

### Annex III. MID-TERM REPORT FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS AND MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

**PIMS #54416: UNDP-GEF Project "Mainstreaming Sustainable Land and Forest Management in Mountain Landscapes of North-Eastern Armenia"**

UNDP Management Response Template:

Mid-term Evaluation Report **December 2018**

Date:

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#### Evaluation Recommendation or Issue 1.

Considering the private sector bottleneck for completing the forest management plans, the project should provide direct funding to the forest enterprises and Hayantar, to pilot a more self-driven approach to completion of the forest management plans. This should include direct collaboration with the State Forest Monitoring Center, which has strong technical capacity related to remote-sensing data analysis. This could begin with a pilot management plan for a forest enterprise sub-unit, to be completed as a collaboration between the forest enterprise staff, the State Forest Monitoring Center, and any other key relevant national stakeholders (i.e. Bioresources center, etc.). Completing this process and carefully tracking the financial inputs required would be a highly useful exercise to inform future planning for completion of forest management plans. This would also help build government forest management capacity, and support sustainability of project activities.

#### Management Response:

The recommendation is partially relevant and acceptable.

Key Action(s)	Time Frame	Responsible Unit(s)	Tracking	
			Comments	Status
Both "Hayantar" SNCO and State Forest Monitoring Center (SFMC) SNCO had certain technical capacities: mapping (including RS application and thematic mapping in GIS environment), field monitoring of illegal logging, authorized cuttings, forest restoration activities, etc. , but they don't have the necessary capacities to prepare complete forest management plans (FMPs) according to the acting Order of Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) from 2005, with integrated biodiversity, ecosystems services and carbon components. The existing capacities of both SNCOs are extensively used through the preparation process of drafted	By the end of 2019	Project management unit UNDP SGR portfolio		Completed

FMPs. For the new FMPs (for the following forest enterprises) the participation of “Hayantar” SNCO and SFMC is intensified. Both “Hayantar” SNCO staff and Monitoring center are intensively involved in drafting of FMPs for 3 new forest enterprises named Tashir, Jiliza and Stepanavan in Lori region.				
<b>Evaluation Recommendation or Issue 2.</b>				
This evaluation recommends that the forest management plans should be developed through a comprehensive national stakeholder consultation process, including institutions such as the national forest monitoring center.				
<b>Management Response:</b> The recommendation is relevant and acceptable.				
Key Action(s)	Time Frame	Responsible Unit(s)	Tracking	
			Comments	Status
The drafted FMPs were presented to “Hayantar” SNCO, Ministry of Nature Protection (MoNP) (since mid-2019 Ministry of Environment (MoE)), SFMC (Since 2019 Forest Monitoring Center) still during their preparation phase. Later, when FMPs were circulated for the official feedbacks both “Hayantar” SNCO (including all respective forest enterprises) and Forest Management Center (FMC) responded with their comments on the base of which drafted FMPs were amended. Forest Management plans have been cleared by the project advisory Boards, which include respective professional civil society and academia representatives.	By the end of 2019	Project management unit Project Steering Committee, “Hayantar” SNCO		Completed
<b>Evaluation Recommendation or Issue 3.</b>				
Even if formal approval of forest management plans depends on government approval of the forest enterprise boundaries, the project should promote draft “provisional” forest management plans that can be implemented prior to official government approval defining the exact forest boundaries. Within the forest management plans there should be an initial clause stating that the management plan is provisional until boundaries are officially approved by the government, but that the forest management plan will be implemented in the meantime based on current common understanding of the area under the responsibility of the forest enterprise.				
<b>Management Response:</b> The recommendation is relevant and acceptable.				
Key Action(s)	Time Frame	Responsible Unit(s)	Tracking	
			Comments	Status

