

Terminal Evaluation of the Caspian Hyrcanian Forest Project (CHFP)

Building a Multiple-use Forest Management Framework to Conserve Biodiversity in the Caspian Hyrcanian Forest Landscape



CHFP re-introduction of traditional weaving loom
Baliran Village, Mazandaran



Forests, Range
& Watershed
Management
Organization
I.R. of Iran



United
Nations
Development
Programme



Global
Environment
Facility



Caspian
Hyrcanian
Forest Project
I.R. of Iran

Project: Building a Multiple-use Forest Management Framework to Conserve Biodiversity in the Caspian Hyrcanian Forest Landscape

UNDP GEF PIMS Number: 4078

Terminal Evaluation Review Period: February – April 2019

Region and Country included in this report: Islamic Republic of Iran, Caspian Region, Provinces Gilan, Mazandaran and Golestan

GEF Operational Focal Areas/Strategic Program: Biodiversity; FA Objective BD-2: Mainstream Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use into Production Landscapes/ Seascapes and Sectors

Executing Entity: United Nations Development Programme, Islamic Republic of Iran

Implementing Partner: Forests, Rangeland and Watershed Management Organization (FRWO) of the Ministry of Jihad Agriculture, Islamic Republic of Iran

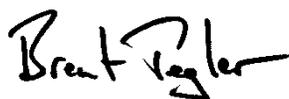
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Terminal Evaluation Report Submitted: April, 2019

Acknowledgements:

To the all the stakeholders who shared their knowledge of the project and provided much of the information used in the terminal evaluation, their time, enthusiasm and commitment is very much appreciated. To the UNDP Iran staff and CHFP project staff who organized a very effective field mission under difficult conditions, I would like to say thank you for ensuring a very productive mission. In particular, I would like to thank Dariush Bayat (National Project Manager) and Mike Moser (International Project Advisor) who provided important input to the evaluation, particularly as there were many project closing duties that were also underway.

Report reviewers from the Project Coordinating Office, UNDP Iran and UNDP Regional offices, as well as Mike Moser, Aydin Yasemi (Training and Capacity Building Consultant) and Andrés Darabant (Social Forestry Consultant) are acknowledged for the excellent feedback, comments and questions provided which have made important contributions to strengthening the analysis which informs the terminal evaluation.



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Executive Summary

The Caspian Hyrcanian Forest Project (CHFP) project was provided with a \$1.9M grant from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) fund and was to receive a \$3M co-financing grant from the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI). The CHFP project summary and co-financing tables are provided below.

| Project Title: Building a Multiple-Use Forest Management Framework to Conserve Biodiversity in the Caspian Hyrcanian Forest Landscape | | | |
|--|---|---------------------------------|-----------|
| Country: | IR Iran | GEF Project ID: | 4470 |
| GEF Agency: | UNDP | GEF Agency Project ID: | 4078 |
| Other Executing Partner: | Forests, Rangeland and Watershed Organisation (FRWO) of the Ministry of Jihad Agriculture | Submission Date: | 26/11/12 |
| | | Signed date: | 05/05/13 |
| GEF Focal Area: | Biodiversity | Project Duration(Months) | 60 Months |
| Name of Parent Program (if applicable): For SFM/REDD+ <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | N/A | Agency Fee (\$): | 190,000 |

| Focal Area Objectives | Expected FA Outcomes | Expected FA Outputs | Trust Fund | Grant Amount (\$) | Co-financing (\$) |
|--|--|--|-------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| BD-2: Mainstream Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use into Production Landscapes/ Seascapes and Sectors | Outcome 2.1: Increase in sustainably managed landscapes and seascapes that integrate biodiversity conservation | Output 2.1. Policies and regulatory frameworks (at least 1 major policy shift in forestry) for production sectors. | GEF TF | 1,710,000 | 4,758,750* |
| Subtotal | | | | 1,710,000 | 4,758,750 |
| Project management cost | | | GEF TF | 190,000 | 516,250 |
| Total project costs | | | | 1,900,000 | 5,275,000 |

* includes \$3M co-financing (parallel funding) from IRI the CHFP and UNDP books did not receive

Project Design

The project was designed to develop and test a new and innovative multi-sectoral, multi-purpose, collaborative planning framework to achieve enhanced sustainable livelihoods and enhanced protection of the Caspian Hyrcanian Forest (CHF) and the habitats it provides to sustain native biodiversity. The project was not intended to go beyond the development and testing phase of the new planning framework. The intent of the CHFP was that the planning framework developed should be fully endorsed, approved and ready for implementation to cover all areas of the CHF. Recognizing the capacity development needs for implementation of the new planning framework, the project design included both "learning by doing" capacity development for those participating in the pilot landscapes, and capacity development through the development and testing of supporting guidelines and training materials. The latter intended

to support implementation of the new planning framework after the CHFP was completed. Outcomes 1 and 3 reflect the development and testing of the new planning framework, outcome 2 capacity development.

Outcome 1: An enabling policy and regulatory framework for multiple use forest management is developed

Outcome 2: Enhanced institutional and staff capacity for implementing a multiple use forest management plan

Outcome 3: Community based integrated forest management piloted

The overall objective of the CHFP identified in the ProDoc is:

To put in place a collaborative governance system and know-how for managing a mosaic of land uses in the Caspian Hyrcanian forest that provides habitat integrity and helps maintain landscape level ecosystem functions and resilience.

The project design was very ambitious and considered challenging to complete within five years with the proposed funding from GEF and co-financing the IRI. Particularly the target of achieving 30,000 ha of community forestry. The lack of co-financing from IRI required the project to scale back substantially, particularly in regard to capacity development and the engagement of villages in the pilot watersheds.

Project Results

The following table provides a summary evaluation for the CHFP project. Detailed evaluation supporting each of the ratings are provided in the associated evaluation report sections.

| Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) | rating⁺ | Implementing Agency (IA) & Executing Agency (EA) Execution | rating⁺ |
|--|---------------------------|---|---------------------------|
| M&E design at entry | HS | Quality of UNDP Implementation – Implementing Agency | HS |
| M&E plan Implementation | MS | Quality of Execution - Executing Agency | S |
| Overall quality of M&E | S | Overall quality of Implementation / Execution | S |
| Assessment of Outcomes | rating⁺ | Sustainability[*] | rating⁺ |
| Relevance | R | Financial resources | ML |
| Effectiveness | HS | Socio-political | ML |
| Efficiency | HS | Institutional framework and governance | ML |
| Overall Project Outcome Rating | HS | Environmental | L |
| | | Overall likelihood of sustainability | ML |

⁺ HS highly satisfactory; S satisfactory; MS moderately satisfactory; U unsatisfactory HU highly unsatisfactory; R relevant; NR not relevant; L likely; ML moderately likely; MU moderately unlikely; U unlikely.

^{*} Sustainability was assessed at three scales as discussed in Section 3.3.7, the ratings in the table reflect the overall sustainability results of the CHFP. In terms of the CHFP overall objective, it is the sustainability of the GDS which carries the most weight, as it the Green Development Strategy (GDS) which has the capacity to institute a collaborative, multi-sectoral, multiuse forest management framework capable of protecting and sustainably managing the entire CHF. The sustainability section provides a more complete analysis of sustainability of the GDS.

Project Conclusions, Recommendations & Lessons Learned

The CHFP has successfully produced high quality outputs supporting the three project outcomes and the project objective. The communities engaged in the pilot landscapes have improved livelihoods and they have committed to enhanced protection of the CHF. The CHFP has made an important contribution to protecting the most important areas for biodiversity in this globally significant ecoregion through approval of a Guideline for selecting and managing Special Areas for Biodiversity (SAB) and identification of 400,734 ha of potential SABs across the CHF. Through the development of the GDS Integrated Management Plan (IMP) process and the associated capacity development a paradigm shift away from traditional forest management to multi-sectoral, multiple purpose, and collaborative forest management with an emphasis on community engagement and forest protection and restoration has been initiated. The project also leaves a legacy of guideline documents and training manuals supporting the GDS, Community Forestry Forest Management Plan (CF-FMP), sustainable forest management biodiversity mainstreaming and much needed future capacity development. Field studies completed by the CHFP have provided increased knowledge of the biodiversity, ecosystem services and land capability of the CHF, including trends in some populations and an understanding of impacts, including human-wildlife conflicts.

There remain concerns regarding the sustainability of CHFP outcomes and there are lessons learned and/or recommendations as noted below.

Recommendation 1: Scaling up CHFP

- there is a need for UNDP and FRWO to urgently work together to plan a five year scale-up phase to ensure that the momentum created by CHFP is not lost
- FRWO to consider allocating the unspent national co-financing to support scaling-up over the five year period, thereby allowing a proportion of the existing project staff and their associated capacity to be retained
- UNDP and FRWO work together to seek additional sources of international funding to continue to bring international best practices and support to help FRWO achieve the paradigm shift to multi-purpose, community based forestry

Recommendation 2: FRWO support of pilot landscape communities, particularly those communities which have not received direct allocation of CF-FMP

- the CHFP should provide guidance to FRWO in regard to the importance of supporting pilot landscape communities that have participated in the project, particularly those which are awaiting approval of CF-FMP, to mitigate potential negative social, economic or ecological impacts on communities and the the pilot landscapes
- the FRWO should acknowledge the fact that those communities awaiting approval and allocation of CF-FMPs have made a significant investment in the CHFP
- there is a need to maintain the trust and participation of these communities to allow them the opportunity to engage in better management, protection and restoration of the CHF
- continued visits to these communities should be made to communicate the status of their CF-FMP
- FRWO should encourage quick resolution of the issue of direct allocation to community groups
- when allocation is approved, ongoing support of these communities will be needed to assist them in their efforts to implement their CF-FMP (e.g. forest park and/or nursery establishment and operation), including:
 - ongoing support may include liaison with appropriate government experts or hiring

- consultants to provide technical advice
- ongoing support may also include assistance in securing the required financing and capacity development to manage financial aspects of the CF-FMP
- ongoing support may include addressing issues of marketing, including market chain analysis to ensure sustainability of expanding alternative livelihood activities.. Where possible, marketing should avoid “middle men”, to maximize the benefits which go to local communities. There are some CHFP examples which show the success of local packaging, branding and direct selling products to enhance the marketing community based enterprises.

Recommendation 3: Support of GDS sign off and implementation initiation

- sign off of the GDS by the Head of FRWO with a formal letter to the Governor Generals is an essential step towards implementation
- with sign off of the GDS has identified several tasks to be completed by the FRWO and the provinces to initiate implementation
- financing will be required to assist the GDS secretariat’s support of GDS initiation
- while the GDS provides broad goals and strategies there is need to develop a detailed action plan for GDS initiation, such as has been recommended for each CHF province
- GDS initiation will include project launches that advocate the GDS, and high level meetings to provide capacity building of key GDS stakeholders and to establish roles, responsibilities, tasks, timelines and funding mechanisms
- it is recommended to develop a strong supervision and oversight mechanism to ensure quality assurance, transparency and auditing of the activities of the GDS.
- a strategy is needed to encourage the many government staff who may be involved in the implementation of the GDS to participate in capacity development using training materials developed by the CHFP to achieve the paradigm needed to support the GDS
- There is a need to move forward with the agreement between the former Head of FRWO and the three Provincial Governors committing to better protection of the CHF
- While sign off of the GDS document by the current head of FRWO is important there is also a need to establish a coordination structure which has the authority to advocate for it. Including engagement of the High Council of Environment (HCE), Chaired by President or Vice President, with members representing Ministers and deputy president, to agree on the establishment of a National Forest Committee or a Special Working Group for Hyrcanian Forest. Two possible options are:
 - A) FRWO sign off of the GDS and using the existing agreement, request the Provincial Governors to establish Regional Coordinating Committee (RCC). Under guidance of the RCC, the PPDC will review and follow up on plans and required budgets thereby providing support for the LCC operating at the county level to implement the GDS IMP. This strategy is in line with the existing GDS structure.
 - B) FRWO sign off of the GDS and it is sent to the MoJA Minister to request Ministry of Jihad Agriculture (MoJA) send the GDS document to the HCE for approval and endorsement. With HCE approval of the GDS then it would be possible to establish a National Forest Committee and Hyrcanian Forest Working Group to coordinate implementation of GDS IMP.
- Allocate national funding to form a permanent "National Expert Group on Community Forestry" that will engage all key CHFP staff and consultants, as well as selected FRWO experts who among them share the expertise available on community forestry in Iran. Under the purview of FRWO, this expert group shall be continuously engaged to provide support to finalizing the approvals for the pending CF-FMPs, provide on-going capacity building on-the-job or through BEPP, and support the implementation of CF-FMPs.

- FRWO may be required to take charge of the finalization and approval of the guideline for sustainable tourism currently being developed in direct consultation with Bureau of Education and Public Participation (BEPP) and Forest, Rangeland and Watershed Management High Council (FHC) by CHFP. CHFP should ensure this matter is stressed in Project Steering Committee (PSC), with Iran Cultural Heritage, Handicraft and Tourism Organization (ICHTO) and Department of Environment (DOE) representatives present.

Recommendation 4: Support of Local Coordination Committees (LCCs) in Pilot Landscapes

- the CHFP established LCCs to implement IMP within the entire area of each pilot landscape
- to date LCCs have successfully worked with a limited number of pilot landscape communities that represent only a part of the total pilot landscape area
- it is recommended the GDS secretariat continue to provide targeted support to LCCs, particularly to LCC Secretariats, in the pilot landscapes to build on the capacity development and positive results seen so far
- the GDS secretariat can assist LCCs in prioritizing the extensive lists of detailed activities provided in the IMPs, including assistance making proposals to the provincial government to support IMPs
- co-mentoring approaches should be used to work towards the development of local capacity in government who are capable of implementing all IMP tasks with limited support from the GDS secretariat

Recommendation 5: Addressing the issue of national co-financing

- national co-financing was to contribute approximately 42% of the CHFP budget
- the CHFP terminal report should provide a comprehensive assessment of the implications of the lack of co-financing, including the adaptive management strategy used by the project and the impact of a reduced budget on project outcomes
- the CHFP terminal report should also provide recommendations in regard to actions required following project closure needed to address the impact of CHFP operating with a reduced budget

Lessons Learned

1. Projects which develop and test a new tool, strategy, or in the case of CHFP, planning framework should not expect government to immediately adopt and implement the innovation, even when they have been involved in its design and testing.
 - project such as CHFP must include a second phase that works with government to mainstream the innovation into the day to day operations and operating budget of government to ensure sustainability
2. Projects that involve a significant paradigm shift for stakeholders are challenging and achievement of the paradigm shift will be linked to all of the intended project outputs.
 - it is interesting to note that CHFP significantly exceeded the target for number of persons trained and yet this was still considered insufficient to achieve the level of paradigm shift necessary
 - project design must therefore ensure significant resources are directed towards capacity development which is intended to achieve a paradigm shift sufficient to develop what the project would consider a “critical mass” of change necessary to advocate and implement the intended project actions following project closure.

3. Community facilitation is an effective and crucial project activity to empower women, men, youth and children, to form community groups, to utilize local knowledge and to introduce innovation.
 - the value and importance of community facilitation to project success and sustainability should be reflected in project design, the number of staff involved, the amount of time allocated, and the budget allocated
 - the quality of community facilitation will strongly influence the success of intended outcomes and outputs
 - capacity development of community facilitators both as project staff and stakeholders should be included in project design

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|------|
| Executive Summary | i |
| Acronyms and Abbreviations..... | viii |
| 1. Introduction | 1 |
| 1.1 Purpose of the evaluation | 1 |
| 1.2 Scope & Methodology..... | 1 |
| 2. Project Description and Development Context | 3 |
| 2.1 Development Context | 3 |
| 2.2 Project Objective and Expected Outputs..... | 6 |
| 3. CHFP Terminal Evaluation Findings | 8 |
| 3.1 Project Design / Formulation | 8 |
| 3.2 Project Implementation..... | 10 |
| 3.2.1 Adaptive Management of Project Design | 11 |
| 3.2.2 Project Monitoring and Evaluation | 12 |
| 3.2.3 Project Coordination and Operation..... | 13 |
| 3.2.3 Project Finance..... | 15 |
| 3.3 Project Results | 18 |
| 3.3.1 Overall results..... | 18 |
| 3.3.2 Relevance | 18 |
| 3.3.3 Effectiveness | 19 |
| 3.3.4 Efficiency | 23 |
| 3.3.5 Country ownership..... | 24 |
| 3.3.6 Mainstreaming | 25 |
| 3.3.7 Sustainability | 27 |
| 3.3.8 Impact..... | 33 |
| 4. Conclusions, Recommendations and Lessons Learned | 40 |
| Appendix 1: Terms of Reference..... | 44 |
| Appendix 2: Itinerary for Field Mission | 52 |
| Appendix 3: List of Persons Interviewed..... | 56 |
| Appendix 4: List of Documents Reviewed | 59 |
| Appendix 5: Evaluation Questions Matrix | 60 |
| Appendix 6: Evaluation Consultant Code of Conduct & Agreement Form | 64 |
| Appendix 7: Report Clearance Form | 65 |

Acronyms and Abbreviations

| | |
|----------|---|
| AWP | Annual Work Plan |
| BEPP | Bureau of Education and Public Participation (Extension Department of FRWO) |
| CBD | Convention on Biodiversity |
| CHF | Caspian Hyrcanian Forests |
| CHFP | Caspian Hyrcanian Forest Project (“Building a Multiple-Use Forest Management Framework to Conserve Biodiversity in the Caspian Hyrcanian Forest Landscape”) |
| CF-FMP | Community Forestry - Forest Management Plan |
| CO | Country Office |
| CSO | Civil Society Organization |
| DGs | Director Generals |
| DoE | Department of Environment |
| EHC | Environment High Council |
| FAC | Forest Advisory Council (for Hyrcanian forest region) |
| FHC | Forest, Rangeland and Watershed Management High Council |
| FMP | Forest Management Plan |
| FRWO | Forest, Rangelands & Watershed Management Organization |
| GDS | Green Development Strategy for the Hyrcanian Forests |
| GEF | Global Environment Facility |
| GEF FA | GEF Focal Area |
| ICHTO | Iran Cultural Heritage, Handicraft and Tourism Organization |
| IMP | Integrated Management Plan |
| IPM | Integrated Pest Management |
| IPA | International Project Advisor |
| IRI | Islamic Republic of Iran |
| LCC | Local Coordination Committee |
| LCMC | Local Community Mobilization Consultancy team |
| LPC | Local Project Coordinator |
| m.a.s.l. | meters above sea level |
| M&E | Monitoring & Evaluation |
| MoE(W) | Ministry of Energy (Water) |
| MoI | Ministry of Interior |
| MoJA | Ministry of Jihad Agriculture |
| MTR | Mid-term Review |
| NRM | Natural Resource Management |
| NBSAP | National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan |
| NGO | Non-Governmental Organization |
| NPD | National Project Director |
| NPM | National Project Manager |
| NTFP | Non-Timber Forest Products |
| PA | Protected Area |
| PCO | Project Coordinating Office |
| PES | Payments for Ecosystem Services |
| PIR | Project Implementation Review |
| PL | Pilot Landscape |
| PPDC | Provincial Planning and Development Council |
| ProDoc | Project Document (UNDP 2013) |
| PSC | Project Steering Committee |
| RCC | Regional Coordination Committee |
| SAB | Special Areas for Biodiversity |
| SFM | Sustainable Forest Management |

| | |
|------|--------------------------------------|
| SRF | Strategic Results Framework |
| TE | Terminal Evaluation of the project |
| TOC | Theory of Change |
| ToR | Term of Reference |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Programme |

1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the evaluation

The TE has been conducted to assess the CHFP performance vis-à-vis its expected outputs and impact relative to the project strategy and strategic results framework (Theory of Change - TOC). The TE has made an effort to identify lessons that can both improve the sustainability of results from the CHFP and aid in the enhancement of UNDP programming. The evaluation covers the implementation period for the CHFP which is, May 5th, 2013 to May 4th, 2019.

The specific objectives of the TE as outlined in the ToR are:

- to assess the achievement of project results, and
- to draw lessons that can both improve the sustainability of benefits from this project, and aid in the overall enhancement of UNDP programming.

1.2 Scope & Methodology

The methodology for the TE follows guidance provided in the TOR (Appendix 1) as well as the *UNDP Evaluation Guidance for GEF Financed Projects* (UNDP 2011) and the *Review of Outcomes to Impacts* (ROtI) method developed by the GEF Evaluation Office (ROtI Handbook 2009). The TE began by reviewing project documentation listed in Appendix 4. Key stakeholders were identified in consultation with the Project Coordinating Office (PCO) to identify relevant individuals, groups and beneficiaries who would be interviewed to understand their perspectives of the project in terms of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and impact and their recommendations going forward. Questions used to direct interview sessions are provided in Appendix 5.

