Mid-term Review Report

UNDP-GEF Project: India High Range Landscape Project – Developing an effective multiple-use management framework for conserving biodiversity in the mountain landscapes of the High Ranges, the Western Ghats, India

GEF Project ID: 4743 UNDP Project ID: 4651

Country: India

Region: Asia and the Pacific

Focal Area: Biodiversity (GEF-5)

GEF Agency: United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)


High range landscape


Nilgiri Tahr, Rajamalai Park

Shola grass nursery


Millets seed bank, Chinnar

Photographs taken by Dr. Nivedita Haran in February 2021 during MTR mission.

Date	Version	Comments
17 April 2021	1	First draft
11 June 2021	Final	

Opening Page

PROJECT DETAILS:	
Project Name:	India High Range Landscape Project – Developing an effective multiple-use management framework for conserving biodiversity in the mountain landscapes of the High Ranges, the Western Ghats, India
Project ID:	UNDP PIMS ID: 4651 GEF Project ID: 4743
Country:	India
Region:	Asia and the Pacific
Focal Area:	Biodiversity (GEF-5)
Focal Area Objectives:	BD-1: Improve Sustainability of Protected Area Systems BD-2: Mainstream Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use into Production Landscapes, Seascapes and Sectors
Funding Source:	GEF Trust Fund (GEF-5)
Implementing Agency:	United Nations Development Programme
Implementation Modality:	Direct Implementation
Executing Agency:	United Nations Development Programme
FINANCIALS:	
Project Preparation Grant:	USD 88,000
GEF Project Grant:	USD 6,275,000
Cofinancing Total:	USD 30,000,000
GEF Agency Fees:	USD 675,000
Total Cost:	USD 36,363,600
PROJECT TIMELINE:	
Received by GEF:	01 December 2011
Preparation Grant Approved:	01 March 2012
Concept Approved:	01 February 2012
Project Approved for Implementation:	02 December 2013
State Date:	15 May 2014
Original Planned Closing Date:	14 May 2019
Revised Planned Closing Date:	14 March 2022
MID-TERM REVIEW DETAILS:	
Mid-term Review Timeframe:	January-March 2021
MTR team:	James Lenoci, International Consultant / Lead Mid-term Reviewer Dr. Nivedita P. Haran, National Consultant
MTR Reporting Language:	English

Acknowledgements:

The MTR team would like to acknowledge the information and feedback provided by interviewed project stakeholders.

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Executive Summary

The biodiversity focal area project is being implemented under the GEF-5 replenishment cycle through a direct implementation modality, with UNDP as GEF Implementation Agency and the Implementing Partner (Executing Agency). Basic project information is summarized below in **Table 1**.

Table 1: Project information table

Project Title:	India High Range Landscape Project – Developing an effective multiple-use management framework for conserving biodiversity in the mountain landscapes of the High Ranges, the Western Ghats, India		
UNDP Project ID (PIMS #):	4651	**PIF Approval Date:**	01 Feb 2012
GEF Project ID (PMIS #):	4743	**CEO Endorsement Date:**	02 Dec 2013
Award ID:	75746	**Project Document (ProDoc) Signature Date (date project began):**	15 May 2014
Country(ies):	India	**Date project manager hired:**	Not hired
Region:	Asia and the Pacific	**Inception Workshop date:**	Not held
Focal Area:	Biodiversity (GEF-5)	**Mid-term Review date:**	Jan-Mar 2021
GEF-5 Focal Area Objectives and Outcomes:	BD-1: Outcome 1.1 BD-2: Outcomes 2.1, 2.2	**Planned closing date:**	14 May 2019
Trust Fund:	GEF TF	**If revised, proposed closing date:**	14 Mar 2022
Executing Agency:	United Nations Development Programme		
Other execution partners:	N/A		
Project Financing:	**at CEO endorsement (USD)**	**at Mid-term Review (USD)***	
[1] GEF financing (incl. PPG):	6,363,000	2,348,497	
[2] UNDP contribution:	1,000,000	300,000	
[3] Government:	28,000,000	4,628,439	
[4] Other partners:	1,000,000	0	
[5] Total cofinancing [2+3+4]:	30,000,000	4,928,439	
PROJECT TOTAL COSTS [1+5]	**36,363,000**	**7,276,936**	

*Expenditures reported through December 2020

Project Description

The project is aimed at conserving globally and nationally significant biological diversity in the High Ranges of the Western Ghats. The strategy includes putting in place a cross-sectoral land use management framework, and compliance monitoring and enforcement system to ensure that development in production sectors such as tea, cardamom and tourism is congruent with biodiversity conservation needs. The landscape management framework is envisaged to establish a conservation compatible mosaic of land uses, anchored in a cluster of protected areas, managed to protect wildlife refugia and corridor areas on production lands.

The project is operating under a direct implementation modality (DIM), with a revised planned closing date of 14 March 2022, which was extended from the original planned closing date of 14 May 2019. The GEF project grant is USD 6,275,000 (excluding agency fee), with confirmed co-financing at project entry of USD 30,000,000.

Purpose and Methodology

The objective of the MTR was to gain an independent analysis of the progress midway through the project. The MTR focused on identifying potential project design problems, assessing progress towards the achievement of the project objective and outcomes, and identifying and documenting lessons learned about project design, implementation, and management. Findings of this review will be incorporated as recommendations for enhanced implementation during the remaining term. Performance with respect to progress towards achievement of project objective and outcomes was measured based on the indicators of the project results framework. The MTR was an evidence-based assessment and relied on feedback from persons who have been involved in the design, implementation, and supervision of the project, as well as beneficiaries of project interventions, and review of available documents.

Project Progress Summary

The project officially started in May 2014, after obtaining CEO endorsement by the GEF SEC in December 2013. Project implementation was paused in 2015 following a grievance lodged by a local stakeholder group. The grievance was based on concerns related to planned expansion of the protected area system and envisaged land use restrictions by production sector operators, particularly cardamom growers. The project design was revisited as part of the grievance, and a revised strategy was approved in 2018. One of the aspects of the revised strategy was a modification to the project landscape, which excludes some of the contentious parts of the originally delineated landscape (see **Figure 1**). The revised landscape covers 219,878 ha, roughly 73% the size of the original approx. 300,000-ha area.

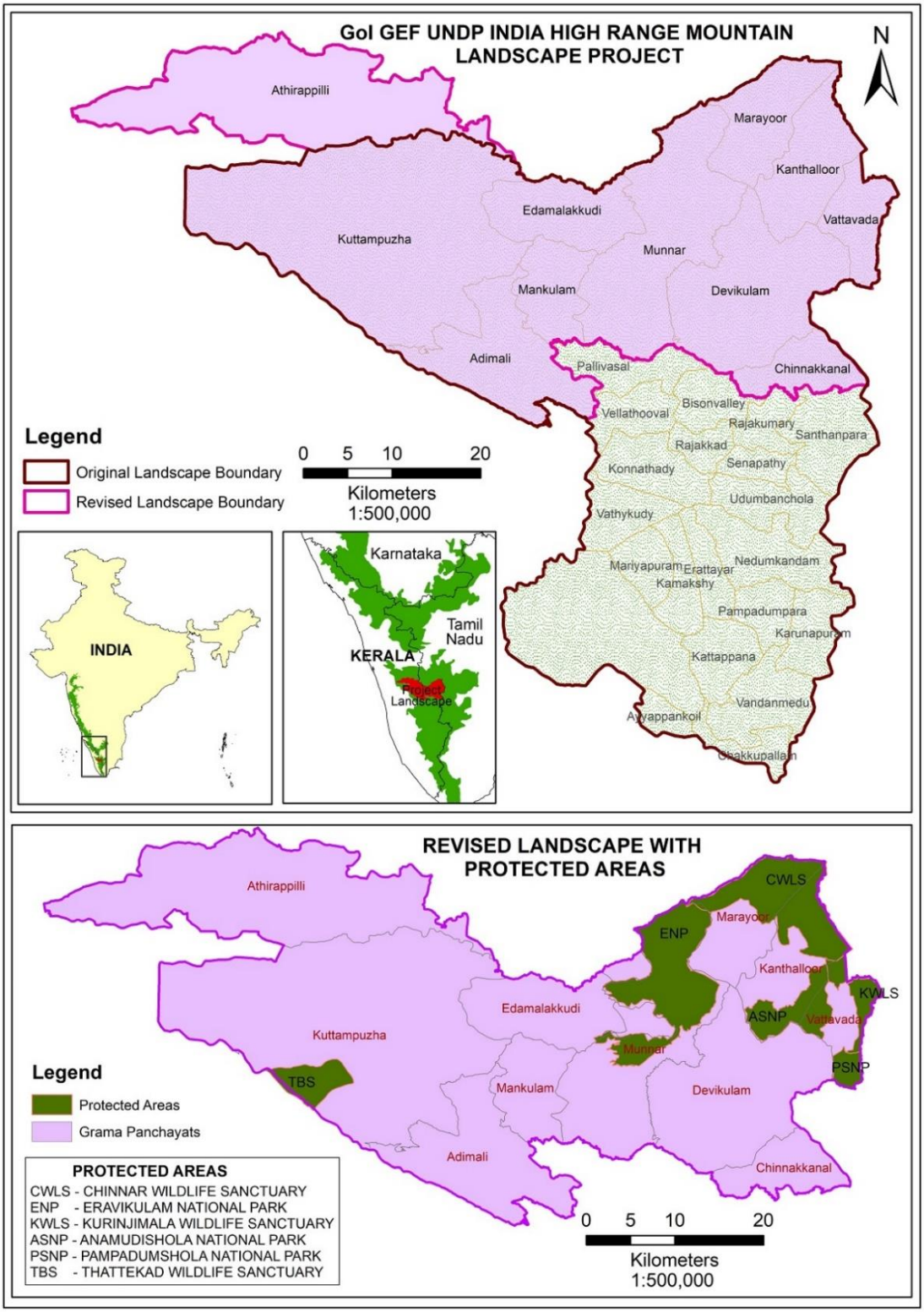

Figure 1: Map showing project landscape

Under Component 1 the project has initiated several foundational activities connected to the development of a multiple use management planning framework, including preparation of GIS land cover maps; review of existing sectoral planning and governance systems in the landscape; development of a green appraisal tool; and review and revision of forest management plans, strengthened Peoples Biodiversity Registers, and management plans of protected areas.

Several demonstration interventions have been started under Component 2, including promoting of native freshwater fish species, reviving traditional agricultural practices and seed conservation, and improved beekeeping and lemongrass oil extraction practices among marginal, tribal communities. Taxonomical investigations of three selected shola forest patches have been completed by the Munnar Forest Division. The baseline of degraded areas within the PA system has been assessed together with the Kerala Forest and Wildlife Department, and restoration of 118 ha of land has started by planting native species. Updated assessments of the management effectiveness of the six PA's in the project landscape have been reported.

Component 2 activities have also included completion of Investment Grade Energy Audits of two tea processing facilities, contributing to the baseline estimation of fuel wood consumption by the tea sector and also providing the enterprises with actionable recommendations for conserving energy – and consequently reducing operating costs.

Strengthening nature-based livelihood opportunities for local communities in the project landscape is the primary focus of Component 3. A livelihood strategy for the landscape has been developed with four broad categories, including sustainable livelihood practices for Tribal communities, sustainable livelihood practices among communities supporting biodiversity, sustainable livelihood practices for farming communities and supporting institutions, and innovation and enterprise support around ecologically sustainable livelihood options. Progress under Component 3 also includes delivery of training on homestay tourism and waste management. An ecotourism concept has been developed, and training on preparation of disaster management and climate change plans was extended to local government officials.

The project has successfully initiated some noteworthy field interventions, including:

- The replanting of grass lands in fire-damaged hillsides at the eco-restoration site in Pazhathottam. 12 ha of land replanted over one year; work done by Scheduled Tribe members (indigenous peoples) living in nearby hamlets; and contours created using fallen tree trunks and grass varieties that are available locally. Perceptible impacts include the following: revival of a dried-up spring that now carries water after a hiatus of decades, as related by tribal elders to the tribal hamlets downstream; Indian bison (gaur), deer, and rabbits have returned to the area to feed on the grass (a herd of approx. 10 gaurs was sighted during the MTR field mission); soil erosion arrested as reported by local community; rhododendron trees that had been disappearing in this area have reappeared; and increased awareness among local communities of the value of the ecosystem services provided by the grasslands.
- Restoration of traditional agricultural practices at Chinnar Wildlife Sanctuary. 40 varieties of Ragi (millet), 8 varieties of beans, and 30 varieties of other traditional food crops grown on 100 acres (approx. 40 ha) of land by Scheduled Tribe families; much of it was consumed by the families, about 20% of the produce sold through the Forest Development Agency (FDA) Eco-shop outlets; plan is on to cover 11 more tribal hamlets this year to grow Ragi; the crops have been provided with crop insurance; and seed bank of the traditional food crops created within the hamlet – this is particularly noteworthy as 2023 has been declared by the UN as the Year of the Millets.
- First sandalwood (*Santalum album*) nursery established in 100 years in Marayoor; with 60,000 mature sandalwood trees of high value as they have high oil content, the area is prone to poaching, hence under the project night-vision CCTV is proposed to be set up whereby the fencing around 15 square kilometres can eventually be removed allowing free movement of wildlife.
- For the first time, species of unique shola forests are being raised in a nursery at Munnar that are to be planted within existing or degraded or deforested shola forests to revive them. Also, 6,500 ha of Shola forests are being digitally mapped, the maps will be shared with Land Revenue Department for making all land digital data inter-operable and to highlight areas prone to human-wildlife conflicts.

Mid-term Review Ratings

MTR ratings and a summary of achievements are presented below in **Table 2.**

Table 2: MTR ratings and achievement summary table

Measure	MTR Rating	Achievement Description
Project Strategy	Not Rated	The biodiversity focal area project was approved under the GEF-5 replenishment cycle. The revised strategy excludes the original concept of expanding the protected aera system in the landscape. A key part of the original design was development of a landscape level land

Measure	MTR Rating	Achievement Description
		use plan, and establishment of a cross-sectoral landscape level institutional platform for implementation of the landscape plan and updated sectoral plans. The revised strategy maintains indicators on developing the landscape level land use plan, but the updated set of outputs do not reflect include development of the plan. The focus of original Output 1.2 (Landscape level land use plan prepared and sustainable resource management systems in place) is not reflected in the revised strategy Gender issues were not integrated into the project design. And methodologies for monitoring results metrics (e.g., population size of critical species) not clearly articulated.
Progress towards Results	Objective Achievement: **Moderately unsatisfactory**	*Project objective: To protect biodiversity of the High Range Mountain Landscape of the southern Western Ghats in peninsular India from existing and emergent threats through building an effective collaborative governance framework for multiple use management* The multi-use management planning framework has not yet been developed, with only one year remaining in the extended implementation timeframe. The reliability of the baseline populations of critical species is questionable, and there are unclear means of verification for evaluating the population status. Reporting on water quality improvements based on setting up improved solid waste management systems and delivering training on waste management. No evidence available in regard to the objective level water quality indicator.
	Outcome 1: **Moderately unsatisfactory**	*Outcome 1: Strengthened capacities for community based sustainable use and management of natural resources* The landscape level land use plan has not yet been developed. GIS maps on land cover have been started, and review of sector strategies initiated, but there has been a lack of a coordinated effort in developing the landscape level land use plan. The cross-sectoral, multi-stakeholder institution has not yet been established or deliberated in detail with landscape stakeholders. Limited progress towards achievement of policy level targets; the project has provided in puts to management plans of protected areas in the landscape. Evaluation of institutional level capacity was made at mid-term using a different Capacity Development Scorecard than was used at baseline.
	Outcome 2: **Moderately satisfactory**	*Outcome 2: Multiple use mountain landscape management is applied securing the ecological integrity of the high range landscape* The mid-term METT scores of 6 PA's in project landscape show significantly higher performance compared to the baseline scores in 2013. The project has initiated restoration of 118 ha of degraded land (achieving end target is unlikely), but it is otherwise unclear how the project is contributing towards improved PA management effectiveness. The project has initiated demonstration of biodiversity-friendly intervention. Seven demonstrations are reported, against a target of twenty by end of the project. Taxonomical investigations initiated in three selected shola forest patches; however, it is unclear how high conservation value considerations will be mainstreamed. Energy audits were completed for two tea processing facilities and recommendations formulated. Progress towards reducing fuel wood consumption for processing in tea has not been reported on.
	Outcome 3: **Moderately satisfactory**	*Outcome 3: Appropriate and effective governance framework for multiple use high range landscape evolved* Annual plans for the 11 Grama Panchayats are under development. Trainings have been delivered to local community members and local government officials. Interventions have been initiated to strengthening or establishing micro-enterprises; however, the envisaged micro-plans have not been developed. Recommendations made on reducing biomass consumption in lemon grass processing, but there has been no reporting on progress towards achievement of the end-of-project target. Trainings have been delivered on implementation of the Forest Rights Act (FRA); however, unclear progress towards a model agreement on the implementation of the FRA, specifically envisaged for the Edamalakudy Panchayat.
Project Implementation and Adaptive Management	**Moderately unsatisfactory**	There is a general lack of coherency on the project, partly attributed to the absence of a Project Manager. Country ownership has been relatively low, lacking a coordinated approach with regard to stakeholder engagement and communications, and a lack of attempt to dovetail to national and state level projects and initiative. The structural entities set up for high level supervision and guidance, viz the NPSC and SPSC, have been rendered ineffective. Project inception workshop not convened at start of project in 2014 or in 2018 when the revised project strategy was approved. There has been inconsistent awareness and management of social and environmental risks, including risks associated with engaging with indigenous peoples (tribal communities). Unclear separation of project assurance and project execution by UNDP.

Measure	MTR Rating	Achievement Description
		Financial delivery has been low, with 37% of the GEF grant spent by the end of 2020, with approximately one year remaining on the extended implementation timeline.
Sustainability	Overall: **Moderately unlikely**	There are a number of factors affect the prospects that results achieved on the project will be sustained after GEF funding ceases. The generally low levels of country ownership diminish the likelihood of sustainability. There has been a lack of focus on developing the envisaged landscape level land-use plan (or strategy) and the cross-sectoral, multi-stakeholder institutional mechanism for implementing the plan. Sector reviews have been initiated, but the criteria for mainstreaming biodiversity are unclear. The project has made progress with some field level interventions and studies. Due to limited stakeholder engagement, these interventions and approaches have not yet been integrated into sectoral plans and budgetary frameworks. Future institutional changes (e.g., following elections) also pose risks to sustainability. There are also externalities that affect sustainability, e.g., unpredictable impacts of climate change. The current COVID-19 pandemic poses further uncertainty, for instance, a prolonged economic downturn and disruptions in supply chains might affect the viability of some of the project interventions
	Financial: **Moderately unlikely**	
	Socioeconomic: **Moderately unlikely**	
	Institutional framework and governance: **Moderately unlikely**	
	Environmental: **Moderately likely**	

Summary of Findings

Following the approximate 3-year pause in implementation, the project has managed to initiate of a large number of activities, despite disruptions caused by the devasting floods in Kerala in August 2018 and then due to the COVID-19 pandemic starting in early 2020. Based on findings during the MTR field mission from 02-09 February 2021, the actual work on the project did not effectively start until later in 2019. Before there was a chance to gather momentum, the pandemic brought all activities to a stop in March 2020. The project was able to resume activities in mid-2020, as the COVID-19 infection rates decreased nationwide.

Project implementation was also stalled for a period of time after the revised project strategy was approved in 2018, due to prolonged discussions regarding converting the project from a direct implementation modality (DIM) to a national implementation modality (NIM). Disbursements of funds to the contracted service parties and the government agencies according to letters of agreement were delayed during this time. In the end there was no change in implementation modality, but it was not until 22 October 2020 when the Department of Economic Affairs issued an Office Memorandum clarifying that the existing fund flow arrangements can be continued until project closure.

Project execution is being carried out through contractual arrangements with 55 different service providers, including governmental agencies and institutes, academic institutions, non-governmental organizations, and individuals. With this high number of service providers, maintaining coherency is of primary concern. The management arrangements on the project, however, are not particularly conducive for ensuring coherency. Firstly, there is an absence of a project manager. Two project officers (Convergence / Coordination) are assigned to the project, one anchored with the Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change in Delhi, along with a finance-administrative assistant, and the other posted in the Kerala State capital of Thiruvananthapuram, where one additional Project Officer and two administrative assistants are also working. The other nine members of the team, including officers, coordinators, and administrative assistants, are posted at local levels in the landscape.

Munnar is the focal point of the landscape, not only geographically but also socio-politically and administratively, and should also be the location where the project team is based. The original design of the project in 2013 and the revised strategy in 2018 called for the project team to be in Munnar. One of the main goals of the project is to mainstream biodiversity considerations into production sectors operating in the landscape. Munnar is the fulcrum of cash crops in the hill region of southwest India. The loss of biodiversity in and around the tea plantations, cardamom, lemongrass and other cash crops grown in this area, the soil and environment degradation resulting from unsustainable farming practices and inefficient energy use, and the vanishing food crops that were the staples for the indigenous communities (Scheduled Tribes) are cause for concern and the impetus for the development of the project.