“Provisional” FMPs were used in autumn 2019 to decide the potential forest restoration sites of 2000 ha degraded forest areas, as a base for UNDP- “Hayantar” SNCO signed “Responsible party agreement” by the mid-October, 2018. The extent of usage of “Provisional” FMPs are much greater and could be specified by particularities of “Hayantar” planned activities for 2019-2020 and the following years.	By the end of project (2019)	Project management unit Project Steering Committee, “Hayantar” SNCO	This action has continuous nature	Completed
<b>Evaluation Recommendation or Issue 4.</b>				
The project team and UNDP should work with other partners and stakeholders to ensure that the work done and the inventory data collected for the FMPs is fully integrated into the FMIS, and the work done under the project is integrated into the development of the NFI.				
<b>Management Response:</b> The recommendation is relevant and acceptable.				
Key Action(s)	Time Frame	Responsible Unit(s)	Tracking	
			Comments	Status
The PMU has been working with GIZ-Armenia (developer of FMIS) and “Hayantar” SNCO to integrate all data developed within project into FMIS: updated GIS layers, HR satellite images, forest inventory and all other relevant data. The agreement is on the ground and will happen once drafted FMPs are approved. Meanwhile PMU contributed to FMIS with all primary (e.g. procured high resolution satellite data) and processed data. Since 2019 the FMIS was transferred from GIZ to Ministry of Environment and thus PMU continuously provide data to Ministry.	By end 1919	Project management unit UNDP SGR, “Hayantar” SNCO	This action has continuous nature	Completed
<b>Evaluation Recommendation or Issue 5.</b>				
If the forest enterprises are merged, the project should support this process by supporting the merging of the forest management plans as well. This should not be a major effort to completely re-do the forest management plans, but basically the existing forest management plans should be aggregated, without major additional revisions for the current 5-10 year management period.				
<b>Management Response:</b> The recommendation is relevant and acceptable.				
Key Action(s)	Time Frame	Responsible Unit(s)	Tracking	
			Comments	Status
The forest sector reforms that started in late 2017 unfortunately does not have any clear framework and action plan. PMU has initiated a workshop on 6 <sup>th</sup> of July, 2018 and invited Ministry of	2019	Project management unit “Hayantar” SNCO		Completed

Environment (MoE and all relevant national and international forest sector stakeholders to get clear picture of developments. Unfortunately until now there are not any clearances and hints on future organizational and management structures of national forest authorities. Despite this un-clear situation PMU has all relevant electronic data on drafted FMPs to merge and/or aggregate them. In November 20, 2019 decision was made by Ministry of Environment MoE to merge Gugarq and Yeghegnut forest enterprises. PMU is supporting the tenderer to merge separate FMPs of Gugarq and Yeghegnut forest enterprises into one-Vanadzor forest enterprise FMP.				
<b>Evaluation Recommendation or Issue 6.</b>				
Considering the delays so far, under Output 1.5 the project should tighten the scope of the development of regulations, focusing on the development of only the most critical 2-3 regulations or guidelines planned. At the same time, during the remaining implementation period, the project could lead work on the development of a National Forest Policy; however, this may need to wait until the forest management institutional framework is fully clear following the restructuring process.				
<b>Management Response:</b>				
The recommendation is relevant and acceptable.				
Key Action(s)	Time Frame	Responsible Unit(s)	Tracking	
			Comments	Status
Under the output 1.5 the project so far has developed “Forest carbon stock measurements” guideline, which was tested for northern and north-eastern Armenia forest ecosystems and is sent to MoE to be formalized. Still in the beginning of 2018 PMU initiated amendment to National Forest Code (2005), i.e. prepared and processed through the required procedures “State Forest Service” legal act to support establishment of “State Forest Service” as a second major organizational unit of “State Forest Committee”, apart of “Hayantar” SNCO. Unfortunately this was not further developed due to political changes in the country and un-known future of “forest reforms”. However structural changes in the Ministry of Environment (MoE) along with forest administration will be finalized by the end of 2019. PMU, on the base of forest inventory activities suggested to prepare certain missing regulations (e.g. transfer of naturally regrowth forest into forest category), as well as to support new regulations development that would be initiated by MoE. PMU provided its	By end 2019	Project management unit UNDP SGR		Completed

extended comments to revision of National Forest Code (from 2005) and Ministry order from 2005 on drafting of FMPs.				
<b>Evaluation Recommendation or Issue 7.</b>				
The project should propose to the Government of Armenia that the State Forest Monitoring Center be shifted to the Ministry of Environment, with an expanded mandate to provide support to all forest management functions. This should include support for the development of forest management plans through detailed analysis of remote sensing data. The State Forest Monitoring Center could also provide a focal point within Hayantar to develop and implement a National Forest Inventory based on new and modern technologies that can be more cost effective.				
<b>Management Response:</b> The recommendation is relevant and acceptable.				
Key Action(s)	Time Frame	Responsible Unit(s)	Tracking	
			Comments	Status
The "SFMC" was transferred to Ministry of Environment (MoE) in 2019 after still on-going large organizational restructurings following extraordinary parliamentary elections of 9 <sup>th</sup> Dec., 2018. PMU convinced UNDP SGR to support the transfer of SFMC to the MoE. Meanwhile PMU contracted SFMC (for October-December, 2018) to monitor and support on-going degraded forest restoration activities conducted by "Hayanatar" SNCO on 2000 ha forest areas in 6 FEs. PMU involved SFMC staff in all its capacity building activities for the project life duration. Support to SFMC has continuous character.	2019	Project management unit UNDP SGR Ministry of Environment		Completed
<b>Evaluation Recommendation or Issue 8.</b>				
To ensure the capacity development work is as effective as possible the project should conduct a training needs assessment for each forest enterprise as part of the completion of the forest management plan. Then the training for each forest enterprise could be better targeted to ensure that the forest enterprise staff have the necessary capacity to implement the new forest management plans.				
<b>Management Response:</b> The recommendation is partially relevant and acceptable.				
Key Action(s)	Time Frame	Responsible Unit(s)	Tracking	
			Comments	Status
The capacity building for the forest enterprise staff was and is obligatory part of ToR designed for the activities to draft FMP. The contractor is obligated to train staff of local forest enterprise and involve this staff in forest inventory, mapping and FMP drafting activities. Beside this, PMU organized separate training on field computers and GPS applications in forestry, where were invited	Regularly by the project end	Project management unit UNDP SGR		Completed