Stakeholder consultations followed ethical guidelines to ensure safe, non-discriminatory, respectful engagement of stakeholders and they ensured that all those who engaged in the evaluation were aware of the purpose of the evaluation, that their participation was voluntary and that all information is confidential. The engagement approach went beyond simple questioning to include self-reflection and action oriented learning.

The evaluation utilized participatory approaches that:

- included primary stakeholders as active participants, not just sources of information to enable joint learning of stakeholders at various levels;
- built capacity of involved stakeholders to analyze, reflect and take action thereby contributing to sustainability of results; and
- catalyzed commitments to sustaining new courses of action taken.

The evaluation ensured full participation of female and male stakeholders, and endeavored to include youth, elder population and disabled persons within the larger participating community. The TE intended to visit all four pilot landscapes, however, due to the late arrival of the visa for the international evaluator, only three watersheds were visited during the joint field mission. The national evaluator planned on visiting the fourth pilot landscape after the joint field mission but because of heavy storms and flood damage to infrastructure, the field visit was cancelled. The national consultant conducted follow-up phone calls with the local coordinator and local facilitator to obtain additional information on the fourth pilot landscape. Both the international and national evaluator also conducted follow-up phone conferences after the field mission to obtain additional information and clarification from UNDP, PCO, project consultants,

International Project Advisor and other stakeholders. See Appendix 2 for a complete list of field mission dates, locations, and villages and government offices visited. In total 24 key knowledge holder interview sessions were conducted, most being small groups of two to three persons or in some cases only one person (see table 1). Larger community focus group discussions were not conducted, in project communities small groups generally had both women and men present, and no specific women's group was interviewed.

Interview sessions were conducted in a manner that allowed knowledge holders to provide context regarding their position in the community or government structure and their role in the CHFP, including how long they have participated. Once the context was established questions were asked directed at topics of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability. A total 121 persons were interviewed, 28 women and 93 men (see table 1). Appendix 3 provides a complete list of persons interviewed showing date, location, person's name and affiliation.

Table 1: Summary table of key knowledge holder interview sessions

| Stakeholder | # of Meetings | # of Women Present | # of Men Present |
|------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| Pilot Landscape Communities | 3 | 9 | 8 |
| Government | 15 | 5 | 38 |
| Project Staff + Consultants | 18 | 6 | 27 |
| Other (NGO + Cooperative) | 5 | 3 | 13 |
| UNDP Team (+ Skype meetings) | 5 | 5 | 7 |
| Totals | 45 | 28 | 93 |

2. Project Description and Development Context

The *Building a Multiple-use Forest Management Framework to Conserve Biodiversity in the Caspian Hyrcanian Forest Landscape* project, more commonly referred to as the *Caspian Hyrcanian Forest Project* (CHFP) began on May 5th, 2013 and closed on May 4th, 2019. Originally intended to close in 2018, CHFP was given a one-year extension. CHFP's Implementing Partner is the Forests, Rangeland and Watershed Management Organization (FRWO) of the Ministry of Jihad Agriculture (MoJA), Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI). CHFP was supported by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) Trust Fund with co-financing that was intended to come from UNDP and the IRI. Within GEF's Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) and Reduced Emissions for Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) parent program CHFP is under the Biodiversity Focal Area Objective BD-2 - *Mainstream Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use into Production Landscapes/ Seascapes and Sectors*.

2.1 Development Context

CHF Biophysical Context

The Caspian Hyrcanian Forest (CHF) landscape is located in the Alborz and Tالش Mountain ranges which run for 1,000 km from the northwest of Iran to the northeast, separating the low-lying Caspian coast from the Iranian plateau. The cold northern front of the Alborz Mountains meets the mild climate of the Caspian Sea coast and forms a warm and wet subtropical climate in summer and a cold humid climate in winter. This climate is ideal for deciduous broad-leaved forest, which covers the northern slopes from sea level to the timber-line at 2,800 m.a.s.l., stretching 800 km from Astara to East Gorgan, in a belt approximately 110 km wide. The total forested region covers an area of over two million ha, or 1.1% of land in Iran. It encompasses parts of five provinces of the northern border of Iran from west to east, including Ardebil, Gilan, Mazandaran, Golestan and North Khorasan. Historically Gilan, Mazandaran and Golestan, which make up the majority of the forested region, were known as Hyrcania; therefore, the area is known as the Caspian Hyrcanian Mixed Forest Ecoregion.

The Caspian Hyrcanian forests contain remnants from the Tertiary period and are rich in relic and endemic species. Whilst in many parts of Europe and Siberia forests were unable to survive the cold temperatures of the last ice age, the climate near the Caspian Sea remained milder, which allowed the survival of much of the forest including some species which consequently became endemic to the Caspian Hyrcanian forests. There are currently around 150 endemic species of trees and shrubs in the Caspian Hyrcanian forests, including the Hyrcanian box tree (*Buxus hyrcana*), Caucasian pear (*Pyrus communis* subsp. *caucasica*), Caucasian oak (*Quercus macranthera*), Persian ironwood and Caucasian lime (*Tilia x euchlora*).

The rich plant diversity of the CHF landscape has led to a high diversity of animals. Up to 60 mammal species plus 340 bird, 67 fish, 29 reptile and 9 amphibian species occur in various habitats of the region, including forest, rangelands and wetlands. The Caspian tiger, the largest carnivore of Iran, became extinct 20 years ago. Other mammals which still inhabit the area but which have also declined dramatically include the Caucasus leopard (*Panthera pardus* subsp. *caucasica*), Eurasian lynx (*Lynx lynx*), brown bear (*Ursus arctos*), wolf (*Canis lupus*), golden jackal (*Canis aureus*), jungle cat (*Felis chaus*), and common otter (*Lutra lutra*). The red deer (*Cervus elaphus*), once widely distributed across the Caspian Hyrcanian landscape, has reduced in number to 1,100 individuals, most of which are restricted to Golestan NP and Asalem forest in Gilan. It is mainly found in forest meadows, which serve as a good grazing

ground for many mammal species including the brown bear and Indian crested porcupine (*Hystrix indica*).

The CHF is listed as an Important Bird Area (IBA). The landscape lies along an important migratory route between Russia and Africa and is a resting area for many birds as they migrate. A total of 340 bird species occur in the region, with 53 % migrants and 47 % residents. 80 % are water birds, which are attracted to the region by its wetlands and extensive large water bodies with many permanent rivers. Some important indicator species of the Caspian Hyrcanian forests and confined to this region are: the lesser spotted eagle (*Aquila pomarina*), Eurasian honey buzzard (*Pernis apivorus*), greater spotted woodpecker (*Dendrocopus major*), black woodpecker (*Dryocopus martius*), Caspian tit (*Parus hyrcanus*) and coal tit (*Parus ater*).

CHF Socio-Economic Context

A total of 7.3 million people live in the CHF landscape, with a population density of 126 people per km², which is 2.7 times greater than for the country as a whole.

High levels of precipitation, fertile soils, a temperate climate and beautiful scenery attract many people to the Caspian Hyrcanian landscape via both tourism and agricultural opportunities. The denser population results in a more dramatic conversion of the land because of increased need for resources, including land for agriculture, animal husbandry and mining. The Caspian Hyrcanian landscape of Iran is predominantly agriculture-based, and agricultural activities account for a large share of economic activities; they provide approximately 36% of total employment in the region and 20% of GDP.

Services provide 42% of the region's employment and 61 % of GDP, while manufacturing contributes approximately 10% of employment. Agro-industries, including wood, pulp, paper and textiles, are the main manufacturing activities in the area. The remaining employment opportunities include construction, mining, water and electricity industries.

Agriculture and orchards play a dominant role in the production sector of Iran. The main produce of the region includes wheat, barley, rice, beans, alfalfa and citrus fruits. Iran's long-grain rice grows primarily in the wet Caspian Hyrcanian lowlands, mainly in Gilan and Mazandaran. Wheat is mainly produced in Golestan, and constitutes 50% of total domestic product. Golestan also produces grain, sunflower and silk, the latter constituting 10% of total domestic product. Mazandaran is a major producer of fruit but also grows grain, cotton, tea, tobacco, sugarcane and silk. The use of chemical fertilisers has increased from 387 metric tons in 2000 to 436 metric tons in 2004.

Animal husbandry is the second greatest source of income for local families in the CHF. In 2003 the livestock population of the region constituted approximately 7% of the total for the country. Traditional animal husbandry systems involve the herding of livestock between lowlands, mid-altitude forests and upland forest and alpine pastures as the climate changes, meaning that all forest, rangeland and alpine landscape is used over the year. During the period that large landowners had control, the balance between livestock numbers and production capacity was relatively well monitored; however, following the nationalisation of forests and rangelands (in 1962) the increase in small landholders has altered the balance and has resulted in the degradation of forests and rangelands, with adverse socio-economic impacts. The system has thus far been slow to utilise new methods and techniques, such as those for livestock keeping as well as product processing and selling, which would develop local and individual economy as well as putting less pressure on forests.

Traditionally the CHF were Iran's main source of commercial timber. Trees were also felled locally for poles, firewood and charcoal, with firewood being the main use. Stricter regulations and increased enforcement resulted in wood extraction declining dramatically between 1991 and 2006: for example, timber production was reduced from 172,700 m³ to 49,700 m³; fuelwood declined from 718,800 m³ to 294,900 m³; charcoal production was reduced from 36,600 tons to 1,000 tons. In January 2018 the government introduced the Forest Protection Bill which banned all commercial logging in the CHF for a period of ten years.

CHF Threats and Protection of Biodiversity in the Caspian Hyrcanian Landscape

Despite their rich biological endowment, the CHF nearly halved in size between 1955 and 2000 (from 3.4 M ha to 1.85 M ha). This has caused significant loss of biodiversity not only through forest conversion and associated loss of habitat but also from forest degradation and habitat fragmentation. There are several main causes of deforestation; increased population, poverty, logging, conversion for agriculture and settlement, construction of new infrastructure, forest fires and livestock herding. With a population density of 126 people per km², the CHF is under great pressure from human activities. This pressure is further increased in summer months when domestic tourism is also high. Key threats to the CHF include the following:

- **Illicit felling for timber and firewood.** Timber is harvested by local communities for domestic use, and illicit felling remains common. These generally involve the high grading of commercially important species for example beech, yew, box, oak, Siberian elm, maple and wild cherry. This in turn leads to forest degradation.
- **Unsustainable agriculture practices.** Forests continue to be cleared by small-scale farmers for agriculture who have small land holdings (approximately 6 ha per family) and large family size (average 5.6 persons per family in Mazandaran) require ongoing forest clearance for subsistence livelihoods. Also, weak enforcement of forest clearance regulations results in less sophisticated farming techniques based on extensive land clearance. Out of a total land area of 5.8 million ha in the three provinces, 1.3 million ha is under cultivation of annual crops and orchards, and 1.9 million ha are forest covered.
- **Overgrazing and damage to forest floor.** Many villagers across the Caspian Hyrcanian landscape rear cattle as well as sheep and goats. The region lacks natural rangelands, and these animals are pastured in fallowed farmland. The amount of grazing land available is inadequate for the high numbers of livestock, and farmers allow their livestock to forage in forest areas, particularly in early spring and mid-autumn, which impedes the natural regeneration of tree species. In addition, herdsman illegally cut trees and shrubs to create open spaces where ground cover of herbaceous plants quickly develops and forms new pastures.
- **Uncoordinated economic development.** In the majority of cases government decision making does adequately consider the protection of habitat for biodiversity or the ecosystem services provided by the CHF. Government sponsored development has placed infrastructure such as reservoirs and roads, and mining and industrial development in ecologically sensitive areas. Domestic tourism also poses a significant threat to biodiversity through a lack of infrastructure and tourism development that does not adequately consider environmental impacts.

It is clear that ecologically sensitive areas are in need of high levels of protection owing to their habitat value. Some advances have been made in this sense, about 15 % of the CHF have been designated as **Protected Areas** (PA) to conserve biodiversity although the management effectiveness of many PAs is sub-optimal. PAs are legally under the jurisdiction of the Department of the Environment (DoE) as part of the national estate, but many are managed by FRWO, which has a stronger field staff presence in the landscape. Other areas within the CHF are designated as **Forest Protection Areas**, mainly for watershed protection, falling directly under the administrative jurisdiction of FRWO. These areas cover some 10 % of the CHF (around 180,000 ha). In theory this means 25% of the CHF is protected. What is important from a biodiversity point of view is that the effectiveness of these different areas in conserving biodiversity patterns and ecological processes and that a system is put in place that can plan and manage a matrix of land uses that enables the conservation of critical habitat patches and maintains forest connectivity across the landscape.

2.2 Project Objective and Expected Outputs

As identified in the Project Document (UNDP 2013) the **project objective** is:

To put in place a collaborative governance system and know-how for managing a mosaic of land uses in the Caspian Hyrcanian forest that provides habitat integrity and helps maintain landscape level ecosystem functions and resilience.

To achieve the project objective, the following three **project outcomes** and associated **project outputs** were identified:

Outcome 1: An enabling policy and regulatory framework for multiple use forest management is developed

Outputs supporting **Outcome 1** include the following:

- 1.1. Systematic analysis of values of forests and externalities of deforestation and forest degradation incorporated into sector decisions and finance options identified to offset opportunity costs.
- 1.2. Inter-sectoral coordination mechanisms established and national regulations and policies (inventory, function mapping and zoning, carrying capacity and utilisation plans etc.) for planning and management for Caspian Hyrcanian forest landscapes based on biodiversity mainstreaming needs reviewed and adopted
- 1.3. Integrated, multi-purpose forestry strategy and plan, including Sustainable land use plan for Caspian Hyrcanian forest, based on in depth biodiversity information, and management options analyses, that a) define biodiversity rich areas to be classified as biodiversity set-asides and secure financial resources for their management and b) lay out appropriate land-uses and management practices to be prescribed in the adjacent production landscape
- 1.4. National and local operational guidelines in place to manage multiple land uses in forest landscapes including improved forestry, small holder agriculture and livestock practices

Outcome 2: Enhanced institutional and staff capacity for implementing a multiple use forest management plan

Outputs supporting **Outcome 2** include the following:

- 2.1. Central and district staff of FRWO and other key stakeholders trained and able to apply / oversee multiple-use landscape level forest management, and training materials and best practices incorporated into FRWO staff induction courses
- 2.2. Integrated management plan developed in a participatory way for each pilot landscape and operationalized with appropriate institutional arrangements, coordination mechanisms and adequate budget
- 2.3. Effective monitoring and enforcement systems in place to control harvesting forest resources
- 2.4. Best practices manual and guidelines for multiple-use forest landscape management prepared, tested and revised
- 2.5. Best practices manual and guidelines for multiple-use forest landscape management prepared, tested and revised

Outcome 3: Community based integrated forest management piloted

- 3.1. Public awareness raised and communities mobilised and empowered to contribute to multi-purpose forestry
- 3.2. At least 2 community-based FMPs (covering 30,000ha) developed and implemented that include prescriptions for sustainable use of forest resources, resource sharing mechanisms and responsibilities of the local communities for the implementation of the plan.
- 3.3. Alternative livelihood development plan implemented that includes agri-livestock based activities (independent to forest ecosystems) and also a NTFP enterprises development and value addition strategy

This CHFP is in line with GEF Strategic Objective 2 of GEF 5 in the Biodiversity Focal Area: *Mainstream biodiversity conservation and sustainable use into production landscapes, seascapes and sectors* and in particular *Outcome 2.1: Increase in sustainably managed landscapes and seascapes that integrate biodiversity conservation*. As stated in the ProDoc the intended contribution of the CHFP is:

Putting in place a collaborative governance system and know-how for managing a mosaic of land uses in the Caspian Hyrcanian forest, incorporating policy inputs, capacity building and community involvement through a biodiversity mainstreaming approach that provides habitat integrity and helps maintain landscape level ecosystem functions and resilience

3. CHFP Terminal Evaluation Findings

3.1 Project Design / Formulation

The project was designed to develop and test a new and innovative multi-sectoral, multi-purpose, collaborative planning framework to achieve enhanced sustainable livelihoods and enhanced protection of the CHF and the habitats it provides to sustain native biodiversity. The project was not intended to go beyond the development and testing phase of the new planning framework. The intent of the CHFP was that the planning framework developed should be fully endorsed, approved and ready for implementation to cover all areas of the CHF. Recognizing the capacity development needs for implementation of the new planning framework, the project design included both “learning by doing” capacity development for those participating in the pilot landscapes, and capacity development through the development and testing of supporting guidelines and training materials. The latter intended to support implementation of the new planning framework after the CHFP was completed. Outcomes 1 and 3 reflect the development and testing of the new planning framework, outcome 2 capacity development.

Some of the feedback obtained during the TE field mission is relevant in the context of what the project hoped to achieve and how the project design intended to achieve outcomes and outputs.

Where a significant paradigm shift is required and the receptivity of target audience is potentially low, significant staff and time resources will be needed to effect change. Further, it is important to consider what might constitute a “critical mass” in terms of what proportion of individuals within the target audience should be engaged in capacity development to facilitate the paradigm shift. In terms of the CHFP project design the capacity development activities and supporting guidelines and training materials produced are considered excellent. The weakness identified was the available time and budget was considered insufficient to address the magnitude of capacity development required. In the context of the project design described above the importance of capacity development is critical to the sustainability of the CHFP, given the fact that the project will have created the need for a trained workforce to implement the new planning framework. But perhaps more important is the socio-political context where advocates of the new planning framework are needed to maintain the momentum of the paradigm shift.

Similar to the discussion of capacity development above, working to empower communities was identified as extremely challenging during TE interviews, however, when completed successfully it was identified as one of the most important outcomes of the project. Community facilitation conducted by the Local Community Mobilization Consultancy (LCMC) team was critical to the success of outcome 3 and currently there is no or little capacity within FRWO to conduct similar community facilitation for future efforts aimed at community multiuse forest management. It was felt that the CHFP could have benefited from additional financial support for community facilitation and that future community multiuse forest management work will need to provide financial support that is consistent with the level of importance attributed to community facilitation.

The project design included the formation of a Regional Coordination Committee (RCC), to engage provinces in the testing undertaken in the pilot landscapes. The provinces are important stakeholders, particularly in the context of the planning and budget allocation role of the Provincial Planning and Development Council (PPDC). The CHFP encountered difficulties forming an RCC and engaging provincial governors and the PPDC. In part the design of the project contributed to this, given the NPD, was not in a position to request provincial

engagement in the CHFP. Had the Head of FRWO held the role of NPD, direct requests for engagement of provinces may have been more successful. In 2015 and 2016, CHFP did hold several meetings of the RCC for the formulation of the Green Development Strategy (GDS), including one hosted by the Governor General of Gilan, and others hosted by Deputy Governors. The challenges identified in securing greater engagement of the RCC were: a) there was a 2 year delay in obtaining approval of the GDS by the Forest, Rangeland and Watershed Management High Council (FHC); and b) due to the large distances between the provinces, it was very challenging to organize RCC meetings.

An important role of the RCC is to assist in providing support for the Local Coordination Committees (LCC). It was difficult for FRWO at the County level to support the LCC because of limitations of staff and budget. As such the LCC could have benefited from additional support from FRWO at provincial and national levels, which a strong and active RCC could have facilitated.

The project design anticipated Community Forestry - Forest Management Plans (CF-FMP) would be developed and allocated to communities in the pilot landscapes. The project anticipated there would be legal issues related to direct allocation of a CF-FMP and therefore put considerable effort into a review of the regulatory framework, with resulting recommendations and efforts securing promises from various sections of FRWO to avoid problems. During the TE there was much discussion with a variety of FRWO staff and project consultants regarding the legality or illegality of direct allocation of CF-FMPs. The question remains, could the project design have better anticipated this issue and taken additional steps to mitigate the problem. It was noted that a project approach that requires fundamental changes in land and resource tenure (i.e. allocation of CF-FMP) was a large undertaking for the CHFP, given the fact that nothing on a similar scale had been tried before in Iran.

During the TE field mission there was a common observation conveyed by community members, government staff at various levels and from various departments and from CHFP staff; the observation was:

“The project is ending but it feels like it is just starting.”

At some level this can be taken as a sign the project was successful. The statement suggests the CHFP has created a multi-sectoral, multi-purpose collaborative planning framework that works to improve community livelihoods and better protect the CHF. The individuals who make the statement indicate they are ready and willing to move on to wider implementation. The issue in regard to project design is, has the CHFP put in place what is needed for FRWO implementation of the new planning framework? Have all the approvals been obtained, is there a plan for next steps and has budget been allocated to implement next steps? These issues are discussed in detail in the detailed evaluation presented below.

Consideration should be given to what elements should be included in a project that develops and tests a new framework, and builds a limited amount of capacity to implement the new framework. The most successful approach would be to have in place a project design that includes a second “implementation” phase of the project. The second phase could potentially involve a much smaller project team with roles of mentoring, supporting, facilitating and capacity development, with government staff and other stakeholders having a larger role as the lead implementing the new framework.