There has been insufficient attention given to ensuring consistent and appropriate management of social and environmental risks. During the MTR mission there was evidence of the lack of achieving free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) from local tribal communities, interviewed service providers seemed largely unaware of UNDP social and environmental standards, and the project has not yet developed a gender analysis and action plan. These findings are

troubling, particularly considering that the project implementation was paused for 3 years due to a grievance escalated to the UNDP Social and Environmental Compliance Unit (SECU).

Garnering country ownership has also been a challenge, partly associated with shortcomings in coordination between the UNDP and the MoEFCC. This has been further aggravated with the DIM modality, i.e., national and state governmental entities have had limited involvement in procurement processes, quality control, and approval of payments, but also due to uncoordinated stakeholder engagement. The amount of governmental co-financing, one measure of country ownership, that has materialized by mid-term (through December 2020) is USD 4.63 million, which is roughly 17% of the USD 28 million confirmed at project entry; this is further evidence of the lack of dovetailing project activities with ongoing national and state programmes and initiatives.

The project steering committees, one National (NPSC) and one State (SPSC) level, have been inconsistent and there has been a general lack of coordination between the two committees. There have been seven NPSC meetings between November 2015 and November 2020, and three SPSC meetings between September 2014 and February 2020. The regularity of the SPSC meetings has been too infrequent, in the opinion of the MTR team. For instance, there were no meetings convened between April 2018 and February 2020, during the critical period when the strategy was revised, and the project was relaunched. Moreover, an inception workshop was not held at the start of the project in 2014 or when the project was restarted in 2018. Inception workshops are critical milestones in the project cycle, setting the stage for the project, ensuring key stakeholders are engaged, and addressing possible changed circumstances. Furthermore, the NPSC meetings have been reduced to mere formality, at times even by-passing its authority and inadequate presence at meetings.

The landscape level land use plan (rebranded in the 2020 PIR as a landscape level multi-use management strategy) is one of the important results envisaged for the project, providing a framework for sustainable management of the target landscape. Project resources are supporting the development of GIS land cover maps and also review of certain production sectors; however, there does not seem to be a coordinated effort to develop a landscape plan or strategy. For example, it is unclear what criteria will be applied for mainstreaming biodiversity considerations – such as identifying High Conservation Value areas in the landscapes and integrating management measures into planning and budgetary frameworks.

The revised project strategy, in response to the grievance lodged by local stakeholders, excludes the original concept of expanding the protected area system in the landscape. Protected areas, however, remain an important part of the landscape, covering 25,320 ha, comprising approximately 12% of the land area, and roughly 30% of the GEF grant is allocated towards the GEF-5 BD-1 objective to "Improve sustainability of protected area systems". There are six (6) protected areas located within the project landscape, two (2) fewer as compared to the original delineation of the landscape, and one of the outcome level indicators is to achieve improved management effectiveness of protected areas. Part of the degraded habitats earmarked for rehabilitation fall within protected areas, but it is otherwise unclear how the project is contributing towards improved management effectiveness.

The population size of two indicator species (Nilgiri tahr and grizzled giant squirrel) is one of the objective-level indicators for the project. Based on findings of the MTR, population size estimates reported in project reports were questioned by landscape stakeholders, inferring that the project has had limited coordination with PA's and wildlife departments with respect to methodologies, spatial and temporal variations, statistical data relied upon, etc.

Under the direct implementation modality, UNDP has the project assurance role as the GEF Implementing Agency, as well as responsibility for project execution as the Implementing Partner, or Executing Agency. It was difficult for the MTR team to distinguish these two roles on this project, as UNDP Country Office colleagues are closely involved with the project assurance and execution. Assigning or recruiting a project manager would help towards rectifying this situation.

Whilst the project faces significant challenges, there has been important progress made on some activities, the project objective remains highly relevant, and feedback during the MTR has confirmed keen interest among landscape level stakeholders in realising a higher level of engagement. Project performance can be improved, but to do this, certain strong decisions need to be taken and the same implemented. If the MTR recommendations are followed it is envisaged that the project could be brought on track and taken to a successful conclusion.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The key conclusions and recommendations of the MTR are summarized below.

1. Unclear and inefficient management arrangements. There is an absence of one single person assigned with overall responsibility for managing the project, i.e., a Project Manager. The organogram provided to the MTR team for review contains 14 positions among the national and state level project management units, but a Project Manager is not

included. During the MTR mission, the MTR team observed a generally weak sense of unity and a fairly undisciplined work culture among the project team.

The state level Project Officer-Convergence, along with a Finance Administrative Assistant, Project Administrative-Operations Assistant, and other technical officers are situated in Thiruvananthapuram, the capital city of the state of Kerala. However, the project landscape is centred in Munnar, Idukki District, quite far from Thiruvananthapuram. Project funds, reportedly INR 3.7 million (approx. USD 50,000) were used to renovate part of the premises of the District Forestry and Wildlife Department in Munnar and should be utilised more optimally.

The National Project Officer anchored with the Wildlife Division of the MoEFCC, was recruited only in November 2020, and the role of this officer is not clearly defined. The officer should be able to act as the eyes and ears of the Ministry and present before the NPSC the progress of each activity – which was not apparent to the MTR team.

The roles and responsibilities of the National Project Steering Committee (NPSC) and State Project Steering Committee (SPSC) are unclear. The members of the committees are not clearly identified, the linkages between the two committees are unclear, and the SPSC has only convened three times.

As a DIM project, it is also unclear how UNDP is separating project assurance responsibilities from project execution.

No.	Recommendation	Responsibility
1.	**Reorganize and strengthen project governance and management arrangements**, including: a) Designate or recruit a full-time Project Manager and develop terms of reference that clearly outlines the roles and responsibilities for this position. b) Relocate the Project Officer-Convergence and consolidate the other positions to Munnar, where the District Forestry and Wildlife Department has provided ample office space and facilities. c) Ensure the National Project Officer anchored with the MoEFCC maintains close review of each project activity, with regular visits to field sites, under the directions of the Deputy Inspector General (DIG) and Inspector General (IG). d) The MoEFCC should carry out an internal review of the operations of the NPSC and SPSC, and prepare updated terms of reference for both committees, indicating members and describing responsibilities, cooperation and coordination, and an increased frequency of convening meetings during the remaining project implementation timeframe, etc. e) The NPSC may set up a group headed by the DIG to carry out on-the-ground assessment of the activities under the Project at regular intervals and to brief the NPSC members at every meeting. f) Describe clearly how project assurance and direct implementation roles are segregated through updating ToRs for respective individuals and preparing an updated Governance and Management Arrangements narrative for the project. g) Operationalise a performance appraisal system for project team members, providing constructive feedback.	UNDP, NPSC (MoEFCC), SPSC

2. Uncoordinated stakeholder engagement, resulting in a low level of ownership. The project is working on several aspects of the landscape level land use plan (LLLUP), e.g., developing GIS land use and land cover maps and carrying out sectoral gap analyses, but there does not seem to be a coordinated effort to develop the multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder plan/strategy. And it is unclear which state and/or district government entity will "own" the LLLUP or strategy, and there are no clear plans on how the plan/strategy will be institutionalized. Moreover, the envisaged cross-sectoral, multi-stakeholder institution for implementing the plan/strategy has not yet been established.

No.	Recommendation	Responsibility
2.	**Develop and initiate the implementation of a sustainability plan,** including but not limited to: a) Develop a Theory of Change that describes the envisaged intermediate outcomes (following closure of the GEF project) and long-term intended impacts, and the key assumptions for achieving these results. The MTR team has prepared a preliminary draft of a Theory of Change (included in the MTR report). b) Carry out proactive advocacy with the State Forest Development Agency (SFDA) for hosting the LLLUP and taking over the interventions initiated during the project, e.g.,	UNDP, NPSC, SPSC, SFDA

No.	Recommendation	Responsibility
	presenting the LLLUP at SFDA biannual governing council meetings, describing how the plan and interventions can be integrated into the SFDA's strategic planning and budgetary frameworks. c) Encourage the Forest Departments and other subnational entities to integrate the project interventions into their annual operating budgets. d) Establish a Working Group reporting directly to the State Project Steering Committee as the cross-sectoral, multi-stakeholder mechanism for overseeing the implementation of the LLUP and facilitate regular meetings. In this way the mechanism would be operationalized during the project's lifetime, allowing time to sort out the specific roles and responsibilities of the members and agreeing upon a nodal agency for instituting the multi-stakeholder landscape management strategy. e) The Nodal Officers need to hold review meetings once a quarter at Munnar or any of the project sites, where all departments and agencies engaged in the projects under review may attend. This will ensure gradual take-over of ownership by the government entities and the beneficiaries.	

3. Lack of strategic guidance and coherency. Ownership of the project activities was found to be low among governmental entities, including at the Grama Panchayat, district, state, and national levels. The project is executing a number of activities, but there has been inconsistent stakeholder involvement and a lack of coherency. A few examples observed by the MTR team include the following:

- During the mission, interaction with Panchayat elected representatives at Athirapally (Vice-President, Members including Chairperson of Standing Committee on Health and Secretary; Adimali (Member of the respective ward and an ex-member); and Munnar (President, Vice-president and Secretary) it was evident that there is need for more regular interactions with landscape level stakeholders. The resource persons, Haritha Keralam Mission (HKM) and officers from the agriculture department were present at a few sites. However, there was no involvement of officials from other departments, such as irrigation, tourism, water supply, revenue, and environment.
- HKM has District Coordinators in every district, however, these coordinators have not been engaged at all in the project. Just as District Forest Officers are the focal points for all the forest related projects, a similar ownership at the district level by HKM has not taken place.
- It is unclear which state and district level entity will host, manage, and update the GIS land cover maps.
- During the online MTR interview with the representatives from Kerala University of Fisheries and Ocean Sciences (KUFOS) it was mentioned that extensive delays took place in getting consent from the respective departments. Furthermore, KUFOS was proposing to set up marketing outlets when a network of fish outlets of the federation (Malsyafed) already exists.

No.	Recommendation	Responsibility
3.	**Post a Project Coordinator (Special Officer) in Munnar.** In coordination with the District Forest Department, arrange to have a Senior Deputy Conservator of Forests (DCF) posted for a period of two years as Project Coordinator (Special Officer) in Munnar, in charge of coordinating project activities. The Project Coordinator would be seconded from her/his current position, i.e., funded through co-financing contributions, if the posting is exclusively for the project. Alternatively, the DFO, Forest and Wildlife Munnar may be designed as the Special Officer for the project. The project team based in Munnar would work under the overall guidance and supervision of the Special Officer. It is also recommended to issue directions to engage District Coordinator/s of HKM in IDK, ERK and TSR districts as the Project Coordinator/s for the Non-Forest related activities. The District Coordinators should be invited for all review meetings of the Project Coordinator (Special Officer). However, since the MTR field mission, the HKM stands disbanded; hence the role of the SFDA becomes even more crucial.	UNDP, SPSC, Forestry Dept.

4. Shortcomings with respect to quality control and accountability. Execution of project activities is being undertaken through contractual services with governmental agencies (23 contracts), non-governmental organisations (21 contracts), and individuals (11 contracts). In total, there were contracts with 55 service providers at the time of the

MTR. Competitive, open-bidding type procurement processes could not be verified. Moreover, the lack of coordination and involvement of concerned departments and agencies is adversely impacting the likelihood that project results will be sustained after GEF funding ceases.

There is room for improvement with respect to quality control and accountability, including improved formulation of the terms of references (ToRs) for the contractual services on the project and specific quality control procedures of work performed and outputs delivered. Some of the reviewed ToRs were vague, with unclear deliverables and timelines, and a lack of performance-based criteria. And there was no evidence of a management system in place for ensuring the work done by the contracted service providers fulfils acceptable quality standards.

No.	Recommendation	Responsibility
4.	**Develop and implement quality control measures, including:** a) Terms of reference for contractual services should be performance-based, with clear breakdowns of activities and deliverables, means of verification progress and completion, and release of funds only after fulfilment of performance criteria. b) Establish and implement a management system for controlling quality, including weekly review of progress by the Project Officer-Convergence; monthly review of progress by the project manager; sensitivity training of project team members on the basic concepts of biodiversity conservation and mainstreaming. c) All project team members posted in Kerala (in Munnar) should attend the Project Officer (PO)'s weekly meetings. The NPO may join online to be updated with the level of progress and to be able to brief the DIG/ IG at regular intervals. The balance project period being only a year in order to show results all concerned need to move at an added speed. d) Through the direction of the Project Coordinator (Special Officer), monthly meetings should be held with contracted service providers and officials from relevant departments and agencies, to discuss progress, synergies, troubleshooting, and sustainability issues. e) Arrange a systematic financial audit of the project to assess management of funds and accountability.	UNDP, NPSC, SPSC, Forest Dept.

5. Insufficient attention to social and environmental safeguards. The multi-year pause in the implementation of the project stemmed from a grievance lodged by a local group of stakeholders to the UNDP Social and Environmental Compliance Unit (SECU), the first such grievance escalated to the SECU. After resuming project implementation, a comprehensive assessment of social and environmental risks was made using the UNDP Social and Environmental Screening Procedure (SESP). However, there have been shortcomings with respect to development and implementation of safeguard management measures, most notably regarding indigenous peoples. Among the thirteen (13) risks assessed in the SESP, eight (8) are associated with indigenous peoples. During a meeting in Marayoor during the MTR field mission, it was revealed that the project has arranged the purchase of three (3) distillation units for lemongrass oil production. The purchase and the proposed placement of the distillation units were carried out without free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) of the tribal community that is producing the lemongrass oil, currently using traditional methods. The District Forest Officer (DFO) and a tribal elder who among others attended the MTR meeting were unaware of the purchase of the distillation units. The DFO indicated that similar distillation units were purchased under a World Bank project several years ago for the same tribal community and the units remain unused, because of the lack of consent and training.

Interviewed contracted service providers were unaware of UNDP social and environmental standards, including FPIC requirements. The project is also lacking a gender mainstreaming strategy. Development of a gender analysis and gender action plan (GAAP) was recommended in the SESP, as well as in the Project Implementation Review (PIR) reports; however, the GAAP has not yet been completed.

No.	Recommendation	Responsibility
5.	**Develop and implement safeguard management plans**, including but not limited to: a) Stop forthwith the procurement of lemongrass oil distillation units until FPIC is carried out. b) Develop and implement an Indigenous Peoples Plan (or equivalent, integrated into an updated Stakeholder Engagement Plan). c) Develop and implement a gender analysis and action plan. d) Regularly update the SESP.	UNDP

No.	Recommendation	Responsibility
	e) Assign (or recruit) a person on the project management team to be responsible for project safeguards (updating the terms of reference for this person). f) Deliver trainings to contracted service providers and project partners on UNDP social and environmental standards, including gender mainstreaming, FPIC, environmental safeguards, etc. g) Carry out focused monitoring and evaluation, report progress, and implement adaptive management measures where and when needed.	

6. Low delivery and unclear path towards achieving project results by the extended closure deadline of March 2022. Through December 2020, 37% (USD 2,348,497) had been expended of the USD 6,275,000 GEF grant. Based on the relatively low delivery rates achieved since resuming project implementation in 2018/2019, it seems unlikely that the GEF grant will be fully utilized by the extended closure deadline of 14 March 2022, which is only one year away, and it is unlikely that the envisaged results will be satisfactorily achieved with solid sustainability structures in place for ensuring long-term durability.

No.	Recommendation	Responsibility
6.	**Prepare an updated work plan for the remaining implementation timeframe coupled with a critical path analysis,** identifying specific activities and inter-dependencies among activities, and implement the recommendations outlined in **Table 3** of this MTR report.	UNDP, NPSC, SPSC

7. Inadequate monitoring and evaluation. Some of the indicators and targets in the project results framework were adjusted when the project strategy was redesigned; however, there remain uncertainties with respect to baseline conditions, sources of verification, and monitoring and evaluation methodologies. For example, the baseline and mid-term population figures of critical species (Nilgiri tahr and grizzled giant squirrel) are unsubstantiated, according to feedback from Forest Department officials during the MTR mission; the methodology for verifying the water quality indicator is uncertain; the methodology of measuring institutional capacity using the adapted UNDP Capacity Development Scorecard is unclear; there has been no analysis of improvements in Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT) scores of protected areas in the project landscape between 2013 (baseline) and 2020 (referred to as updated baselines); the degraded areas inside and outside protected areas that are restored varies between 116 ha to 750 ha to 1,500 ha; the end target for the number of new micro-enterprises based on sustainable resource use has not been established; biomass consumption in lemongrass enterprises is not being monitored; broader development objectives (e.g., gender mainstreaming) are not integrated into the project results framework; etc. Activities should be based on established data and proven scientific methods.

No.	Recommendation	Responsibility
7.	**Prepare and implement a project monitoring plan**, including descriptions of the sources and means of verification for each of the project indicators, specific roles and responsibilities, risks and assumptions, and how broader development objectives will be monitored and evaluated during implementation of the project. Please refer to the recommendations in regard to achievement of project results outlined in **Table 3**.	UNDP

8. Unclear biodiversity mainstreaming criteria. Mainstreaming biodiversity across the production sectors in this landscape is a complex undertaking. There is a long history of cash crop cultivation in the Munnar region and impacts to biodiversity and ecosystems can often go unnoticed and unrecorded. The tea plantations in Munnar as in Assam and North Bengal started in the early 1800's when the climatic conditions were considered to be conducive to growing tea in these areas after clearing forest land. Cardamom cultivation started around the same time with the primary difference that cardamom crops grow under the shade and hence do not require forest clearance. The economy of this region depends heavily on the returns from these cash crops, viz., tea, cardamom, lemon grass, vanilla and pepper among others. A large amount of firewood from the forest is used for drying tea and cardamom and for distilling lemongrass oil; farmers to get maximum returns use large quantities of chemical fertilisers and pesticides; the overall impact on the surrounding biodiversity is yet unknown. Some of the questions that need to be asked are: can use of firewood be reduced ultimately moving to a more environment-friendly fuel? Can fuel efficiency be improved? How are the chemicals used in cultivation impacting the local biodiversity and forests? Are there organic alternatives available for the fertilisers and pesticides? Moreover, Munnar and the surrounding area is a major watershed region where at least three rivers and many rivulets originate. It is unclear whether the PMU and the contracted service

agencies and service providers are taking these factors into account, and it is also unclear how biodiversity considerations can be mainstreamed across the production sectors at landscape scale.

No.	Recommendation	Responsibility
8.	**Identify the strategic linkages for the biodiversity mainstreaming objective.** For example, consider applying the **High Conservation Value (HCV) concept** by identifying and overlaying High Conservation Value Areas (HCVAs[1]) onto the land cover maps and integrating these into the landscape strategy/plan. It is also recommended to coordinate with the State Land Use Board, for integrating the land cover maps and HCVA maps (if prepared) into the State's system, making them available to local governments to supplement their resource and revenue maps. Ensure that the Land Use Board shares the maps with the concerned stakeholder departments and agencies for future planning, viz., Revenue, Irrigation and Water, Fisheries, Agriculture, Forest Research Institute among others.	UNDP, SFDA, SPSC

9. Unclear strategic approach with respect to knowledge management and communications. The project has developed some high-quality knowledge products, including brochures and videos (on seed conservation, ecotourism, grassland restoration, eco-shop design). It would be useful to develop a knowledge management and communications strategy. It is important to convey the message of project objective, i.e., the project emerged from the primary objective to mainstreaming biodiversity into natural resources-related production sectors. The project landscape was delineated in the Munnar region because Munnar is the hub for production of several cash crops, namely, tea, cardamom, certain agriculture crops, as well as forest plantations. The linkage should be communicated to the stakeholders patiently and repeatedly. For example, sharing knowledge and lessons learned regarding energy efficiency and low emission energy development among stakeholders in the production sectors (private sector and government entities). The project also has the opportunity to document (with informed consent) traditional knowledge on crops, farming practices, and cultural activities linked to them. Music, poetry, cane weaving, and linguistics were observed during the MTR field mission visit to Adimali, Pettimudi and Marayoor. The poetry and songs of paddy sowing and harvesting that Chinna Thambi Nagan of Pettimudi rendered is an example.

