# Midterm Review Report

Version: Draft 2.0

2019

# Maximizing carbon sink capacity and conserving biodiversity through sustainable conservation, restoration, and management of peat swamp ecosystems

**UNDP Project ID: 4951**

**GEF Project ID: 5330**

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| UNDP Project ID#: | 4951 |
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| Executing Agency: | UNDP |
| Implementing Partner: | ONEP |
| Other project partners: | RECOFTC |
| MTR team members: | Adrian Stokes and Walaitat Worakul |

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# Acronyms and Abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| ALRO | Agricultural Land Reform Office |
| BTOR | Back to office report |
| DEM | Digital elevation model |
| DOAE | Department of Agricultural Extension |
| DOLA | Department of Local Administration |
| EHI | Ecosystem Health Index |
| EPA | Environmental Protection Areas |
| KKL | Kuan Kreng landscape |
| LDD | Land Development Department |
| LOA | Letter of Agreement |
| MOAC | Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives |
| MONRE | Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment |
| NBSAP | National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan |
| NEB | National Environmental Board |
| NHA | Non Hunting Areas |
| NIM | National Implementation Modality |
| NSP | National Strategy for Peat Swamps |
| ONEP | Office of Natural Resources and Environmental Planning and Policy |
| PAC | Protected Area Committee |
| PAR | Participatory action research |
| PB | Project Board |
| PIR | Project Implementation Report |
| PM | Project manager |
| PSU | Prince of Songkla University |
| RFD | Royal Forest Department |
| RID | Royal Irrigation Department |
| RP | Responsible Party |
| SESP | Social and Environmental Screening Procedure |
| SPCC | Strategic Plan on Climate Change |
| TAO | Tambon Administration Organizations |
| ToR | Terms of Reference |

# 1 Executive Summary

**Table 1:** Project Information Table

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Project Title** | Maximizing carbon sink capacity and conserving biodiversity through sustainable conservation, restoration, and management of peat swamp ecosystems | | |
| UNDP Project ID (PIMS #): | 4951 | PIF Approval Date: | 24 April 2013 |
| GEF Project ID (PMIS #): | 5330 | CEO Endorsement Date: | 24 December 2014 |
| ATLAS Business Unit, Award # Proj. ID: | 00084475 | Project Document (ProDoc) Signature Date (date project began): | 21 July 2016 |
| Country(ies): | Thailand | Date project manager hired: | 17 October 2016 |
| Region: | Asia-Pacific | Inception Workshop date: | 17 July 2017 |
| Focal Area: | Multi Focal Areas | Midterm Review completion date: | June 2019 |
| GEF Focal Area Strategic Objective: | CCM-1, BD-1, SFM/REDD-1 | Planned closing date: | 20 July 2020 |
| Trust Fund [indicate GEF TF, LDCF, SCCF, NPIF]: | GEF TF | If revised, proposed op. closing date: | |
| Executing Agency/ Implementing Partner: | Office of Natural Resources and Environmental Planning and Policy (ONEP) | | |
| Other execution partners: | RECOFTC - The Center for People and Forests | | |
| **Project Financing** | *at CEO endorsement (US$)* | *at Midterm Review (US$)** | |
| [1] GEF financing: | 3,224,400 | | |
| [2] UNDP contribution: | 300,000 | | |
| [3] Government: | 13,082,711 | | |
| [4] Other partners: | - | | |
| [5] Total co-financing [2 + 3+ 4]: | 13,382,711 | | |
| PROJECT TOTAL COSTS [1 + 5] | 16,607,111 | | |

## 1.1 Project Description

The Kuan Kreng landscape (KKL) contains Thailand's second largest peat swamp forest area. These provide many ecosystem services, including providing livelihoods for local communities, providing natural hydrological regulation, storing a large quantity of carbon, and harboring significant biodiversity. These ecosystem services are at risk from unsustainable activities, especially conversion to oil palm cultivation and associated drainage and forest fires.

To address these risks, the project identified a need to shift from unsustainable land-use policies and practices to sustainable land and forest management that could be enforced and adopted at a landscape level. The project document identified three barriers to achieving this shift and established a project strategy based around addressing these barriers.

The project objective is "To conserve and restore peatlands to increase their capacities to act as carbon sinks, as habitats for globally important species, and as sources of ecosystem services for improved livelihoods".

Outcome 1 is "Expanding protection of high conservation value peat swamp forests and demonstrating their sustainable use within the broader landscape" and focuses on: (i) bringing the entire KKL under protected areas, and (ii) improving the management effectiveness of these existing and new protected zones.

Outcome 2 is "Implementing technologies to avoid peat swamp forest degradation and restore degraded peat swamp forests". It focuses on modelling and implementation of hydrotechnical measures to manage water levels in an area of 4,600 ha in the KKL, which will contribute to improved health of peat swamp ecosystems and help reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from mineralizing peat and fires. This outcome also includes activities to reforest peat swamp forests that have been damaged by fire and storms in the Kreng sub-district.

Outcome 3 is "Improving policies, standards and enforcement mechanisms for conservation and sustainable use of peat swamp forests" and focuses on creating an enabling environment for a landscape approach to management of peat swamp areas. The outcome will result in a national inventory of peat swamps and a National Strategy for Peat Swamps.

## 1.2 Project Progress Summary

After a slow start with substantial delays over the first 18 months, this project now has good momentum, excellent connections with the local community, and is laying the groundwork for some significant technical, on-ground and policy outcomes. The delays were primarily due to a delay after CEO endorsement until Cabinet approval of the project document, the departure of the first project manager and a subsequent prolonged recruitment process to engage a Responsible Party to manage the project.

After some changes to the results framework during the inception phase, Outcome 1 is focusing on establishing a landscape approach to peat swamp conservation through "top-down" planning and "bottom-up" engagement with peat swamp forest users and protected area managers. Progress towards this is considered Satisfactory. Outcome 2 is technically challenging and complex and will rely on successful engagement with provincial stakeholders to implement critical water table management. High-quality technical work is underway; however, progress is considered Unsatisfactory because of the very high risk of not meeting the targets. Outcome 3 is in the early stages and is being implemented according to the project document and best available practice. There will be difficulties achieving all targets for this outcome by the end date of July 2020, therefore this is rated as Moderately Satisfactory. Finally, although the landscape-scale model of an integrated mosaic of land-use types and protected areas shows significant promise, progress towards the Objective indicator was rated as Moderately Unsatisfactory, because there is little progress apparent in replicating learnings and knowledge beyond the KKL.

**Table 2:** MTR Ratings and Achievements Table

| **Project:** Maximizing carbon sink capacity and conserving biodiversity through sustainable conservation, restoration, and management of peat swamp ecosystems | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Measure** | **MTR Rating** | **Achievement Description** |
| **Project Strategy** | Not rated | The delivery and sustainability of major results from this project (e.g. water level management and GHG emissions reduction) will rely greatly on local stakeholders and local planning and budgeting processes. The project document considered this to some extent, but did not explicitly identify the critical nature of these local processes to project outcomes.<br><br>The MTR team identified a significant gap in the biodiversity aspects of the project design. The Objective includes the aim to "conserve and restore peatlands … as habitats for globally important habitats for globally important species" and the project document provides details on flora and fauna present. Although the general approach of protected area establishment should have some benefits, there are no specific actions to progress this.<br><br>There were some limitations to the environmental and social screening in the project document; in particular, there was little discussion of the risks to project outcomes from competing land uses and irrigation development, and there was little discussion of risks and opportunities relating to gender. The MTR team recommends that a revised assessment using the Social and Environmental Screening Procedure (SESP) be prepared. |
| **Progress Towards Results** | Objective Achievement:<br><br>**Moderately Unsatisfactory** | A substantial amount of work has been undertaken that will build towards the Objective and its associated target. The approach being taken is one of both "top-down" and "bottom-up": a landscape-scale approach that considers protected areas and sustainable use, informed by intensive community-level work on peat swamps, community forest management and local knowledge. Although there is still much to be done, the approach shows significant promise. Despite this, the single indicator for the Objective has been rated as "not on target", because attention must be paid to important aspects of its interpretation and measurement if it is to be met; for this reason, the Objective has been rated as Moderately Unsatisfactory. |
| | Outcome 1 Achievement:<br><br>**Satisfactory** | Good work is being undertaken under this outcome. Multiple sources of evidence showed that community awareness of and involvement in the project is high, and that much of the community-level work being done is effective. Although no quantitative results were available from the last project implementation report (PIR) in 2018, anecdotal reports during the field visit and information provided in quarterly reports |

| **Project:** Maximizing carbon sink capacity and conserving biodiversity through sustainable conservation, restoration, and management of peat swamp ecosystems | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Measure** | **MTR Rating** | **Achievement Description** |
| | | suggest that the incidence of violations of Non Hunting Areas (NHA) regulations declined, that the incidence of fires declined in the past year, and that training and capacity building has been effective (Indicators 4, 5 and 6). Work towards Indicator 7 with local people on community forest management has been well received in the region. The various project initiatives that the MTR team observed are likely to lead to a greater peat swamp area being managed in the KKL; however, careful attention is needed to the interpretation and measurement of Indicator 2 (Peat swamp forests in KKL under protection) if progress under this outcome is to remain satisfactory at the project's end. Also, although the METT showed an improvement from baseline (Indicator 3) at two sites, it is not clear from the Tracking Tool whether project activities led to this improvement and the METT had not been applied to all four sites. Finally, the prompt development of an Ecosystem Health Index (Indicator 8) is required. |
| | Outcome 2 Achievement:<br><br>**Unsatisfactory** | The project faces significant challenges under this outcome, which includes the project's very ambitious targets for reductions in GHG emissions. Although a lot of high-quality work is underway, especially in the form of academic research and modelling to inform implementation, achievement of Targets 9, 10 and 11 are dependent on implementation of water table management across 4,600 ha in the KKL. The hydrological modelling to inform this is nearing completion, however little or no progress has been made on the mechanism for delivering the water level changes and, therefore, the GHG results. It is essential that the hydrological modelling leads to tangible management actions. Further, the target for carbon sequestration through reforestation is extremely unlikely to be met and the MTR team recommends that the target be revised downward and that an additional indicator and target be adopted for this component. |
| | Outcome 3 Achievement:<br><br>**Moderately Satisfactory** | Actions under this outcome are in the early stages and are being undertaken according to the project document and best available practice. There are likely to be challenges with delivering all outputs and meeting all targets by the end date of July 2020; hence, the MTR team considers progress to be Moderately Satisfactory. |

| **Project:** Maximizing carbon sink capacity and conserving biodiversity through sustainable conservation, restoration, and management of peat swamp ecosystems | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Measure** | **MTR Rating** | **Achievement Description** |
| **Project Implementation & Adaptive Management** | **Moderately Satisfactory** | The project experienced a long delay during its initial 18 months. The project has gathered significant momentum since RECOFTC commenced in April 2018 and most activities are now being implemented according to the approved work plans towards the planned outcomes. The decision to change the project manager from an Individual Contractor to an institution-based Responsible Party reflected good adaptive management. Improvements could be made in record keeping of co-financing information, communication (internal and external), and in monitoring and evaluation systems. |
| **Sustainability** | **Moderately Likely** | Financial and institutional risks to sustainability are being managed appropriately, because during the remainder of the project RECOFTC will work to place provincial stakeholders in the driver's seat for activities under Outcomes 1 and 2. There are significant socio-economic risks (especially the long-term threat of encroachment by oil palm cultivation, despite a reported short-term reduction in this threat) and environmental risks (especially adverse impacts on peat swamp condition from climate change, drainage and land-use changes) that should be better addressed. |

## 1.3 Summary of Conclusions and Recommendations

The project has strengths in the high levels of activity and involvement in the provinces and the significant amount of momentum that RECOFTC has generated in the short time since they became the Responsible Party.

There are high levels of commitment and activity by all project parties in carrying out their components of the project. The MTR team was consistently impressed with the level of knowledge of the project, both in the region and Bangkok.

The project is collecting large amounts of high-quality local and academic knowledge on peat swamps and their management. There are exciting opportunities to blend these areas of knowledge and create a peat swamp management regime that is built on diverse knowledge bases and a culture of sharing, learning and adapting.

The MTR team observed that integration between parties could be improved in some areas to ensure consistency and more comprehensive coverage and shared ownership of the work. A lack of role clarity was also detected in some areas of this complex project.

A number of specific challenges and weaknesses were detected during the review, and these are described below with associated recommendations.

**Table 3:** Recommendations Table

| No. | Recommendation | Responsibility |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | **Ensure that UNDP, ONEP and RECOFTC have a shared understanding of the approaches being used to achieve the project's outcomes and targets**<br><br>There was limited understanding within UNDP and ONEP of how the numerous activities that RECOFTC had underway were combining to deliver the project's high-level outcomes. Much of the quarterly reporting focuses on activities rather than outcomes, which is partly why this understanding is low. After a verbal briefing of the strategic context for RECOFTC's activities, the MTR team was impressed with the "big picture" that was described. It is important that this strategic view is communicated to other project parties and documented. The MTR team recommends that a workshop between the three parties is held with the specific purpose of achieving this shared understanding; graphic tools, such as simple flowcharts or "mind maps" that show the connections between the activities and outcomes, should be used. The quarterly reporting should be changed to place more emphasis on progress towards outcomes and less emphasis on activities. | RECOFTC, ONEP, UNDP |
| 2 | **Establish a delivery mechanism for implementation of the recommendations from the hydrological modelling, with engagement of relevant line agencies as a matter of very high priority**<br><br>The activities in Output 2.1 to manage water levels to re-wet peat across 4,600 ha are central to achievement of Outcome 2, including the reduction of forest fires and the achievement of the ambitious GHG targets. Progress on implementing these changes is pending completion of hydrological modelling, and is expected to rely heavily on provincial agencies picking up the recommendations from this modelling. For this reason, the MTR team considered there to be a critical risk to the project if an effective mechanism is not developed soon for ensuring implementation of these water level changes. This should include consideration of how to convey the findings to key stakeholders. | RECOFTC |
| 3 | **Establish the greenhouse gas monitoring program as a matter of very high priority and ensure that the baseline and end-of-project measurements are compatible**<br><br>The indirect monitoring system for GHG emissions requires a two-year calibration period and relies on the prior establishment of a water level monitoring program and on the establishment of specialized equipment to measure carbon flux. These two prerequisites have not yet been completed, although the MTR team understands that they are well advanced. It will be important to monitor the status of these prerequisites to ensure that the monitoring is established as soon as technically feasible and to maximize the likelihood that GHG monitoring will be in place during the life of the project.<br><br>Also, the baseline for GHG emissions was calculated using a different methodology from the indirect methodology being established; it is important that baseline and target measurements can be legitimately compared. This may require calculating a new baseline and/or end-of-project target. | RECOFTC |

| No. | Recommendation | Responsibility |
|---|---|---|
| 4 | **Revise the end-of-project target for carbon sequestration through reforestation with native species**<br><br>Reforestation in these systems is very time consuming and subject to significant delays from approval processes, and the target of 300 ha reforestation is very unlikely to be achieved. Further, during the field visits the MTR team heard numerous times that the planting density in these peat swamps should be lower than that originally proposed during project preparation (1,250 individuals/hectare). For these reasons, the target to sequester 129,000 t $CO_2$ is not realistic. A lower end-of-project target should be set, following the methodology in Annex 5 of the project document and using revised estimates for the total area to be planted, the density of trees per hectare and the species to be planted. | UNDP CO through PB and RTA |
| 5 | **Adopt a new indicator for the reforestation component to require the "development of guidelines for objective-based planning and implementation of peat swamp restoration and reforestation"**<br><br>The project's restoration and reforestation activities have diverse objectives, of which carbon sequestration is only one. Management objectives that were mentioned by community members during the field visits included improving fauna habitat (especially for fish), re-establishing with native tree species, and establishing economic crops; sequestration of carbon was not mentioned. The MTR team understands that RECOFTC is establishing demonstration plots with different models of community-based swamp restoration. These provide the opportunity to develop a simple restoration planning approach that (i) analyzes the current situation in a swamp, (ii) determines the objectives of the local people, and (iii) provides some restoration approaches that may be used to meet those objectives. To capture these learnings, and in recognition that the project's carbon sequestration targets from reforestation are very unlikely to be met, the MTR team recommends that a new indicator and target be established to require "the development of guidelines for objective-based planning and implementation of restoration and reforestation". | UNDP CO through PB and RTA |
| 6 | **Ensure that the Working Group on Strategic Planning for the Kuan Kreng Landscape that is being established has the necessary knowledge, capacity and support to build peat swamp management and conservation priorities into their regular planning and budgeting**<br><br>Provincial agencies are critical to both the successful implementation of many activities and the sustainability of outcomes beyond the life of the GEF project. Although the MTR team understands that the project is planning some relevant capacity building activities for provincial agencies, it was not apparent that this Working Group had been specifically identified as the key target for such activities.<br><br>Capacity building could include technical training and the engagement of relevant line agencies within the Working Group in the "learning by doing" process. Ideally, these agencies should be driving the implementation of relevant project activities during the remainder of the project, with technical support from RECOFTC and initial budget support from the project. | RECOFTC |

| No. | Recommendation | Responsibility |
|---|---|---|
| | As these line agencies gain direct experience from the project, they should be supported to build relevant activities into their regular workplans and budget plans. It is also important to ensure that provincial development strategies support project-initiated activities in the long term. | |
| 7 | **Develop mechanisms for local people to protect the carbon sink that is contained in peat swamps**<br><br>There is low awareness among local people of the aspects of the project that consider GHG abatement, the carbon storage role of peat, and the potential value of the carbon sink. Several interviewees noted that this must change if local people are to become enthusiastic participants in the carbon sink aspects of the project; others suggested that it was more important to focus on establishing sustainable swamp management practices that are tied with livelihood benefits and that also achieve carbon storage, rather than on educating locals in the complex areas of GHG abatement and carbon sinks.<br><br>A combined approach is recommended. The project should continue to research and promote management practices that have a primary focus on providing local people with productive swamps and livelihood benefits beyond the life of the project, and that also result in GHG abatement. Meanwhile, awareness raising about the significance of the carbon that is stored in the peat swamps, and possibly in the monetary value of that carbon sink, would strengthen local people's appreciation of the diverse natural assets and ecosystem services that their swamps provide. | RECOFTC |
| 8 | **Include national and landscape-level perspectives in both the national peat swamp inventory and the National Strategy for Peat Swamps**<br><br>The MTR team considers that, to meet the objectives outlined in the project document, the inventory criteria should not be restricted to those in the Ramsar tropical peat swamp guide, but should also include ecological information and information on the "landscape context" (e.g. adjacent land use and connectivity with other peat swamp areas).<br><br>At the time of the MTR, there is confusion over whether RECOFTC or the Prince of Songkla University (PSU) has responsibility for developing the criteria for the inventory, and this should be clarified as soon as possible to enable the inventory to proceed. The MTR team considers that the national criteria should be established by the PSU and the "landscape context" criteria should be developed by RECOFTC. | PSU, RECOFTC |
| 9 | **Blend local knowledge and academic knowledge where possible and appropriate, and provide local people with the skills to continuously learn and adapt their management approaches**<br><br>This project is collecting large amounts of high-quality local and academic knowledge on peat swamps and their management. The MTR team heard of examples in which the two knowledge areas appeared to conflict (e.g. in the timing of burning for krajood and the management of water levels to disadvantage *Melaleuca cajuputi*). This provides an exceptional opportunity to blend these areas of knowledge into a dynamic management model based on sharing, learning and adapting. | RECOFTC |

| No. | Recommendation | Responsibility |
|---|---|---|
| | The project has been engaging experts and local people to collect knowledge, discuss findings and relate them to scientific knowledge where relevant. Participatory action research is exploring issues that are important for locals (e.g. ecotourism and sustainable krajood-based livelihoods).<br><br>Regular meetings between the project and local stakeholders could continually tune understanding of what are sustainable practices and what are not. Media or knowledge products could be developed based on blended local wisdom and scientific evidence, and used to assist locals "learn by doing" and try new approaches to peat swamp management.<br><br>Knowledge on peat swamp management is also being collected in projects with similar objectives in nearby countries (especially Indonesia and Malaysia). Reciprocal knowledge sharing with these projects is recommended, whereby a budget allocation from this project would facilitate visits to Thailand from people in other countries and/or visits to other countries by people from this project. | |
| 10 | **Prepare a communication strategy that covers all aspects of the project, that analyzes communication objectives and stakeholders, and that clearly identifies roles, responsibilities and approval protocols**<br><br>There are many different communication needs to this project, each with different objectives and suitable communication techniques. An external communication agency, Wisdom Vast, has been contracted to develop a communication strategy. However, the MTR team found that there was a lack of clarity regarding communication needs, roles and responsibilities among the various partners. A joint meeting between UNDP, ONEP, RECOFTC and Wisdom Vast is needed as the prerequisite for the development of an objective-based communication strategy. | Wisdom Vast, RECOFTC, ONEP and UNDP |
| 11 | **Ensure that changes to the results framework are made to reflect changes in implementation approach and are endorsed according to required protocols, and that the current version is readily available to all implementing parties**<br><br>Changes to and approvals of the results framework were not consistently and clearly documented, resulting in some lack of clarity around the wording of current indicators, targets and outputs. The current "correct" version of the results framework is that endorsed ahead of the 2018 PIR by the Project Board (PB) and RTA and formalized in the 2018 PIR; the PB re-confirmed these changes at its January 2019 meeting. The MTR team found that not all parties knew the correct version or were able to confidently access a copy of this results framework. Also, some of the wording in the PB minutes caused some confusion relating to changes to the results framework. Finally, various changes were made during 2018 to the names of outputs under Outcome 1 that RECOFTC was delivering and reporting against; it was not clear to the MTR team when or by whom these changes were approved and what assessment was made of whether the changed outputs were still appropriate to deliver the outcome. | UNDP, ONEP, RECOFTC |

| No. | Recommendation | Responsibility |
|---|---|---|
| 12 | **Request a 12-month extension to the project, to allow time for key deliverables in Outcome 2 to be achieved**<br><br>The extensive delays in commencement, particularly for recruitment of the Responsible Party, mean that achieving the very ambitious and technically demanding results under Outcome 2 by the end date of July 2020 will be extremely challenging. In particular, the GHG monitoring system proposed in the project document requires a two-year calibration period and relies on the prior establishment of a water level monitoring program; this two-year calibration has not yet commenced. In many ways, Outcome 2 represents the most substantial added value for Thailand from this GEF funding; if these results are not achieved then there will be significant missed opportunities for Thailand from the project. | RECOFTC, ONEP, UNDP |
| 13 | **Prepare a revised Social and Environmental Screening Procedure (SESP) assessment for the project, which includes mitigation measures for identified risks**<br><br>The MTR team considers that some important social and environmental risks could have been addressed in more detail in the environmental and social screening assessment in the project document, and that some of these may have become more significant since commencement. In particular, there are significant risks from changing land use and drainage programs for irrigation that may adversely affect peat swamp condition, yet these were not identified in the project document and the MTR team is not aware of specific mechanisms in place to address these risks. | RECOFTC, UNDP CO, ONEP |
| 14 | **Undertake a gender analysis to identify key activities for gender mainstreaming**<br><br>The MTR team heard of various opportunities for positive gender-related outcomes from the project. However, there was not a systematic approach to pursuing these and a gender analysis was not undertaken during this project's preparation phase. A gender analysis would enable a more systematic approach to gender mainstreaming during the remainder of the project, to maximize the realization of opportunities. | RECOFTC, UNDP CO, ONEP |
| 15 | **Engage a person with expertise in monitoring and evaluation to assist with project monitoring to ensure high-quality and timely implementation**<br><br>This project is technically complex and has some ambitious interrelated quantitative targets. Because of this, the MTR team considers that the allocation to monitoring and evaluation in the original project budget was too low. Allocation of additional resources to the engagement of an M&E specialist would assist the project with quality assurance functions. The M&E specialist would work closely with UNDP, ONEP, RECOFTC and project consultants to ensure consistency and quality of the various M&E activities and to provide timely support for other coordination of project implementation as the need arises. | RECOFTC, UNDP CO, ONEP |