At a minimum the CHFP should be able to report at the end of the project that the FRWO had

developed a viable strategy providing assurance the new planning framework will be implemented, including commitments from key stakeholders, an action plan with a timeline identifying activities and responsibilities supported by confirmed budget commitments. Without these commitments from FRWO in place, the benefits which are to be derived from the outputs of the CHFP may not be sustainable.

3.2 Project Implementation

The project office located in Chalus was well situated being co-located with the office of FRWO responsible for management of the CHF and it includes the office of the NPD. Chalus is also centrally located in the CHF, reducing the time required to travel to pilot landscapes. The PCO included a strong team of up to 14 individuals including the NPM. Communication and coordination of work with each of the pilot landscapes was assured by the presence of local teams that included a coordinator, technical expert and a local coordinator. The CHFP engaged up to 30 national consultants and 3 international consultants. There was also a LCMC team that included 6 individuals (one facilitator for each pilot landscape and two supporting team members).

The UNDP and CHFP teams worked hard to achieve all expected outcomes and outputs on time. This was challenged, in part, by high turnover and changes in government staff, including having 3 NPDs over the 5-year duration of the project and some changes in UNDP program officers leading to negative impacts on project progress.

Feedback from the TE field mission on project implementation was generally positive, demonstrating good team spirit and a strong commitment to the CHFP, despite some of the serious issues encountered during the project (see Section 3.2.1 Adaptive Management of Project Design). The importance of the LCMC team cannot be understated given their role in bringing communities into the project and bridging communication with FRWO. Some project team members and government staff suggested more inter-sectoral meetings among consultants and between consultants and government would have been beneficial for knowledge sharing, multi-sectoral collaboration and decision making and providing advice on activities as earlier as possible to avoid having to make corrections later.

There appeared to be lack of engagement of the private sector and some government sectors such as mining and transportation. This may have been due to limitation of project budgets and/or time constraints. These stakeholders are very active in the pilot landscapes and the CHF generally and have an important role to play in Integrated Management Planning (IMP).

There was a delay in starting the formal capacity development component of CHFP due to an inability of the first national consultant engaged to complete their report, fortunately a replacement was found who made a very strong contribution to the project in what the TE has determined is one of the key aspects of the CHFP.

It is unclear how much work was directly carried out by the project team, national consultants, and the LCMC without the presence of FRWO or other government staff or members of the LCC. While including non-project staff in project activities requires more time and may require more budget, there are long term benefits derived through a mentoring approach. These include capacity development of staff who are expected to sustain project activities and the development of project advocates and “champions” that will maintain the momentum of CHFP after project closure.

The only issues regarding project support from UNDP identified, was the pause in the delivery of UNDP project co-financing that occurred while attempting to address the issue of government co-financing. This was considered a constraint on project implementation by the PCO.

3.2.1 Adaptive Management of Project Design

The budget for the CHFP in the Project Document was US\$7,125,000. US\$3M of this amount was to be contributed as a co-financing grant from the IRI. Only 3.4% of the US\$3M was made available and the project was forced to adapt and work within the more limited budget that was available. Scaling back on the number of communities in the pilot landscapes that participated in the project was one of the key strategies to manage the budget. This adaptive management approach was effective in that other important project outputs could still be worked on and there was still some level of testing within each of the pilot landscapes. An alternative adaption strategy of working with reduced available funding could have been a reduction in the total number of pilot landscapes from four to three or two. This may have permitted a more comprehensive testing by allowing more communities to be involved within a single pilot landscape, providing a more complete picture of the results of community based, multi-sectoral, multi-use forest management (Outcome 3).

In 2016 the government announced the Forest Retreat Policy, which initially was to include a phased reduction of logging in the CHF, but, which instead introduced an abrupt end to all logging in the CHF. The implication for the CHFP was there would no longer be the opportunity to work with communities (and FRWO) on the development of CF-FMP that had the capacity to provide an income for communities from sustainable timber harvesting. CF-FMPs were also important to the project in the context of the promoting and testing the paradigm shift from traditional commercial logging to a more collaborative approach to forest management with consideration of more than just commercial timber in the CHF. Communities would see direct financial benefits and become more involved in protection of the forest, relieving some of this burden from FRWO. The CHFP continued to develop materials on community forestry, including guideline documents and training manuals. The CHFP also adapted its approach to the development of CF-FMPs by focusing on activities that did not involve tree harvesting (e.g. three forest parks, one nursery) and one CF-FMP that involved harvesting coppices (sticks used for fencing and gardening). The latter CF-FMP was, however, considered “harvesting” under the logging ban and is currently on hold.

In addition to encountering the logging ban, when CF-FMPs for three forest parks and a nursery were submitted to FRWO for approval the issue of direct allocation of these CF-FMPs to the pilot landscape communities could not be resolved under current legislation. CHFP continues to work with FRWO to find an approach that will resolve the issue of direct allocation. If there is an inability to move forward with CF-FMPs this will have a negative impact on the project, with fewer benefits realized by communities and a loss of some of trust developed between FRWO and communities. It is hoped that CHFP will continue to work with FRWO and these communities to resolve the issue of direct allocation of CF-FMPs to ensure communities are not negatively impacted and to assist them in whatever way possible to achieve a positive outcome.

The project design included an RCC working group that included representation from each of the provinces, which the CHFP was unable to sustain for reasons discussed above. The NPM reported the CHFP adapted by working directly with individual provinces. The TE field mission did not discover significant interaction of the project with provincial governors or the PPDC. This did not appear to negatively impact the success work in the pilot landscapes. Nonetheless, greater engagement of the provinces may have strengthened the apparent low level of commitment and activity in the LCC observed during the TE.

3.2.2 Project Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) was recognized as an integral component of the implementation of CHFP. A comprehensive table of M&E activities is outlined in the Inception report, and they begin with the inception workshop and end with the TE, Terminal Report, a final audit and field visits to project sites with UNDP staff and government representatives. M&E design at project entry is considered “*highly satisfactory*”. Key elements of the M&E conducted throughout the course of the project include the following:

| Type of M&E activity | Responsible Parties |
|---|--|
| Project Steering Committee Meetings | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ National Project Director ▪ National Project Manager |
| Measurement of Means of Verification for Project Purpose Indicators | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ National Project Manager will oversee the hiring of specific studies and institutions, and delegate responsibilities to relevant team members ▪ International Project Advisor and Senior National Advisor |
| Measurement of Means of Verification for Project Progress and Performance (measured on an annual basis) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Oversight by National Project Manager ▪ Deputy National Project Manager ▪ Advice from International Project Advisor and Senior National Advisor |
| Annual Project Review (ARR) and Project Implementation Review (PIR) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Project Team ▪ UNDP-CO ▪ UNDP-GEF |
| Issues Log | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ National Project Manager ▪ UNDP CO Programme Staff |
| Risks Log | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ National Project Manager ▪ UNDP CO Programme Staff |
| Lessons Learned Log | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ National Project Manager ▪ UNDP CO Programme Staff |

CHFP completed PIRs annually and the TE reviewed reports provided from 2014 to 2018. The TE review determined PIR reports comprehensively tracked progress against project indicators, providing year to year updates and thorough overall assessment and accurate ratings of project results. The only criticism of PIR would be in relation to critical risk management regarding government co-financing.

The issue of co-financing was consistently identified as a critical risk in PIR, 2014 PIR *problems in securing co-financing from Government resources*; 2015 PIR *A critical risk that has affected the project is national co-financing*; 2016 PIR *The availability of co-financing resources will be of a critical importance*. The PIR identified actions taken to try to resolve the issues associated with CHFP receiving co-financing, however, none of the PIR, Annual Audit Management Responses, Annual Work Plans (AWP) or International Advisor reports provide a comprehensive assessment or risk analysis of the implications of not receiving national co-financing nor was there an adaptive management response addressing how CHFP would be restructured to address a reduced budget.

Given that national co-financing was to contribute approximately 42% of the CHFP budget there should be a comprehensive assessment of the implications of the lack of co-financing on project

outcomes with recommendations in regard to adaptive management undertaken during CHFP implementation and actions to be addressed following project closure. The TE team was informed that there was considerable discussion within the PSC, the PCO, and UNDP, and with the IPA in regard to addressing the co-financing issue, however, in the materials reviewed the TE team documentation of these discussions within a coherent risk assessment and adaptive management framework was not evident.

The mid-term review of CHFP provided 15 constructive recommendations for the CHFP. In response the PCO prepared a comprehensive table outlining management response, key action, time frame, responsible unit and these were tracked with comments to ensure all recommendations were addressed.

National Implementation Audit Action Plans were to be completed annually, the TE team was provided files for 2015 (dated December 2016) and 2017 (dated July 2018). The audits provided very limited assessment of project budgets, project expenditure, and progress of project delivery with few or no recommended planned actions. A more comprehensive review was expected, particularly in regard to the implications of CHFP operating without national co-financing.

AWP were provided in Excel spreadsheets for the years 2014 to 2019. AWP for 2014 to 2017 continued to show national co-financing supporting activities in the annual work plans. The mid-year progress reports for 2014 to 2017 provide no information in regard to how project funding was adjusted to support some activities (i.e. presumably with GEF funding) and limited response in regard to project adaptation for activities that were scaled back or cancelled due to a lack of co-financing.

While AWP provided a comprehensive outline of project activities in line with output indicators and targets and identified budgets for project activities there was no follow up analysis of proposed budgets against actual spending on project activities (i.e. spreadsheet columns showing proposed budgets, actual spending and percent of target budget used on a quarterly basis if possible). This type of analysis provides financial tracking of project progress, which project managers should respond to by identifying reasons for under/over spending on activities and the strategies for reallocation of funds to address under/over spending.

While the CHFP was able to effectively adapt to changing conditions over the course of the project, particularly a lack of national co-financing, the implementation of M&E could have provided better tracking of the process of project adaptation, including the reasoning behind changes made to project activities and their associated budgets. As such M&E implementation is assessed as “*moderately satisfactory*”. The overall quality of M&E is considered “*satisfactory*”.

3.2.3 Project Coordination and Operation

Locating the PCO in Chalus city with the Department of Forest Affairs of FRWO provided for excellent ongoing communication with FRWO and access to the CHF. In consultation with FRWO, CHFP selected four pilot landscapes in four bureaus of Natural Resource Management (NRM) based in the cities of Rasht, Noshahr, Sari and Gorgan cities which are located in three different provinces (Gilan, Mazandaran and Golestan) of the CHF ecoregion. The pilot landscapes chosen were considered to include representation of the CHF and as suggested by the PCO, they represented included areas and communities with substantial challenges to be addressed by the CHFP (e.g. severely degraded landscapes and communities with a poor relationship with FRWO).

In each of the pilot landscapes, a small number of villages (two or three) were selected as the key communities that would be involved in CHFP capacity building and testing and introducing of CF-FMP and alternative livelihood activities. In each pilot landscape CHFP has a local FRWO coordinator in the bureau of NRM, this person is also active in and has FRWO contacts with the county and province NRM. CHFP also established a contact person within each local community (village), and CHFP hired a local coordinator for each pilot landscape.

To facilitate IMP CHFP established a LCC in the county associated with each of the pilot landscapes. With each LCC the County Governor acts as the chairperson and the head of the NRM office (i.e. FRWO at county level) is the LCC secretariat. The LCC also has representation from DoE, ICHTO, the Water Board and representatives from the local community and local NGOs.

CHFP also established a RCC for the CHF ecoregion. There were difficulties coordinating meetings with all three Province Governors and Director Generals (DGs) representing key stakeholders. It was decided therefore that CHFP would work individually with the provinces through the existing PPDC.

The CHFP has held five RCC meetings held to assist in the formulation of the GDS (two in Golestan, two in Mazandaran and one in Gilan). Provincial Governors have not attended these meetings, instead Deputy Governors, who has less power and authority, have attended. Also, DGs, have not attended these meetings, sending deputy DGs in their place. Due to delays in approval of the GDS by the FHC, no additional RCC meetings have been held since 2017.

There were also meetings with PPDC in two provinces; three meetings in Gilan province and two meetings in Mazandaran province. No meeting has been with PPDC in Golestan province.

One of the challenges facing CHFP is coordinating effective project meetings within government agencies where there is high staff turnover. Each meeting is often faced with briefing new members, including new NPDs, Province Governor, Deputy of Province Governor, DGs or Deputy DGs, County governors, and District governors) There was also some staff turnover within CHFP, including new consultants and local facilitators. Continued strong support for the CHFP is best achieved when there is continuity among key stakeholders participating in the project.

Since 2016, there have been 13 consultation meetings with FRWO at the provincial level, six meetings of the Forest Advisory Council (FAC), and two meetings of the FHC. There were ten meetings with the technical committee of the Afforestation bureau, six regarding SABs and the SAB Guideline and four regarding the CF guideline and the Biodiversity guideline and checklist.

3.2.3 Project Finance

The CHFP project was provided with a \$1.9M grant from the GEF, \$150,000 from UNDP and was to receive a \$3M co-financing grant from the IRI. The CHFP project summary and co-financing tables are provided below.

| Project Title: Building a Multiple-Use Forest Management Framework to Conserve Biodiversity in the Caspian Hyrcanian Forest Landscape | | | |
|--|---|---------------------------------|-----------|
| Country: | IR Iran | GEF Project ID: | 4470 |
| GEF Agency: | UNDP | GEF Agency Project ID: | 4078 |
| Other Executing Partner: | Forests, Rangeland and Watershed Organisation (FRWO) of the Ministry of Jihad Agriculture | Submission Date: | 26/11/12 |
| | | Signed date: | 05/05/13 |
| GEF Focal Area: | Biodiversity | Project Duration(Months) | 60 Months |
| Name of Parent Program (if applicable): For SFM/REDD+ <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | N/A | Agency Fee (\$): | 190,000 |

| Focal Area Objectives | Expected FA Outcomes | Expected FA Outputs | Trust Fund | Grant Amount (\$) | Co-financing (\$) |
|---|---|---|-------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| BD-2: Mainstream Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use into Production Landscapes/ Seascapes and Sectors | Outcome 2.1: Increase in sustainably managed landscapes and seascapes that integrate biodiversity conservation | Output 2.1. Policies and regulatory frameworks (at least 1 major policy shift in forestry) for production sectors. | GEF TF | 1,710,000 | 4,758,750* |
| Subtotal | | | | 1,710,000 | 4,758,750 |
| Project management cost | | | GEF TF | 190,000 | 516,250 |
| Total project costs | | | | 1,900,000 | 5,275,000 |

* includes \$3M co-financing from IRI which the CHFP and UNDP books did not receive

The project design was very ambitious and would be challenging to complete within five years with the proposed funding from GEF and co-financing the IRI. Particularly the target of achieving 30,000 ha of community forestry. The lack of co-financing from IRI required the project to scale back substantially, particularly in regard to capacity development and the engagement of villages in the pilot watersheds.

Financial Report for the Terminal Evaluation (prepared by CHFP)

This section has been prepared for the CHFP Terminal Evaluation, and describes the project financing from the inception phase in 2013 until the 4th May 2019 when the project will end following a 12 month extension. It covers GEF, national (cash and in-kind) and UNDP financial contributions and expenditures.

A. Report on GEF costs

The approved GEF budget for CHFP was 1,900,000.00 USD. The percentage of cost has been forecasted in the annual budgets according to the projects' activity since 2013. Overall expenditure at the end of 2018 was 1,764,024.36 USD, or 93% of the total budget and is therefore broadly on target. The following table shows the expenditure of GEF funds per Outcome to the end of 2018.

| Total | Outcome1 | Outcome 2 | Outcome 3 | Outcome 4 | Total |
|--------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|--------------|
| Expenditure | 535,074.01 | 437,792.11 | 603,394.21 | 187,764.03 | 1,764,024,36 |
| Budget | 639,500.00 | 518,000.00 | 552,500.00 | 190,000.00 | 1,900,000.00 |
| Percentage | 84% | 85% | 109% | 99% | 93% |

Regarding to the budget for 2019 activities, the entire remaining GEF budget will be used by the end of the project on 4th May 2019.

B. Report on governments' cash co-financing

The approved national government cash co-financing budget for CHFP was 3,000,000.00 USD. The percentage of cost has been forecasted in the annual budgets according to the projects' activity since 2013. Overall expenditure at the end of 2018 is 100,431.80 USD, or 3.35% of the expected total budget.

At the start of the project, an agreement was made to enable payments of national co-financing contribution for the project via Direct Payment Modality of UNDP. Although the agreement was clear, details of administrative operations of FRWO were not adequately addressed, and the accountants of the provincial FRWO expressed concern that they would not be able to respond to the Supreme Audit Court regarding expenditures of the funds.

Then in 2015, the cost-sharing term was added to the agreement on the basis of articles in the CHFP project document. However, because of decreasing dedicated credits, just 50,694.26 USD were paid into the joint account. (This was paid in the form of 1,004.26 USD from provincial FRWO and 49,690.00 USD from the Forest Affairs Deputy of FRWO). Since then, due to legal obstacles, FRWO has failed to pay the project, and according to the law it was stipulated that all payments should be made by provincial FRWO.

Due to challenges, such as the return of funds to the provincial FRWO after UNDP deducting 3% of the share for General Management Service charges (included in the cost sharing agreement) and problems from the accountants of the provincial FRWO to respond to the Supreme Audit Court, there were no payments in 2016, and in 2017 only 53,751.25 USD was paid by provincial FRWO.

In 2018 due to changing budget allocation modality to provincial FRWO from cash to Treasury documents, it was no longer possible to transfer cash to a joint account, and that resulted in

contracting and direct payment to the parties from the provincial FRWO. Gilan provincial FRWO spent 21,300.00 USD on the biodiversity plan and a study visit to the Yazd game haunting area, while Golestan provincial FRWO spent 12,500.00 USD on capacity building and training of local community for Livestock, Tourism and Medicinal Plants.

C: Report on government in-kind cost

The planned budget for in-kind costs of government was 1,925,000.00 USD according to the project document. Expenditures have been monitored by the project office and are divided into five categories: a) salaries of government experts, b) central and provincial project offices, c) government transport, d) meeting hall costs, e) meeting catering costs. Total expenditure to the end of 2018 is 565,000.00 USD, which is 29.35% of the total budget. This is expected to increase slightly in 2019.

D: Report on UNDP costs

The approved UNDP cash co-financing budget for CHFP is 150,000.00 USD. Total expenditure to date is 108,725.24 USD (72.48%).

According to the project document, a further cash-parallel co-financing of 200,000.00 USD was considered for UNDP. No financial reports have been submitted to the project office so far regarding to this amount.

Conclusion:

The project's cash costs are based on the three sources (GEF, UNDP, and Government) in the following table, which shows expenditure to the end of 2018.

| Total | GEF | UNDP (cash) | Gov. (cash) | Total |
|--------------------|--------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------|
| Expenditure | 1,764,024.36 | 108,725.24 | 100,431.80 | 1,973,181.40 |
| Budget | 1,900,000.00 | 150,000.00 | 3,000,000.00 | 5,050,000.00 |
| Percentage | 92.84% | 72.48% | 3.47% | 39.07% |

Based on the 2019 work plan, the CHFP aims to spend the remaining costs of GEF and UNDP in its activities during this period.

A key lesson learned about government payments, is that for facilitation of mobilization of national co- financing, it is necessary to have approval of Parliament or Cabinet board prior to the project implementation, otherwise the mechanism cannot work properly due to existing barriers and current laws and regulations.

3.3 Project Results

3.3.1 Overall results

The following table provides a summary evaluation for the CHFP project. Detailed evaluation supporting each of the ratings are provided in the associated evaluation report sections.

| Monitoring and Evaluation | rating ⁺ | Implementing Agency (IA) & Executing Agency (EA) Execution | rating ⁺ |
|--------------------------------|---------------------|--|---------------------|
| M&E design at entry | HS | Quality of UNDP Implementation – Implementing Agency | HS |
| M&E plan Implementation | MS | Quality of Execution - Executing Agency | S |
| Overall quality of M&E | S | Overall quality of Implementation / Execution | S |
| Assessment of Outcomes | rating ⁺ | Sustainability* | rating ⁺ |
| Relevance | R | Financial resources | ML |
| Effectiveness | HS | Socio-political | ML |
| Efficiency | HS | Institutional framework and governance | ML |
| Overall Project Outcome Rating | HS | Environmental | L |
| | | Overall likelihood of sustainability | ML |

⁺ HS highly satisfactory; S satisfactory; MS moderately satisfactory; U unsatisfactory HU highly unsatisfactory; R relevant; NR not relevant; L likely; ML moderately likely; MU moderately unlikely; U unlikely.

* Sustainability was assessed at three scales as discussed in Section 3.3.7, the ratings in the table reflect the overall sustainability results of the CHFP. However, in terms of the CHFP objective, it is the sustainability of the GDS which carries the most weight, as it is the GDS which has the capacity to institute a collaborative, multi-sectoral, multiuse forest management framework capable of protecting and sustainably managing the entire CHF. Please read section 3.3.7 below for a complete analysis of sustainability.