No.	Recommendation	Responsibility
9.	**Develop and implement a knowledge management strategy and action plan**, including: a) Identification of key messages, target audiences, methodologies, assessment, procedures and FPIC processes for documenting traditional knowledge. b) Design a project website or linking with Forest Department's site. c) Utilise social media for timely messaging. d) Garner attention of students and youth through online discussions, fun games, and other methods. e) Use innovative methods to propagate ideas and information, e.g., stationary with photographs or images of Nilgiri tahr and grizzled giant squirrel, as well as Neelakurinji, different varieties of ragi and paddy rice.	UNDP

10. Room for improvement with respect to engagement with production sector stakeholders. Sustainability of project results could be better enhanced through capitalizing upon co-financing and stakeholder engagement opportunities with production sector enterprises and organisations. Ownership of project activities would also likely be increased if project partners are providing co-financing. For example:

- The private tea production company owning and operating the facilities where energy audits were carried out should have been requested to provide co-financing. (lesson learned)
- The hydroelectric power company having water rights to the reservoir where the native fish breeding intervention is being developed could be approached for contributing corporate social responsibility (CSR) or other types of co-financing ensuring long-term management.

[1]The High Conservation Value (HCV) concept was originally developed by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) in 1999 for use in forest management certification. In 2005 the HCV Resource Network was established, and the scope was widened from "HCV Forest" to "HCV Area" (HCVA).

- Engage with the 11 elected local bodies to first inform them on the importance of the project, help build capacity and gradually convince them into introducing projects on the same or similar lines as part of their annual budget. This would be especially relevant for Munnar, a hill town with substantial tourist population, high-value resorts and medium and low-end lodges and guest houses.
- Set up 'green islands' in at least one govt school in each of the above Panchayats involving the pupils for a hands-on understanding of eco-systems, biodiversity and impact on flora and fauna.

No.	Recommendation	Responsibility
10.	Strengthen engagement with production sector stakeholders, e.g., engage with the Kerala State Start-up Mission, agro-industrial trade associations, and other business groups to advocate for cofinancing, facilitate partnership building, promote marketing strategies, etc.	UNDP, SPSC

Lessons Learned, Concluding Remarks:

Conceived as a landmark project, it draws attention to the Western Ghats, a geographical feature of peninsular India that has geomorphological and hydrometeorological significance, not the least of which is the annual advent of the monsoon. The project has had a chequered history, and one would have expected the main stakeholders to have been more alert when the project re-emerged in its revised form. Unfortunately, it does not seem to be so.

The project is located in an area that suffers from poor land management and land records, encroachments, coupled with rising land values. The initial project strategy covered the Cardamom Hill Reserve, the most critical of the areas, that has been prone to all the above issues and large number of litigations. The project fell in the cusp between two State Assembly elections and was a victim of local politicking. Groupism within the stakeholder departments and flawed staff selection also had major impacts to the performance of the project. The MoEFCC also became part of the petty politicking, and unable to exert control with an ineffectual NPSC and with essentially no financial involvement under the DIM modality, the MoEFCC has seemingly decided to adopt a hands-off approach.

The risk of low country ownership under the DIM modality has materialized on this project. As the GEF Implementing and Executing Agency, the UNDP also needs to keep a strict firewall between these two functions. The agency has not done a good job in this regard. An international agency has upon it the added responsibility of bringing in global good practices into the country at the same time ensuring that the national standards are in no way compromised. This applies to all external agencies and ministries.

A few lessons learned include:

i. Ensure the systems set up for a project implementation and review at project inception, namely the NPSC, SPSC should have clearly outlined terms of reference that are assiduously followed.
ii. The NIM modality should be the default arrangement, with the Lead Implementing Partner responsible and accountable for fund management.
iii. Procurement processes need to be transparent and follow public procurement policies, regulations, and best practices. GEF-funded projects should set examples of unbiased procurement, with emphasis on professional competence and value-for-money.
iv. It would be prudent to maintain a standing list of domain experts recruited by the UNDP that is broad-based and transparent and is vetted by the concerned ministry
v. Remain aware of upcoming and anticipated political changes in the country/ state/ region where the project is situated and anticipate possible hurdles that may arise thereof.

Table 3: Recommendations in regard to progress towards achievement of project results

Indicator	Recommendation
Project Objective level indicators:	
Indicator 1. Extent brought under multiple use management planning framework.	The results reported in the self-assessment include annual plans of Grama Panchayaths, sectoral plans, working plans for the Forest Divisions, and management plans of protected areas. The MTR team recommends focusing on an overarching multiple use management planning framework, consistent with the landscape approach promoted in the project strategy.
Indicator 2. Population status of following critical species remain stable or increase.	The baseline and the reporting against this indicator are unclear. For instance, the baseline figures in the original ProDoc are the same as in the revised strategy, although changes were made to the delineation of the landscape. Means of verification need to be described and the project should coordinate monitoring with the relevant landscape stakeholders to ensure reliable reporting.
Indicator 3. Improvements in water quality in the water bodies of the landscape.	The end target for this indicator is the concentration of BOD of surface water measures at two locations in the landscape (Neriamangalam and Bhoothathankett). The self-assessment report includes a note from the State Government requesting that this indicator and end target be changed, using the Water Quality Index (WQI) instead of BOD as an end target. The MTR team concurs that BOD is not an ideal metric for this indicator. And a more appropriate indicator might have been "Improving the provision of ecosystem services, measured by the WQI or an ecosystem health index". However, revisions to objective level indicators requires approval by the GEF Secretariat – which is unadvisable at this late stage of the project. The MTR team recommends reporting both BOD and WQI (in fact, BOD is one of the parameters of the WQI). If different sampling locations would provide a clearer indication of water quality in the landscape, then the MTR team recommends collecting samples at those locations in addition to the two identified in the results framework. Any reductions in the number of dump sites could also be reported in the project progress reports as additional supporting information.
Outcome 1 level indicators:	
Indicator 4. Landscape Level Land Use Plan (LLLUP) developed adhering to multiple use management decisions.	Similar to the comments regarding Indicator 1, the project is working on several aspects of the LLLUP, including GIS mapping, but there has been a lack of a coordinated effort on development of a multiple use landscape strategy/plan. For instance, it is unclear how biodiversity considerations will be mainstreamed across the production sectors at landscape scale. The landscape strategy or plan should also describe how interactions between the productive and protective areas within the landscape (e.g., within buffer zones of protected areas) will be coordinated among the key stakeholder groups.
Indicator 5. Sector-specific biodiversity-plans compatible with LLLUP developed leading to effective integration of biodiversity considerations into production practices.	The sector-specific biodiversity plans should be based upon the LLLUP. It would be prudent to fact-track the completion of the LLLUP and then integrate the biodiversity mainstreaming considerations into the relevant production sector plans. The project team should also review the project stakeholder engagement strategy, e.g., to ensure the Department of Agriculture are proactively involved in sector plans associated with tea, coffee, cardamom, oil palm, etc.
Indicator 6. Effective and functioning cross-sectoral, multi-stakeholder institution (including conservation, livelihood and production) established.	As described under Recommendation No. 2, it would be advisable to establish a Working Group reporting directly under the State Project Steering Committee as the cross-sectoral, multi-stakeholder mechanism for overseeing the implementation of the LLUP and facilitate regular meetings. In this way the mechanism would be operationalized during the project's lifetime, allowing time to sort out the specific roles and responsibilities of the members and agreeing upon a nodal agency for instituting the multi-stakeholder landscape management strategy.
Indicator 7. Number of key policy and management framework / decisions adopted at local and state level related to sustainable mountain landscape management.	There is limited progress reported in the self-assessment towards achievement of this indicator. The self-assessment includes a note from the State Government requesting to remove this indicator, as "adoption of said policies are undertaken through the relevant departments". Considering the project strategy was reworked and the revised version approved in 2018, the MTR team does not see it advisable to remove indicators with only one year remaining in the project implementation timeframe. It is important to keep in mind that the GEF funding is incremental, i.e., adding value to ongoing processes for generating global environmental benefits. The MTR team recommends that the project work closely with the legislative departments at the State and local levels and

Indicator	Recommendation
	explore options for strengthening policy frameworks, e.g., in regard to the landscape approaches promoted on the project.
Indicator 8. Improvement in Systemic Level Indicators of Capacity Development Scorecard.	The Capacity Development Scorecard included in the results framework was developed specifically for the project. The MTR team does not agree with using a different scorecard midway through the project. Mid-term assessments should be made using the originally developed scorecard – and capacity building efforts during the remaining implementation timeframe should be focused on the gaps identified in the mid-term assessments.
Outcome 2 level indicators:	
Indicator 9. Improved management effectiveness PAs as measured and recorded by Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT).	The METT assessments made in 2013 should remain as the project baselines. It is unclear which stakeholders were involved in preparing the May 2020 METT assessments. The MTR team recommends that the project commission the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) to carry out independent METT assessments. Specific gaps in management effectiveness identified in the METT assessments could then be addressed in the PA management plans mentioned in the self-assessment of progress towards achievement of Indicator 1.
Indicator 10. Proportion of degraded habitats rehabilitated within the PA system.	The self-assessment indicates a proposed baseline figure of 2,153 ha, reportedly endorsed by the Munnar Wildlife Division. The self-assessment also includes a note suggesting that the end target be downgraded from "30% increase by end of project" to "5% increase". The MTR team does not agree with downgrading the end targets at this late stage of the project. It is recommended that the degraded areas be reflected in the PA management plans and restoration-rehabilitation of these areas be included in the operating budgets of the PA's. Restoration of degraded forest lands typically requires long time horizons, with tight oversight, monitoring, and maintenance. The current GEF-7 guidelines are consistent with this reasoning, e.g., the definition of GEF-7 Sub-Indicator 3.2 (Area of forest and forest land restored) reads "This indicator captures the area of forest and forest land that is undergoing ecological restoration through GEF-funded interventions".
Indicator 11. Number of new demonstration programmes/ featuring biodiversity friendly production practices (e.g. curing units/ energy efficiency options/ farming practices) adopted.	The self-assessment describes seven (7) demonstration programmes that the project is working on. It is unclear whether achieving the end target of 20 demonstration programmes is reflected in the work plan for the remaining implementation timeframe. The MTR team recommends that the project focus on the "adoption" of the demonstration programmes, i.e., ensuring there is coordination between local communities and the relevant local government units that could help coordinate the activities after the GEF funding ceases.
Indicator 12. Areas of forest fragments/ HVBAs in tea gardens inventorised and secured.	This indicator is closely linked with the development of the LLLUP (Indicators 1 and 4), as well as the sector plans in Indicator 5. The self-assessment describes 331 patches of remnant shola forests with an extent of 5,608 ha were mapped. The strategy for "securing" these patches has not yet been developed. The MTR team recommends that the project engage with the relevant departments, including Forestry and Agriculture, as well as the private sector owners/operators of the tea gardens. Agreeing upon a biodiversity mainstreaming strategy for protecting remnant shola patches would be a good topic to table with the cross-sectoral, multi-stakeholder mechanism (see recommendation above for Indicator 6).
Indicator 13. % reduction in fuel wood consumption for processing in tea and cardamom using energy efficient technology and improved design (indicator, baselines and targets will have to be re-visited once the Sector Plans are prepared by mid-term).	The self-assessment includes reference to the results of investment grade energy audits completed at two tea factories. The baseline of this indicator reflects the thermal energy consumption of these two factories, presented in kWh/kg. The MTR team recommends presenting the baseline in tons per year of fuel wood consumed, preferably, if available, broken down by wood sourced from sustainable, own plantations and wood sourced unsustainably. It would be advisable to coordinate this analysis with the Department of Agriculture, possibly the tea growers association(s), etc. And then design project activities that promotes energy efficiency in processing and more sustainable fuel wood consumption. An online survey could be made among the major and smallholder tea growers, requesting them to self-report on fuel wood consumption.
Outcome 3 level indicators:	
Indicator 14. development plans of PRIs/ CBOs that incorporate bio-diversity friendly practices.	Progress towards achievement of this indicator is reported in the self-assessment includes developing the 2021-2022 Annual Plans for the 11 Grama Panchayaths in the project landscape as "Green Plans", using a methodology developed by the Kerala Institute of Local Administration (KILA).

Indicator	Recommendation
	The plans have not yet been developed and, therefore, were not available for review by the MTR team.
Indicator 15. Number of community representatives/ PRIs trained in biodiversity mainstreaming activities.	The self-assessment reports 559 people have been trained as of January 2021, through six different types of capacity building, including commercial beekeeping, advanced woodworking, sustainable harvesting of non-timber forest products (NTFPs), solid waste management, community-based tourism, and greening local annual plans. The MTR team recommends that the project provide some type of certificate of completion of the trainings and follow up as part of project M&E on how the skills trainings have been utilized by the community representatives/PRIs.
Indicator 16. Number of new micro-enterprises at individual/SHG/ CBO/ and other local institution levels based sustainable resource use.	The self-assessment includes a note suggesting the end target for this indicator be 10, and progress on 10 different initiatives is described. The MTR team concurs with the proposed end target. It would be advisable to facilitate development of the referenced "micro-plans" in the Project Document. These simplified business plans would strengthen the sustainability of the initiatives supported by the project. The description of Output 3.2 in the original Project Document includes the following: "This Output will support biodiversity-friendly businesses as identified in the micro-plans of JFMCs (*Joint Forest Management Committees*) and Resource Plans of Panchayats/ Gramasabhas which will include artisanal enterprises (e.g. reed mat weaving), community-based tourism, NTFP based enterprises etc."
Indicator 17. % reduction in biomass consumption in lemon grass enterprises through adoption of improved technology.	The MTR team has addressed shortcomings with respect to social safeguards, including with respect to engagement with Indigenous Peoples. Recommendation No. 5 covers this. The self-assessment indicates that improved technologies for reducing biomass consumption have been identified. There are no monitoring data provide on the annual biomass consumption since the baseline figure of 494,361 kg/year, which represents 2013. And the feasibility of achieving the target of 20% reduction by project end is unclear. The MTR team recommends providing annual biomass consumption data from 2013 through 2020 and developing a plan in coordination with the relevant departments, local farmers, and private sector operators for achieving the envisaged reduction.
Indicator 18. Appropriate model agreement between different agencies on the effective implementation of FRA as evidence through sustainable use and protection of biodiversity in Edamalakudy Panchayat.	The self-assessment and the 2020 PIR describes training of Forest Department officials and VSS members, as well as discussions initiated with higher level forest officials to establish FRA agreements. However, the progress towards achieving a model agreement in Edamalakudy Panchayat is unclear. The MTR team recommends that a specific work plan be developed that outlines how this result is envisaged to be achieved during the remaining implementation timeframe.

Abbreviations and Acronyms

Exchange Rate, INR: USD:

At project start (15 May 2014):	At mid-term review (15 March 2021):
59.2736	72.6080

AWP	Annual Work Plan
BD	Biodiversity
BOD	Biochemical Oxygen Demand
CBO	Community-based Organization
CDR	Combined delivery report
DFO	District Forest Officer
DIG	Deputy Inspector General
DIM	Direct Implementation Modality
FPIC	Free, Prior and Informed Consent
FRA	Forest Rights Act
GEF	Global Environment Facility
HCVA	High conservation value area
HKM	Haritha Keralam Mission
HRML	High Range Mountain Landscape
HVBA	High value biodiversity area
IG	Inspector General
IHRLP	India High Range Landscape Project
INR	Indian rupee
KILA	Kerala Institute of Local Administration
KUFOS	Kerala University of Fisheries and Ocean Studies
LLLUP	Landscape level land use plan
M&E	Monitoring & Evaluation
MEE	Management Effectiveness Evaluation
METT	Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool
MoEFCC	Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change
MTR	Mid-term Review
NIM	National implementation modality
NPO	National Project Officer
NPSC	National Project Steering Committee
NTFP	Non-timber forest product
PA	Protected Area
PIR	Project Implementation Review
PMU	Project Management Unit
RET	Rate, endangered and threatened
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SHG	Self-Help Group
SECU	Social and Environmental Compliance Unit (UNDP)
SESP	Social and environmental screening procedure
SFDA	State Forest Development Agency
SMART	Specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound
SPSC	State Project Steering Committee
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UPASI	United Planters' Association of South India
USD	United States Dollar
WII	Wildlife Institute of India
WQI	Water Quality Index

1 Introduction

1.1 Objective

The objective of the MTR is to gain an independent analysis of the progress mid-way through the project. The MTR will identify potential project design issues, assess progress towards the achievement of the project objective, identify and document lessons learned about project design, implementation and management. It will focus on the impact, effectiveness, efficiency, relevance and sustainability and highlight challenges as well as lessons learned in the project implementation thus far. The MTR will assess early signs of project success or failure and identify possible adjustments to be made. Findings of this review will be incorporated as recommendations for enhanced implementation during the final half of the project's term. Project performance will be measured based on the indicators of the project's strategic results framework and relevant GEF tracking tools and/or core indicator worksheets.

1.2 Scope and Methodology

The MTR was an evidence-based assessment, relying on feedback from individuals who have been involved in the design, implementation, and supervision of the project, review of available documents, and findings of online stakeholder surveys. The overall approach and methodology of the evaluation follows the guidelines outlined in the UNDP Guidance for Conducting mid-term reviews of UNDP-supported, GEF-financed Projects[2].

The review was carried out over the period of January-March 2021, including preparatory activities, desk review, stakeholder interviews, file mission, and completion of the report. The timing of the MTR coincided with the COVID-19 pandemic. As of 11 March 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 a global pandemic as the new coronavirus rapidly spread to all regions of the world. International travel to India was restricted during this timeframe and, therefore, the international MTR Lead Consultant was unable to participate in the field mission. The national MTR Consultant led the field mission from 02 to 09 February 2021.

As a data collection and analysis tool, an evaluation matrix (see **Annex 1**) was developed to guide the review process. Evidence gathered during the MTR was cross-checked between as many sources as practicable, to validate the findings. The desk review was a critical part of the review; the project management unit (PMU) assisted in uploading project documentation onto a dedicated Google folder. The list of documents reviewed is included in **Annex 2**. Stakeholder interviews were held virtually through Zoom calls; the list of people interviewed is presented in **Annex 3**.

The PMU provided a self-assessment of progress towards results, using the project results framework template provided by the MTR Consultant in the MTR inception report. The project results framework was used as an evaluation tool, in assessing attainment of project objective and outcomes (see **Annex 4**).

Cofinancing that has materialized by project mid-term is outlined in the cofinancing table compiled in **Annex 5**.

1.3 Structure of the Report

The MTR report was prepared in accordance with the outline specified in the UNDP-GEF MTR guideline. The report starts out with a description of the project, indicating the duration, main stakeholders, and the immediate and development objectives. The findings of the evaluation are broken down into the following categories:

- Project Strategy
- Progress towards results
- Project implementation and adaptive management
- Sustainability

The report culminates with a summary of the conclusions reached and recommendations formulated to enhance implementation during the final period of the project implementation timeframe.

1.4 Rating Scales

Consistent with the UNDP-GEF MTR guidelines, certain aspects of the project are rated, applying the rating scales outlined in **Annex 6.**

[2] Guidance for Conducting Mid-term Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects, 2014, UNDP-GEF Directorate.

Progress towards results and project implementation and adaptive management are rated according to a 6-point scale, ranging from highly satisfactory to highly unsatisfactory. Sustainability is evaluated across four risk dimensions, including financial risks, socio-economic risks, institutional framework and governance risks, and environmental risks. According to UNDP-GEF evaluation guidelines, all risk dimensions of sustainability are critical: i.e., the overall rating for sustainability cannot be higher than the lowest-rated dimension. Sustainability was rated according to a 4-point scale, including likely, moderately likely, moderately unlikely, and unlikely.

1.5 Ethics

The review was conducted in accordance with the UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluators, and the MTR team members have signed the Evaluation Consultant Code of Conduct Agreement form (**Annex 7**).

1.6 Audit Trail

An audit trail was not prepared, as there were no written comments submitted upon review of the MTR report. The final version was prepared following two online debriefings of the MTR findings and recommendations.

1.7 Limitations

The MTR was carried out according to the Terms of Reference (**Annex 8**) and UNDP guidelines for mid-term reviews of GEF-financed projects. The methodology of the MTR was adjusted in response to the travel restrictions associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.

There were no significant limitations associated with language. Project documentation is prepared in English, and the national MTR Consultant was able to communicate directly in local languages with local community members during the field mission.

Overall, the MTR team concludes that the information and feedback obtained sufficiently captured the progress made on the project, remaining barriers, and prospects for sustaining results after GEF funding ceases.

2 Project Description

2.1 Development Context

As described in the Project Document, the High Range Mountain Landscape (HRML), nestled in the Western Ghats mountains of peninsular India is globally significant due to the following reasons: a) high levels of endemism and repository of presumably several new species; b) richest biome in the Western Ghats; c) presence of globally threatened species of fauna, flora and ecosystems; d) part of the World Heritage Site under UNESCO; e) an Important Bird Area (IBA); f) catchment of three major river systems in the southern Western Ghats; g) one of the five viable breeding centres of tiger in the entire country and part of the largest habitat for elephants in the southern Western Ghats; h) harbours the largest global population of the highly threatened Nilgiri tahr and a significant population of Grizzled Giant Squirrel; i) strong eco-cultural affinities and presence of ethnic groups that depend heavily on natural resources for livelihoods; j) supports important economic sectors like cardamom, tea and tourism; k) vegetal cover in the region acts as a shield against the impacts of climate change; l) high potential for carbon sequestration; m) there has been no major project in this region for mainstreaming biodiversity. Further, HRML is a peep into the future in terms of the trajectory of development taking place in other mountain areas in the country where there is an intricate interplay of ecological and anthropogenic factors.