local forest staff from 4 forest enterprises. After trainings and testing of knowledge all 4 FEs were equipped by field computers and GPS receivers. The capacity upgrade for local FE staff is continuous task for PMU. The training and technical capacity upgrade of 3 new forest enterprises in Lori region, named Tashir, Stepanavan and Jiliza was just completed.				
<b>Evaluation Recommendation or Issue 9.</b>				
The work on forest restoration and regeneration is another area (like the completion of the forest management plans) where the project has the opportunity to directly support the forest enterprises, in order to build capacity and long-term sustainability. The project's approach (apparently due to UNDP requirements) has been to conduct tenders and contract project activities out directly to third parties – NGOs, or private companies. It would be preferable if the project could work directly with the forest enterprises and Hayantar to carry out forest and pasture restoration activities - an approach recommended by this mid-term review. This has been done in other UNDP and GEF projects in other countries (e.g. Kyrgyzstan) and should be feasible in Armenia as well.				
<b>Management Response:</b> The recommendation is relevant and acceptable.				
Key Action(s)	Time Frame	Responsible Unit(s)	Tracking	
			Comments	Status
<p>The PMU succeeded to have “Responsible party agreement” between UNDP and “Hayantar” SNCO to conduct forest restoration of 2000 ha degraded forest ecosystems in 6 forest enterprises. The forest staff of 6 FEs and locally hired 500 people were involved in the scale activities. The PMU is working closely with all 6 FEs and “Haynatar” SNCO to make activities effective and also valuable for local community members. It is planned to continue this collaboration and extend such agreement for the specially protected areas, e.g. Dilijan NP.</p> <p>In November, 20 PMU facilitated the new UNDP-“Hayantar” SNCO “Responsible party agreement” to restore 1650 ha degraded forest enterprises in 11 forest enterprises of Lori and Tavush regions (project target areas).</p>	<p>October, 2018- April 30, 2019</p> <p>November, 20- April, 30, 2020</p>	<p>Project management unit UNDP SGR</p>		Completed
<b>Evaluation Recommendation or Issue 10.</b>				
In the second half of the project, to develop measures for sustainable management of forest pastures, this evaluation recommends that the project integrate new and advanced concepts in sustainable pasture management. In particular, recent research shows that pasture carrying capacity (the number of livestock units a pasture is able to support per unit time) is dynamic and variable from one year to the next, depending on annual climatic conditions. Other recent developments for sustainable pasture management includes the use of remote sensing data, such as satellite imagery, to assess pasture				

conditions and suitability for grazing.<sup>1</sup> The project should also assess the relevance and utility of the Trends. Earth tool (<http://trends.earth/docs/en/>) to support sustainable land management outcomes in the context of the project. The Armenia Mountain SLM project should provide information on these tools and methods to Hayantar, and assess the cost-effectiveness and feasibility of conducting a pilot activity on sustainable pasture management using remote sensing technology. In addition, the project should build on direct recent experience in Armenia, such as the work and lessons from the Clima East pilot project in Armenia.

**Management Response:**

The recommendation relevant and acceptable.