3.3.2 Relevance

The CHFP introduced and successfully piloted two important concepts that are highly relevant to supporting enhanced sustainable livelihoods in the CHF region and enhanced protection and restoration of the forest and the native biodiversity they sustain. The two concepts are:

1. A multi-sectoral and multi-purpose forest management approach that was not present in the traditional approach FRWO used for forest management in the CHF.
2. Community engagement in decision making and in the implementation of activities related to management of the CHF region.

Currently each sector of government tends to work independently, each sector trying to justify the importance of their work and then competing for the budgets which are available. Inter-sectoral working groups, addressing complex multi-dimensional development issues through comprehensive analysis of benefits, impacts, mitigation, tradeoffs, and net benefit strategies has not been the traditional approach. When sectors such as forestry, mining, transportation, water management, agriculture, and tourism work independently there are many lost opportunities to maximize benefits, reduce impacts and more efficiently and effectively work towards sustainable development. The GDS Integrated Management Plan (IMP) process developed by the CHFP, implemented through multi-stakeholder working groups (RCC and LCC) includes representation

from relevant government sectors as well as representation of the private and public sector. Planning and monitoring at the provincial (landscape) and county (basin) scales contributes to an examination and integration of local and regional issues such as, road infrastructure, forest protection and use, mining needs, agricultural development for food security, expanding conventional and eco-tourism development, water security, and climate change risk reduction and adaptation.

The traditional governance model in Iran has also been a top down approach, without much community engagement. At the community level this has resulted in FRWO having a “policing” role that has led to an adversarial relationship and a lack of trust on both the community and FRWO sides. Other government departments such as mining or watershed development have not undertaken consultative processes that respect local communities. These approaches preclude the adoption of development strategies which introduce unforeseen opportunities that may be realized through good communication and mutually agreed upon goals, particularly the protection of the CHF. The integrated management planning approach delivered through the GDS IMPs is an inclusive planning process that includes stakeholder analysis and the engagement of local communities. Local development planning undertaken through the LCCs in each pilot landscape proceeded through an assessment of land capability analysis and capacity development needs to facilitate sustainable development targeting economic development opportunities for local communities that support and enhance environment protection needs.

3.3.3 Effectiveness

The CHFP design included one objective and three outcomes, together with their associated outputs, which are presented in a strategic results framework with baselines, indicators and targets.

The overall objective *“to put in place a collaborative governance system and know-how for managing a mosaic of land uses in the Caspian Hyrcanian forest that provides habitat integrity and helps maintain landscape level ecosystem functions and resilience”* has effectively been completed through the development and approval by the FHC of the GDS. The sets out an operational governance system that includes direction from the national government (FRWO and DoE) to provinces of the CHF which through the provincial PPDC will plan and budget activities that are introduced through bottom up planning of county government (i.e. LCC) which are working with communities at a local watershed (basin) scale. Through the national government the GDS will have the necessary authority through the Head of FRWO and the required technical expertise through the FHC and FAC of the Forest Affairs Deputy, to provide provincial governors and DGs with the direction needed to oversee the collaborative governance system outlined in the GDS. The provincial planning body, the PPDC, and its working groups provide an inter-sectoral forum to review, approve and provide budget for IMPs and their associated activities which are produced through bottom up planning of the LCC operating at the county level and submitted to the province.

The CHFP could have benefited from additional testing of inter-sectoral coordination, community participation and mobilization, and alternative livelihoods activities within the pilot landscapes. Due to a lack of co-financing, scaling back of the project limited the number and diversity of multi-purpose activities that were tested. In addition, the CHFP has not fully tested CF-FMP such as the forest parks and nursery as these are awaiting direct allocation and CF-FMPs involving timber harvesting have not been tested due to the Forest Retreat Policy that led to a ban on tree cutting.

Objective level indicators include a target for the identification and protection of 100,000 ha of forest to contribute to the biodiversity conservation. Through CHFPs establishment of a set-aside program for Special Areas for Biodiversity (SAB), the development of a SAB Guideline document and the identification of 400,734 ha of SAB candidate areas, the project has very effectively achieved this target and put in place a mechanism to further increase the area of forest protected for biodiversity conservation.

Objective level indicators also established a target for no net loss of forest cover in the pilot landscapes where the GDS IMP process was tested. The results show virtually no change (+/- 1%) in each of the four pilot landscapes. The extent to which the Forest Retreat Policy which banned logging in the CHF in 2016, may have contributed to these favorable results is unknown. It should also be noted that in addition to forest cover there is a need to consider forest quality. During the TE forests were visited that showed dramatic impacts from livestock. In addition, some watersheds, such as the Chehelchai basin have large areas converted to agriculture (pasture, crops) which create gaps in forest cover, increase the amount forest edge and fragment forest cover such that forest cover targets should be established to go beyond no net loss to achieve increased levels of forest cover that improve forest integrity and enhance the quality of forest habitats which sustain native biodiversity.



Chelchai basin landscape

The Forest Condition assessment conducted by CHFP provides a measure of some important indicators applied at a basin level, such as the percent of basin area with soil compaction, grazing and soil erosion. In addition to the CHFP forest cover and condition indicators forest targets, may also consider the amount of forest edge within basin forests (i.e. edge: interior ratios), forest fragmentation and connectivity, understory conditions within forests used for grazing, considering indicators such as tree regeneration, native herbs, woody plants, mosses, lichens and soil health (compaction, organic matter).

Objective level indicators also set a target of no decline in the status of rare and flagship species. Due to funding and timing constraints comparable survey methods used to establish baselines of rare and flagship species were not undertaken at the end of the project. Instead of a quantitative method, a more rapid and geographically more limited qualitative analysis was used at the end of the project and this may not represent meaningful data in the context of the changes noted in the large mammals surveyed (Persian leopard and red deer), given the relatively short four-year time period. The quantitative primary data collected on these mammal species and on forest bird specialists does however establish an important baseline which should be evaluated in the future using comparable survey methods.

Outcome 1 which is “An enabling policy and regulatory framework for multiple use forest management is developed” has four outputs with measurable targets. Output 1.1 has been achieved in large measure through the completion of an evaluation of key ecosystem services,

water provisioning, tourism, timber and carbon sequestration, in each of the four pilot landscapes. Project reports outline the methodology used for the assessment, mapping and valuation of these selected ecosystem services, to permit the replication required for work in new CHF basins. An FRWO Guideline for “*Integrating Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services into Multi-Purpose Forestry in the Caspian Hyrcanian Forests*” has been developed, tested, approved, published and widely distributed to promote future consideration of the value of ecosystem services in GDS IMP processes. Options for the Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) for tourism and water were detailed in brochures and a booklet. The possible implementation of PES was explored with water companies in Gilan and Golestan provinces, though no agreements were made. A concrete example of PES from the project is the introduction of the direct allocation forest entrance fees paid by tourists to the local community who in turn ensure rubbish is collected in areas used by tourists (previously entrance fees went to the local government).

The amount of money earned from entrance fees is small, while the valuation of ecosystem services is substantial, and the cost to implement activities identified in IMPs is substantial.

The value of the four main services of carbon sequestration, water production, wood production and protection value of the Baliran Basin was valued at \$ 1,702,997, \$ 248.2 million, \$ 3.4 million, and \$ 90.2 million, respectively. (Baliran IMP 2018)

Given the financial needs of GDS IMP implementation and the PES options identified it is hoped the work started by CHFP will be further explored by FRWO to introduce more substantial PES financing.

Output 1.2 requires the establishment of an inter-sectoral coordination mechanism to plan and sustainably manage the CHF. This was achieved in the pilot landscapes through the establishment of Local Coordination Committees (LCC) with membership from multiple sectors and the community. The local FRWO is appointed as the secretariat to support and organize the LCC meetings, the county governor is chair, and other members include the district governor, DoE, ICHTO, Department of Water Affairs, etc. The TE received mixed feedback on the strength of the LCC, in some cases individuals strongly supported the committee; these individuals can be very important “environmental champions” that encourage others to rally around the work of the LCC. In other cases, the apparently weak LCC members may be due to frequent changes in government staff, such that new members will not have benefited from participation in LCC training, field visits, etc. that might lead to greater engagement and enthusiasm for the work LCC is undertaking. In at least one case the LCC secretariat did not appear to have confidence in the work of the LCC, and did not support the IMP actions proposed.

In the GDS IMP process, the LCC is a critical link to local communities and is the foundation of the bottom up approach to sustainable development promoted. As such, high functioning LCC will make the most significant contribution to achieving GDS vision of “*Empowered Communities, Sustainable Forests, Global Heritage*”. With support from CHFP LCC have effectively prepared IMP for each of the pilot landscapes and overseen the implementation of activities in pilot landscape communities. Significant support mechanisms, including a strong secretariat, ongoing capacity development, engagement with stakeholder communities and technical and financial support from provinces will be factors that determine the continued success of LCC.

Output 1.3 has been effectively completed through the completion of the GDS as a framework for IMP within the CHF and input to a new FMP ToR that encourages an alternative approach to traditional forest management, including community forest management. With the assistance of paid consultants and in-kind support from FRWO and DoE, CHFP also completed and field tested studies within each of the pilot landscapes on land capability, SAB, socio-economic conditions, and valuation of ecosystem services needed to support the GDS IMP process. Finally, through

collaborative processes and field testing CHFP produced the guidelines, training documents and a handbook on integrated management planning for FRWO staff and other stakeholders who will participate in future GDS IMP exercises throughout the CHF.

The focus of Outcome 2 is capacity development intended to create a paradigm shift from a traditional sectoral, top down management to a multi-stakeholder, multi-sectoral, bottom up approach to management of the CHF. *“Enhanced institutional and staff capacity for implementing a multiple use forest management plan”*

Capacity development was effectively accomplished through a “learning by doing” approach in the four pilot landscapes. The development of IMPs proceeded with stakeholders (FRWO, DoE, ICHTO, county and district governors, local community members, etc.) participating, as appropriate, in a wide variety of training workshops, which over the course of the project were translated into field tested guidelines and training manuals to support future GDS IMP.

The capacity development scorecard confirms the baseline conditions characterized by: a low capacity of the government to lead and coordinate participatory, multi-sectoral planning; a lack of knowledge and motivation to undertake ecosystem-based integrated forest management planning; a lack of outreach skills to engage and build trust with communities; an inability to lead conflict resolution and build consensus among stakeholders; and rigid rather than reflective and adaptive, innovative management strategies.

CHFP documents provide data showing how the targets set for outcome 2 have been met, including: a combined capacity development score with a baseline of 11% and final score of 52%, which exceeds the 42% target; the number of FRWO and other staff trained of 1,516 is far above the target of 270; and IMPs were approved in all four pilot landscapes again well above the target of two IMPs.

Outcome 2 also includes the following indicator *“Use of a community based, functional and effective monitoring mechanism for illicit felling and land clearing in the pilot landscapes”*. No formal community based monitoring mechanism was developed and implemented as part of the CHFP. The CF-FMP guidelines produced by the CHFP do establish clear M&E procedures. During the TE field mission it was noted that community members advocated for protection of the forest and appeared to assume more responsibility to prevent illegal tree felling and land clearing. This is consistent with the theory that returning ownership of forest management to communities, leads to increased protection of the forest.

CHFP has effectively completed Outcome 3 *“Community based integrated forest management piloted”* through community facilitation which led to the development of CF-FMPs and other sustainable livelihood activities in the four pilot landscapes. Targets set for some of outcome 3 outputs have not been achieved, as shown in the information provided below:

- overall public awareness scores increased by 17% which is relatively close to the target set at 20%
- community based forest management plans covering 4,050 ha developed, achieving approximately 14% of the target set at 30,000 ha
- 360 women, 511 men involved in 7 sustainable livelihood activities, far exceeding the targets of 100 women and 100 men in 4 sustainable livelihood activities
- US\$76,400 generated from sustainable livelihood activities, approximately 38% of the target set at US\$200,000

The reasons why three of the four targets for outcome 3 indicators were not met as determined by the TE include:

1. CHFP received very little of the proposed government co-financing of US\$3M (so far, about US\$100,000.00 as cash co-financing, has been received), and to compensate for this significant reduction in the project budget, a much smaller number of villages were engaged in each pilot landscape likely limiting the overall public awareness of the project and the total revenue generated from sustainable livelihood activities.
2. During the CHFP project the Forest Retreat Policy was introduced, banning timber harvesting in the CHF, this restricted the options for community based management plans, which reduced the total potential revenue generated.
3. FRWO did not provide the necessary approvals for direct allocation of CF-FMPs to communities despite substantial efforts by CHFP staff over several years. There was an apparent lack of willingness by FRWO to provide an exemption from current internal rules and regulations for CHFP pilot landscapes.
4. The target of achieving 30,000 ha of community forestry from a baseline of zero within a five year span, supported through a subordinate component of a moderately funded project, is considered over-ambitious based on an international comparison of community forestry achievements elsewhere in Asia.
5. There was a substantial increase in the US dollar exchange rate, which has reduced the US dollar value of sustainable livelihood activities.

3.3.4 Efficiency

The CHFP is considered to have been very efficient, based on the project's ability to achieve the intended outputs of Outcomes 1, 2 and 3 with approximately 40% of the budget originally identified for the project. There were of course consequences of a reduced budget, and these are clearly reflected in output targets that were not achieved in Outcome 3, due in part to the substantial scaling back of the project, working in a smaller number of villages in each of the pilot landscapes.

While capacity development targets of Outcome 2 were met, the feedback received during the TE suggests there remains much work to do to achieve the paradigm shift within FRWO, other national, provincial and local government organizations and the public towards multi-sectoral, multi-purpose, collaborative and community based approaches to planning for sustainable management of the CHF. It has been stated that a "critical mass" has not been reached and there are serious concerns there may not be sufficient support within FRWO to advocate for GDS IMP implementation, for the development of CF-FMP or to provide the technical support needed for these activities. In particular, the need for staff with skills in facilitation, community engagement, conflict resolution, and collaborative planning are lacking. Had the actual project budget been received and used for project implementation, a far larger number of people would have been engaged increasing the capacity development at all levels leading to an increased confidence in project results.

Some of the efficiency of the project may come from engagement of well qualified consultants to complete specific project tasks, such as land capability classification, valuation of ecosystem services, and community facilitation, etc. There is a concern, however, that while this approach is efficient for CHFP, it may come at the expense of reduced technical knowledge transfer to government staff who may be responsible for undertaking or overseeing replication of these activities essential to implementation of the GDS IMP. A larger budget may have permitted the hiring of more project staff who were able to work collaboratively with government of project activities.

It is difficult to evaluate the cost effectiveness of the CHFP; however, a conservative assessment suggests there are likely considerable financial benefits to individual households and communities that participated in CHFPs sustainable livelihood activities. Eco-lodge owners reported income was generated quickly after establishment, and that the income was large by Iranian standards and it was expected to grow with continued success of the operation. Income benefits were in some cases shared among community members through cooperative ownership, and/or through the community interactions with eco-lodges with some community members providing local foods for consumption by tourists, guiding activities with tourists and the sale of locally made handicrafts.

There are also cost benefits derived through continued protection and enhancement of ecosystem services. As shown above for the Baliran Basin, the value of ecosystem services is substantial with a total of over US\$343M derived annually for the 21,550 ha basin. While the value of all ecosystem services cannot be attributed to CHFP, during the course of the project 400,734 ha of candidate SAB were identified. Given the likely long term protection of SABs, the value of ecosystem services associated with these areas far exceeds the US\$1.9M GEF investment, making CHFP an extremely cost effective project. It must also be recognized that CHFP is a pilot project, which through a collaborative process has developed, piloted and obtained approval for the GDS IMP. Implementation throughout the CHF will lead to further protection and enhancement of the environment together with their associated ecosystem services and financial benefits.

3.3.5 Country ownership

The key output from the CHFP is the GDS implemented through local level IMPs with strong community participation in the pilot landscapes. Success of the GDS is entirely dependent on government ownership given the role of national, provincial and local level governments in the implementation of the GDS. Ownership by non-government stakeholders, particularly local village communities to whom greater responsibility for forest management restoration and protection will be given, is also essential to successful GDS implementation.

The CHFP was challenged by the need to initiate a paradigm shift within a government organization with a long history of responsibility for implementation of a rigid, single focus, non-consultative, forest management mandate. The organization is led and staffed by professionals, many who are engineers, who oversee implementation of traditional extractive forest management, conducted by forestry consultants and forest logging companies. Forest protection, also part of FRWO's mandate, is the responsibility of forest guards.

Inevitably there was resistance within FRWO of taking ownership of CHFP's multi-sectoral, multi-purpose, consultative forest management approach as it meant a significant change in the way FRWO operates. It requires staff at all levels to embrace new ways of thinking, many of which require the acquisition of new skills. There is a need to have the ability to lead collaborative management with other institutions that maybe similarly single focused and whom do not want to participate in collaborative decision making or in the case of the public, have a long standing mistrust of FRWO.

Despite these challenges elements of FRWO, including the FHC, FAC, NPD and many of the local FRWO staff working in the pilot landscapes have demonstrated ownership of the CHFP through their participation in development, review and approval of the many project outputs, such as the GDS, pilot IMPs and supporting guideline documents and learning manuals. Some units within FRWO developed stronger ownership (e.g. FRWO BEPP) and others little

ownership (e.g. FRWO Golestan). FRWO is a large organization with many staff and a long history of traditional forest management; during the TE field mission many of the individuals interviewed identified the need to reach a larger proportion of FRWO to achieve the paradigm shift needed within the organization. This was sometimes expressed as the need to achieve a “critical mass” of CHFP supporters.

Ownership among other government organizations is less well understood, but remains important. DoE staff interviewed consistently expressed enthusiastic support and ownership. ICHTO was not interviewed, but were engaged and supported the project, suggesting good ownership. Given the GDS IMP is a multi-sectoral process there remains a need to reach out to all relevant stakeholders, to facilitate their understanding of the GDS, to encourage and provide opportunities for their participation which leads ultimately to ownership.

CHFP demonstrated that ownership by the public in local communities occurs when there is good facilitation that builds trust, takes the time to understand local cultures, including their social, environmental and economic situation. Communities from the pilot landscapes participating in the CHFP demonstrated a very strong ownership. There is also the potential for a wide audience of the public to show ownership of the project given its emphasis on protection of the CHF and native biodiversity. The Red Deer campaign and work with controlling Boxwood leaf blight are good examples where a wider public group has shown ownership for protection of the CHF.

There remains a need to build ownership of the GDS. Final sign off of the GDS by the Head of FRWO will signal an important, high level of ownership, by the government of the IRI. The large requirement for additional capacity development identified by the TE is, in part, due to the need for developing greater ownership of the GDS within FRWO and other key stakeholders.

3.3.6 Mainstreaming

The CHF is an exceptional global ecological asset. In a study completed by WWF (Global 200 2002) the CHF was identified as one of 238 global ecoregions with distinct and irreplaceable biodiversity features. WWF states “*effective conservation in these ecoregions would help conserve the most outstanding and representative habitats for biodiversity on this planet*”. The CHF is also listed as an Important Bird Area (IBA), providing resting and breeding habitat for birds that annually migrate along a route between Russia and Africa. The CHF is composed of ancient broadleaf and mixed lowland and montane forests that form unique and diverse communities providing habitat for a number of endemic and endangered tree, mammal and bird species. Between 1955 and 2000 the CHF area was reduced from 3.4M ha to 1.85M ha, and there has been significant degradation and fragmentation of the remaining forest cover.

The GDS IMP process has the potential to mainstream an urgently needed management strategy that recognizes the global significance of the CHF and contributes to global and national programs aimed at the protection of biodiversity. The following assessment of mainstreaming is contingent upon the successful implementation of the GDS and IMP following completion of the CHFP (see sustainability section below).

Successful implementation of the GDS, the biodiversity mainstreaming guideline and CF-FMP guideline produced by the CHFP will, over time, make a substantial contribution to GEF's global strategic objective and program "BD-2" which is *"Mainstream Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use into Production Landscapes/ Seascapes and Sectors"* including applicable GEF Expected Outcomes: Outcome 2.1: Increase in sustainably managed landscapes and seascapes that integrate biodiversity conservation and applicable GEF Outcome Indicators: Policies and regulatory frameworks for production sectors. GDS IMPs support the enhancement of sustainable economic opportunities for communities living in the CHF while also introducing new and innovative restoration and protection mechanisms for the CHF.

Nationally the GDS will support Iran's commitments as a signatory to the global Convention of Biodiversity and the targets outlined in Iran's National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP):

1. Promotion of public awareness and participation;
2. Formation of biodiversity information systems;
3. Sustainable use of biodiversity resources; and
4. Integrated management of biodiversity.

The CHFP has produced and undertaken a wide variety of awareness raising initiatives, many of which are available on the project website (<http://chfp.ir/>) in Farsi and English. These include videos, radio shows, brochures, newspaper and magazine articles, newsletters, posters, leaflets, calendars, and cards. The project has also supported and attended local and national events, including support for pilot landscape communities to attend events, such as: National Tourism Exhibition, National Environment Exhibition, National Entrepreneurship Awards, Livelihoods Festival Chehelchai, and the Red Deer Festival. The Chehelchai women participating in the pilot project were one of the winners presenting at the National Entrepreneurship Award.