# 2 Introduction

## 2.1 Purpose and Objectives of the Review

In accordance with the ToR for this midterm review (MTR), the objective of the review is to 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 to set the project on track to achieve its intended results.

The MTR also reviews the project's strategy, implementation and adaptive management, and risks to its sustainability.

## 2.2 Scope and Methodology

The scope of the MTR was to review all relevant sources of information since project inception to collect evidence-based information that is credible, reliable and useful, to identify challenges, and to outline corrective actions to ensure that the project is on track to achieve maximum results by its completion.

The MTR was undertaken between March and June 2019. A two-person MTR team implemented the review, comprising a national consultant and an international consultant / team leader.

The MTR followed the document *Guidance for Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects* ("UNDP-GEF MTR Guidance" hereafter).

The review was based on a detailed review of data and information and extensive stakeholder consultation, to develop evidence-based conclusions and provide recommendations for critical intervention that are specific, measurable, achievable, and relevant.

The following activities were included in the MTR:

- A mission to Thailand, including Bangkok and project sites, between 22 and 29 April 2019; this included face-to-face consultations with a wide range of stakeholders, using "semi-structured interviews" in a conversational format. The itinerary and interviewees for the mission are provided in Annex 1.
- A desktop review of all relevant documents covering project design, implementation progress, and monitoring and review; the list of documents and information is provided in Annex 2.
- Constructing an evaluation matrix that identifies the evaluation questions, the indicators used to consider the questions, the sources of information used and the assessment methodology for each; this is shown in Annex 3.
- Assessment of the extent to which gender considerations were mainstreamed into the project's design, monitoring, implementation and impact.
- Consolidating information from various sources on progress against project outputs; this is summarized in Annex 4.
- Assessment of progress towards the end-of-project targets.
- Assignment of an achievement rating for the project's objective and three outcomes.
- Assignment of a rating for project implementation and adaptive management.
- Assignment of a rating for the likelihood of continued benefits from the project after it ends (sustainability).
- Assessment of provided GEF Tracking Tools.

- Presentation of preliminary findings by the MTR team in two end-of-mission sessions, the first to ONEP and RECOFTC staff and the second to UNDP staff.

## 2.3 Structure of the MTR Report

This report structure follows the content guidelines provided in the UNDP-GEF MTR Guidance document (Annex B of the MTR ToR Standard Template).

Background information is first provided on the MTR process (this chapter) and the project (Chapter 3). Chapter 4 then presents detailed findings in the areas of project strategy, progress towards results, project implementation and adaptive management, and sustainability. Finally, Chapter 5 provides specific conclusions and recommendations that provide corrective actions for the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the project.

# 3 Project Description

## 3.1 Development Context

The KKL contains Thailand's second largest peat swamp forest area. These provide many ecosystem services, including providing livelihoods for local communities and providing natural hydrological regulation. These ecosystem services are at risk from unsustainable activities, especially conversion to oil palm cultivation and associated drainage and forest fires. This project addresses these risks through a suite of activities, ranging from working closely with forest communities on sustainable forest management, through to technical hydrological interventions and development of a national strategy for peat swamps.

The project was designed to be consistent with the strategies and priorities of the Implementing Partner, ONEP. In particular, the hydrotechnical rewetting of peat swamps was in line with Strategies 1 and 2 of Thailand's *Strategic Plan on Climate Change (SPCC 2008-2012)* and the project was written to tackle some of the key barriers mentioned in the SPCC. The project was also written to be consistent with Thailand's 5th *National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP 2014–2017)*, which was in the process of endorsement by Cabinet; in particular, the project's work on enhancing community participation in conservation and sustainable use of peat swamps was in line with the NBSAP priority to improve participatory management of peatlands as a means of achieving Aichi Targets.

The project was designed to deliver global benefits under three GEF focal areas: climate change, biodiversity, and sustainable forest management. Under the climate change focal area, the project will generate benefits by avoiding degradation of and restoring peat swamp forests, which will result in avoidance of GHG emissions and carbon sequestration. The project generates benefits under the biodiversity focal area by improving the protected area status of peat swamps in the KKL and improving management effectiveness; it adopts a landscape approach to management of protected areas and outlying areas, strengthening the protection of core areas while putting in place clearer rules for sustainable use and support for livelihoods. Under the sustainable forest management focal area, the project proposes a model for the sustainable management of peat swamp forests as "community forests" and the use of incentives for communities to use and value wet, undrained peat swamp forest ecosystems in good condition.

## 3.2 Problems that the Project Sought to Address

The project identified three major threats to the KKL and its associated peat swamp carbon sink and biodiversity: (i) encroachment of peat swamps by oil palm plantations; (ii) fires; and (ii) unsustainable use of peat swamps by local communities. Underpinning the impacts of these threats is the critical role of hydrology in the ecology and sustainable use of peat swamps: wet peat swamps are in better ecological condition, provide their ecosystem services more effectively, and have lower GHG emissions than swamps that have dried out.

The project identified a need to shift from unsustainable land-use policies and practices to sustainable land and forest management that could be enforced and adopted at a landscape level. The project document identified three main barriers to this shift, as outlined below.

**Barrier 1: Inadequate protection of primary and secondary natural peat swamps**

Although peat swamps are well represented in Thailand's protected area system, many of these protected areas are not receiving effective protection due to poor patrolling and low conservation

capacities of the administrators of protected areas and forests. Importantly, the management of these protected areas is typically not integrated with land-use management in the surrounding landscape. Further, engagement of communities in co-management of peatlands has not been systematic. The project identified a need to find a balance between protection of healthy peat swamps, rehabilitation of degraded areas, improvements in the water regime, and better land-use management to enhance sustainable utilization. The situation in the KKL mirrors this national situation, therefore the KKL was chosen as a pilot for developing such an integrated, landscape-scale model that balances protection and sustainable use.

**Barrier 2: Technologies to avoid peatland degradation are not available and there are major gaps in knowledge of carbon value of peatlands**

The project document noted that international research on the coexistence of peatlands with economic use areas has demonstrated the importance of hydrotechnical measures to separate areas where drainage occurs from the surrounding landscape, thus eliminating or minimizing the cycle of draining effects and resulting fires. A lack of knowledge of hydrological processes in the KKL was identified, which means that the management of water levels at project sites is based on limited understanding of the underlying processes. Many small-scale swamp restoration projects had been ad hoc, without underpinning hydrological understanding.

Further, a significant global knowledge gap on carbon fluxes from tropical peatlands was identified, which hinders effective discussions on the importance of peatlands in climate change mitigation.

**Barrier 3: Inadequate and unclear land-use standards and policies specifically related to peat swamps**

Thailand has a National Wetlands Action Plan, but this does not include specific standards and enforcement mechanisms for sustainable use of peat swamps. The project document identified that this lack of clear standards on sustainable peat swamp use has led to a number of problems, including the expansion of oil palm plantations, inconsistencies in policies on community forest management, and misunderstandings between local communities and state officials regarding the use of peat swamps by communities that were already residing within areas that are now declared as conservation zones. The project document also noted that there were many overlapping and conflicting rules, regulations and policies for the different land and forest classifications in the KKL.

## 3.3 Project Description and Strategy

The project strategy is to address the three barriers described above through an integrated suite of activities grouped under three outcomes.

The project Objective is “to conserve and restore peatlands to increase their capacities to act as carbon sinks, as habitats for globally important species, and as sources of ecosystem services for improved livelihoods”. The three outcomes are described below.

**Outcome 1: Expanding protection of high conservation value peat swamp forests and demonstrating their sustainable use within the broader landscape**

In the project document, this outcome focuses on: (i) bringing the entire KKL under protected areas, and (ii) improving the management effectiveness of these existing and new protected zones. The project develops an integrated landscape approach for peat swamp management, involving some areas being under strict protection and others having a systematic management plan for sustainable use. This outcome also addresses capacity building among responsible authorities for monitoring and

managing land use, water levels, and fires in the KKL. It will also result in a land-use plan for the Kreng sub-district to demonstrate how to align sub-district plans with the landscape-scale protection approach. Outcome 1 comprises five outputs.

**Outcome 2: Implementing technologies to avoid peat swamp forest degradation and restore degraded peat swamp forests**

This outcome will see the modelling and implementation of hydrotechnical measures to manage water levels in an area of 4,600 ha in the KKL. This rewetting will contribute to improved health of peat swamp ecosystems and will help reduce GHG emissions from mineralizing peat and fires. The outcome will also contribute to filling the identified knowledge gaps on carbon fluxes from tropical peatlands and from KKL peat swamp forests specifically. Finally, activities are included in this outcome to reforest peat swamp forests that have been damaged by fire and storms in the Kreng sub-district. Outcome 2 comprises three outputs.

**Outcome 3: Improving policies, standards and enforcement mechanisms for conservation and sustainable use of peat swamp forests**

This outcome creates an enabling environment for a landscape approach to management of peat swamp areas, in which peat swamps are not managed in isolation; management responses are planned and delivered at the landscape level; and land use considers biodiversity conservation, soil conservation, and minimization of carbon emissions in addition to short-term economic factors. The outcome will result in a national inventory of peat swamps and a National Strategy for Peat Swamps. Outcome 3 comprises four outputs.

The project's activities are located in the KKL, in three provinces: Nakhon Si Thammarat, Phatthalung and Songkhla. The Thale Noi and Bor Lor NHAs are important project sites. The project document also proposed that community forestry management activities would focus on three community forests in the KKL (in the Baan Tul, Chau-uad and Kreng sub-districts) and one in Kanthulee sub-district, Surat Thani province.

## 3.4 Project Implementation Arrangements

The project is delivered through UNDP's National Implementation Modality (NIM), with ONEP as the Implementing Partner and UNDP as the GEF Implementing Agency. RECOFTC (The Center for People and Forests) has been engaged as the Responsible Party (RP).

A PB has been established for the project. The PB approves the project's workplan, budget plan, progress reports and any proposed amendments to the project's results framework, and gives necessary support to project implementation as required.

The Secretary General of ONEP is chair of the PB and the Director of Biodiversity Management Division in ONEP is Project Director. A co-financed project coordinator sits within ONEP.

The UNDP Country Office (UNDP CO) is responsible for: (i) providing financial and audit services to the project; (ii) recruitment of project staff and contracting of consultants and service providers; (iii) overseeing financial expenditures against project budgets approved by the PB; (iv) appointment of independent financial auditors and evaluators; and (iv) ensuring that all activities including procurement and financial services are carried out in strict compliance with UNDP/GEF procedures. A UNDP staff member is assigned with the responsibility for day-to-day oversight and control over project deliveries.

## 3.5 Project Timing and Milestones

A summary of the key project milestones and their dates is provided in Table 4.

**Table 4:** Project Milestone Dates

| Milestone | Date |
|---|---|
| PIF Approval | 24 April 2013 |
| CEO Endorsement | 24 December 2014 |
| GEF Agency Approval (UNDP ProDoc signature, after Cabinet endorsement) | 21 July 2016 |
| Inception Workshop | 17 July 2017 |
| Project Manager hired | 17 October 2016 |
| Midterm Evaluation | April–July 2019 |
| Terminal Evaluation due | 21 April 2020 |

## 3.6 Main Stakeholders

The project document has a comprehensive stakeholder assessment. In summary, they are grouped into: (i) stakeholders with an implementation role and (ii) stakeholders with a supporting role.

### Stakeholders with an implementation role

***National level***

Most of the identified stakeholders at the national level are within the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE). These include ONEP, the project's Implementing Partner; the Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation (DNP); the Royal Forest Department (RFD); the Royal Irrigation Department (RID); and the Land Development Department (LDD). Another key agency is the Agricultural Land Reform Office (ALRO), which is under the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives (MOAC). Representatives of these agencies sit on the PB. Regional and/or provincial offices of these departments are engaged with the community in project activities in pilot sites.

***Provincial/project site level***

Key stakeholders at the project site level include the Pak Panang River Basin Royal Development Project, which works in KKL on irrigation schemes and community livelihood development; Tambon Administration Organizations (TAOs) in Kreng, Ban Tul and Cha-uad sub-districts, who are local focal points for peat swamp management; and local communities who use resources in the peat swamps (e.g. wild beekeepers, krajood collectors, water buffalo herders, and fisher folk). These community groups are engaged in natural resources management decisions. Civil society organizations (CSOs) and local academic institutes/universities will be partners in research-related activities.

### Stakeholders with a supporting role

The Department of Agricultural Extension (DOAE) under MOAC has a role in the development of the National Strategy for Peat Swamps and in ensuring that agricultural land use in the pilot site is in line with the land zoning and management plan to be developed under Outcome 1. The Department of Local Administration (DOLA) under the Ministry of Interior is involved with interventions that require the participation of local authorities at provincial, district and sub-district levels.

# 4 Findings

## 4.1 Project Strategy

### 4.1.1 Project design

This section presents an analysis of the design of the project as outlined in the project document.

The project aligns well with country priorities at the time of project preparation, particularly the NBSAP and those for climate change and wetlands. The project document refers to a "forthcoming" national Action Plan for Peatland Management; however, the MTR team could not determine whether this document exists after investigations and questioning during interviews. The project document does not directly link with Thailand's development priorities, although the above-mentioned strategies and plans include components around sustainable development, sustainable use and quality of living, which this project addresses.

The delivery and sustainability of major results from this project (e.g. water level management and GHG emissions reduction) will rely greatly on local stakeholders and provincial planning and budgeting processes. Although this is covered to some extent in the project document (e.g. in Outputs 1.3 and 3.1), the critical nature of it could have been addressed more explicitly.

Regarding whether externalities were sufficiently considered, the project document explicitly states that potential climate change impacts will be considered when developing recommendations for peat swamp management in the National Strategy for Peat Swamps.

There were some limitations to the environmental and social screening in the project document: there was little discussion of the risks (and their mitigation) to project outcomes from competing land uses and irrigation development, including those supported by the Department of Irrigation; there was little discussion of risks and opportunities relating to gender; and it was stated that there was no risk of introducing invasive alien species, despite proposing reforestation with tree species based on carbon sequestration and economic value criteria. The MTR team recommends that a revised SESP be prepared.

The project identifies three barriers to sustainable peat swamp use and the conservation and enhancement of carbon stocks, and sets an outcome for each of these barriers.

Outcome 1 is focused on expanding protection of peat swamps and on establishing an integrated landscape approach to their management. The primary protected area mechanism proposed in the project document was the establishment of two large Environmental Protection Areas (EPAs), which was appropriate at the time of project preparation based on the understanding of Thai government priorities and approaches. During the inception period, it was established that the establishment of new EPAs was no longer a government policy priority, due partly to the extensive consultation involved and the challenges of achieving this during the project period. Changes to the results framework for this outcome were made during the inception phase in response to this, with the delivery of new EPAs removed and compensatory changes made to associated indicators and targets, as described elsewhere in this report.

Outcome 2 is focused on technologies to avoid peat swamp forest degradation and restore degraded peat swamp forests. It contains some very substantial targets for reduction in GHG emissions. Managing water levels ("hydrotechnical measures") in the peat swamps is the key to achieving these targets and associated improvements in peat swamp condition and reductions in forest fires. Outputs

2.1 and 2.2 are technically sound, although there are likely to be significant practical challenges with delivering the hydrotechnical measures across 4,600 ha and achieving the targets for water level and GHG emissions (see SMART analysis of targets below).

There is ambiguity in the project document in the terminology for Output 2.2 ("Native tree reforestation of areas damaged by storms and fires in Kreng sub-district"). The description under the output refers to "reforestation" and "regeneration", whereas the intent from the wording of Outcome 2 appears to be "restoring degraded peat swamp forests". "Restoration" refers to assisting the recovery of a system that has been degraded or damaged, ideally undertaken with clearly defined objectives for the system that is being restored. "Reforestation" refers generally to the planting of trees, usually in an area that has been fully or partially cleared, and can be undertaken for a wide range of purposes. The indicator in the results framework for these activities is GHG sequestered through trees planted, which only measures one aspect of restoration and reforestation activities (see SMART analysis of targets below).

Outcome 3 is focused on improving policies, standards and enforcement mechanisms for conservation and sustainable use of peat swamp forests, including the development of a national inventory and a National Strategy for Peat Swamps (NSP). This approach is generally well considered and appropriate, although there is some ambiguity over the intended nature of the criteria for the inventory (Outputs 3.2 and 3.3).

The MTR team identified a significant gap in the biodiversity aspects of the project design. The Objective includes the aim to "conserve and restore peatlands … as habitats for globally important species" and pages 10–12 of the project document provide details on flora and fauna present, including threatened species. Further, there is an indicator to prepare an Ecosystem Health Index that considers species. However, there are no specific actions to progress this. There appears to be an unstated assumption that there will be biodiversity benefits from the peat swamp restoration activities; however, there is no process to identify biodiversity values, species' habitat requirements and threats, and to determine appropriate objectives-based management actions. One of the main biodiversity mechanisms in the project document was protected area establishment to protect the habitats of threatened species. However, with the project change from new EPA establishment, this mechanism is potentially weakened unless the landscape approaches developed under Outcome 1 and in the NSP have a strong protected area and biodiversity focus.

Stakeholder participation appears to have been good during project development: the project document is particularly well-grounded by activities at the provincial, sub-district and local levels. It is not clear whether the substantive land and water use policy matters received support from stakeholders during project development (e.g. large-scale oil palm cultivation being excluded from permissible activities in the sub-district land-use plan, and manipulation of water levels to benefit peat swamps). It is also not clear from the project document or interviews during the mission whether local stakeholders were consulted on the proposed new EPAs during project preparation

### 4.1.2 Results framework

This section presents a critical analysis of the project's results framework, assessing how SMART the indicators and end-of-project targets are. There are no midterm targets to assess.

Annex 7 provides a list of suggestions regarding the results framework, including suggested changes to indicators and targets.

SMART analysis: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Timebound.

