with support from another development partner, GIZ. The project contributions were envisioned to be the introduction of ecosystem services concepts, updating monitoring protocols to include biodiversity and other aspects, consideration of climate change factors, and other elements. However, the support from GIZ did not ultimately materialize as envisioned. Therefore, the project workplan has been reshaped and included development of new Forest Management Plans in full scale, which means that UNDP may not have enough resources to complete preparation of all Forest Management Plans in the required format.
4. An even stronger approach to adaptive management may be necessary in the second half of implementation, in order to keep the project moving forward even in the face of difficult or unclear national institutional circumstances. The key for the project will be to remain focused on a results-based approach, and to focus on delivering sustainable forest management benefits. The recommendations in this mid-term review provide some preliminary guidance to support more intensive implementation.

## Financial Planning by Component and Delivery

1. The breakdown of project GEF financing is indicated in Table 6 below. Additional details on project finances are included in tables in Annex 8. The total GEF-allocation was $2,977,169. Of this, $1,175,400 (37.2%% of the total) was planned for Component 1, Component 2 was budgeted at $1,585,499 (50.2%), and Component 3 was budgeted at $74,500 (2.4%). Project management was budgeted at $321,770, or 10.2% of the total; the project management budget includes $180,000 in co-financing from UNDP and therefore the GEF financing for project management is $141,770 (4.76% of total GEF financing).
2. The project was originally planned for 48 months. The Prodoc indicates that the expected project implementation start would be January 2016, although the Prodoc Total Budget and Workplan (starting on p. 74 of the Prodoc) indicates planned expenditure of $195,948 for the 2015 calendar year. Although Project Prodoc signature did occur by the end of 2015, the project inception workshop was not until June 2016.
3. As of the mid-term review the project has had five formal budget revisions in order to re-allocate funds to later years for underspent funds in the initial part of the project. As of the mid-term review there had been no re-allocation of funds between the project components.

Table 6. Project Planned vs. Actual Financing, Through June 8, 2018 ($ USD)

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Planned amount** | **Share of total** | **Actual amount** | **% of actual amount** | **% of original planned** |
| **Component 1: Enabling Environment** | 1,175,400 | 37.2% | 257,376 | 38.4% | 21.9% |
| **Component 2: SFM Practices** | 1,585,499 | 50.2% | 319,882 | 47.7% | 20.2% |
| **Component 3: M&E, Learning\*** | 74,500 | 2.4% | 3,215 | 0.5% | 4.3% |
| Project Coordination and Management\*\* | 321,770 | 10.2% | 90,560 | 13.5% | 28.1% |
| **Total‡** | 3,157,169 | 100.0% | 671,033 | 100.0% | 21.3% |

*Sources: Project Document for planned amount; project financial documents provided by UNDP for actual amounts.*

*\* The project’s Component 3 included budget for monitoring and evaluation activities, but also included budget for other activities. The project document includes a detailed M&E budget. However, the total M&E budget includes activities that would be funded from the project management budget line (such as annual reporting) or other sources (such as UNDP oversight).*

*\*\* The “Project Coordination and Management” budget line is cash co-financed by UNDP, with $180,000 of co-financing. Therefore the GEF contribution to this budget line is $141,770, or 4.76% of the total GEF financing.*

1. Figure 3 show the percentage planned and actual allocation of budget by component. The breakdown of actual expenditure by component is roughly in-line with planned expectations, although Component 3 is significantly underspent (actual 0.5% of total vs. planned 2.4% of total). Project management expenditure is outpacing expenditure for Components 1-3, which is to be expected since project management expenditure should track more closely in-line with the amount of implementation time; from this perspective the project management budget is still significantly underspent, as only 28.1% of the budget line has been spent, although the project has reached the mid-point of implementation; project management expenditure is still below the total planned share at 4.35% of GEF funding, vs the planned 4.76%.

Figure 3. Component Share of Total, Planned vs. Actual Budget Allocation

1. Actual financial expenditure is well below the planned pace as of the mid-term review. Total financial delivery stands at 21.3% as of June 8th, 2018.[[8]](#footnote-8) This is almost exactly the 24-month mid-point after the June 17, 2016 inception workshop. Typically project disbursement does not go in a linear fashion, but there is no question that financial delivery is behind expectations. Figure 4 below shows the project’s originally planned expenditure by year, vs. actual expenditure by year, with the annual financial delivery rate. Figure 5 shows the project’s original planned cumulative expenditure vs actual cumulative expenditure.

Figure 4. Annual Planned vs. Actual Expenditure, and Annual Financial Delivery Rate

Figure 5. Planned Cumulative Expenditure by Year vs. Actual Cumulative Expenditure

1. The project had an audit in February-March 2018, in accordance with the project M&E plan to have an audit “at least in lifetime of project”. The audit report was not available at the time of the MTR. It is recommended that an additional audit be conducted prior to budgeting and workplanning for the final year of the project (i.e. likely in the 3rd quarter of 2019).

## Planned and Actual Co-financing

1. The expected project co-financing was $13,989,935 (42% cash, 58% in-kind), from five total partners. This is an expected co-financing ratio of 4.7 : 1. Table 7 below shows planned and actual co-financing. According to data provided by the project team, the project had received $0.06 million USD in co-financing as of June 8, 2018; this was a portion of the cash co-financing expected from UNDP as a contribution to the project management budget line. This is 0.4% of the expected co-financing. It is likely that the project has received significantly more co-financing from the project partners, at least in terms of in-kind co-financing. In addition, it is expected that additional leveraged co-financing from the government will be provided in the second half of the project for the development of the Sevqar forest enterprise forest management plan. However, no additional co-financing was formally reported as of the mid-term review. This evaluation recommends that the project closely and carefully track actual co-financing, including any in-kind or cash co-financing that is contributed by local stakeholders or local partners that may not have been part of the originally planned co-financing. The breakdown of co-financing is not tracked by project outcome because it is not managed by the project.

Table 7 Planned and Actual Co-financing Received, as of June 8, 2018 (USD)

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Sources of Co-finance** | **Name of Co-financer** | **Type of Co-financing** | **Planned** | **Actual** | **Explanation** | **% of Expected Amount** |
| GEF Agency | UNDP | Cash | 180,000 | 59,347 | * Contributions to Project Management budget line | 33% |
| GEF Agency | UNDP | In-kind | 720,000 | Not reported | * Not specified | 0% |
| National Government | Ministry of Nature Protection | In-kind | 6,055,000 | Not reported | * Not specified | 0% |
| National Government | Ministry of Nature Protection | Cash | 2,595,000 | Not reported | * Not specified | 0% |
| National Government | Hayantar SNCO | In-kind | 1,277,235 | Not reported | * Not specified | 0% |
| National Government | Hayantar SNCO | Cash | 2,500,000 | Not reported | * Not specified | 0% |
| Non-Governmental Organization | World Wide Fund for Nature (Armenia) | Cash | 376,000 | Not reported | * Partially for re-introduction of red deer in Dilijian National Park | 0% |
| Foundation | Caucasus Nature Fund | Cash | 286,200 | Not reported | * Support for improved management of Dilijian National Park | 0% |
| **Total** |  |  |  |  |  |  |

*Sources: Planned from Project Document. Actual total co-financing received as per data from UNDP/Project Team.*

## Monitoring and Evaluation

1. The Armenia Mountain SLM project **M&E design** generally meets UNDP and GEF minimum standards, and is considered **satisfactory**. **M&E implementation** is considered **satisfactory**, and therefore **overall M&E** is considered **satisfactory**.

### M&E Design

1. The Armenia Mountain SLM project M&E plan is outlined in the project document, including a budgeted M&E plan in table format (section 6 of the Prodoc, pp. 87-91). The M&E plan describes each of the planned M&E activities, including roles, responsibilities, and timeframe. The identified M&E activities include inception workshop and report, annual progress reporting (APR/PIR), meetings of the Project Board, independent mid-term review and terminal evaluation, project final report, and audit. The project M&E activities were specifically budgeted under Component 3 of the project, including a focus on learning and knowledge sharing. In addition, it was expected lessons would be captured in the various M&E activities and reports, since, for example, they are automatically included in the annual PIR, and Terminal Evaluation. The project M&E plan is appropriately designed and well articulated, and conforms to GEF and UNDP M&E minimum standards.
2. The M&E plan is summarized in a table showing responsible parties, budget, and timeframe for each of the M&E activities, with the total expected budget of $74,500; this was fully and directly budgeted for under the project’s Component 3, which is fully funded with GEF resources. This is adequate for a project of this size and scope, representing approximately 2.4% of the GEF allocation. Having a specific project budget line dedicated to M&E activities is a positive lesson from the project, and represents good practice within the UNDP and GEF global portfolio.
3. The project results framework is a critical component of the project’s overall M&E framework. The Armenia Mountain SLM project results framework indicators and targets meet SMART criteria, but only at a minimal level. Many of the indicator targets are output-based, rather than outcome focused. For example, the project results framework has multiple indicators with targets focusing on the number of people trained, without clear outcome-level rationale for the target value. One indicator in particular does not clearly fully meet SMART criteria: *“Percentage decrease in number of livestock using natural forests for unsustainable grazing practices in targeted forest branches”*. In addition, the target for completion of forest management plans may need to be adjusted to reflect the changed baseline context faced by the project (as further discussed in later Section VI.A on Component 1 of the project). In addition, a number of indicators could be consolidated, because they all reflect results to be achieved through the process of revising the forest management plans – for example the first indicator at the objective level, and the second and third indicators under Component 1. This evaluation recommends that the Project Steering Committee consider approving revisions to the project results framework to ensure indicators and targets are fully in-line with SMART criteria, and reflect the baseline context at the time the project started implementation.
4. On the other hand, the project results framework has strong indicators related to assessing the biodiversity impact, with technically well-developed indicators that focus on changes in population trends for important indicator species, based on clearly specified monitoring techniques. This is another positive lesson from the project.

### M&E Implementation

1. The project M&E activities have been implemented as foreseen. The project team provided reports at required reporting intervals (i.e. quarterly progress reports, annual PIR), and UNDP oversight has been appropriate.
2. Four Project Board meetings have been conducted: August 18, 2016; March 31, 2017; December 21, 2017; and February 13, 2018.
3. The project has had one financial audit in February-March 2018 (as discussed at the end of Section V.F above on financial management); however, an additional audit may be useful, and should be conducted in approximately the 3rd quarter of 2019, prior to budgeting and workplanning for the final year of project activities.

# Effectiveness and Results: Progress Toward the Objective and Outcomes

1. The Armenia Mountain SLM project has made some progress toward the planned objective and outcome, but the project’s slower-than-planned implementation to this point has so far reduced its effectiveness and progress toward results. When total financial delivery stands at between 20%-30% (see Section V.F on financial management), it is not a surprise that the project’s effectiveness and results thus far are limited.
2. The project’s **effectiveness** is rated ***moderately satisfactory.*** The project activities and outputs should ultimately contribute to the planned outcomes and objective, once more progress is made on implementation. Ongoing national governmental reforms, and the process of national transformation of the forestry sector has led the Ministry of Nature Protection to request the project to postpone or delay multiple project activities. The affected activities include the preparation of forest management plans (a key project output), forest rehabilitation activities, and some work on the forestry sector regulatory framework. The activities and outputs generated thus far have contributed to the achievement of outcomes.
3. The project strategy is technically sound, but has some challenges in terms of the practical implementation, as discussed in previous Section IV.B on relevance of the project approach. In addition, without a larger-scale focus on addressing rural fuelwood dependency it is unclear to what extent the implementation of sustainable forest management plans will be effective.
4. Project **results / achievement of overall outcomes** is rated ***moderately unsatisfactory***. The project is likely to meet 13 of its results framework indicators, while achievement of the remaining 11 indicators is uncertain.
5. Key results achieved thus far with project support include:

* Four forest management plans have been updated (for Ijevan, Noyemberyan, Gougarq, and Eghegnut forest enterprises), with the following characteristics:
  + FMPs use integrated protocols for biodiversity considerations (the HCVF concept), ecosystem services (including non-timber forest products, carbon sequestration, water regulation and other services) and indicator bird and butterfly species to monitor ecosystem changes.
  + FMPs include forest inventories and corresponding maps, and an assessment of the exact boundaries of the forest enterprises and their sub-units.
  + FMPs identify and specify management measures for 38,000 ha of HCVF, including protected areas within the forest enterprises.
  + FMPs identify and map 2,000 ha for multi-use regimes involving NTFPs and agro-forestry.
* Implementation of a local sustainable forest and land management capacity building program, with technical trainings involving 35 people from forest enterprises, 50 pasture resource-users (of which 25 were women), and 190 forest resource-users (of which 70 were women).
* Development and implementation of detailed monitoring protocols for bird and butterfly indicator species.
* Restoration of 93 ha of beech forest through coppicing, in Lalvar forest enterprise near Odzun community; initial steps toward restoration of a further 2,000 ha of degraded forest.
* Identification of 1,455 ha of degraded pastureland within five forest enterprises for potential restoration, with preliminary progress toward restoration of 1,000 ha.
* Production and dissemination to needy resource-dependent community members in and near Koghb community of 278 energy efficient stoves that reduce fuelwood use by 25%-30%.
* Installation of solar electrical heating systems in four kindergartens in the forest-dependent communities of Ijevan, Koghb, Koti, Bagratashen, to reduce fuelwood dependency.
* Procurement and establishment of a demonstration facility for production of biomass briquettes from agricultural wastes, to reduce fuelwood dependency in Mets Parni community.
* Support for sustainable livelihoods in forest dependent communities, such as the establishment of forest fruit and berry drying facility in Voskepar village, and a passive solar greenhouse in Ardvi community.
* Significant progress on field research to determine national carbon co-efficients for forest and soil carbon in Armenian forests.

1. Detailed and specific information identifying many project results not covered in this section is available in the “Self-assessment” column of Annex 10 of this report, which includes the project results framework and the project’s reporting on indicators and targets from the 2018 PIR.
2. The project objective level results indicators are summarized in Table 8 below.

Table 8 Armenia Mountain SLM project Objective Level Indicators

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Indicator** | **Baseline** | **Target** | **Status** |
| 1. Number of forest management plans integrating considerations of biodiversity, ecosystem services, climate mitigation and community resource use (integrating sustainable forest management principles) | (not set or not applicable) | 11  5 Community development plans updated | Achievement uncertain. |
| 2. Total avoided and/or sequestrated carbon benefits over ten-year period due to improved sustainable management of forests. | N/A | 681,990 metric tCO2 | Achievement likely. |
| 3. Extent in hectares of forest area managed for multiple sustainable forest management and ecosystem benefits | (not set or not applicable) | 250000 | Achievement uncertain. |

## *Component/ Outcome 1: Enabling environment for the marzes in Northeastern Armenia to plan, monitor and adapt sustainable forest and land management*

1. The first component of the project focuses on addressing the barrier related to deficiencies in the current inadequate planning, regulatory and institutional framework for integrated forest resource management. The total GEF funding planned for the component was $1,175,400 million USD, which was 37.2% of the total GEF funding for the project; the actual expenditure as of June 8th, 2018 was $257,376 USD. The component activities were organized around six outputs. The progress toward results so far for each of the outputs is summarized following the table below.
2. The level of progress toward the results indicators for Component 1 are summarized in Table 9 below.

Table 9 Component 1 Indicators and Targets

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Indicator** | **Baseline** | **Target** | **Status** |
| 4. Number of forest management plan protocols/guidelines for mainstreaming ecosystem, climate risk mitigation and biodiversity considerations into forest management in NE Armenia | *(not set or not applicable)* | One set approved by Ministry of Agriculture | Achievement likely. |
| 5. Number of sets of forest inventory and maps in support of sustainable forest management for forest enterprise branches | *(not set or not applicable)* | 11 | Achievement uncertain. |
| 6. Number of forest enterprise branches effectively applying consideration of the needs for biodiversity, climate mitigation, forest ecosystem services and community sustainable use | 0 (partial application in FMPs) | 11 | Achievement uncertain. |
| 7. Number of forest monitoring protocols to assess effectiveness of adoption for SFM in forestlands | 0 (Existing practice, monitoring protocols used for recording forest violations and fires, not for consideration of ecosystem values and functions) | One set of protocols approved and adopted by Ministry of Agriculture | Achievement uncertain. |
| 8. Number of marz and enterprise branch forest staff trained in the use of ecosystem based planning tools | *(not set or not applicable)* | 60 | Achievement likely. |
| 9. Number of pasture stakeholders undergone technical and skills training and development in sustainable pasture management | *(not set or not applicable)* | 100 (of which at least 30 are women) | Achievement likely. |
| 10. Number of forest dependents trained in technical skills for sustainable forest resource use | *(not set or not applicable)* | 500 (of which at least 150 are women) | Achievement uncertain. |
| 11. Number of recommendations on accounting for ecosystem services valuation and community resource use | *(not set or not applicable)* | One set of recommendations | Achievement likely. |

1. Output 1.1: Forest management plan guidelines/protocols updated for mainstreaming ecosystem, climate risks and biodiversity considerations into forest management planning in North-east Armenia
2. The project has a target of developing forest management plans for 11 forest enterprises in Tavush marz and Loris marz (see Figure 6 and Figure 7 below). This target was developed based on initial assumptions about the work to be done by partners, and what the project’s contribution would be. The project contribution was only planned to be incremental to the baseline forest management plans, focusing on adding value related to biodiversity, ecosystem services, and climate change aspects. Since the baseline situation has not materialized as envisioned (i.e. GIZ was not able to make the contributions that had been initially planned), then the project target should be reduced, but with a greater contribution to a fewer number of forest management plans. It may be reasonable to reduce the project target by one-quarter or one-third, to aim for a target of 7-8 completed forest management plans. However, the plans completed by the project should be fully comprehensive, with completed forest inventory for the targeted area, and including biodiversity data, ecosystem services, and climate change aspects.
3. So far, the project has completed the following work:

* Two FMPs drafted for Ijevan and Noyemberyan forest enterprises with integrated considerations of biodiversity, ecosystem services, climate mitigation and community resource (integrating sustainable forest management principles) use; through a UNDP official letter shared with MoNP for circulation and feedback. The project expects to receive feedback from MoNP by the end of August or September, 2018. The relevant amendments to the drafted FMPs will be incorporated shortly and final FMPs will be submitted for approval by the end of 2018.
* One FMP for Artsvaberd forest enterprise with integrated considerations of biodiversity, ecosystem services, climate mitigation and community resource (integrating sustainable forest management principles) use was not delivered by a contracted company due to changes in the company’s team. Thus, the contract was terminated and will be re-announced.
* Two FMPs for Gugarq and Yeghegnut forest enterprises with integrated considerations of biodiversity, ecosystem services, climate mitigation and community resource (integrating sustainable forest management principles) use are being completed and will be officially delivered to MoNP for circulation and feedback by mid-August 2018.