Working with communities and government the CHFP has gathered local knowledge and completed detailed field studies to compile information on the current status of biodiversity and how it is changing over time. Reports on flora, mammals, birds, forest condition, and NTFP have been produced by the CHFP. Advances have been made in efforts to provide enhanced protection of biodiversity through the preparation of the Biodiversity Handbook, Biodiversity Guideline and Checklist, SAB, and contributions to the new Guideline for Commercial FMP. Implementation of the GDS in through the IMP, supporting target 4 of the NBSAP.

GDS Vision

By 1414 (2035), as a result of environmental considerations at all levels, plus empowerment of local forest communities, the extent/coverage and quality of Hyrcanian Forests will be improved.

GDS Principles

- Twelve principles of the ecosystem approach
- Integrated and sustainable forest management
- Strengthen administrative structures and inter-sectoral cooperation
- Community participation and empowerment
- Sharing and learning from successful experiences

The GDS contributes to UNDP's Country Programme (2012 – 2016) including national priorities:

1. Environmental considerations integrated into development decision-making;
2. Iran contributes to implementation of Multilateral Environment Agreements and internationally agreed targets.

And Outcome 4: National, subnational and local capacities enhanced to ensure:

1. integrated management, conservation and sustainable use of ecosystems, natural resources and biodiversity;
2. Main-streaming environmental economics into national planning and audits;

The GDS is founded on an integrated decision making process for sustainable economic development, restoration and protection of the CHF, contributing to Iran's international agreement on the Convention on Biodiversity Aichi targets as outlined in the NBSAP.

Successful implementation of the GDS IMP process and CHFP's contributions to the new sustainable commercial FMP guideline, will mainstream enhanced efforts to protect forests of the CHF and the adoption of agricultural methods that reduce soil erosion and enhance water quality. When implemented, these actions will result in environmental benefits of a more secure and sustainable water supply and reduced risk of landslides and flooding for the large population which lives in the CHF region.

Following the example of the CHFP, GDS IMP implementation will also mainstream the process of engaging women in sustainable livelihood activities leading to greater economic and social empowerment of rural women in the CHF region. The GDS IMP process also includes facilitation techniques that encourage the formation of community groups and cooperatives, and the adoption of a greater range of both, new alternative and revived traditional, livelihood activities leading to enhanced social, food and economic security for rural communities living in the CHF.

With a focus on rural communities living within the CHF, GDS IMP implementation will also mainstream a planning and economic development approach that targets more disadvantaged communities, including ethnic minorities, living in the CHF region.

3.3.7 Sustainability

Sustainability of the CHFP is evaluated below at the following three geographic / socio-political scales:

- the local village communities directly involved in project activities within the pilot landscapes, i.e. Youj, Baliran, Chehelchai, and Feriroud/Zilakiroud;
- the IMP teams represented by the LCCs operating at the county level which were established to work in each of the pilot landscapes, i.e. basin 22/23; basin 33/34; basin 53; and basin 93; and
- the GDS which is a national initiative which, based on the vision and strategy of the GDS, is intended to cover the entire CHF by the year 2035.

Financial resources

Through the efforts of the LCMC, local communities have created revolving community funds and cooperatives to support self-sustaining activities. With technical assistance and training from the project local communities developed locally appropriate initiatives, including: handicrafts; ecotourism (eco-lodges); production and processing of saffron, verbena, borage and non-timber forest products; and IPM in rice fields. Over the course of the project, in large measure, these activities have proved successful and they have generated significant financial benefits. The sustainability of these local community activities and the associated financial benefits is

considered “likely”.

In addition to the evidence local community activities are financially sustainable, there is also significant evidence of the replication of some these activities and their associated financial benefits, including:

- in each of the communities where the CHFP initiated the establishment of one eco-lodge there has been significant replication by others, in Gilan there are five new eco-lodges, in Baliran there are 4 new eco-lodges, in Chehelchai there are eight new eco-lodges;
- in Chehelchai it was extremely difficult to introduce a change from traditional wheat production to alternative crops. One woman took up the initiative establishing a small plot of borage approximately 200 m², this has now grown to more than 40 ha, largely through replication by others. Similarly saffron production has increased from 5 ha to 40 ha;
- there has been replication of handicraft production within communities where this activity was introduced;
- the Red Deer Campaign has undergone significant increase in size and scope following the initial financial support from the CHFP;
- the campaign for controlling Boxwood leaf blight has increased the collection of saplings from healthy trees and planting them in safer places such as inside green gardens in cities and villages and
- the introduction of IPM in rice fields has been replicated, expanding from 4 ha to 10 ha.

Within each pilot landscape due to the large area of the watershed (e.g. Baliran 21,550 ha) and the wide dispersion of the communities, target villages for community-based activities were selected at the start of the project, with the list of villages being adaptively managed throughout the project period. There remain many villages that have not participated in IMP. LCC established by the CHFP are responsible for IMP within the entire basin. When the project closes May 4th 2019 the expectation is the established LCCs will upscale the current initiative, to eventually reach all villages within the basin. For each pilot landscape the project has worked with, the LCC has produced an IMP that includes tables providing comprehensive and detailed implementation plans with a long list of activities with associated annual budgets to be implemented within the basin over the next five years. Implementation activities are categorized in tables under the following thematic areas:

- Sustainable Forest Economy & Jobs
- Biodiversity Enhancement
- Climate Change Adaptation /Global Threats
- Resilient & Empowered Forest Communities
- Recreation and Low Impact Ecotourism

THEME 1: SUSTAINABLE FOREST ECONOMY & JOBS

1.1. Develop and implement sustainable alternative livelihood options for local communities and particularly for herders / Galesh (for Ecotourism – see Theme 5)

| Activities | Unit | Cost of Each Unit | Program of Implementation of Activities and Necessary Credit | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|--------------|-------------------|--|--------|--------------|--------|--------------|--------|--------------|--------|--------------|--------|--|--|--|
| | | | 1397/2018-19 | | 1398/2019-20 | | 1399/2020-21 | | 1400/2021-22 | | 1401/2022-23 | | | | |
| | | | Amount | Credit | Amount | Credit | Amount | Credit | Amount | Credit | Amount | Credit | | | |
| Study and compile alternative employment options suitable to the environment | Plan | 20 | | | 5 | 100 | | | | | | | | | |
| Local community capacity building for 'green' alternative employment | Group / Hour | 1 | | | 30/6 | 30 | | | | | | | | | |
| Create and develop special alternative employment based on non-timber forest product (NTFPs) | Jobs | 100 | | | 1 | 100 | 1 | 100 | | | | | | | |
| Improve and develop traditional rural handicrafts (especially for women's employment) | Industry | 100 | | | 2 | 200 | 1 | 100 | | | | | | | |
| Study and create added-value for timber products | Plan | 100 | | | 1 | 100 | | | | | | | | | |

*** Unit price and credit in million Rials.

The sustainability of LCCs and their ability to replicate IMP within all villages of the pilot is dependent, in part, on the LCC's commitment, advocacy and networking capability. The LCCs needs strong leadership from the LCC chair (county governor) and organizational support from the LCC secretariat (local FRWO) to empower the LCCs as an agent of change that is acknowledged at the provincial level, particularly by the PPDC where LCC IMP proposals will be reviewed, approved and funding allocated. While the production of detailed IMPs for each of the

pilot landscapes and the success of activities in pilot landscapes suggests strong and active LCCs, these outputs demonstrate what can be accomplished with excellent work conducted by an LCMC, CHFP staff and appropriate financial support. Financial support came both from the communities which, in large measure, self-funded their activities and the CHFP which funded the background studies supporting the IMPs and the LCMC team.

The TE field mission interviewed members of various LCCs, including district governors, FRWO, and DoE. Most of those interviewed did not show a strong understanding of the IMP process or a knowledge of future commitments to implement the IMPs. Additionally, the CHFP did not have significant engagement with the provincial PPDC and at this time there is a need to establish a mechanism for LCC to submit IMP proposals to the PPDC for approval and funding. The sustainability of LCC in the pilot landscapes will be highly dependent on continued support from the GDS IMP secretariat which FRWO has committed to sustaining headed by the NPM following the closure of the CHFP. With ongoing support from a GDS IMP secretariat headed by the NPM (who has a full understanding LCC responsibilities and needs) the financial and socio-political sustainability of LCC in the pilot landscapes is considered “moderately likely”.

Implementation of the GDS with replication of IMPs in all 103 basins of the CHF is a very large undertaking which the GDS has given a reasonable timeline of 2035 for completion. The ecological significance and value of the CHF appears to be recognized in Iran and the GDS has been approved by the FHC making it a legal document. The GDS is currently awaiting final sign off and operationalization by the Head of FRWO. The successful development and implementation of IMPs in the pilot landscapes which demonstrated very successful sustainable livelihood activities supporting enhanced protection of the CHF provides excellent validation for the GDS IMP framework. Once approved by the Head of FRWO, a directive would be given to provincial governors and relevant director generals to initiate implementation of the GDS. Financial support would largely come through the review and approval of IMP activities by each province’s PPDC submitted by local LCCs.

The GDS provides a new integrated multi-sectoral, collaborative framework for planning which, in theory, should improve the current planning model and to some extent work within the existing budget allocations. There were activities undertaken in the CHFP supporting the IMP testing in the pilot landscapes that would need to be undertaken and would require funding as part of the implementation of the GDS IMP process. For example, land capability mapping of basins and the vital work of the LCMC team. LCC collaboration with other government departments could seek support from existing government extension and training programs that are currently funded to support IMP activities. Due to the re-imposition of sanctions by the United States in 2017, Iran is currently experiencing financial difficulties, inflation in 2018 was over 35% and this is increasing monthly. During the TE field mission individuals noted rising prices of products and expressed concern about the government’s ability to fund existing work let alone new initiatives. Given the fact that the GDS does not yet have full political support at the national level, the uncertainty of provinces embracing the implementation of the GDS and instituting the establishment of LCC and the development of IMPs for CHF watersheds, and the financial difficulties currently facing Iran, the sustainability of the GDS is considered “moderately unlikely”.

Socio-political

At the community level despite initial challenges of mistrust and a lack of respect on both sides, government and community members, facilitation was able to form new community groups and the building of trustful working relationships with government that contributed to the success of IMP activities in the pilot landscape villages. There remains the possibility that new issues and/or individuals could undermine and breakdown the important relationships formed by CHFP which

are needed to sustain community activities. For example, CHFP has developed CF-FMPs with communities (three forest parks and one nursery) that have not yet been allocated to the communities which developed the plans and there has been some discussion of the CF-FMPs going to an open bidding process. Some community members have stated if their CF-FMP is allocated to someone else they will physically block implementation suggesting a significant breakdown in the trust relationships established. A second example noted was, some FRWO staff stated they do not support the allocation of CF-FMPs to communities, because they do not feel communities will successfully implement the forest management plans and protect the forests. These are two examples where there would be a complete lack of socio-political support and sustainability would be considered “unlikely”. For the pilot landscape communities engaged in eco-tourism, handicrafts, and alternative agriculture, community support will continue and there is less reliance on government and sustainability would be considered “likely”. As eco-tourism, local handicrafts and alternative agriculture continue to develop and expand in the CHF, there will be a need to monitor these activities to ensure their long term sustainability.

At the LCC pilot landscape level, as discussed above socio-political support is weak and sustainability will be reliant on substantial ongoing support from the GDS secretariat which FRWO has committed to sustaining. With continued support from the GDS secretariat it is likely the LCC will continue to meet regularly, functioning as the socio-political agent for IMP implementation. Sustainability of the pilot landscape LCCs is considered “moderately likely”

The GDS has strong socio-political support from some individuals, but there are others who expressed skepticism that the GDS could be implemented, citing reasons of political barriers and competition among government programs and departments, a personal or institutional lack of support for multi-sectoral planning, a lack of trust in community forest management and protection and/or a lack of available funding. Until there is strong support from FRWO to implement the GDS the sustainability based on socio-political considerations is “moderately unlikely”.

Institutional framework and governance

The mobilization of communities was identified as one of the most challenging tasks of the project. The excellent work of the LCMC was, however successful, and led to the establishment of working groups, cooperatives, and revolving funds that constitute strong local governance structures. Once these have been established as part of the IMP process and new community activities are being implemented successfully their sustainability is considered “likely”. In the pilot landscape communities pursuing CF-FMPs, the sustainability of the community institutions will in large measure be dependent on the direct allocation of these plans.

The institutional framework and governance for multi-sectoral, multi-purpose planning at the local level is the LCC. The LCC leads the development and implementation of the IMP. The chair, secretariat and stakeholders identified creates a strong governance structure for the LCC. Operating at the county and district level puts the LCC in direct communication with village communities. The intent to link LCC reporting upwards to the provincial PPDC where IMP prepared by the LCC will be reviewed and approved and budgets for activities allocated appears to fit well within the existing institutional framework. There was little active participation of the provincial government in the development and approval of pilot landscape IMPs and as of yet there has been no confirmation of PPDC support and approval of budget allocation for IMP activities. When the CHFP closes there will be a need for the GDS secretariat to work on the establishment of a more formal link between the LCC and the province and to ensure the work of the LCC is validated and financially supported by the province. Without validation and financial support, the LCC will not be sustainable. Based on the above analysis the sustainability of institutional framework and governance of the LCC is considered “moderately likely”.

The GDS presents a strong, logical institutional framework and governance structure. This has been tested and proven successful at the local level, as demonstrated by the success of activities initiated in pilot landscape villages leading to enhanced sustainable livelihoods and increased protection of the CHF. The GDS has not yet been tested and proven successful at the provincial and national level.

During implementation of the CHFP difficulties were reported working at the provincial scale and, in part, this may be due to CHFP's institutional framework and governance structure. In particular, it was noted the NPD of CHFP did not have the political authority to direct provincial governors to engage in CHFP activities, such as the formation of a RCC, which was originally envisioned for the project. With final sign off of the GDS by the Head of FRWO, the governance structure of the GDS will overcome the problem experienced by the CHFP, as the Head of FRWO does have the political authority to direct provinces and provincial director generals to adopt and implement the GDS. At the national level the institutional framework and governance structure has been approved by the FHC. Sign off of the GDS by the head of FRWO will help to solidify the potential sustainability of the institutional framework and governance structure, and with this approval sustainability is considered "moderately likely".

Environmental

At the community level there are a number of environmental benefits derived from the CHFP, many as a result of the livelihood activities. They include:

- improved water quality as a result of IPM and cropping patterns changing from annual crops (wheat) to perennial crops (saffron, borage);
- enhanced soil conditions associated with perennial crops;
- reduced impact of livestock on forests through shifting livelihoods from livestock rearing to ecotourism and a local PES initiative where a community is using a portion of livelihood profits to purchase fodder for livestock;
- reduced impact on wildlife from hunting through changing attitudes towards the environment and increased advocacy such as the Red Deer Campaign, and
- forest restoration within areas previously cropped or used as pasture.

As the livelihood activities provide substantial benefits to the communities the sustainability the associated environmental benefits are considered "likely"

There are already concerns regarding the impact of tourism and ecotourism in the CHF and these impacts are likely to increase given the trend of increasing tourism in the region. It was reported that over 5000 tourists visit Baliran each day during peak holiday periods. The CHFP saw significant replication of eco-lodges in the pilot landscape communities where they were established, potentially contributing to an increase in the number of tourists visiting the CHF. A general lack of infrastructure for tourism was noted during the TE field mission. Implementation of the GDS IMP process as well as application of the ecotourism guidelines and distribution of ecotourism handbook and advocacy materials for biodiversity conservation produced by the CHFP has the potential of reversing tourism impacts on the environment. Left unchecked and unmanaged, increasing tourism impacts will constitute a serious threat to the environment of the CHF.

At a basin scale and at a national scale implementation of the GDS has the potential to make a significant contribution to the restoration, enhancement and protection of the CHF. The CHFP has already shown significant success through the identification of 400,474 ha of candidate SAB. The integrated multi-sectoral, multi-purpose planning process is focused on sustainability and

protection of the CHF. The CHFP has tested and approved guideline documents and training manuals directed at environmental protection associated with IMP, forest management, tourism and awareness raising. Implementation of the GDS would contribute to the achievement of environmental benefits which in terms of sustainability are considered “likely”.

Overall likelihood of sustainability

The overall likelihood of sustainability is best assessed at the scale of the GDS as this is the outcome capable of achieving the project long term goal.

“The long-term goal to which the project will contribute is “an effective multiple use forest governance system is in operation resulting in enhanced biodiversity and maintained landscape level ecosystem functions, integrity and resilience for the Caspian Hyrcanian Forests of Iran”. (Strategic Results Framework)

The evaluation of sustainability of the GDS based on what has been tested by the CHFP provides insight into the potential sustainability of the GDS should it be implemented. Based solely on the evaluation of sustainability of the pilot landscape communities, the sustainability of the GDS would be considered “likely”. Based on the evaluation of the sustainability of the LCC working in the pilot landscapes the sustainability of the GDS would be considered “moderately likely”.

Sustainability of the GDS has components that are “likely” (environmental), “moderately likely” (institutional framework and governance) and “moderately unlikely” (socio-political and financial). The sustainability ratings are strongly influenced by the following factors:

- the GDS needs final approval
- once approved there is a need to build national and provincial political understanding of the GDS, possibly through capacity development, so that national and provincial levels of government support and initiate the first steps of GDS implementation
- some financial resources not yet allocated are needed to initiate baseline studies and support community facilitation;
- within the wider community of FRWO and other stakeholders, capacity development of multi-sectoral, multi-purpose planning that works collaboratively with communities is needed to create a “critical mass” of supporters and some “GDS champions” that have made the paradigm shift away from traditional FMP

Without assurance the above factors will be addressed the sustainability of the GDS is considered “moderately unlikely”. Should there be assurances mechanisms were in place to address the factors noted above the GDS would be considered “moderately likely”.

3.3.8 Impact

Based on the Strategic Framework for the CHFP the following table outlines a Theory of Change (TOC) developed by the TE team used to undertake an analysis of project impacts (ROtI Handbook 2009). The impact noted in the table is based on the project goal and objective and is considered equivalent to the Global Environmental Benefit which may be derived from the project.

| Outcomes Impacts | Impact Drivers & Assumptions | Intermediate States | Impact |
|---|--|--|---|
| <p>Outcome 1: An enabling policy and regulatory framework for multiple use forest management is developed</p> | <p>ID: A model approach developed mapping and creating greater appreciation of key ecosystem services (water provisioning, tourism, timber and carbon sequestration) in four pilot landscapes</p> | <p>IS: An implementation framework and operational guidelines are in place to support multiple use forest management in the CHF. Pilot Multiple use forest management plans (referred to as IMPs) are actively being supported and implemented. A medium term strategy has selected landscapes (sites, villages, watersheds) to upscale multiple use forest management in the CHF, the strategy identifies stakeholders, annual work plans and budgets for priority landscapes.</p> | <p>1. An effective multiple use forest governance system resulting in enhanced biodiversity and maintained landscape level ecosystem functions, integrity and resilience for the Caspian Hyrcanian Forests of Iran.</p> |
| | <p>ID: All stakeholders understand biodiversity values and protection needs and new mechanisms to protect biodiversity are developed.</p> | | |
| | <p>ID: RCC and LCC inter-sectoral coordination mechanisms to implement multiple use forest management established and operational</p> | | |
| | <p>A: FRWO and DoE will apply methods of mapping ecosystem services and biodiversity values to provide baseline data for future multiple use forest management</p> | | |
| | <p>A: RCC and LCC have the capacity (staff & budget), and political power and will to effectively implement multiple use forest management</p> | | |
| | <p>A: Monitoring and evaluation used in an adaptive management framework</p> | | |
| <p>Outcome 2: Enhanced institutional and staff capacity for implementing a multiple use forest management plan</p> | <p>ID: Capacity development of FRWO and other participating stakeholders is sufficient to support implementation of participatory multiple use forest management</p> | <p>IS: FRWO and participating stakeholders have developed the capacity to implement multiple use forest management plans (IMP) in pilot landscapes. Institutional training of multiple use forest management training has</p> | |
| | <p>ID: Multiple use forest management guideline documents and training materials developed and tested.</p> | | |

| Outcomes Impacts | Impact Drivers & Assumptions | Intermediate States | Impact |
|---|--|---|--------|
| | <p>A: The paradigm shift to multiple use forest management among FRWO staff and stakeholders is achieved</p> <p>A: Multiple use forest training will be provided to FRWO and participating stakeholders</p> <p>A: Management guideline documents understood and used in multiple use forest management planning</p> | <p>been initiated, and institutional and staff capacity is increasing to support upscaling of multiple use forest management to all areas of CHF.</p> | |
| <p>Outcome 3: Community based integrated forest management piloted</p> | <p>ID: Participatory development and implementation of multiple use forest management plans in pilot landscapes</p> | <p>IS: Pilot landscapes successfully demonstrate a multi stakeholder, multiple use approach to the development and implementation of community based forest management. Pilot landscapes successfully demonstrate development and implementation of alternative livelihoods. New community practices are shown to contribute to enhanced protection of biodiversity.</p> | |
| | <p>ID: Participatory development and implementation of alternative livelihood activities</p> | | |
| | <p>A: Communities will receive the necessary technical and financial support for successful implementation of multiples use forest management plans</p> | | |
| | <p>A: Multiple use forest management and alternative livelihood activities demonstrate benefits for communities and lead to enhanced protection of biodiversity</p> | | |
| | <p>A: FRWO will provide the necessary approvals for piloting CF-FMPs</p> | | |

Following guidance provided in the ROTI Handbook (2009) a qualitative assessment of CHFP’s TOC is presented in the table below along with the following ratings which are based on desktop and field investigations of the TE:

Not achieved (0) - the TOC component was not explicitly or implicitly identified by the project, and/ or very little progress has been made towards achieving the TOC component, and the conditions are not in place for future progress

Poorly achieved (1) there are no appropriate mechanisms set out to achieve the TOC component after CHFP’s UNDP GEF funding has ended, and/ or very little progress has been made towards achieving the TOC component, but the conditions are in place for future progress should new support be provided to complete this component.