✔ Meets criterion ✘ Does not meet criterion ? Some ambiguity or clarification needed

**Objective**

| Description of Indicator | End-of-project target level | SMART analysis | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | S | M | A | R | T |
| 1. Extent of peat swamp area under effective management (IUCN Category IV, V) in KKL, under the framework of a National Strategy for Peat Swamps (NSP) | 154,363 ha | ? | ✔ | ? | ✔ | ✔ |

The following observations are made:

- The target wording was modified after the 2018 PIR to reflect the changed approach with EPAs, but the total target area (154,363 ha) was retained.
- The target could be more specific: careful consideration is needed to the interpretation of "under effective management (IUCN Category IV, V)" to ensure shared understanding.
- This target was achievable at the time of project document (i.e. two EPAs), now careful consideration is needed to determine an achievable interpretation.

**Outcome 1**

| Description of Indicator | End-of-project target level | SMART analysis | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | S | M | A | R | T |
| 2. Peat swamp forests in KKL under protection | Additional 16,347 ha | ✘ | ? | ? | ✔ | ✔ |
| 3. Enhanced management effectiveness at existing PAs (NHAs) and Songkhla and Kuan Kreng peat swamp landscapes as measured by METT | Thale Noi NHA: 75<br>Bor Lor NHA: 70<br>Kuan Kreng: 20<br>Songkhla: 30 | ✔ | ✔ | ✔ | ✔ | ✔ |
| 4. Incidence of violations of NHA regulations | Bor Lor: 0 Thale Noi: No tree cutting, Less than 6 invasions | ✔ | ✔ | ✔ | ✔ | ✔ |
| 5. Incidence of fires | Wildfires burning on average 408 ha per year KKL | ✔ | ✔ | ✔ | ✔ | ✔ |
| 6. Number of units trained for patrolling, managing water levels, fire protection, and enforcement of regulations | 6 units in Thale Noi NHA<br>2 in Bor Lor NHA<br>3 in Kreng, Cha-uad and Baan Tul sub-districts | ✔ | ✔ | ✔ | ✔ | ✔ |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 7. Area of peat swamp forests in Kuan Kreng landscape under participatory community forestry management plans or co-management | 435 ha under improved peat swamp forest participatory management plans<br>Additional 1,500 ha established under co-management | ? | ✔ | ✔ | ✔ | ✔ |
| 8. Ecosystem Health Index (EHI) monitoring system for monitoring peatland health is developed and in place for 2 NHAs in order to ensure good quality habitat for Yellow-headed Tortoise, Fishing Cat | System applied at 2 NHAs | ✘ | ✔ | ✔ | ? | ✔ |

The following observations are made:

- Indicator 2 (additional 16,347 ha) is not specific, because attention is needed to how "under protection" will be interpreted (e.g. under a new or expanded protected area?); for this reason, it is also not clear whether the indicator is measurable or achievable.
- Indicator 7 could be more specific: discussions should ensure that parties have a shared understanding of how "under … co-management" will be interpreted for measuring achievement against this.
- The wording of Indicator 8 suggests that the only purpose of the EHI will be to "ensure good quality habitat for" the two named species; it should be re-worded to clarify that the EHI will be established for the 2 NHAs and that it will include consideration of the habitat requirements of the named species. Also, the relevance of the indicator as currently worded can be questioned, because the project contains no actions that specifically address "good quality habitat" for the two species.

**Outcome 2**

| **Description of Indicator** | **End-of-project target level** | **SMART analysis** | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | **S** | **M** | **A** | **R** | **T** |
| 9. Peat swamp area in KKL that is under effective water table management regime | 4,600 ha | ? | ? | ? | ✔ | ✔ |
| 10. Water levels at 4,600 ha of peat swamp forest (pilot sites where hydrotechnical measures are to be implemented) | Drainage will be stopped or significantly reduced and the water level will substantially increase for all project sites. At least for 25% of the area (1,150 ha) the water level will never drop more than 20 cm below surface. | ✔ | ✔ | ? | ✔ | ✔ |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 11. GHG emissions at 4,600 ha of peat swamp forest (pilot sites where hydrotechnical measures are to be implemented) | 1.959 Mt $CO_2$-eq | ✔ | ✔ | ? | ✔ | ✔ |
| 12. Carbon sequestration through reforestation with native species (projected over 20 years) | 129,000 t$CO_2$-eq over a 20-year period | ✔ | ✔ | ✘ | ? | ✔ |

The following observations are made:

- Indicator 9 could be more specific and measurable: there is a need to clarify how "under effective management" will be interpreted and measured; also, the 4,600 ha target appears very difficult to achieve, although this is difficult to assess because no progress has been made on the implementation mechanism for the water table management regime (the project has been completing hydrological modelling to generate recommendations for water table management).
- The target for Indicator 10 will also be very difficult to achieve, especially given the substantial delay in project commencement; whether this target is achieved will depend largely on the extent and effectiveness of the "water table management" under Indicator 9, which is yet to commence.
- The same comment applies to the achievability of the target for Indicator 11: it will be very difficult to achieve, especially given the project delays, and will depend largely on the extent and effectiveness of the "water table management" under Indicator 9. Note also that GHG emissions will be measured indirectly using water level; this methodology requires two years of calibration so will not be in place by the scheduled project completion date of July 2020. Finally, it should be noted that the baseline for GHG emissions was calculated using a different methodology; the baseline and target should be revised if necessary to ensure that the methodologies for baseline and end-of-project emissions are compatible.
- The target for Indicator 12 of 129,000 t $CO_2$ sequestered (through reforestation of 300 ha) was difficult to achieve at project inception and is now not achievable for several reasons: project delays; long lag times for planning, delivering and maintaining planting projects; challenges with obtaining approvals to plant at some sites; and a widely-held belief that the planting density required to achieve this extent of $CO_2$ sequestration was too high (the MTR team concurred with this belief after inspecting planting sites of different density in the field). A lower end-of-project target should be set. Further, the indicator ($CO_2$ sequestration) only measures one of a variety of objectives of the associated activities.

**Outcome 3**

| **Description of Indicator** | **End-of-project target level** | **SMART analysis** | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | **S** | **M** | **A** | **R** | **T** |
| 13. Cross-sectoral WG for promoting a landscape approach to peatlands conservation and sustainable use | Working Group formed by Year 1 | ? | ✔ | ✔ | ✔ | ✔ |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 14. Criteria and methodologies for assessment of peatlands' state, function and services that take into account full range of ecosystem services | Criteria and methodology endorsed by Year 2 and includes ecological criteria | ✔ | ✔ | ✔ | ✔ | ✔ |
| 15. Inventory of all peatlands | Current and comprehensive listing of peatlands status, functions, services (based on above criteria) by Year 3 | ✔ | ✔ | ✔ | ✔ | ✔ |
| 16. National Strategy for Peat Swamps | New 20-year strategy that takes economic and ecological benefits into account in determining use of peatlands | ✔ | ✔ | ✔ | ✔ | ✔ |

The following observations are made:

- Indicator 13 should be more specific: the project document suggests (Output 3.1) that the WG and its membership will be national in scope, although this is not explicitly stated.

## 4.2 Progress Towards Results

### 4.2.1 Progress towards outcomes analysis

This section presents an analysis of the project's progress against the end-of-project targets for each indicator. There are no midterm targets against which to assess progress.

This section also provides an "Achievement Rating" for the objective and each outcome and justification for each of these ratings.

The assessment has been conducted against the version of the results framework as agreed in the 2018 PIR.

Annex 5 provides the Progress Towards Results Matrix, which documents the findings for progress towards the objective and outcome-level results and summarizes the analysis of progress against each indicator and end-of-project target.

Tables showing the detailed analysis for the Objective and each outcome are provided below.

**Objective:** To conserve and restore peatlands to increase their capacities to act as carbon sinks, as habitats for globally important species, and as sources of ecosystem services for improved livelihoods

| |
|---|
| **Achievement Rating for Objective:** Moderately Unsatisfactory |

**Justification for Rating:** A substantial amount of work has been undertaken that will build towards the Objective and its associated target. The approach being taken is one of both "top-down" and "bottom-up": a landscape-scale approach that considers protected areas and sustainable use, informed by intensive community-level work on peat swamps, community forest management and local knowledge. Although there is still much to be done, the approach shows significant promise. Despite this, the single indicator for the Objective has been rated as "not on target", because attention must

be paid to important aspects of its interpretation and measurement if it is to be met; for this reason, the Objective has been rated as Moderately Unsatisfactory.

| Indicator | End-of-project Target | MTR Assessment | Description |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Extent of peat swamp area under effective management (IUCN Category IV, V) in KKL, under the framework of a National Strategy for Peat Swamps (NSP) | 154,363 ha | Not on target | Significant activities implemented in KKL, including a feasibility study to define a landscape co-management approach for peat swamps. There has only been limited consideration of the role of protected areas in this landscape approach.<br><br>KKL covers 74,363 ha; an additional 80,000 ha must be "under effective management" to meet target. In the project document, this was the area of proposed Songkhla Lake EPA. The project must identify replication mechanisms to transfer learnings and knowledge from KKL to other areas; conversations during mission indicated that this thinking has commenced, although it must be fast-tracked if the target is to be met.<br><br>2018 PIR: off track. |

**Outcome 1:** Expanding protection of high conservation value peat swamp forests and demonstrating their sustainable use within the broader landscape

**Achievement Rating for Outcome 1:** Satisfactory

**Justification for rating:** Good work is being undertaken under this Outcome. Multiple sources of evidence showed that community awareness of and involvement in the project is high, and that much of the community-level work being done is effective. Although no quantitative results were available from the last PIR in 2018, anecdotal reports during the field visit and information provided in quarterly reports suggest that the incidence of violations of NHA regulations declined, that the incidence of fires declined in the past year, and that training and capacity building has been effective (Indicators 4, 5 and 6). Work towards Indicator 7 with local people on community forest management has been well received in the region. The various project initiatives that the MTR team observed are likely to lead to a greater peat swamp area being managed in the KKL; however, careful attention is needed to the interpretation and measurement of Indicator 2 (Peat swamp forests in KKL under protection) if progress under this outcome is to remain satisfactory at the project's end. Also, although the METT showed an improvement from baseline (Indicator 3) at two sites, it is not clear from the Tracking Tool whether project activities led to this improvement and the METT had not been applied to all four sites. Finally, the prompt development of an Ecosystem Health Index (Indicator 8) is required.

| Indicator | End-of-project Target | MTR Assessment | Description |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2. Peat swamp forests in KKL under protection | Additional 16,347 ha | On target | The project is delivering numerous on-ground and capacity development activities at locations additional to the two NHAs in KKL, although the project should consider carefully which additional areas will be considered "under protection" and how this will be interpreted.<br><br>2018 PIR: off track. |
| 3. Enhanced management effectiveness at existing PAs (NHAs) and Songkhla and Kuan Kreng peat swamp landscapes as measured by METT | Thale Noi NHA: 75<br><br>Bor Lor NHA: 70<br><br>Kuan Kreng: 20<br><br>Songkhla: 30 | On target | The METT was measured for the two NHAs for the MTR and was reported as:<br><br>Thale Noi: 69 (from baseline 64)<br><br>Bor Lor: 57 (from baseline 42)<br><br>This represents an improvement for the two NHAs, although it is not clear from the Tracking Tool whether project activities have led to this improvement.<br><br>At the time of the MTR, the METT had not been completed for the Songkhla and Kuan Kreng landscapes. This should be remedied urgently.<br><br>2018 PIR: behind schedule. |
| 4. Incidence of violations of NHA regulations | Bor Lor: 0 Thale Noi: No tree cutting, Less than 6 invasions | On target | Anecdotal advice from interviews during the mission indicate that there have been fewer violations.<br><br>2018 PIR: no progress. |
| 5. Incidence of fires | Wildfires burning on average 408 ha per year KKL | On target | Anecdotal advice from interviews during the mission indicate that there have been fewer wildfires during the past year, possibly due in part to the support provided by the project to the 41 local fire networks.<br><br>2018 PIR: no progress. |

| Indicator | End-of-project Target | MTR Assessment | Description |
|---|---|---|---|
| 6. Number of units trained for patrolling, managing water levels, fire protection, and enforcement of regulations | 6 units in Thale Noi NHA<br><br>2 in Bor Lor NHA<br><br>3 in Kreng, Cha-uad and Baan Tul sub-districts | On target | Several units have been trained in the KKL, mostly in fire surveillance. Discussions during the field visit indicated that this had been well received and had improved relationships between government agencies and local communities.<br><br>There appears to have been little attention in this capacity building to managing water levels and enforcement of regulations (as per the wording of the indicator). The MTR team was advised that a capacity needs assessment had been undertaken that identified the priority areas for focus; however, this assessment has not been documented.<br><br>2018 PIR: no progress. |
| 7. Area of peat swamp forests in Kuan Kreng landscape under participatory community forestry management plans or co-management | 435 ha under improved peat swamp forest participatory management plans<br><br>Additional 1,500 ha established under co-management | On target | Good progress was observed during the mission on working with the local community on community forest management; this was also reported on at length in quarterly reports.<br><br>Discussions should ensure that parties have a shared understanding of how "under … co-management" will be interpreted for measuring achievement against this.<br><br>2018 PIR: behind schedule although community forest groups had been approached. |
| 8. Ecosystem Health Index (EHI) monitoring system for monitoring peatland health is developed and in place for 2 NHAs in order to ensure good quality habitat for Yellow-headed Tortoise, Fishing Cat | System applied at 2 NHAs | Not on target | Not commenced. The EHI has not been mentioned in quarterly reports and was not discussed during the mission until the MTR asked about it.<br><br>The MTR team recommends that the EHI be developed as soon as possible, learning from its successful recent application in UNDP-GEF projects in China.<br><br>2018 PIR: no EHI conducted yet. |

**Outcome 2:** Implementing technologies to avoid peat swamp forest degradation and restore degraded peat swamps forests

**Achievement Rating for Outcome 2:** Unsatisfactory

**Justification for rating:** The project faces significant challenges under this outcome, which includes the project's very ambitious targets for reductions in GHG emissions. Although a lot of high-quality work is underway, especially in the form of academic research and modelling to inform implementation, achievement of Targets 9, 10 and 11 are dependent on implementation of water table management across 4,600 ha in the KKL. The hydrological modelling to inform this is nearing completion, however little or no progress has been made on the mechanism for delivering the water level changes and, therefore, the GHG results. It is essential that the hydrological modelling leads to tangible management actions. Further, the target for carbon sequestration through reforestation is extremely unlikely to be met and the MTR team recommends that the target be revised downward and that an additional indicator and target be adopted for this component.

| Indicator | End-of-project Target | MTR | Description |
|---|---|---|---|
| 9. Peat swamp area in KKL that is under effective water table management regime | 4,600 ha | Not on target | Hydrological model of the KKL is nearing completion, to provide recommendations for hydrotechnical measures to manage water table to benefit peat swamps. Little work done on the mechanism for delivery of these recommendations, although it is presumed that it will rely largely on provincial stakeholders. The project parties currently have limited control over this.<br><br>The MTR team considers that there is a high risk that the target will not be met by the end date of July 2020.<br><br>2018 PIR: discussions and background data collection commenced. |
| 10. Water levels at 4,600 ha of peat swamp forest (pilot sites where hydrotechnical measures are to be implemented) | Drainage will be stopped or significantly reduced and the water level will substantially increase for all project sites. At least for 25% of the area (1,150 ha) the water level will never drop more than 20 cm below surface. | Not on target | For the above reasons, the MTR team believes that there is a high risk that the targeted changes to drainage and water levels will not be achieved by July 2020.<br><br>2018 PIR: existing and ongoing water management systems under review. |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 11. GHG emissions at 4,600 ha of peat swamp forest (pilot sites where hydrotechnical measures are to be implemented) | 1.959 Mt $CO_2$-eq | Not on target | Most carbon measurement equipment has been purchased and installed and measurements have commenced.<br><br>Most of the GHG emission reductions for the project arise from the wetting of peat through water table management across 4,600 ha, as measured in Indicators 9 and 10. For these reasons, the MTR team consider that there is a high risk that the targeted GHG results will not be achieved by July 2020. Further, the proposed indirect GHG monitoring system requires two years of calibration (which was confirmed by the MTR team during the mission), therefore the monitoring cannot be finished by July 2020.<br><br>2018 PIR: carbon monitoring system under review and required equipment identified. |
| 12. Carbon sequestration through reforestation with native species (projected over 20 years) | 129,000 t$CO_2$-eq over a 20-year period | Not on target | Limited planting has occurred. Three community nurseries established and seedlings distributed. Locations have been identified for planting, although delays occurred due to unseasonal weather and difficulties obtaining approvals to plant on targeted land. The target to reforest 300 ha is extremely unlikely to be met. In addition, planting densities are much lower than proposed in the project document.<br><br>MTR team considers that the target will not be achieved and recommends that it be revised downwards.<br><br>2018 PIR: behind schedule; area to be planted likely to be “at least 100 ha”. |

**Outcome 3:** Improving policies, standards, and enforcement mechanisms for conservation and sustainable use of peat swamp forests

**Achievement Rating for Outcome 3:** Moderately Satisfactory

**Justification for rating:** Actions under this Outcome are in the early stages, and are being undertaken according to the project document and best available practice. There are likely to be challenges with delivering all outputs and meeting all targets by the end date of July 2020; hence, the MTR team considers progress to be Moderately Satisfactory rather than Satisfactory.

| Indicator | End-of-project Target | MTR | Description |
|---|---|---|---|
| 13. Cross-sectoral WG for promoting a landscape approach to peatlands conservation and sustainable use | Working Group formed by Year 1 | On target | ToR for a provincial cross-sectoral WG were drafted, and final approval is pending. Good local buy-in is evident.<br><br>The project document suggests (but is not explicit) that the cross-sectoral WG will be national in scope and membership. Such a WG has not been established. Also, attention should be paid to whether the ToR satisfy the wording of the indicator.<br><br>The indicator should be revised to be more specific.<br><br>2018 PIR: behind schedule. |
| 14. Criteria and methodologies for assessment of peatlands' state, function and services that take into account full range of ecosystem services | Criteria and methodology endorsed by Year 2 and includes ecological criteria | On target | Criteria development has commenced.<br><br>The Ramsar briefing note 9 (*Guidelines for inventories of tropical peatlands to facilitate their designation as Ramsar Sites*) is being used as the basis for the methodology, which is appropriate.<br><br>There is some confusion around roles regarding criteria and methodology development, which needs clarification.<br><br>Process for endorsement of the criteria should be carefully considered.<br><br>2018 PIR: no progress. |
| 15. Inventory of all peatlands | Current and comprehensive listing of peatlands status, functions, services (based on above criteria) by Year 3 | On target | GIS layers have been collected and early field work has commenced.<br><br>It is important that the inventory does not progress too far before the criteria have been finalized (Indicator 14).<br><br>2018 PIR: no progress. |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 16. National Strategy for Peat Swamps | New 20-year strategy that takes economic and ecological benefits into account in determining use of peatlands | On target | Contractor has been appointed.<br><br>The NSP will be based on other project components, especially landscape approach and inventory.<br><br>2018 PIR: no progress. |

### 4.2.2 Remaining barriers to achieving the project objective

Because the project has only been in full implementation for a little over a year, the three barriers identified in the project document still remain. The MTR team provides the following observations on progress towards addressing these barriers.

**Barrier 1: Inadequate protection of primary and secondary natural peat swamps**

There has been no increase in the formal level of protection of KKL peat swamps in the protected area system and, although there has been some improvement from this project in the conservation capacities of the protected area and forest administrators, this barrier largely remains. Progress has been made on developing a model for a landscape approach to peat swamp management that balances protection and sustainable use. To address this barrier, it is important that explicit consideration is given during the remainder of the project to the role of protected areas (of various types and IUCN categories) in this landscape model.

**Barrier 2: Technologies to avoid peatland degradation are not available and there are major gaps in knowledge of carbon value of peatlands**

The investigations and modelling in Outcome 2 are in their early stages, so the identified gaps still exist. Nevertheless, the work being undertaken should make a significant contribution to filling these gaps and addressing this barrier if seen through to completion.

**Barrier 3: Inadequate and unclear land-use standards and policies specifically related to peat swamps**

Again, the work being undertaken in Outcome 3 is in the early stages, however it is well targeted and should address this barrier.

## 4.3 Project Implementation and Adaptive Management

Project Implementation and Adaptive Management is rated as **Moderately Satisfactory (MS).**

**Justification**: The project experienced long delays during its initial stages. The first project manager departed after a relatively short period and it was then more than a year until RECOFTC was recruited as Responsible Party to manage the project. The project has gathered significant momentum since RECOFTC commenced in April 2018 and, at the time of this MTR, most activities are now being implemented according to newly approved work plans towards the planned results/outcomes. The decision to change the project manager from an Individual Contractor to an institution-based Responsible Party reflected good adaptive management, as RECOFTC have proven to have more capacity and staff to carry out complicated project activities under considerable time pressures. Improvements could be made in record keeping of co-financing information, communication (internal and external), and in monitoring and evaluation systems.