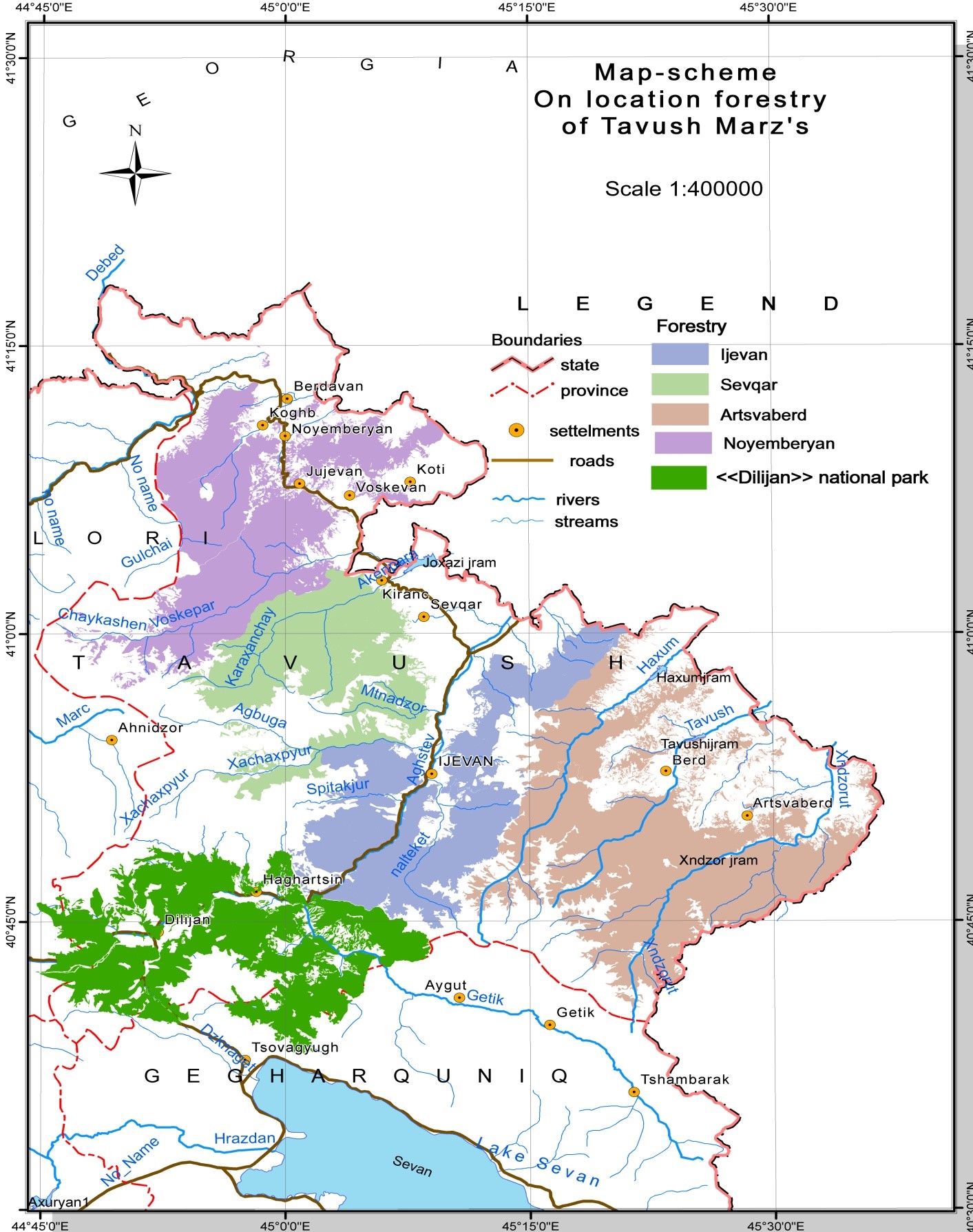
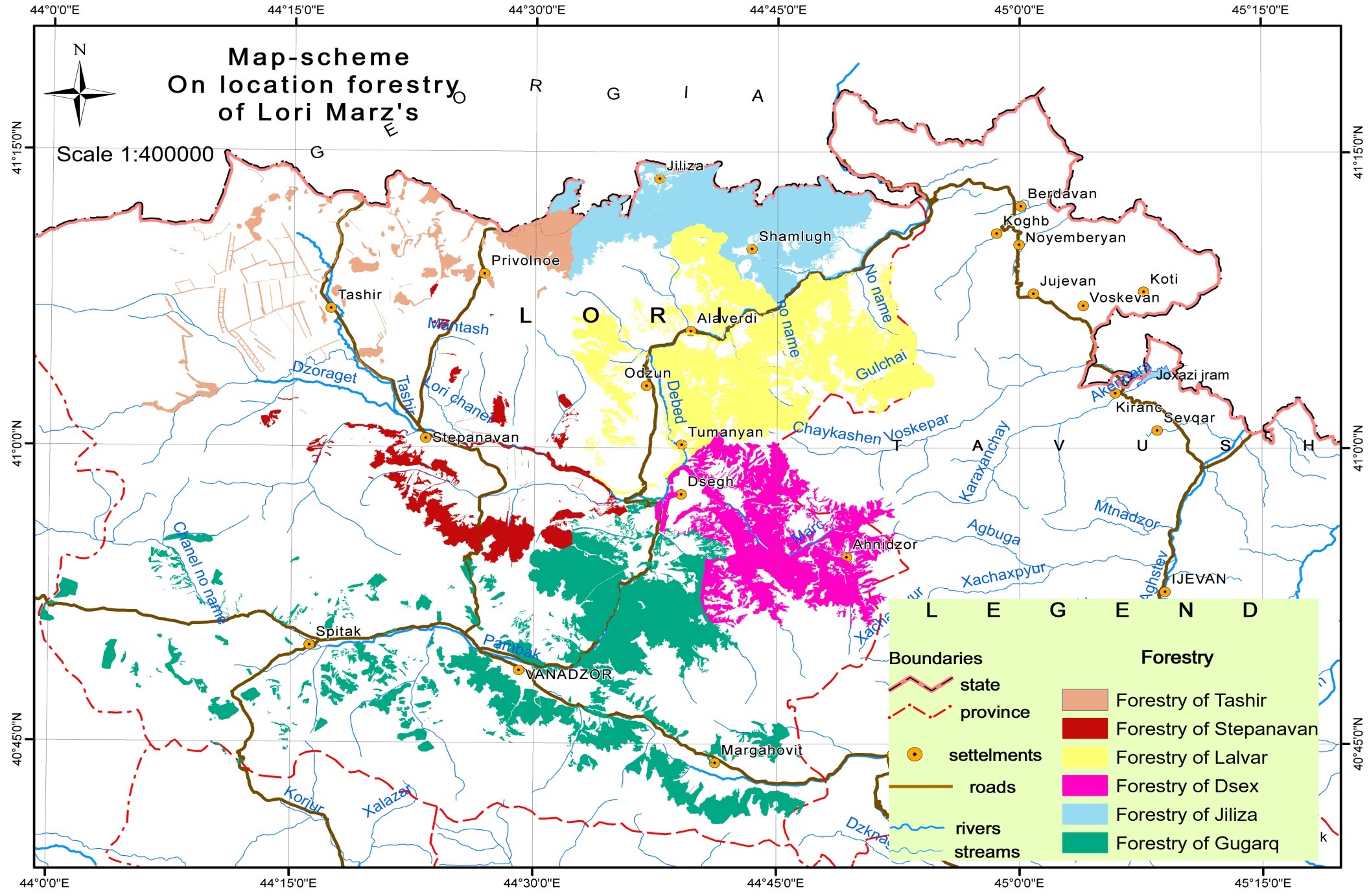
1. While progress has been made on development of the forest management plans, the process for developing the plans could be more comprehensive. So far, the forest management plans are just developed and completed by third-party consulting companies. Some institutional stakeholders in the country have not been fully consulted in the development of the plans. This evaluation recommends that the forest management plans should be developed through a comprehensive national stakeholder consultation process, including institutions such as the national forest monitoring center.

Figure 6. Forest Enterprises in Tavush Marz

1. Another major bottleneck for completing the forest management plans is that there is not sufficient technical capacity within the country to complete all of the forest management plans simultaneously. To complete the forest management plans the project currently relies on a model where a third-party private sector entity is contracted to complete each forest management plan. However, there are currently only 1-3 private sector entities in the country that are qualified to complete the forest management plans (at least one of the companies in the market has gone through changes that affect their ability to deliver the expected outputs; this is an issue the project is managing adaptively). Therefore, there is only technical capacity to complete one forest management plan at a time, a process that requires 4-6 months.
2. Considering this issue, this evaluation recommendation that the project should provide direct funding to pilot a more self-driven approach to completion of the forest management plans. This should commence with a pilot management plan for a forest enterprise sub-unit, to be completed as a collaboration between the forest enterprise staff, the national forest monitoring center, and any other key relevant national stakeholders (i.e. Bioresources center, etc.). Completing this process and carefully tracking the financial inputs required would be a highly useful exercise to inform future planning for completion of forest management plans.

Figure 7. Forest Enterprises of Lori Marz



1. One of the challenges of finalizing the expected forest management plans is that formal approval of the plans depends on official recognition of the exact boundaries of the forest unit area being described. Anecdotally, for the two “marzes” (counties) targeted by the project, there are 40,000 hectares of inconsistency between the forest enterprise management area and the official land cadaster. However, the project should not let this formal barrier be a major roadblock to progress toward outcomes. Even if formal approval depends on government approval of the boundaries, the project should promote draft “provisional” forest management plans that can be implemented prior to official government approval defining the exact forest boundaries. Within the forest management plans there should be an initial clause stating that the management plan is provisional until boundaries are officially approved by the government, but that the forest management plan will be implemented in the meantime based on current common understanding of the area under the responsibility of the forest enterprise.
2. Another challenge to the project result for forest management plans is that under the current institutional reform there is the possibility that the current administrative boundaries and structure of the forest enterprises will be changed. There is currently discussion about the possibility of merging all forest enterprises within each marz (county) into a single administrative unit. If this institutional reform occurs, it would naturally have significant implications for the relevance of the forest management plans. However, if the forest enterprises are merged, the project should support this process by supporting the merging of the forest management plans as well. This should not be a major effort to completely re-do the forest management plans, but basically the existing forest management plans should be aggregated, without major additional revisions for the current 5-10 year management period.
3. Output 1.2: Geo-spatial information systems support forest inventory and mapping for forest management planning, development, implementation and monitoring
4. This output was intended to support the development of the forest management plans, through mapping and inventorying forest resources. The corresponding results indicator is “11 sets of forest inventory and maps in support of sustainable forest management for forest enterprise branches”. The consultants contracted to complete the forest management plans are partially carrying out this work, but it is also supported through the analysis of remote sensing data – satellite images. The project has procured satellite images from Airbus, the standard provider of this type of data to the UN. The procured satellite images have 1 panchromatic (0.5 m resolution), and 4 multispectral bands (2 m resolution), at the price of $7 per/km2 (100 ha) (at the 30% discount for the UN, compared to commercial operators).
5. The maps for the forest management plans are based on field data, and further verified through analysis of the satellite images. As further discussed under Output 1.5 below, the project must ensure that the forest inventory data collected and validated through satellite images is integrated into the national Forest Management Information System, as a key element to the development of a National Forest Inventory process.
6. The maps are also being used to identify areas for other activities, such as areas to support natural regeneration through livestock exclusion fencing, etc.
7. Output 1.3: Revised forest management plans integrate considerations of biodiversity, ecosystem services, climate mitigation, and community resource use.
8. This work is being done as part of the overall work to complete and implement the forest management plans; see information under Output 1.1 above. Progress on this output is in-line with the overall progress on development of the forest management plans; work has been carried out for 4 of the planned 11 forest enterprises.
9. Output 1.4: System for effective monitoring and enforcement of forest management plans, including clear delineation of roles and responsibilities of key partners and management of participatory processes in forest development
10. Activities related to this output have mostly been postponed as of the MTR, due to the institutional restructuring in the forestry sector.
11. Output 1.5: Recommendations for national policy and regulations for facilitating adoption of sustainable forest management practices
12. Under this output, according to the Prodoc, the project planned to produce “recommendations will be provided for considering adoption of approaches” that:

* Stipulates the process for identification and setting aside of High Conservation Value Forests (HCVF) in Forest Management Planning;
* Develop structures and methodologies for integrating community participatory forestry or sustainable NTFP and agro-forestry systems into the Forest Management Planning;
* Define options for assessment of economic services value of ecosystem functions and climate amelioration;
* Impact resolutions of Hayantar will be sought to adopt methodologies and criteria for assessing forests and grazing land condition for the purposes of subsequent forest and land use decision making;
* Recommendations will be developed for securing additional finances for SFM/SLM investments and aligning the existing financial contributions in the forestry and rangeland sectors to support SFM/SLM practices;
* Guidance and resource distribution criteria for allocations – to improve the efficacy of SFM/SLM investments (reduce overlap and redundancy) will be designed;
* Regulations for special management in ecological sensitive areas will be put in place, protocols for identification and demarcation of corridors for wildlife movement;
* Regulations on identification of ecosystem goods and services that will be mandatory to be addressed in the land use planning.

1. Due to the forest sector reform, activities under this output have mostly been postponed.
2. The project’s above described work on the development of forest management plans, and the regulations and guidelines is important for implementing sustainable forest management on the ground. However, at the national level Armenia is still lacking a National Forest Policy, and a National Forest Inventory (NFI), which are two of the foundational elements to effective and sustainable forest management. The full completion of these two foundational pillars is beyond the scope of this project, but the project must do whatever possible to contribute to progress on these fronts in a meaningful way.
3. Considering the delays so far, under Output 1.5 the project should tighten the scope of the development of regulations, focusing on the development of only the most critical 2-3 regulations or guidelines indicated above. At the same time, during the remaining implementation period, the project could lead work on the development of a National Forest Policy, although it may be necessary to wait until the institutional framework is reasonably clear after sectoral restructuring. The key government stakeholders are unlikely to be willing to proceed with policy development without having a clear picture about roles and responsibilities related to forest management.
4. Work is being done to develop the NFI by the German Development Bank (GiZ) (through the “Integrated biodiversity management, South Caucasus” (IBiS) project), and Food and Agriculture Organization. This is a multi-year process, which needs the support of all partners and stakeholders. In addition, GiZ is continuing to work with the Government of Armenia to fully develop and implement the National Forest Management Information System (FMIS), which is an important element of the development of the NFI. This evaluation recommends that the project team and UNDP should work with other partners and stakeholders to ensure that the work done and the inventory data collected for the FMPs is fully integrated into the FMIS, and the work done under the project is integrated into the development of the NFI.
5. Output 1.6: Enhanced capacity for sustainable land and forest management within key agencies and communities
6. The project aimed to carry out a range of training activities at different levels, relating to implementation of SLM and SFM. As of mid-2018, the project had completed the following work, according to the PIR (and validated by the MTR):

* 35 persons in total (out of a total project target of 60) from the beginning of project (5 persons at the end of 2017 and in 15 persons in 2018) in Ijevan, Noyemberyan, Artsvaberd, Gugarq and Yeghegnut Forest Enterprises were trained in the use of ecosystem-based planning tools. The trainings were performed by the forest inventory and mapping team staff. The target groups of trainings included forest rangers and district heads, head of branches, chief foresters, as well as members of consolidated local self-governments. Almost all participants were men, as women traditionally were and are not part of forest management in Armenia. These field trainings were beneficial both to the inventory team (e.g. to correct methodological approaches for the assessment of NTFP amount and cost) and the local staff to learn about concentrated locations of NTFP, the methods of sustainable harvest and opportunities for further processing (e.g. agricultural crops processing units in Voskepar, Koghb, Berdavan and other sites).
* 50 pasture stakeholders in total (out of a total project target of 100) from the beginning of project (of which 15 were women; in 2018 - 30 pasture stakeholders of which 10 were women) have undergone technical and skills training and development in sustainable pasture management in Ijevan, Noyemberyan, Gugarq an Yeghegnut Forest Enterprises. Additional community training on sustainable pasture management will be done by the pasture expert contracted by the project in mid-2018, with trainings to be held in late 2018 and early 2019.
* 190 (of which 70 were women; 60 persons in 2018, of which 60 were women) forest dependents trained in technical skills for sustainable forest resource use in Ijevan, Noyemberyan, Gugarq and Yeghegnut FEs. Forest enterprise staff and local community members were informed and trained in sustainable use of different type of forest ecosystems meaning and use: including water regulation, soil protection, climate regulation in-direct ecosystem values; NTFP sustainable use for current and future generations; opportunities for eco-tourism development and alternatives to fuel wood consumption.

1. The project has made some progress on training. The training work should be carefully completed to support the future implementation of the newly developed forest management plans, which apply new and innovative concepts for sustainable forest management. To ensure the capacity development work is as effective as possible the project should conduct a training needs assessment for each forest enterprise as part of the completion of the forest management plan. Then the training for each forest enterprise could be better targeted to ensure that the forest enterprise staff have the necessary capacity to implement the new forest management plans.
2. Currently Armenia has a State Forest Monitoring Center, which is a unit under the Ministry of Agriculture. The State Forest Monitoring Center’s main mandate is to monitor for illegal logging. However, the unit has well-developed capacity in GIS, remote sensing (including aerial monitoring through drones), and data analysis, which could be put to great use in support of the development of forest management plans, forest inventory, and other forest management functions that are within the institutional mandate of Hayantar and the Ministry of Nature Protection. The center accesses and analyzes free satellite imagery from the EU’s Sentinel program. The capacity for many forest management functions could be greatly improved if the State Forest Monitoring Center were under the Ministry of Nature Protection. This evaluation recommends that the project strongly recommend to the Government of Armenia that the State Forest Monitoring Center be shifted to the Ministry of Nature Protection, with an expanded mandate to provide support to all forest management functions. This should include support for the development of forest management plans through detailed analysis of remote sensing data. The State Forest Monitoring Center could also provide a focal point within Hayantar to develop and implement a National Forest Inventory based on new and modern technologies that can be more cost effective.

## *Component/Outcome 2: Investment in demonstrating improved sustainable forest and land management practices to reduce pressure on high conservation forests and maintain flow of ecosystem services*

1. The second component of the project demonstrates on-the-ground approaches to improving sustainable land and forest management within a production landscape covering an area of around 220,000 hectares of forest lands in the forest enterprises. The additional inventory and forest mapping exercises and subsequent revised/updated forest management plans provide the basis to demarcate areas for restricted land and forest use for assigning land use regime to certain areas important for the provision of ecosystem services in the area such as water supply and land slide control, and for priority corridors for wildlife, and areas to be set-aside for community resource use and grazing management. The total GEF funding for Component 2 was originally planned at $1,585,499 USD, which is 50.2% of the total GEF funding for the project; actual expenditure as of June 8th, 2018 was $319,882. The component activities are organized around five key outputs. The main progress toward results of these outputs is summarized following the table below.
2. Progress toward results indicator targets for Component 2 are summarized in Table 10 below.

Table 10 Component 2 Indicators and Targets

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Indicator** | **Baseline** | **Target** | **Status** |
| 12. Hectares of high biodiversity conservation value forests designated identified and effectively managed for biodiversity and climate mitigation | *(not set or not applicable)* | At least 85,000 | Achievement uncertain. |
| 13. Change in population trends for five indicator bird species | The coefficient of x value in the ten-year linear trend equation (which refers to y=ax+b) is --0.0965; -0.0455; --0.0338; -0.1156 and -0.0346 for Coal Tit, Eurasian Nuthatch, Semi-collared flycatcher, Green Warbler and Song Thrush respectively. | Population of indicator bird species stable or increase over baseline values | Achievement likely. |
| 14. Change in population trends for five indicator bird species | Average number of individuals per 1km transect for the 4 species are 10.3-16.5; 8.6-12.9; 15.3-21.7 and 18.9-27.2 for Argynnis paphia, Brintesia circe, Coenonympha arcania and Leptidea sinapis respectively. | Population changes of indicator butterfly species stable and/or do not decrease | Achievement uncertain. |
| 15. Number of hectares of degraded forests regenerated through assisted natural regeneration | *(not set or not applicable)* | 4932 | Achievement uncertain. |
| 16. Number of hectares degraded pasture and hay fields rehabilitated under sustainable management practices to reduce pressure on forest lands | *(not set or not applicable)* | 1000 | Achievement likely. |
| 17. Number of hectares of forest land under multiple use regimes (sustainable NTFP production and agro-forestry) with participation of forest dependent communities | *(not set or not applicable)* | 3000 | Achievement likely. |
| 18. Percentage decrease in number of livestock using natural forests for unsustainable grazing practices in targeted forest branches | Baseline to be developed after forest inventory and mapping completed and locations identified for grazing management | 0.15 | Achievement uncertain. |
| 19. Percentage reduction in forest firewood collection areas in targeted forest branches Reduced areas of felling in target state forests | Baseline to be developed after forest inventory and mapping completed | 0.15 | Achievement uncertain. |
| 20. Number of recommendations for management of dependencies in firewood use from forests | No integrated strategy exists to deal with the complex nature of firewood dependencies | One set of recommendation developed by Ministry of Agriculture | Achievement likely. |
| 21. Percentage of households reporting increased incomes from forest and non-forest resources in target communities, including percentage of beneficiaries among women | Baseline incomes would be assessed once forest inventory and mapping completed and locations for community forest use identified | 20%, of which at least 30% of beneficiaries are women | Achievement likely. |
| 22. Number of carbon stock assessment completed for key forest types in NE Armenia | *(not set or not applicable)* | One set of baseline assessment completed and monitoring | Achievement likely. |
| 23. Emissions of metric tCO2 avoided from conservation set-asides over a 10-year period | *(not set or not applicable)* | 559,110 metric tCO2 | Achievement likely. |
| 24. Improvement in carbon sequestration capacity in metric tCO2 of restored forests over a 10-year period | *(not set or not applicable)* | 122,880 metric tCO2 | Achievement likely. |