2.2 Problems the Project Sought to Address

At the time of the project design, the HRML remained a complex juxtaposition of land-uses where conservation and economic production systems assume equal primacy and profoundly influence each other. Baseline analysis carried out during the project preparatory phase clearly showed that the project landscape has diverse characteristics, i.e., striking range of biological diversity, contesting land-use assertions, ambitious developmental imperatives, contradictory sectoral directives, multitudes of actors and contrary aspirations. Cumulatively, these were contributing to injudicious use of natural resources and eventual disruption of vital ecological processes. Despite several years of developmental interventions, the landscape still had substantial area under natural vegetation (both primeval and under varying degrees of degradation). However, the rapidly altering developmental context, demographic contours, resource use configurations, and new and emerging challenges made the situation increasingly precarious for HRML's long-term ecological sustainability. An assessment of the existing and emerging challenges to biodiversity conservation in the

project area revealed the following worrying scenario: a) rapidly eroding biological diversity (at genetic, species and ecosystem level); b) key habitats getting degraded or fragmented; c) proliferation of invasive alien species; d) increasing human-animal conflicts; e) climate change impedes ecosystem functionality; e) over-exploitation of natural resources; f) unfavourable practices in economic production sectors adversely affecting biodiversity; g) weakening capacity for sustainable resource use particularly among tribal communities; h) diminishing livelihoods based on natural resources; and g) production imperatives overriding conservation considerations.

While there are several initiatives (across different sectors and actors) pertaining to resource governance in HRML, they were concluded to be insufficiently coordinated to lessen pressure on biological diversity. The operations of individual agencies were very much sector-focused and the region lacked a comprehensive planning and governance framework that specifically integrates biodiversity conservation needs in production sector planning and operations. Further, as is the case elsewhere in the country, the existing conservation framework in HRML was still 'Protected Area' centric. As PAs alone would not be able to secure the ecological future of HRML (due to their sub-optimal coverage and existing and emerging threats), it is imperative to adopt a broader integrated approach to biodiversity conservation.

To repair and maintain the ecological integrity of HRML, it was concluded that a radical shift would be required in the governance approach that was being pursued towards one that is underpinned by cross-sectoral coordinated planning, execution and compliance monitoring so that ecosystem integrity and life-support functions of the region are restored/ maintained for posterity. The aim is to broaden the constituency of conservation beyond the conservation sector and mainstream biodiversity considerations as central to the operations of economic production sectors. It was expected that this will enable them to minimize adverse impacts on biological diversity, manage potential trade-offs and promote win-win opportunities. The *long-term solution* proposed by the project was thus to build the know-how and put in place a collaborative governance mechanism for multiple-use management of HRML based on landscape approach that secures PAs and outlying HVBAs, mainstreams biodiversity management into production sector operations and promote conservation-compatible livelihoods.

Barriers identified as hindering achievement of the long-term solution outlined above include the following:

- Barrier 1: Inadequate institutional and policy framework for collaborative governance and know-how and capacities for multiple use mountain landscape management
- Barrier 2: Limited application of landscape level land use planning and management that would maximize biodiversity conservation prospects
- Barrier 3: Community level barriers constrain the adoption of biodiversity conservation objectives in community-level land and resource use decisions

2.3 Project Description and Strategy

The revised project strategy, in response to the grievance lodged by local stakeholders, excludes the original concept of expanding the protected area system in the landscape. Protected areas, however, remain an important part of the landscape, covering 25,320 ha, comprising approximately 12% of the land area, and roughly 30% of the GEF grant is allocated towards the GEF-5 BD-1 objective to "Improve sustainability of protected area systems". There are six (6) protected areas located within the project landscape, two (2) fewer as compared to the original delineation of the landscape, and one of the outcome level indicators is to achieve improved management effectiveness of protected areas. Part of the degraded habitats earmarked for rehabilitation fall within protected areas, but it is otherwise unclear how the project is contributing towards improved management effectiveness.

Original project strategy, endorsed in 2013	Revised project strategy, approved in 2018
Project objective: To protect biodiversity of the High Range Mountain Landscape of the southern Western Ghats in peninsular India from existing and emergent threats through building an effective collaborative governance framework for multiple use management	
Component 1: Effective governance framework for multiple-use mountain landscape management in place	
Outcome 1: Effective governance framework for multiple-use mountain landscape management in place	**Outcome 1: Strengthened capacities for community based sustainable use and management of natural resources**
Output 1.1: Strengthened knowledge generation and dissemination system improves decision making related to sustainable land and resource use	Output 1.1: Capacities of Local Self Governments and community organizations developed to plan for sustainable resource use
Output 1.2: Landscape level land- use plan prepared and sustainable resource management systems in place	Output 1.2: Sustainable resource use practices demonstrated for improved quality of life

Original project strategy, endorsed in 2013	Revised project strategy, approved in 2018
Output 1.3: Biodiversity considerations are mainstreamed into sector plans and practices Output 1.4: A dedicated cross - sectoral landscape level institutional platform ensures sectoral compliance with management prescriptions of Landscape and Sector Plans Output 1.5: Replication strategy developed for multiple use management of mountain landscapes	Output 1.3: Enhanced products/services value chains developed for providing ecologically sustainable livelihoods options Output 1.4: Community-based models developed for sustainable access and use of forest resources by local communities Output 1.5: Policies framework reviewed and harmonised for ensuring sustainable resource use and management at the landscape level
Component 2: Applying Multiple Use Mountain Landscape (MUML) management	
Outcome 2: Multiple use mountain landscape management is applied securing the ecological integrity of HRML	**Outcome 2: Multiple use landscape management is applied to secure the ecological integrity of the high range landscape**
Output 2.1: Capacities developed among conservation and production sector staff for applying landscape approaches to biodiversity conservation into sectoral operations Output 2.2: Management effectiveness of PA system strengthened to address existing and emerging threats to PA systems Output 2.3: HVBAs secured through improved conservation focus and interventions Output 2.4: Biodiversity mainstreaming demonstrated in key production sectors	Output 2.1: Capacities of conservation and production sector personnel developed for applying landscape approaches into sectoral planning and operations Output 2.2: Mainstreaming of biodiversity concerns in key production sectors demonstrated Output 2.3: Best practices documented and disseminated for improving decision making on sustainable resource management and use Output 2.4: Replication strategies developed for use and management of mountain landscape resources
Component 3: Community-based sustainable use and management of wild resource	
Outcome 3: Strengthened community capacities for community based sustainable use and management of wild resources	**Outcome 3: Appropriate and effective governance framework for multiple use high range landscape evolved**
Output 3.1 Community based organizations (Panchayats, JFMCs, Self Help Groups (SHGs)) have adequate capacities to plan sustainable resource use Output 3.2 Support to sustainable resource use practices accentuate positive resource dependency Output 3.3 Community-based natural resource management governance model for the unique tribal local self-government (Edamalakudy Panchayat)	Output 3.1: Landscape level management plans and sustainable resource management systems in place Output 3.2: Institutional platforms of multiple stakeholders evolved and strengthened at appropriate levels for planning and reviewing sustainable resource use (sectoral integration) Output 3.3: Management effectiveness of designated biodiversity rich ecosystems are strengthened to address existing and emerging challenges to ecosystem conservation and services Output 3.4: Rare, endangered and threatened (RET) ecosystems and endemic species are secured through improved conservation measures

2.4 Implementation Arrangements

The project is being implemented under direct implementation modality (DIM), with UNDP as the GEF Implementing Agency and Executing Agency. The project governance implementation and funds flow arrangements, as described in the November 2017 Revised Implementation Strategy is shown below in **Figure 2**.

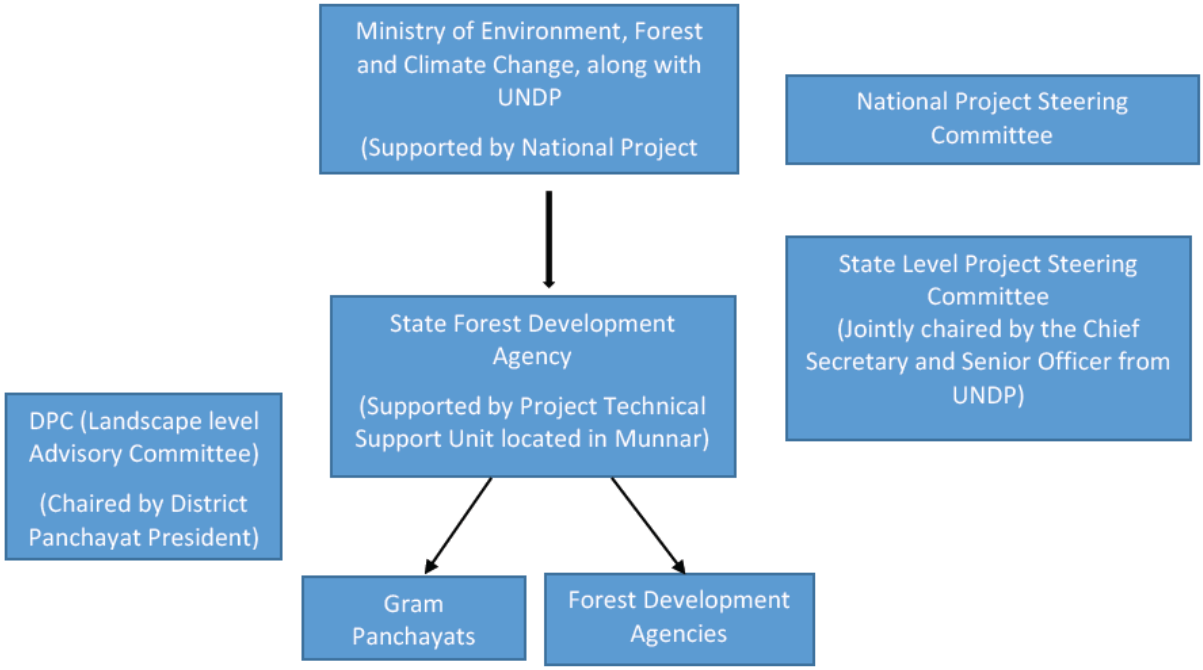

Figure 2: Governance Implementation and Funds Flow Arrangements (from Nov 2017 revised strategy)

National Project Steering Committee (NPSC)

The Additional Director General of Forests (Wildlife), Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC), Govt. of India and a senior official of the UNDP would jointly chair the National Project Steering Committee (NPSC).

Members of NPSC would include Inspector General of Forests (Wildlife), Operational Focal Point of Global Environment Facility (GEF-OFP), Joint Secretary (in charge of Biodiversity), Joint Secretary (in Charge of Mountains), representatives of the Ministries of Agriculture, Commerce, Tourism, Tribal Affairs, Panchayati Raj, Rural Development, and New and Renewable Energy, Chairman, National Bio Diversity Authority, Secretary, Local Self Government, Kerala, Secretary, Forests, Kerala, two representatives from non-governmental sector (one from private sector/ industries) nominated by the Ministry of Environment, Forests, and Climate Change and two representatives from the UNDP.

The chairmen would be authorised to invite experts and other officials to NPSC as per requirement. The responsibilities of NPSC would include ensuring overall effectiveness of programme implementation, providing policy guidance and approval of budgeted Annual Work Plans (AWP) forwarded by the State. NPSC would meet at least once a year. The MoEF assisted by National PMU will host the NPSC.

The State Project Steering Committee (SPSC)

The Chief Secretary, Government of Kerala and a senior official from UNDP would jointly chair the SPSC. The Forest Secretary would be the Convener and LSG Secretary would be a member of SPSC.

The Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and Chief Wildlife Warden, and Chairman and CEO of State Forest Development Agency would be members of SPSC. Representatives of MoEFCC (that includes GEF OFP and IG-Forest), the State Planning Board, Various departments (Finance, Agriculture, Animal Husbandry, Dairy Development, Rural Development, Minor Irrigation, Town and Country Planning, Environment and Climate Change, Fisheries, Tourism, Scheduled Tribe, Scheduled Caste, Soil Survey and Soil Conservation, Ground Water), Kudumbashree, Haritha Keralam Mission, Suchitwa Mission, State Biodiversity Board, State Medicinal Plant Board, Land Use Board, Tea Board, Agency for Non-Conventional Energy and Rural Technology (ANERT), Plantation Corporation, and Kerala Forest Development Corporation would be the members. The District Collectors of Idukki, Ernakulam, and Thrissur, representatives of Hindustan Newsprint Limited, and United Planters' Association of South India (UPASI) would also be the members of the SPSC.

The SPSC will meet once a year or more on approval of Chair. The State Project Steering Committee would endorse and forward the AWP to the national Project Director and UNDP for approval. The other responsibilities include approval for procurements/ sanctions for activities related to AWP, supervision of project activities, review and recommendations, ensuring departmental and sectoral coordination for the smooth functioning of the project, policy support and communication with NPSC. The SPSC would ensure that the officials involved in the project have sufficient tenure for the smooth implementation of the project.

SPSC would ensure that the co-financing arrangements of the Government of Kerala and private sector are met through scheme commitments. SPSC would also ensure its implementation through respective agencies are in line with the outcome and outputs of the project. All the decisions taken by SPSC will be in accordance with the standards that ensure management of development results, best value for money, fairness, integrity, transparency and effective international cooperation. This will uphold the ultimate accountability of the UNDP. The SPSC will be hosted by the State LSGD, assisted by a State Coordinating Unit.

Landscape Level Advisory Committee (LLAC)

Landscape Level Committee would provide necessary advisory support in sectoral planning, resource mobilisation, ensure transparency in implementation of pilots, review annual plans, ensure sectoral coordination and departmental coordination, look after resolution of local conflicts, and ensure community support. President of Idukki District Panchayat would be the chairperson of LLAC and District Collector, Idukki would be the Secretary.

LLAC will consist of the members of the District Planning Committee from the project landscape.

Additionally representatives of agencies involved in various aspects of sustainable development in the region like Haritha Keralam Mission, Bio Diversity Board, Medicinal Plant Board, Kudumbashree, Suchitwa Mission, Pollution Control Board, Vegetable and Fruit Promotion Council of Kerala (VFPCK), Kerala State Horticultural Products Development Corporation (Horticorp), Agency for Non-conventional Energy and Rural Technology (ANERT), Kerala Forest Research Institute (KFRI), Cardamom Research Institute, Plantation Corporation, Kerala Forest Development Corporation, and Hindustan News Print Limited would be the members of SPSC Various stakeholders including Farmers' Apex body, Community Forests Rights Coordination Committee (CFRCC), Forest Management Committees, project created Sectoral Apex Institutions, United Planters' Association of South India (UPASI), Private Plantations, Merchants' Associations, Kerala Hotels and Restaurants Association, and Tour Operators' Association would be represented in LLAC. Representatives of other stakeholder groups or associations could be included if the LLAC finds their presence relevant for the successful implementation of the project and follow up programmes.

This committee would meet minimum twice a year. The combined annual work plan of GPs and Forest Development Agencies would be discussed with LLAC before sending to NPSC through SPSC. This District Collector would convene the meeting as the Member Secretary of DPC with the support of the Project Management and Technical Support Unit headed by a Project Manager.

The Project Management and Technical Support Unit will support Local Governments in mainstreaming biodiversity concerns in their planning process. The projects thus developed would be subject to the approval of District Planning Committee.

Since the LLAC includes the members of DPC from the project landscape, sensitisation of DPC on mainstreaming biodiversity concerns will naturally occur.

National Project Management Unit (NPMU)

The NPMU would be housed under the MoEFCC/UNDP. A Project Officer, a Project Associate and an Administration/Finance Assistant will support the functions of NPMU related to project implementation. The Project Officer would be responsible for coordinating with various stakeholders of the project including the Government of Kerala, UNDP, Landscape Level Project Management and Technical Support Unit (PMTSU), and various agencies. The NPMU will also coordinate with similar programmes/projects elsewhere in the country and ensure better synergy through information exchange for upstream policy engagements.

State Forest Development Agency

State Forest Development Agency would be the Nodal Agency for the project in the State. The Member Secretary, State Forest Development Agency, would be the Nodal Officer for the Project.

Landscape Level Project Management and Technical Support Unit (PMTSU)

The project will be implemented through a landscape level Project Management and Technical Support Unit (PMTSU) housed in State Forest Development Agency and located in Munnar. The office space constructed during the first phase of project implementation may be used for this purpose. Apart from facilitating implementation of the project, the PMTSU may: (1) develop overall programme for implementation in consultation with local governments, departments, FDAs and experts; (2) collaborate with expert institutions/universities/ research organisations for promoting research into the scientific, sociological and economic aspects of the landscape and integrate them into landscape and sectoral plans; (3) coordinate with different production sectors and agencies to develop environmentally sustainable strategic plan for the landscape; (4) promote programmes for sustainable livelihood options for communities dependent on the landscape including facilitating implementation of Community Forest Rights Act; (5) promote collaboration with the

newly launched Haritha Keralam Mission of the Government of Kerala; and (6) support SFDA and FDAs for preparing utilisation certificates and progress reports for time bound reporting to MoEFCC/UNDP (7) support in evolving a multi-stakeholder forum and its sustainability strategy for future.

PMTSU would have a full-time Project Manager, three full time Project Officers and six cluster coordinators to drive the programmatic aspects of the project. A full-time Assistant will provide operational support. The Project Officer (M&E) will monitor the project activities in accordance with the log frame. The PMTSU would hire experts and agencies on need basis, for specific purposes. The Project Manager will report to the State Nodal Officer of the project.

The organogram of the entire project management unit at the National, State, Landscape level is given hereunder.

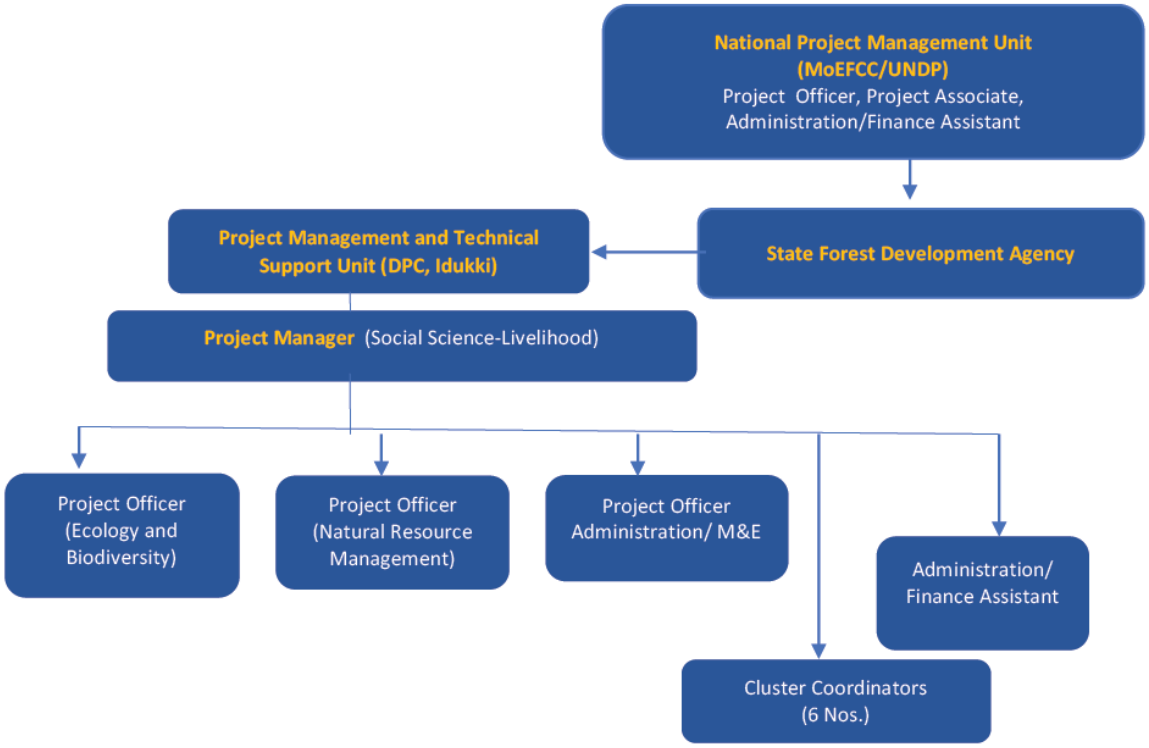

Figure 3: Project organogram (from Nov 2017 revised strategy)

The actual governance and management arrangements at mid-term are discussed in Section 3.3.1 of this MTR report.