Key Action(s)	Time Frame	Responsible Unit(s)	Tracking	
			Comments	Status
The project forest and communities degraded pasturelands expert has been using the degraded pasturelands identification “Guideline on summer pasturelands monitoring in Armenia” tool developed within GIZ IBIS project and “Technical Reference 1737-7 of Ecological site Inventory, Colorado, 2001, NSTC, BLM ” (it considers also pasture carrying capacity). In both documents for the identification of degraded pasturelands extensively were used RS technologies. Beside these guidelines and RS PMU with project expert has had more than 10 field visits to preliminary identified pasturelands and conducted rather detailed field investigations on the status and potential treatment means. The investigation and field activity results were communicated to local livestock breeders and farmers through a series of trainings.	By mid-2019	Project management unit UNDP SGR		Completed

**Evaluation Recommendation or Issue 11.**

This mid-term review recommends that during the second half of implementation the project produce a short knowledge product (such as a 2-4 page brochure) analyzing and indicating exactly how the project has contributed to achievement of the national LDN target.

**Management Response:**

The recommendation is relevant and acceptable.

Key Action(s)	Time Frame	Responsible Unit(s)	Tracking	
			Comments	Status
The PMU will develop a short knowledge brochure analyzing and indicating the project contribution to the national LDN target.	By mid 2019	Project management unit		Completed

**Evaluation Recommendation or Issue 12.**

<sup>1</sup> For example, see <https://www.uidaho.edu/cnr/rangeland-center/projects/space-cowboys>; and <https://academic.oup.com/jpe/article/9/6/649/2623732>.

The project should leverage the livelihood support activities as community-education and awareness raising opportunities as well. The project should install sign boards at fruit, nut, and berry collection facilities in all communities near the targeted forests, such as Noyemberyan and Voskepar. The sign boards should clearly outline the linkage between the project's objective of sustainable forest management, and the project's support for local livelihoods. The signboards should also be designed to emphasize the importance of sustainable use of forest resources, and indicate regulations for forest use.				
<b>Management Response:</b> The recommendation is relevant and acceptable.				
Key Action(s)	Time Frame	Responsible Unit(s)	Tracking	
			Comments	Status
The PMU installed sign board on "Ardvi" passive solar green house with the clarification of this unit for the reduction of green house gases, decrease of fuel-wood extraction from the surrounding forests due to provided alternative source of income. It is in the designing phase the signboards for Met Parni briquetting facility; Indicator bird and butterfly sites, Voskepar solar drying facility. The PMU will put more efforts also to design and install the relevant signboards in Koghb, Ijevan, Koti and Bagratashen communities with clearances on usage of solar panels/water heaters as substitution to firewood consumption in kindergarten, improvement of healthy environment and promotion of carbon sinks. The education and public awareness component is obligatory for all local level activities: forest inventory, pasturelands management, degraded forest restoration and livelihood programs.	By the Q1-Q2 of 2019	Project management unit		Completed
<b>Evaluation Recommendation or Issue 13.</b>				
To better document, communicate and promote the potential replicability of the project's small-scale activities to reduce fuelwood dependency, this mid-term review recommends that the project conduct a small study to carefully and closely assess the actual likely avoided deforestation resulting from the project's activities. In addition, the project should revise the indicator relating to "percentage reduction in forest firewood collection..." to focus on the amount of fuelwood use avoided (in cubic meters of wood), or the hectares of forest degradation or deforestation avoided.				
<b>Management Response:</b> The recommendation is relevant and acceptable.				
Key Action(s)	Time Frame	Responsible Unit(s)	Tracking	
			Comments	Status
The PMU already completed one joint study on potential effects of introduced hail-nets for Tavush region. In November two different studies were initiated to study the effectiveness of introduced energy-efficient ovens and solar panels/heaters, as	By mid 2019	Project management unit UNDP SGR Ministry of Environment		Completed



well as the outcomes for the introduced microgrant program for Teghut and Haghartsin villages. By the end of 2019 a study has ordered to learn the efficiency of more than 10 livelihood programs that project implemented through Lori and Tavush results. A special study to calculate avoided deforestation has been initiated The study outcome will be available by May, 31, 2020				
<b>Evaluation Recommendation or Issue 14.</b>				
The PMU should closely and carefully track actual co-financing, including any in-kind or cash co-financing that is contributed by local stakeholders or local partners that may not have been part of the originally planned co-financing.				
<b>Management Response:</b> The recommendation relevant and acceptable.				
Key Action(s)	Time Frame	Responsible Unit(s)	Tracking	
			Comments	Status
The PMU will take necessary steps to track actual co-financing (both in-kind and cash) for all stakeholders involved in project activities (MoE, MoA, "Hayantar" SNCO, WWF-Armenia and CNF). Government of Armenia in autumn 2019 allocated ca. 1 mln US dollar to support planting and forest restoration activities, which were conducted by "Hayantar" SNCO in parallel to activities with new UNDP-"Hayantar" SNCO Responsible party agreements.	By the end of 2019	Project management unit UNDP SGR		Completed
<b>Evaluation Recommendation or Issue 15.</b>				
Now that a gender analysis has been completed, the PMU should develop a brief gender action plan to accompany project work planning, to concretely and specifically indicate the key actions that the project will proactively take to engage women and support gender mainstreaming, as relevant to the project activities and expected results.				
<b>Management Response:</b> The recommendation relevant and acceptable.				
Key Action(s)	Time Frame	Responsible Unit(s)	Tracking	
			Comments	Status
The corresponding ToR is submitted as a part of UNDP-Armenia LTA contracted "International gender advisor" to work out gender action plan with the SMART indicators to increase the PMU efforts towards gender mainstreaming.	By Q1 2019	Project management unit UNDP SGR		Completed