1. Output 2.1: Designation of High Conservation Value Forests covering 85,000 ha of current production and protection forests for species conservation and climate mitigation
2. Under this output, the project planned to support (i) improved management of one existing protected area (33,765 ha) and eight existing sanctuaries (19,880 ha) that are embedded within the forest estate (total of 53,645 ha of PAs); the latter are not defined on the ground nor are these managed for biodiversity outcomes. The project was also to support boundary demarcation, management planning and surveys and monitoring of biodiversity within these sanctuaries, and (ii) identification and setting-aside around 34,000 ha intact forests within the forest enterprise branches for environmental and biodiversity conservation.”
3. The protected areas to be covered by the project are indicated in Table 1 of the Prodoc, on p. 12.
4. As summarized in the 2018 PIR, and validated by the MTR, *“According to the drafted [forest management plans] for Ijevan, Noyemberyan, Gugarq and Yeghegnut forest enterprises of Tavush and Lori regions, HCVF have been identified covering 38,000 ha, of which 16,572 ha in Ijevan FE (13,912 ha located in the newly established Ijevan State Reservation and 2,660 ha identified in the remaining area of managed part of the Ijevan FE), 8,506 ha in the Noyemberyan FE, 8,382 ha in Gugarq FE of which 3,126 ha in Margahovit state sanctuary and 4,540 ha in Yeghegnut FE.”*
5. This leaves a balance of approximately 47,000 ha. Of this, 33,765 ha are to be covered through support to the Dilijan National Park. The remaining balance of 13,235 ha are to be identified when the forest management plans for the remaining 4-5 forest enterprises are completed, with appropriate management measures planned for the the HCVF areas.
6. If the project fully implements its expected support for Dilijan National Park the target should be achievable, as long as the project is successful in completing the remaining forest management plans (as discussed under Output 1.1 above). Once all of the area of the HCVF are identified and management measures planned, then there is the matter of ensuring that the forest management plans are implemented for all of the forest enterprises, and particularly measures related to HCVF; it is expected the forest management plans will be implemented, though it is unclear to what extent this will happen during the life of the project.
7. Output 2.2: Restoration of forests and pasture lands, and rehabilitation of multiple use forestlands through community forest resource management
8. Activities under this output were planned to include: (i) restoration of 4,932 ha of degraded forests (e.g. burnt forests, past clear-cut etc.) through assisted natural regeneration; by triggering the return of degraded forests to their natural condition, the project planned to restore their ecosystem functions, including carbon sequestration. This is to be achieved through fencing, thinning, limited soil working and limited seeding with native forest species to facilitate rapid natural regeneration of forests. In addition, the project aimed for (ii) Sustainable management of around 1,000 ha of degraded pastures and hay areas in government owned grazing lands to enhance and sustain productivity of these lands and reduce pressure on forest lands for grazing. Finally, the project expected to undertake (iii) Multi-purpose forestry in around 3,000 hectares of forest lands to be brought under sustainable community NTFP production and agro-forestry to reduce forest degradation and enhance economic benefits to local communities living adjacent to the forests.
9. Forest Restoration: Under the first activity for forest restoration, the project document foresaw the following activities: 1). Fencing of forested areas to prevent cattle access and other possible violations - 52,000 lm in total, which will ensure the protection of 4,932 ha of forests; 2). Regeneration of massively logged beech, oak-hornbeam stands, to ensure normal coppice growth and additional growth of springs at 120 ha - only 2-3 straight and well-developed shoots should be left on stumps; 3). Measures directed to support natural growth and soil amelioration, preparation of platforms of 1m to 1m for partial sowing of seeds, and maintenance at 4,932 ha.
10. The specific rationale for the target value is not fully clear. According to the project team, the target may have been based on a calculation of the resources available for this activity – restoration through coppicing can cost approximately $400/ha, while other types of assisted natural regeneration support can be $70/ha (anecdotally). Officially, according to the Government of RA Decision N684-Ն, from June 27, 2013 the average cost of support to natural regrowth in degraded forest ecosystems is $125/ha and for coppicing the cost is $265/ha (including all linked expenses). According to the project team the full amount of degraded forest is likely to be much more than what is targeted by the project.
11. Degraded forests for rehabilitation were identified during the development of the forest management plans. For example, in each of Ijevan and Noyemberyan forest enterprises 800 hectares of degraded forest were identified (1,600 ha total). Actual work for regeneration has been delayed however, as indicated in the 2018 PIR: *“Request for proposals (RFPs) for rehabilitation of degraded forest for over 2,000 ha area were prepared, agreed and tenders advertised for 2018. Most of them are in contracting stage. However, the tendering process is postponed as per the Government request due to ongoing forest sector reforms (started in autumn 2017) and political changes in the country (spring 2018). Project staff with support of UNDP senior management keeps permanent consultations with the management of MoNP and State forest committee to support with forest reforms at the extent possible and accelerate the overall implementation process.”*
12. The project has made some preliminary progress on activities under this output, with support for natural regeneration through coppicing in 93 hectares of a beech forest in Lalvar forest enterprise, near the town of Odzun. The 300 m3 of firewood produced was distributed among the needy population in surrounding Odzun, Ardvi and other communities.
13. The activities for assisted natural regeneration can take a variety of forms. In Ijevan forest enterprise the project plans to do 30 ha of coppicing, and then 300 ha with other forms of support for natural regeneration, which will mostly be done in hazelnut stands. There are two types of interventions: In each hectare workers make 1 m square boxes, where they clean the leaf litter, put in seeds, and then cover the seeds with the leaf litter. If the conditions are not good for this type of intervention, workers may make trenches with the same general function, where seeds are placed, and re-covered with a little soil. Another intervention is fencing for livestock exclusion. Another activity under this output is to enhance the forest enterprises’ tree nurseries. In some cases, there may be a nursery, but the irrigation system is not working, so the project’s intention is to help put drip irrigation systems in the nurseries, as long as it is cost-effective.
14. The work on forest restoration and regeneration is another area (like the completion of the forest management plans) where the project has the opportunity to directly support the forest enterprises, in order to build capacity and long-term sustainability. The project’s approach (apparently due to UNDP requirements) has been to conduct tenders and contract project activities out directly to third parties – NGOs, or private companies. It would be preferable if the project could work directly with the forest enterprises and Hayantar to carry out forest and pasture restoration activities - an approach recommended by this mid-term review. This has been done in other UNDP and GEF projects in other countries (e.g. Kyrgyzstan) and should be feasible in Armenia as well.
15. Sustainable Pasture Management: With respect to pasture management, the project has contracted an expert on pasture management and restoration, who began activities in July 2018. The project has already outlined the 1,000 ha of degraded pastureland through the forest management plan process; the forest pasturelands are spread throughout the forest enterprises. The expert will study the area, and will prepare training materials for local communities. The training is to be conducted partially in autumn 2018, and partially in spring 2019. The expert will also propose rehabilitation measures for the degraded pasturelands. The project identified 1,455 ha of degraded forest pasturelands from the five largest forest enterprises. It is necessary to work on large consolidated areas, because it is not cost-effective to do a small 50 ha area in the middle of nowhere, and then another 20 ha in the middle of nowhere. Therefore, the pastureland to be restored should be consolidated, but the project is at least aiming to work on degraded pastureland in each of the largest forest enterprises. The project aims to do at least ~500 ha in Tavush marz, and ~500 ha in Lori marz. The expert is supposed to recommend exactly which 1,000 ha should be rehabilitated, and through what measures, and provide advice on the measures and methods to be implemented. The project will aim for 1,000 ha at a minimum, but if the rehabilitation measures are not too expensive then the project may be able to increase to the full 1,455 ha.
16. Armenia is one of the many countries that has established a national Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) target (see Box 1), linked with the country’s implementation of the UNCCD. The project activities on forest and pasture restoration are contributing to achievement of the country’s LDN target, although the project was developed and began implementation prior to the establishment of the national LDN target. This mid-term review recommends that during the second half of implementation the project produce a short knowledge product (such as a 2-4 page brochure) analyzing and indicating exactly how the project has contributed to achievement of the national LDN target.

Box 1. Armenia's Land Degradation Neutrality Target

|  |
| --- |
| ***LDN national target:*** *By the year 2040, the carbon stock lost between 2000 and 2010 will be recover and increase by 2,8% in relation to present.*  **Means to achieve LDN national target:**  1. Stop cropland degradation and apply agro ecology (conservation + modern “organic” technology). Currently, about 2/3 of all agricultural lands are at different stages of degradation. The reasons are clear: first of all because the small allotments owners do not apply modern methods of cultivation, crop rotation is not very often, incorrectly applied fertilizers, irrational use of pesticides, lack of irrigation water, the abundant use of artesian water, causing secondary salinization of soil, among other causes. In the next 10 years, a pilot project will be undertaken to promote among local people their conversion to "organic agriculture" technology, in particular to the widespread use of manure, compost and others as fertilizer. The country has already implemented projects to build reservoirs to collect and use rainfall water as a source of water for irrigation during dry season. Additionally, wide technical support will be undertaken on the rational use of land resources. It is expected to expand the rate of agricultural areas under permanent crops.  2. Reforest 2/3 of the degraded land. The "Armenian Forest Program" expects to increase the area of forested areas to 20.1% of the total national territory till the end of century. The program includes reforestation, afforestation of degraded areas, improvement of degraded forests, the transformation of mono-specific (artificial) forests into full-fledged natural forest ecosystems.  3. Stop deforestation and improve forest management in 100% of national territory. Currently, the country started the work on the elaboration of new management plan for all forestry enterprises. In these plans “High value forests” should be marked out for special conservation, fully taking into account the possible consequences of global climate change and measures will be enforced towards sustainable use of forest resources.  4. Stop overgrazing and improve grassland management in 100% of national territory. The country launched a number of pilot projects to inventory the practices of grazing throughout Armenia, recalculate grazing norms and adequate grazing regulations to different environmental conditions and different degrees of pastures degradation, through the development of management plans for use of grasslands for fodder conservation and grazing.  *Source: Republic of Armenia Land Degradation Neutrality National Report (2016).* |

1. In the second half of the project, to develop measures for sustainable management of forest pastures, this evaluation recommends that the project integrate new and advanced concepts in sustainable pasture management. In particular, recent research shows that pasture carrying capacity (the number of livestock units a pasture is able to support per unit time) is dynamic and variable from one year to the next, depending on annual climatic conditions. Other recent developments for sustainable pasture management includes the use of remote sensing data, such as satellite imagery, to assess pasture conditions and suitability for grazing.[[9]](#footnote-9) The project should also assess the relevance and utility of the Trends.Earth tool (<http://trends.earth/docs/en/>) to support sustainable land management outcomes in the context of the project. The Armenia Mountain SLM project should provide information on these tools and methods to Hayantar, and assess the cost-effectiveness and feasibility of conducting a pilot activity on sustainable pasture management using remote sensing technology. In addition, the project should build on direct recent experience in Armenia, such as the work and lessons from the Clima East pilot project in Armenia.
2. One other important issue raised by stakeholders during the mid-term review was that there is apparently some inaccurate language used in the Armenian translation of the Prodoc, relating to the indicator on “*Percentage decrease in number of livestock using natural forests for unsustainable grazing practices in targeted forest branches*”, which has a target of 15% reduction. This mid-term review recommends that the indicator related to the percentage of livestock using natural forests should be updated and clarified as necessary in the Armenian translation of all project-related documents, to ensure that all stakeholders and partners have a full understanding of the purpose and goal of the indicator.
3. Multi-Purpose Forestry for NTFP Production and Agro-forestry: The project has a target of 3,000 hectares where multiple-use forest management regimes (NTFP harvest, agro-forestry, etc.) should be implemented, with participation of forest-dependent communities. Thus far the project has identified and mapped 2,000 ha for multiple-use regimes during the forest management plan development process for Ijevan, Noyemberyan, Gugarq, and Yeghegnut forest enterprises. In certain areas the project completed calculations on the estimated volume of NTFP production, such as the amount of berries and fruits in certain areas. For example, in one sub-unit the project calculated the amount of forest cherry, walnut, and blackberry, and assessed the potential production of mushrooms and edible plants.
4. Output 2.3: Alternative livelihood programs for local communities as incentive to conserve forests and biological resources
5. The project has completed a number of activities under this output. The project target related to this output is “Percentage of households reporting increased incomes from forest and non-forest resources in target communities, including percentage of beneficiaries among women”, with a target of 20%, of which at least 30% are women.
6. Activities completed thus far are summarized in the 2018 PIR:

* The project is piloting anti-hail nets as a means of supporting incomes in forest dependent communities. Hail nets were purchased and installed on 9 hectares of vineyards and orchards in 4 target communities in Tavush region. This was completed in collaboration with the UNDP Disaster Risk Reduction project. A study assessing the impact and cost-benefit of this activity was conducted.
* An innovative Passive Solar Greenhouse was constructed in mid-December 2017 in Ardvi community, Lori region, in collaboration with UNDP “Climate Risk Mitigation: Passive Solar Greenhouse” project.
* A solar fruit drying facility was constructed in Voskepar village (Noyemberyan community), to complement the refrigerator and packaging facilities installed by the latter. The dryer was commissioned in December 2017.
* In fall 2017 a Letter of Intent was signed with UNDP-GEF Small Grants Programme to support CSOs engagement in the implementation of alternative income generation projects in target regions through the SGP modality.
* Impact measurement and monitoring system will be in place to track income dynamic of the selected households.

1. The project’s work under this output is admirable, and is expected to have positive benefits for forest-dependent communities. At the same time, the mid-term review found that the linkage between the project’s livelihood-support activities and sustainable forest management was not very clear to the local resource users and beneficiaries. Local beneficiaries could not articulate why their communities had been chosen for support, or what the purpose of the project’s activities were other than to support rural development.
2. Therefore, this evaluation recommends that the project leverage the livelihood support activities as community-education and awareness raising opportunities as well. The project should install sign boards at fruit, nut, and berry collection facilities in all communities near the targeted forests, such as Noyemberyan and Voskepar. The sign boards should clearly outline the linkage between the project’s objective of sustainable forest management, and the project’s support for local livelihoods. The signboards should also be designed to emphasize the importance of sustainable use of forest resources, and indicate regulations for forest use.
3. Output 2.4: Integrated strategy for management of firewood collection and distribution from forests
4. This output focuses on addressing the specific issue of fuelwood in local communities. For this output the project has an indicator of “Percentage reduction in forest firewood collection areas in targeted forest branches Reduced areas of felling in target state forests”, with a target of 15%. This indicator could be revised to better meet SMART criteria, by being changed to something like cubic meters of fuelwood avoided, or hectares of avoided degradation due to fuelwood substitution.
5. Under Output 2.4 the project contracted a study on firewood consumption in Armenia. The key findings of this study include:
   * The farmers burning wood for heating the house report to be using from 8 to 20 m3 wood monthly during winter seasons;
   * Out of 23 farmers interviewed only 3 reported having income from the forest, two of which stated that 20% of their income comes from the wood as they do wild collection of berries and collect wood for heating the house;
   * In case of increased income farmers would prefer to use gas or electricity as these are more convenient and “sanitary” way of heating the house;
   * Out of 23 interviewed farmers 7 stated that are interested to energy saving heaters (solar energy).
   * The farmers stating that will shift to gas or electricity heating systems expect having 5-7.5 mio AMD yearly income. Some stated that even if the income will increase during winter months by 600K AMD (or 100KAMD per family member) they will consider shifting.
6. The project also studied fuelwood and biomass briquette markets, with a view of developing a strategy for management of firewood in 2019. The project will start drafting a firewood strategy in the beginning of 2019, when overall analyses of feasibility for application of alternative energy sources, namely briquetting production unit, solar panels/water heaters, as well as energy-efficient ovens, fuelwood import potential will be analyzed.
7. In the Mets Parni community (population ~2,000) of Lori region, the project supported the establishment of a community-managed briquetting facility with associated necessary agricultural machinery, and mechanisms to establish demonstrative agricultural waste-based briquette production unit, as a possible alternative to substitute fuel-wood consumption. The briquette production facility in Mets Parni community will be fully operational by end of August 2018. The briquetting facility will provide additional source of income and , job opportunities for local population and reduce community’s dependence and negative pressure on forest ecosystem. There is not a forest immediately in the vicinity of Mets Parni, and community members must purchase fuelwood cut from other parts of the region. It is estimated that local farmers annually have enough biomass waste on their agricultural plots to produce a sufficient volume of briquettes for their individual annual household heating requirements. The briquetting facility is therefore expected to free up residents’ incomes, while significantly reducing pressure on forests. It is estimated that each household spends approximately $200 USD annually on fuelwood (100,000 Armenian dram), so being able to avoid this expenditure would be a significant economic benefit.
8. The biomass briquette facility is an innovative and potentially significant demonstration activity. The concept is still yet to be fully proven – since the facility is still being operationalized, it remains to be seen if the local farmers will be sufficiently incentivized and have the necessary means to bring their waste biomass to the facility to turn into briquettes. It also remains to be seen if the briquettes can be produced at a sufficient quality (in terms of moisture content, and contamination) to fully replace fuelwood in households. However – if the concept is demonstrated to be successful and feasible, it could have a large impact on reduction of fuelwood consumption, particularly if it were possible to replicate and scale-up this activity. If a community such as Mets Parni has approximately 300-400 households (with 5-7 people per household) that each spend $200 USD on fuelwood per year, this equals $60-80,000 USD annual expenditure on fuelwood for the village. The total cost of the briquetting machinery and associated agricultural equipment was approximately $170,000 USD. Therefore, if financing were available, a community such as Mets Parni could see 100% return on investment for establishing a biomass briquetting facility in 2-3 years. With a single facility serving 300+ households with 2,000 people, replicating this activity would potentially have a large impact on fuelwood reduction in forest-dependent communities.
9. In 2017 two additional small-scale projects to reduce fuelwood dependence were started in Tavush marz: (a) Testing and manufacturing energy-saving heating and cooking stoves in Noyemberyan sub-region and (b) Installation of photovoltaic systems and solar water heaters in four kindergartens in Ijevan community. Two more projects will start in Lori marz in 2018.
10. The energy-efficient stoves program is organized with support of a local NGO in the community of Koghb. The NGO designed the stoves based on designs on the internet, and with the support of engineers in Armenia. Once the design was set, a private company was contracted by the project to actually produce the stoves in larger quantities. The company is producing the stoves at an agreed price of 86,000 Armenian drams, equivalent to about $150-$200 USD. A total of 238 stoves were financed by the project and disseminated to needy members of the local community. Each household receiving the stove had to pay 15,000 drams, and these additional funds allowed the project to produce another 40 stoves, for a total of 278. The energy efficient stoves are estimated to reduce fuelwood consumption by 25-30%.
11. This activity should have an impact of reducing forest degradation from wood cutting in some small number of hectares annually. The initial proposal of the NGO that conducted the activity includes estimates on the number of hectares of forest that could be saved, but this could be assessed in more detail now that the activity has been completed. This activity could have a much larger impact if it were possible to replicate and scale it up to a much larger scale. Since the cost of the stove is approximately the same amount that local households spend on fuelwood per year, and the stove is able to reduce wood consumption by 25%, then - if financing were available - a household could have a 100% return on investment in four years. If the government of Armenia or other development partners could establish a financing program for household purchase of these stoves then there could potentially be a large impact for reducing fuelwood use.
12. To better document, communicate and promote the potential replicability of the project’s small-scale activities to reduce fuelwood dependency, this mid-term review recommends that the project conduct a small study to carefully and closely assess the actual likely avoided deforestation resulting from the project’s activities. In addition, the project should revise the indicator relating to “percentage reduction in forest firewood collection…” to focus on the amount of fuelwood use avoided (in cubic meters of wood), or the hectares of forest degradation or deforestation avoided.
13. Output 2.5: Carbon stock assessments and coefficients for key forest types in NE Armenia
14. The project contracted experts to undertake this work. In 2017 the project piloted forest carbon inventory in Noyemberyan forest enterprise. Around 50 sample plots were completed for above ground biomass. An additional 10 sample plots were completed for leaf litter, grass and soil (at 10, 20 and 30 cm depths within an 8m radius). In 2018 above ground sampling took place on 265 sample plots (in all forest enterprises of northern and north-eastern Armenia), while sub-surface carbon for leaf litter-grass-soil (at 10, 20 and 30 cm depths within an 8m radius) was assessed in 28 sample plots. The project international expert on carbon will summarize data on the basis of laboratory analysis that will be done in an accredited lab at Yerevan State University. Through this process they will ultimately achieve the carbon coefficients for the forests, and this will also be shared with the national GHG inventory for the LULUCF portion. This will be a significant benefit for the country, and will have potentially large catalytic benefits.
15. In order for the carbon co-efficients to be as well established and validated as possible, this evaluation recommends that the process and results for establishing the carbon co-efficients be published in a peer-reviewed scientific journal.

## Impacts and Global Environmental Benefits

1. The GEF Evaluation Office and UNDP require a rating on project impact, which in the context of the GEF biodiversity and land degradation focal areas relates to actual change in environmental status (e.g. improvements in status of species or ecosystem, reduced land degradation, land restored, etc.). The impact rating is not highly relevant at this stage of the Armenia Mountain SFM project’s implementation. Few activities have been completed on the ground, and any changes in status of forest ecosystem, forest biodiversity, or forest degradation are unlikely to have been influenced by project activities.
2. The most immediate likely impact level results of the project are likely to be small-scale site-based impacts. For example, the project’s work to reduce local communities’ dependency on fuelwood should have a direct impact on the reduction of fuelwood required for those project demonstration communities and families involved in pilot activities (e.g. energy efficient stoves, biomass briquette alternatives, solar, etc.). These activities are just at the stage where it may be possible to see some impacts during the coming winter, during the main heating season. This evaluation has recommended above that the project conduct a small study to carefully and closely track the likely avoided deforestation resulting from these project activities.
3. Although an impact rating is not highly relevant, an impact rating is provided here as required for the mid-term review, and consequently, impact ratings for the project must be assessed as follows:

* *Environmental status improvement* is assessed as **negligible;**
* *Environmental stress reduction* is assessed as **negligible;** and
* *Progress toward stress/status change* is assessed as **negligible.**

# Key GEF Performance Parameters

1. The GEF has 10 operational principles, some of which are inherently covered by the five main evaluation criteria, and some of which are not. The key performance parameters that are not covered previously in this evaluation report are sustainability, catalytic role, and gender mainstreaming. UNDP-GEF project evaluations are also required to discuss the mainstreaming of UNDP program principles; this is covered in Annex 12 of this evaluation report.

## Sustainability

1. Sustainability is one of the five main evaluation criteria, as well as being considered one of the GEF operational principles.
2. While a sustainability rating is provided here as required, sustainability is a temporal and dynamic state that is influenced by a broad range of constantly shifting factors. It should be kept in mind that the important aspect of sustainability of GEF projects is the sustainability of results, not necessarily the sustainability of activities that produced results. In the context of GEF projects there is no clearly defined timeframe for which results should be sustained, although it is implied that they should be sustained indefinitely. When evaluating sustainability, the greater the time horizon, the lower the degree of certainty possible. In addition, by definition, mid-term evaluations are not well positioned to provide ratings on sustainability considering that many more activities will be undertaken before project end that may positively or negatively affect the likelihood of sustainability.
3. Based on GEF evaluation policies and procedures, the overall rating for sustainability cannot be higher than the lowest rating for any of the individual components. Therefore, the overall **sustainability** rating for the Armenia Mountain SLM project for this mid-term evaluation is ***moderately likely***.
4. There are four important aspects of risks to sustainability: financial, socio-political, institutional and governance, and environmental.
5. Financial risks are not considered, at present, a major issue for the results of the Armenia Mountain SLM project, and this aspect of sustainability is moderately likely. The forest management plans developed by the project will need to be implemented, but preliminary indications are that the Government of Armenia has prioritized continued funding for sustainable forest management. There are many aspects of forest management in Armenia that would be improved with increased financial resources, but sustaining the project results is not likely to depend on additional resources. One consideration is that some of the project results could have a much greater impact with increased financial resources – for example, to have a transformative impact, the project demonstration work on biomass briquetting and energy efficient stoves would need to be massively scaled up, which would require significant financing. Financial risks are typically an important considering of sustainability, and the financial risks to the sustainability of project results may increase as the project continues to progress and generate further outputs.
6. Socio-political risks to project results remain moderate. The main consideration on this issue is the extent to which forest enterprises are able to work collaboratively with local stakeholders in the implementation of forest management plans. This will not be fully known until the forest management plans are under implementation, but if UNDP and the Ministry of Nature Protection are able and willing to provide support for key elements of community-based management approaches that are well-integrated with the goals and objectives of the management plans, then this risk may be minimized. This aspect of sustainability is considered moderately likely.
7. Institutional and governance risks are not seen as a critical issue for sustainability at this stage, although the sectoral restructuring of the institutional framework for forestry management in Armenia has delayed actual project implementation. Once the sectoral reform is completed (prior to project completion), institutional risks to sustainability are expected to remain present, but not critically so, and this aspect of sustainability is moderately likely. Mainly, the forestry sector in Armenia has a moderate level of institutional and technical capacity, and this is not something that will be improved rapidly. With the ongoing support of donors such as GiZ and UNDP, institutional capacity will continue to increase, which will improve the outlook for all outcomes in the forestry sector in general, whether they are related to sustainable management of forests, improved mainstreaming of biodiversity, expanded community engagement in forest management, or monitoring of forest resources.
8. There are no notable environmental risks for the sustainability of project results, apart from the key ongoing threats that the project is working to address. The scale and scope of the project will not allow it to fully and completely address all threats to forests in Armenia; therefore those threats will remain as environmental risks. Climate change also continues to present an ongoing environmental risk for forest ecosystems. It is expected, however, that the project will contribute to reducing the environmental threats, and this aspect of sustainability is considered moderately likely.