2.5 Project Timing and Milestones

Project Milestones:

Received by GEF:	01 December 2011
Preparation Grant Approved (PIF approval date):	01 March 2012
Project Approved for Implementation:	02 December 2013
Start Date (project document signed by Government of India):	15 May 2014
Project Inception Workshop:	Not held
Mid-term Review:	January-March 2021
Closing Date (Planned):	14 May 2019
Closing Date (Revised)	14 March 2022

The Project Identification Form (PIF) was approved on 01 March 2012 for incorporation into the GEF Council Work Programme for the GEF-5 replenishment cycle. Following the project preparation phase, the project obtained approval for implementation by the GEF CEO on 02 December 2013. The official start date of the project is 15 May 2014, when the Government of India signed the project document.

Project implementation was paused in 2015 following a grievance lodged by a local stakeholder group. The grievance was based on concerns related to planned expansion of the protected area system and envisaged land use restrictions by production sector operators, particularly cardamom growers. The project design was revisited as part of the

grievance, and a revised strategy was approved in 2018, and a 34-month no-cost time extension was granted, thus revising the closing date to 14 March 2022.

2.6 Main Stakeholders

The main stakeholders for the project and their indicative roles and responsibilities are outlined in the Project Document (Annex 14 to the original Project Document), as copied below in **Table 4**. An updated stakeholder analysis was not included in the Revised Implementation Strategy dated November 2017.

Table 4: List of project stakeholders included in the stakeholder analysis in the project document

No.	Stakeholder	Functions and capacities
1	Ministry of Environment and Forests (MOEF) (currently the MoEFCC)	The MoEF is the nodal agency in the administrative structure of the national Government for planning, promoting, coordinating and overseeing implementation of India's environmental, forestry, land degradation and climate change related policies and programmes. MoEF shall provide the overall project coordination at the national level and facilitate implementation particularly policy reforms and coordination among Ministries. National Board for Wildlife is an important body with statutory powers capable of influencing the Project positively. National Biodiversity Authority (NBA) with a mandate of pursuing the implementation of the Biological Diversity Act, 2002, shall also be another important statutory body from the perspective of the project.
2	Other Union Ministries / Agencies	Other union ministries whose mandate and domain has a bearing on this project are the Ministries of Commerce (including Tea Board and Spices Board); Rural Development; Tribal Affairs (includes Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India Ltd.-TRIFED); Panchayati Raj; Power, New and Renewable Energy, Agriculture, Road Transport and Highways and Tourism. These central ministries shall contribute to project objectives by aligning sectoral programmes and policies in line with LLLUP and also provide necessary co-financing at the national level.
3	Forest Department	The Department of Forests & Wildlife, one of the oldest in the State, shall be the nodal agency at the state level for coordinating and implementing the project. It is the key stakeholder given its mandate for forest protection and biodiversity conservation. The main functions of KFD are to a) conserve and expand the natural forests for posterity, in particular, with regard to water and biodiversity ; b) increase the productivity of forest plantations ; c) increase the tree cover both inside and outside the forests; d) meet the livelihood needs of tribals and other forest dependent communities; and e) sustainably manage biodiversity-rich and sensitive ecosystems such as mangroves, sacred groves, coastal areas, wetlands, homesteads, private plantations etc. which are outside the control of the Forest Department. Capacity to interact with people and to deal with emergent threats like climate change needs to be strengthened.
4	Other State Departments / Agencies	Agriculture Department is another important entity as large area of the project landscape is under agriculture land use. Many of its activities are carried out by LSGs. The Agriculture Department promotes organic farming as per the Organic Farming Policy that promotes gradual withdrawal of chemicals and conservation of natural resources and biodiversity. But the Department is still oriented towards maximising production through intensive farming. Tourism Department deals primarily with planning, development, promotion and marketing of tourism potential of the State. Institutions like Kerala Tourism Development Corporation, Kerala Institute of Travel and Tourism Studies and District Tourism Promotion Councils are under the Tourism Department. The focus still remains on increasing visitation levels. Revenue Department controls the district administration and has very close interaction with the general public, as it deals with all matters related to land (land revenue, survey, distribution, implementation of various Acts etc.). It still possesses large tracts of HVBAs but is unable to protect them as the mandate is different. It is also the nodal agency for natural disaster management. Animal Husbandry Department seeks to increase production potential of livestock and poultry, retain traditional livestock farmers, promote fodder production, conserve local breeds and control zoonotic diseases. Most of its activities are carried out through LSGs. The Fisheries Department aims to promote, facilitate and secure long term sustainable development, conservation and utilization of the rich fisheries resources. It strives to enhance fish production in inland water bodies through schemes like Matsyakeralam. But the focus still remains only production as evidenced through its priority for introduction of fast-growing exotics (whose breeding technology has been mastered unlike indigenous species). The State planning Board (under Department of Planning) enables the Government to formulate development plans based on a scientific assessment of the resources of the State. The Land Use Board functions to assist the Government to frame policies for optimum land use and natural resources management in the State. With the decentralisation of powers to LSGs, the Department of Local Self Governance has an important role to play in the formulation of policy and implementation of developmental works at the grass roots level. The Environment Department is important as it deals with environment protection, awareness creation, climate change and river protection. It controls the State Biodiversity Board and Pollution Control Board. The Department of Education administers all the educational institutions and can have an enabling role as a conduit for developing the concept of the landscape among students. The Department of Water Resources endeavours to ensure that water, the vital resource, will continue to be sustainable for future generations to come in the context of physical, environmental and social background. The Scheduled Tribe Development Department looks after the welfare and development of the tribes. They are mandated to implement the FRA. The Public Works Department has a role as infrastructure development which has a direct bearing on the landscape. Other state level departments and agencies shall contribute to project objectives by aligning sectoral programmes in line with LLLUP and also provide necessary co-financing at the state level.

5	District Administration	Headed by the District Collector[3], and include functionaries responsible for different aspects of district governance such as district planning (District Planning Officer), agriculture (Deputy Director, Agriculture), tribal development (Integrated Tribal Development Officer), livestock (District Animal Husbandry Officer), soil & water engineers, officials of the Department of Social Justice. These district level functionaries are responsible for planning and implementing sectoral programmes in the project landscape and will form primary stakeholders in the project. The Collector holds regular meetings of all the functionaries along with the elected representatives for coordinating their activities.
6	Panchayat Raj Institutions	At the District level there is District Panchayat; at the block level there are Block Panchayats, and at the village level there are Gram Panchayats. These three levels of local government constitute the third tier of governance and are responsible for the preparation of plans for economic development and social justice and also for the implementation of schemes at the grassroots level (Ex.NREGA). They will be actively involved in the project. Apart from developmental and welfare activities, they are also responsible for protection of the environment and implementation of Acts like FRA. Kudumbasree, a remarkably successful women empowering project coordinated at district level and functioning through LSGs is a major stakeholder with extensive reach at grass root level.
7	Research and Educational Institutions	Research institutions –national, regional and local need to be involved in the Project for research, innovation, education, implementation and monitoring. Wildlife Institute of India, Indian Council of Agriculture Research (ICAR),National Centre for Biological Sciences(NCBS), College of Forestry, Kerala Agriculture University, Cardamom Research Centre, United Planter's Association of South India(UPASI),Research and Development Department (KDHP), Kerala Forest Research Institute(KFRI), Tropical Botanical Garden and Research Institute ,School of Social Sciences Mahatma Gandhi University, Kerala State Council for Science, Technology and Environment(KSCSTE), Centre for Water Resources Development and Management (CWRDM), Centre for Earth Science Studies (CESS), Periyar Foundation, Institute of Management in Government (IMG), Kerala Institute for Research, Training and Development Studies of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (KIRTADS) and Kerala Institute of Travel and Tourism Studies (KITTS) are institutions of excellence in research and capacity building relevant to the project and also have a presence in the region. These institutions can broaden the transdisciplinary nature of the Project and ensure that the land use and sector management measures are grounded in sound science. Kerala Institute of local Administration (KILA) is an important institution for strengthening the capacity of LSIs and also for mainstreaming biodiversity and resource conservation into their activities. The Project intends to develop a network of these organizations for mobilizing knowledge, technology and expertise.
8	Production sector	Production sector is another important stakeholder and partner for the project as they have significant dependence on natural resources and sustainable use is vital for their own existence in the long run. Tea, cardamom and tourism are the major private production sector agencies in the project landscape. Reed industry is represented by Hindustan Newsprint Ltd.(HNL) and Kerala State Bamboo Corporation (KSBC), both in the public sector. Kerala Forest Development Corporation (KFDC) has stakes in plantations and tourism. Right at an early stage, the project will develop collaboration and promote proactive engagement with the production sector. The private sector is largely represented through tea companies (mostly corporate in nature), cardamom federations/associations (representing a number of scattered cardamom growers) and hoteliers associations and tour operators(organizations like Kerala Travel Mart Society). Partnerships can be built with institutions like UPASI(planters), KTM Society (tourism), KDHP Co. Ltd., and cardamom growers for imparting biodiversity and sustainability concerns into their practices. Moreover, entrepreneurs who are willing to invest in innovative green technologies like renewable energy, waste management and value addition of organic products are also important stakeholders.
9	Local communities and community institutions	Local communities especially tribes are key stakeholders as they are highly vulnerable to natural resource depletion affecting their livelihood. They will be the main beneficiaries of project interventions through enhanced community capacities to plan and manage natural resources. Programmes like NREGA are primarily implemented through them. The community institutions targeted are grass root level organizations like Kudumbasree, VSS/EDC/ULO (supported by the Forest Department for participatory forest management), FDAs, CRC and Oorukoottams (for implementation of FRA). In addition to being project beneficiaries, they are also a critical repository of traditional knowledge.
10	NGOs/NGIs	These stakeholders form a major catalyst group for the success of the Project. High Range Wildlife and Environment Preservation Association, Munnar Environment and Wildlife Society, Gurukula Botanical Gardens, Vattakanal Trust, World Wide Fund for Nature, Wildlife Trust of India, Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment (ATREE), Nature conservation Foundation, Hornbill Foundation etc. are some of the NGOs that promote conservation awareness, ecorestoration, participatory monitoring and conduct outreach programmes. In addition, there are other individuals who have contributed enormously for developing knowledge about the landscape and also, in disseminating this knowledge among a large cross section of the public. Audio-visual and print media are important partners for highlighting the objectives of the Project and also the progress of implementation
11	Political workers	The highly politicised atmosphere in the State provides the right ambience for including the political workers as important stakeholders. Though ecologically literate to an extent, all political parties need to have an understanding and appreciation of conservation at the level of landscapes.

[3] District Collectors are officers of the Indian Administrative Service and in charge of the administration of the district. They are entrusted the task of handling law and order, revenue collection, taxation, the control of planning and handling of natural and man-made emergencies.

3 Findings

3.1 Project Strategy

3.1.1 Project Design

The project was approved under the GEF-5 replenishment cycle and aligned to the biodiversity (BD) focal area objectives and programs:

- **BD-1**: Improve Sustainability of Protected Area Systems; **Outcome 1.1**: Improved management effectiveness of existing and new protected areas
- **BD-2:** Mainstream Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use into Production Landscapes, Seascapes and Sectors; **Outcome 2.1:** Increase in sustainability managed landscapes and seascapes that integrate biodiversity conservation
- **BD-2:** Mainstream Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use into Production Landscapes, Seascapes and Sectors; **Outcome 2.2:** Measures to conserve and sustainably use biodiversity incorporated in policy and regulatory frameworks

The project strategy was formulated in line with the 2008 National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, particularly with respect to measures for conserving mountain ecosystems. As described in the Project Document, the Government of India has provided extensive technical and financial support for the establishment and conservation of protected aeras, biosphere reserves, tiger reserves, elephant reserves, and reserve forests in mountain areas.

The project objectives are also directly aligned with the UNDP Country Programme Document (CPD), which was based on the United Nations India Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) for India, specifically the following UNDAF outcome: Inclusive and equitable growth policies and poverty reduction strategies of the Government are strengthened to ensure that most vulnerable and marginalized people in rural and urban areas have greater access to productive assets, decent employment, skill development, social protection and sustainable livelihoods; and Country Programme Action Plan Outcome: "Sustainable management of biodiversity and land resource is enhanced".

As mentioned in Section 2.3 (*Project Description and Strategy*) of this MTR report, the revised project strategy, in response to the grievance lodged by local stakeholders, excludes the original concept of expanding the protected area system in the landscape and the delineation of the project landscape was adjusted, largely leaving out the cardamom growing region. The project objective, the three components, and the majority of the indicators in the results framework remained unchanged. There were changes at the outcome and output level. Some of the changes made are inconsistent with the underlying objective of the project, i.e., building a collaborative governance framework for multiple use management of the HRML. A key part of the original design was development of a landscape level land use plan, and establishment of a cross-sectoral landscape level institutional platform for implementation of the landscape plan and updated sectoral plans. The revised strategy maintains indicators on developing the landscape level land use plan, but the updated set of outputs do not reflect include development of the plan. The focus of original Output 1.2 (Landscape level land use plan prepared and sustainable resource management systems in place) is not reflected in the revised strategy.

3.1.2 Project Theory of Change

For the purposes of contextualizing and orienting the MTR, the MTR team constructed a generalized theory of change for the project (see **Figure 4**) based upon the project strategy outlined in the project document.

The project is also contributing to the following Sustainable Development Goals:

- 15.1. By 2020, ensure the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of terrestrial and inland freshwater ecosystems and their services, in particular forests, wetlands, mountains and drylands, in line with obligations under international agreements.
- 15.4 By 2030, ensure the conservation of mountain ecosystems, including their biodiversity, in order to enhance their capacity to provide benefits that are essential for sustainable development.
- 15.9 By 2020, integrate ecosystem and biodiversity values into national and local planning, development processes, poverty reduction strategies and accounts.
- SDG 2.5. By 2020, maintain the genetic diversity of seeds, cultivated plants and farmed and domesticated animals and their related wild species, including through soundly managed and diversified seed and plant banks at the national, regional and international levels, and promote access to and fair and equitable sharing

of benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge, as internationally agreed.

- SDG 5.a. Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws.
- SDG 12.2 By 2030, achieve the sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources.

3.1.3 Results Framework

As part of this mid-term review, the project results framework for the project was assessed against "SMART" criteria, to evaluate whether the indicators and targets were sufficiently specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and timebound. With respect to the timebound criterion, all targets are assumed compliant, as they are set as end-of-project performance metrics.

Project Objective:

There are seven indicators at the project objective level, as described below in **Table 5.**

Table 5: SMART analysis of project results framework

Indicator	Baseline	End-of-Project target	MTR SMART analysis					Comments / analysis
			S	M	A	R	T	
Objective: To protect biodiversity of the High Range Mountain Landscape of the southern Western Ghats in peninsular India from existing and emergent threats through building an effective collaborative governance framework for multiple use management								
1. Extent brought under multiple use management planning framework	0 ha	219,878 ha	Y	Q	Q	Y	Y	The target is specific, but the revised strategy does not include development of a landscape level land use plan, rendering achievement questionable.
2. Population status of following critical species remain stable or increases:	Nilgiri tahr: 944 Grizzled giant squirrel: 195	Remain stable or increases by project end	Q	Q	Q	Y	Y	Baseline figures have not been fully vetted with project stakeholders. Also unclear why the baseline was not adjusted when the landscape was revised.
3. Improvements in water quality in the water bodies of the landscape	BOD: 1.5 mg/l at Neriamangalam; and BOD: 1.4 mg/l at Bhoothathankett	10% improvement by project end	Y	Y	Q	N	Y	BOD is not the most appropriate indicator for measuring improvements in water quality. Baseline concentrations are quite low, and it would be difficult to draw statistically reliable conclusions that 10% improvement achieved.
Outcome 1: Strengthened capacities for community based sustainable use and management of natural resources								
4. Landscape Level Land Use Plan (LLLUP) developed adhering to multiple use management decisions	0	1	Q	Y	Y	Y	Y	The indicator would have been more appropriate at the outcome level if approval of the plan were also reflected.
5. Sector-specific biodiversity-plans compatible with LLLUP developed leading to effective integration of biodiversity considerations into production practices	0	At least six Sector Plans (Forestry, Tourism, Tea, Cardamom, Agriculture and Tribal Development) and Biodiversity Conservation Plans (5) in place	Q	Y	Y	Y	Y	Similarly, the indicator would have been more appropriate at the outcome level if approval were included.
6. Effective and functioning cross-sectoral, multi-stakeholder institution (including conservation, livelihood and production) established	0	1	Q	Q	Y	Y	Y	There was no definition of "effective" included, rendering measurability difficult.

Indicator	Baseline	End-of-Project target	MTR SMART analysis					Comments / analysis
			S	M	A	R	T	
7. Number of key policy and management framework/ decisions adopted at local and state level related to sustainable mountain landscape management	0	7 (Wildlife Protection Act, Forest Conservation Act, Environment Protection Act, Forest Rights Act, Cardamom Rules, KDH Act, Land Assignment Act, Commodities Act), National Working Plan Code and other Management decisions	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	SMART compliant.
8. Improvement in Systemic Level Indicators of Capacity Development Scorecard	1. Capacity to conceptualize and formulate policies, legislations, strategies, programme 40% 2. Capacity to implement policies, legislation, strategies and programmes 33% 3. Capacity to engage and build consensus among all stakeholders 15% 4. Capacity to mobilize information and knowledge 35% 5. Capacity to monitor, evaluate and report and learn at the sector and project levels. 30%	1. Capacity to conceptualize and formulate policies, legislations, strategies, programme 80% 2. Capacity to implement policies, legislation, strategies and programmes 80% 3. Capacity to engage and build consensus among all stakeholders 15% 80% 4. Capacity to mobilize information and knowledge 35% 80% 5. Capacity to monitor, evaluate and report and learn at the sector and project levels. 30% 80%	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	SMART compliant.
Outcome 2: Multiple use landscape management is applied to secure the ecological integrity of the high range landscape								
9. Improved management effectiveness PAs as measured and recorded by Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT)	168 out of 300	By 20% by Year 5	Q	Y	Y	Q	Y	It would have been more appropriate to separate out the METT scores for the individual PA's. For example, exceptional performance by one PA could skew the combined score for the full set.
10. Proportion of degraded habitats rehabilitated within the PA system	To be established - baseline degraded areas to be measured for revised indicator	30% increase (NEW target for revised indicator, TBC once baseline established)	Q	Q	Q	Y	Y	This indicator and end target are unclear. Would have been more appropriate use land area as an end target, rather than the percent increase in the proportion of degraded habitats rehabilitated.
11. Number of new demonstration programmes/ featuring biodiversity friendly production practices (e.g. curing units/ energy efficiency options/ farming practices) adopted	0	20	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	SMART compliant.
12. Areas of forest fragments/ HVBAs in tea gardens inventorised and secured	0	4,000 ha	Q	Q	Q	Y	Y	Unclear what the term "secured" means in this context. Also, the concept of HVBA was a key part of the original project design, but not reflected in the revised strategy.
13. % reduction in fuel wood consumption for processing in tea and	Baseline to be established in the first year	10% decline over baseline usage	Q	Q	Q	Y	Y	Baseline conditions not clearly defined (or

Indicator	Baseline	End-of-Project target	MTR SMART analysis					Comments / analysis
			S	M	A	R	T	
cardamom using energy efficient technology and improved design								updated at project inception).
Outcome 3: Appropriate and effective governance framework for multiple use high range landscape evolved								
14. Number of development plans of PRIs/ CBOs that incorporate bio-diversity friendly practices	0	11	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	SMART compliant
15. Number of community representatives/ PRIs trained in biodiversity mainstreaming activities	0	500	Q	Q	Y	Y	Y	It would have been advisable to include some type of training certification or assessment process in the indicator. For example, it is unclear whether participation in a one-day session counts towards this indicator.
16. Number of new micro-enterprises at individual/SHG/ CBO/ and other local institution levels based sustainable resource use	0	Target to be define after design of the micro-plans	Q	Q	Y	Y	Y	An end target of 10 has been proposed by the project team. There is, however, not mention of the design of micro-plans.
17. % reduction in biomass consumption in lemon grass enterprises through adoption of improved technology	494,361 kg/ year	20 percent by project end	Y	Q	Q	Y	Y	The means of verification of progress towards the end target are unclear.
18. Appropriate model agreement between different agencies on the effective implementation of FRA as evidence through sustainable use and protection of biodiversity in Edamalakudy Panchayat	0	1	Q	Q	Y	Y	Y	Unclear what is meant by the term "appropriate model agreement", and how this would be measured.
SMART: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-Bound Green: SMART criteria compliant (Y); Yellow: observation (Q) noted regarding SMART criteria; Red: not (N) compliant with SMART criteria								

3.1.4 Gender Mainstreaming and Social Inclusion Analysis

An Environmental and Social Screening Checklist was completed as part of the original project development and annexed to the Project Document (Annexure 21). Essentially all entries in the checklist were answered "No", which the MTR team finds to be flawed. For instance, Question 3 in the checklist ("Does the proposed project include activities and outputs that support upstream planning processes that potentially pose environmental and social impacts or are vulnerable to environmental or social change"), was answered "No". One of the main premises of the project was development of a landscape level land use plan, which inherently would involve changes to environmental management regimes, potentially affecting socioeconomic conditions. And the original design included expanding the protected area system in the landscape. Each of the 34 entries under Question 4 ("Does the proposed project include the implementation of downstream activities that potentially pose environmental and social impacts or are vulnerable to environmental and social change") were answered "No". A few examples of the entries are listed below:

- 1.3. Would the proposed project pose a risk of introducing invasive alien species? (the project design includes restoration)
- 1.5. Does the project involve the production and harvesting of fish populations or other aquatic species without an accepted system of independent certification to ensure sustainability? (the inland fishery intervention on the project does not entail independent certification)
- 4.1. Would the proposed project have environmental and social impacts that could affect indigenous people or other vulnerable groups? (the majority of the inhabitants in the project landscape are indigenous)

- 4.4. Will the proposed project have variable impacts on women and men, different ethnic groups, social classes? (a gender analysis was not made at the project preparation phase)
- 6.1. Is the project likely to significantly affect the cultural traditions of affected communities, including gender-based roles? (the majority of the inhabitants in the project landscape are indigenous, i.e., scheduled tribes)
- 8.1. Is the proposed project likely to have impacts that could affect women's and men's ability to use, develop and protect natural resources and other natural capital assets? (development of a landscape level land use plan would likely entail changes in how local communities can access and use natural resources; and the original design included expanding the protected area system)

There seems to have been a misunderstanding at the project preparation phase with respect to the environmental and social screening process, and consequently there were no specific safeguard plans prepared.