### 4.3.1 Management arrangements

**Management Modality:** The project is delivered primarily under the NIM with ONEP acting as Implementing Partner and RECOFTC as Responsible Party. NIM has the advantages of improving national ownership of the project and the long-term sustainability of project results, but it also requires that government rules and procedures are adopted to guide project operation in addition to those of UNDP. This has contributed to delays in implementation.

**Adaptive Management:** The project experienced substantial delays during its initial stages. First, there was a long delay after CEO endorsement until Cabinet approval (see Table 4). Subsequently, the first project manager was engaged in October 2016 but departed in July 2017. After this, at ONEP's request it was decided to shift to an RP arrangement and to contract an institution to manage the project rather than an individual manager. This proved to be a good adaptive management approach because the institution, RECOFTC, is equipped with a pool of experienced personnel and an extensive academic network.

The project undertook periodic monitoring visits to project sites (as described in Section 4.3.4). Although back to office reports (BTORs) were prepared for these, it was not always clear whether recommendations from these were implemented in accordance with good adaptive management practice. For example, the RTA made several observations and recommendations in the BTOR after a joint oversight monitoring mission in September 2018; however, not all of these were followed after the mission (e.g. increased attention to gender mainstreaming and the preparation of a revised SESP were recommended, but the MTR team saw no evidence that these had been followed).

**Implementing Partner**: As Implementing Partner, ONEP has a strong commitment to the project. The MTR team observed a very strong focus on results. The management inputs are substantial: the project coordinator spends about 80% of her working time on this project and understands the project outcomes and activities in great detail. The RECOFTC Project Manager spends two days a week at ONEP to coordinate activities.

The project is managed by the Division of Biodiversity Management; the MTR team considers that substantial opportunities and synergies would be available if the Climate Change Division was more involved, not only on the PB but also in project implementation, knowledge transfer, and connecting the GHG emissions reduction component of the project with Thailand's UNFCCC and Paris Agreement commitments.

Several outputs and activities in this project adopt new approaches and methodologies, for which RECOFTC has primary delivery responsibility. Although ONEP has no direct implementation role in the project, it will be a key user of the knowledge developed, especially in policy making. It is very important that ONEP is provided with opportunities to participate in on-ground activities whenever possible, to provide first-hand learning and experience.

**GEF Agency:** UNDP sits on the PB and plays an active role in meetings. Quarterly meetings with ONEP are held to discuss project management issues, including on adaptive management measures. A programme assistant is in charge of day-to-day coordination with ONEP, RECOFTC and other parties on administrative matters.

UNDP CO provides substantial support to the project at the request of ONEP, in accordance with a Letter of Agreement (LOA) between ONEP and UNDP (viewed by the MTR team). Actual support services provided have included recruitment of the first project manager (PM) and the RP (RECOFTC); procurement of other service providers and goods; and organizing meetings and work. The costs

incurred by UNDP CO in providing these support services are recovered from the project's administrative budget.

Given the complexity of the project activities and the importance of a rigorous focus on monitoring, evaluation and reporting, the MTR team recommends that UNDP CO engages an extra person, to assist with project monitoring to ensure quality and timely implementation. This person should sit in UNDP CO and work closely with RECOFTC on result-based monitoring.

The UNDP RTA provides timely advice on technical and adaptive management aspects when required.

**Responsible Party:** RECOFTC has been contracted since April 2018 to manage most components of the project (with the exception of Outputs 3.3 and 3.4). They have a consortium of three organizations, with the lead partner being RECOFTC and the sub-partners being the Faculty of Forestry of Kasetsart University and Kon Rak Tin Association, a local non-government organization in the project site. RECOFTC's Bangkok office is staffed with a Project Team Leader, Project Manager and Project Coordinator, who liaises between the Bangkok and field offices and between financial and administrative staff. The field office in Nakhon Si Thammarat is headed by the Kon Rak Tin Association and staffed with locally recruited members who are in charge of coordinating field-level activities.

Despite its late start in the project, RECOFTC has made significant progress in implementation against the approved project work plan. However, there is a need for RECOFTC to be more focused on results-based monitoring and reporting and on sharing the "big picture" context of their work.

The **Project Board** was appointed in March 2017 and has met four times. It includes several members from government departments involved in the project and their regional and/or provincial offices. Most of these are agencies under MONRE and research institutes. As the project will focus on working more intensively with provincial agencies during the remainder of the project, consideration should be given to including line agencies from outside MONRE in the PB, particularly representatives from the Department of Provincial Administration and the DOLA, who control provincial and local planning processes.

### 4.3.2 Work planning

The first PM started in October 2016 and an inception workshop was held in July 2017 to approve the project indicators, monitoring mechanism and tracking tools, including some adjustment of project activities from the original project document.

The first work plan was developed after site visits by the PM to conduct a situational survey and engage in informal consultation with stakeholders. Initial information supported development of the work plan and identification of demonstration sites. Shortly after the first PB meeting, the first PM departed and most of the planned activities were suspended for several months. RECOFTC commenced as RP in April 2018 and developed a work plan for the remainder of the project (from May 2018 to July 2020). Some of the project's activities, indicators and end-of-project targets have been adjusted to reflect changed circumstances and the shift in position around the establishment of new EPAs.

The revised project work plan was approved by the PB in May 2018 with suggestions for minor changes. The work plan focuses on developing technical models and recommendations and on stakeholder participation in peat swamp management, conservation and restoration. The overall quality of the work plan is good. It is evidence-based and systematically links various activities within and between outputs and outcomes to focus on achievements at the outcome and objective levels.

To some degree, this reflects RECOFTC's holistic and integrated approach for sustainable environmental and ecosystem management.

Based on the approved project work plan, an annual work plan for 2018 was developed and implemented. There was delay in some activities due to prolonged flooding in some project areas. These activities were carried over to 2019, resulting in a quite intensive implementation schedule that requires extra input and time from the project team and other stakeholders in the field. There is a risk that local communities will become exhausted with the intensive activities.

### 4.3.3 Finance and co-finance

**Financing**

According to the project financial monitoring report prepared by UNDP, by the end of 2018 the project had spent only 12.23% of its GEF budget. This very low delivery is due to the limited implementation during the first two years. Table 5 presents information on project expenditure by year from 2016 to 2018.

**Table 5**: Summary of project expenditure by year (US dollars); source: UNDP CO.

| Activity | Expenditure | | | Total | Project Budget | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | | | |
| Outcome 1 | 5,671.58 | 28,078.46 | 129,279.12 | 163,029.16 | 1,000,000.00 | 16.30 |
| Outcome 2 | 2,829.00 | 0.00 | 168,836.66 | 171,665.66 | 1,500,000.00 | 11.44 |
| Outcome 3 | 5,052.85 | 8,280.15 | 46,204.41 | 59,537.41 | 570,857.00 | 10.43 |
| Project Admin | 11,266.93 | 49,279.07 | 24,688.29 | 85,234.29 | 153,543.00 | 55.51 |
| **Total** | | | | **394,232.23** | **3,224,400.00** | **12.23** |

The MTR team was provided with a draft budget plan for 2019–2020, which may change depending on the multi-year workplan that is yet to be finalized. This draft budget projects 100% expenditure by project end.

**Table 6:** Budget plan for 2019–2020 (US dollars); source: UNDP CO.

| Activity | Expenditure | | | Budget | | Total | Project budget | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | | | |
| Outcome 1 | 5,671.58 | 28,078.46 | 129,279.12 | 700,002.00 | 136,968.84 | 1,000,000.00 | 1,000,000.00 | 100.00 |
| Outcome 2 | 2,829.00 | 0.00 | 168,836.66 | 1,006,409.00 | 321,925.34 | 1,500,000.00 | 1,500,000.00 | 100.00 |
| Outcome 3 | 5,052.85 | 8,280.15 | 46,204.41 | 488,325.16 | 22,994.43 | 570,857.00 | 570,857.00 | 100.00 |
| Project Admin | 11,266.93 | 49,279.07 | 24,688.29 | 48,500.00 | 19,808.71 | 153,543.00 | 153,543.00 | 100.00 |
| **Total** | **24,820.36** | **85,637.68** | **369,008.48** | **2,243,236.16** | **501,697.32** | **3,224,400.00** | **3,224,400.00** | **100.00** |

**Co-financing**

According to the project document, USD 13,382,711 of co-financing was committed (Table 6); most of this was from the Thai government, with some from UNDP and the TAOs.

**Table 6:** Summary of project funding sources (US dollars); source: project document.

| Funding Source | Type | Amount | | | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Year 1 | Year 2 | Year 3 | Year 4 | |
| GEF | Cash | 814,300 | 828,128 | 781,129 | 800,843 | 3,224,400 |
| ONEP-MONRE | In-kind | 2,780,000 | 2,780,000 | 2,780,000 | 2,780,000 | 11,120,000 |
| DNP-MONRE | In-kind | 215,170 | 215,170 | 215,170 | 215,170 | 860,680 |
| UNDP | In-kind | 50,000 | 50,000 | 100,000 | 100,000 | 300,000 |
| Kreng TAO | In-kind | 3,750 | 30,000 | 30,000 | 30,000 | 93,750 |
| Ban Tul TAO | In-kind | 86,250 | 300,000 | 300,000 | 200,000 | 886,250 |
| Cha-uad TAO | In-kind | 22,031 | 40,000 | 40,000 | 20,000 | 122,031 |
| **Total** | | **3,971,501** | **4,243,298** | **4,246,299** | **4,146,013** | **16,607,111** |

The MTR team has not received information on co-financing contributed by the different partners, which means that it is not possible to present an exact amount of actual co-financing provided.

Nevertheless, there have been substantial in-kind contributions from all parties that committed co-financing. ONEP has provided office space, equipment and facilities for the Project Management Unit; meeting rooms for the PB and other project-related meetings; vehicles for project-related activities; and salaries of ONEP officials involved in the project in different capacities (including PB members, Project Director, and the ONEP staff member assigned for day-to-day management and coordination who spends 80% of her working time on this project).

DNP's in-kind contribution includes office and meeting spaces in Bor Lor and Thale Noi NHAs; staff time and salaries, facilities, vehicles and fuel for fire control activities in project sites; and a lump sum of 50,000 baht for each of the 42 community-based forest fire prevention networks in peat swamps in the Kreng sub-district.

The three TAOs (Kreng, Baan Tul and Cha-uad) have taken turns to provide a meeting room and facilities for the community forest network from the three sub-districts, which meet on a monthly basis. Kreng TAO also includes project-initiated activities (e.g. training of fire prevention networks, building firebreaks) in its budget plan. Staff from the three TAOs participate in project activities such as media training, producing video clips to advocate the project's activities, and reporting on important issues related to peat swamps in their respective sub-districts.

It is expected that the in-kind contributions from government agencies, in terms of staff time at the local and provincial levels, will increase significantly during the remainder of the project, as most activities on the ground have gained significant momentum. The MTR team was informed of several mechanisms being established to engage line agencies, NGOs and CSOs in project implementation, including a provincial working group to develop a sustainable peat swamp management strategy and sub-working groups on participatory land-use planning and water management.

### 4.3.4 Project-level monitoring and evaluation systems

The section "Monitoring Framework and Evaluation" in the project document establishes standard M&E activities and makes allowances for these in the M&E budget. This budget is USD 55,000, approximately 1.7% of the GEF grant (USD 3,224,400); this is a relatively low percentage allocation for

M&E. It should be noted that this M&E budget excludes project team staff time and the significant spend on monitoring at project sites. Of the M&E budget, USD 36,000 (65%) is allocated to the midterm review and terminal evaluation and USD 10,000 (18%) to the inception workshop.

The MTR team considers that, given this project's technical complexity and ambitious interrelated quantitative targets, a greater M&E allocation would have been appropriate; accordingly, engagement of a M&E specialist is recommended (as described in Section 4.3.1).

The project inception workshop was held on 17 July 2017 and a report was prepared after this workshop, which met the UNDP-GEF requirements for an Inception Report. The M&E plan in the project document stated that, at this workshop, a detailed overview of reporting and M&E requirements would be provided and that the M&E work plan and budget would be agreed and scheduled; these items are not mentioned in the agenda and report from the workshop, although the project indicators were discussed.

Quarterly progress reports are the most frequent mechanism for reporting on project progress. The RP (RECOFTC) completed their first quarterly report in Quarter 2 of 2018 and the most recent in Quarter 1 of 2019. These reports provide a lot of detail on project activities, although they provide limited information on how these activities are leading towards the project's results.

One PIR has been prepared, in 2018. This focused on progress towards results. Because the PIR was completed shortly after commencement of the RP, there had been very little progress and all targets were reported as "off track" or "behind schedule". The RP tended to report optimistically, because they had only recently become involved in the project. The UNDP CO and RTA reported more realistically against the very limited progress since project commencement.

The 2018 PIR identified a critical risk from government policy around EPA establishment and the realization that the two EPAs would not be established during the project term. Appropriate adaptive management changes were made to indicators and targets under Outcome 1 in the results framework to respond to this. This included removing specific references to the originally proposed EPAs, clarifying interpretation of the Objective indicator, and deleting an indicator because it did not meet SMART criteria. These changes were endorsed ahead of the 2018 PIR by the RTA and the PB and formalized in the PIR (and subsequently re-confirmed by the PB in its January 2019 meeting). The PIR did not detect the significant risks to meeting the targets under Outcome 2 that have been identified in this MTR, because the technical components of the project were still being scoped at that time.

Periodic monitoring visits to project sites were conducted, in accordance with the M&E plan; the MTR team viewed BTORs for two such visits. In particular, a joint oversight monitoring mission (also referred to as an "internal MTR") was conducted by the UNDP CO and RTA in September 2018.

Most of the Tracking Tools were completed appropriately and provided to the MTR team prior to the MTR mission. The METT was not applied at two of the four sites.

In accordance with the M&E plan, an independent auditing company (EY) was engaged in 2018 to complete a Spot Check Report and a Micro Assessment Report on the RP (RECOFTC).

The MTR team is not aware of any specific focus on development, gender or other social impacts in the project's monitoring system.

As noted in Section 4.11 (Project design), the MTR team considers that there were some limitations to the environmental and social screening in the project document and recommends that a revised SESP be prepared.

### 4.3.5 Stakeholder engagement

The project has engaged relevant departments from within MONRE and representatives of their regional and/or provincial offices, local NGOs, and local universities / institutions in the PB. This provides a good basis for receiving solid advice on the project's work plan and implementation. It also enables the project to make necessary linkages with existing initiatives in the project sites; these include the Pak Phanang River Basin Royal Project, which works extensively on water management in peat swamp areas; and a research project on processing and product development of *Melaleuca cajuputi* trees, which occupy around 90% of the Kuan Kreng peat swamp area.

Engagement with stakeholders at the community level is a strength of this project's implementation. For example, RECOFTC works extensively with DNP on forest fire management through community-based volunteer networks in 41 villages around the KKL. Through this, the project provides technical and financial support to enhance the capacity of DNP's Fire Control Stations and community volunteers in the project sites.

Through its field-based team, RECOFTC also focuses on strengthening the networking and capacity of existing community forest committees. It organizes monthly meetings to bring together committee members of the three community forests in Kreng, Baan Tul and Cha-uad sub-districts. The purpose is to set up a network of community forest committees among these three groups and develop a joint management plan and to provide them with relevant knowledge and skills (e.g. information about the new Community Forest Bill that was passed in February 2019).

During the field visit, the MTR team heard very favorable comments about this aspect of the project from both government and community representatives in the KKL, reporting that relationships between government and the local community had improved greatly as a direct result.

The project also works extensively with local schools and youth groups. Sixteen local schools in Kreng and Baan Tul sub-districts participated in training on peat swamps and developed a local curriculum related to peat swamps in eight subject areas for Grade 4 students. The curriculum will be tested in all of these schools in May 2019. Youth groups and community groups in target areas are also engaged in participatory action research (PAR) facilitated by the RECOFTC field team, to address issues of common interest such as improving krajood processing and product designs, community-based tourism, and peat swamp restoration. Knowledge gained from the PAR will be presented in community learning centers initiated by the project.

Several technical experts from Kasetsart University in Bangkok have been engaged to provide contributions to the project, including hydrological models for managing water levels in peat swamps; carbon flux and GHG monitoring; reforestation and restoration of peat swamp forests; and economic valuation of ecosystem services.

Experts from local universities in the project's main target area have also been engaged to contribute to the project. Researchers from Thaksin University are conducting participatory research with local communities into local wisdom (local knowledge) in forest management, and a team from PSU is developing criteria for peat swamp assessment, developing the national peat swamp inventory, and preparing the NSP.

### 4.3.6 Reporting

Reporting is described in Section 4.3.4 (Project-level monitoring and evaluation systems) of this report, and a brief outline is provided here.

Annual PIRs are prepared. At the time of the MTR, only one PIR had been completed (in 2018).

RECOFTC prepares quarterly progress reports for consideration by ONEP and UNDP. As noted elsewhere, these tend to be activity focused rather than results focused.

BTORs are prepared after visits to project sites by UNDP Bangkok-based staff.

Other reporting is conducted as required under contractual arrangements with other project parties.

### 4.3.7 Communications

**Internal project communications**

At a national level, regular communication between UNDP, ONEP and RECOFTC takes place via quarterly meetings and day-to-day communication. Ad hoc meetings occur occasionally to address emerging issues. The RECOFTC PM spends two days a week at the ONEP office. Given the challenges that have been identified with integration and limited shared understanding of the project's strategic direction, the MTR team recommends that communication between key UNDP, ONEP and RECOFTC staff should be more frequent and more systematic. It is suggested that, at least while the high priority recommendations from this review are enacted, monthly meetings are held to discuss strategic aspects of delivery.

Communication between RECOFTC's Bangkok office and field office takes various forms. The project coordinator is based in Bangkok and is responsible for communicating with the field team. He travels to project sites regularly, at least one or two times per month, for face-to-face communication. For emerging and urgent issues, email and phone and skype calls are used. It is important to note that RECOFTC team members joined the project at different times and that, through frequent and effective communication, they have built a strong team, strong networks and very good shared understanding of the project's implementation approach. However, the MTR team felt that there was not such a strong shared ownership in RECOFTC of the project's holistic strategy that was prepared by the Bangkok team.

Activity-based communication with other stakeholders in the pilot areas is done primarily by the respective field staff. These include face-to-face communication and phone calls; generally, these appear to be timely and appropriate. During the field visit, the MTR team received favorable impressions of the extent to which the RECOFTC field staff had become "embedded" in the local community.

**External communications**

RECOFTC includes communication regarding specific activities and stories under Outcomes 1 and 2 in its work plan and has a communication officer based in the Bangkok office. Project activities are communicated through several media channels, including social media, a newsletter and a webpage. A group of local media and reporters has also been engaged by RECOFTC to communicate about the project and to raise awareness among people in the region about the importance of peat swamps as a carbon sink and a source of the community's livelihood. Youth groups and community volunteers have been trained to produce video clips and movies using mobile phones. These stories are then broadcast on local television channels, Facebook, and YouTube.

For project-level external communication, a media company, Wisdom Vast, has been contracted by UNDP to: (i) develop a communication strategy of the project, (ii) implement the communication strategy, and (iii) support development and/or production of selected communication media. Wisdom

Vast's contract commenced on 28 December 2018. At the time of the MTR, the first deliverable (project communication strategy) has not yet been developed. The MTR team detected a significant lack of clarity around the purpose of the planned communication strategy and the roles of different parties; there is a need for UNDP, ONEP, RECOFTC and Wisdom Vast to develop a joint communication strategy for the project, which includes clear communication objectives and role definition, to synergize communication efforts and avoid duplication.

### 4.3.8 Gender mainstreaming

A gender analysis was not prepared during the project preparation phase (as this was not a requirement at the time) and the environmental and social screening did not identify any gender-related risks or opportunities (Annex 11 of the project document). The results framework does not contain any gender disaggregated or gender sensitive indicators.

The project document does provide some background information on the roles of women in peat swamps (Section 2.5), stating that women are the most frequent users of peat swamps, especially for harvesting and processing of krajood. Each of the 11 villages in the Kreng sub-district has a women's group for krajood processing, and some villages have more than one group. In total, there are at least 20 groups in this sub-district, each with 30 to 50 members. These groups have been set up and supported by various government agencies and NGOs; it appears that the project has not provided specific support to these krajood-based groups.

The MTR team heard that the project has identified alternative livelihood activities such as ecotourism and the collection and processing of non-timber forest products, in which women's role will be clearly specified. Women's groups will be trained on necessary skills to perform these roles.

The MTR team also heard that, in some villages, there are more women than men participating in the peat swamp project's meetings and activities, because many men have to go to work outside the community and leave their families in the village. Hence, women are becoming steadily more engaged in decision-making on community development and related matters.

Although the above general opportunities have been identified, the MTR team recommends that a more systematic approach to gender mainstreaming be adopted during the remainder of the project, to maximize the realization of these opportunities. Specifically, the MTR team recommends that a gender analysis be undertaken to identify key activities for gender mainstreaming. A revised SESP assessment should be prepared, and this assessment should also pay careful attention to gender issues.

The 2018 PIR reported that three female field staff had been hired. This PIR also included a recommendation for a gender analysis, however this has not been done.