## Catalytic Role: Replication and Up-scaling

1. The project’s work to establish national carbon co-efficients (Output 2.5) through actual sampling and testing of different types of forest in Armenia will have potentially significant catalytic benefits. Having actual co-efficient figures that are accurate for the national context will allow Armenia to greatly improve the accuracy of its national reporting to the UNFCCC, and these co-efficients can be used for calculations for other important activities as well, such as assessing the impact of land use change.
2. It would be potentially highly catalytic if the project is able to make a significant contribution to the development of a National Forest Policy that incorporates sustainable approaches, and elements such as ecosystem services and integration of biodiversity considerations. Similarly, if the forest inventory data collected for the development of the forest management plans is integrated into the national Forest Management Information System, the data will then be able to be used for a range of other catalytic purposes, including reporting on forest coverage at the international level.
3. The project’s work to demonstrate biomass briquetting and energy efficient stoves (Output 2.4) could potentially have a catalytic effect, if the government or other donors or partners ultimately are able to further develop and replicate these technologies at a larger scale.

## Gender Equality and Mainstreaming

1. The UNDP GEF Equality Strategy for 2014-2017 was just beginning implementation during the project development phase from 2013-2015. The project did not have a comprehensive, standardized gender analysis during the project development phase. Gender aspects of the project were considered and discussed both in the CEO Endorsement Request (section B.2, p. 18 of the CEO Endorsement Request) and the Prodoc (section 2.3 of the Prodoc, p. 51).
2. The project has developed a draft gender analysis in early 2018, which is reported in the 2018 PIR. The project results framework did originally include gender-disaggregated indicators. Attention to gender aspects is being paid during project implementation. As reported in the 2018 PIR:
3. *“Two good examples demonstrate how gender equality and women's empowerment improve projects resilience outcomes:*
4. *Piloting of a forest carbon inventory and monitoring set up for Noyemberyan FE where a local counterpart played an important role in developing a field guideline, organizing inventory and sampling activities and following lab analyses and reporting. The results were of high quality and submitted on time. The project will surely enjoy similar outcomes from the envisioned scaled-up activities for the whole northern and north-eastern Armenia in 2018. If in 2017 forest carbon pilot project where involved 6 persons, including one women, than in 2018 scaled up activities involved 8 persons, including 2 women. A project leader, both for field sampling, lab analyses and reporting, is a woman.*
5. *An NGO led by a woman successfully installed solar panels and heaters in 4 kindergartens of vulnerable communities. Apart from improving the indoor conditions, this grant project promotes and increases the interest of local communities in cost-efficient and effective renewable energy technologies.”*
6. The mid-term review recommends that now that a gender analysis has been completed, the project should develop a brief gender action plan to accompany project workplanning, to concretely and specifically indicate the key actions that the project will proactively take to engage women and support gender mainstreaming, as relevant to the project activities and expected results.

# Main Lessons Learned and Recommendations

## Lessons from the Experience of the Armenia Mountain SLM project

1. The mid-term review has identified the below notable lessons from the experience of the Armenia Mountain SLM project. These lessons should be aggregated by UNDP for application to other similar future initiatives.
2. One important lesson is that while the design of projects should embrace a partnership approach as much as possible and build synergies with others’ initiatives, risks to the achievement of expected outcomes increase with the level of dependency on others for inputs. The Armenia Mountain SLM project depended on other development partners for inputs, and when those inputs did not materialize as expected, the project results were put at risk.
3. Another important lesson related to project design is that project designers must consider how expected outputs will actually be completed and by whom, and ensure that there are sufficient resources within the country to successfully complete the expected work in the required timeframe. Alternatively, appropriate budget should be allocated in order to contract expertise from outside the country. The Armenia Mountain SLM project has encountered bottlenecks in achieving outputs due to the limited amount of technical expertise in the country for producing revised forest management plans.
4. A positive lesson for the project is that the project’s M&E plan, including learning and knowledge management activities, was fully and directly budgeted as a specific component of the project (Component 3). This type of budgeting for M&E activities provides transparency and ensure adequate budget is available for M&E.
5. Another positive lesson from the project’s M&E design is that the project includes impact-level biodiversity indicators that are scientifically sound and technically well-developed. This is a positive example for the design of other similar GEF projects in the future.

## Mid-term Recommendations for Progress Toward Outcomes for the Armenia Mountain SLM project

1. The recommendations of the mid-term review are listed below, with the primary target audience for each recommendation following in brackets.
2. ***Key Recommendation 1:*** Considering the private sector bottleneck for completing the forest management plans, the project should provide direct funding to the forest enterprises and Hayantar, to pilot a more self-driven approach to completion of the forest management plans. This should include direct collaboration with the State Forest Monitoring Center, which has strong technical capacity related to remote-sensing data analysis. This could begin with a pilot management plan for a forest enterprise sub-unit, to be completed as a collaboration between the forest enterprise staff, the State Forest Monitoring Center, and any other key relevant national stakeholders (i.e. Bioresources center, etc.). Completing this process and carefully tracking the financial inputs required would be a highly useful exercise to inform future planning for completion of forest management plans. This would also help build government forest management capacity, and support sustainability of project activities. [UNDP, PMU]
3. ***Key Recommendation 2:*** This evaluation recommends that the forest management plans should be developed through a comprehensive national stakeholder consultation process, including institutions such as the national forest monitoring center. [PMU, Project Steering Committee, Hayantar]
4. ***Key Recommendation 3:*** Even if formal approval of forest management plans depends on government approval of the forest enterprise boundaries, the project should promote draft “provisional” forest management plans that can be implemented prior to official government approval defining the exact forest boundaries. Within the forest management plans there should be an initial clause stating that the management plan is provisional until boundaries are officially approved by the government, but that the forest management plan will be implemented in the meantime based on current common understanding of the area under the responsibility of the forest enterprise. [PMU, Hayantar, Government of Armenia]
5. ***Key Recommendation 4:*** The project team and UNDP should work with other partners and stakeholders to ensure that the work done and the inventory data collected for the FMPs is fully integrated into the FMIS, and the work done under the project is integrated into the development of the NFI. [PMU, UNDP, Hayantar]
6. ***Key Recommendation 5:*** If the forest enterprises are merged, the project should support this process by supporting the merging of the forest management plans as well. This should not be a major effort to completely re-do the forest management plans, but basically the existing forest management plans should be aggregated, without major additional revisions for the current 5-10 year management period. [PMU, Hayantar]
7. ***Key Recommendation 6:*** Considering the delays so far, under Output 1.5 the project should tighten the scope of the development of regulations, focusing on the development of only the most critical 2-3 regulations or guidelines planned. At the same time, during the remaining implementation period, the project could lead work on the development of a National Forest Policy; however, this may need to wait until the forest management institutional framework is fully clear following the restructuring process. [PMU, UNDP]
8. ***Key Recommendation 7:*** The project should propose to the Government of Armenia that the State Forest Monitoring Center be shifted to the Ministry of Nature Protection, with an expanded mandate to provide support to all forest management functions. This should include support for the development of forest management plans through detailed analysis of remote sensing data. The State Forest Monitoring Center could also provide a focal point within Hayantar to develop and implement a National Forest Inventory based on new and modern technologies that can be more cost effective. [UNDP, PMU, Ministry of Nature Protection]
9. ***Key Recommendation 8:*** To ensure the capacity development work is as effective as possible the project should conduct a training needs assessment for each forest enterprise as part of the completion of the forest management plan. Then the training for each forest enterprise could be better targeted to ensure that the forest enterprise staff have the necessary capacity to implement the new forest management plans. [PMU]
10. ***Key Recommendation 9:*** The work on forest restoration and regeneration is another area (like the completion of the forest management plans) where the project has the opportunity to directly support the forest enterprises, in order to build capacity and long-term sustainability. The project’s approach (apparently due to UNDP requirements) has been to conduct tenders and contract project activities out directly to third parties – NGOs, or private companies. It would be preferable if the project could work directly with the forest enterprises and Hayantar to carry out forest and pasture restoration activities - an approach recommended by this mid-term review. This has been done in other UNDP and GEF projects in other countries (e.g. Kyrgyzstan) and should be feasible in Armenia as well. [UNDP, PMU]
11. ***Key Recommendation 10:*** In the second half of the project, to develop measures for sustainable management of forest pastures, this evaluation recommends that the project integrate new and advanced concepts in sustainable pasture management. In particular, recent research shows that pasture carrying capacity (the number of livestock units a pasture is able to support per unit time) is dynamic and variable from one year to the next, depending on annual climatic conditions. Other recent developments for sustainable pasture management includes the use of remote sensing data, such as satellite imagery, to assess pasture conditions and suitability for grazing.[[10]](#footnote-10) The project should also assess the relevance and utility of the Trends.Earth tool (<http://trends.earth/docs/en/>) to support sustainable land management outcomes in the context of the project. The Armenia Mountain SLM project should provide information on these tools and methods to Hayantar, and assess the cost-effectiveness and feasibility of conducting a pilot activity on sustainable pasture management using remote sensing technology. In addition, the project should build on direct recent experience in Armenia, such as the work and lessons from the Clima East pilot project in Armenia. [PMU, Hayantar]
12. ***Key Recommendation 11:*** This mid-term review recommends that during the second half of implementation the project produce a short knowledge product (such as a 2-4 page brochure) analyzing and indicating exactly how the project has contributed to achievement of the national LDN target. [PMU]
13. ***Key Recommendation 12:*** The project should leverage the livelihood support activities as community-education and awareness raising opportunities as well. The project should install sign boards at fruit, nut, and berry collection facilities in all communities near the targeted forests, such as Noyemberyan and Voskepar. The sign boards should clearly outline the linkage between the project’s objective of sustainable forest management, and the project’s support for local livelihoods. The signboards should also be designed to emphasize the importance of sustainable use of forest resources, and indicate regulations for forest use. [PMU]
14. ***Key Recommendation 13:*** To better document, communicate and promote the potential replicability of the project’s small-scale activities to reduce fuelwood dependency, this mid-term review recommends that the project conduct a small study to carefully and closely assess the actual likely avoided deforestation resulting from the project’s activities. In addition, the project should revise the indicator relating to “percentage reduction in forest firewood collection…” to focus on the amount of fuelwood use avoided (in cubic meters of wood), or the hectares of forest degradation or deforestation avoided. [PMU, UNDP, Ministry of Nature Protection]
15. ***Recommendation 14:*** The PMU should closely and carefully track actual co-financing, including any in-kind or cash co-financing that is contributed by local stakeholders or local partners that may not have been part of the originally planned co-financing. [PMU, UNDP]
16. ***Recommendation 15:*** Now that a gender analysis has been completed, the PMU should develop a brief gender action plan to accompany project workplanning, to concretely and specifically indicate the key actions that the project will proactively take to engage women and support gender mainstreaming, as relevant to the project activities and expected results. [PMU, UNDP]
17. ***Recommendation 16:*** In approximately the 1st quarter of 2019 the Project Steering Committee should be prepared to consider a possible 6-12 month extension from the currently planned completion of December 2019. Ideally the project would finish in the 4th quarter of 2020, in order to take advantage of the 2020 summer field season for forest and biodiversity monitoring, as well as other activities that are dependent on the summer field season. [Project Steering Committee]
18. ***Recommendation 17:*** The Project Steering Committee should consider approving revisions to the project results framework to ensure indicators and targets are fully in-line with SMART criteria, and reflect the baseline context at the time the project started implementation. Some results framework targets are not well-developed, or may need to be revised based on changed circumstances compared to what was expected during the project development phase. For example, the Project Steering Committee should consider reducing the target for forest management plans from 11 to 7-8 plans. The target for the indicator related to the percentage decrease in livestock using forests for unsustainable grazing practices should also be revised to fully meet SMART criteria. This mid-term review also recommends that the indicator related to the percentage of livestock using natural forests should be updated and clarified as necessary in the Armenian translation of all project-related documents, to ensure that all stakeholders and partners have a full understanding of the purpose and goal of the indicator. [Project Steering Committee, PMU]
19. ***Recommendation 18:*** In order for the carbon co-efficients to be as well established and validated as possible, this evaluation recommends that the process and results for establishing the carbon co-efficients be published in a peer-reviewed scientific journal. [PMU]
20. ***Recommendation 19:*** To keep the project moving forward UNDP may need to provide support through high level engagement with the Ministry of Nature Protection, in order to find a mutually agreeable path for rapid implementation during the second half of the project. This evaluation recommends that UNDP provide intensive supervision and support for the project to address any further delays of three months or longer. [UNDP Armenia Country Office]

# Annexes

Annex 1: Terms of Reference

Annex 2: GEF Operational Principles

Annex 3: Armenia Mountain SLM project Terminal Evaluation Matrix

Annex 4: Interview Guide

Annex 5: Rating Scales

Annex 6: Key Informants Targeted and Interviewed

Annex 7: Documents Reviewed

Annex 8: Armenia Mountain SLM Project Financial Tables

Annex 9: Armenia Mountain SLM project Results Framework Assessed Level of Indicator Target Achievement

Annex 10: Armenia Mountain SLM project Mainstreaming of UNDP Programme Principles

## Annex 1: Terms of Reference

*Note: Annexes of the TORs have been left out of this MTR annex due to space considerations, but they were included with the actual TORs, and are available upon request.*

**TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR MID-TERM REVIEW OF THE UNDP/GEF PROJECT:**

“**Mainstreaming Sustainable Land and Forest Management in Mountain Landscapes of North-eastern Armenia**”

**Contents**

[1. INTRODUCTION 2](#_Toc492632841)

[2. PROJECT BACKGROUND INFORMATION 2](#_Toc492632842)

[3. OBJECTIVES OF THE MTR 3](#_Toc492632843)

[4. MTR APPROACH & METHODOLOGY 3](#_Toc492632844)

[5. DETAILED SCOPE OF THE MTR 3](#_Toc492632845)

[6. TIMEFRAME 9](#_Toc492632846)

[7. DELIVERABLES 9](#_Toc492632847)

[8. ARRANGEMENTS 10](#_Toc492632848)

[9. TEAM COMPOSITION 10](#_Toc492632849)

[10. PAYMENT MODALITIES AND SPECIFICATIONS 11](#_Toc492632850)

[11. APPLICATION PROCESS 11](#_Toc492632851)

[ANNEX A: List of Documents to be reviewed by the MTR Consultant 13](#_Toc492632852)

[ANNEX B: Guidelines on Contents for the Midterm Review Report 14](#_Toc492632853)

[ANNEX C: Midterm Review Evaluative Matrix Template 16](#_Toc492632854)

[ANNEX D:. Project Results Framework 18](#_Toc492632855)

[ANNEX E: UNEG Code of Conduct for Evaluators/Midterm Review Consultants 26](#_Toc492632856)

[ANNEX F: MTR Ratings 27](#_Toc492632857)

[ANNEX G: MTR Report Clearance Form 28](#_Toc492632858)

[ANNEX H: MTR Audit Trail 28](#_Toc492632858)

**INTRODUCTION**

This is the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the UNDP-GEF Midterm Review (MTR) of the full-sized project titled “**Mainstreaming Sustainable Land and Forest Management in Mountain Landscapes of North-eastern Armenia**’’ (PIMS 4416) implemented through the UNDP/Ministry of Nature Protection of the Republic of Armenia (RoA), to be undertaken in 2018. The project started on December 25, 2015 and is in its second year of implementation.. This ToR sets out the expectations for this MTR. The MTR process must follow the guidance outlined in the document *Guidance For Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects* [[11]](#footnote-11).

**PROJECT BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

«Mainstreaming sustainable land and forest management in mountain landscapes of North-Eastern Armenia» full-sized project is designed to facilitate and demonstrate the shift from unsustainable to sustainable land and forest management in the Lori and Tavush regions. The project is financed by GEF and co-financed by different sources. Project budget constitutes $16,967,104, which includes the $2,977,169 GEF grant (including $744,000 from REDD+), and co-financing of $13,989,935, including from the Government of Armenia - $12,427,235; from UNDP - $900,000 (200,000 cash); from WWF Armenia - $376,500 and from the Caucasus Nature Fund - $286,200. The project is implemented by UNDP Armenia. The Ministry of Nature Protection is the project Executing Agency, while “Hayantar” SNCO (State Forest Agency) under the Ministry of Agriculture serves as the senior beneficiary. UNDP will also closely work with the other beneficiaries of the Project: RoA Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), RoA Tavush and Lori Regional Administrations and target regions’ local self-governing (LSG) authorities.

**The aim of the project** is to decrease the pressure on forest ecosystems and promote carbon pools and sequestration enlargement through the shift from unsustainable to sustainable land and forest management practices. Across the region, forest landscapes face moderate to severe deforestation and overgrazing pressures, corresponding in high rates of erosion, lowered soil fertility and loss of biodiversity. The main cause of land and forest degradation in North-Eastern Armenia is the deforestation and overexploitation of forest resources. Thus, sustainable land and forest management approaches are being postulated under the project. To achieve the shift from current unsustainable to sustainable forest and land use practices, the project objective will ensure sustainable land and forest management to secure continued flow of multiple ecosystem services. This would be achieved through two main components, namely: (i) Integration of sustainable forest and land management objectives into planning and management of forest ecosystems to reduce degradation and enhance ecosystem services in two marzes covering 0.65 million hectares; and (ii) Sustainable Forest Management practices effectively demonstrating reduced pressure on high conservation forests and maintaining flow of ecosystem services.

**The project objective** is to ensure sustainable land and forest management to secure continued flow of multiple ecosystem services. The project target area includes Tavush and Lori regions (marzes) of RA where 65% of the country’s forest resources and essential ecosystem services, such as water provision, landslide prevention and carbon sequestration are located.

The Project Board provides consensus-based decisions, in particular when guidance is required by the Project Coordinator (PC) and has final authority on matters requiring official review and approval, including annual work plans, budgets, and key hires. The Project Board actively seeks and takes account of the input of the Technical Advisory Committee that meets annually, with periodic consultation as needed throughout the year.

UNDP acts as the GEF Agency for this project. The project is implemented by the Ministry of Nature Protection (MNP) following UNDP’s National Implementation Modality (NIM). The MNP mandate is to address environmental policy in the country.

**OBJECTIVES OF THE MTR**

The MTR will assess progress towards the achievement of the project objectives and outcomes as specified in the Project Document, and assess early signs of project success or failure with the goal of identifying the necessary changes to be made in order to set the project on-track to achieve its intended results. The MTR will also review the project’s strategy, its risks to sustainability.

**MTR APPROACH & METHODOLOGY**

The MTR must provide evidence based information that is credible, reliable and useful. The MTR consultant will review all relevant sources of information including documents prepared during the preparation phase (i.e. PIF, UNDP Initiation Plan, UNDP Environmental & Social Safeguard Policy, the Project Document, project reports including Annual Project Report (APR)/, Project Implementation Report (PIR), project budget revisions, lesson learned reports, national strategic and legal documents, and any other materials that the team considers useful for this evidence-based review). The MTR consultant will review the baseline GEF focal area Tracking Tool submitted to the GEF at CEO endorsement, and the midterm GEF focal area Tracking Tool that must be completed before the MTR field mission begins.

The MTR consultant is expected to follow a collaborative and participatory approach[[12]](#footnote-12) ensuring close engagement with the Project Team, government counterparts (the GEF Operational Focal Point), the UNDP Country Office(s), UNDP-GEF Regional Technical Advisers, and other key stakeholders.

Engagement of stakeholders is vital to a successful MTR.[[13]](#footnote-13) Stakeholder involvement should include interviews with stakeholders who have project responsibilities, including but not limited to; executing agencies, senior officials and task team/ component leaders, key experts and consultants in the subject area, Project Board, project stakeholders, academia, local government and CBOs, etc.

1. The final MTR report should describe the full MTR approach taken and the rationale for the approach making explicit the underlying assumptions, challenges, strengths and weaknesses about the methods and approach of the review.

**DETAILED SCOPE OF THE MTR**

The MTR consultant will assess the following four categories of project progress. See the *Guidance For Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects* for extended descriptions.

**i. Project Strategy**

Project design:

* Review the problem addressed by the project and the underlying assumptions. Review the effect of any incorrect assumptions or changes to the context to achieving the project results as outlined in the Project Document.
* Review the relevance of the project strategy and assess whether it provides the most effective route towards expected/intended results. Were lessons from other relevant projects properly incorporated into the project design?
* Review how the project addresses country priorities. Review country ownership. Was the project concept in line with the national sector development priorities and plans of the country?
* Review decision-making processes: were perspectives of those who would be affected by project decisions, those who could affect the outcomes, and those who could contribute information or other resources to the process, taken into account during project design processes?
* Review the extent to which relevant gender issues were raised in the project design. See Annex 9 of *Guidance For Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects* for further guidelines.
* If there are major areas of concern, recommend areas for improvement.

Results Framework/Logframe:

* Undertake a critical analysis of the project’s logframe indicators and targets, assess how “SMART” the midterm and end-of-project targets are (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-bound), and suggest specific amendments/revisions to the targets and indicators as necessary.
* Are the project’s objectives and outcomes or components clear, practical, and feasible within its time frame?
* Examine if progress so far has led to, or could in the future catalyse beneficial development effects (i.e. income generation, gender equality and women’s empowerment, improved governance etc...) that should be included in the project results framework and monitored on an annual basis.
* Ensure broader development and gender aspects of the project are being monitored effectively. Develop and recommend SMART ‘development’ indicators, including sex-disaggregated indicators and indicators that capture development benefits.