<b>Evaluation Recommendation or Issue 16.</b>				
In approximately the 1 <sup>st</sup> quarter of 2019 the Project Steering Committee should be prepared to consider a possible 6-12 month extension from the currently planned completion of December 2019. Ideally the project would finish in the 4 <sup>th</sup> quarter of 2020, in order to take advantage of the 2020 summer field season for forest and biodiversity monitoring, as well as other activities that are dependent on the summer field season.				
<b>Management Response:</b> The recommendation relevant and acceptable.				
Key Action(s)	Time Frame	Responsible Unit(s)	Tracking	
			Comments	Status
The Project Steering Committee will be prepared and supported by all necessary documents and justifications to consider a possible 12 month no-cost extension from the currently planned completion of December 2019. Project no-cost extension will be applied upon confirmation from the GEF along with project work-plan and budget revision to plan activities and allocate funds for the period till end of Q4 2020.	By Q1 2019	Project management unit UNDP SGR Project Steering Committee		Q1 2019, Completed
<b>Evaluation Recommendation or Issue 17.</b>				
The Project Steering Committee should consider approving revisions to the project results framework to ensure indicators and targets are fully in-line with SMART criteria, and reflect the baseline context at the time the project started implementation. Some results framework targets are not well-developed, or may need to be revised based on changed circumstances compared to what was expected during the project development phase. For example, the Project Steering Committee should consider reducing the target for forest management plans from 11 to 7-8 plans. The target for the indicator related to the percentage decrease in livestock using forests for unsustainable grazing practices should also be revised to fully meet SMART criteria. This mid-term review also recommends that the indicator related to the percentage of livestock using natural forests should be updated and clarified as necessary in the Armenian translation of all project-related documents, to ensure that all stakeholders and partners have a full understanding of the purpose and goal of the indicator.				
<b>Management Response:</b> The recommendation is partially relevant and acceptable.				
Key Action(s)	Time Frame	Responsible Unit(s)	Tracking	
			Comments	Status
The draft of revision of project results framework with clarifications on certain indicators will be prepared by PMU and presented to Project Steering Committee meeting. The revision will touch the following indicators: number of revised FMPs, the percentage decrease in livestock using forests for unsustainable grazing practices, percentage of livestock using natural forests.	By the end of 2019	Project management unit UNDP SGR Project Steering Committee		25.12.2019

<b>Evaluation Recommendation or Issue 18.</b>				
In order for the carbon co-efficient to be as well established and validated as possible, this evaluation recommends that the process and results for establishing the carbon co-efficient be published in a peer-reviewed scientific journal.				
<b>Management Response:</b> The recommendation is relevant and acceptable.				
Key Action(s)	Time Frame	Responsible Unit(s)	Tracking	
			Comments	Status
The article titled “Piloting a national forest carbon inventory in north-east Armenia” is already drafted. It’s planned to submit by 2020.	By mid 2020	Project management unit		Completed
<b>Evaluation Recommendation or Issue 19.</b>				
To keep the project moving forward UNDP may need to provide support through high level engagement with the Ministry of Environment, in order to find a mutually agreeable path for rapid implementation during the second half of the project. This evaluation recommends that UNDP provide intensive supervision and support for the project to address any further delays of three months or longer.				
<b>Management Response:</b> The recommendation is partially relevant and acceptable.				
Key Action(s)	Time Frame	Responsible Unit(s)	Tracking	
			Comments	Status
The UNDP SGR and PMU are working tightly with MoE to rapid the implementation of project activities for the second half of 2019 and 2020. The revised work plan and budget will be presented to Project Steering Committee meeting by the end of December, 2020 to seek the executive body support to rapid the project activities.	By the end of 2019	Project management unit UNDP SGR Project Steering Committee		25.12.2019