## 4.4 Sustainability

**Rating**: Overall sustainability of the project is rated as **Moderately Likely.**

**Justification:** Financial and institutional risks to sustainability are being managed appropriately, because during the remainder of the project RECOFTC will work to place the provincial Working Group on Strategic Planning for the Kuan Kreng Landscape in the driver's seat for activities under Outcomes 1 and 2. The NSP to be developed under Outcome 3 will also serve as an entry point to feed innovation and knowledge generated under the project into national policy. This can be done through the existing National Wetland Management Committee chaired by the Permanent Secretary of MONRE. There are

significant socio-economic risks (especially the long-term threat of encroachment by oil palm cultivation, despite a reported short-term reduction in this threat) and environmental risks (especially adverse impacts on peat swamp condition from climate change, drainage and land-use changes) that should be better addressed.

### 4.4.1 Financial risks to sustainability

The Working Group on Strategic Planning for the Kuan Kreng Landscape will be the key mechanism to securing financial support to project activities and results after the project ends. The project is in line with the Provincial Strategy on Sustainable Natural Resources and Environmental Management. It is very important that project activities are incorporated into the provincial strategy and work plan, which will require close engagement in the project by the relevant line agencies during the remainder of the project to develop their understanding of the value of peat swamp conservation. If RECOFTC succeeds in doing this, then the project has a good likelihood of achieving financial sustainability.

The TAOs in the KKL include key project activities (e.g. fire control, livelihood training) in their annual budgets and plans, which will also be an important mechanism for project sustainability. The MTR team understands that liaison with the TAOs is underway as part of the project.

RECOFTC has also established linkages with potential donors from the private sector (e.g. the Central Group for sponsorships and international organizations for carbon trading opportunities) to support to some project activities, such as undertaking fire control and valuing stored carbon.

### 4.4.2 Socio-economic risks to sustainability

About 80% of households in the Kreng sub-district rely on krajood (*Lepironia articulata*) from peat swamps as raw materials for their livelihoods. There are many other products obtained from the peat swamp forests. Consequently, these communities have high levels of awareness and knowledge of the importance of peat swamp conservation and restoration for sustainable uses and will be important parties in project sustainability project. The project has identified this and the MTR team considers that RECOFTC is working well at this level.

The project has identified opportunities for alternative livelihood activities for KKL communities; for example, ecotourism was mentioned frequently during the field visit, and non-timber forest product development and traditional herbal medicines were also raised. The project is proposing to conduct value chain analysis of potential production activities and to provide training to local households on necessary skills for the identified livelihood activities. The MTR team feels that it is important that the project includes rigorous feasibility assessment in any alternative livelihood activities.

The MTR team heard on several occasions that the threat to peat swamps from encroachment by oil palm cultivation had reduced, largely due to the falling price of oil palm. In fact, oil palm was only mentioned rarely during the mission. It is important to note that such a price trend may be temporary and that measures should still be taken to address this socio-economic risk in the long term.

### 4.4.3 Institutional framework and governance risks to sustainability

As described under 4.4.1 (Financial risks to sustainability), the Working Group on Strategic Planning for the Kuan Kreng Landscape and provincial planning and budgeting will be key mechanisms for institutionalizing project initiatives and knowledge. The MTR team recommends that this be pursued as a high priority.

The MTR team saw evidence that the project is working very well with local schools. There was a very high level of commitment to the activities described under Section 4.3.5.

The MTR team also saw evidence during the field visit that the project is working very well to increase the capacity and involvement of the community at the landscape level. Community networks have been established and strengthened to carry out project-related activities, including in fire prevention and control, community forest management, and in the activities of the Protected Area Committee (PAC) established by DNP. These networks have been trained by the project and work closely with respective line agencies (i.e. RFD and DNP) to continue activities in the peat swamps. However, the MTR team did hear concerns from some local people that this training and support role would be lost when the project ended; the project should consider this carefully when building local capacity.

### 4.4.4 Environmental risks to sustainability

A major environmental risk to the sustainability of the project is ongoing pressure beyond the life of the project from drainage and land-use changes that will adversely affect peat swamp condition. This includes initiatives that are supported by other government agencies (e.g. RID). It is important that a detailed risk assessment, which includes identification of mitigation measures, is conducted on this risk.

Climate change is likely to significantly affect peat swamp forests. In particular, changes to wetland hydrology may change the recommendations from the hydrological modelling conducted in this project, and an adaptive management model will be needed to ensure that peat swamp management approaches are assessed and updated regularly. The NSP (Output 3.4) must include this (as stated in the project document).

## 4.5 Conclusions and Recommendations

### 4.5.1 Conclusions

#### 4.5.1.1 Strengths

**High levels of project activity in the region**

There are very high levels of activity and involvement in the region. RECOFTC have generated significant momentum in the short time since they became the RP.

**Local capacity greatly strengthened**

A particular highlight is the training and support provided to 41 fire networks, which has greatly improved fire surveillance activities and relationships between DNP and local people ("we were enemies and now we're friends").

**High levels of commitment by all parties**

There are high levels of commitment and activity by all project parties in carrying out their components of the project. The MTR team was consistently impressed with the level of knowledge of the project, both in the region and Bangkok.

**A strong knowledge-based approach**

The project is collecting large amounts of high-quality local and academic knowledge on peat swamps and their management.

**Opportunities for localizing SDGs**

The very effective community-level work being undertaken provides numerous opportunities for localizing and integrating SDGs in those communities. SDGs 8 (Decent work and economic growth), 13 (Climate action) and 15 (Life on land) are particularly relevant to the outcomes of this project. Opportunities are likely to arise from the measures that will be taken to achieve sustainability and embed outcomes and activities in provincial-level planning and budgeting.

#### 4.5.1.2 Weaknesses

**Working in silos**

The MTR team observed that integration between parties could be improved in some areas to ensure consistency and more comprehensive coverage of the content of the work (e.g. delivery of Outputs 3.2 and 3.3, and planning and delivery of communication activities). Integration, collaboration and achieving shared understanding and ownership of the approaches being used should be pursued.

**Lack of role clarity**

Many parties are involved in the implementation of this complex project, and usually these parties have engaged rapidly with the project and are making significant progress. Not surprisingly, a lack of clarity of roles in some areas was observed, especially for activities under Output 3 and for communication activities.

### 4.5.2 Recommendations

This section presents recommendations for the project to improve delivery and assess identified risks, with an explanation of each that outlines the MTR team's relevant conclusions and rationale for the recommendation.

**Recommendation 1.** Ensure that UNDP, ONEP and RECOFTC have a shared understanding of the approaches being used to achieve the project's outcomes and targets

There was limited understanding within UNDP and ONEP of how the numerous activities that RECOFTC had underway were combining to deliver the project's high-level outcomes. Much of the quarterly reporting focuses on activities rather than outcomes, which is partly why this understanding is low. After a verbal briefing of the strategic context for RECOFTC's activities, the MTR team was impressed with the "big picture" that was described. It is important that this strategic view is communicated to other project parties and documented. The MTR team recommends that a workshop between the three parties is held with the specific purpose of achieving this shared understanding; graphic tools, such as simple flowcharts or "mind maps" that show the connections between the activities and outcomes, should be used. The quarterly reporting should be changed to place more emphasis on progress towards outcomes and less emphasis on activities.

**Recommendation 2.** Establish a delivery mechanism for implementation of the recommendations from the hydrological modelling, with engagement of relevant line agencies as a matter of very high priority

The activities in Output 2.1 to manage water levels to re-wet peat across 4,600 ha are central to achievement of Outcome 2, including the reduction of forest fires and the achievement of the ambitious GHG targets. Progress on implementing these changes is pending completion of hydrological modelling, and is expected to rely heavily on provincial agencies picking up the recommendations from this modelling. For this reason, the MTR team considered there to be a critical risk to the project if an effective mechanism is not developed soon for ensuring implementation of these water level changes. This should include consideration of how to convey the findings to key stakeholders.

**Recommendation 3.** Establish the greenhouse gas monitoring program as a matter of very high priority and ensure that the baseline and end-of-project measurements are compatible

The indirect monitoring system for GHG emissions requires a two-year calibration period and relies on the prior establishment of a water level monitoring program and on the establishment of specialized equipment to measure carbon flux. These two prerequisites have not yet been completed, although the MTR team understands that they are well advanced. It will be important to monitor the status of these prerequisites to ensure that the monitoring is established as soon as technically feasible and to maximize the likelihood that GHG monitoring will be in place during the life of the project.

Also, the baseline for GHG emissions was calculated using a different methodology from the indirect methodology being established; it is important that baseline and target measurements can be legitimately compared. This may require calculating a new baseline and/or end-of-project target.

**Recommendation 4.** Revise the end-of-project target for carbon sequestration through reforestation with native species

Reforestation in these systems is very time consuming and subject to significant delays from approval processes, and the target of 300 ha reforestation is very unlikely to be achieved. Further, during the field visits the MTR team heard numerous times that the planting density in these peat swamps should be lower than that originally proposed during project preparation (1,250 individuals/hectare). For these reasons, the target to sequester 129,000 t $CO_2$ is not realistic. A lower end-of-project target should be set, following the methodology in Annex 5 of the project document and using revised estimates for the total area to be planted, the density of trees per hectare and the species to be planted.

**Recommendation 5.** Adopt a new indicator for the reforestation component to require the "development of guidelines for objective-based planning and implementation of restoration and reforestation"

The project's restoration and reforestation activities have diverse objectives, of which carbon sequestration is only one. Management objectives that were mentioned by community members during the field visits included improving fauna habitat (especially for fish), re-establishing with native tree species, and establishing economic crops; sequestration of carbon was not mentioned. The MTR team understands that RECOFTC is establishing demonstration plots with different models of community-based swamp restoration. These provide the opportunity to develop a simple restoration planning approach that (i) analyzes the current situation in a swamp, (ii) determines the objectives of the local people, and (iii) provides some restoration approaches that may be used to meet those objectives. To capture these learnings, and in recognition that the project's carbon sequestration targets from reforestation are very unlikely to be met, the MTR team recommends that a new indicator and target be established to require "the development of guidelines for objective-based planning and implementation of restoration and reforestation".

**Recommendation 6.** Ensure that the Working Group on Strategic Planning for the Kuan Kreng Landscape that is being established has the necessary knowledge, capacity and support to build peat swamp management and conservation priorities into their regular planning and budgeting

Provincial agencies are critical to both the successful implementation of many activities and the sustainability of outcomes beyond the life of the GEF project. Although the MTR team understands that the project is planning some relevant capacity building activities for provincial agencies, it was not apparent that this Working Group had been specifically identified as the key target for such activities.

Capacity building could include technical training and the engagement of relevant line agencies within the Working Group in the "learning by doing" process. Ideally, these agencies should be driving the implementation of relevant project activities during the remainder of the project, with technical support from RECOFTC and initial budget support from the project.

As these line agencies gain direct experience from the project, they should be supported to build relevant activities into their regular workplans and budget plans. It is also important to ensure that provincial development strategies support project-initiated activities in the long term.

**Recommendation 7.** Develop mechanisms for local people to protect the carbon sink that is contained in peat swamps

There is low awareness among local people of the aspects of the project that consider GHG abatement, the carbon storage role of peat, and the potential value of the carbon sink. Several interviewees noted that this must change if local people are to become enthusiastic participants in the carbon sink aspects of the project; others suggested that it was more important to focus on establishing sustainable swamp management practices that are tied with livelihood benefits and that also achieve carbon storage, rather than on educating locals in the complex areas of GHG abatement and carbon sinks.

A combined approach is recommended. The project should continue to research and promote management practices that have a primary focus on providing local people with productive swamps and livelihood benefits beyond the life of the project, and that also result in GHG abatement. Meanwhile, awareness raising about the significance of the carbon that is stored in the peat swamps, and possibly in the monetary value of that carbon sink, would strengthen local people's appreciation of the diverse natural assets and ecosystem services that their swamps provide.

**Recommendation 8.** Include national and landscape-level perspectives in both the national peat swamp inventory and the National Strategy for Peat Swamps

The MTR team considers that, to meet the objectives outlined in the project document, the inventory criteria should not be restricted to those in the Ramsar tropical peat swamp guide, but should also include ecological information and information on the "landscape context" (e.g. adjacent land use and connectivity with other peat swamp areas).

At the time of the MTR, there is confusion over whether RECOFTC or PSU has responsibility for developing the criteria for the inventory, and this should be clarified as soon as possible to enable the inventory to proceed. The MTR team considers that the national criteria should be established by the PSU and the "landscape context" criteria should be developed by RECOFTC.

**Recommendation 9.** Blend local knowledge and academic knowledge where possible and appropriate, and provide local people with the skills to continuously learn and adapt their management approaches

This project is collecting large amounts of high-quality local and academic knowledge on peat swamps and their management. The MTR team heard of examples in which the two knowledge areas appeared to conflict (e.g. in the timing of burning for krajood and the management of water levels to disadvantage *Melaleuca cajuputi*). This provides an exceptional opportunity to blend these areas of knowledge into a dynamic management model based on sharing, learning and adapting.

The project has been engaging experts and local people to collect knowledge, discuss findings and relate them to scientific knowledge where relevant. Participatory action research is exploring issues that are important for locals (e.g. ecotourism and sustainable krajood-based livelihoods).

Regular meetings between the project and local stakeholders could continually tune understanding of what are sustainable practices and what are not. Media or knowledge products could be developed based on blended local wisdom and scientific evidence, and used to assist locals "learn by doing" and try new approaches to peat swamp management.

Knowledge on peat swamp management is also being collected in projects with similar objectives in nearby countries (especially Indonesia and Malaysia). Reciprocal knowledge sharing with these

projects is recommended, whereby a budget allocation from this project would facilitate visits to Thailand from people in other countries and/or visits to other countries by people from this project.

**Recommendation 10.** Prepare a communication strategy that covers all aspects of the project, that analyzes communication objectives and stakeholders, and that clearly identifies roles, responsibilities and approval protocols

There are many different communication needs to this project, each with different objectives and suitable communication techniques. An external communication agency, Wisdom Vast, has been contracted to develop a communication strategy. However, the MTR team found that there was a lack of clarity regarding communication needs, roles and responsibilities among the various partners. A joint meeting between UNDP, ONEP, RECOFTC and Wisdom Vast is needed as the prerequisite for the development of an objective-based communication strategy.

**Recommendation 11.** Ensure that changes to the results framework are made to reflect changes in implementation approach and are endorsed according to required protocols, and that the revised version is made available to all implementing parties

Changes to and approvals of the results framework were not consistently and clearly documented, resulting in some lack of clarity around the wording of current indicators, targets and outputs. The current "correct" version of the results framework is that endorsed ahead of the 2018 PIR by the PB and RTA and formalized in the 2018 PIR; the PB re-confirmed these changes at its January 2019 meeting. The MTR team found that not all parties knew the correct version or were able to confidently access a copy of this results framework. Also, some of the wording in the PB minutes caused some confusion relating to changes to the results framework. Finally, various changes were made during 2018 to the names of outputs under Outcome 1 that RECOFTC was delivering and reporting against; it was not clear to the MTR team when or by whom these changes were approved and what assessment was made of whether the changed outputs were still appropriate to deliver the outcome.

**Recommendation 12.** Request a 12-month extension to the project, to allow time for key deliverables in Outcome 2 to be achieved

The extensive delays in commencement, particularly for recruitment of the Responsible Party, mean that achieving the very ambitious and technically demanding results under Outcome 2 by the end date of July 2020 will be extremely challenging. In particular, the GHG monitoring system proposed in the project document requires a two-year calibration period and relies on the prior establishment of a water level monitoring program; this two-year calibration has not yet commenced. In many ways, Outcome 2 represents the most substantial added value for Thailand from this GEF funding; if these results are not achieved then there will be significant missed opportunities for Thailand from the project.

**Recommendation 13.** Prepare a revised Social and Environmental Screening Procedure (SESP) assessment for the project, which includes mitigation measures for identified risks

The MTR team considers that some important social and environmental risks could have been addressed in more detail in the environmental and social screening assessment in the project document, and that some of these may have become more significant since commencement. In particular, there are significant risks from changing land use and drainage programs for irrigation that may adversely affect peat swamp condition, yet these were not identified in the project document and the MTR team is not aware of specific mechanisms in place to address these risks.

**Recommendation 14.** Undertake a gender analysis to identify key activities for gender mainstreaming

The MTR team heard of various opportunities for positive gender-related outcomes from the project. However, there was not a systematic approach to pursuing these and a gender analysis was not undertaken during this project's preparation phase. A gender analysis would enable a more systematic approach to gender mainstreaming during the remainder of the project, to maximize the realization of opportunities.

**Recommendation 15.** Engage a person with expertise in monitoring and evaluation to assist with project monitoring to ensure high-quality and timely implementation

This project is technically complex and has some ambitious interrelated quantitative targets. Because of this, the MTR team considers that the allocation to monitoring and evaluation in the original project budget was too low. Allocation of additional resources to the engagement of an M&E specialist would assist the project with quality assurance functions. The M&E specialist would work closely with UNDP, ONEP, RECOFTC and project consultants to ensure consistency and quality of the various M&E activities and to provide timely support for other coordination of project implementation as the need arises.

# Annexes

Annex 1. MTR mission itinerary and people interviewed

Annex 2. List of documents reviewed

Annex 3. MTR evaluation matrix

Annex 4. Progress against outputs

Annex 5. Progress towards results matrix

Annex 6. Ratings scales

Annex 7. Suggested amendments to results framework

Annex 8. Signed UNEG Code of Conduct form

Annex 9. MTR Terms of Reference (excluding ToR annexes)

Annex 10. Signed MTR final report clearance form

Annexed in a separate file: Audit trail from received comments on draft MTR report

Annexed in a separate file: Relevant midterm tracking tools

## Annex 1: MTR mission itinerary and people interviewed

| Date/Time | Meeting/Interview | Participants | Venue |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Monday 22 April 2019** | | | |
| 09.00-11.00 | Opening meeting with UNDP | • Ms. Napaporn Yuberk, Programme Analyst<br>• Ms. Yenta Nungvaewdaeng, Project Assistant | UNDP Country Office |
| 11.00-11.30 | Depart UNDP for ONEP | | |
| 11.30-13.00 | Lunch | | |
| 13.00-14.00 | Meeting with ONEP | • Ms. Sukanya Wisal, Senior Environmental Specialist<br>• Ms. Tatiya Ouitrakul, Environmental Specialist | ONEP Building |
| 14.00 | Leave for Kasetsart University | | |
| 15.00-17.30 | Meeting with RECOFTC and consultants from Kasetsart University | <u>RECOFTC</u><br>• Mr. Ronnakorn Triraganon RECOFTC Team Leader<br>• Mr. Poom Pinthep – RECOFTC Project Manager<br>• Mr. Tanongsak Janthong – Project Coordinator<br>• Ms. Saranya Manatsakarn, RECOFTC<br>• Ms. Nantawan Aunjangwang, RECOFTC<br><br><u>Kasetsart University</u><br>• Mr. Kobsak Wanthongchai, Fac. Of Forestry<br>• Mr. Somruthai Tasaduak, Fac. of Engineering<br>• Ms. Sapit Diloksumpun, Fac of Forestry<br>• Mr. Piyapong Tongdeenok, Faculty of Forestry<br>• Mr. Prasong Sanguantham, Faculty of Forestry<br>• Ms. Penporn Janekarnkij, Faculty of Economics | RECOFTC Building |
| **Tuesday 23 April 2019** | | | |
| 06.00-07.10 | Depart BKK for Nakhon Si Thammarat via Nok Air DD7804 | | |

| Date/Time | Meeting/Interview | Participants | Venue |
|---|---|---|---|
| 08.00-09.00 | Travel from Nakhon Si Thammarat airport to Cha-uad District | | |
| 09.00-12.00 | Meeting with:<br>1. Kreng Sub-district administration representatives<br>2. Head of the villages<br>3. Representative of Sai Kanoon Community Forest and local communities<br>Visit community-based nursery and peat swamp area in Sai Kanoon Village (forest walk and talk) | • Mr. Sawai Thangdam (Mayor)<br>• Mr. Sanan Khongkaew (Head of Village no 11)<br>• Mr. Somaek Inchuay (Kreng community forest committee) | Kreng Sub-district and Sai Kanoon village |
| 12.00-13.00 | Lunch at Cha-uad District | | |
| 13.00-15.00 | Discussion and meeting with representative of Kuan Ngeon Community Forest Committee<br>Visit community-based nursery and Kuan Ngoen community forest | • Ms. Siriporn Kaewjandee, village head<br>• Mr. Boonlue Kaewjandee. Vice -chairman of Khuan Nguan community forest<br>• Mr. Charoen Chokham, Advisor to Forest Committee<br>• Mr. Sabai Anurak, Advisor to Forest Committee | Kuan Ngeon Village<br>Kuan Ngeon community forest |
| 15.30-16.30 | Meeting with director and teachers of Kuan Ngoen School | • Ms. Siriporn Phromprasart, (Teacher)<br>• Ms. Sumoltha Ratanawong (Teacher) | Kuan Ngoen School |
| 17.00-18.00 | Meeting with local media | • Mr. Kraingkrai Rattanporn, Pracharat Radio and TV station<br>• Mr. Pornchai Chotiwan, Buddhism and Culture Radio Station | A Café in Najkhon Sri Thammarat |
| | Stay overnight in Nakhon Si Thammarat | | |
| **Wednesday 24 April 2019** | | | |
| 08.00-09.00 | Travel from Nakhon Si Thammarat to Cha-uad district | | |
| 09.00-10.30 | Meeting with Head of Bor Lor Non Hunting Area office<br>Forest walk at BL NHA | • Mr. Songwut Yiamwej (and team) | Bor Lor Non Hunting Area |