Partially achieved (2) the TOC component is explicitly recognized and the mechanisms set out to achieve it are appropriate but insufficient (e.g. there is no clear allocation of responsibilities for implementing the mechanisms after CHFP UNDP GEF funding ends). Moderate and continuing progress was and is being made towards achieving the TOC component, although there is not yet a strong basis assuring the eventual delivery of the

intended impact (Global Environmental Benefits).

Fully achieved (3) the TOC component is explicitly recognized and appropriate and sufficient mechanisms to achieve it are apparent (e.g. specific allocation of responsibilities and financial and staff support is available after CHF UNDP GEF funding ends), and/ or substantial progress has been made towards achieving the TOC component and there is strong assurance of eventual delivery of the intended impact (Global Environment Benefits).

| Theory of Change Component | Qualitative Analysis | Rating |
|--|--|----------|
| <p>Outcome 1: An enabling policy and regulatory framework for multiple use forest management is developed</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The GDS has been completed and is awaiting final sign off from the Head of FRWO • There is a regulatory issue which currently prevents direct allocation of forest management to communities • Mechanism of financial support required to implement GDS unknown at this time • Weak evidence of the primary driving agencies, RCC and LCC, actively pursuing GDS implementation through development of IMPs in all CHF watersheds | <p>1</p> |
| <p>ID: A model approach developed mapping and creating greater appreciation of key ecosystem services (water provisioning, tourism, timber and carbon sequestration) in four pilot landscapes</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Valuation of key ecosystem services in four pilot landscapes completed • Value of ecosystem services noted in work undertaken on IMPs • Models of Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) explored, no concrete PES implemented | <p>2</p> |
| <p>ID: All stakeholders understand biodiversity values and protection needs and new mechanisms to protect biodiversity are developed.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The government and public have an awareness of and support biodiversity protection • A new category of forest protection developed, SAB along with criteria and guideline document for implementation and protection • Currently 400,734 ha candidate SAB identified • CHF contributions to new sustainable FMP guidelines will enhance recognition and protection of biodiversity | <p>2</p> |
| <p>ID: RCC and LCC inter-sectoral coordination mechanisms to implement multiple use forest management established and operational</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project struggled to establish RCC • LCC established and participated in development of IMP in four pilot landscapes • Weak evidence of LCC in pilot landscapes continuing to meet regularly to implement IMPs • No immediate plans evident for the formation of new LCC in other CHF watersheds to initiate GDS IMP process | <p>1</p> |
| <p>A: FRWO and DoE will apply methods of mapping ecosystem services and biodiversity values to provide baseline data for future multiple use forest management</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It will be necessary for FRWO and DoE to establish the budgets required to hire consultants to follow the CHF model to prepare mapping and valuation of ecosystem services in support of GDS IMP in other watersheds • Budget may be forthcoming in 2020 in support of FRWOs new sustainable FMP initiative which could support the GDS IMP process | <p>1</p> |

| Theory of Change Component | Qualitative Analysis | Rating |
|---|---|--------|
| A: RCC and LCC have the capacity (staff & budget), and political power and will to effectively implement multiple use forest management | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A partial RCC was formed during CHFP for GDS formulation • A similar interprovincial RCC and/or national governing body will be required to oversee GDS IMP implementation • LCC does not currently have sufficient support from provincial government to ensure future implementation of GDS IMP activities in pilot landscapes or new watersheds | 1 |
| A: Monitoring and evaluation used in an adaptive management framework | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FRWO and DoE to develop and implement a monitoring evaluation strategy for GDS IMP • Political and financial support for GDS not yet secured | 0 |
| IS: An implementation framework and operational guidelines are in place to support multiple use forest management in the CHF. Pilot multiple use forest management plans (referred to as IMPs) are actively being supported and implemented. A medium term strategy has selected landscapes (sites, villages, watersheds) to upscale multiple use forest management in the CHF, the strategy identifies stakeholders, annual work plans and budgets for priority landscapes. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The GDS and work completed in pilot landscapes provides a working model for the implementation of multiple use forest management in the CHF • Guideline documents and training materials developed by CHFP are available to support implementation • IMPs for pilot landscapes developed and approved and with some components very successfully implemented (IPM, ecotourism, handicraft production) and other components on hold due to legislative constraints (direct allocation of Forest Park, Nursery and CF-FMP) • Scaling up will be responsibility of FRWO and DoE with final approval of GDS • Political and financial commitment of FRWO unconfirmed • It is unclear how GDS IMP process will work alongside the new sustainable FMP initiative proposed by FRWO | 2 |
| Outcome 2: Enhanced institutional and staff capacity for implementing a multiple use forest management plan | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The capacity development scorecard shows CHFP resulted in significant improvement of institutional and staff capacity to implement multiple use forestry • Capacity development remains below the level necessary for FRWO to achieve full implementation of multiple use forest management in the CHF • Adoption of training materials by BEPP will contribute to further capacity development | 1 |
| ID: Capacity development of FRWO and other participating stakeholders is sufficient to support implementation of participatory multiple use forest management | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There has been some uptake of capacity development, in FRWO and participating stakeholders, particularly within those involved in the pilot landscapes • FRWO has not demonstrated the ability or commitment to lead implementation of the GDS IMP multiple forest management process across the CHF. | 1 |
| ID: Multiple use forest management guideline documents and training materials developed and tested. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CHFP prepared guideline documents and training manuals which have been approved by FRWO • Guideline documents will support multiple use forest management | 3 |

| Theory of Change Component | Qualitative Analysis | Rating |
|--|---|--------|
| A: The paradigm shift to multiple use forest management approach among FRWO staff and stakeholders is achieved | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The understanding of multiple use forest management has been substantially increased among individuals involved in work conducted in the pilot landscapes The majority within FRWO as an organization as well as other relevant stakeholders do not yet understand or actively promote multiple use forest management | 1 |
| A: Multiple use forest training will be provided to FRWO and participating stakeholders | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> BEPP has committed to using training manuals BEPP is embedding a formally certifiable training course into the regular training agenda of FRWO-BEPP | 3 |
| A: Management guideline documents understood and used in multiple use forest management planning | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> CHFP has contributed to FRWO's revision of the FMP manual, including adoption of management guidelines Future implementation of FRWO's new sustainable FMP cannot be confirmed at this time | 2 |
| IS: FRWO and participating stakeholders have developed the capacity to implement multiple use forest management plans (IMP) in pilot landscapes. Institutional training of multiple use forest management training has been initiated, and institutional and staff capacity is increasing to support upscaling of multiple use forest management to all areas of CHF. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> With assistance from CHFP project staff, FRWO and relevant stakeholders have demonstrated the capacity to develop IMPs in the pilot landscapes The capacity to implement some components very successfully has been demonstrated (IPM, ecotourism, handicraft production) The capacity to implement a CF-FMPs such as forest park, nursery, and CF have not been demonstrated due to legislative constraints It is anticipated capacity development will increase as BEPP implements new training programs There is a need for additional capacity development of FRWO to achieve the understanding and commitment necessary to lead multiple purpose forest management | 2 |
| Outcome 3: Community based integrated forest management piloted | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multipurpose, multi-sectoral forest management was piloted in four pilot landscapes identifying activities directed at empowerment and livelihood improvement local communities while also protecting and enhancing the environment to achieve sustainable development and enhanced protection of biodiversity | 2 |
| ID: Participatory development and implementation of multiple use forest management plans in pilot landscapes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> CHFP facilitation lead a participatory approach to the development of multiple use forest management plans, however due to legislative constraints preventing direct allocation to communities these have not been implemented in pilot landscapes | 1 |
| ID: Participatory development and implementation of alternative livelihood activities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> CHFP facilitation lead a participatory approach to the development and implementation of alternative livelihoods as a part of IMP in pilot landscapes | 3 |
| A: Communities will receive the necessary technical and financial support for successful implementation of multiples use forest management plans | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communities in pilot landscapes have, in large measure, received the technical and financial support needed for successful implementation of alternative livelihood activities Significant technical and financial support will be required for the implementation of the CF-FMPs (forest park, nursery, CF) which are not yet approved. The level of support which may be provided is unknown because implementation has not been tested. | 2 |

| Theory of Change Component | Qualitative Analysis | Rating |
|---|--|----------|
| <p>A: Multiple use forest management and alternative livelihood activities demonstrate benefits for communities and lead to enhanced protection of biodiversity</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alternative livelihood activities are providing good financial benefits and these have been shown to support enhanced concern for and direct support of biodiversity conservation If/when forest management plans are implemented they are expected to provide financial benefits and stakeholders have already indicated a willingness to enhance biodiversity protection | <p>3</p> |
| <p>A: FRWO will provide the necessary approvals for piloting CF-FMPs</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> FRWO did not provide the necessary approvals for direct allocation of CF-FMPs to communities despite substantial efforts by CHFP staff over several years. | <p>1</p> |
| <p>IS: Pilot landscapes successfully demonstrate a multi stakeholder, multiple use approach to the development and implementation of community based forest management. Pilot landscapes successfully demonstrate development and implementation of alternative livelihoods. New community practices are shown to contribute to enhanced protection of biodiversity.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pilot landscapes have successfully demonstrated that through careful facilitation multi-stakeholder, multiple use forest management planning can be accomplished with CHF communities and local governments Pilot landscapes have successfully demonstrated implementation of alternative livelihood activities that contribute to community resilience and enhanced biodiversity. The IMPs prepared for each pilot landscape discussed in relation to Objectives 1 & 2 above will continue the work of multipurpose, multi-sectoral forest management as identified in the IMP five year plan which identifies a long and comprehensive list of activities and their associated costs. Potential mechanisms for financing are presented but to date there are no confirmed budgets to support the multipurpose, multi-sectoral activities outlined in the IMPs. | <p>2</p> |
| <p>Overall project summary findings:</p> | | <p>2</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Despite the withholding of substantial government co-financing budgeted for CHFP and the constraints of the Forest Retreat Policy introduced during the CHFP the project has clearly demonstrated a multi-stakeholder planning approach involving local communities can lead to successful multiple use forest management that support improved livelihoods and enhances the protection and restoration of forest habitats and the associated biodiversity. The challenge of a paradigm shift to inclusive, multiple purpose forest management required within FRWO (a large organization with a long history of forest management) and local communities can be achieved with appropriate facilitation. However, the project has achieved the paradigm shift within a relatively small part of the much larger group of stakeholders required to implement IMP across the CHF. FRWO has not fully endorsed CF given their inability to directly allocate a CF-FMP to the community that participated in its development The mainstreaming of the CHFP approach through the GDS and IMP process within all watersheds of the CHF is not assured and there is the potential for FRWO to continue a conventional top down, non-inclusive approach based on what has been learned about sustainable FMP process FRWO is currently developing. | | |

The CHFP project has also demonstrated improvements in the ecological status of the environment and reductions in stress on ecological systems. Most notable of the positive environmental impacts of the project are:

1. The adoption of IPM in rice farming reducing the amount of pesticides and chemical fertilizer used.
2. The replacement of annual wheat crops in some areas with perennial native species such as saffron and borage that reduce soil erosion.
3. The use of profits from handicraft sales to purchase fodder for livestock to reduce livestock pressure on native forest ecosystems.
4. CHFP support of the Red Deer Campaign protecting forest habitats, increasing and sharing knowledge of large mammal populations, and campaigning to reduce illegal hunting.
5. Supporting campaign for controlling Boxwood leaf blight by collecting saplings from healthy trees and planting them in the safe place.
6. Alternative ecotourism livelihoods lead to a shift away from forest livestock rearing improving forest habitats and reducing hunting pressure on large carnivores that are considered a threat to livestock.
7. The IMP process has led to the identification of linkage areas where forest restoration has been implemented to enhance forest connectivity.
8. Working with communities has led to changing attitudes of the local community in regard to controlling wildlife hunting and showing more respect for biodiversity conservation.

The CHFP project has not comprehensively documented or established monitoring mechanisms to track potential negative environmental impacts which may be associated with some project activities. It would be useful for the following project activities to include monitoring and adaptive management mechanisms to address potential negative environmental impacts which may occur over time:

1. There is a large body of literature on negative impacts of tourism and associated monitoring and mitigation measures that could inform CHFP ecotourism activities. Much of this information will be included in the ecotourism guideline currently being developed in direct consultation with BEPP and FHC by CHFP. FRWO should finalize and provide final approval of the sustainable tourism guideline. Once approved there will be a need to initiate monitoring to understand current baseline conditions and to begin monitoring of existing and future impacts of tourism.
2. A reduction of livestock herding within forests and successful protection of red deer may, over the long term, lead to hyper-abundant deer populations in some areas, with resulting negative impacts of deer browsing and grazing on native forest vegetation. Understanding the concepts of ecosystem carrying capacity and monitoring changes in deer population size over time is one of the important elements of a long term management strategy for red deer.

4. Conclusions, Recommendations and Lessons Learned

The CHFP has successfully produced high quality outputs supporting the three project outcomes and the project objective. The communities engaged in the pilot landscapes have improved livelihoods and they have committed to enhanced protection of the CHF. The CHFP has made an important contribution to protecting the most important areas for biodiversity in this globally significant ecoregion through approval of a Guideline for selecting and managing Special Areas for Biodiversity (SAB) and identification of 400,734 ha of potential SABs across the CHF. Through the development of the GDS Integrated Management Plan (IMP) process and the associated capacity development a paradigm shift away from traditional forest management to multi-sectoral, multiple purpose, and collaborative forest management with an emphasis on community engagement and forest protection and restoration has been initiated. The project also leaves a legacy of guideline documents and training manuals supporting the GDS, Community Forestry Forest Management Plan (CF-FMP), sustainable forest management biodiversity mainstreaming and much needed future capacity development. Field studies completed by the CHFP have provided increased knowledge of the biodiversity, ecosystem services and land capability of the CHF, including trends in some populations and an understanding of impacts, including human-wildlife conflicts.

There remain concerns regarding the sustainability of CHFP outcomes and there are lessons learned and/or recommendations as noted below.

Recommendation 1: Scaling up the CHFP

- there is a need for UNDP and FRWO to urgently work together to plan a five year scale-up phase to ensure that the momentum created by CHFP is not lost
- FRWO to consider allocating the unspent national co-financing to support scaling-up over the five year period, thereby allowing a proportion of the existing project staff and their associated capacity to be retained
- UNDP and FRWO work together to seek additional sources of international funding to continue to bring international best practices and support to help FRWO achieve the paradigm shift to multi-purpose, community based forestry

Recommendation 2: FRWO support of pilot landscape communities, particularly those communities which have not received direct allocation of CF-FMP

- the CHFP should provide guidance to FRWO in regard to the importance of supporting pilot landscape communities that have participated in the project, particularly those which are awaiting approval of CF-FMP, to mitigate potential negative social, economic or ecological impacts on communities and the pilot landscapes
- the FRWO should acknowledge the fact that those communities awaiting approval and allocation of CF-FMPs have made a significant investment in the CHFP
- there is a need to maintain the trust and participation of these communities to allow them the opportunity to engage in better management, protection and restoration of the CHF
- continued visits to these communities should be made to communicate the status of their CF-FMP
- FRWO should encourage quick resolution of the issue of direct allocation to community groups
- when allocation is approved, ongoing support of these communities will be needed to assist them in their efforts to implement their CF-FMP (e.g. forest park and/or nursery establishment and operation), including:
 - ongoing support may include liaison with appropriate government experts or hiring

- consultants to provide technical advice
- ongoing support may also include assistance in securing the required financing and capacity development to manage financial aspects of the CF-FMP
- ongoing support may include addressing issues of marketing, including market chain analysis to ensure sustainability of expanding alternative livelihood activities. Where possible, marketing should avoid “middle men”, to maximize the benefits which go to local communities. There are some CHFP examples which show the success of local packaging, branding and direct selling products to enhance the marketing community based enterprises.

Recommendation 3: Support of GDS sign off and implementation initiation

- sign off of the GDS by the Head of FRWO with a formal letter to the Governor General is an essential step towards implementation
- with sign off of the GDS has identified several tasks to be completed by the FRWO and the provinces to initiate implementation
- financing will be required to assist the GDS secretariat’s support of GDS initiation
- while the GDS provides broad goals and strategies there is need to develop a detailed action plan for GDS initiation, such as has been recommended for each CHF province
- GDS initiation will include project launches that advocate the GDS, and high level meetings to provide capacity building of key GDS stakeholders and to establish roles, responsibilities, tasks, timelines and funding mechanisms
- it is recommended to develop a strong supervision and oversight mechanism to ensure quality assurance, transparency and auditing of the activities of the GDS.
- a strategy is needed to encourage the many government staff who may be involved in the implementation of the GDS to participate in capacity development using training materials developed by the CHFP to achieve the paradigm needed to support the GDS
- There is a need to move forward with the agreement between the former Head of FRWO and the three Provincial Governors committing to better protection of the CHF
- While sign off of the GDS document by the current head of FRWO is important there is also a need to establish a coordination structure which has the authority to advocate for it. Including engagement of the High Council of Environment (HCE), Chaired by President or Vice President, with members representing Ministers and deputy president, to agree on the establishment of a National Forest Committee or a Special Working Group for Hyrcanian Forest. Two possible options are:
 - C) FRWO sign off of the GDS and using the existing agreement, request the Provincial Governors to establish Regional Coordinating Committee (RCC). Under guidance of the RCC, the PPDC will review and follow up on plans and required budgets thereby providing support for the LCC operating at the county level to implement the GDS IMP. This strategy is in line with the existing GDS structure.
 - D) FRWO sign off of the GDS and it is sent to the MoJA Minister to request MoJA send the GDS document to the HCE for approval and endorsement. With HCE approval of the GDS then it would be possible to establish a National Forest Committee and Hyrcanian Forest Working Group to coordinate implementation of GDS IMP.
- Allocate national funding to form a permanent "National Expert Group on Community Forestry" that will engage all key CHFP staff and consultants, as well as selected FRWO experts who among them share the expertise available on community forestry in Iran. Under the purview of FRWO, this expert group shall be continuously engaged to provide support to finalizing the approvals for the pending CF-FMPs, provide on-going capacity building on-the-job or through BEPP, and support the implementation of CF-FMPs.
- FRWO may be required to take charge of the finalization and approval of the guideline for

sustainable tourism currently being developed in direct consultation with BEPP and FHC by CHFP. CHFP should ensure this matter is stressed in PSC, with ICHTO and DOE representatives present.

Recommendation 4: Support of LCCs in Pilot Landscapes

- the CHFP established LCCs to implement IMP within the entire area of each pilot landscape
- to date LCCs have successfully worked with a limited number of pilot landscape communities that represent only a part of the total pilot landscape area
- it is recommended the GDS secretariat continue to provide targeted support to LCCs, particularly to LCC Secretariats, in the pilot landscapes to build on the capacity development and positive results seen so far
- the GDS secretariat can assist LCCs in prioritizing the extensive lists of detailed activities provided in the IMPs, including assistance making proposals to the provincial government to support IMPs
- co-mentoring approaches should be used to work towards the development of local capacity in government who are capable of implementing all IMP tasks with limited support from the GDS secretariat

Recommendation 5: Addressing the issue of national co-financing

- national co-financing was to contribute approximately 42% of the CHFP budget
- the CHFP terminal report should provide a comprehensive assessment of the implications of the lack of co-financing, including the adaptive management strategy used by the project and the impact of a reduced budget on project outcomes
- the CHFP terminal report should also provide recommendations in regard to actions required following project closure needed to address the impact of CHFP operating with a reduced budget

Lessons Learned

1. Projects which develop and test a new tool, strategy, or in the case of CHFP, planning framework should not expect government to immediately adopt and implement the innovation, even when they have been involved in its design and testing.
 - projects such as CHFP must include a second phase that works with government to mainstream the innovation into the day to day operations and operating budget of government to ensure sustainability
2. Projects that involve a significant paradigm shift for stakeholders are challenging and achievement of the paradigm shift will be linked to all of the intended project outputs.
 - it is interesting to note that CHFP significantly exceeded the target for number of persons trained and yet this was still considered insufficient to achieve the level of paradigm shift necessary
 - project design must therefore ensure significant resources are directed towards capacity development which is intended to achieve a paradigm shift sufficient to develop what the project would consider a “critical mass” of change necessary to advocate and implement the intended project actions following project closure.
3. Community facilitation is an effective and crucial project activity to empower women, men, youth and children, to form community groups, to utilize local knowledge and to introduce innovation.