**ii. Progress Towards Results**

Progress Towards Outcomes Analysis:

* Review the logframe indicators (Annex D) against progress made towards the end-of-project targets using the Progress Towards Results Matrix and following the *Guidance For Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects*; colour code progress in a “traffic light system” based on the level of progress achieved; assign a rating on progress for each outcome; make recommendations from the areas marked as “Not on target to be achieved” (red).

Table. Progress Towards Results Matrix (Achievement of outcomes against End-of-project Targets)

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Project Strategy** | **Indicator[[14]](#footnote-14)** | **Baseline Level[[15]](#footnote-15)** | **Level in 1st APR self- reported)** | **Midterm Target[[16]](#footnote-16)** | **End-of-project Target** | **Midterm Level & Assessment[[17]](#footnote-17)** | **Achievement Rating[[18]](#footnote-18)** | **Justification for Rating** |
| **Objective:** | Indicators 1-4 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Outcome 1:** | Indicator 5-7 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Outcome 2:** | Indicators 8-11 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Outcome 3:** | Indicators 12-15 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

**Indicator Assessment Key**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Green= Achieved | Yellow= On target to be achieved | Red= Not on target to be achieved |

In addition to the progress towards outcomes analysis:

* Compare and analyse Capacity Development (CD) scorecards at the Baseline with the one completed right before the Midterm Review.
* Identify remaining barriers to achieving the project objective in the remainder of the project.
* By reviewing the aspects of the project that have already been successful, identify ways in which the project can further expand these benefits.

**iii. Project Implementation and Adaptive Management**

Management Arrangements:

* Review overall effectiveness of project management as outlined in the Project Document. Have changes been made and are they effective? Are responsibilities and reporting lines clear? Is decision-making transparent and undertaken in a timely manner? Recommend areas for improvement.
* Review the quality of execution of the Executing Agency/Implementing Partner(s) and recommend areas for improvement.
* Review the quality of support provided by the GEF Partner Agency (UNDP) and recommend areas for improvement.

Work Planning:

* Review any delays in project start-up and implementation, identify the causes and examine if they have been resolved.
* Are work-planning processes results-based? If not, suggest ways to re-orientate work planning to focus on results?
* Examine the use of the project’s results framework/ logframe as a management tool and review any changes made to it since project start.

Finance and co-finance:

* Consider the financial management of the project, with specific reference to the cost-effectiveness of interventions.
* Review the changes to fund allocations as a result of budget revisions and assess the appropriateness and relevance of such revisions.
* Does the project have the appropriate financial controls, including reporting and planning, that allow management to make informed decisions regarding the budget and allow for timely flow of funds?
* Informed by the co-financing monitoring table to be filled out, provide commentary on co-financing: is co-financing being used strategically to help the objectives of the project? Is the Project Team meeting with all co-financing partners regularly in order to align financing priorities and annual work plans?

Project-level Monitoring and Evaluation Systems:

* Review the monitoring tools currently being used: Do they provide the necessary information? Do they involve key partners? Are they aligned or mainstreamed with national systems? Do they use existing information? Are they efficient? Are they cost-effective? Are additional tools required? How could they be made more participatory and inclusive?
* Examine the financial management of the project monitoring and evaluation budget. Are sufficient resources being allocated to monitoring and evaluation? Are these resources being allocated effectively?

Stakeholder Engagement:

* Project management: Has the project developed and leveraged the necessary and appropriate partnerships with direct and tangential stakeholders?
* Participation and country-driven processes: Do local and national government stakeholders support the objectives of the project? Do they continue to have an active role in project decision-making that supports efficient and effective project implementation?
* Participation and public awareness: To what extent has stakeholder involvement and public awareness contributed to the progress towards achievement of project objectives?

Reporting:

* Assess how adaptive management changes have been reported by the project management and shared with the Project Board.
* Assess how well the Project Team and partners undertake and fulfil GEF reporting requirements (i.e. how have they addressed poorly-rated, if applicable?)
* Assess how lessons derived from the adaptive management process have been documented, shared with key partners and internalized by partners.

Communications:

* Review internal project communication with stakeholders: Is communication regular and effective? Are there key stakeholders left out of communication? Are there feedback mechanisms when communication is received? Does this communication with stakeholders contribute to their awareness of project outcomes and activities and investment in the sustainability of project results?
* Review external project communication: Are proper means of communication established or being established to express the project progress and intended impact to the public (is there a web presence, for example? Or did the project implement appropriate outreach and public awareness campaigns?)
* For reporting purposes, write one half-page paragraph that summarizes the project’s progress towards results in terms of contribution to sustainable development benefits, as well as global environmental benefits.

**iv. Sustainability**

* Validate whether the risks identified in the Project Document, APR/ and the ATLAS Risk Management Module are the most important and whether the risk ratings applied are appropriate and up to date. If not, explain why.
* In addition, assess the following risks to sustainability:

Financial risks to sustainability:

* What is the likelihood of financial and economic resources not being available once the GEF assistance ends (consider potential resources can be from multiple sources, such as the public and private sectors, income generating activities, and other funding that will be adequate financial resources for sustaining project’s outcomes)?

Socio-economic risks to sustainability:

* Are there any social or political risks that may jeopardize sustainability of project outcomes? What is the risk that the level of stakeholder ownership (including ownership by governments and other key stakeholders) will be insufficient to allow for the project outcomes/benefits to be sustained? Do the various key stakeholders see that it is in their interest that the project benefits continue to flow? Is there sufficient public / stakeholder awareness in support of the long term objectives of the project? Are lessons learned being documented by the Project Team on a continual basis and shared/ transferred to appropriate parties who could learn from the project and potentially replicate and/or scale it in the future?

Institutional Framework and Governance risks to sustainability:

* Do the legal frameworks, policies, governance structures and processes pose risks that may jeopardize sustenance of project benefits? While assessing this parameter, also consider if the required systems/ mechanisms for accountability, transparency, and technical knowledge transfer are in place.

Environmental risks to sustainability:

* Are there any environmental risks that may jeopardize sustenance of project outcomes?

**Conclusions & Recommendations**

The MTR consultant will include a section of the report setting out the MTR’s evidence-based conclusions, in light of the findings.[[19]](#footnote-19)

Recommendations should be succinct suggestions for critical intervention that are specific, measurable, achievable, and relevant. A recommendation table should be put in the report’s executive summary. See the *Guidance for Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects* for guidance on a recommendation table.

The MTR consultant should make no more than 15 recommendations total.

**Ratings**

The MTR consultant will include its ratings of the project’s results and brief descriptions of the associated achievements in a *MTR Ratings & Achievement Summary Table* in the Executive Summary of the MTR report. See Annex E for ratings scales. No rating on Project Strategy and no overall project rating is required.

Table. MTR Ratings & Achievement Summary Table for “Mainstreaming sustainable land and forest management in mountain landscapes of North-Eastern Armenia’’ (00091048/00081940)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Measure** | **MTR Rating** | **Achievement Description** |
| **Project Strategy** | N/A |  |
| **Progress Towards Results** | Objective Achievement Rating: (rate 6 pt. scale) |  |
| Outcome 1 Achievement Rating: (rate 6 pt. scale) |  |
| Outcome 2 Achievement Rating: (rate 6 pt. scale) |  |
| Outcome 3 Achievement Rating: (rate 6 pt. scale) |  |
| Etc. |  |
| **Project Implementation & Adaptive Management** | (rate 6 pt. scale) |  |
| **Sustainability** | (rate 4 pt. scale) |  |

**TIMEFRAME**

The total duration of the MTR will be up to *15 days* over a time period of *8 weeks* starting *from the first day of the mission,* and shall not exceed five months from when the consultant is hired. The tentative MTR timeframe is as follows:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **TIMEFRAME** | **ACTIVITY** |
| *March 9, 2018* | Application closes |
| *March 30, 2018* | Select MTR consultant |
| *April 2-4, 2018* | Prep the MTR consultant (handover of Project Documents) |
| *April 5-10, 3 days* | Document review and preparing MTR Inception Report |
| *April 15, 1 day* | Finalization and Validation of MTR Inception Report - latest start of MTR mission |
| *April 23- April 27, 5 days* | MTR mission: stakeholder meetings, interviews, wrap-up workshop |
| *May 4 – 15, 6 days* | Preparing draft report |
| *June 8-12, 1 day* | Incorporating audit trail from feedback on draft report/Finalization of MTR report |
| *Up to 2 weeks after receiving the draft report* | Preparation & Issue of Management Response |
| *1 week after receiving the Management Response* | Expected date of full MTR completion |

Options for site visits should be provided in the Inception Report.

**DELIVERABLES**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **#** | **Deliverable** | **Description** | **Timing** | **Responsibilities** |
| **1** | **MTR Inception Report** | MTR consultants clarifies objectives and methods of Midterm Review | No later than 1 week before the MTR mission  April 13, 2018 | MTR consultant submits to the Commissioning Unit and project management |
| **2** | **Presentation** | Initial Findings | End of MTR mission  April 27, 2018 | MTR consultant presents to project management and the Commissioning Unit |
| **3** | **Draft Final Report** | Full report (using guidelines on content outlined in Annex B) with annexes | Within 3 weeks of the MTR mission  May 15, 2018 | Sent to the Commissioning Unit, reviewed by RTA, Project Coordinating Unit, GEF OFP |
| **4** | **Final Report\*** | Revised report with audit trail detailing how all received comments have (and have not) been addressed in the final MTR report | Within 1 week of receiving UNDP comments on draft  July 10, 2018 | Sent to the Commissioning Unit |

\*The final MTR report must be in English. If applicable, the Commissioning Unit may choose to arrange for a translation of the report into a language more widely shared by national stakeholders.

**ARRANGEMENTS**

The principal responsibility for managing this MTR resides with the Commissioning Unit. The Commissioning Unit for this project’s MTR is UNDP Armenia Country Office.

The commissioning unit will contract the consultant and ensure all necessary support throughout the process, including with travel arrangements within the country for the MTR consultant. The Project Team will be responsible for liaising with the MTR consultant to provide all relevant documents, set up stakeholder interviews, and arrange field visits.

**TEAM COMPOSITION**

The independent international consultant (with experience and exposure to projects and evaluations in other regions globally) will conduct the MTR with support of local expert group and administrative team of the project. The consultant cannot have participated in the project preparation, formulation, and/or implementation (including the writing of the Project Document) and should not have a conflict of interest with project’s related activities.

Candidate will be evaluated using a cumulative analysis method taking into consideration the combination of the applicants' technical qualifications,  experience and financial proposal. The contract will be awarded to the individual consultant whose offer has been evaluated and determined as technically responsive/compliant/acceptable to the requirements of the ToR and received the highest cumulative (technical and financial) score out of below defined technical and financial criteria.

Only candidates obtaining a minimum of  49 points in the technical evaluation would be considered for financial evaluation.

Technical Criteria - 70% of total evaluation - max. 70 points

The selection of the consultant will be aimed at maximizing the qualifications in the below areas. 70% of points will be awarded for the technical qualifications and 30% for the financial bid.

* Criteria A (Education- Master’s degree in BA, International Relations, Forestry, Environmental Sciences, or other closely related field)-10 max points
* Criteria B (Work experience in GEF and in projects evaluations for at least 10 years)-15 max points
* Criteria C (Projects evaluation/review experiences within UN system with result-based management evaluation methodologies, applying SMART indicators and validating basline scenarios)-15 max points
* Criteria D (Experience working in CIS countries and in the Caucasus region)-15 max points
* Criteria E (Excellent language, analytic and communication skills)-15 max points.

Financial Criteria - 30% of total evaluation - max. 30 points. The maximum number of points assigned to the financial proposal is allocated to the lowest price proposal. All other price proposals receive points in inverse proportion.

Note:

\*Please note that the financial proposal is all-inclusive and shall take into account various expenses incurred by the consultant/contractor during the contract period (e.g. fee, health insurance, and any other relevant expenses related to the performance of services).

**PAYMENT MODALITIES AND SPECIFICATIONS**

10% of payment upon approval of the final MTR Inception Report

30% upon submission of the draft MTR report

60% upon finalization of the MTR report

Or, as otherwise agreed between the Commissioning Unit and the MTR team.

**APPLICATION PROCESS**[[20]](#footnote-20)

**Recommended Presentation of Proposal:**

1. **Letter of Confirmation of Interest and Availability** using the [template](https://intranet.undp.org/unit/bom/pso/Support%20documents%20on%20IC%20Guidelines/Template%20for%20Confirmation%20of%20Interest%20and%20Submission%20of%20Financial%20Proposal.docx)[[21]](#footnote-21) provided by UNDP;
2. **CV** and a **Personal History Form** ([P11 form](http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/corporate/Careers/P11_Personal_history_form.doc)[[22]](#footnote-22));
3. **Brief description of approach to work/technical proposal** of why the individual considers him/herself as the most suitable for the assignment, and a proposed methodology on how they will approach and complete the assignment; (max 1 page)
4. **Financial Proposal** that indicates the all-inclusive fixed total contract price and all other travel related costs (such as flight ticket, per diem, etc), supported by a breakdown of costs, as per template attached to the [Letter of Confirmation of Interest template](http://procurement-notices.undp.org/view_file.cfm?doc_id=29916). If an applicant is employed by an organization/company/institution, and he/she expects his/her employer to charge a management fee in the process of releasing him/her to UNDP under Reimbursable Loan Agreement (RLA), the applicant must indicate at this point, and ensure that all such costs are duly incorporated in the financial proposal submitted to UNDP.

**Criteria for Evaluation of Proposal:** Only those applications which are responsive and compliant will be evaluated. Offers will be evaluated according to the Combined Scoring method – where the educational background and experience on similar assignments will be weighted at 70%and the price proposal will weigh as 30% of the total scoring. The applicant receiving the Highest Combined Score that has also accepted UNDP’s General Terms and Conditions will be awarded the contract.

## Annex 2: GEF Operational Principles

**http://www.gefweb.org/public/opstrat/ch1.htm**

**TEN OPERATIONAL PRINCIPLES FOR DEVELOPMENT**

**AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GEF'S WORK PROGRAM**

1. For purposes of the financial mechanisms for the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the GEF will **function under the guidance of, and be accountable to, the Conference of the Parties** (COPs). For purposes of financing activities in the focal area of ozone layer depletion, GEF operational policies will be consistent with those of the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer and its amendments.

2. The GEF will provide new, and additional, grant and concessional funding to meet the agreed **incremental costs** of measures to achieve agreed global environmental benefits.

3. The GEF will ensure the **cost-effectiveness** of its activities to maximize global environmental benefits.

4. The GEF will fund projects that are **country-driven** and based on national priorities designed to support sustainable development, as identified within the context of national programs.

5. The GEF will maintain sufficient **flexibility** to respond to changing circumstances, including evolving guidance of the Conference of the Parties and experience gained from monitoring and evaluation activities.

6. GEF projects will provide for **full disclosure** of all non-confidential information.

7. GEF projects will provide for consultation with, and **participation** as appropriate of, the beneficiaries and affected groups of people.

8. GEF projects will conform to the **eligibility** requirements set forth in paragraph 9 of the GEF Instrument.

9. In seeking to maximize global environmental benefits, the GEF will emphasize its **catalytic role** and leverage additional financing from other sources.

10. The GEF will ensure that its programs and projects are **monitored and evaluated** on a regular basis.

## Annex 3: Armenia Mountain SLM project Terminal Evaluation Matrix

| **Evaluation Questions** | | **Indicators** | **Sources** | **Data Collection Method** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ***Evaluation Criteria: Relevance*** | | | | |
| * Does the project’s objective align with the priorities of the local government and local communities? | * Level of coherence between project objective and stated priorities of local stakeholders | | * Local stakeholders * Document review of local development strategies, environmental policies, etc. | * Local level field visit interviews * Desk review |
| * Does the project’s objective fit within the national environment and development priorities? | * Level of coherence between project objective and national policy priorities and strategies, as stated in official documents | | * National policy documents, such as National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, National Capacity Self-Assessment, etc. | * Desk review * National level interviews |
| * Did the project concept originate from local or national stakeholders, and/or were relevant stakeholders sufficiently involved in project development? | * Level of involvement of local and national stakeholders in project origination and development (number of meetings held, project development processes incorporating stakeholder input, etc.) | | * Project staff * Local and national stakeholders * Project documents | * Field visit interviews * Desk review |
| * Does the project objective fit GEF strategic priorities? | * Level of coherence between project objective and GEF strategic priorities (including alignment of relevant focal area indicators) | | * GEF strategic priority documents for period when project was approved * Current GEF strategic priority documents | * Desk review |
| * Was the project linked with and in-line with UNDP priorities and strategies for the country? | * Level of coherence between project objective and design with UNDAF, CPAP, CPD | | * UNDP strategic priority documents | * Desk review |
| * Does the project’s objective support implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Convention to Combat Desertification, and the UNFCCC? Other relevant MEAs? | * Linkages between project objective and elements of the CBD, UNCCD, and UNFCCC, such as key articles and programs of work | | * Convention website * National Strategies and Action Plan for each convention | * Desk review |
| ***Evaluation Criteria: Efficiency*** | | | | |
| * Is the project cost-effective? | * Quality and adequacy of financial management procedures (in line with UNDP, and national policies, legislation, and procedures) * Financial delivery rate vs. expected rate * Management costs as a percentage of total costs | | * Project documents * Project staff | * Desk review * Interviews with project staff |
| * Are expenditures in line with international standards and norms? | * Cost of project inputs and outputs relative to norms and standards for donor projects in the country or region | | * Project documents * Project staff | * Desk review * Interviews with project staff |
| * Is the project implementation approach efficient for delivering the planned project results? | * Adequacy of implementation structure and mechanisms for coordination and communication * Planned and actual level of human resources available * Extent and quality of engagement with relevant partners / partnerships * Quality and adequacy of project monitoring mechanisms (oversight bodies’ input, quality and timeliness of reporting, etc.) | | * Project documents * National and local stakeholders * Project staff | * Desk review * Interviews with project staff * Interviews with national and local stakeholders |
| * Is the project implementation delayed? If so, has that affected cost-effectiveness? | * Project milestones in time * Planned results affected by delays * Required project adaptive management measures related to delays | | * Project documents * Project staff | * Desk review * Interviews with project staff |
| * What is the contribution of cash and in-kind co-financing to project implementation? | * Level of cash and in-kind co-financing relative to expected level | | * Project documents * Project staff | * Desk review * Interviews with project staff |
| * To what extent is the project leveraging additional resources? | * Amount of resources leveraged relative to project budget | | * Project documents * Project staff | * Desk review * Interviews with project staff |
| ***Evaluation Criteria: Effectiveness*** | | | | |
| * Are the project objectives likely to be met? To what extent are they likely to be met? | * Level of progress toward project indicator targets relative to expected level at current point of implementation | | * Project documents * Project staff * Project stakeholders | * Field visit interviews * Desk review |
| * What are the key factors contributing to project success or underachievement? | * Level of documentation of and preparation for project risks, assumptions and impact drivers | | * Project documents * Project staff * Project stakeholders | * Field visit interviews * Desk review |
| * What are the key risks and barriers that remain to achieve the project objective and generate Global Environmental Benefits? | * Presence, assessment of, and preparation for expected risks, assumptions and impact drivers | | * Project documents * Project staff * Project stakeholders | * Field visit interviews * Desk review |
| * Are the key assumptions and impact drivers relevant to the achievement of Global Environmental Benefits likely to be met? | * Actions undertaken to address key assumptions and target impact drivers | | * Project documents * Project staff * Project stakeholders | * Field visit interviews * Desk review |
| ***Evaluation Criteria: Results*** | | | | |
| * Have the planned outputs been produced? Have they contributed to the project outcomes and objectives? | * Level of project implementation progress relative to expected level at current stage of implementation * Existence of logical linkages between project outputs and outcomes/impacts | | * Project documents * Project staff * Project stakeholders | * Field visit interviews * Desk review |
| * Are the anticipated outcomes likely to be achieved? Are the outcomes likely to contribute to the achievement of the project objective? | * Existence of logical linkages between project outcomes and impacts | | * Project documents * Project staff * Project stakeholders | * Field visit interviews * Desk review |
| * Are impact level results likely to be achieved? Are the likely to be at the scale sufficient to be considered Global Environmental Benefits? | * Environmental indicators * Level of progress through the project’s Theory of Change | | * Project documents * Project staff * Project stakeholders | * Field visit interviews * Desk review |
| ***Evaluation Criteria: Sustainability*** | | | | |
| * To what extent are project results likely to be dependent on continued financial support? What is the likelihood that any required financial resources will be available to sustain the project results once the GEF assistance ends? | * Financial requirements for maintenance of project benefits * Level of expected financial resources available to support maintenance of project benefits * Potential for additional financial resources to support maintenance of project benefits | | * Project documents * Project staff * Project stakeholders | * Field visit interviews * Desk review |
| * Do relevant stakeholders have or are likely to achieve an adequate level of “ownership” of results, to have the interest in ensuring that project benefits are maintained? | * Level of initiative and engagement of relevant stakeholders in project activities and results | | * Project documents * Project staff * Project stakeholders | * Field visit interviews * Desk review |
| * Do relevant stakeholders have the necessary technical capacity to ensure that project benefits are maintained? | * Level of technical capacity of relevant stakeholders relative to level required to sustain project benefits | | * Project documents * Project staff * Project stakeholders | * Field visit interviews * Desk review |
| * To what extent are the project results dependent on socio-political factors? | * Existence of socio-political risks to project benefits | | * Project documents * Project staff * Project stakeholders | * Field visit interviews * Desk review |
| * To what extent are the project results dependent on issues relating to institutional frameworks and governance? | * Existence of institutional and governance risks to project benefits | | * Project documents * Project staff * Project stakeholders | * Field visit interviews * Desk review |
| * Are there any environmental risks that can undermine the future flow of project impacts and Global Environmental Benefits? | * Existence of environmental risks to project benefits | | * Project documents * Project staff * Project stakeholders | * Field visit interviews * Desk review |
| ***Cross-cutting and UNDP Mainstreaming Issues*** | | | | |
| * Did the project take incorporate gender mainstreaming or equality, as relevant? | * Level of appropriate engagement and attention to gender-relevant aspects of the project | | * Project documents * Project staff * Project stakeholders | * Field visit interviews * Desk review |