| Date/Time | Meeting/Interview | Participants | Venue |
|---|---|---|---|
| 11.00-12.00 | Meeting with Chief of Forest Fire Operation and Control Office | • Mr. Tanakorn Raktham | |
| 12.00-13.00 | Lunch | | |
| 13.00-15.00 | Travel to Talae Noi Non Hunting Area, Phattalung | | |
| 15.00-16.30 | Meeting with Chief of Talae Noi NHA | • Mr. Prapaisaka Sook-Yoi (NHA Chief ) | Talae Noi NHA |
| 17.00-19.00 | Meeting with RECOFTC's consultant on Output 1.5 community forestry management | • Mr. Cherdsak Kuaraks, Thaksin University | Thaksin University, Songkla campus |
| | Overnight at Talae Noi Non Hunting Area, Phatthalung | | |
| **Thursday 25 April 2019** | | | |
| 10.00-11.00 | Meeting with representatives of local communities and livelihood groups. | • Mr. Kiitikorn Chupetch, Boat service Association for ecotourism)<br>• Mr. Trairat Jobchan, Chief of Village, Moo 2 | Talae Noi NHA |
| 11.00-13.00 | Travel from Phattalung to Nakhon Si Thammarat (lunch on the way) | | |
| 13.00-14.00 | Meeting with Royal Forestry Management Bureau 12 Nakhon Si Thammarat | • Mr. Kwanchai Aue-Ari (Senior Forest Technician) | Forestry Management Bureau 12 |
| 14.30-16.00 | Meeting with Protected Area Regional Office 5 (PA RO 5), Nakhon Si Thammarat | • Mr. Chaichana Wichaidit, (Director of Fire Control sub-division, PA RO 5) | PA RO 5 Office |
| 16.00 | Leave for Nakhon Si Thammarat airport | | |
| 20.05-21.20 | Depart for BKK via FD 3183 | | |
| **Friday 26 April 2019** | | | |
| 09.00-10.00 | Meeting with representatives of Prince of Songkhla University | • Mr. Noparat Bamroongrugsa, Wetland Management Specialist<br>• Ms. Nirawan Pipitsombat, Expert in Peat Swamp Policy | UNDP Country Office |
| 10.00-12.00 | Meeting with Wisdom Vast, communication agency | • Mr. Piya Piriyapokanont and team | |

| Date/Time | Meeting/Interview | Participants | Venue |
|---|---|---|---|
| 13.00-16.30 | Verification and clarification meeting with RECOFTC | • Mr. Ronnakorn Triraganon, RECOFTC Team Leader<br>• Mr. Poom Pinthep, RECOFTC Project Manager<br>• RECOFTC Finance Officer<br>• RECOFTC Communication Officer | RECOFTC Office |
| **Monday 29 April 2019** | | | |
| 10.00-12.00 | Debriefing with ONEP and RECOFTC at ONEP Office | ONEP<br>• Ms. Sukanya Wisal, ONEP Project Manager<br>• Ms. Tatiya Ouitrakul, ONEP Project Coordinator<br><br>RECOFTC<br>• Mr. Ronnakorn Triraganon RECOFTC Team Leader<br>• Mr. Poom Pinthep – RECOFTC Project Manager<br>• Mr. Tanongsak Janthong – Project Coordinator<br>• Ms. Chutiporn Viriyapanon, Communication Officer<br>• Ms. Natawan Ounchangwang, Project Coordinator<br>• Mr. Pratya Yungpattana, Project Officer<br>• Ms. Saranya Manaskarn<br>• Project Coordinator<br>• Ms. Kesara Saenmongkhol<br>• Project Administration Officer<br><br>UNDP<br>Ms. Yenta Nungvaewdaeng | ONEP Office |
| 12.00-13.00 | Travel to UNDP Office (Lunch on the way) | | |
| 13.00-15.00 | Debriefing with UNDP | • Mr. Renaud Meyer, Resident Representative<br>• Ms. Lovita Ramguttee, Deputy Resident Representative | UNDP Country Office |

| Date/Time | Meeting/Interview | Participants | Venue |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | • Mr. Saengroj Srisawaskraisorn, Programme Specialist/Team Leader IGSD Unit<br>• Ms. Napaporn Yuberk, Programme Specialist<br>• Ms. Yenta Nungvaewdaeng, Project Assistant<br>• Ms. Natsuda Suwatthanapunpot | |

**Annex 2: List of documents reviewed**

1. PIF
2. UNDP Initiation Plan
3. Project Document
4. LPAC meeting minutes
5. UNDP Environmental and Social Screening results
6. Project Inception Report
7. 2018 PIR
8. Quarterly progress reports and work plans of the various implementation task teams
9. Audit reports
10. Finalized GEF focal area Tracking Tools at CEO endorsement and midterm
11. Back to Office Reports by UNDP
12. All monitoring reports prepared by the project
14. Minutes of the Project Board meetings
15. Technical reports prepared by project consultants
16. Co-financing, budgeting and expenditure report

## Annex 3: MTR evaluation matrix

| Evaluation questions | Indicators | Sources | Methodology |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Project Strategy** | | | |
| Project Design | Project design effective at achieving desired results | Project document, PIF, CEO endorsement request, PIR, GEF strategies, Thai national strategies and plans | Desktop review, interviews |
| Results Framework | Indicators and targets meet SMART criteria | Project document, amended results framework, PIR, tracking tools | Desktop review, interviews |
| **Progress Towards Results** | | | |
| Progress Towards Outcomes | Indicators in results framework | PIR, quarterly reports, results framework, project document, stakeholder interviews, midterm tracking tools | Desktop review, interviews, field visits |
| Remaining Barriers to Achieving Project Objective | Status of barriers at midterm | PIR, quarterly reports, project document, stakeholder interviews | Desktop review, interviews, field visits |
| **Project Implementation and Adaptive Management** | | | |
| Management Arrangements | Quality of support to and execution of the project | PIR, quarterly reports, PB minutes, stakeholder interviews | Desktop review, interviews |
| Work planning | Work planning is results-based and project uses results framework as a management tool | PIR, quarterly reports, annual and multi-year work plans, PB minutes, results framework, stakeholder interviews | Desktop review, interviews |
| Finance and co-finance | Effectiveness of financial management and level of co-financing relative to that originally committed | Budget and expenditure reports, audit reports, quarterly reports, PB minutes, co-financing reports, stakeholder interviews | Desktop review, interviews |
| Project-level monitoring and evaluation systems | Quality and implementation of M&E plan | PIR, quarterly reports, project document, results framework, Tracking Tools, stakeholder interviews | Desktop review, interviews |
| Stakeholder engagement | Adequacy of stakeholder engagement throughout project cycle | Project document, PIR, quarterly reports, stakeholder interviews | Desktop review, interviews, field visits |

| Evaluation questions | Indicators | Sources | Methodology |
|---|---|---|---|
| Reporting | Reporting meets requirements and is used effectively to communicate and share within project | PIR, quarterly reports, back to office reports, PB minutes, stakeholder interviews | Desktop review, interviews |
| Communications | Internal and external communication is regular, effective and appropriate | PIR, quarterly reports, back to office reports, PB minutes, social media posts, stakeholder interviews | Desktop review, interviews, field visits |
| **Sustainability** | | | |
| Financial risks to sustainability | Likelihood and opportunities for financial sustainability beyond project | Quarterly reports, PIR, PB minutes, stakeholder interviews | Desktop review, interviews, field visits |
| Socio-economic risks to sustainability | Level of stakeholder ownership of project and level of knowledge transfer | PIR, quarterly reports, back to office reports, PB minutes, stakeholder interviews | Desktop review, interviews, field visits |
| Institutional framework and governance risks to sustainability | Risks identified and mitigation measures in place | PIR, quarterly reports, back to office reports, PB minutes, stakeholder interviews | Desktop review, interviews, field visits |
| Environmental risks to sustainability | Risks identified and mitigation measures in place | PIR, quarterly reports, back to office reports, PB minutes, project document, stakeholder interviews | Desktop review, interviews, field visits |

## Annex 4: Progress against outputs

The following brief assessment of progress against project outputs has been prepared by the MTR team, using a variety of information sources, particularly the RECOFTC quarterly reports and interview. It is not intended as a comprehensive progress report or critical assessment of progress.

| Output | Progress as assessed by MTR team |
|---|---|
| **Outcome 1:** Expanding protection of high conservation value peat swamp forests and demonstrating their sustainable use within the broader landscape[1] | |
| 1.1: Improve Protection Status of the Kuan Kreng Landscape[2] | A stakeholder analysis and basic participatory resource assessment for the target area in the KKL have been completed. Stakeholder issues have been analyzed, their needs assessed, and potential for collaboration have been identified. GIS is being used for land-use planning and management. Landscape maps have been collated, and different land-use areas (e.g. for settlement, conservation, and community forests, among others) have been identified. These have fed into the drafting of a framework for a co-management feasibility study.<br>Participatory action research for KKL co-management was conducted and results indicate that the beliefs, cultural and social relationships of local people could be a significant mechanism contributing to peat swamp conservation and avoidance of conflicts in resource utilization. Involvement of the private sector in environmental education and youth group participation was also identified as study recommendation.<br>Several public activities have been held to collect ideas and inputs for appropriate mechanisms for KKL peat swamps management.<br>Local wisdom knowledge on peat swamp was documented in order to raise awareness and also support the learning center development in Kreng sub-district.<br>A local media company has been contracted to provide local media communication for peat swamps conservation and to develop at least local communication products. |
| 1.2: Participatory management plan for Kuan Kreng Landscape | A landscape strategy development has been initiated, supervised by Deputy Governor of Nakhon Si Thammarat, and collaboration has been sought from relevant agencies in Phattalung and Songkhla. Spatial information for GIS and land-use planning of KKL has been developed. |
| 1.3: Kreng sub-district land-use plan adjusted to reflect the new zonation | A GIS boundary map of Kreng sub-district (including areas of different land use) and a framework for land-use analysis has been developed, to be used as a basis for further discussion with local stakeholders during the participatory land-use assessment planned under the project.<br>Drones were used to map and assess condition of three community forests.<br>A scheduled consultation workshop with communities was postponed to Q2 2019. |

| Output | Progress as assessed by MTR team |
|---|---|
| 1.4: Training workshops to increase capacity of the administrators and TAOs for patrolling, monitoring water levels, fire protection, and enforcement | Hotspots for forest fires were identified with the chiefs of NHAs and relevant local agencies in the project's target area. A framework for collaborative engagement was drafted with three sub-districts and forest fire control units in the project's target area. A capacity development needs assessment in water and fire management and community forestry was also undertaken.<br>Members of the Forest Fire Smoke and Smog Prevention network were trained and supported for forest fire management. Officers from the Forest Fire Protection Unit, Forest Fire Network and relevant agencies reviewed and increased their knowledge in forest fire management through a joint workshop with the project and Protected Areas Regional Office 5 (Nakhon Si Thammarat). The project has so far experienced strong collaboration with the Protected Areas Regional Office 5 (Nakhon Si Thammarat).<br>Networking for forest fire and haze prevention, involving 42 networks, has been very effective. |
| 1.5: Community forestry management strengthened and support scheme in place | A situation analysis and demonstration of a sampling plot was undertaken by local experts from the College of Local Wisdom, Thaksin University. The results show that the main ecosystem goods and services from the community forests are fish collection, edible vegetables, honey collection, use as a recreation area, and water supply. The variety of flora and fauna species from the demonstration plot will be used as the basis for developing community forest management.<br>The community forest network has been mobilized in order to explore and provide feedback on collaboration and provide suggestions for community forest development.<br>An integrated local curriculum on peat swamp conservation was developed with schoolteachers from 14 schools. |
| **Outcome 2:** Implementing technologies to avoid peat swamp forest degradation and restore degraded peat swamp forests | |
| 2.1: Hydrotechnical measures implemented in pilot sites to prevent drainage and fires | Work is focusing on developing models for water balance using the hydrological modelling software MIKE SHE. The required data for processing the water balance model in the target area have been gathered: digital elevation model (DEM); meteorological, hydrological, hydrogeological, geological, land-use, sea water level and cross-section data; data on water levels in peat swamp forest; and water management strategies by the local government agencies.<br>The results depict the characteristics of the hydrological cycle in the target area. It will be used for the analysis of water balance and its interaction with the hydrological cycle and then can be used for planning and management of the water table for swamp management and restoration purposes.<br>30-meter towers were installed in two areas covering upper and lower peat swamp forest (Phanangtung botanical garden and the lower peat swamp forest in Kreng sub-district), to collect meteorological and hydrological parameters. |

| Output | Progress as assessed by MTR team |
|---|---|
| 2.2: Native tree reforestation of areas damaged by storms and fires in Kreng sub-district | RECOFTC have chosen not to attempt to restore just one large area of 300 ha, because of risks with low survival and growth rates. RECOFTC found different areas in Bor Lor NHA that were previously destroyed by fires that had already begun natural regeneration with native species. The focus is, therefore, on developing different models with demonstration plots of community-based peat swamp restoration. Each demonstration plot will be no larger than 5 ha, with a total of about 50 ha demonstration. By the end of the project, at least 80 ha will be reforested by local stakeholders.<br>The target area of 300 ha reforested is extremely unlikely to be met, for various reasons. Reforestation in peat swamps is time consuming and requires two or three years of follow-up maintenance. Also, there have been some delays in planned planting. Permission to plant must be sought from organizations (DNP, RFD, Chaipattana Royal Foundation) and this can cause delays or require new locations to be found. Other planting was delayed by unseasonal wet conditions; these activities have been shifted to Q2/2019.<br>Under the project's reforestation and restoration scheme, communities are given the opportunity to consider which species they would like to obtain. Community-based forest nurseries have been established to provide seedlings to the communities. The project is supporting the maintenance and other activities of these nurseries. |
| 2.3: Peat swamp carbon flux monitoring system set up | For carbon measurement within the KKL, the project aims to set up a carbon measurement and monitoring system in three land-use types: undisturbed peat swamp forest, disturbed or degraded peat swamp forest, and converted peatlands. Site selection for oil palm plantations in Kreng sub-district, Cha-Uat district, Nakhon Si Thammarat province as converted peatlands has been undertaken.<br>A carbon measurement and monitoring system is being set up in three land-use types: 1) undisturbed peat swamp forest, 2) disturbed or degraded peat swamp forest and 3) converted peatlands. The LI-8100A Automated Soil $CO_2$ Flux System has been purchased and training has been undertaken for research assistants at the Faculty of Forestry, Kasetsart University. All equipment is being prepared for on-site $CO_2$ emission measurement in peat swamps.<br>A database is being developed for the data.<br>A community-based team has been arranged for the carbon measurement and monitoring in Kuan Kreng peat swamps. The community training for tree surveys and carbon measurement has been done, and the 2 km x 2 km grid sampling for carbon stock survey throughout the KKL has been planned. |
| **Outcome 3:** Improving policies, standards and enforcement mechanisms for conservation and sustainable use of peat swamp forests | |
| 3.1: Working Group for promoting a landscape approach to management of peat swamp areas | Draft ToR and proposed membership for two levels of project task forces (one at the KKL level and one for Kreng Sub-district) have been prepared and considered by the PB.<br>A landscape forum was organized on 28 February 2019 to create a platform and provide relevant agencies and local communities in KKL with updates on project progress. |

| Output | Progress as assessed by MTR team |
|---|---|
| 3.2: Specific criteria and methodologies for assessment of state, functions and services of peat swamps developed and approved based on an economic valuation of ecosystem services provided by peat swamps in the KKL | On 9–10 February 2019, an expert team on economic valuation of peat swamp resources organized a workshop on data collection and analysis for the economic valuation of peat swamp ecosystem use. This will support local researchers into the economic valuation of peat swamp resources.<br>Progress has been made on draft criteria and methodology for peat swamp assessment. The MTR team noted that there was some duplication in the perceived roles of RECOFTC and PSU. This is partly due to the wording of this output being unclear. |
| 3.3: Comprehensive inventory and database of Thailand's peat swamp areas | PSU has been contracted to undertake the national inventory and database.<br>Existing GIS layers have been collected and early field work has commenced.<br>All criteria are not yet available. |
| 3.4: National strategy for peat swamp areas drafted for government approval | PSU has been contracted to develop the NSP. |

[1] Outputs 1.1, 1.2, 1.3 and 1.4 are different from those listed in the original project document

[2] Output 1.1 in RECOFTC quarterly reports is different to that used previously

## Annex 5: Progress towards results matrix

| Indicator | Baseline | End-of-project Target | 2018 PIR | MTR Assessment | Achievement Rating | Justification |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Objective:** To conserve and restore peatlands to increase their capacities to act as carbon sinks, as habitats for globally important species, and as sources of ecosystem services for improved livelihoods | | | | | | |
| 1. Extent of peat swamp area under effective management (IUCN Category IV, V) in KKL, under the framework of a National Strategy for Peat Swamps (NSP) | Currently there is no NSP; there are 2 NHAs (IUCN category IV) as follows:<br><br>Thale Noi NHA and buffer zone - 48,000 ha<br><br>Bor Lor NHA - 10,016 ha | 154,363 ha | Off track | **Not on target**<br><br>Significant relevant activities have been implemented in KKL, including a feasibility study to define a landscape co-management approach for peat swamps. There has only been limited consideration of the role of protected areas in this landscape approach.<br><br>The project must identify replication mechanisms to transfer learnings and knowledge from KKL to other areas if the 154,363 ha target is to be met. | **Moderately Unsatisfactory** | A substantial amount of work has been undertaken that will build towards the Objective and its associated target. The approach being taken is one of both "top-down" and "bottom-up": a landscape-scale approach that considers protected areas and sustainable use, informed by intensive community-level work on peat swamps, community forest management and local knowledge. Although there is still much to be done, the approach shows significant promise. Despite this, the single indicator for the Objective has been rated as "not on target", because attention must be paid to important aspects of its interpretation and measurement if it is to be met; for this reason, the Objective has been rated as Moderately Unsatisfactory. |

| Indicator | Baseline | End-of-project Target | 2018 PIR | MTR Assessment | Achievement Rating | Justification |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Outcome 1:** Expanding protection of high conservation value peat swamp forests and demonstrating their sustainable use within the broader landscape | | | | | | |
| 2. Peat swamp forests in KKL under protection | Thale Noi NHA – 48,000 ha<br><br>Bor Lor NHA – 10,016 ha | Additional 16,347 ha | Off track | **On target**<br><br>The project is delivering numerous on-ground and capacity development activities at additional locations; should consider carefully which additional areas will be considered "under protection" and how this will be interpreted. | **Satisfactory** | Good work is being undertaken under this Outcome. Multiple sources of evidence showed that community awareness of and involvement in the project is high, and that much of the community-level work being done is effective. Although no quantitative results were available from the last PIR in 2018, anecdotal reports during the field visit and information provided in quarterly reports suggest that the incidence of violations of NHA regulations declined, that the incidence of fires declined in the past year, and that training and capacity building has been effective (Indicators 4, 5 and 6). Work towards Indicator 7 with local people on community forest management has been well received in the region. The various project initiatives that the MTR team observed are likely to lead to a greater peat swamp area being managed in the KKL; however, careful attention is needed to the interpretation and measurement of Indicator 2 (Peat swamp forests in KKL under protection) if progress under this outcome is to remain satisfactory at the project's end. Also, although the METT showed an improvement from baseline (Indicator 3) at two sites, it is not clear from the Tracking Tool whether project activities led to this improvement and the METT had not been applied to all four sites. Finally, the prompt development of an Ecosystem Health Index (Indicator 8) is required. |
| 3. Enhanced management effectiveness at existing PAs (NHAs) and Songkhla and Kuan Kreng peat swamp landscapes as measured by METT | Thale Noi NHA: 64<br><br>Bor Lor NHA: 42<br><br>Kuan Kreng: 12<br><br>Songkhla: 19 | Thale Noi NHA: 75<br><br>Bor Lor NHA: 70<br><br>Kuan Kreng: 20<br><br>Songkhla: 30 | Behind schedule | **On target**<br><br>METT for the MTR was reported as:<br><br>Thale Noi: 69 (from baseline 64)<br><br>Bor Lor: 57 (from baseline 42)<br><br>This represents an improvement, although it is not clear whether project activities have led to this improvement. At the time of the MTR, the METT had not been completed for the | | |