- the value and importance of community facilitation to project success and sustainability should be reflected in project design, the number of staff involved, the amount of time allocated, and the budget allocated
- the quality of community facilitation will strongly influence the success of intended outcomes and outputs
- capacity development of community facilitators both as project staff and stakeholders should be included in project design

Appendix 1: Terms of Reference

Terms of Reference (TOR)

“Terminal Evaluation (TE) of the Building a Multiple-use Forest Management Framework to Conserve Biodiversity in the Caspian Hyrcanian Forest Landscape”

INTRODUCTION

In accordance with UNDP and GEF M&E policies and procedures, all full and medium-sized UNDP support GEF financed projects are required to undergo a terminal evaluation upon completion of implementation. These terms of reference (TOR) sets out the expectations for a Terminal Evaluation (TE) of the *Building a Multiple-use Forest Management Framework to Conserve Biodiversity in the Caspian Hyrcanian Forest Landscape* (PIMS 4078).

The essentials of the project to be evaluated are as follows:

PROJECT SUMMARY TABLE

| | | | | |
|-------------------------|--|---------------------|--|---|
| Project Title: | Building a Multiple-use Forest Management Framework to Conserve Biodiversity in the Caspian Hyrcanian Forest | | | |
| GEF Project ID: | 4470 | | <i>at endorsement (US\$)</i> | <i>expenditure as at end of September 2018 (US\$)</i> |
| UNDP GEF Project ID: | 4078 | | | |
| Atlas award ID: | 00071681 | GEF financing: | US\$ 1,900,000 | US\$ 1,691,025.28 |
| Atlas project ID: | 00085011 | | | |
| Country: | Islamic Republic of Iran | IA/EA own: | | |
| Region: | Asia Pacific | Government: | Cash US\$ 3,000,000 In kind US\$ 1,925,000 | US\$ 99,153.15 US\$ 584,000 |
| Focal Area: | Biodiversity | Other: | UNDP Cash US\$150,000 UNDP Cash (Parallel) US\$ 200,000 | UNDP Cash US\$56,559.51 |
| FA Objectives, (OP/SP): | BD2 Mainstream BD conservation and sustainable | Total co-financing: | US\$5,275,000 | US\$ 739,712.66 |

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| | | | | |
|--------------------------|--|---|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| | use into production landscapes and sectors. | | | |
| Executing Agency: | Forests, Rangeland and Watershed Management Organization, FRWO | Total Project Cost: | US\$ 7,175,000 | US\$ 2,430,737.94 |
| Other Partners involved: | | ProDoc Signature (date project began): (Operational) Closing Date: | Proposed: 4 May 2018 | 5 May 2013 Actual: 4 May 2019 |

OBJECTIVE AND SCOPE

The project was designed to conserve biodiversity in key landscapes within the Caspian broadleaf deciduous forest ecoregion. The ecoregion is recognized for its high levels of endemism; it is also an important storehouse of threatened species. It will do this by strengthening the national and local policy framework governing land use in the Caspian forests (which cover an area of approximately 1.8 million hectares), enhancing the rights and roles of the local communities in their management and demonstrating ways and means of improving management (including land use planning, zoning, compliance monitoring and enforcement).

The project will trigger a paradigm shift from sector-focused management to multiple use management, to reduce the conjunction pressures arising from different land uses. It will put in place the necessary policy and regulatory mechanisms needed to mainstream biodiversity conservation considerations into land use plans and build the capacities of key institutions to implement the reformed planning and management approach. The project is thus consistent with GEF Strategic Objective 2 of GEF 5: Mainstream biodiversity conservation and sustainable use into production landscapes, seascapes and sectors and in particular Outcome 2.1: Increase in sustainably managed landscapes and seascapes that integrate biodiversity conservation. The successful implementation of this project will set the foundations for replication of the approach in other important forest ecosystems across the country.

The project is responsible for achieving the following project objective: "To put in place a collaborative governance system and know-how for managing a mosaic of land uses in the Caspian Hyrcanian forest that provides habitat integrity and helps maintain landscape level ecosystem functions and resilience".

The project is designed to lift the barriers to establishment of a landscape approach to the management of biodiversity. The project comprises three complementary components, which are cost shared by the GEF and co-financing. Each addresses a different barrier and has discrete outcomes.

Component 1. An enabling policy and regulatory framework

Component 2. Institutional and staff capacity strengthening for multiple-use forest management

Component 3. Community piloting of integrated forest management

The TE will be conducted according to the guidance, rules and procedures established by UNDP and GEF as reflected in the UNDP Evaluation Guidance for GEF Financed Projects. The objectives of the evaluation are to assess the achievement of project results, and to draw lessons that can both improve the sustainability of benefits from this project, and aid in the overall enhancement of UNDP programming.

EVALUATION APPROACH AND METHOD

An overall approach and method¹ for conducting project terminal evaluations of UNDP supported GEF financed projects has developed over time. The evaluator is expected to frame the evaluation effort using the criteria of **relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and impact**, as defined and explained in the UNDP Guidance for Conducting Terminal Evaluations of UNDP-supported, GEF-financed Projects. A set of questions covering each of these criteria have been drafted and are included with this TOR (see [Annex C](#)) The evaluator is expected to amend, complete and submit this matrix as part of an evaluation inception report, and shall include it as an annex to the final report.

The evaluation must provide evidence- based information that is credible, reliable and useful. The evaluator is expected to follow a participatory and consultative approach ensuring close engagement with government counterparts, in particular the GEF operational focal point, UNDP Country Office, project team, UNDP GEF Technical Adviser based in the region and key stakeholders. The evaluator is expected to conduct a field mission to **Golestan, Mazandaran, Guilan and Tehran provinces**, including the following project sites:

1. Chehel chay pilot, Minudasht, Golestan
2. Baliran pilot, Amol, Mazandaran
3. Dohezar-Sehezar pilot, Tonekabon, Mazandaran
4. Fariroud-Zilakiroud pilot, Rodbar & Siahkal, Guilan

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

- FRWO Tehran and heads of Natural Resources & Watershed Management in pilots
- Department of Environment (DOE)
- Ministry of Jihad Agriculture (MoJA)
- ICHTO
- District Governors, Local communities & NGOs (Provincial).

The evaluator will review all relevant sources of information, such as the project document, project reports including Annual APR/PIR, project budget revisions, midterm review, progress reports, GEF focal area tracking tools, project files, national strategic and legal documents, and any other materials that the evaluator considers useful for this evidence-based assessment. A list of documents that the project team will provide to the evaluator for review is included in [Annex B](#) of this Terms of Reference.

¹ For additional information on methods, see the [Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating for Development Results](#), Chapter 7, pg. 163

EVALUATION CRITERIA & RATINGS

An assessment of project performance will be carried out, based against expectations set out in the Project Logical Framework/Results Framework (see [Annex A](#)), which provides performance and impact indicators for project implementation along with their corresponding means of verification. The evaluation will at a minimum cover the criteria of: **relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact**. Ratings must be provided on the following performance criteria. The completed table must be included in the evaluation executive summary. The obligatory rating scales are included in [Annex D](#).

| Evaluation Ratings: | | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------|---|---------------|
| 1. Monitoring and Evaluation | <i>rating</i> | 2. IA & EA Execution | <i>rating</i> |
| M&E design at entry | | Quality of UNDP Implementation | |
| M&E Plan Implementation | | Quality of Execution - Executing Agency | |
| Overall quality of M&E | | Overall quality of Implementation / Execution | |
| 3. Assessment of Outcomes | <i>rating</i> | 4. Sustainability | <i>rating</i> |
| Relevance | | Financial resources: | |
| Effectiveness | | Socio-political: | |
| Efficiency | | Institutional framework and governance: | |
| Overall Project Outcome Rating | | Environmental : | |
| | | Overall likelihood of sustainability: | |

PROJECT FINANCE / COFINANCE

The Evaluation will assess the key financial aspects of the project, including the extent of co-financing planned and realized. Project cost and funding data will be required, including annual expenditures. Variances between planned and actual expenditures will need to be assessed and explained. Results from recent financial audits, as available, should be taken into consideration. The evaluator(s) will receive assistance from the Country Office (CO) and Project Team to obtain financial data in order to complete the co-financing table below, which will be included in the terminal evaluation report.

| Co-financing (type/source) | UNDP own financing (mill. US\$) | | Government (mill. US\$) | | Partner Agency (mill. US\$) | | Total (mill. US\$) | |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------|--------|-------------------------|--------|-----------------------------|--------|--------------------|--------|
| | Planned | Actual | Planned | Actual | Planned | Actual | Actual | Actual |
| Grants | | | | | | | | |
| Loans/Concessions | | | | | | | | |
| • In-kind support | | | | | | | | |
| • Other | | | | | | | | |
| Totals | | | | | | | | |

MAINSTREAMING

UNDP supported GEF financed projects are key components in UNDP country programming, as well as regional and global programmes. The evaluation will assess the extent to which the project was successfully mainstreamed with other UNDP priorities, including poverty alleviation, improved governance, the prevention and recovery from natural disasters, and gender.

IMPACT

The evaluators will assess the extent to which the project is achieving impacts or progressing towards the achievement of impacts. Key findings that should be brought out in the evaluations include whether the project has demonstrated: a) verifiable improvements in ecological status, b) verifiable reductions in stress on ecological systems, and/or c) demonstrated progress towards these impact achievements.²

CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS & LESSONS

The evaluation report must include a chapter providing a set of conclusions, recommendations and lessons.

Conclusions should build on findings and be based in evidence. Recommendations should be prioritized, specific, relevant, and targeted, with suggested implementers of the recommendations. Lesson should have wider applicability to other initiatives across the region, the area of intervention, and for the future.

IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

The principal responsibility for managing this evaluation resides with the UNDP CO in **the Islamic Republic of Iran**. The UNDP CO will contract the evaluators and ensure the timely provision of per diems and travel arrangements within the country for the evaluation team. The Project Team will be responsible for liaising with the Evaluators team to set up stakeholder interviews, arrange field visits, coordinate with the Government etc.

EVALUATION TIMEFRAME

The total duration of the evaluation will be **33 days**, starts on 23 January 2019 and expires on 31 March 2019 according to the following plan:

| Activity | Timing | Completion Date |
|---|---------|-------------------------------|
| Preparation/Inception Report | 7 days | 10 February 2019 (home-based) |
| Evaluation Mission and National Meetings | 16 days | 15 March 2019 |
| Draft Evaluation Report | 8 days | 25 March 2019 (home-based) |
| Final Report | 2 days | 30 March 2019 (home-based) |

² A useful tool for gauging progress to impact is the Review of Outcomes to Impacts (ROtI) method developed by the GEF Evaluation Office: [ROtI Handbook 2009](#)

EVALUATION DELIVERABLES

The evaluation team is expected to deliver the following:

| Deliverable | Content | Timing | Responsibilities |
|--------------------------------|--|---|---|
| Inception Report | Evaluator provides clarifications on timing and method | No later than 2 weeks before the evaluation mission. | Evaluator submits to UNDP CO and Project CO |
| Presentation | Initial Findings | End of evaluation mission | To project management, UNDP CO |
| Draft Evaluation Report | Full report, (per annexed template) with annexes | Within 3 weeks of the evaluation mission | Sent to Project and UNDP CO, reviewed by RTA, PCU, GEF OFPs |
| Final Report* | Revised report | Within 1 week of receiving UNDP and Project comments on draft | Sent to CO for uploading to UNDP ERC. |

*When submitting the final evaluation report, the evaluator is required also to provide an 'audit trail', detailing how all received comments have (and have not) been addressed in the final evaluation report.

TEAM COMPOSITION

The evaluation team will be composed of **1 international /1 national evaluator**. The consultants shall have prior experience in evaluating similar projects. Experience with GEF financed projects is an advantage. **The International consultant will be the team leader and responsible for finalizing the report.** The evaluators selected should not have participated in the project preparation and/or implementation and should not have conflict of interest with project related activities.

The International Evaluator (team leader) must present the following qualifications:

- Minimum 15 years of relevant professional experience
- Knowledge of UNDP and GEF
- Academic and/or professional background in institutional/governance aspects of natural resource management, forest management or biodiversity conservation;
- Experience in project design, project cycle management, and project monitoring and evaluation at the international level outside Iran;
- Previous experience with results- based monitoring and evaluation methodologies
- Experience in the review of sustainable development projects at the international level, preferably with UNDP or GEF or other United Nations development agencies
Technical knowledge in the targeted focal area of biodiversity
- Have a broad-based knowledge and international/national experience related to capacity building, local community development and natural resource/forest management.
- Understanding of political, economic, institutional issues associated with natural resource/forest management and good environmental governance within the Iranian/Middle-Eastern context.
- Excellent English language skills, both spoken and written

EVALUATOR ETHICS

Evaluation consultants will be held to the highest ethical standards and are required to sign a Code of Conduct (Annex E) upon acceptance of the assignment. UNDP evaluations are conducted in accordance with the principles outlined in the [UNEG 'Ethical Guidelines for Evaluations'](#)

Note

- In full consideration for the complete and satisfactory performance of the Services under this contract, UNDP shall pay the Contractor the total amount of EUR 12,715.12 (twelve thousand seven hundred fifteen euro and twelve eurocents) on the above payment schedule.
- Confirmation of the Forests, Rangelands and Watershed Management Organization on delivery by the consultant, and acceptance by UNDP of all deliverables is a prerequisite to each payment.
- All envisaged travel costs (including ticket to join duty station, visa, accommodation, etc.) must be included in the offeror's financial proposal. The individual offeror should consider the prevailing price for an economy class ticket serving the most direct routes in his /her financial proposal. The cost of ticket, visa and travel insurance will be reimbursed upon submission of copy of ticket and visa before each mission as per actual cost incurred but not exceeding the proposed cost in financial proposal.
- Individual contractor wishing to upgrade his/her travel to business or first class shall do so at his/her own expense.
- The project will provide air ticket for each local travel- therefore the cost to be excluded from this contract. As for living allowances, the cost will be included in and covered by this contract. Therefore, the offeror is required to include the foreseen cost (living allowances) for Mazandaran (8 Days comprised of 4 days in project pilot sites and 4 days in Project Office), Guilan (2 Days), Golestan (2 Days) and Tehran (4 days).
- The current living allowances in different cities of Iran has been included in the Financial Proposal template. The terminal fee and living allowances will be reimbursed after completion of each mission upon submission of travel claim form and based on the actual rate on travel dates. The cost of each mission is payable only against submission of boarding passes as well as visa, tickets' and all other associated costs' invoices.
- Each payment will be made in Euro upon satisfactory completion of the tasks and respective deliverables as per submission of deliverables/claims by the consultant and the project/UNDP approvals.
- Each payment will be transferred by UNDP through Electronic Fund Transfer to the Euro account number of the contractor introduced through completed vendor form and Bank certificate indicating full banking information.
- Any payment under this contract will be made using UN Operational Rate of Exchange. For updated rates please see:
<http://treasury.un.org/operationalrates/OperationalRates.aspx>
- Payments will be made according to UNDP regulations as explained in the contract documents.
- The International Consultant shall not do any work, provide any equipment, materials and supplies or perform any other services which may result in any cost in excess of the above-mentioned amount.

TRAVEL

If travel is required under the contract, the individual consultant shall:

1. Obtain the security clearance from UNDP office (the details of travel including date of departure and arrival, accommodation and purpose of travel shall be submitted to UNDP office 2 working days before date of travel)
2. Undertake the training courses on Basic Security in the Field and Advanced Security in the Field (only applicable for certain destination; to be checked with UNDP) and provide UNDP with both certificates; the related CD ROMs are available at UNDP office.
3. Undertake a full medical examination including x-rays and obtain medical clearance from an UN- approved physician. This is only applicable for the contractors on the age of 65 years or more.
4. All envisaged travel costs must be included in the Offeror's financial proposal. This includes all duty travels, travels to join duty station and repatriation. The anticipated mission travel has been included in the TOR; however, in the event of unforeseeable travel, UNDP and the Individual Contractor will agree upon the manner in which travel costs including tickets, lodging and terminal expenses are to be reimbursed to the traveler.

FINANCIAL PROPOSAL

Candidates are asked to submit a financial proposal as per "Annex III" that indicates the all-inclusive total price (consultancy fee + travel costs), supported by a breakdown of costs as per the deliverables outlined in this TOR.

UNDP applies a fair and transparent selection process that will take into account the competencies/skills of the applicants as well as their financial proposals. Qualified women and members of social minorities are encouraged to apply.

Appendix 2: Itinerary for Field Mission

| Date (March 2019) | Task | Time | Venue |
|------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|---|
| Wednesday 6 | Travel to Frankfurt to obtain visa | 06:30 | |
| Thursday 7 | Travel to Iran - Arrival time IKA | Arrive at around 21:00 | Overnight: Taj Mahal Hotel Check in around: 21:30 |
| Friday 8 | Departure to Rudbar | 08:30 – 13:00 | Check out hotel around: 08:00 Farirud & Zilakirud- Rudbar Overnight: Khosh Neshin ecolodge- Baalaa baraagur village |
| | Lunch Break | 13:00 – 14:00 | Farirud & Zilakirud- Rudbar |
| | Meetings With villagers in Farirud & Zilakirud and visit plans Area | 14:00 – 15:00 | Bala baraagour village-Khosh Neshin |
| | Meetings With Naarvan cooperative members FRWO | 15:00 – 16:00 | |
| | Meeting with NGOs | 16:00 – 18:00 | Overnight: Khosh Neshin ecolodge- Baalaa baraagur village |
| Saturday 9 | Meeting in Roudbar/ Farirud & Zilakirud | 08:30 – 09:30 | District governor- Rudbar |
| | Meeting in DoE | 10:00 – 11:00 | DoE office Rudbar |
| | Meeting in FRWO | 11:30 – 12:30 | FRWO office Rudbar |
| | Lunch Break | 12:30 – 14:00 | Rudbar |

| Date (March 2019) | Task | Time | Venue |
|------------------------------|---|----------------------|--|
| | Departure to Yuj village- Tonekabon | 14:00 – 17:30 | Overnight: Nesa Eco lodge-Yuj village |
| Sunday 10 | Meetings in Tonekabon/ Dohezar & Sehezar | 09:30 – 10:30 | District governor |
| | Meeting with DoE | 11:00 – 12:00 | Tonekabon- DoE office |
| | Meeting with FRWO | 12:30 – 13:30 | Tonekabon- DRWO office |
| | Lunch Break | 14:00 – 15:00 | Tonekabon |
| | Meeting with Gav Poshte villagers | 15:30 – 16:30 | Gav Poshte village |
| | Meetings in Tonekabon/ Dohezar & Sehezar NGOs) | 17:00 – 18:00 | Tonekabon- NGO's office |
| | Departure to Chalous | 18:00 – 19:00 | Overnight: PCO |
| Monday 11 | Departure to Amol | 07:00 - 08:30 | Amol |
| | Meeting with Local community | 08:30 – 10:00 | Mr. Taheri's eco lodge- Baliran village |
| | Baliran-Visit Pilot Site | 10:00 – 12:00 | Baliran |
| | Lunch Break | 12:00 – 13:00 | Baliran |
| | Meeting in Amol/Baliran (NGOs) | 14:30 – 16:00 | Baliran |
| | Departure to Chalus | 16:00 – 18:00 | Overnight: PCO |
| Tuesday 12 | Meeting with project team and Introduction to project+ Detailed overview presentation from NPM + show the project films | 08:30 – 12:30 | PCO |
| | Lunch break | 12:30 - 13:00 | PCO |
| | Meet CF consultant, (Dr. Kazemnejhad, Andras via Skype) | 13:00 - 14:00 | PCO |
| | Meet Legislation and enforcement consultant – Mr. Abdollah pour | 14:00 - 15:00 | PCO Overnight: PCO |
| Wednesday 13 | Meeting with Technical committee of Forestry & Afforestation bureaus | 08:30 - 10:00 | Chalous Deputy of Forest Affairs |

| Date (March 2019) | Task | Time | Venue |
|----------------------|--|---|------------------------------------|
| | Meeting with Forestry Advisory Council members | 10:15 - 12:15 | Chalous Deputy of Forest Affairs |
| | Lunch Break | 12:30 - 14:00 | PCO |
| | Meet National Project Director NPD & NPM | 14:00 - 16:00 | Overnight: PCO |
| Thursday 14 | Departure to Amol | 7:00 – 08:30 | Amol |
| | Meeting in Amol/Baliran | 08:30 – 10:00 | District governor |
| | Meeting in Amol - DoE | 10:30 – 11:30 | Amol DoE office |
| | Meeting in Amol FRWO | 12:00 – 13:00 | Amol FRWO office |
| | Lunch break | 13:00 – 14:00 | Amol |
| | Meeting in Amol/Baliran (NGOs) | 14:00 – 15:00 | Amol |
| | Travel to Tehran | 15:00 – 17:30 Overnight: Taj Mahal hotel | Check in around: 18:00 |
| Friday 15 | Meet BD diversity consultant- Niloufar Raesee | 09:00 - 10:00 | Taj Mahal hotel |
| | Meet TCBC consultant-Aydin Yasemi | 10:00 - 11:00 | Taj Mahal hotel |
| | TE Team working | 11:00 – 17:00 | Overnight: Taj Mahal hotel |
| Saturday 16 | Meet National Project Director NPD & NPM | 08:30 - 10:00 | Tehran-FRWO |
| | Meeting with BEPP + Aydin | 10:00 – 11:00 | Tehran-FRWO |
| | Meeting with FHC members | 11:00 - 12:30 | Tehran-FRWO |
| | Lunch Break | 12:30 -13:30 | Tehran-FRWO |
| | Meeting PSC members (Department of Environment(DoE) | 14:00 – 15:30 | Tehran- DoE |
| Sunday 17 | Meet and debriefing NPM/ DNPM/ANPM/ UNDP/ Aydin & Mike via Skype | 10:30 - 12:30 | UNDP Overnight: Taj Mahal hotel |
| | Lunch Break | 12:30 - 13:30 | UNDP |
| | TE team Wrap up | 14:00 – 1600 | UNDP |
| Monday 18 | Departure to home | 07:40 | IKA- Check out around: 05:30 |