## Annex 4: Interview Guide

**Mid-term Review Draft Interview Guide**

*Overview: The questions under each topic area are intended to assist in focusing discussion to ensure consistent topic coverage and to structure data collection, and are not intended as verbatim questions to be posed to interviewees. When using the interview guide, the interviewer should be sure to target questions at a level appropriate to the interviewee. The interview guide is one of multiple tools for gathering evaluative evidence, to complement evidence collected through document reviews and other data collection methods; in other words, the interview guide does not cover all evaluative questions relevant to the evaluation.*

Key

**Bold** = GEF Evaluation Criteria

*Italic* = GEF Operational Principles

1. PLANNING / PRE-IMPLEMENTATION
2. **Relevance**
   1. Did the project’s objectives fit within the priorities of the local government and local communities?
   2. Did the project’s objectives fit within national priorities?
   3. Did the project’s objectives fit GEF strategic priorities?
   4. Did the project’s objectives support implementation of the relevant multi-lateral environmental agreement?
3. *Incremental cost*
4. Did the project create environmental benefits that would not have otherwise taken place?
5. Does the project area represent an example of a globally significant environmental resource?
6. *Country-drivenness / Participation*
7. How did the project concept originate?
8. How did the project stakeholders contribute to the project development?
9. Do local and national government stakeholders support the objectives of the project?
10. Do the local communities support the objectives of the project?
11. Are the project objectives in conflict with any national level policies?
12. Monitoring and Evaluation Plan / Design *(M&E)*
13. Were monitoring and reporting roles clearly defined?
14. Was there either an environmental or socio-economic baseline of data collected before the project began?
15. MANAGEMENT / OVERSIGHT
16. Project management
17. What were the implementation arrangements?
18. Was the management effective?
19. Were workplans prepared as required to achieve the anticipated outputs on the required timeframes?
20. Did the project develop and leverage the necessary and appropriate partnerships with direct and tangential stakeholders?
21. Were there any particular challenges with the management process?
22. If there was a steering or oversight body, did it meet as planned and provide the anticipated input and support to project management?
23. Were risks adequately assessed during implementation?
24. Did assumptions made during project design hold true?
25. Were assessed risks adequately dealt with?
26. Was the level of communication and support from the implementing agency adequate and appropriate?
27. *Flexibility*
28. Did the project have to undertake any adaptive management measures based on feedback received from the M&E process?
29. Were there other ways in which the project demonstrated flexibility?
30. Were there any challenges faced in this area?
31. **Efficiency** *(cost-effectiveness)*
32. Was the project cost-effective?
33. Were expenditures in line with international standards and norms?
34. Was the project implementation delayed?
35. If so, did that affect cost-effectiveness?
36. What was the contribution of cash and in-kind co-financing to project implementation?
37. To what extent did the project leverage additional resources?
38. Financial Management
39. Was the project financing (from the GEF and other partners) at the level foreseen in the project document?
40. Where there any problems with disbursements between implementing and executing agencies?
41. Were financial audits conducted with the regularity and rigor required by the implementing agency?
42. Was financial reporting regularly completed at the required standards and level of detail?
43. Did the project face any particular financial challenges such as unforeseen tax liabilities, management costs, or currency devaluation?
44. Co-financing *(catalytic role)*
45. Was the in-kind co-financing received at the level anticipated in the project document?
46. Was the cash co-financing received at the level anticipated in the project document?
47. Did the project receive any additional unanticipated cash support after approval?
48. Did the project receive any additional unanticipated in-kind support after approval?
49. Monitoring and Evaluation *(M&E)*
50. Project implementation M&E
51. Was the M&E plan adequate and implemented sufficiently to allow the project to recognize and address challenges?
52. Were any unplanned M&E measures undertaken to meet unforeseen shortcomings?
53. Was there a mid-term evaluation?
54. How were project reporting and monitoring tools used to support adaptive management?
55. Environmental and socio-economic monitoring
56. Did the project implement a monitoring system, or leverage a system already in place, for environmental monitoring?
57. What are the environmental or socio-economic monitoring mechanisms?
58. Have any community-based monitoring mechanisms been used?
59. Is there a long-term M&E component to track environmental changes?
60. If so, what provisions have been made to ensure this is carried out?
61. *Full disclosure*
62. Did the project meet this requirement?
63. Did the project face any challenges in this area?
64. ACTIVITIES / IMPLEMENTATION
65. **Effectiveness**
66. How have the stated project objectives been met?
67. To what extent have the project objectives been met?
68. What were the key factors that contributed to project success or underachievement?
69. Can positive key factors be replicated in other situations, and could negative key factors have been anticipated?
70. Stakeholder involvement and public awareness *(participation)*
71. What were the achievements in this area?
72. What were the challenges in this area?
73. How did stakeholder involvement and public awareness contribute to the achievement of project objectives?
74. **RESULTS**
75. Outputs
76. Did the project achieve the planned outputs?
77. Did the outputs contribute to the project outcomes and objectives?
78. Outcomes
79. Were the anticipated outcomes achieved?
80. Were the outcomes relevant to the planned project impacts?
81. Impacts
82. Was there a logical flow of inputs and activities to outputs, from outputs to outcomes, and then to impacts?
83. Did the project achieve its anticipated/planned impacts?
84. Why or why not?
85. If impacts were achieved, were they at a scale sufficient to be considered Global Environmental Benefits?
86. If impacts or Global Environmental Benefits have not yet been achieved, are the conditions (enabling environment) in place so that they are likely to eventually be achieved?
87. Replication strategy, and documented replication or scaling-up *(catalytic role)*
88. Did the project have a replication plan?
89. Was the replication plan “passive” or “active”?
90. Is there evidence that replication or scaling-up occurred within the country?
91. Did replication or scaling-up occur in other countries?
92. LESSONS LEARNED
    1. What were the key lessons learned in each project stage?
    2. In retrospect, would the project participants have done anything differently?
93. **SUSTAINABILITY**
94. Financial
95. To what extent are the project results dependent on continued financial support?
96. What is the likelihood that any required financial resources will be available to sustain the project results once the GEF assistance ends?
97. Was the project successful in identifying and leveraging co-financing?
98. What are the key financial risks to sustainability?
99. Socio-Political
100. To what extent are the project results dependent on socio-political factors?
101. What is the likelihood that the level of stakeholder ownership will allow for the project results to be sustained?
102. Is there sufficient public/stakeholder awareness in support of the long-term objectives of the project?
103. What are the key socio-political risks to sustainability?
104. Institutions and Governance
105. To what extent are the project results dependent on issues relating to institutional frameworks and governance?
106. What is the likelihood that institutional and technical achievements, legal frameworks, policies and governance structures and processes will allow for the project results to be sustained?
107. Are the required systems for accountability and transparency and the required technical know-how in place?
108. What are the key institutional and governance risks to sustainability?
109. Ecological
110. Are there any environmental risks that can undermine the future flow of project impacts and Global Environmental Benefits?

## Annex 5: Rating Scales

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| ***Progress towards results: use the following rating scale*** | | |
| Highly Satisfactory (HS) | Project is expected to achieve or exceed all its major global environmental objectives, and yield substantial global environmental benefits, without major shortcomings. The project can be presented as “good practice”. | |
| Satisfactory (S) | Project is expected to achieve most of its major global environmental objectives, and yield satisfactory global environmental benefits, with only minor shortcomings. | |
| Moderately Satisfactory (S) | Project is expected to achieve most of its major relevant objectives but with either significant shortcomings or modest overall relevance. Project is expected not to achieve some of its major global environmental objectives or yield some of the expected global environment benefits. | |
| Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU) | Project is expected to achieve its major global environmental objectives with major shortcomings or is expected to achieve only some of its major global environmental objectives. | |
| Unsatisfactory (U) | Project is expected not to achieve most of its major global environment objectives or to yield any satisfactory global environmental benefits. | |
| Highly Unsatisfactory (HU) | The project has failed to achieve, and is not expected to achieve, any of its major global environment objectives with no worthwhile benefits. | |
| ***Adaptive management AND Management Arrangements: use the following rating scale*** | | |
| Highly Satisfactory (HS) | | The project has no shortcomings and can be presented as “good practice”. |
| Satisfactory (S) | | The project has minor shortcomings. |
| Moderately Satisfactory (S) | | The project has moderate shortcomings. |
| Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU) | | The project has significant shortcomings. |
| Unsatisfactory (U) | | The project has major shortcomings. |
| Highly Unsatisfactory (HU) | | The project has severe shortcomings. |
| ***Sustainability: use the following rating scale*** | | |
| Likely (L) | | There are no or negligible risks that affect this dimension of sustainability/linkages |
| Moderately Likely (ML) | | There are moderate risks that affect this dimension of sustainability/linkages |
| Moderately Unlikely (MU) | | There are significant risks that affect this dimension of sustainability/linkages |
| Unlikely (U) | | There are severe risks that affect this dimension of sustainability |
| ***Impact*** | |  |
| Significant (S) | | By project completion project directly contributed to scientifically documented large scale impacts. |
| Minimal (M) | | By project completion project directly contributed to anecdotal and/or relatively small site-specific impacts. |
| Negligible (N) | | By project completion project no direct contribution of project to impacts. |

## Annex 6: Key Informants Targeted and Interviewed

**Mid-term Review Mission Agenda**

of the International Consultant on Mid-term Review of the GEF Project “Mainstreaming Sustainable Land and Forest Management in Dry Mountain Landscapes of Northeastern Armenia**”**

Mr. Joshua Brann

(accompanying interpreter is **Mr.Vladimir Ter-Ghazaryan**)

June 4-8, 2018

| **Day and Timing** | **Meeting / Activity** | **Location** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Monday, June 4, 2018 | | |
| Morning | Arrival to Yerevan 03:35am (Austrian Airlines flight OS641) | Accommodation in hotel in Yerevan |
| 10:00-11:30 | **Meeting with UNDP Project Team**  Participants:  Mr. Hovik Sayadyan, Project Manager  Ms. Lusine Sargsyan, Project Officer  **Discussion topics**: Overview of project plans, activities and results so far, challenges and current risks, etc. | Project Office |
| 11:30-12:15 | **Meeting with UNDP Armenia Country Office**  Participants:  Mr. Armen Martirosyan  Mr. Georgi Arzumanyan  Ms. Tatevik Koloyan  **Discussion topics:** Overview of project activities, forest sector reforms and project adaptation measures | UNDP Office |
| 12:15-1:45pm | *Lunch break* |  |
| 2:00-4:00pm | Meeting with State Forest Committee and Hayantar (ArmForest)  Participants:  Mr. Miqayel Manukyan, Head of State Forest Committee  Mr.Ruben Petrosyan, “Hayantar” (ArmForest), Chief Forester, Project board member | State Forest Committee Offices |
| 4:00-5:00pm | **Meeting with Ministry of Nature Protection**  **Bio-resources Management Agency**  Participants:  Mr. Artem Tarzyan, Head, Project Board co-chair | State Fotest Monitoring Center |
|  |  | Accommodation in hotel in Yerevan |
| Tuesday, June 5, 2018 | | |
| 10:00 – 12:00 | **Meeting with State Forest Monitoring ceneter**  Participants:  Aram Gulkhasyan, Head of Center  Arman Avagyan, Deputy Head of Center  Atom Grigoryan-Head of GIS analyses division, forester Gevorg Azgaldyan-Chief expert, GIS analyses division | Ministry of Nature Protection |
| Bio-resources Management Agency |
| 12:00-12:30 | Quick lunch for take-away |  |
| 12:30 – 17:00 | **Travel to Ijevan forest enterprise office** via Sevan-Chambarak-Berd to see cases of anti-hail nets applications, as a mean to promote sustainable livelihood within forest-dependent communities (This activity was done in collaboration with UNDP DRR project) | Tavush community |
| 17:00 – 18:00 | **Visit to “Huysi Kamurj” (Bridge of Hope) NGO** SGP-SLM/SFM collaborative activity on installation of solar panels and solar heaters in kindergartens (in Ijevan, Koghb, Koti, Bagratashen communities)  **Meeting with Ijevan Forest Enterprise with following field trip**  Participants:  Head of Ijevan Forest Enterprise  Chief Forester, Ijevan Forest Enterprise  Monitoring staff | Ijevan,  Bridge of Hope  Ijevan Forest Enterprise office and Forest Enterprise area |
| 19:00 – 20:00 | Dinner and accommodation | Accommodation in Ijevan either or in Noyemberyan |
| Wednesday, June 6, 2018 | | |
| Morning | **Meeting with Noyemberyan Forest Enterprise with following field trip** (School forest district could be an option)  Participants:  Head of Noyemberyan Forest Enterprise  Chief Forester, Noyemberyan Forest Enterprise  Monitoring staff  **Meetings in Noyemberyan**  -Noyemberyan Local Self Government  -Local resource users / stakeholders | Noyemberyan |
| Mid-day | Lunch in Noyemberyan |  |
| Afternoon | **Meeting with local “Verelq” NGO** who organized the design, production and distribution of Energy efficiency ovens (SGP-SLM/SFM collaborative activity),  **Visit to fruit solar drying facility in Voskepar community**  SFM project and UNDP “Integrated Support to Rural Development: Building Resilient Communities”  project joint activity  **Visit to “Huysi Kamurj” (Bridge of Hope) NGO** SGP-SLM/SFM collaborative activity other site- installation of solar panels and solar heaters in kindergartens (Koghb community) as alternatives to fuelwood based heating | Koghb  Voskepar |
|  |  | Accommodation in Noyemberyan |
| Thursday, June 7, 2018 | | |
| Morning-Mid-day | On the way to return to Yerevan:  **Visit to 93 ha coppiced degraded forests** of Lalvar FE of Hayantar SNCO (near the Odzun community)  **Visit to Passive solar greenhouse in Ardvi community** (Lori region), SLM/SFM activity in collaboration with UNDP “Climate Risk Mitigation: Passive Solar Greenhouse” project  **Visit to Mets Parni community in Lori region**, where model briquetting production will be set, along with supporting agricultural machinery | Odzun  Ardvi  Mets Parni |
|  | Lunch |  |
| 14:00-17:00 | Return to Yerevan |  |
|  |  | Accommodation in Yerevan hotel |
| Friday, June 8 |  |  |
| Morning | **Meetings with national stakeholders**   * GIZ-Armenia-Mrs. Siranush Galstyan (Adviser   “Integrated Biodiversity Management, South Caucasus”)   * WWF-Armenia-Mr.Karen Manvelyan (Head of office) | Yerevan  GIZ, WWF Offices |
| 12:30-13:30 pm | Lunch (on own) / time |  |
| 13:30-17:00 pm | Armenian Tree Project (ATP)-Mr.Samvel Ghandilyan (Nursery manager)  **Meeting with National expert** in zoology who conducted project bird and butterfly studies and training  **Wrap up meeting with project team** | Yerevan  ATP Office  UNDP Office |
| 17:15 pm | **De-briefing with Senior Management of UNDP Country Office**  Participants:  Mr. Dmitry Mariyasin, DRR  Mr. Armen Martirosyan  Mr. Georgi Arzumanyan  Ms. Tatevik Koloyan  Mr. Hovik Sayadyan, Project Manager  Ms. Lusine Sargsyan, Project Officer | UNDP Office |
|  |  | Accommodation in Yerevan hotel |
| Saturday, June 9, 2018 | | |
| 02:30 | Car from hotel to airport |  |
| 04:25 | Flight departure to Vienna (**flight US9828**, operated by Austrian Airlines) |  |

## Annex 7: Documents Reviewed

**Project-related Documents**

* PIF
* UNDP Initiation Plan
* UNDP Project Document
* UNDP Country Programme Document 2016-2020
* UN Development Assistance Framework 2016-2020
* UNDP Environmental and Social Screening results
* Project Inception Report
* Annual Project Report (APR)
* Project Implementation Report (PIR)
* Semi-annual and Annual progress reports and work plans
* Capacity development scorecards
* All monitoring reports prepared by the project
* Minutes of the Project Outcome Board Meetings and other meetings (i.e. Project Technical Advisory Committee meetings)

## Annex 8: Armenia Mountain SLM Project Financial Tables

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **ORIGINAL BUDGET (Prodoc ATLAS)** | **2015** | **2016** | **2017** | **2018** | **2019** | **Total** |
| Component 1 | $116,500 | $318,625 | $421,800 | $235,300 | $83,175 | $1,175,400 |
| Component 2 | $50,600 | $491,283 | $420,583 | $360,583 | $262,450 | $1,585,499 |
| Component 3 | $4,000 | $2,875 | $37,875 | $2,875 | $26,875 | $74,500 |
| Project Management | $20,264 | $34,629 | $35,329 | $29,734 | $21,814 | $141,770 |
| UNDP | $4,584 | $43,150 | $44,750 | $50,350 | $37,166 | $180,000 |
| **Total** | **$195,948** | **$890,562** | **$960,337** | **$678,842** | **$431,480** | **$3,157,169** |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **ACTUAL EXPENDITURE (CDRs)** | **2015** | **2016** | **2017** | **2018** | **2019** | **Total** |
| Component 1 | $- | $56,154 | $197,903 | $3,320 | $- | $257,376 |
| Component 2 | $- | $53,304 | $263,620 | $2,958 | $- | $319,882 |
| Component 3 | $- | $1,779 | $932 | $505 | $- | $3,215 |
| Project Management - UNDP | $- | $18,695 | $40,193 | $458 | $- | $59,347 |
| Project Management - GEF | $- | $5,454 | $21,144 | $- | $- | $26,598 |
| Unspecified - Dep Exp Owned ITC & Vehicle (GEF funded) | $- | $1,176 | $3,439 | $- | $- | $4,615 |
| **Total** | $- | **$136,562** | **$527,230** | **$7,241** | $- | $671,033 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Actual Delivery vs Original PRODOC Budget** | **2015** | **2016** | **2017** | **2018** | **2019** | **Total** |
| Component 1 | 0.00% | 17.62% | 46.92% | 1.41% |  | 21.90% |
| Component 2 | 0.00% | 10.85% | 62.68% | 0.82% |  | 20.18% |
| Component 3 | 0.00% | 61.87% | 2.46% | 17.56% |  | 4.32% |
| Project Management | 0.00% | 45.31% | 67.09% | 1.54% |  | 34.31% |
| Total | 0.00% | 15.33% | 54.90% | 1.07% |  | 21.25% |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Planned VS Actual By Component** | **Planned** | **Actual** |  |  |  |  |
| Component 1 | $1,175,400 | $257,376 |  |  |  |  |
| Component 2 | $1,585,499 | $319,882 |  |  |  |  |
| Component 3 | $74,500 | $3,215 |  |  |  |  |
| Project Management | $321,770 | $90,560 |  |  |  |  |
| **Total** | **$3,157,169** | **$671,033** |  |  |  |  |