| Indicator | Baseline | End-of-project Target | 2018 PIR | MTR Assessment | Achievement Rating | Justification |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | Songkhla and Kuan Kreng landscapes. | | |
| 4. Incidence of violations of NHA regulations | NHA<br>2013 2014 (up to Sept.)<br>Bor Lor: 2 (1 cutting tree, 1 invasion) 1 (invasion)<br>Thale Noi: 21 (4 cutting tree, 17 burning forest for land) 15 (1 cutting tree, 14 burning forest for land) | Bor Lor: 0 Thale Noi: No tree cutting, Less than 6 invasions | No progress | **On target**<br>Anecdotal advice from interviews during the mission indicates that there have been fewer violations. | | |
| 5. Incidence of fires | Wildfires burning on average 680 ha per year (0.91%) of KKL | Wildfires burning on average 408 ha per year KKL | No progress | **On target**<br>Anecdotal advice from interviews during the mission indicates that there have been fewer wildfires, partly due to the support provided by the project to the 41 local fire networks | | |

| Indicator | Baseline | End-of-project Target | 2018 PIR | MTR Assessment | Achievement Rating | Justification |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 6. Number of units trained for patrolling, managing water levels, fire protection, and enforcement of regulations | (not set or not applicable) | 6 units in Thale Noi NHA<br><br>2 in Bor Lor NHA<br><br>3 in Kreng, Cha-uad and Baan Tul sub-districts | No progress | **On target**<br><br>Several units have been trained in the KKL, mostly in fire surveillance.<br><br>Little attention to other capacity building needs; a capacity needs assessment has been undertaken that identified the priority areas for focus, although this is not documented. | | |
| 7. Area of peat swamp forests in Kuan Kreng landscape under participatory community forestry management plans or co-management | 435 ha under some form of community forestry as follows:<br><br>Community Forest Kuan Ngoen (90 ha; Baan Tul)<br><br>Community Forest Suan Somdej Chao Fa Chulabhorn (240 ha; Cha-uad)<br><br>Baan Sai Kannon (100 ha; Kreng sub-district)<br><br>No EHI monitoring system in use | 435 ha under improved peat swamp forest participatory management plans<br><br>Additional 1,500 ha established under co-management | Behind schedule although community forest groups had been approached. | **On target**<br><br>Good progress with the local community on community forest management.<br><br>Should confirm how "under … co-management" will be interpreted for measuring achievement against this. | | |

| Indicator | Baseline | End-of-project Target | 2018 PIR | MTR Assessment | Achievement Rating | Justification |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 8. Ecosystem Health Index (EHI) monitoring system for monitoring peatland health is developed and in place for 2 NHAs in order to ensure good quality habitat for Yellow-headed Tortoise, Fishing Cat | No EHI monitoring system in use | System applied at 2 NHAs | No EHI conducted yet | **Not on target**<br>Not commenced.<br>Should be developed as soon as possible, learning from its successful recent application in UNDP-GEF projects in China. | | |
| **Outcome 2:** Implementing technologies to avoid peat swamp forest degradation and restore degraded peat swamps forests | | | | | | |
| 9. Peat swamp area in KKL that is under effective water table management regime | 0 ha | 4,600 ha | Discussions and background data collection commenced | **Not on target**<br>Hydrological model with recommendations is nearing completion.<br>Little work done on developing the mechanism for implementation of these recommendations; will rely largely on provincial stakeholders. | **Unsatisfactory** | The project faces significant challenges under this outcome, which includes the project's very ambitious targets for reductions in GHG emissions. Although a lot of high-quality work is underway, especially in the form of academic research and modelling to inform implementation, achievement of Targets 9, 10 and 11 are dependent on implementation of water table management across 4,600 ha in the KKL. The hydrological modelling to inform this is nearing completion, however little or no progress has been made on the mechanism for delivering the water level changes and, therefore, the GHG results. It is |

| Indicator | Baseline | End-of-project Target | 2018 PIR | MTR Assessment | Achievement Rating | Justification |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 10. Water levels at 4,600 ha of peat swamp forest (pilot sites where hydrotechnical measures are to be implemented) | 20-90 cm below surface during dry season. To be confirmed by detailed study on the hydrological system at the pilot sites under Output 2.1 | Drainage will be stopped or significantly reduced and the water level will substantially increase for all project sites. At least for 25% of the area (1,150 ha) the water level will never drop more than 20 cm below surface | Existing and ongoing water management systems under review | **Not on target**<br><br>For the above reasons, the MTR team believes that there is a high risk that the targeted changes to drainage and water levels will not be achieved by July 2020. | | essential that the hydrological modelling leads to tangible management actions. Further, the target for carbon sequestration through reforestation is extremely unlikely to be met and the MTR team recommends that the target be revised downward and that an additional indicator and target be adopted for this component. |
| 11. GHG emissions at 4,600 ha of peat swamp forest (pilot sites where hydrotechnical measures are to be implemented) | 2.793 Mt $CO_2$-eq | 1.959 Mt $CO_2$-eq | Carbon monitoring system under review and required equipment identified | **Not on target**<br><br>Carbon measurement equipment has been purchased and installed and measurements have commenced.<br><br>Because of its dependence on the water level reductions, there is a high risk that the targeted GHG results will not be achieved. Also, the GHG monitoring system requires two years of calibration, therefore monitoring cannot be finished by July 2020. | | |

| Indicator | Baseline | End-of-project Target | 2018 PIR | MTR Assessment | Achievement Rating | Justification |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 12. Carbon sequestration through reforestation with native species (projected over 20 years) | (not set or not applicable) | 129,000 $tCO_2$-eq over a 20-year period | Behind schedule; area to be planted likely to be "at least 100 ha" | **Not on target**<br><br>Limited planting has occurred. Planting locations identified, although delays occurred. The target to reforest 300 ha is extremely unlikely to be met. In addition, planting densities are much lower than proposed in the project document.<br><br>MTR team considers target will not be achieved and recommends that it be revised downwards. | | |

| Indicator | Baseline | End-of-project Target | 2018 PIR | MTR Assessment | Achievement Rating | Justification |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Outcome 3:** Improving policies, standards, and enforcement mechanisms for conservation and sustainable use of peat swamp forests | | | | | | |
| 13. Cross-sectoral WG for promoting a landscape approach to peatlands conservation and sustainable use | Cross-sectoral platform exists in the form of National Wetland Management Committee, but no specific working group on landscape approach to peatlands conservation and sustainable use | Working Group formed by Year 1 | Behind schedule | **On target**<br><br>ToR drafted for a provincial cross-sectoral WG, and final approval is pending.<br><br>Attention should be paid to whether the terms of reference satisfy the wording of the indicator and the intent of the project document. | **Moderately Satisfactory** | Actions under this Outcome are in the early stages, and are being undertaken according to the project document and best available practice. There are likely to be challenges with delivering all outputs and meeting all targets by the end date of July 2020; hence, the MTR team considers progress to be Moderately Satisfactory rather than Satisfactory. |
| 14. Criteria and methodologies for assessment of peatlands' state, function and services that take into account full range of ecosystem services | No documented criteria exist | Criteria and methodology endorsed by Year 2 and includes ecological criteria | No progress | **On target**<br><br>Criteria development commenced.<br><br>Ramsar briefing note 9 is being used as the basis, which is appropriate.<br><br>Some confusion around roles needs clarification.<br><br>Process for endorsement of the criteria should be agreed. | | |

| Indicator | Baseline | End-of-project Target | 2018 PIR | MTR Assessment | Achievement Rating | Justification |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 15. Inventory of all peatlands | Outdated listing of peatlands exists and it is spotty (not comprehensive) | Current and comprehensive listing of peatlands status, functions, services (based on above criteria) by Year 3 | No progress | **On target**<br>GIS layers collected and early field work commenced. | | |
| 16. National Strategy for Peat Swamps | None | New 20-year strategy that takes economic and ecological benefits into account in determining use of peatlands | No progress | **On target**<br>Contractor has been appointed.<br>NSP will be based on other project components, especially landscape approach and inventory. | | |

## Annex 6: Ratings scales

| Ratings for Progress Towards Results: (one rating for each outcome and for the objective) | | |
|---|---|---|
| 6 | Highly Satisfactory (HS) | The objective/outcome is expected to achieve or exceed all its end-of-project targets, without major shortcomings. The progress towards the objective/outcome can be presented as "good practice". |
| 5 | Satisfactory (S) | The objective/outcome is expected to achieve most of its end-of-project targets, with only minor shortcomings. |
| 4 | Moderately Satisfactory (MS) | The objective/outcome is expected to achieve most of its end-of-project targets but with significant shortcomings. |
| 3 | Moderately Unsatisfactory (HU) | The objective/outcome is expected to achieve its end-of-project targets with major shortcomings. |
| 2 | Unsatisfactory (U) | The objective/outcome is expected not to achieve most of its end-of-project targets. |
| 1 | Highly Unsatisfactory (HU) | The objective/outcome has failed to achieve its midterm targets, and is not expected to achieve any of its end-of-project targets. |

| Ratings for Project Implementation & Adaptive Management: (one overall rating) | | |
|---|---|---|
| 6 | Highly Satisfactory (HS) | Implementation of all seven components – management arrangements, work planning, finance and co-finance, project-level monitoring and evaluation systems, stakeholder engagement, reporting, and communications – is leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive management. The project can be presented as "good practice". |
| 5 | Satisfactory (S) | Implementation of most of the seven components is leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive management except for only few that are subject to remedial action. |
| 4 | Moderately Satisfactory (MS) | Implementation of some of the seven components is leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive management, with some components requiring remedial action. |
| 3 | Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU) | Implementation of some of the seven components is not leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive, with most components requiring remedial action. |
| 2 | Unsatisfactory (U) | Implementation of most of the seven components is not leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive management. |
| 1 | Highly Unsatisfactory (HU) | Implementation of none of the seven components is leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive management. |

| Ratings for Sustainability: (one overall rating) | | |
|---|---|---|
| 4 | Likely (L) | Negligible risks to sustainability, with key outcomes on track to be achieved by the project's closure and expected to continue into the foreseeable future |
| 3 | Moderately Likely (ML) | Moderate risks, but expectations that at least some outcomes will be sustained due to the progress towards results on outcomes at the Midterm Review |
| 2 | Moderately Unlikely (MU) | Significant risk that key outcomes will not carry on after project closure, although some outputs and activities should carry on |
| 1 | Unlikely (U) | Severe risks that project outcomes as well as key outputs will not be sustained. |

## Annex 7: Suggested amendments to results framework

| Indicator | Baseline | End-of-project target | Suggestions |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Objective:** To conserve and restore peatlands to increase their capacities to act as carbon sinks, as habitats for globally important species, and as sources of ecosystem services for improved livelihoods | | | |
| 1. Extent of peat swamp area under effective management (IUCN Category IV, V) in KKL, under the framework of a National Strategy for Peat Swamps (NSP) | Currently there is no NSP; there are 2 NHAs (IUCN category IV) as follows:<br>Thale Noi NHA and buffer zone - 48,000 ha<br>Bor Lor NHA - 10,016 ha | 154,363 ha | Careful consideration needed to interpretation of "under effective management (IUCN Category IV, V)" to achieve shared understanding |
| **Outcome 1:** Expanding protection of high conservation value peat swamp forests and demonstrating their sustainable use within the broader landscape | | | |
| 2. Peat swamp forests in KKL under protection | Thale Noi NHA – 48,000 ha<br>Bor Lor NHA – 10,016 ha | Additional 16,347 ha | Careful consideration needed to interpretation of "under protection" |
| 3. Enhanced management effectiveness at existing PAs (NHAs) and Songkhla and Kuan Kreng peat swamp landscapes as measured by METT | Thale Noi NHA: 64<br>Bor Lor NHA: 42<br>Kuan Kreng: 12<br>Songkhla: 19 | Thale Noi NHA: 75<br>Bor Lor NHA: 70<br>Kuan Kreng: 20<br>Songkhla: 30 | No suggestions |
| 4. Incidence of violations of NHA regulations | NHA<br>2013 2014 (up to Sept.)<br>Bor Lor: 2 (1 cutting tree, 1 invasion) 1 (invasion)<br>Thale Noi: 21 (4 cutting tree, 17 burning forest for land) 15 (1 cutting tree, 14 burning forest for land) | Bor Lor: 0 Thale Noi: No tree cutting, Less than 6 invasions | No suggestions |
| 5. Incidence of fires | Wildfires burning on average 680 ha per year (0.91%) of KKL | Wildfires burning on average 408 ha per year KKL | No suggestions |
| 6. Number of units trained for patrolling, managing water levels, fire protection, and enforcement of regulations | (not set or not applicable) | 6 units in Thale Noi NHA<br>2 in Bor Lor NHA<br>3 in Kreng, Cha-uad and Baan Tul sub-districts | No suggestions |

| Indicator | Baseline | End-of-project target | Suggestions |
|---|---|---|---|
| 7. Area of peat swamp forests in Kuan Kreng landscape under participatory community forestry management plans or co-management | 435 ha under some form of community forestry as follows:<br>Community Forest Kuan Ngoen (90 ha; Baan Tul)<br>Community Forest Suan Somdej Chao Fa Chulabhorn (240 ha; Cha-uad)<br>Baan Sai Kannon (100 ha; Kreng sub-district)<br>No EHI monitoring system in use | 435 ha under improved peat swamp forest participatory management plans<br>Additional 1,500 ha established under co-management | Must agree on interpretation and measurement of "under … co-management"<br>No changes suggested |
| 8. Ecosystem Health Index (EHI) monitoring system for monitoring peatland health is developed and in place for 2 NHAs in order to ensure good quality habitat for Yellow-headed Tortoise, Fishing Cat | No EHI monitoring system in use | System applied at 2 NHAs | Revise indicator to make clear that EHI "will include consideration of habitat quality for Yellow-headed Tortoise, Fishing Cat and other species" |
| **Outcome 2:** Implementing technologies to avoid peat swamp forest degradation and restore degraded peat swamps forests | | | |
| 9. Peat swamp area in KKL that is under effective water table management regime | 0 ha | 4,600 ha | Must clarify how "under effective management" will be interpreted and measured<br>Analyze achievability of 4,600 ha target when progress has been made on establishing the implementation mechanism for water table management; consider revising target at this time |
| 10. Water levels at 4,600 ha of peat swamp forest (pilot sites where hydrotechnical measures are to be implemented) | 20-90 cm below surface during dry season. To be confirmed by detailed study on the hydrological system at the pilot sites under Output 2.1 | Drainage will be stopped or significantly reduced and the water level will substantially increase for all project sites. At least for 25% of the area (1,150 ha) the water level will never drop more than 20 cm below surface. | Analyze achievability of target when Indicator 9 is assessed as described above; consider revising target at this time |

| Indicator | Baseline | End-of-project target | Suggestions |
|---|---|---|---|
| 11. GHG emissions at 4,600 ha of peat swamp forest (pilot sites where hydrotechnical measures are to be implemented) | 2.793 Mt $CO_2$-eq | 1.959 Mt $CO_2$-eq | Analyze achievability of target when Indicator 9 is assessed as described above; consider revising target at this time<br>Recommend revising the baseline if necessary to ensure that methodologies for baseline and end-of-project emissions are compatible |
| 12. Carbon sequestration through reforestation with native species (projected over 20 years) | (not set or not applicable) | 129,000 t$CO_2$-eq over a 20-year period | Recommend setting a lower end-of-project $CO_2$ target<br>Also recommend a new indicator and target to require "development of guidelines for objective-based planning and implementation restoration and reforestation" |
| **Outcome 3:** Improving policies, standards, and enforcement mechanisms for conservation and sustainable use of peat swamp forests | | | |
| 13. Cross-sectoral WG for promoting a landscape approach to peatlands conservation and sustainable use | Cross-sectoral platform exists in the form of National Wetland Management Committee, but no specific working group on landscape approach to peatlands conservation and sustainable use | Working Group formed by Year 1 | Recommend changing target to "Working Group formed by Year 3" |
| 14. Criteria and methodologies for assessment of peatlands' state, function and services that take into account full range of ecosystem services | No documented criteria exist | Criteria and methodology endorsed by Year 2 and includes ecological criteria | Recommend changing target to "Criteria and methodology endorsed by Year 3 and includes ecological criteria" |
| 15. Inventory of all peatlands | Outdated listing of peatlands exists and it is spotty (not comprehensive) | Current and comprehensive listing of peatlands status, functions, services (based on above criteria) by Year 3 | No suggestions |

| Indicator | Baseline | End-of-project target | Suggestions |
|---|---|---|---|
| 16. National Strategy for Peat Swamps | None | New 20-year strategy that takes economic and ecological benefits into account in determining use of peatlands | Results framework in project document states that "Strategy approved and adopted by NEB [National Environmental Board]". It is not realistic that the NEB would approve the strategy before the end of the project; therefore, the MTR team recommends that project parties agree on a suitable stage of the approval process for the strategy to reach during the project (e.g. submitted to the National Wetland Management Subcommittee). |

## Annex 8: Signed UNEG Code of Conduct form

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

**MTR Consultant Agreement Form**

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

Name of Consultant: Adrian Stokes

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

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

Signed at Adelaide, Australia on 15 July 2019

Signature: 

Evaluators/Consultants:
1. Must present information that is complete and fair in its assessment of strengths and weaknesses so that decisions or actions taken are well founded.
2. Must disclose the full set of evaluation findings along with information on their limitations and have this accessible to all affected by the evaluation with expressed legal rights to receive results.
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4. Sometimes uncover evidence of wrongdoing while conducting evaluations. Such cases must be reported discreetly to the appropriate investigative body. Evaluators should consult with other relevant oversight entities when there is any doubt about if and how issues should be reported.
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6. Are responsible for their performance and their product(s). They are responsible for the clear, accurate and fair written and/or oral presentation of study limitations, findings and recommendations.
7. Should reflect sound accounting procedures and be prudent in using the resources of the evaluation.

**MTR Consultant Agreement Form**

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

Name of Consultant: Walaitat Worakul

Name of Consultancy Organization (where relevant): -

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

Signed at: Chiang Mai, Thailand: on 15 July 2019

Signature: 

**Annex 9: MTR Terms of Reference (excluding ToR annexes)**

# UNDP-GEF MIDTERM REVIEW
# TERM OF REFERENCE (INTERNATIONAL MTR TEAM LEAD)

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This is the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the UNDP-GEF Midterm Review (MTR) of the *medium*-sized project titled **Maximizing carbon sink capacity and conserving biodiversity through sustainable conservation, restoration, and management of peat swamp ecosystems** (PIMS#4951) implemented through the Office of Natural Resources and Environmental Policy and Planning (ONEP), Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE), which is to be undertaken in 2nd year. The project started on 21st July 2016 and is in its *second* year of implementation. In line with the UNDP-GEF Guidance on MTRs, this MTR process was initiated before the submission of the second Project Implementation Report (PIR). 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* (Guidance For Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects)

## 2. PROJECT BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The project was designed to conserve and restore peatlands to increase their capacities to act as carbon sinks, as habitats for global important species, and as sources for ecosystems services for improved livelihoods.

The Kuan Kreng landscape (KKL) in south eastern Thailand contains the country's second largest peat swamp forest area. The peat swamps provide many ecosystem services ranging from livelihoods for local communities, acting as a rainwater and runoff reservoir, buffering from the impact of rains and floods, acting as a natural sediment filter before waters drain into Songkhla Lake, being a major store of carbon, and harboring important biodiversity including a number of globally threatened species. By some estimates, however, about 65% of the KKL remains under constant threat of degradation from various threats with the primary one being conversion to oil palm cultivation and associated drainage and forest fires. The area of natural peatlands that harbor biodiversity and sequester carbon is being reduced. The long-term solution is to change the trajectory of baseline approaches and facilitate a transformative shift from unsustainable to sustainable and integrated use of peat swamps in Thailand. The project proposes three components: the first focusing on improving effective protection of remaining natural peat swamp forests in the KKL; the second helping to implement innovative approaches to avoid drainage and restore peat swamps; and the third helping to improve national strategies for land use in peat swamps. In doing so it will improve the status of indicator species in KKL, demonstrate good peat swamp forest management practices, maintain the carbon pool, reduce emissions from peatlands, enhance institutional capacity to account for GHG emission reduction and increase in carbon stocks, and develop a national strategy to guide the management of peat swamps.

## 3. 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 to set the project on-track to achieve its intended results. The MTR will also review the project's strategy, its risks to sustainability.

## 4. MTR APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

The MTR must provide evidence based information that is credible, reliable and useful. The MTR team 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 Review/PIRs, 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 team 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 team is expected to follow a collaborative and participatory approach 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. Stakeholder involvement should include interviews with stakeholders who have project responsibilities, including but not limited to (list); 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 CSOs, etc. Additionally, the MTR team is expected to conduct field mission to Thailand, including the project sites in two locations of Cha-uad district in Nakhon Si Thammarat Province and Kuan-Kanoon District in Phatthalung Province.