And the November 2017 revised implementation strategy does not include an updated environmental and social screening analysis.

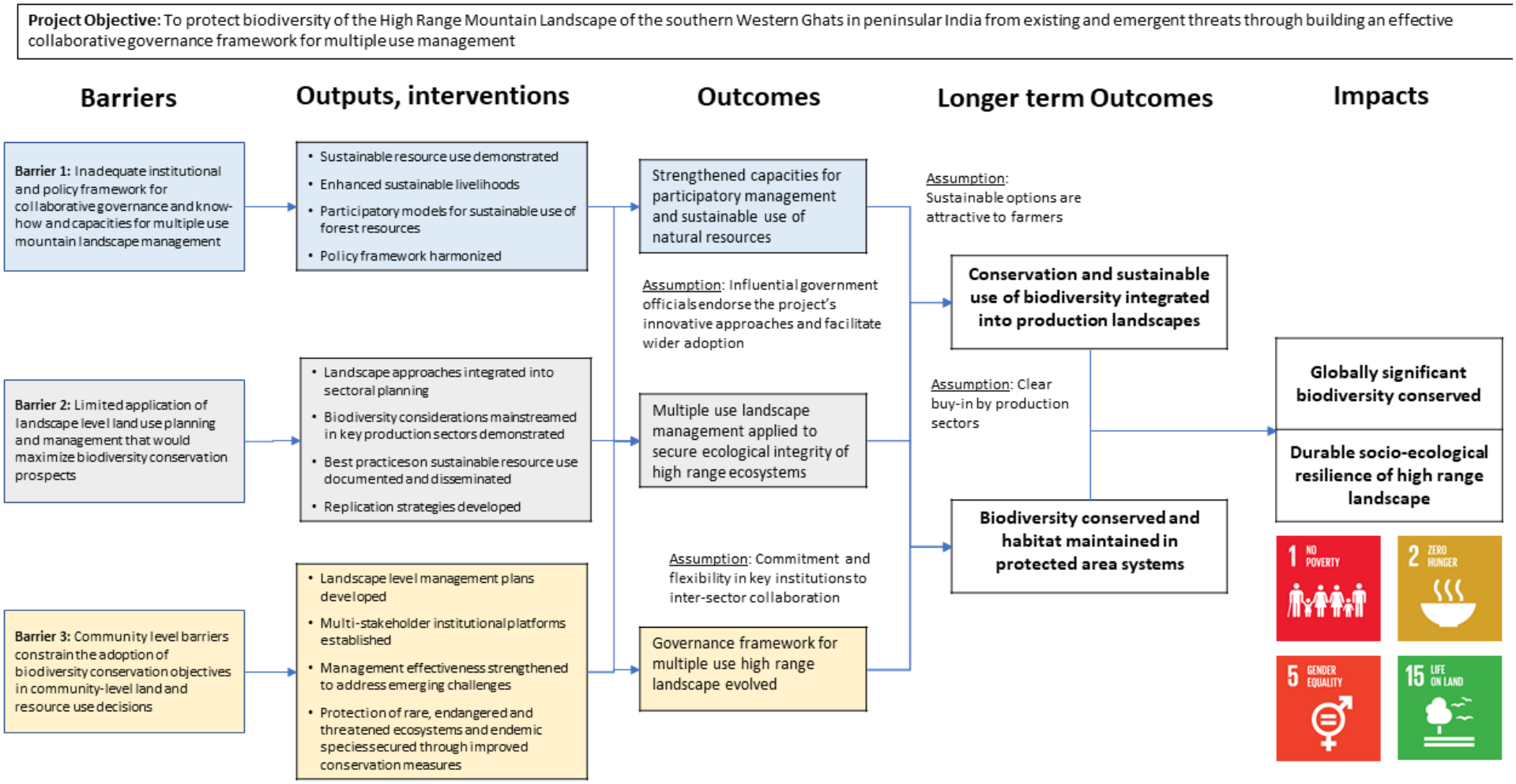

Figure 4: Theory of change

3.2 Progress towards Results

3.2.1 Progress towards Objective and Outcomes Analysis

Objective: To protect biodiversity of the High Range Mountain Landscape of the southern Western Ghats in peninsular India from existing and emergent threats through building an effective collaborative governance framework for multiple use management	
Progress towards achieving the project objective is rated as:	**Moderately unsatisfactory**

A rating of **moderately unsatisfactory** is applied for progress made towards achieving the project objective through mid-term, as summarized below in **Table 6** and further broken down in **Annex 4**.

Table 6: Progress towards results, project objective

Indicator	Baseline	Mid-term status	End-of-Project target	MTR Assessment
Date:	**2013**	**Mar 2021**	**Mar 2022**	
1. Extent brought under multiple use management planning framework	0 ha	The multi-use management planning framework has not yet been developed, with only one year remaining in the extended implementation timeframe	219,878 ha	**Not on target**
2. Population status of following critical species remain stable or increases:	Nilgiri tahr: 944 Grizzled giant squirrel: 195	The reliability of the baseline populations of critical species is questionable, and there are unclear means of verification for evaluating the population status.	Remain stable or increases by project end	**Unable to assess**
3. Improvements in water quality in the water bodies of the landscape	BOD: 1.5 mg/l at Neriamangalam; and BOD: 1.4 mg/l at Bhoothathankett	Reporting on water quality improvements based on setting up improved solid waste management systems and delivering training on waste management. No evidence available in regard to the objective level water quality indicator.	10% improvement by project end	**Unable to assess**

Component 1: Effective governance framework for multiple-use mountain landscape management in place

Outcome 1: Strengthened capacities for community based sustainable use and management of natural resources	
Progress towards achieving Outcome 1 is rated as:	**Moderately unsatisfactory**

Progress towards achievement of Outcome 1 is rated as **moderately unsatisfactory**, as outlined below in **Table 7** and further broken down in **Annex 4**.

Table 7: Progress towards results, Outcome 1

Indicator	Baseline	Mid-term status	End-of-Project target	MTR Assessment
Date:	**2013**	**Mar 2021**	**Mar 2022**	
4. Landscape Level Land Use Plan (LLLUP) developed adhering to multiple use management decisions	0	The landscape level land use plan has not yet been developed. GIS maps on land cover have been started, but there has been a lack of a coordinated effort in developing the landscape level land use plan.	1	**Not on target**
5. Sector-specific biodiversity-plans compatible with LLLUP developed leading to effective integration of biodiversity considerations into production practices	0	Review of sector strategies have been initiated; it is unclear what criteria will be applied for mainstreaming biodiversity.	At least six Sector Plans (Forestry, Tourism, Tea, Cardamom, Agriculture and Tribal Development) and Biodiversity Conservation Plans (5) in place	**Not on target**
6. Effective and functioning cross-sectoral, multi-stakeholder institution (including conservation,	0	The cross-sectoral, multi-stakeholder institution has not yet been established or deliberated in detail with landscape stakeholders.	1	**Not on target**

Indicator	Baseline	Mid-term status	End-of-Project target	MTR Assessment
Date:	2013	Mar 2021	Mar 2022	
livelihood and production) established				
7. Number of key policy and management framework/ decisions adopted at local and state level related to sustainable mountain landscape management	0	Limited progress towards achievement of policy level targets; the project has provided in puts to management plans of protected areas in the landscape.	7 (Wildlife Protection Act, Forest Conservation Act, Environment Protection Act, Forest Rights Act, Cardamom Rules, KDH Act, Land Assignment Act, Commodities Act), National Working Plan Code and other Management decisions	**Not on target**
8. Improvement in Systemic Level Indicators of Capacity Development Scorecard	1. Capacity to conceptualize and formulate policies, legislations, strategies, programme 40% 2. Capacity to implement policies, legislation, strategies and programmes 33% 3. Capacity to engage and build consensus among all stakeholders 15% 4. Capacity to mobilize information and knowledge 35% 5. Capacity to monitor, evaluate and report and learn at the sector and project levels. 30%	Evaluation of institutional level capacity was made at mid-term using a different Capacity Development Scorecard than was used at baseline.	1. Capacity to conceptualize and formulate policies, legislations, strategies, programme 80% 2. Capacity to implement policies, legislation, strategies and programmes 80% 3. Capacity to engage and build consensus among all stakeholders 15% 80% 4. Capacity to mobilize information and knowledge 35% 80% 5. Capacity to monitor, evaluate and report and learn at the sector and project levels. 30% 80%	**Unable to assess**

Output 1.1: Capacities of Local Self Governments and community organizations developed to plan for sustainable resource use

Key achievements:

- Solid waste collection centre at Athirapally.
- Started to engage with the Kudumbasree SHGs at Athiraplly for carrying out segregated waste collection.
- Similar engagement with SHGs planned at Kuttampuzha.

Issues / challenges:

- Need for closer association with the Gram Panchayats.
- Waste management system in Munnar, a tourist town, needs to be a priority; however, there is uncertainty on the location site.

Output 1.2: Sustainable resource use practices demonstrated for improved quality of life

Key achievements:

- The eco-restoration work at Pazhathottam has helped revive spring that is a boon for the ST communities.
- Punarjeevanam towards traditional food is a novel activity initiated in Pettimudi and Chinnar among other hamlets to grow traditional millets like ragi, paddy, beans variety and sweet potato among others. After the first successful season the area under cultivation is now extended to 100 acres.
- Marketing of produce after packaging and branding through SFDA outlets.

Issues / challenges:

- Replicate the above activities to many more hamlets extended over all 11 Panchayats.

- Set up energy efficient distillation plants for lemongrass after FPIC.

Output 1.3: Enhanced products/services value chains developed for providing ecologically sustainable livelihoods options

Key achievements:

- Action in progress.

Issues / challenges:

- Slow take-off and project time limited to one more year.

Output 1.4: Community-based models developed for sustainable access and use of forest resources by local communities

Key achievements:

- Collection and marketing of organic honey initiated.

Issues / challenges:

- Slow to start, hence needs to accelerate.

Output 1.5: Policies framework reviewed and harmonised for ensuring sustainable resource use and management at the landscape level

Key achievements:

- Plan in the offing in Adimali Panchayat to use reed grown to strengthen river bank for producing cane products.

Issues / challenges:

- Very few trained persons adept at cane weaving among the SHG members; need to locate nearest hamlet where there are cane crafts-persons.

Component 2: Applying Multiple Use Mountain Landscape (MUML) management

Outcome 2: Multiple use landscape management is applied to secure the ecological integrity of the high range landscape	
Progress towards achieving Outcome 2 is rated as:	**Moderately satisfactory**

Progress towards achievement of Outcome 2 is rated as **moderately satisfactory**, as outlined below in **Table 8** and further broken down in **Annex 4**.

Table 8: Progress towards results, Outcome 2

Indicator	Baseline	Mid-term status	End-of-Project target	MTR Assessment
Date:	**2013**	**Jan 2021**	**Mar 2022**	
9. Improved management effectiveness PAs as measured and recorded by Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT)	168 out of 300	The mid-term METT scores of 6 PA's in project landscape show significantly higher performance compared to the baseline scores in 2013. It is unclear how the project is contributing towards improved PA management effectiveness.	By 20% by Year 5	**On target**
10. Proportion of degraded habitats rehabilitated within the PA system	To be established - baseline degraded areas to be measured for revised indicator	The project has initiated restoration of 118 ha of degraded land; achieving end target unlikely	30% increase (NEW target for revised indicator, TBC once baseline established)	**Partially on target**
11. Number of new demonstration programmes/ featuring biodiversity friendly production practices (e.g. curing units/ energy efficiency options/ farming practices) adopted	0	The project has initiated demonstration of biodiversity-friendly intervention. Seven demonstrations are reported, against a target of twenty by end of the project.	20	**Partially on target**
12. Areas of forest fragments/ HVBAs in tea gardens inventorised and secured	0	Taxonomical investigations initiated in three selected shola forest patches; however, it is unclear how high	4,000 ha	**Not on target**

Indicator	Baseline	Mid-term status	End-of-Project target	MTR Assessment
Date:	2013	Jan 2021	Mar 2022	
		conservation value considerations will be mainstreamed.		
13. % reduction in fuel wood consumption for processing in tea and cardamom using energy efficient technology and improved design	Baseline to be established in the first year	Energy audits were completed for two tea processing facilities and recommendations formulated. Progress towards reducing fuel wood consumption for processing in tea has not been reported on.	10% decline over baseline usage	**Not on target**

Output 2.1: Capacities of conservation and production sector personnel developed for applying landscape approaches into sectoral planning and operations

Key achievements:

- Training and capacity building of Panchayat elected members, SHG members and interested locals conducted in KILA and through other agencies.
- Study assigned to EMC in progress in 2 selected tea gardens on the level of energy efficiency and ways to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- Five tribal youth attended training at Woodcraft Institute, Bangalore; all have found placements.

Issues / challenges:

- Trained persons need to be engaged in project activities to reinforce training input.
- Engage with tea garden owner-company to instil sense of responsibility and ownership.

Output 2.2: Mainstreaming of biodiversity concerns in key production sectors demonstrated

Key achievements:

- Engagement with two tea companies
- With data from the two companies on bio-mass thermal energy used and carbon footprint the total impact in the project area can be assessed.
- Plantation of cane along river bank at Adimali to arrest erosion
- Introduction of soft non-engineering options can set replicable example

Issues / challenges:

- All activities need to pick up speed.
- Need for forward linkages.
- Supply chains need to be assessed and planned in advance.

Output 2.3: Best practices documented and disseminated for improving decision making on sustainable resource management and use

Key achievements:

- Documentation of Pazhathottam grassland, Punarjeevanam: revival of traditional grains and greens and a few others done.
- The branding and marketing of traditional grains has won the Chinnar tribal settlement a national award.
- Work to improve energy efficiency in lemongrass distillation assigned to CIMAP.

Issues / challenges:

- The tendency to by-pass the community and do the work routinely evident with CIMAP.
- Better knowledge and connectivity with the field necessary on the part of the PMU staff necessary.

Output 2.4: Replication strategies developed for use and management of mountain landscape resources

Key achievements:

- Replication strategies developed at Pazhathottam, Chinnar and Pettimudi.
- Elsewhere replication attempts would be premature.

Issues / challenges:

- With the limited timeline remaining there is need to take up activities on a faster mode.
- Site visits by a team headed by the IG/ DIG on behalf of the NPSC can have a positive impact.

Component 3: Community-based sustainable use and management of wild resource

Outcome 3: Appropriate and effective governance framework for multiple use high range landscape evolved	
Progress towards achieving Outcome 3 is rated as:	**Moderately satisfactory**

Progress towards achievement of Outcome 3 is rated as **moderately satisfactory**, as outlined below in **Table 9** and further broken down in **Annex 4**.

Table 9: Progress towards results, Outcome 3

Indicator	Baseline	Mid-term status	End-of-Project target	MTR Assessment
Date:	**2014**	**Sep 2020**	**Dec 2021**	
14. Number of development plans of PRIs/ CBOs that incorporate bio-diversity friendly practices	0	Annual plans for the 11 Grama Panchayats are under development.	11	**On target**
15. Number of community representatives/ PRIs trained in biodiversity mainstreaming activities	0	Trainings have been delivered to local community members and local government officials.	500	**On target**
16. Number of new micro-enterprises at individual/SHG/ CBO/ and other local institution levels based sustainable resource use	0	Interventions have been initiated on strengthening or establishing micro-enterprises; however, the envisaged micro-plans have not been developed.	Target to be define after design of the micro-plans	**Partially on target**
17. % reduction in biomass consumption in lemon grass enterprises through adoption of improved technology	494,361 kg/ year	Recommendations made on reducing biomass consumption in lemon grass processing, but there has been no reporting on progress towards achievement of the end-of-project target.	20 percent by project end	**Not on target**
18. Appropriate model agreement between different agencies on the effective implementation of FRA as evidence through sustainable use and protection of biodiversity in Edamalakudy Panchayat	0	Trainings have been delivered on implementation of the Forest Rights Act (FRA); however, unclear progress towards a model agreement on the implementation of the FRA, specifically envisaged for the Edamalakudy Panchayat.	1	**Not on target**

Output 3.1: Landscape level management plans and sustainable resource management systems in place

Key achievements:

- The work on GIS database with time series analysis and attributes assigned to SACON.

Issues / challenges:

- The maps need to be integrated with existing cadastral maps, resource maps of panchayats and land use maps.

Output 3.2: Institutional platforms of multiple stakeholders evolved and strengthened at appropriate levels for planning and reviewing sustainable resource use (sectoral integration)

Key achievements:

- Work assigned to HKM and the ACS Planning.

Issues / challenges:

- More active involvement of above required in future.
- The panchayat-level elections and the state assembly elections could mean change in elected leaders.

Output 3.3: Management effectiveness of designated biodiversity rich ecosystems are strengthened to address existing and emerging challenges to ecosystem conservation and services

Key achievements:

- Munnar panchayat and Athirapally panchayat presidents agreed to include the same as part of their annual budget with required allocation.

Issues / challenges:

- Similar consent required from rest of the nine panchayats; PMU to ensure it actually happens.
- Provide necessary input to KILA to ensure during its training programmes this item gets necessary emphasis.

Output 3.4: Rare, endangered and threatened (RET) ecosystems and endemic species are secured through improved conservation measures

Key achievements:

- The baseline figures of Nilgiri Tahr and GGS and targets by project end have now been given same clarity; same with the degraded areas within the six PAs targeted to be restored.
- The data of the Forest dept are now being obtained and both sets of figures reconciled.

Issues / challenges:

- Dovetail IHLP activities to existing state and national projects for better synergy.

3.2.2 Remaining Barriers to Achieving the Project Objective

Agreeing on the landscape level management and governance frameworks. The underlying objective of the project calls for a multiple use landscape management framework. The form of this plan or strategy or framework has not yet been agreed upon, and there has been limited progress or deliberation regarding the cross-sectoral, multi-stakeholder governance institution or mechanism.

Adapting to the current COVID-19 pandemic. There have been significant disruptions in all sectors during the COVID-19 pandemic and some of the project activities have needed to be paused and re-evaluated according to the current constraints, including limitations on travel and gatherings of people.

3.3 Project Implementation and Adaptive Management

Project Implementation and Adaptive Management is rated as: Moderately Satisfactory

3.3.1 Management Arrangements

The project is being implemented under direct implementation modality, with UNDP as the GEF Implementing Partner (Executing Agency) and as the GEF Implementing Agency.

Steering Committees:

There are two steering committees on the project, the main committee at the national level (NPSC) and one at the state level SPSC).

The roles and responsibilities of the National Project Steering Committee (NPSC) and State Project Steering Committee (SPSC) are unclear. The members of the committees are not clearly identified, the linkages between the two committees are unclear.

The project steering committees, one National (NPSC) and one State (SPSC) level, have been inconsistent and there has been a general lack of coordination between the two committees. There have been seven NPSC meetings between November 2015 and November 2020, and three SPSC meetings between September 2014 and February 2020. The regularity of the SPSC meetings has been too infrequent, in the opinion of the MTR team. For instance, there were no meetings convened between April 2018 and February 2020, during the critical period when the strategy was revised, and the project was relaunched. Moreover, an inception workshop was not held at the start of the project in 2014 or

when the project was restarted in 2018. Inception workshops are critical milestones in the project cycle, setting the stage for the project, ensuring key stakeholders are engaged, and addressing possible changed circumstances.

Risk Management:

The 2020 PIR includes a discussion of two critical risks: (1) how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected project implementation, and (2) delays in transferring funds due to continued uncertainty regarding fund flow arrangements. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic was beyond the control of the project and there were significant disruptions in the execution of project activities. The project was able to resume field work when the situation improved later in 2020.