## Annex 9: Armenia Mountain SLM project Results Framework Assessed Level of Indicator Target Achievement

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Results Framework Assessment Key** | | |
| *Green = Achievement Likely / Achieved / Exceeded* | *Yellow = Partially Achieved / Achievement Uncertain* | *Red = Achievement Unlikely* | *Gray = Not applicable* |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Objective: Sustainable land and forest management in the Northeastern Armenia secures continued flow of ecosystem services** | | | | | | |
| **Description of Indicator** | **Baseline Level** | **Midterm target level** | **End of project target level** | **Level at 30 June 2017** | **Level at 30 June 2018** | **MTR Assessment** |
| 1. Number of forest management plans integrating considerations of biodiversity, ecosystem services, climate mitigation and community resource use (integrating sustainable forest management principles) | *(not set or not applicable)* | *(not set or not applicable)* | 11    5 Community development plans updated | - Two (2) forest management plans (FMPs) for the Ijevan and Noyemberyan forest enterprises with integrated considerations of biodiversity, ecosystem services, climate mitigation and community resource (integrating sustainable forest management principles) use are being drafted and will be ready by September 2017.    - A contract to prepare a FMP for the Artsvaberd forest enterprise that integrates considerations of biodiversity, ecosystems services and community resource use is signed with the winner company and activities has started.    - Requests for proposals (RFP) for another 2 forest enterprises (Gougarq and Yeghegnut) have been drafted and the call for proposals are announced by the end of August 2017. | -Two (2) FMPs drafted for Ijevan and Noyemberyan forest enterprises with integrated considerations of biodiversity, ecosystem services, climate mitigation and community resource (integrating sustainable forest management principles) use; through a UNDP official letter shared with MoNP for circulation and feedback. The project expects to receive feedback from MoNP by the end of August or September, 2018. The relevant amendments to the drafted FMPs will be incorporated shortly and final FMPs will be submitted for approval by the end of 2018.    -One (1) FMP for Artsvaberd forest enterprise with integrated considerations of biodiversity, ecosystem services, climate mitigation and community resource (integrating sustainable forest management principles) use was not delivered by a contracted company due to changes in the company’s team. Thus, the contract was terminated and will be re-announced.    -Two (2) FMPs for Gugarq and Yeghegnut forest enterprises with integrated considerations of biodiversity, ecosystem services, climate mitigation and community resource (integrating sustainable forest management principles) use are being completed and will be officially delivered to MoNP for circulation and feedback by mid-August 2018.    -In collaboration with the ongoing UNDP - Russian Federation Trust Fund “Integrated support to rural development: Building resilient communities” project the SLM/SFM PIU participates in updating a consolidated development plan for the Noyemberyan community. According to this plan, Voskepar village, as a part of the consolidated community, received an environmentally friendly production and processing unit for fruits, berries, mushrooms and herbs. Within the SLM/SFM project detailed maps of berries, mushrooms and herbs collection sites were also prepared.    -In collaboration with UNDP “Climate Risk Mitigation: Passive Solar Greenhouse” project, the SLM/SFM project supported creation of “Ardvi” cooperative and handed over a constructed passive solar greenhouse (PSG) to this cooperative, as an opportunity for Ardvi village overall development.    -Inclusion of PSG and tourism development opportunities are also considered for the Odzun consolidated community (Ardvi village is a part of this community) development plan. | Achievement uncertain. Due to contextual issues prior to project start this target may need to be revised. However, the project is making progress toward at least five FMPs, although progress should optimally be further along as of the mid-term, although it must be kept in mind that some delays were encountered at project start-up. The FMPs only take an expert team a few months’ time to prepare, so the project could theoretically complete the target number by the end of the project. However, there is in fact an intense shortage of qualified national experts to complete this work, and the project has been unable to contract more than 1-2 expert teams at a time. Therefore, it is unclear if the project will be able to complete all of the intended FMPs in the remaining time (although a no-cost extension may be necessary due to the initial delays). |
| 2. Total avoided and/or sequestrated carbon benefits over ten-year period due to improved sustainable management of forests. | N/A | *(not set or not applicable)* | 681,990 metric tCO2 | Calculations are not available yet in the reporting period    - Total avoided and/or sequestrated carbon benefits over ten-year period for 2 forest enterprises (Ijevan and Noyemberyan) will be calculated based on finalized FMPs to be available by the end of September 2017.  -Similarly, avoided and/or sequestrated carbon benefits over 10-year period will be calculated during 2017-2018 for the following forest enterprises: Artsvaberd (Tavush region), Gougarq and Yeghegnut (Lori region) | Total carbon benefits are not available yet for 11 targeted FEs    - Total avoided and/or sequestrated carbon benefits over ten-year period for 2 forest enterprises (Ijevan and Noyemberyan) according to final draft FMPs amount to 212,960 metric tCO2.    - Carbon benefit estimates are not yet available for Artsvaberd, Gugarg and Yeghegnut FEs in the reporting period as respective FMPs aren’t finalized. | Achievement likely. |
| 3. Extent in hectares of forest area managed for multiple sustainable forest management and ecosystem benefits | *(not set or not applicable)* | *(not set or not applicable)* | 250000 | In the reporting period, the project registered 52,202.6 ha of forest area (in both Ijevan and Noyemberyan forest enterprises) managed for multiple sustainable forest management and ecosystem benefits. All activities were to be completed by end of July 2017, but due to the extended procurement process and unusually cold and long 2016/2017 winter, completion of activities is delayed by 2 months.    -Two (2) FMPs for the Ijevan and Noyemberyan forest enterprises include 24,256.8 ha and 27,945.8 ha respectively under multiple sustainable forest management and ecosystem benefits, consisting of delineated high conservation value forest areas, non-timber forest products distribution, degraded forest lands, etc.    -In 2017-2018, similar inventories will be conducted for the Artsvaberd FE (42,007.8 ha), Gougarq and Yeghegnut FEs (28,258.4 ha) to identify forest areas for multiple sustainable management and ecosystem benefits | -In the reporting period, the project recorded 80,461 ha of forest area (in Ijevan, Noyemberyan, Gugarq and Yeghegnut forest enterprises) managed for multiple sustainable forest management and ecosystem benefits. The recorded area was included in the draft FMPs pending government approval. Drafted FMPs were done on the base of former FMPs, include updated detail cartographic information on the base of recent high-resolution satellite images, field checking with local forest enterprises staff and several discussions with FEs administration and local communities. Completed activities for the Noyemberyan and Ijevan FEs include: corrected and agreed boundaries between different land-users and forest estate; detailed analyze and description of changes in forest cover for past 10 years; incorporation of biodiversity, carbon and ecosystem protocols into updated FMPs and detailed management plan for coming 10 years. As for the Gugarq and Yeghegnut FEs, relevant work will be completed by mid-August 2018.    - 52,202.6 ha in Tavush region (according to final draft FMPs and completed inventory of Ijevan and Noyemberyan FEs) were designated as areas for multiple sustainable forest management and ecosystems benefits. In particular, high conservation value forest (HCVF) areas were delineated and naturalized that strengthen forest ecosystems biodiversity value and provide a solid source of avoided carbon emissions estimation. Non-timber forest products (NTFP) stands were mapped and potential harvest were assessed. These renewable bio-resources (e.g. cornelian cherry, blackberry, walnut, hazelnut, wild pear and apple, edible and medicinal herbs, mushrooms) are interpreted as serious source of income for local population. Some of these assessments were used as a base to establish the Voskepar village fruit-berry-herbs processing production unit. Several ecosystem services (water regulation, soil protection, carbon sequestration, etc.) were calculated and incorporated into FMPs. The restored degraded forests and forest pasture lands will also become a resource of multiple forest use.  - 28,258.4 ha in Lori region (according to draft FMPs of Gugarq and Yeghegnut FEs) were designated as areas for multiple sustainable forest management and ecosystem benefits. As an expression of forest landscape level approach in drafted Gugarq FE FMP incorporates also “Margahovit” forest-animal and “Caucasus snow-rose” state reservations. This is unique approach to perceive forest massive (both managed and conserved) as one, consolidated mountain forest landscape. This approach impose “more careful” treatment of managed forests in favor of sustainable management of conserved forest and all forest ecosystem.  Boundaries corrections, HCVF areas in Gougarq and Yeghegnut forest areas were delineated and described with management prescriptions, NTFP areas were mapped and bio-resources were assessed. Water regulation, soil protection, carbon sequestration services for both FEs were studied, calculated and included in the FMPs.  -Forest inventory for Gugarq and Yeghegnut FEs (28,258.4 ha) consisting of: external boundaries agreed corrections, internal delineation of forest estate (district, compartment and sub-compartment), assessment of major characteristics of forest estate (tree composition, volumes, regeneration potential, etc.) studied and mapped HCVF areas, NTFP allocation areas, degraded forest and pasture lands recognition on high resolution satellite images and their naturalization was completed. An inventory for the Artsvaberd FE covering 42,007.8 ha has been delayed due to non-performance and subsequent contract termination with the selected company. A new tender will be re-announced shortly. | Achievement uncertain. The project has reached approximately 1/3rd of the target. The achievement of indicator targets is not necessarily expected to be linear, and therefore the fact that 50% is not yet achieved at the mid-term is not the critical point. The key issue is that achieving the target depends on the completion of most of the FMPs, which is also uncertain. |
| **Outcome 1: Integration of sustainable forest and land management objectives into planning and management of forest ecosystems in NE Armenia to reduce degradation and enhance ecosystem services in two marzes covering 0.65 million hectares** | | | | | | |
| **Description of Indicator** | **Baseline Level** | **Midterm target level** | **End of project target level** | **Level at 30 June 2017** | **Cumulative progress since project start** |  |
| 4. Number of forest management plan protocols/guidelines for mainstreaming ecosystem, climate risk mitigation and biodiversity considerations into forest management in NE Armenia | *(not set or not applicable)* | *(not set or not applicable)* | One set approved by Ministry of Agriculture | - By end of 2016, studies were completed on inclusion of biodiversity, particularly identification and delineation of High conservation value forests (HCVF), which were already tested within WWF-Armenia project and published in a guideline format, ecosystem services (including non-timber forest products, carbon sequestration and other services), and indicator bird and butterfly species to monitor the status of forest ecosystems protocols in the forest management plans.    -Considering the above, guideline protocols on biodiversity, ecosystem services and carbon sequestration are expected to be added/amended to the Decree of the Ministry of Agriculture N 130-N dated 10 August 2005 on the Guideline to prepare forest enterprise forest management plans. | - Four (4) FMPs updated using integrated protocols for biodiversity considerations (the HCVF concept), ecosystem services (including non-timber forest products, carbon sequestration, water regulation and other services) and indicator bird and butterfly species to monitor ecosystem changes.    -In particular, the following activities were implemented:  -Exact boundaries between Noyemberyan and Ijevan FEs and local communities were identified using high-resolution satellite images purchased by the Project.    -An inventory of Artsvaberd FE, revision of FMP, and integration of new protocols into the FMP; correction of boundaries between the neighboring PAs and communities, delineation, and coordination with interested parties started on 30 June 2017. The draft FMP was expected to be completed by February 2018, but unfortunately the contractor, “GeoInfo” LLC, was not able to complete the task due to major changes in the staff and inability to timely bring in replacements.    - An inventory of Gougarq and Eghegnut FEs, revision of FMPs (including separate management plans for “Margahovit” and “Caucasian Snow-Rose” state sanctuaries) and integration of new protocols into the FMP; correction of boundaries between the neighboring PAs and the communities, delineation, and coordination with interested parties started in November 2017. The draft FMPs is expected to be completed by mid-August 2018.    -Due to forest sector reforms (started in Autumn 2017 and continuing nowadays) and political changes in the country (Spring 2018), envisioned activities to institutionalize a forest carbon inventory and monitoring guideline, ecosystem services and biodiversity protocols are currently on hold. It is still expected that proposed amendments to forest management will be formalized and the Decree of the Ministry of Agriculture related to A guideline on how to prepare a forest enterprise forest management plan, # 130-N 10 August 2005 will be updated. | Achievement likely. |
| 5. Number of sets of forest inventory and maps in support of sustainable forest management for forest enterprise branches | *(not set or not applicable)* | *(not set or not applicable)* | 11 | Two (2) sets of forest inventory and maps of sustainable forest management for 2 forest enterprise branches (Ijevan and Noyemberyan) are drafted and will be delivered by end of September 2017. | - Two (2) sets of forest inventory and maps of sustainable forest management for 2 FEs (Ijevan and Noyemberyan) were finalized and delivered to the MoNP for feedback and approval;  - Two (2) sets of forest inventory and maps of sustainable forest management for 2 FEs (Gugarq and Yeghegnut) are drafted and will be delivered to the MoNP by mid-August 2018. | Achievement uncertain. Dependent on completion of the FMPs, which is also uncertain. |
| 6. Number of forest enterprise branches effectively applying consideration of the needs for biodiversity, climate mitigation, forest ecosystem services and community sustainable use | 0 (partial application in FMPs) | *(not set or not applicable)* | 11 | Two (2) forest enterprise branches (Ijevan and Noyemberyan), being involved in forest inventory, mapping and management planning activities, started to effectively apply biodiversity, climate mitigation, forest ecosystem services approaches as drafted in the revised FMPs. | -Four (4) FEs (Ijevan, Noyemberyan, Gugarq and Yeghegnut)—with Project’s technical assistance-- walked every step in doing a forest inventory, mapping and planning management activities. Such learning-by-doing exercise worked as a catalyzer, and now these 4 FEs started to effectively apply biodiversity, climate mitigation, forest ecosystem services approaches as shown in their respective updated FMPs. | Achievement uncertain. Dependent on completion of the FMPs, which is also uncertain. |
| 7. Number of forest monitoring protocols to assess effectiveness of adoption for SFM in forestlands | 0 (Existing practice, monitoring protocols used for recording forest violations and fires, not for consideration of ecosystem values and functions) | *(not set or not applicable)* | One set of protocols approved and adopted by Ministry of Agriculture | Monitoring protocols currently used for recording forest violations and fires will be discussed upon completion of FMPs for the Ijevan and Noyemberyan FEs at the end of September 2017 to include considerations of ecosystem values and functions, which are missing in the existing practice. | -Due to forest sector reforms (starting in autumn 2017 and continuing nowadays) and political changes in the country (spring, 2018), envisioned activities to institutionalize monitoring protocols that consider ecosystem services were postponed. | Achievement uncertain. Concur with self-assessment. Progress on this activity has been limited and postponed, pending completion of the forest sector reforms. |
| 8. Number of marz and enterprise branch forest staff trained in the use of ecosystem based planning tools | *(not set or not applicable)* | *(not set or not applicable)* | 60 | 15 persons total (5 persons at the end of 2016 and 10 persons in 2017) in Ijevan and Noyemberyan FEs, Ijevan State sanctuary and Zikatar Environmental Education Center were trained in the use of ecosystem based planning tools. | -35 persons in total from the beginning of project (5 persons at the end of 2017 and in 15 persons in 2018) in Ijevan, Noyemberyan, Artsvaberd, Gugarq and Yeghegnut FEs were trained in the use of ecosystem based planning tools. The trainings were performed by the forest inventory and mapping team staff. The target groups of trainings included forest rangers and district heads, head of brunches, chief foresters , as well as members of consolidated local self governments. Almost all participants were men, as women traditionally were and are not part of forest management in Armenia. These field trainings were beneficial both to the inventory team (e.g. to correct methodological approaches for the assessment of NTFP amount and cost) and the local staff to learn about concentrated locations of NTFP, the methods of sustainable harvest and opportunities for further processing (e.g. agricultural crops processing units in Voskepar, Koghb, Berdavan and other sites). | Achievement likely. Concur with self-assessment. However, the target rationalization appears to have been based on the training of an average of approximately 5-6 people per forest enterprise. Depending on the number of FMPs completed, the project may not reach the coverage of training intended, even if it does reach the number of people trained. |
| 9. Number of pasture stakeholders undergone technical and skills training and development in sustainable pasture management | *(not set or not applicable)* | *(not set or not applicable)* | 100 (of which at least 30 are women) | 20 pasture stakeholders (of which 5 were women) have undergone technical and skills training and development in sustainable pasture management in Ijevan and Noyemberyan FEs. | -50 pasture stakeholders in total from the beginning of project (of which 15 were women; in 2018 - 30 pasture stakeholders of which 10 were women) have undergone technical and skills training and development in sustainable pasture management in Ijevan, Noyemberyan, Gugarq an Yeghegnut FEs.    -Specific topics of trainings, which were conducted initially by the inventory team and later by the project pasture and grassland management expert included:  - economic and ecological efficiency of pasture use;  - pasture vegetation information (beneficial, toxic, harmful plants)  -the reasons of pasture and land degradations due to mostly human factor and as a result malnutrition of milking animals;  -the rules to use pasture lands ecological provisionary services (e.g. the forms, dates and methods of wild collection);  -the importance of proper pasture management and effective conservation means (e.g. in many cases red colored milk and/or meat, low milking are wrongly interpreted as a cow being ill, instead of analyzing the character of pasture land and features of its vegetation). | Achievement likely. Concur with self-assessment. |
| 10. Number of forest dependents trained in technical skills for sustainable forest resource use | *(not set or not applicable)* | *(not set or not applicable)* | 500 (of which at least 150 are women) | 30 (of which 10 were women) forest dependents trained in technical skills for sustainable forest resource use in Ijevan and Noyemberyan FEs. | -190 (of which 70 were women; 60 persons in 2018, of which 60 were women) forest dependents trained in technical skills for sustainable forest resource use in Ijevan, Noyemberyan, Gugarq and Yeghegnut FEs.    -Forest enterprise staff and local community members were informed and trained in sustainable use of different type of forest ecosystems meaning and use: including water regulation, soil protection, climate regulation in-direct ecosystem values; NTFP sustainable use for current and future generations; opportunities for eco-tourism development and alternatives to fuel wood consumption, | Achievement uncertain. Target may need to be revised. There may not be the necessary number of relevant individuals in the communities targeted by this project activity. |
| 11. Number of recommendations on accounting for ecosystem services valuation and community resource use | *(not set or not applicable)* | *(not set or not applicable)* | One set of recommendations | Recommendations on accounting for ecosystem services valuation and community resource use will be outlined and discussed upon the preparation of FMPs for the Ijevan and Noyemberyan FEs by end of September 2017. | -Due to ongoing forest sector reforms (started in autumn 2017) and political changes in the country (spring 2018) development of recommendations on accounting for ecosystem services valuation and community resource use and their subsequent discussion were postponed. | Achievement likely. Although the actual work that would contribute to this target has been postponed, the project has made some progress in working on valuation of ecosystem services. It should be feasible to achieve the target by the end of the project. |
| **Outcome 2: Sustainable Forest Management practices effectively demonstrating reduced pressure on high conservation forests and maintaining flow of ecosystem services** | | | | | | |
| **Description of Indicator** | **Baseline Level** | **Midterm target level** | **End of project target level** | **Level at 30 June 2017** | **Cumulative progress since project start** | **MTR Assessment** |
| 12. Hectares of high biodiversity conservation value forests designated identified and effectively managed for biodiversity and climate mitigation | *(not set or not applicable)* | *(not set or not applicable)* | At least 85,000 | - According to drafted FMPs for Ijevan and Noyemberyan forest enterprises of Tavush region, High conservation value forests (HCVF) have been identified covering 25,078 ha, of which 16,572 ha in Ijevan FE (13,912 ha located in the newly established Ijevan State Reservation and 2,660 ha identified in the remaining area of managed part of the Ijevan FE) and 8,506 ha in the Noyemberyan FE.    - Six (6) HCVF groups (I to VI) according to the Principle 9 of International Stewardship Council have been identified. The HCVF concept was tested in northern Armenia within WWF-Armenia project at the end of 2016.    - Remaining 59,922 ha of HCVF as indicated in the Prodoc will be identified during revisions of forest management plans of FEs in Lori and Tavush regions and in protected areas. | - According to the drafted FMPs for Ijevan, Noyemberyan, Gugarq and Yeghegnut forest enterprises of Tavush and Lori regions, High conservation value forests (HCVF) have been identified covering 38,000 ha, of which 16,572 ha in Ijevan FE (13,912 ha located in the newly established Ijevan State Reservation and 2,660 ha identified in the remaining area of managed part of the Ijevan FE), 8,506 ha in the Noyemberyan FE, 8,382 ha in Gugarq FE of which 3,126 ha in Margahovit state sanctuary and 4,540 ha in Yeghegnut FE.    - Remaining 47,000 ha of HCVF as indicated in the Prodoc will be identified during revisions of forest management plans of FEs in Lori and Tavush regions and in protected areas. | Achievement uncertain. Concur with self-assessment. This depends on the completion – and implementation – of the FMPs, which is uncertain. However, it is expected that the project will come close to the target, even if it doesn’t not completely reach it. |
| 13. Change in population trends for five indicator bird species | The coefficient of x value in the ten-year linear trend equation (which refers to y=ax+b) is --0.0965; -0.0455; --0.0338; -0.1156 and -0.0346 for Coal Tit, Eurasian Nuthatch, Semi-collared flycatcher, Green Warbler and Song Thrush respectively. | *(not set or not applicable)* | Population of indicator bird species stable or increase over baseline values | Monitoring data on indicator bird species not available in the reporting period    - During autumn (2016) and winter of 2016-2017, a national expert on zoology conducted field studies in the project area and identified in total 23 monitoring sites in six forestry enterprises (both in Lori and Tavush regions), Dilijan National Park, and Zikatar Environmental Educational Center (also within the project target area) to monitor population trends of 5 indicator bird species identified in the PPG stage and in the project document.    - The GPS references of the visiting monitoring sites have been mapped and observed.    - In June 2017, the national expert on zoology organized two separate field trainings for forestry staff of corresponding FEs in Lori (Vanadzor regional center) and Tavush (Zikatar Environmental Educational Center) regions on recognizing, identifying and using 5 indicator bird species as a tool for monitoring changes in forest ecosystems. | -In the baseline ten-year linear trend equation (which refers to y=ax+b), the coefficient “a” of x value was changed to -0.0359; -0.0256; -0.0209; -0.0771 and -0.0253 for Coal Tit, Eurasian Nuthatch, Semi-collared flycatcher, Green Warbler and Song Thrush respectively following results and findings of field studies covering 23 monitoring sites performed by a national expert in 2016. Positive changes in “a” coefficients for five indicator species demonstrate stabilized population trends.    - During May 2018, a national expert on zoology conducted field studies in the project area for counting newly selected indicator species at 11 monitoring sites in five forestry enterprises of Lori region and in the Dilijan National Park.    - During May-June 2018, a national expert on zoology organized two field trainings for forestry staff in Vanadzor regional center (for Gougarq, Yeghegnut, Stepanavan, Tashir, Dsegh, Lalvar and Jiliza forest enterprises) of Lori region and in the Dilijan National Park (for Ijevan, Noyemberyan and Artsvaberd forest enterprises staff) of Tavush region. Trainings were aimed at firming of already (in 2017) conducted training results on identification of newly selected indicator species and at practicing data collection on site. | Achievement likely. Concur with self-assessment. There seem to be positive directions on this indicator, although natural stochastic variation can distort short-term positive or negative changes – particularly in the case of birds, which can easily shift to alternative habitats based on short-term natural changes in ecosystem conditions. However, it is highly unlikely that any positive changes as of the MTR, or even at the time of project completion, will necessarily be due to project activities. Project activities would most likely be expected to have longer-term results, beyond the life of the project. |
| 14. Change in population trends for five indicator bird species | Average number of individuals per 1km transect for the 4 species are 10.3-16.5; 8.6-12.9; 15.3-21.7 and 18.9-27.2 for Argynnis paphia, Brintesia circe, Coenonympha arcania and Leptidea sinapis respectively. | *(not set or not applicable)* | Population changes of indicator butterfly species stable and/or do not decrease | Monitoring data on population changes of indicator butterfly species not available in the reporting period.    - In autumn 2016, a national expert on zoology conducted a comprehensive field study in the project area and identified potential sites for monitoring 4 indicator butterfly species.    - In June 2017, the expert organized two separate field trainings for forestry staff of corresponding FEs in Lori (Vanadzor regional center) and Tavush (Zikatar Environmental Educational Center) regions on recognizing, identifying and using 4 indicator butterfly species along the transect of 1km long and 5m wide to monitor the status of forest ecosystems. | Average number of individuals per 1km transect for the 4 species was changed into 13.05-14.05; 10.19-11.62; 16.92-18.22 and 21.68-23.43 for Argynnis paphia, Brintesia circe, Coenonympha arcania and Leptidea sinapis respectively.    -Registered population trend for Argynnis paphia indicates a decline of the decreasing slope while stabilization of population trends is observed for Brintesia circe, Coenonympha arcania and Leptidea sinapis.  - During May 2018, a national expert on zoology conducted field studies in the project area for counting newly selected indicator species at 11 monitoring sites in five forestry enterprises of Lori region and in the Dilijan National Park.    - During May 2018, a national expert on zoology organized two field trainings for forestry staff in Vanadzor regional center (for Gougarq, Yeghegnut, Stepanavan, Tashir, Dsegh, Lalvar and Jiliza forest enterprises) of Lori region and in the Dilijan National Park (for Ijevan, Noyemberyan and Artsvaberd forest enterprises staff ) of Tavush region. Trainings were aimed at firming of already (in 2017) conducted training results on identification of newly selected indicator species and at practicing data collection on sites..  data collection on site. | Achievement uncertain. Concur with self-assessment. Natural stochastic variation may affect short-term trends, and it is difficult to draw conclusions without longer term consistent monitoring. As with the other biodiversity impact indicators, it may not be possible to demonstrate a project contribution to the achievement of the target within the life of the project. |
| 15. Number of hectares of degraded forests regenerated through assisted natural regeneration | *(not set or not applicable)* | *(not set or not applicable)* | 4932 | 0 ha    - According to drafted FMPs for the Ijevan and Noyemberyan FEs in total 1,600ha degraded forests have been identified (800 ha in Ijevan FE and 800ha in Noyemberyan FE) where regeneration of degraded forests is foreseen through assisted natural regeneration.    - During the project’s PPG stage, 90 ha of degraded beech-oak coppice forest were identified as a potential area for project interventions in the Lalvar FE of Hayantar State non-commercial organization (SNCO) (near to the Odzun community). By end of June 2017, “Green Land” LLC was contracted to develop a forest rehabilitation project for 90 ha of degraded beech-oak coppice forests in the Lalvar FE of Hayantar SNCO. The deadwood generated from the joint work of the Project (the Contractor and Hayantar SNCO) will be delivered to the needy families in Odzun and neighboring communities. The contractor will also report on water regulation ecosystem services provided by designated 90 ha of coppice beech-oak forest over time. | 93 ha of degraded forests was regenerated in Lalvar FE of Haynatar SNCO in autumn 2017. The generated 300 m3 of firewood was distributed among the needy population in surrounding Odzun, Ardvi and other communities.    Request for proposals (RFPs) for rehabilitation of degraded forest for over 2000 ha area were prepared, agreed and tenders advertised for 2018.Most of them are in contracting stage. However, the tendering process is postponed as per the Government request due to ongoing forest sector reforms (started in autumn 2017) and political changes in the country (spring 2018). Project staff with support of UNDP senior management keeps permanent consultations with the management of MoNP and State forest committee to support with forest reforms at the extent possible and accelerate the overall implementation process. | Achievement uncertain. Concur with self-assessment. The project target is a relatively large number for this type of activity within the project lifetime, and the delays encountered may affect the project’s ability to reach the target. However, if the current plans are able to move forward within a reasonable time it appears that it would be feasible for the project to reach the target. |
| 16. Number of hectares degraded pasture and hay fields rehabilitated under sustainable management practices to reduce pressure on forest lands | *(not set or not applicable)* | *(not set or not applicable)* | 1000 | 0 ha    Number of hectares of degraded pasture and hay fields for the Ijevan and Noyemberyan FEs will be outlined, mapped along with relevant sustainable rehabilitation measures by end of September 2017. | - The area of degraded pastures and hayfields for potential intervention according to the drafted FMPs (Ijevan, Noyemberyan, Gugarq and Yeghegnut FEs) is 1,225 ha. The area of degraded pastures and hay-fields according to the acting FMPs in Artsvaberd and Tashir FEs is 149 ha.    - A pasture management expert was selected to study the identified degraded pastures and hay-fields and work-out rehabilitation measures. The plan is to rehabilitate ca 500 ha of degraded pastures and hay fields by end of 2018.    - Fifty (50) local farmers (including 15 women) took part in trainings on sustainable pasture management conducted by the forest inventory and mapping teams during preparation of revised FMPs. | Achievement likely. Concur with self-assessment. The progress the project has made toward initiating restoration of pasturelands indicates that the project should be able to reach the target by the end of the project, but the project will need to take full advantage of the remaining two field seasons during project implementation. |
| 17. Number of hectares of forest land under multiple use regimes (sustainable NTFP production and agro-forestry) with participation of forest dependent communities | *(not set or not applicable)* | *(not set or not applicable)* | 3000 | 0 ha    Number of hectares of forest land under multiple use regimes (NTFP, agro-forestry system, etc.) for the Ijevan and Noyemberyan FEs will be outlined and mapped by end of August 2017. | -2,000 ha of forest land has been identified and mapped for the purpose of multiple use regimes (NTFP, agro-forestry system, bee-keeping, etc.) for Ijevan, Noyemberyan, Gugarq and Yeghegnut forest enterprises.enterprises. | Achievement likely. Concur with self-assessment. Achievement of the target will depend on the degree of implementation of multi-use regimes with the participation of forest dependent communities; it is not enough just to make the plans. |
| 18. Percentage decrease in number of livestock using natural forests for unsustainable grazing practices in targeted forest branches | Baseline to be developed after forest inventory and mapping completed and locations identified for grazing management | *(not set or not applicable)* | 0.15 | Not available    Percentage decrease in number of livestock using natural forests for unsustainable grazing practices along with the baseline assessment in Ijevan and Noyemberyan FEs will be outlined by end of September 2017. | Not available  -Forest inventory and mapping completed activities for Ijevan, Noyemberyan, Gougarq and Yeghegnut FEs shows that almost 40% of livestock in forest adjacent communities are grazed in forest lands.    -The exact baseline will be identified within on-going forest and community degraded pasture lands study to be completed by the end of 2018.    -The results of the study will be transferred into activities and incorporated into community development plans. Monitoring system will be establish to review implementation process and record changes in the number of livestock using natural forests for grazing practices in Ijevan, Noyemberyan and Gugarq, Yeghegnut FEs. | Achievement uncertain. Indicator may need to be revised to better meet SMART criteria; Armenian translation of indicator in Armenian Prodoc needs to be revised for clarity. Target is theoretically achievable within the remaining time period, but the project will need to continue making good progress on the planned activities to reach the target. |
| 19. Percentage reduction in forest firewood collection areas in targeted forest branches Reduced areas of felling in target state forests | Baseline to be developed after forest inventory and mapping completed | *(not set or not applicable)* | 0.15 | Not available    Percentage reduction in forest firewood collection areas (reduced areas of felling) along with the baseline assessment in Ijevan and Noyemberyan FEs will be outlined and discussed upon completion of FMPs for the Ijevan and Noyemberyan FEs by end of August 2017. | Not available    - A percentage reduction in forest firewood collection areas (reduced areas of felling) was preliminary identified in revised draft FMPs for Ijevan and Noyemberyan FEs that currently await approval.  -On the base of drafted FMPs, particularly identified areas and assessed volumes for firewood collections, preliminary calculations of efficiency of the introduced energy-efficiency ovens and solar panels/water heaters in Tavush region it may be assessed that reduction in forest firewood collection areas constitute 20-25%. In order to have averaged value of reduced firewood collection areas FMPs for other FEs should be completed, as there are many regional differences. | Achievement uncertain. Depends on the completion of the forest management plans, which is uncertain. |
| 20. Number of recommendations for management of dependencies in firewood use from forests | No integrated strategy exists to deal with the complex nature of firewood dependencies | *(not set or not applicable)* | One set of recommendation developed by Ministry of Agriculture | Some recommendations for management of dependencies in firewood use from forests will be outlined and discussed upon completion of FMPs for the Ijevan and Noyemberyan FEs by end of August 2017. | - The project analyzed firewood consumption in Armenia, studied fuelwood and briquette markets with a view of developing a strategy for management of firewood in 2019. Project will start drafting a firewood strategy in the beginning of 2019 when overall analyses of feasibility for application of alternative energy sources, namely briquetting production unit, solar panels/water heaters, as well as energy-efficient ovens, fuelwood import potential will be analyzed.    Procurement of a briquetting facility and agricultural machinery and mechanisms to establish demonstrative agricultural waste-based briquette production unit in Mets Parni community of Lori region was done as a possible alternative to substitute fuel-wood consumption. The briquette production facility in Mets Parni community will be fully operational by end of August 2018.    The briquetting facility will provide additional source of income and , job opportunities for local population and reduce community’s dependence and negative pressure on forest ecosystem. | Achievement likely. The project has made some positive progress toward this result, and reaching the full target is feasible within the time remaining. |
| 21. Percentage of households reporting increased incomes from forest and non-forest resources in target communities, including percentage of beneficiaries among women | Baseline incomes would be assessed once forest inventory and mapping completed and locations for community forest use identified | *(not set or not applicable)* | 20%, of which at least 30% of beneficiaries are women | Percentage increase in household incomes not available in the reporting period.    Tavush region covers 270,400 ha and has a human population of approximately 132,000, living in 5 urban and 57 rural communities. 52.6% of population are living in urban areas. Referring to the Armenian social snapshot and poverty report (National Statistical Service of the Republic of Armenia. 2014. Social Snapshot and Poverty in Armenia), 27.7% of the population in Tavush Marz is poor, out of which 2.5% is extremely poor.    - In autumn 2016, the PIU--using existing reports and results of the conducted social-economic study of 4 communities in Tavush region (Itsaqar, Tavush, Paravaqar and Varagavan)--jointly with the UNDP Disaster risk reduction (DRR) team purchased anti-hail nets for identified vulnerable communities to provide for sustainable income of local households. In total, 9 ha of vineyards and orchards will be protected from hails.    - To scale-up the effect and efficiency of this activity, UNDP Armenia signed an agreement with “ACBA CREDIT Agricole” (Armenia bank) and DRR national platform in May 2017. The effect of this activity on incomes of local communities and decreased pressure on forests (for fuel-wood extraction) can be observed and reported in the next year PIR.    - In March-June 2017, the project in collaboration with UNDP “Climate Risk Mitigation: Passive Solar Greenhouse” project conducted a study and field research in Lori region to construct a passive solar greenhouse (PSG) in one of the project target communities. According to the developed criteria, the Ardvi community of Lori region was selected as target community for PSG. Construction of PSG in Ardvi is believed to promote climate preparedness in vulnerable communities and release pressure on neighboring forest ecosystems by providing a stable source of income to local households.    - In April-June 2017, in collaboration with UNDP - Russian Federation (RF) “Integrated support to rural development: Building resilient communities” project, a comprehensive research and planning exercise has been completed for building a fruit-berries solar drying facility in Voskepar village (Noyemberyan community), as a logical addition to the refrigerator and packaging facilities that UNDP-RF started to construct in the same village. This unit is believed to increase the effectiveness of fruit and berries processing and storing facility and become a sustainable source of income for local households.    - The institutional and regulatory framework for the alternative livelihood program and actions (Small Grants Program scheme) has been developed in the first half of 2017 and is expected to implement 3-4 grant programs in project target areas in the second half of 2017, with a view of providing stable income to local communities and releasing pressure on surrounding forests. | A study (“Impact assessment and cost benefit analyses of hail-nets”) on application of hail nets by 4 target communities in Tavush region covering 9 ha of vineyards and orchards were conducted in collaboration with UNDP Disaster risk reduction (DRR) project. The key findings of this study include:  - The farmers burning wood for heating the house report to be using from 8 to 20 m3 wood monthly during winter seasons;  - Out of 23 farmers interviewed only 3 reported having income from the forest, two of which stated that 20% of their income comes from the wood as they do wild collection of berries and collect wood for heating the house;  - In case of increased income farmers would prefer to use gas or electricity as these are more convenient and “sanitary” way of heating the house;  - Out of 23 interviewed farmers 7 stated that are interested to energy saving heaters (solar energy).  -The farmers stating that will shift to gas or electricity heating systems expect having 5-7.5 mio AMD yearly income. Some stated that even if the income will increase during winter months by 600K AMD (or 100KAMD per family member) they will consider shifting.    In addition to the hail-nets study the following practical studies were done:    -An innovative Passive Solar Greenhouse was constructed in mid-December 2017 in Ardvi community, Lori region, in collaboration with UNDP “Climate Risk Mitigation: Passive Solar Greenhouse” project.    - A solar fruit drying facility was constructed in Voskepar village (Noyemberyan community), to complement the refrigerator and packaging facilities installed by the latter. The dryer was commissioned in December 2017.    -In fall 2017 a Letter of Intent was signed with UNDP-GEF Small Grants Programme to support CSOs engagement in the implementation of alternative income generation projects in target regions through the SGP modality. In 2017 two projects were started in Tavush marz: (a) Testing and manufacturing energy-saving heating and cooking stoves in Noyemberyan sub-region and (b) Installation of photovoltaic systems and solar water heaters in four kindergartens in Ijevan community. Two more projects will start in Lori marz in 2018.    Impact measurement and monitoring system will be in place to track income dynamic of the selected households.  facility. | Achievement likely. Indicator may need to be revised to better conform with SMART criteria. It should be noted that the indicator refers to the percentage of households reporting increased incomes, not the percentage increase in income. However, defining the baseline value in terms of the number of households in target communities would be important, and then the project would need to rapidly assess baseline income levels. |
| 22. Number of carbon stock assessment completed for key forest types in NE Armenia | *(not set or not applicable)* | *(not set or not applicable)* | One set of baseline assessment completed and monitoring | -In November 2016, an international forest carbon expert visited the project target area, met with the forest inventory team, local and central stakeholders, analyzed expectations of the National greenhouse gases inventory for 2013-2014 (previewed to be published in 2017) and prepared a list of recommendations.    - The expert suggested to conduct a forest carbon national inventory on the base of stratified major forest types in the north-eastern Armenia and develop corresponding national capacities.    -In May 2017, the expert presented and discussed with local stakeholders the developed forest carbon inventory field guidelines, sampling approach and needs for laboratory analyses, major forest types stratification results on the base of RS and GIS analyses and a draft plan for the pilot forest carbon inventory in the Noyemberyan FE, planned for September 2017.    - The assessment of carbon stock for key forest types in North-Eastern Armenia and development of national coefficients will follow the completed preparatory activities, as described above. | - An international forest carbon expert developed Guidelines for measuring carbon stocks in the north eastern forests of Armenia. The content of draft guideline was discussed with key stakeholders and updated following completed pilot forest carbon inventory in the Noyemberyan FE in 2017.    -According to the developed guidelines, in November - December 2017, a pilot carbon inventory, sampling, and lab processing was implemented in the Noyemberyan Forest Enterprise jointly with “Hayantar” SNCO and MoNP. National coefficients of forest carbon for major forest types of Noyemberyan FE pilot area were estimated and results will be shortly reported to web-based Carbon benefit project (CBP).    - Stemming from this study, a forest carbon expert designed a forest carbon inventory covering 305 sample plots. Lab analyses and estimation of national forest carbon coefficients for the entire north and north-eastern Armenia will be completed by end of 2018. Results will be reported in the next year PIR. | Achievement likely. Concur with self-assessment. |
| 23. Emissions of metric tCO2 avoided from conservation set-asides over a 10-year period | *(not set or not applicable)* | *(not set or not applicable)* | 559,110 metric tCO2 | Emissions of metric tCO2 from conservation set-asides, i.e. from HCVF, will be calculated by end of September 2017 according to the final FMPs of Ijevan and Noyemberyan forest enterprises of Tavush region for the identified area of HCVF covering 25,078 ha    Resulting estimations will be reported in the next project’s PIR. | - 212,960 metric tCO2 of total avoided carbon emissions over ten-year period were estimated for two (2) forest enterprises (Ijevan and Noyemberyan) according to updated FMPs.    -The calculations of avoided carbon emissions for Gugarq and Yeghegnut forest enterprises will be completed by mid-August 2018. Results will be reported in the next year PIR. | Achievement likely. Concur with self-assessment. |
| 24. Improvement in carbon sequestration capacity in metric tCO2 of restored forests over a 10-year period | *(not set or not applicable)* | *(not set or not applicable)* | 122,880 metric tCO2 | Improvement in carbon sequestration capacity in metric tCO2 of restored forests, i.e. following natural regeneration of degraded forest will be calculated by end of September 2017 according to the final FMPs for the Ijevan and Noyemberyan forest enterprises of Tavush region for the identified degraded forest areas.    Resulting estimations will be reported in the next project’s PIR. | -Natural regeneration activities are planned for implementation in 6 FEs --Ijevan, Noyemberyan, Gugarq, Yeghegnut, Artsvaberd and Lalvar-- covering 1,640 ha of degraded forest areas.    - Resulting estimates of carbon sequestration capacity will be reported in the next PIR after completion of these activities. | Achievement likely. Concur with self-assessment. |