Interviews will be held with the following organizations and individuals at a minimum:

- UNDP Regional Technical Advisor
- UNDP Programme Analyst
- Project Director (ONEP)
- RECOFTC (Responsible Party)
    - Representatives from Kasetsart University
    - Field Coordinators
    - Representatives from Kreng Sub-district administration organization
    - Representative from Sai Kanoon Community Forest and Local Communities
    - Representative from Kuan Ngeon Community Forest and Local Communities
    - Chief and Representatives from Bor Lor Non-Hunting Area Office in Nakhon Si Thammarat
    - Chief of Forest Fire Operation and Control Office in Nakhon Si Thammarat
- Local Media
- Chief and/or Deputy of Talae Noi Non-Hunting Area in Phatthalung
- Representatives from local communities in Phattalung
- Senior Forest Technician from Royal Forestry Department Bureau 12, Nakhon Si Thammarat
- Director of Protected Area Regional Office 5, Nakhon Si Thammarat
- Other project consultants as appropriate
- UNDP Thailand Country Office in Bangkok

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.

## 5. DETAILED SCOPE OF THE MTR

The MTR team 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 (or of participating countries in the case of multi-country projects)?
- 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 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[1] | Baseline Level[2] | Level in 1st PIR (self-reported) | Midterm Target[3] | End-of-project Target | Midterm Level & Assessment[4] | Achievement Rating[5] | Justification for Rating |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

[1] Populate with data from the Logframe and scorecards
[2] Populate with data from the Project Document
[3] If available
[4] Colour code this column only
[5] Use the 6 point Progress Towards Results Rating Scale: HS, S, MS, MU, U, HU

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Objective:** | Indicator (if applicable): | | | | | | | |
| **Outcome 1:** | Indicator 1: | | | | | | | |
| | Indicator 2: | | | | | | | |
| **Outcome 2:** | Indicator 3: | | | | | | | |
| | Indicator 4: | | | | | | | |
| | Etc. | | | | | | | |
| **Etc.** | | | | | | | | |

**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 the GEF Tracking Tool 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 PIRs, 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, Annual Project Review/PIRs 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 team will include a section of the report setting out the MTR's evidence-based conclusions, in light of the findings.[6]

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 team should make no more than 15 recommendations total.

**Ratings**

The MTR team 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 (*Project Title*)**

| 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) | |

[6] Alternatively, MTR conclusions may be integrated into the body of the report.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | Etc. | |
| **Project Implementation & Adaptive Management** | (rate 6 pt. scale) | |
| **Sustainability** | (rate 4 pt. scale) | |

## 6. TIMEFRAME

The total duration of the contract will be **approximately 22 working days** from **22 March to 30 July 2019.**

Duty Station: home-based with one mission to Bangkok and the project sites in Nakhon Si Thammarat and Pattalung provinces, Thailand. The tentative MTR timeframe is as follows:

| TIMEFRAME | ACTIVITY |
|---|---|
| 22 March 2019 | Contract begins<br>Prep the MTR Team (handover of Project Documents) |
| 25-29 March 2019<br>(5 working days) | Project Document Review<br>Submit MTR Inception Report to UNDP for review |
| 1 April 2019 | Finalization of the MTR Inception Report and re-submit to UNDP. |
| 21 April 2019 | Arrival in Bangkok of International Evaluation Team Lead and National MTR consultant |
| 22-25 April2019<br>(4 working days) | Inception meeting at UNDP Country Office<br>Meeting with ONEP and PMU (RECOFTC) Team<br>MTR mission: stakeholder meetings, interviews and field visits |
| 26-28 April 2019<br>(3 working days) | Preparation of presentations for wrap-up meeting. |
| 29 April 2019<br>(1 working day) | Mission wrap-up meeting & presentation of initial findings-earliest end of MTR mission |
| 1 May -5 May 2019<br>(5 working days for consultant) | Preparing draft MTR report |
| 16 May 2019<br>(0 working days for consultant) | Circulation of draft report with draft management response template for comments and completion |
| 10-13 July 2019<br>(max: 4 working days) | Incorporating audit trail from feedbacks on draft report/Finalization of MTR report including Management Responses |
| 30 July 2019 | Expected date of contract closure |

## 7. MTR DELIVERABLES

| # | Deliverable | Description | Timing | Responsibilities |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1** | **MTR Inception Report** | MTR team clarifies objectives and methods of Midterm Review | 1 April 2019 | MTR team submits to the Commissioning Unit and project management |
| **2** | **Presentation** | Initial Findings | 29 April 2019 | MTR Team presents to project management and the Commissioning Unit |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **3** | **Draft Final MTR Report** | Full report (using guidelines on content outlined in Annex B) with annexes | 16 May 2019 | Sent to the Commissioning Unit, reviewed by RTA, Project Coordinating Unit, GEF OFP |
| **4** | **Final MTR Report*** | Revised report with audit trail detailing how all received comments have (and have not) been addressed in the final MTR report | 15 July 2019 (or within 1 week of receiving UNDP comments on draft) | 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.

## 8. MTR ARRANGEMENTS

The principal responsibility for managing this MTR resides with the Commissioning Unit (UNDP Thailand Country Office). The Commissioning Unit for this project's MTR is UNDP Thailand Country Office.

The commissioning unit will contract the consultants and ensure the timely provision of the travel arrangements within the country for the MTR team. The Project Team will be responsible for liaising with the MTR team to provide all relevant documents, set up stakeholder interviews, and arrange field visits.

## 9. TEAM COMPOSITION

A team of two independent consultants will conduct the MTR – one team leader (with experience and exposure to projects and evaluations in other regions globally) and one team local expert, from Thailand. The consultants 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.

The selection of consultants will be aimed at maximizing the overall "team" qualities in the following areas:

**INTERNATIONAL CONSULTANT**

**Profile**

- A Master's degree in Natural Sciences, Environmental Management, Environmental Studies, Development studies, Social Sciences and/or other related fields, or other closely related field (20%).
- Minimum of 8 years accumulated and recognized experience in biodiversity conservation and sustainable utilisation areas, and sustainable livelihoods (20%)
- Minimum of 5 years of project evaluation and/or implementation experience in the result-based management framework, adaptive management and UNDP or GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy (20%)
- Very good report writing skills in English (20%)
- Familiarity in similar country or regional situations relevant to that of Strengthening Capacity and Incentives for Wildlife Conservation in the Western Forest Complex is an advantage (10%).
- Some experience working with the GEF or GEF-evaluations is an advantage (10%);
- Demonstrated understanding of issues related to gender and biodiversity, experience in gender sensitive evaluation and analysis.
- Excellent communication skills.
- Demonstrable analytical skills.

**Responsibilities**

- Documentation review
- Leading the MTR Team in planning, conducting and reporting on the evaluation
- Deciding on division of labour within the Team and ensuring timeliness of reports
- Use of best practice evaluation methodologies in conducting the evaluation
- Leading the drafting and finalization of the Inception Report for the Mid-term Review
- Leading presentation of the draft evaluation findings and recommendations in-country
- Conducting the de-briefing for the UNDP Country Office in Thailand and Core Project Management Team
- Leading the drafting and finalization of the MTR report

## 10. PAYMENT MODALITIES AND SPECIFICATIONS

Consultant must send a financial proposal based on **Lump Sum Amount**. The total amount quoted shall be **all-inclusive and include all costs components required to perform the deliverables identified in the TOR,** including:

- professional fee;
- return flights from IC's country of residence to duty station (BKK);
- living allowance and travel costs for Midterm Review Exercise which includes:
    - domestic airfare to project sites in Nakhon Si Thammarat;
    - transportation to meeting venues in Bangkok for 2 days;
    - 4 legs Terminal (to Don-Muang Airport, from Nakhon Si Thammarat Airport to local accommodation and vice versa);
- any other applicable cost to be incurred by the IC in completing the assignment.

*Note:* Project Management Unit (PMU) will be responsible for providing local transportation during project site visits in Nakhon Si Thammarat and Phatthalung.

The contract price will be fixed output-based price regardless of extension of the herein specified duration. Payments will be done upon completion of the deliverables/outputs and as per below percentages:

| % | Milestone |
|---|---|
| *10%* | Following submission and approval of Inception Report |
| *40%* | Following submission and approval of the draft MTR report |
| *50%* | Following submission and approval (UNDP-CO and UNDP RTA) of the final MTR report |

**In general, UNDP shall not accept travel costs exceeding those of an economy class ticket.** Should the IC wish to travel on a higher class he/she should do so using their own resources

In the event of unforeseeable travel not anticipated in this TOR, payment of travel costs including tickets, lodging and terminal expenses should be agreed upon, between the respective business unit and the Individual Consultant, prior to travel and will be reimbursed. Travel costs shall be reimbursed at actual but not exceeding the quotation from UNDP approved travel agent. The provided living allowance will not be exceeding UNDP DSA rates. Repatriation travel cost from home to duty station in Bangkok and return shall not be covered by UNDP.

## 11. APPLICATION PROCESS[7]

[7] 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

**Recommended Presentation of Proposal:**
a) **Letter of Confirmation of Interest and Availability and Financial Proposal** using the template provided by UNDP

b) **CV** indicating all past experiences from similar projects, as well as the contact details (email and telephone number) of the Candidate and at least three (3) professional references.

c) **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)

d) **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. 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.

**All application materials should be submitted to UNDP by 8 February 2019**. The short-listed candidates may be contacted and the successful candidate will be notified.

**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.

Only candidates obtaining a minimum of 70% of the total technical points would be considered for the Financial Evaluation.

# UNDP-GEF MIDTERM REVIEW
# TERM OF REFERENCE (NATIONAL MTR CONSULTANT)

## 1. INTRODUCTION

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## 2. PROJECT BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The project was designed to conserve and restore peatlands to increase their capacities to act as carbon sinks, as habitats for global important species, and as sources for ecosystems services for improved livelihoods.

The Kuan Kreng landscape (KKL) in south eastern Thailand contains the country's second largest peat swamp forest area. The peat swamps provide many ecosystem services ranging from livelihoods for local communities, acting as a rainwater and runoff reservoir, buffering from the impact of rains and floods, acting as a natural sediment filter before waters drain into Songkhla Lake, being a major store of carbon, and harboring important biodiversity including a number of globally threatened species. By some estimates, however, about 65% of the KKL remains under constant threat of degradation from various threats with the primary one being conversion to oil palm cultivation and associated drainage and forest fires. The area of natural peatlands that harbor biodiversity and sequester carbon is being reduced. The long-term solution is to change the trajectory of baseline approaches and facilitate a transformative shift from unsustainable to sustainable and integrated use of peat swamps in Thailand. The project proposes three components: the first focusing on improving effective protection of remaining natural peat swamp forests in the KKL; the second helping to implement innovative approaches to avoid drainage and restore peat swamps; and the third helping to improve national strategies for land use in peat swamps. In doing so it will improve the status of indicator species in KKL, demonstrate good peat swamp forest management practices, maintain the carbon pool, reduce emissions from peatlands, enhance institutional capacity to account for GHG emission reduction and increase in carbon stocks, and develop a national strategy to guide the management of peat swamps.

## 3. OBJECTIVES OF THR 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 to set the project on-track to achieve its intended results. The MTR will also review the project's strategy, its risks to sustainability.

## 4. MTR APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

The MTR must provide evidence based information that is credible, reliable and useful. The MTR team 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 Review/PIRs, 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 team will review the baseline GEF focal area and the Tracking Tool submitted to the GEF at CEO endorsement, and the mid-term GEF focal area Tracking Tool that should be completed before the MTR field mission begins.

The MTR team is expected to follow a collaborative and participatory approach 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 MTR8. Stakeholder involvement should include interviews with stakeholders who have project responsibilities, including but not limited to (list); 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 CSOs, etc. Additionally, the MTR team is expected to conduct field mission to Thailand, including the project sites in two locations of Cha-uad district in Nakhon Si Thammarat Province and Kuan-Kanoon District in Phatthalung Province.

Interviews will be held with the following organizations and individuals at a minimum:

- UNDP Regional Technical Advisor
- UNDP Programme Analyst
- Project Director (ONEP)
- RECOFTC (Responsible Party)
    - Representatives from Kasetsart University
    - Field Coordinators
    - Representatives from Kreng Sub-district administration organization
    - Representative from Sai Kanoon Community Forest and Local Communities
    - Representative from Kuan Ngeon Community Forest and Local Communities
    - Chief and Representatives from Bor Lor Non-Hunting Area Office in Nakhon Si Thammarat
    - Chief of Forest Fire Operation and Control Office in Nakhon Si Thammarat
- Local Media
- Chief and/or Deputy of Talae Noi Non-Hunting Area in Phatthalung
- Representatives from local communities in Phattalung
- Senior Forest Technician from Royal Forestry Department Bureau 12, Nakhon Si Thammarat
- Director of Protected Area Regional Office 5, Nakhon Si Thammarat
- Other project consultants as appropriate
- UNDP Thailand Country Office in Bangkok

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.

## 5. DETAILED SCOPE OF THE MTR

The MTR team 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.

[8] For more stakeholder engagement in the M&E process, see the UNDP Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating for Development Results, Chapter 3, pg. 93.

### 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 (or of participating countries in the case of multi-country projects)?
- 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 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[9] | Baseline Level[10] | Level in 1st PIR (self-reported) | Midterm Target[11] | End-of-project Target | Midterm Level & Assessment[12] | Achievement Rating[13] | Justification for Rating |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | | | |

[9] Populate with data from the Logframe and scorecards
[10] Populate with data from the Project Document
[11] If available
[12] Colour code this column only
[13] Use the 6 point Progress Towards Results Rating Scale: HS, S, MS, MU, U, HU

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Objective:** | Indicator (if applicable): | | | | | | | |
| **Outcome 1:** | Indicator 1: | | | | | | | |
| | Indicator 2: | | | | | | | |
| **Outcome 2:** | Indicator 3: | | | | | | | |
| | Indicator 4: | | | | | | | |
| | Etc. | | | | | | | |
| **Etc.** | | | | | | | | |

**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 the GEF Tracking Tool 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 PIRs, 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, Annual Project Review/PIRs 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 team will include a section of the report setting out the MTR's evidence-based conclusions, in light of the findings.[14]

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 team should make no more than 15 recommendations total.

## Ratings

The MTR team 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 (*Project Title*)**

| 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 &** | (rate 6 pt. scale) | |

[14] Alternatively, MTR conclusions may be integrated into the body of the report.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Adaptive Management** | | |
| **Sustainability** | (rate 4 pt. scale) | |

## 6. TIMEFRAME

The total duration of the contract will be approximately **22 working days** from **14 March to 30 July 2019.** Duty Station: home-based with one mission to Bangkok and the project sites in Nakhon Si Thammarat and Patthalung provinces.

| TIMEFRAME | ACTIVITY |
|---|---|
| 14 March 2019 | Contract begins<br>Prep the MTR Team (handover of Project Documents) |
| 25-29 March 2019<br>(5 working days) | Project Document Review<br>Submit MTR Inception Report to UNDP for review |
| 1 April 2019 | Finalization of the MTR Inception Report and re-submit to UNDP. |
| 21 April 2019 | Arrival in Bangkok of International Evaluation Team Lead and National MTR consultant |
| 22-25 April 2019<br>(4 working days) | Inception meeting at UNDP Country Office<br>Meeting with ONEP and PMU (RECOFTC) Team<br>MTR mission: stakeholder meetings, interviews and field visits |
| 26-28 April 2019<br>(3 working days) | Preparation of presentations for wrap-up meeting. |
| 29 April 2019<br>(1 working day) | Mission wrap-up meeting & presentation of initial findings- earliest end of MTR mission |
| 1-5 May 2019<br>(5 working days for consultant) | Preparing draft MTR report |
| 16 May 2019<br>(0 working days for consultant) | Circulation of draft report with draft management response template for comments and completion |
| 10-13 July 2019<br>(max: 4 working days) | Incorporating audit trail from feedbacks on draft report/Finalization of MTR report including Management Responses |
| 30 July 2019 | Expected date of contract closure |

## 7. MTR DELIVERABLES

| # | Deliverable | Description | Timing | Responsibilities |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1** | **MTR Inception Report** | MTR team clarifies objectives and methods of Midterm Review | 1 April 2019 | MTR team submits to the Commissioning Unit and project management |
| **2** | **Presentation** | Initial Findings | 29 April 2019 | MTR Team presents to project management and the Commissioning Unit |
| **3** | **Draft Final MTR Report** | Full report (using guidelines on content outlined in Annex B) with annexes | 16 May 2019 | Sent to the Commissioning Unit, reviewed by RTA, Project Coordinating Unit, GEF OFP |
| **4** | **Final MTR Report*** | Revised report with audit trail detailing how all received comments have (and have not) been addressed in the final MTR report | 15 July 2019 (or within 1 week of receiving UNDP comments on draft) | 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.

## 8. MTR ARRANGEMENTS

The principal responsibility for managing this MTR resides with the Commissioning Unit (UNDP Thailand Country Office). The Commissioning Unit for this project's MTR is UNDP Thailand Country Office.

The commissioning unit will contract the consultants and ensure the timely provision of the travel arrangements within the country for the MTR team. The Project Team will be responsible for liaising with the MTR team to provide all relevant documents, set up stakeholder interviews, and arrange field visits.

## 9. TEAM COMPOSITION

A team of two independent consultants will conduct the MTR – one team leader (with experience and exposure to projects and evaluations in other regions globally) and one team local expert, from Thailand. The consultants 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.

The selection of consultants will be aimed at maximizing the overall "team" qualities in the following areas:

**National Consultant**

**Profile**

- At least a Master's degree in social development, public policy, environmental studies, development studies, social sciences and/ or other related fields (20%)
- Minimum of five (5) years of supporting project evaluation and/or implementation experience in the result-based management framework, adaptive management (20%).
- Proven communication, facilitation, and writing skills.
- Evaluation skills, including conducting interviews, focus group discussions, desk research, qualitative and quantitative analysis.
- Excellent command of English both writing and speaking (20%)
- Familiarity with Thailand national and local development policies, programs and projects (20%)
- Some project management experience in biodiversity conservation and sustainable utilisation would be an advantage (10%).
- Some knowledge of UNDP or GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy would be an advantage (10%)

**Responsibilities**

- Documentation review and data gathering
- Contributing to the development of the review plan and methodology
- Conducting those elements of the evaluation determined jointly with the international consultant and UNDP
- Contributing to presentation of the review findings and recommendations at the wrap-up meeting
- Contributing to the drafting and finalization of the review report

## 10. PAYMENT MODALITIES AND SPECIFICATIONS

Consultant must send a financial proposal based on Lump Sum Amount. The total amount quoted shall be all-inclusive and include all costs components required to perform the deliverables identified in the TOR, including:

- professional fee;
- return flights from IC's country of residence to duty station (BKK)
- living allowance and travel costs for Midterm Review Exercise which includes:

- domestic airfare to project sites in Nakhon Si Thammarat;
- transportation to meeting venues in Bangkok for 2 days;
- 6 legs Terminal in Bangkok and 2 legs terminal in home country;

- any other applicable cost to be incurred by the IC in completing the assignment.

*Note:* Project Management Unit (PMU) will be responsible for providing local transportation during project site visits in Nakhon Si Thammarat and Phatthalung.

The contract price will be fixed output-based price regardless of extension of the herein specified duration. Payments will be done upon completion of the deliverables/outputs and as per below percentages:

| % | Milestone |
|---|---|
| *10%* | Following submission and approval of Inception Report |
| *40%* | Following submission and approval of the draft MTR report |
| *50%* | Following submission and approval (UNDP-CO and UNDP RTA) of the final MTR report |

In general, UNDP shall not accept travel costs exceeding those of an economy class ticket. Should the IC wish to travel on a higher class he/she should do so using their own resources

In the event of unforeseeable travel not anticipated in this TOR, payment of travel costs including tickets, lodging and terminal expenses should be agreed upon, between the respective business unit and the Individual Consultant, prior to travel and will be reimbursed. Travel costs shall be reimbursed at actual but not exceeding the quotation from UNDP approved travel agent. The provided living allowance will not be exceeding UNDP DSA rates. Repatriation travel cost from home to duty station in Bangkok and return shall not be covered by UNDP.

## 11. APPLICATION PROCESS[15]

**Recommended Presentation of Proposal:**
a) **Letter of Confirmation of Interest and Availability and Financial Proposal** using the template provided by UNDP

b) **CV** indicating all past experiences from similar projects, as well as the contact details (email and telephone number) of the Candidate and at least three (3) professional references.

c) **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)

d) **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. 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.

**All application materials should be submitted to UNDP by 8 February 2019**. The short-listed candidates may be contacted and the successful candidate will be notified.

**Criteria for Evaluation of Proposal:** Only those applications which are responsive and compliant will be

[15] 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

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.

Only candidates obtaining a minimum of 70% of the total technical points would be considered for the Financial Evaluation.

**ANNEX 10 : EVALUATION REPORT CLEARANCE FORM**

*(to be completed by CO and UNDP GEF Technical Adviser based in the region and included in the final document)*

Evaluation Report Reviewed and Cleared by

**UNDP Country Office**

Name: Ms. Napaporn Yuberk

Signature: _____ Date: 23 July 2019

**UNDP GEF RTA**

Name: Ms. Lisa Farroway

Signature: _____ Date: 24 July 2019