The fund flow uncertainties had been a topic of concern for a long time, including before the pause in project implementation in 2015 and again after the project was restarted in 2018. In the end there was no change in implementation modality, but it was not until 22 October 2020 when the Department of Economic Affairs issued an Office Memorandum clarifying that the existing fund flow arrangements can be continued until project closure.

There has been insufficient attention given to ensuring consistent and appropriate management of social and environmental risks. During the MTR mission there was evidence of the lack of achieving free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) from local tribal communities, interviewed service providers seemed largely unaware of UNDP social and environmental standards, and the project has not yet developed a gender analysis and action plan. These findings are troubling, particularly considering that the project implementation was paused for nearly three years due to a grievance escalated to the UNDP Social and Environmental Compliance Unit (SECU).

Project Management Unit (PMU):

There is an absence of one single person assigned with overall responsibility for managing the project, i.e., a Project Manager. The organogram provided to the MTR team for review contains 14 positions among the national and state level project management units, but a Project Manager is not included. During the MTR mission, the MTR team observed a generally weak sense of unity and a fairly undisciplined work culture among the project team.

The state level Project Officer-Convergence, along with a Finance Administrative Assistant, Project Administrative-Operations Assistant, and other technical officers are situated in Thiruvananthapuram, the capital city of the state of Kerala. However, the project landscape is centred in Idukki District, quite far from Thiruvananthapuram. It is also unclear why the National Project Officer and a Finance and Administration Assistant are anchored with the Wildlife Division of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC).

Project execution is being carried out through contractual arrangements, and at the time of the MTR, there were 55 different service providers, including governmental agencies and institutes, academic institutions, non-governmental organizations, and individuals. With this high number of service providers, maintaining coherency is of primary concern. The management arrangements on the project, however, are not particularly conducive for ensuring coherency. Firstly, there is an absence of a project manager. Two project officers (Convergence / Coordination) are assigned to the project, one anchored with the Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change in Delhi, along with a finance-administrative assistant, and the other posted in the Kerala State capital of Thiruvananthapuram, where one additional Project Officer and two administrative assistants are also working. The other nine members of the team, including officers, coordinators, and administrative assistants, are posted at local levels in the landscape.

Under the direct implementation modality, UNDP has the project assurance role as the GEF Implementing Agency, as well as responsibility for project execution as the Implementing Partner, or Executing Agency. It was difficult for the MTR team to distinguish these two roles on this project, as UNDP Country Office colleagues are closely involved with the project assurance and execution. Assigning or recruiting a project manager would help towards rectifying this situation.

3.3.2 Work Planning

Following the approximate 3-year pause in implementation, the project has managed to initiate of a large number of activities, despite disruptions caused by the devasting floods in Kerala in August 2018 and then due to the COVID-19 pandemic starting in early 2020. Based on findings during the MTR field mission from 02-09 February 2021, the actual work on the project did not effectively start until later in 2019. Before there was a chance to gather momentum, the pandemic brought all activities to a stop in March 2020. The project was able to resume activities in mid-2020, as the COVID-19 infection rates decreased nationwide.

An inception workshop was not held at the start of the project in 2014 or when the project was restarted in 2018. Inception workshops are critical milestones in the project cycle, setting the stage for the project, ensuring key stakeholders are engaged, and addressing possible changed circumstances.

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented challenges to work planning. Adaptive management measures have been implemented but there remains a high level of uncertainty regarding the duration and possible recurrence of the crisis over the short to medium term.

With only one year remaining in the project's implementation timeframe, it would be advisable to link work planning with strategic planning oriented towards achievement of the project objective and outcomes, as set forth in the project results framework.

3.3.3 Finance and Cofinance

Financial Expenditures:

Total expenditures against the GEF project grant reported in the UNDP combined delivery reports (CDRs) through 31 December 2020 were USD 2,348,497, which is 37% of the USD 6,275,000 GEF project grant (see **Table 10** and **Figure 5)**.

Table 10: Project expenditures and indicative budget breakdown

Outcome	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Total	Indicative ProDoc budget
Activity 0	(519)	1,253	1,253	1,253	888	1,313	6,926	12,368	0
Component 1	227,588	66,677	9,622	45,859	31,107	41,773	114,145	536,771	750,100
Component 2	68,473	147,489	11,882	37	189,875	130,013	261,740	809,509	3,500,600
Component 3	51,944	32,419	7,602	240	56,962	230,172	328,707	708,045	1,729,300
Sub-total	**347,486**	**247,838**	**30,359**	**47,389**	**278,832**	**403,271**	**711,517**	**2,066,693**	**5,980,000**
Project Management	99,385	148,781	2,675	14,252	15,668	68,693	(67,650)	281,804	295,000
TOTAL expenditure	**446,872**	**396,619**	**33,034**	**61,641**	**294,500**	**471,965**	**643,867**	**2,348,497**	**6,275,000**

Figures in USD — Balance: 3,926,503
Source of budget figures: approved Project Document — % spent: 37%
Source of expenditures: Combined Delivery Reports (CDR), provided by UNDP

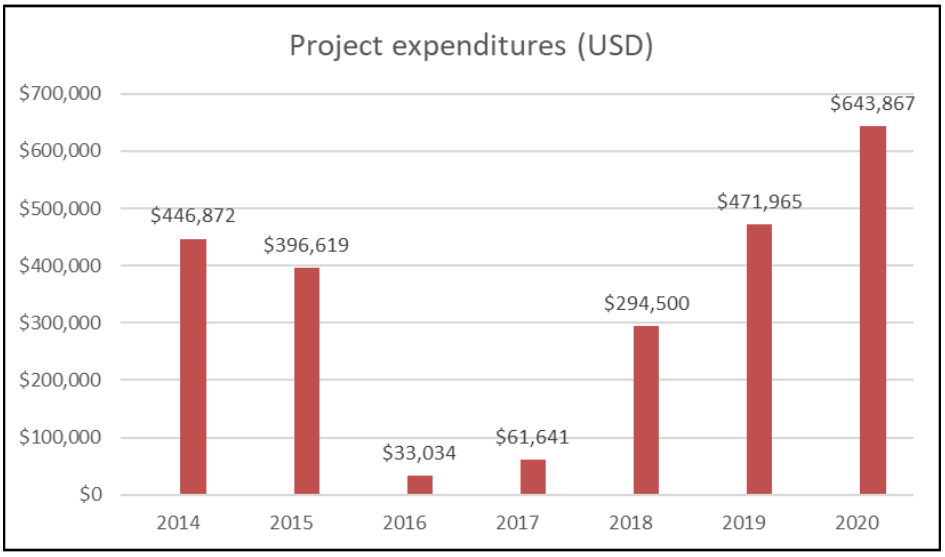

Figure 5: Annual project expenditures 2014-2020

Spending under Component 2 has been particularly low, with USD 809,509 expended of the USD 3,500,600 indicative allocation outlined in the Project Document.

Project management costs through December 2020 are reported at USD 281,804, which is 13.6% of the sub-total of the actual expenditures incurred under Components 1 through 3. At this rate, project management costs would likely exceed the 5% GEF threshold (USD 295,000 was allocated in the indicative budget described in the Project Document – which represents 5% of the total budget estimated for the technical components. In fact, a negative charge of USD 67,650 was booked for project management in 2020, as the total project management costs would have been even higher; however, it is confusing to have zero costs charged to project management in that year.

Asset purchases:

The project asset register was not available for review by the MTR team.

Currency Fluctuations and Inflation:

Most of the project costs are in incurred in Indian rupees (INR), and, therefore, currency fluctuations and inflation are important factors. The INR has been devalued by approximately 23% compared to the USD between the project start date of 15 May 2014, when the rate was 59.2736) and project mid-term on 15 March 2021, when the rate was 72.6080 (see **Figure 6**).

Figure 6: INR:USD exchange rate history 2011-2021

The rate of inflation (consumer price index – CPI) has fluctuated between 2% and 8% from 2017 to 2021 (see **Figure 7)**.

Figure 7: Inflation history (consumer price index), 2017-2021

Financial Audits:

There have not been any independent financial audits made yet of the project through mid-term.

Cofinancing:

The cumulative total of cofinancing confirmed at CEO endorsement was USD 30,000,000, including USD 28,000,000 in grant government co-financing from the MoEFCC and the Kerala State Government, USD 1,000,000 in grant contributions from the Cardamom Growers Association, and USD 1,000,000 in grant co-financing from the UNDP.

By project mid-term (31 December 2020), materialized cofinancing was USD 4,928,439, which is roughly 16% of the USD 30,000,000 confirmed at project entry (see **Annex 5**).

Materialized co-financing includes USD 4,628,439 from state and local governmental partners and USD 300,000 from the UNDP. There has been no co-financing from the Cardamom Growers Association and there is none expected by project closure, considering that the revised project landscape excluded the key cardamom growing areas.

The reported governmental co-financing materialized by project mid-term does not include contributions at the national level. This is evidence of low country ownership and also a lack of co-financing tracking by the project team.

3.3.4 Project-level Monitoring and Evaluation Systems

The monitoring and evaluation (M&E) plan was prepared using the standard UNDP-GEF template. The estimated cost for implementation of the M&E plan, as recorded in the CEO ER, is USD 79,400, which is approximately 1.3% of the GEF grant. The budget allocated for M&E is considered by the MTR team to be low; for reference, the current UNDP-GEF

guidance calls for the M&E budget to be 3% of the GEF grant for projects between USD 5-10 million (based on the July 2020 project document template).

Some of the indicators and targets in the project results framework were adjusted when the project strategy was redesigned; however, there remain uncertainties with respect to baseline conditions, sources of verification, and monitoring and evaluation methodologies. For example, the baseline and mid-term population figures of critical species (Nilgiri tahr and grizzled giant squirrel) are unsubstantiated, according to feedback from Forest Department officials during the MTR mission; the methodology for verifying the water quality indicator is uncertain; the methodology of measuring institutional capacity using the adapted UNDP Capacity Development Scorecard is unclear; there has been no analysis of improvements in Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT) scores of protected areas in the project landscape between 2013 (baseline) and 2020 (referred to as updated baselines); the degraded areas inside and outside protected areas that are restored varies between 116 ha to 750 ha to 1,500 ha; the end target for the number of new micro-enterprises based on sustainable resource use has not been established; biomass consumption in lemongrass enterprises is not being monitored; broader development objectives (e.g., gender mainstreaming) are not integrated into the project results framework; etc.

Some of the baseline analyses appeared to be unavailable to the project team during the MTR. For example, the full set of Project Document annexes, which includes the baseline METT and Capacity Development Scorecard assessments were provided by the UNDP regional office in Bangkok.

A gender analysis and action plan were not prepared during the project preparation phase or through mid-term.

Tracking tools and GEF core indicators:

Based on project progress reports and MTR stakeholder interviews, there has been discussions regarding the assessment of management effectiveness of the protected areas in the project landscape. The use of the Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT) is a requirement for GEF-financed protected area project. The Government of India has developed their own assessment tool for projected areas, called the Management Effectiveness Evaluation (MEE), and the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) is tasked with carrying out independent assessments on a regular basis.

Project baseline METT scores for the six PA's in the project landscape were made in 2013 and annexed to the Project Document. Mid-term assessments were made in May 2020; it is unclear which organization made the mid-term assessments, as the entry for this information is blank in the forms. For all six PA's, significant progress is apparent through comparing the baseline and mid-term METT assessments. During the project's lifespan, the WII has also carried out MEE assessments of the six PA's; this information was provided to the MTR team by the MoEFCC and is listed below in **Table 11**.

Table 11: METT and MEE scores for the protected areas in the project landscape

Protected Area	METT baseline (2013)	METT mid-term (2020)	MEE*	
			Score	Date
Chinnar Wildlife Sanctuary	59	81	84.17% (very good)	2019
Eravikulam National Park	70	84	77.3% (very good)	2006-2014
Kurinjmala Wildlife Sanctuary	29	77	61.67% (good)	2020
Anamudishola National Park	54	79	66.67% (good)	2019
Pampadumshola National Park	63	79	70.83% (good)	2019
Thattekad Wildlife Sanctuary	57	78	77.50% (very good)	2020
*MEE scores provided to the MTR team by the MoEFCC; assessments made by the Wildlife Institute of India.				

There are some similarities between the METT and MEE assessments; however, there are also some differences, e.g., for the Kurinjmala Wildlife Sanctuary, Anamudishola National Park, and the Pamadumshola National Park. Recognizing that the METT and MEE results cannot be directly compared, the mid-term METT assessments show much better performance than the MEE assessments do for these PA's.

The MTR team recommends that the project commission the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) to carry out independent METT assessments. Specific gaps in management effectiveness identified in the METT assessments could then be addressed in the PA management plans mentioned in the self-assessment of progress towards achievement of project results.

If the WII is commissioned to carry out independent assessments, it would be advisable to use both the METT and MEE. This would not require significant additional work for the assessment teams, and the comparative results would provide valuable information for other GEF projects in the country.

With respect to the Capacity Development Scorecard, the mid-term assessment reported that a different scorecard was used. The scorecard presented in the Project Document was specifically constructed for the project and it is unclear why a different scorecard was developed for the mid-term assessment. The MTR team recommends using the original scorecard and to redo the mid-term assessments.

3.3.5 Stakeholder Engagement and Partnerships

The UNDP has worked closely with the MoEFCC on GEF-financed biodiversity projects in India through the years. On this project, communication and engagement with the MoEFCC has been unsatisfactory. A National Project Officer was posted to the ministry only in November 2020. Apart from the annual NPSC meetings, there has been limited information shared.

Ownership of the project activities was found to be low among governmental entities, including at the Grama Panchayat, district, state, and national levels. The project is executing a number of activities, but there has been inconsistent stakeholder involvement and a lack of coherency

The project is working on several aspects of the landscape level land use plan (LLLUP), e.g., developing GIS land use and land cover maps and carrying out sectoral gap analyses, but there does not seem to be a coordinated effort to develop the multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder plan/strategy. And it is unclear which state and/or district government entity will "own" the LLLUP or strategy, and there are no clear plans on how the plan/strategy will be institutionalized. Moreover, the envisaged cross-sectoral, multi-stakeholder institution for implementing the plan/strategy has not yet been established.

Sustainability of project results could be better enhanced through capitalizing upon cofinancing and stakeholder engagement opportunities with production sector enterprises and organisations. Ownership of project activities would also likely be increased if project partners are providing cofinancing. For example:

- The private tea production company owning and operating the facilities where energy audits were carried out should have been requested to provide cofinancing. (lesson learned)
- The hydroelectric power company having water rights to the reservoir where the native fish breeding intervention is being developed could be approached for contributing corporate social responsibility (CSR) or other types of co-financing ensuring long-term management.

3.3.6 Reporting

The Project Implementation Review (PIR) reports are important documents, providing a detailed assessment of progress made and guiding adaptive management. The PIR reports should be discussed in more detail with the NPSC and SPSC members. For example, issues regarding unclear baseline conditions, including populations of critical species, review of mid-term management effectiveness evaluations made, etc. The PIR reports include discussion on limited progress made with respect to the landscape level land use plans and establishing the envisaged cross-sectoral institution for implementing the plan, but there is no evidence that these concerns are being discussed in detail with the project stakeholders, including the steering committee members.

3.3.7 Communications and Knowledge Management

Based on stakeholder feedback during the MTR, internal communication has been generally weak. The lack of a single person, i.e., project manager, responsible for the project is one of the key reasons why communication has been inconsistent and uncoordinated. The project team is split between Delhi and the landscape. Without having the landscape team based in Munnar, there are limited channels for communicating to key stakeholders there.

The project has deliberately split responsibilities for activities in forest areas (Forest Department) and activities outside forest areas (HKM). This split has also affected communication, i.e., it creates and perpetuates a barrier between these two sectors. This is also contradictory with the spirit of cross-sectoral and multi-stakeholder landscape management.

The MTR team has also observed gaps in communication between the UNDP country office and the UNDP regional office, e.g., shortcomings in the flow of information and lack of follow-up, including aspects related to project safeguards (e.g., gender analysis and gender action plan).

The project has developed some high-quality knowledge products, including brochures and videos (on seed conservation, ecotourism, grassland restoration, eco-shop design). It would be useful to develop a knowledge management and communications strategy. It is important to convey the message of project objective, i.e., the project emerged from the primary objective to mainstreaming biodiversity into natural resources-related production sectors. The project landscape was delineated in the Munnar region because Munnar is the hub for production of several cash

crops, namely, tea, cardamom, certain agriculture crops, as well as forest plantations. The linkage should be communicated to the stakeholders patiently and repeatedly. For example, sharing knowledge and lessons learned regarding energy efficiency and low emission energy development among stakeholders in the production sectors (private sector and government entities). The project also has the opportunity to document (with informed consent) traditional knowledge on crops, farming practices, and cultural activities linked to them. Music, poetry, cane weaving, and linguistics were observed during the MTR field mission visit to Adimali, Pettimudi and Marayoor. The poetry and songs of paddy sowing and harvesting that Chinna Thambi Nagan rendered is an example.

3.4 Sustainability

Sustainability is generally considered to be the likelihood of continued benefits after the GEF funding ends. Under GEF criteria each sustainability dimension is critical, i.e., the overall ranking cannot be higher than the lowest one among the four assessed risk dimensions.

Overall:
Likelihood that benefits will continue to be delivered after project closure: Moderately unlikely

There are a number of factors affect the prospects that results achieved on the project will be sustained after GEF funding ceases.

The generally low levels of country ownership diminish the likelihood of sustainability. There has been a lack of focus on developing the envisaged landscape level land-use plan (or strategy) and the cross-sectoral, multi-stakeholder institutional mechanism for implementing the plan. Sector reviews have been initiated, but the criteria for mainstreaming biodiversity are unclear.

The project has made progress with some field level interventions and studies. Due to limited stakeholder engagement, these interventions and approaches have not yet been integrated into sectoral plans and budgetary frameworks.

Future institutional changes (e.g., following elections) also pose risks to sustainability. There are also externalities that affect sustainability, e.g., unpredictable impacts of climate change. The current COVID-19 pandemic poses further uncertainty, for instance, a prolonged economic downturn and disruptions in supply chains might affect the viability of some of the project interventions.

Overall, the likelihood that benefits will continue to be delivered after project closure is rated as **moderately unlikely**. The following sections include considerations across the four sustainability risk dimensions, including financial, socioeconomic, institutional and governance, and environmental.

3.4.1 Financial Risks to Sustainability

Financial Risks:
Likelihood that benefits will continue to be delivered after project closure: Moderately unlikely

With respect to the financial dimension of sustainability, the low country ownership, lack of clarity regarding biodiversity mainstreaming criteria, and shortfalls with respect to project co-financing (approx. 16% has materialized by mid-term) reduce the likelihood that results will be sustained after closure.

Financial sustainability should be more secure in this landscape. There is significant national and international funding available for conservation of the globally significant biodiversity of the Western Ghats.

At mid-term, low ownership and shortcomings in co-financing render prospect of sustaining project results **moderately unlikely**, with respect to the financial dimension of sustainability. With a more targeted and proactive stakeholder engagement strategy, the project has a chance to enhance financial sustainability during remaining one year.

3.4.2 Socioeconomic Risks to Sustainability

Socioeconomic Risks:
Likelihood that benefits will continue to be delivered after project closure: Moderately unlikely

The state of Kerala is a high-income region of India, and the natural resource-based production sectors are an important part of the socioeconomic conditions across the landscape. The project is aiming to improve biodiversity mainstream across the production sector, but there has been limited engagement with the private sector.

At the community level the project has been delivering capacity building and skills training for new and improved nature-based livelihoods. There have been inconsistent approaches in engaging indigenous communities, as well as evidence of not obtaining free, prior and informed consent (FPIC). It is unclear to what extent the community level

interventions will be sustained after project closure, e.g., use of the lemon grass distillation units procured for indigenous communities without FPIC.

The efforts under Component 3 to facilitate new micro-enterprises have been adjusted to identification of enterprise building opportunities, rather than development of micro-plans. This further diminishes the likelihood for sustainability.

The COVID-19 pandemic is not only a public health risk, but also has had significant socioeconomic consequences, and the uncertainty regarding the duration and possible recurrence of the crisis compound the problem.

A rating of **moderately unlikely** is applied with respect to socioeconomic risks.

3.4.3 Institutional Framework and Governance Risks to Sustainability

Institutional Framework and Governance Risks:
Likelihood that benefits will continue to be delivered after project closure: Moderately unlikely

The landscape level land use plan (rebranded in the 2020 PIR as a landscape level multi-use management strategy) is one of the important results envisaged for the project, providing a framework for sustainable management of the target landscape. Project resources are supporting the development of GIS land cover maps and also reviews of certain production sectors; however, there does not seem to be a coordinated effort to develop a landscape plan or strategy. For example, it unclear what criteria will be applied for mainstreaming biodiversity considerations – such as identifying high conservation value areas in the landscapes and integrating management measures into planning and budgetary frameworks.