Notes:

- Mr. Saeed Nouri Neshat (Local Community mobilization consultant) accompanies the TE team in all pilot site visit / Cell phone: 09332635124

- International TE consultant stays in Taj Mahal hotel in Tehran- Address: no 29, south sheikh Bahayi street, Mola Sadra blvd, Vanak sq. Tehran Tell: 02188035444
- Mr. Hafez Bagheri owner of eco-lodge house in Baalaa baraagoor (Address: Baalaa baraagur village –, Rahmat Abaad & Boloukaat district, Rudbar town, Guilan Province, Iran) Cellphone: 09113847709
- Ms. Fahime Shafee'ee (Owner of eco-lodge in Yuj-Sehezar, Tonekabon, Mazandaran, Iran) cellphone: 091138404009
- Mr. Taheri (Owner of eco-lodge in Baliran- Address: Baliran village, Amol, Mazandaran, Iran) cellphone: 09369103468
- CHFP's driver: Ali kia Jamali 09380197108 - Project car : Grey Peugeot , plate number: 82و11ايران
- PCO guesthouse telephone: 01152222824 Address: Deputy of Forest Affairs, Moalem Sq. Chalous town, Mazandaran, Iran
- Gilan NGO address: No 3- Moradian alley- Boomsar Blvd. – Rasht Ms. Tahmine Shemshadi 09111315530
- NGO's of Tonekabon. Address: Moslemi St. Tonekabon. Coordinator: Ms. Nahid Almasi 09120180756

Appendix 3: List of Persons Interviewed

For Terminal Evaluation of CHFP, there were 2 trips to Chalus. The first trip was on 19-20 Feb. 2019 by Mr. Mirghasemi (the national consultant). The second trip was by both international and national consultants on 8-14 March 2019.

Persons interviewed during the first trip included:

- Mr. Bayat (NPM) provided a summary of the project including selection of the pilot landscapes, the main challenges in implementation, the characteristics of each pilot landscape and CHFP activities in each pilot landscape.
- Mr. Jalil Karami (deputy NPM) about his role in M&E of the project.
- Ms. Maral Mortazavi about cultural issues of women empowerment in the project
- Mr. Behzad Taghavi Angooraj, former head of Forest Affairs Department and the second NPD of the project. He explained project issues when was NPD and general environmental and socio-economic issues in the CHF

Persons interviewed during the second trip included the following:

Friday, 8th March, on the way from Tehran to Rudbar (Gilan Province) with Ms. Maral Mortezaei, she explained about some evidence of capacity building and empowerment in the project pilot sites especially in Chehelchai watershed.

- In the car, general discussion about socio-economic condition of Iran and local people with Dr. Saeid Nouri Neshat and Mr. Mehdi Almasi (form LCMC)
- In Bala baraagour village-Khosh Neshin (Rudbar County) Meetings with villagers in Farirud & Zilakirud including: 1- Mr. Hafez Bagheri, 2- Mr. Reza Pourbagher, 3- Mr. Azim Gholami, 4- Mr. Mahmoud Zarrabi Mehr
- From FRWO: 1- Mr. Mohammadreza Nouri, 2- Mr. Vahid Mosmeri
- From local NGO: Ms. Tahmineh Shemshadi
- From Forestry Cooperative: Mr. Kiomars Bagheri
- From LCMC: 1- Mr. Saeid Nouri Neshat, 2- Mr. Mehdi Almasi 3- Mr. Behzad Savari 4- Mr. Javad Yaghoubzadeh

Saturday, 9th March,

- District Governor of Rahmatabad and Bolookat (Rudbar County): Mr. Alireza Jahangard; district governor
- DoE office in Rudbar, Mr. Hasan Kazemi (biodiversity conservation expert)
- FRWO office in Rudbar: 1- Mr. Ali Omidi (Head of NRM office), 2- Mr. Reza Paravar (former Head of NRM office), 3- Mr. Vahid Mosmeri, 4- Mr. Mohammadreza Nouri, 5- Mr. Hafez Bagheri (local coordinator of CHFP) + LCMC team
- Narvan Forestry Cooperative company, Mr. Ali Etemad
- Nesa Eco lodge-Yuj village: 1- Ms. Fahimeh Shafiei, 2- Mr. Yaghoub Beyraghdar, 3- Ms. Ozma Beyraghdar, 4- Mr. Reza Mansour Kiaei, 5- Ms. Saba Beyraghdar + LCMC team (+ Ms. Nahid Almasi)

Sunday, 10th March,

- Meetings in Tonekabon with District Governor of Khorramabad, 1- Mr. Alikhani, 2- Mr. Naghipour, member of Islamic council of the district
- DoE office in Tonekabon county, Mr. Hadi Mansourkiaei

- FRWO office in Tonekabon county, 1- Mr. Mahdi Molaei, 2- Ms. Ashourifar, 3- Mr. Yaser Montazeri
- Meeting with Gav Poshte villagers: 1- Ms. Sherafat, 2- Ms. Goli, 3- Mr Ghorban, 4- Ms. Ashourifar + LCMC team
- Meeting with local NGOs: 1- Ms. Mirhosseini, 2- Mr. Shah Abbaspour, 3- Mr. Tolouei, 4- Mr. Mashayekhi, 5- Mr. Bahmani, 6- Mr. Eisapour + Ms. Ashourifar and LCMC team

Monday, 11th March,

- Meeting with Local community in Baliran village: 1- Ms. Fatemeh Rashidi, 2- Ms. Banin Nabinia, 3- Ms Banoo Soghra Nabinia, 4- Ms. Khatereh, 5- Ms. Robab Hosseinzadeh, 6- Mr. Mohammad Ghaffari (Mr. Pirtaheer), 7- Mr. Nader Taheri + LCMC team + Mr. Nariman Bayat (local coordinator of CHFP)
- An introduction to Chehelchai pilot site by Ms. Nahid Almasi.
- Meeting with facilitators team (LCMC team): 1- Mr. Saeid Nouri Neshat, 2- Mr. Mehdi Almasi 3- Mr. Behzad Savari 4- Mr. Javad Yaghoubzadeh, 5- Ms. Nahid Almasi, 6- Ms. Azadeh Karimi

Tuesday, 12th March,

- Meeting with project team and Introduction to project + Detailed overview presentation from NPM: 1- Mr. Dariush Bayat, 2- Mr. Jalil Karami, 3- Mr. Ehsan Riabzadeh, 4- Mr. Amirhossein Kavooosi, 5- Ms. Maral Mortazavi, 6- Ms. Sahar Ghasemzadeh
- Meeting with CF consultant, (Dr. Kazemnejhad, Andras via Skype)
- Meeting with Legislation and enforcement consultant – Mr. Abdollahpour

Wednesday, 13th March,

- Meeting with NPM
- Meeting with Technical committee of Forestry & Afforestation bureaus:
1- Mr. Rahmatollah Pourvali, 2- Mr. Ahmad Ramezannia, 3- Mr. Hossein Nezamdoost, 4- Ms. Shabnam Badiezadeh, Ms. Fatemeh Moosavi, 6- Ms. Fatemeh Sharifi, 7- Mr. Hamidreza Saeidi, 8- Mr. Akbar Malekan rad, 9- Mr. Mohammadreza Nouri, 10- Mr. Kamyar Marzzbani, 11- Mr. Qasem Pourvali, 12- Abolfazl Ahmadi fard,
- C- Meeting with Forestry Advisory Council members: 1- Mr. Eshagh Ataei, 2- Mr. Rahmat Alizadeh, 3- Mr. Ramin Moosavi, 4- Mahdi Molaei 5- Davood Moghaddasi, 6- Mr. Kamyar Marzzbani, 7- Mr. Mohammad Amoozad, 8- Mr. Mohammadreza Nouri 9- Mr. Alizadeh
- D- Meeting with NPM and his assistant

Thursday, 14th March,

- Meeting in Amol/Baliran, District Governor of Dashtsar: 1- Mr. Ali Farshidfar, 2- Mr. hamidreza Barzegar
- Meeting in Amol city – DoE: Mr. Vahid Rezaeian
- Meeting in Amol city FRWO: Mr. Abbas Hosseini, Deputy Head of NRM office
- Meeting with local NGOs in Amol city and Red Deer Campaign:
1- Mr. Mohammad Ghaffari (Mr. Pirtaheer), 2- Mr. Javad Yaghoubzadeh, 3- Ms. Azadeh Karimi, 4- Ms Banoo Soghra Nabinia, 5- Mr. Vahid Rezaeian, 6- Mr. Ali Mahmoodzadeh, 7- Mr. Reza Taheri, 8- Ms. Fatemeh Rajaei, 9- Mr. Mahdi Meschi

Friday, 15th March,

- Meet BD diversity consultant: Ms. Niloufar Raesee
- Meet TCBC consultant: Mr. Aydin Yasemi

Saturday, 16th March,

- Meet National Project Director NPD & NPM (in FRWO HQ): 1- Dr. Abbasali Nobakht (NPD), 2- Mr. Dariush Bayat (NPM), 3- Mr. Masoomi
- Meeting with Forest High Council members (in FRWO HQ): 1- Mr. Kamran Pourmoghaddam, 2- Mr. Moosavinezhad, 3- Ms. Aadbesh,
- Meeting with BEPP (in FRWO HQ): 1- Mr. Vahid Jafarian, 2- Mr. Majid loqmanpour, 3- Mr. Hosseinali Motavalli
- Meeting PSC member (Department of Environment (DoE) in FRWO HQ: Mr. Dariush Golalizadeh

Sunday, 17th March,

- Meet and debriefing NPM/ DNPM/ANPM/ UNDP/ + Aydin Yasemi & Mike via Skype
- UNDP Staff: 1- Mr. Ali Nazaridoust, 2- Mr. Mohsen Soleymani Roozbehani, 3- Mr. Mohammadreza Khosravi, 4- Shafagh Bakhshalian
- CHFP Team: 1- Mr. Dariush Bayat, 2- Mr. Jalil Karami, 3- Mr. Amirhossein Kavooosi,

+ Skype meetings with NPM, UNDP and IPA (Mike Moser)

+ Telephone call with Ms. Masoomeh Kouhi, local coordinator of Chehelchay pilot site.

Appendix 4: List of Documents Reviewed

- Project Preparation Grant Report (August 2012)
- Project Document (2013)
- Project Inception report (December 2013)
- Strategic Results Framework as updated for the Terminal Review
- Project Annual Work Plans and Mid-Year Progress Reports (2014-2019)
- Project MTR Report and Management Response
- Annual Project Implementation Review (2014-2018)
- GEF Focal Area Tracking tools (AMAT)
- Capacity Development Scorecard
- Strategies and Guidelines developed by the CHFP
- Financial Report
- International Project Advisor Mission reports (1-7)
- Project Website
- Pilot Landscapes Management Plans
- Consultant's Technical Reports (International and National)
- Annual Audit reports (2015 & 2017)
- Green Development Strategy
- Pilot Landscape IPM Fariroud-Zilakiroud Basin
- Status of Mammals in the Hyrcanian Forests A preliminary study of distribution and human-wildlife conflicts
- Community based livestock insurance
- National Policies, Regulations, Monitoring and Law Applying In Caspian Hyrcanian Forest Project
- Training Design To facilitate the transition from classical forestry to multi-purpose and sustainable management of Caspian Hyrcanian Forests
- CHFP Capacity Development & Training Plan
- Public Awareness on The Caspian Hyrcanian Forests

Appendix 5: Evaluation Questions Matrix

| Evaluation Questions | Indicators | Data Sources | Methodology |
|--|---|---|--|
| Relevance: How does the project relate to the main objectives of the GEF focal area, and to the environment and development priorities at the county, regional and national levels? | | | |
| 1. What is the role of government in the protection of biodiversity in the I.R. of Iran? | Policy instruments Staff capacity Action Plans Planning Budgets Responses received from interviews. | Government staff Government planning and policy documents | Key stakeholder interviews Document review |
| 2. What is the role of the community in the protection of biodiversity in the I.R. of Iran? | Policy instruments (community management plans) Responses received from interviews. | Community members Government planning and policy documents | Key stakeholder interviews Group discussions Document review |
| 3. Is a collaborative approach to management of the CHF important? Please explain? | Policy instruments Staff capacity Action Plans Budget lines Responses received from interviews. | Government staff Community members Government planning and policy documents | Key stakeholder interviews Group discussions Document review |
| 4. Among the many community development priorities of government how important is biodiversity conservation? Please explain. | Policy instruments Staff capacity Action Plans Budget lines Responses received from interviews. | Government staff Community members Government planning and policy documents | Key stakeholder interviews Group discussions Document review |
| 5. Is the protection of biodiversity an important priority for the I.R. of Iran? Explain why? | Responses received from interviews | Government staff Community members | Key stakeholder interviews Group discussions |
| Effectiveness: To what extent have/will the expected outcomes and objectives of the project been/be achieved? | | | |
| 6. Is multi-use forest management practiced by the FRWO? Please describe the multiple uses. | Policy instruments Staff capacity Action Plans Responses received from interviews. | Government staff Community members Government planning and policy documents | Key stakeholder interviews Group discussions Document review |

| Evaluation Questions | Indicators | Data Sources | Methodology |
|---|---|---|--|
| 7. What approach is used to conserve biodiversity in the CHF? | Policy instruments Staff capacity Action Plans Responses received from interviews. | Government staff Community members Government planning and policy documents | Key stakeholder interviews Group discussions Document review |
| 8. Is a collaborative approach used in multi-use forest management? Please describe the stakeholders and approach used. | Policy instruments Staff capacity Action Plans Responses received from interviews. | Government staff Community members Government planning and policy documents | Key stakeholder interviews Group discussions Document review |
| 9. Have communities adopted alternative sources of income that fit into a multi-use forest management approach? | Responses received from interviews. | Government staff Community members | Key stakeholder interviews Group discussions |
| 10. Has the CHFP increased the dialogue on biodiversity conservation among government agencies, among community members and between government and communities? | Responses received from interviews. | Government staff Community members | Key stakeholder interviews Group discussions |
| 11. Where there any unexpected results (positive or negative) from the CHFP? What were they? | Responses received from interviews. | Government staff Community members | Key stakeholder interviews Group discussions |
| Efficiency: Was the project implemented efficiently, in-line with international and national norms and standards? | | | |
| 12. From a “ <i>value for money</i> ” perspective, have CHFP activities delivered the intended results? Could anything be done differently to improve delivery of the intended results? | Responses received from interviews and focus group discussions | Implementing partners Project budgets | Key stakeholder interviews and Focus group discussions |
| 13. Has the CHFP included at-risk and most vulnerable communities and community members, including ethnic minorities, women, youth, children, persons with disability and elders? | Responses received from interviews and focus group discussions | Implementing partners Community leaders and members | Key stakeholder interviews and Focus group discussions |
| 14. Did the CHFP include effective monitoring and evaluation with a responsive adaptive management approach? | Responses received from interviews and focus group discussions | Implementing partners | Key stakeholder interviews and Focus group discussions |
| Results: What are the current actual, and potential long-term, results of activities supported by the project? | | | |
| 15. Has a collaborative, multi-use forest management strategy been included in National, Provincial and County government planning and policies? | Policy instruments Action Plans Responses received from interviews. | Government staff Community members Government planning and policy documents | Key stakeholder interviews Group discussions Document review |

| Evaluation Questions | Indicators | Data Sources | Methodology |
|---|---|---|--|
| 16. Has a collaborative, multi-use forest management strategy been included in government budgets? | Planning Budgets Responses received from interviews. | Government staff Community members Government planning and policy documents | Key stakeholder interviews Group discussions Document review |
| 17. Which government departments are involved in collaborative multi-use forest management? | Responses received from interviews. | Government staff Community members | Key stakeholder interviews Group discussions |
| 18. How does government implement collaborative, multi-use forest management with local communities? | Policy instruments Action Plans Responses received from interviews. | Government staff Community members Government planning and policy documents | Key stakeholder interviews Group discussions Document review |
| 19. What evidence is there that communities are engaged in the implementation of collaborative, multi-use forest management? | Action Plans Responses received from interviews. | Government staff Community members Government planning and policy documents | Key stakeholder interviews Group discussions Document review |
| 20. What measures have been implemented by community members contributing to the conservation of biodiversity? | Responses received from interviews. | Government staff Community members | Key stakeholder interviews Group discussions |
| 21. Does the CHFP contribute to climate change mitigation? And are CHFP initiatives resilient to predicted climate change impacts? | Policy instruments Action Plans Responses received from interviews. | Government staff Community members Government planning and policy documents | Key stakeholder interviews Group discussions Document review |
| Sustainability: Are the conditions in place for project-related benefits and results to be sustained? | | | |
| 22. Was a CHFP sustainability plan developed and implemented? | Project documents Responses received from interviews. | Project staff | Key stakeholder interviews |
| 23. Will provincial and county governments expand implementation of collaborative, multi-use forest management that protects native biodiversity beyond the four pilot project sites? | Policy instruments Action Plans and budgets Responses received from interviews. | Government staff Government planning and policy documents | Key stakeholder interviews Document review |
| 24. Has government and community capacity been enhanced sufficiently to enable ongoing collaborative, multi-use forest management that protects native biodiversity? | Guideline documents Responses received from interviews. | Government staff Community members Government documents | Key stakeholder interviews Group discussions Document review |
| 25. When project funding ends will forest management plans initiated by the CHFP continue to be implemented and maintained in the pilot communities? | Responses received from interviews. | Government staff Community members | Key stakeholder interviews Group discussions |

| Evaluation Questions | Indicators | Data Sources | Methodology |
|--|---|--|---|
| 26. Do communities have the technical, economic and political capability and support needed to sustain the positive results of the CHFP project? | Action Plans Responses received from interviews. | Community members | Key stakeholder interviews Group discussions |
| 27. Is there evidence of scaling up and/or replication of CHFP activities? | Policy instruments Action Plans and budgets Responses received from interviews. | Government staff Government planning and policy documents | Key stakeholder interviews Document review |

Appendix 6: Evaluation Consultant Code of Conduct & Agreement Form

Evaluators:

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 imitations, findings and recommendations.
7. Should reflect sound accounting procedures and be prudent in using the resources of the evaluation.

| |
|---|
| <p>Evaluation Consultant Agreement Form</p> <p>Agreement to abide by the Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN System</p> <p>Name of Consultant: <u>Brent Tegler</u></p> <p>Name of Consultancy Organization (where relevant): _____</p> <p>I confirm that I have received and understood and will abide by the United Nations Code of Conduct for Evaluation.</p> <p>Signed at <i>place</i> on <i>date</i>: <u>Fergus, ON Canada 25 January, 2019</u></p> <p>Signature: <u></u></p> |
|---|

Appendix 7: Report Clearance Form

Evaluation Report Reviewed and Cleared by:

UNDP Country Office Iran

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

UNDP GEF Regional Technical Advisor

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____