## Annex 10: Armenia Mountain SLM project Mainstreaming of UNDP Programme Principles

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| **Programming Principle** | **Project Principle Mainstreaming Approach** |
| **UNDAF / CPAP / CPD** | The project is aligned with the relevant UNDAF/CPD, as indicated on the cover page of the Prodoc. |
| **Poverty-Environment Nexus / Sustainable Livelihoods** | The project directly and clearly addresses the Poverty-Environment nexus, and sustainable livelihoods. The project is working directly with impoverished forest-dependent communities to improve their livelihoods while reducing their dependency on the forest. For example, the project produced and disseminated 278 energy efficient wood stoves to needy families in the Koghb and Noyemberyan communities, which will reduce fuelwood use by 25%-30%, and therefore reduce the household annual expenditure on fuelwood by a corresponding amount. |
| **Disaster Risk Reduction, Climate Change Mitigation / Adaptation** | The project partnered with another UNDP project on disaster risk reduction to pilot the use of anti-hail nets for vineyards and orchards in forest dependent communities, in order to maintain and improve sustainable livelihoods in forest dependent communities. The project is also working to establish national carbon co-efficients for forests and soil carbon, to improve reporting and planning related to carbon emissions and sequestration related to LULUCF. |
| **Crisis Prevention and Recovery** | The project is not directly addressing this issue, which is not currently highly relevant in the context of Armenia. |
| **Gender Equality / Mainstreaming** | Gender mainstreaming is discussed in detail in Section VII.C of this mid-term review report. |
| **Capacity Development** | The project is carrying out capacity development work on a number of fronts, but primarily through a series of training activities targeting forest resource managers and users. |
| **Rights** | The project strategy does include a rights-based approach, as the project respects forest user rights, and some of the project activities set out to establish co-management regimes with resource users for forests and forest-pastures. |

1. Note: The MTR has counted the number of project indicators in a slightly different manner than the way indicators are reported on in UNDP internal management systems. The MTR counts a total of 24 indicators, including the first three “objective” level indicators in the results framework, and then including all other indicators in the project strategic results framework, as initially outlined in the Prodoc, and as reported on annually in the PIR. As per internal management systems the project reports on 17 indicators under the annual workplan and as logged in the ATLAS system. These 17 indicators do not include the first three “objective” level indicators, and exclude indicators numbered 11, 14, 20, and 22 as counted by the MTR. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. See <http://www.thegef.org/gef/Evaluation%20Policy%202010>. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. See <http://www.uneval.org/normsandstandards/index.jsp?doc_cat_source_id=4>. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. See <http://www.undp.org/evaluation/handbook>. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. See <http://www.undp.org/evaluation/handbook>. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Sources: 1.A. Not applicable; 1.B. GEF Online PIMS; 2.A. As per GEF Secretariat business standards; 2.B. GEF Secretariat Review Sheet; 3.A. Not specified; 3.B. Submission date on Revised PIF document; 4.A. As per GEF Secretariat business standards; 4.B. GEF Secretariat Review Sheet; 5.A. Not specified; 5.B. GEF Secretariat Review Sheet; 6.A. Not specified; 6.B. GEF Online PIMS; 7.A. Not specified; 7.B. STAP Review Sheet; 8.A. Not specified; 8.B. GEF Online PIMS; 9.A. Within 18 months of PIF approval; 9.B. Submission date on CEO Endorsement Request; 10.A. Within 30 days of submission, as per GEF business standards; 10.B. GEF Online PIMS; 11.A. Prodoc milestone dates; 11.B. UNDP Prodoc Signature Date; 12.A. Within 3 months of Prodoc signature; 12.B. Project inception report; 13.A. Within 3 months of Prodoc signature; 13.B. Project inception report; 14.A. 24 months after Prodoc signature; 14.B. Date of mid-term review field mission and data collection; 15.A. Within 3 months of planned project operational completion; 15.B. Not applicable; 16.A. 2018 PIR: 48 months after Prodoc signature; 16.B. Not applicable; 17.A. End of fiscal year following final project operations, as per UNDP procedures; 17.B. Not applicable. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. For the focal area strategic priorities for GEF-5, see GEF Council document GEF/R.5/31, “GEF-5 Programming Document,” May 3, 2010. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. This had increased to 31.6% total financial delivery as of the completion of the 2018 PIR in August 2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. For example, see <https://www.uidaho.edu/cnr/rangeland-center/projects/space-cowboys>; and <https://academic.oup.com/jpe/article/9/6/649/2623732>. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. For example, see <https://www.uidaho.edu/cnr/rangeland-center/projects/space-cowboys>; and <https://academic.oup.com/jpe/article/9/6/649/2623732>. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. <http://web.undp.org/evaluation/documents/guidance/GEF/mid-term/Guidance_Midterm%20Review%20_EN_2014.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. For ideas on innovative and participatory Monitoring and Evaluation strategies and techniques, see [UNDP Discussion Paper: Innovations in Monitoring & Evaluating Results](http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/capacity-building/discussion-paper--innovations-in-monitoring---evaluating-results/), 05 Nov 2013. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. For more stakeholder engagement in the M&E process, see the [UNDP Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating for Development Results](http://www.undg.org/docs/11653/UNDP-PME-Handbook-(2009).pdf), Chapter 3, pg. 93. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Populate with data from the Logframe and scorecards [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Populate with data from the Project Document [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. If available [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Colour code this column only [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Use the 6 point Progress Towards Results Rating Scale: HS, S, MS, MU, U, HU [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Alternatively, MTR conclusions may be integrated into the body of the report. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Engagement of the consultants should be done in line with guidelines for hiring consultants in the POPP: <https://info.undp.org/global/popp/Pages/default.aspx> [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. <https://intranet.undp.org/unit/bom/pso/Support%20documents%20on%20IC%20Guidelines/Template%20for%20Confirmation%20of%20Interest%20and%20Submission%20of%20Financial%20Proposal.docx> [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. <http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/corporate/Careers/P11_Personal_history_form.doc> [↑](#footnote-ref-22)