The project is working on several aspects of the landscape level land use plan (LLLUP), e.g., developing GIS land use and land cover maps and carrying out sectoral gap analyses, but there does not seem to be a coordinated effort to develop the multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder plan/strategy. And it is unclear which state and/or district government entity will "own" the LLLUP or strategy, and there are no clear plans on how the plan/strategy will be institutionalized. Moreover, the envisaged cross-sectoral, multi-stakeholder institution for implementing the plan/strategy has not yet been established.

Low country ownership and a lack of a clear stakeholder engagement approach further reduces the likelihood that project results will be sustained.

Institutional framework and governance risks remain relevant at mid-term. A rating of **moderately unlikely** is applied for this sustainability dimension.

3.4.4 Environmental Risks to Sustainability

Risks:
Likelihood that benefits will continue to be delivered after project closure: Moderately likely

The GEF funding is contributing to strengthened conservation and management of globally significant biodiversity. Significant improvements in the effectiveness of protected area management have been made between the baseline in 2013 and 2020; also confirmed through independent evaluations made by the Wildlife Institute of India.

Although there has been limited progress with respect to the envisaged landscape level land use plan (or multiple use landscape strategy), the project activities are increasing the knowledge base on biodiversity values of the landscape and enhancing awareness among local communities and production sectors.

There are certain externalities associated with the unpredictable impacts of climate change. Overall, a **moderately likely** rating has been applied for the environmental sustainability dimension at mid-term.

4 Conclusions and Recommendations

4.1 Conclusions

Following the approximate 3-year pause in implementation, the project has managed to initiate of a large number of activities, despite disruptions caused by the devasting floods in Kerala in August 2018 and then due to the COVID-19 pandemic starting in early 2020. Based on findings during the MTR field mission from 02-09 February 2021, the actual work on the project did not effectively start until later in 2019. Before there was a chance to gather momentum, the pandemic brought all activities to a stop in March 2020. The project was able to resume activities in mid-2020, as the COVID-19 infection rates decreased nationwide.

Project implementation was also stalled for a period of time after the revised project strategy was approved in 2018, due to prolonged discussions regarding converting the project from a direct implementation modality (DIM) to a national implementation modality (NIM). Disbursements of funds to the contracted service parties and the government agencies according to letters of agreement were delayed during this time. In the end there was no change in implementation modality, but it was not until 22 October 2020 when the Department of Economic Affairs issued an Office Memorandum clarifying that the existing fund flow arrangements can be continued until project closure.

Project execution is being carried out through contractual arrangements with 55 different service providers, including governmental agencies and institutes, academic institutions, non-governmental organizations, and individuals. With this high number of service providers, maintaining coherency is of primary concern. The management arrangements on the project, however, are not particularly conducive for ensuring coherency. Firstly, there is an absence of a project manager. Two project officers (Convergence / Coordination) are assigned to the project, one anchored with the Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change in Delhi, along with a finance-administrative assistant, and the other posted in the Kerala State capital of Thiruvananthapuram, where one additional Project Officer and two administrative assistants are also working. The other nine members of the team, including officers, coordinators, and administrative assistants, are posted at local levels in the landscape.

Munnar is the focal point of the landscape, not only geographically but also socio-politically and administratively, and should also be the location where the project team is based. The original design of the project in 2013 and the revised strategy in 2018 called for the project team to be in Munnar. One of the main goals of the project is to mainstream biodiversity considerations into production sectors operating in the landscape. Munnar is the fulcrum of cash crops in the hill region of southwest India. The loss of biodiversity in and around the tea plantations, cardamom, lemongrass and other cash crops grown in this area, the soil and environment degradation resulting from unsustainable farming practices and inefficient energy use, and the vanishing food crops that were the staples for the indigenous communities (Scheduled Tribes) are cause for concern and the impetus for the development of the project.

There has been insufficient attention given to ensuring consistent and appropriate management of social and environmental risks. During the MTR mission there was evidence of the lack of achieving free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) from local tribal communities, interviewed service providers seemed largely unaware of UNDP social and environmental standards, and the project has not yet developed a gender analysis and action plan. These findings are troubling, particularly considering that the project implementation was paused for 3 years due to a grievance escalated to the UNDP Social and Environmental Compliance Unit (SECU).

Garnering country ownership has also been a challenge, partly associated with shortcomings in coordination between the UNDP and the MoEFCC. This has been further aggravated with the DIM modality, i.e., national and state governmental entities have had limited involvement in procurement processes, quality control, and approval of payments, but also due to uncoordinated stakeholder engagement. The amount of governmental co-financing, one measure of country ownership, that has materialized by mid-term (through December 2020) is USD 4.63 million, which is roughly 17% of the USD 28 million confirmed at project entry; this is further evidence of the lack of dovetailing project activities with ongoing national and state programmes and initiatives.

The project steering committees, one National (NPSC) and one State (SPSC) level, have been inconsistent and there has been a general lack of coordination between the two committees. There have been seven NPSC meetings between November 2015 and November 2020, and three SPSC meetings between September 2014 and February 2020. The regularity of the SPSC meetings has been too infrequent, in the opinion of the MTR team. For instance, there were no meetings convened between April 2018 and February 2020, during the critical period when the strategy was revised, and the project was relaunched. Moreover, an inception workshop was not held at the start of the project in 2014 or when the project was restarted in 2018. Inception workshops are critical milestones in the project cycle, setting the stage for the project, ensuring key stakeholders are engaged, and addressing possible changed circumstances. Furthermore, the NPSC meetings have been reduced to mere formality, at times even by-passing its authority and inadequate presence at meetings.

The landscape level land use plan (rebranded in the 2020 PIR as a landscape level multi-use management strategy) is one of the important results envisaged for the project, providing a framework for sustainable management of the target landscape. Project resources are supporting the development of GIS land cover maps and also review of certain production sectors; however, there does not seem to be a coordinated effort to develop a landscape plan or strategy. For example, it is unclear what criteria will be applied for mainstreaming biodiversity considerations – such as identifying High Conservation Value areas in the landscapes and integrating management measures into planning and budgetary frameworks.

The revised project strategy, in response to the grievance lodged by local stakeholders, excludes the original concept of expanding the protected area system in the landscape. Protected areas, however, remain an important part of the

landscape, covering 25,320 ha, comprising approximately 12% of the land area, and roughly 30% of the GEF grant is allocated towards the GEF-5 BD-1 objective to "Improve sustainability of protected area systems". There are six (6) protected areas located within the project landscape, two (2) fewer as compared to the original delineation of the landscape, and one of the outcome level indicators is to achieve improved management effectiveness of protected areas. Part of the degraded habitats earmarked for rehabilitation fall within protected areas, but it is otherwise unclear how the project is contributing towards improved management effectiveness.

The population size of two indicator species (Nilgiri tahr and grizzled giant squirrel) is one of the objective-level indicators for the project. Based on findings of the MTR, population size estimates reported in project reports were questioned by landscape stakeholders, inferring that the project has had limited coordination with PA's and wildlife departments with respect to methodologies, spatial and temporal variations, statistical data relied upon, etc.

Under the direct implementation modality, UNDP has the project assurance role as the GEF Implementing Agency, as well as responsibility for project execution as the Implementing Partner, or Executing Agency. It was difficult for the MTR team to distinguish these two roles on this project, as UNDP Country Office colleagues are closely involved with the project assurance and execution. Assigning or recruiting a project manager would help towards rectifying this situation.

Whilst the project faces significant challenges, there has been important progress made on some activities, the project objective remains highly relevant, and feedback during the MTR has confirmed keen interest among landscape level stakeholders in realising a higher level of engagement. Project performance can be improved, but to do this, certain strong decisions need to be taken and the same implemented. If the MTR recommendations are followed it is envisaged that the project could be brought on track and taken to a successful conclusion.

4.2 Recommendations

No.	Recommendation	Responsibility
Project implementation		
1.	**Reorganize and strengthen project governance and management arrangements**, including: a) Designate or recruit a full-time Project Manager and develop terms of reference that clearly outlines the roles and responsibilities for this position. b) Relocate the Project Officer-Convergence and consolidate the other positions to Munnar, where the District Forestry and Wildlife Department has provided ample office space and facilities. c) Ensure the National Project Officer anchored with the MoEFCC maintains close review of each project activity, with regular visits to field sites, under the directions of the Deputy Inspector General (DIG) and Inspector General (IG). d) The MoEFCC should carry out an internal review of the operations of the NPSC and SPSC, and prepare updated terms of reference for both committees, indicating members and describing responsibilities, cooperation and coordination, and an increased frequency of convening meetings during the remaining project implementation timeframe, etc. e) The NPSC may set up a group headed by the DIG to carry out on-the-ground assessment of the activities under the Project at regular intervals and to brief the NPSC members at every meeting. f) Describe clearly how project assurance and direct implementation roles are segregated through updating ToRs for respective individuals and preparing an updated Governance and Management Arrangements narrative for the project. g) Operationalise a performance appraisal system for project team members, providing constructive feedback.	UNDP, NPSC (MoEFCC), SPSC
2.	**Develop and initiate the implementation of a sustainability plan,** including but not limited to: a) Develop a Theory of Change that describes the envisaged intermediate outcomes (following closure of the GEF project) and long-term intended impacts, and the key assumptions for achieving these results. The MTR team has prepared a preliminary draft of a Theory of Change (included in the MTR report). b) Carry out proactive advocacy with the State Forest Development Agency (SFDA) for hosting the LLLUP and taking over the interventions initiated during the project, e.g., presenting the LLLUP at SFDA biannual governing council meetings, describing how the plan and interventions can be integrated into the SFDA's strategic planning and budgetary frameworks.	UNDP, NPSC, SPSC, SFDA

No.	Recommendation	Responsibility
	c) Encourage the Forest Departments and other subnational entities to integrate the project interventions into their annual operating budgets. d) Establish a Working Group reporting directly to the State Project Steering Committee as the cross-sectoral, multi-stakeholder mechanism for overseeing the implementation of the LLUP and facilitate regular meetings. In this way the mechanism would be operationalized during the project's lifetime, allowing time to sort out the specific roles and responsibilities of the members and agreeing upon a nodal agency for instituting the multi-stakeholder landscape management strategy. e) The Nodal Officers need to hold review meetings once a quarter at Munnar or any of the project sites, where all departments and agencies engaged in the projects under review may attend. This will ensure gradual take-over of ownership by the government entities and the beneficiaries.	
3.	**Post a Project Coordinator (Special Officer) in Munnar.** In coordination with the District Forest Department, arrange to have a Senior Deputy Conservator of Forests (DCF) posted for a period of two years as Project Coordinator (Special Officer) in Munnar, in charge of coordinating project activities. The Project Coordinator would be seconded from her/his current position, i.e., funded through co-financing contributions, if the posting is exclusively for the project. Alternatively, the DFO, Forest and Wildlife Munnar may be designed as the Special Officer for the project. The project team based in Munnar would work under the overall guidance and supervision of the Special Officer. It is also recommended to issue directions to engage District Coordinator/s of HKM in IDK, ERK and TSR districts as the Project Coordinator/s for the Non-Forest related activities. The District Coordinators should be invited for all review meetings of the Project Coordinator (Special Officer). However, since the MTR field mission, the HKM stands disbanded; hence the role of the SFDA becomes even more crucial.	UNDP, SPSC, Forestry Dept.
4.	**Develop and implement quality control measures, including:** a) Terms of reference for contractual services should be performance-based, with clear breakdowns of activities and deliverables, means of verification progress and completion, and release of funds only after fulfilment of performance criteria. b) Establish and implement a management system for controlling quality, including weekly review of progress by the Project Officer-Convergence; monthly review of progress by the project manager; sensitivity training of project team members on the basic concepts of biodiversity conservation and mainstreaming. c) All project team members posted in Kerala (in Munnar) should attend the Project Officer (PO)'s weekly meetings. The NPO may join online to be updated with the level of progress and to be able to brief the DIG/ IG at regular intervals. The balance project period being only a year in order to show results all concerned need to move at an added speed. d) Through the direction of the Project Coordinator (Special Officer), monthly meetings should be held with contracted service providers and officials from relevant departments and agencies, to discuss progress, synergies, troubleshooting, and sustainability issues. e) Arrange a systematic financial audit of the project to assess management of funds and accountability.	UNDP, NPSC, Forest Dept., SPSC
5.	**Develop and implement safeguard management plans**, including but not limited to: a) Stop forthwith the procurement of lemongrass oil distillation units until FPIC is carried out. b) Develop and implement an Indigenous Peoples Plan (or equivalent, integrated into an updated Stakeholder Engagement Plan). c) Develop and implement a gender analysis and action plan. d) Regularly update the SESP. e) Assign (or recruit) a person on the project management team to be responsible for project safeguards (updating the terms of reference for this person). f) Deliver trainings to contracted service providers and project partners on UNDP social and environmental standards, including gender mainstreaming, FPIC, environmental safeguards, etc.	UNDP

No.	Recommendation	Responsibility
	g) Carry out focused monitoring and evaluation, report progress, and implement adaptive management measures where and when needed.	
6.	**Prepare an updated work plan for the remaining implementation timeframe coupled with a critical path analysis,** identifying specific activities and inter-dependencies among activities, and implement the recommendations outlined in **Table 3** of this MTR report.	UNDP, NPSC, SPSC
7.	**Prepare and implement a project monitoring plan**, including descriptions of the sources and means of verification for each of the project indicators, specific roles and responsibilities, risks and assumptions, and how broader development objectives will be monitored and evaluated during implementation of the project. Please refer to the recommendations in regard to achievement of project results outlined in **Table 3**.	UNDP
8.	**Identify the strategic linkages for the biodiversity mainstreaming objective.** For example, consider applying the **High Conservation Value (HCV) concept** by identifying and overlaying High Conservation Value Areas (HCVAs[4]) onto the land cover maps and integrating these into the landscape strategy/plan. It is also recommended to coordinate with the State Land Use Board, for integrating the land cover maps and HCVA maps (if prepared) into the State's system, making them available to local governments to supplement their resource and revenue maps. Ensure that the Land Use Board shares the maps with the concerned stakeholder departments and agencies for future planning, viz., Revenue, Irrigation and Water, Fisheries, Agriculture, Forest Research Institute among others.	UNDP, SFDA, SPSC
9.	**Develop and implement a knowledge management strategy and action plan**, including: a) Identification of key messages, target audiences, methodologies, assessment, procedures and FPIC processes for documenting traditional knowledge. b) Design a project website or linking with Forest Department's site. c) Utilise social media for timely messaging. d) Garner attention of students and youth through online discussions, fun games, and other methods. e) Use innovative methods to propagate ideas and information, e.g., stationary with photographs or images of Nilgiri tahr and grizzled giant squirrel, as well as Neelakurinji, different varieties of ragi and paddy rice.	UNDP
10.	Strengthen engagement with production sector stakeholders, e.g., engage with the Kerala State Start-up Mission, agro-industrial trade associations, and other business groups to advocate for cofinancing, facilitate partnership building, promote marketing strategies, etc.	UNDP, SPSC

[4]The High Conservation Value (HCV) concept was originally developed by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) in 1999 for use in forest management certification. In 2005 the HCV Resource Network was established, and the scope was widened from "HCV Forest" to "HCV Area" (HCVA).

Annex 1: Evaluation matrix

Evaluation theme	Questions	Sources	Methodology
Project Strategy			
Project Design:	To what extent is the project suited to local and national development priorities and policies?	National development strategies, sector plans, medium term development plan, project document	Desk review, interviews
Project Design:	To what extent is the project in line with GEF operational programs?	GEF focal area strategies, project design, PIR reports	Desk review, interviews
Project Design:	To what extent are the objectives and design of the project supporting environment and development priorities?	UNPDF, UNDP CPD, multilateral environmental agreements, etc.	Desk review, interviews
Project Design:	Does the project design remain relevant in generating global environmental benefits?	GEF strategies, national and subnational development plans, PIF, project document, CEO endorsement request, reviews, PIRs	Desk review, interviews
Results Framework:	Does the results framework fulfil SMART criteria and sufficiently captures the added value of the project?	Strategic results framework, tracking tools, inception report, PIRs	Desk review, interviews
Results Frameworks:	What changes could be made (if any) to the design of the project in order to improve the achievement of the project's expected results?	SMART analysis of results framework, current national and local development strategies	Desk review, interviews
Mainstreaming:	How are broader development objectives are represented in the project design?	Project document, social and environmental social screening procedure, gender action plan, work plans for community activities, training records, monitoring reports of community activities, project steering committee meeting minutes, stakeholder feedback during MTR mission	Desk review, interviews, field visits
Progress towards Results			
Progress towards Outcomes Analysis:	Has the project been effective in achieving the expected outcomes and objective?	PIRs, self-assessment reports by PMU, annual reports, monitoring reports, output level deliverables, mid-term tracking tool, stakeholder feedback during MTR mission	Desk review, interviews, field visits
Progress towards results:	To what extent has the project increased institutional capacity to sustainably manage the project landscape?	Progress reports, national and local development strategies, capacity development scorecards, etc.	Desk review, interviews, field visits.
Progress towards results:	How has the project been able to influence monitoring and evaluation associated with landscape conservation and management?	Progress reports, national and local development strategies, budget allocations, increased level of awareness	Desk review, interviews, field visits
Risk management:	What were the risks involved and to what extent were they managed?	Project document, risk log, progress reports	Desk review, interviews, field visits
Lessons learned:	What lessons have been learned from the project regarding achievement of outcomes?	Progress reports, lessons learned reports, back-to-office reports	Desk review, interviews
Remaining Barriers to Achieving the Project Objective:	How are the project outputs addressing key barriers?	PIRs, annual reports, project steering committee meeting minutes, stakeholder feedback during MTR mission	Desk review, interviews, field visits
Project Implementation & Adaptive Management			
Management Arrangements, GEF Partner Agency:	How were lessons learned on other projects incorporated into project implementation?	PIRs, project steering committee meeting minutes, audit reports, feedback obtained during MTR mission	Desk review, interviews
Management Arrangements, Executing Agency/Implementing Partner:	How effective has adaptive management been, e.g., in response to recommendations raised by project steering committee?	PIRs, project steering committee meetings, feedback obtained during MTR mission	Desk reviews, interviews

Evaluation theme	Questions	Sources	Methodology
Work Planning:	Are milestones within annual work plans consistent with indicators in strategic results framework.	Project document, multi-year work plan, annual work plans, PIRs, financial expenditure reports, feedback obtained during MTR mission	Desk review, interviews
Finance and Cofinance:	How efficient has financial delivery been?	Financial expenditure reports, combined delivery reports, audit reports, project steering committee meeting minutes, PIRs, mid-term cofinancing report, feedback obtained during MTR mission	Desk review, interviews
Cost-effectiveness:	How cost-effective have the project interventions been?	Analysis of progress towards results, financial delivery	Desk review, interviews, field visits
Project-level Monitoring and Evaluation Systems:	How timely has implementation of adaptive management measures been?	PIRs, mid-term tracking tools, monitoring reports, annual progress reports, self-assessment reports by PMU, project steering committee meeting minutes, feedback obtained during MTR mission	Desk review, interviews, field visits
Stakeholder Engagement:	How inclusive and proactive has stakeholder involvement been?	Stakeholder involvement plan in the project document, meeting minutes, records of exchange visits, stakeholder feedback obtained during MTR mission	Desk review, interviews, field visits
Grievance redress	How effectively has the project managed and responded to grievances.	SECU report, updated versions of the SESP, PIR reports, stakeholder meetings.	Desk review, interviews, field visits
Partnership Arrangements:	How effective have partnership arrangements been?	Partnership agreements, contracts, progress reports, cofinancing realized	Desk review, interviews, field visits
Local Capacity Utilized:	Has the project efficiently utilized local capacity in implementation?	Contracts, financial expenditure records, progress reports	Desk review, interviews, field visits
Reporting:	Adaptive management measures implemented in response to recommendations recorded in PIRs.	PIRs, annual progress reports, mid-term tracking tools, output level project deliverables, feedback obtained during MTR mission	Desk review, interviews
Communication:	Project information is effectively managed and disseminated.	Internet and social media, press releases, media reports, statistics on awareness campaigns, evidence of changes in behaviour, feedback obtained during MTR mission	Desk review, interviews, field visits
Sustainability			
Risk Management:	How timely has delivery of project outputs been?	Project document, risk logs, PIRs, project steering committee meeting minutes, feedback during MTR mission	Desk review, interviews
Lessons Learned:	What lessons can be drawn regarding sustainability of project results, and what changes could be made (if any) to the design of the project in order to improve sustainability of project results?	Progress reports, monitoring and evaluation reports, feedback from stakeholders, current national and local development strategies and sector plans	Desk review, interviews, field visits
Financial Risks to Sustainability:	How has the project addressed financial and economic sustainability? Are recurrent costs sustainable after project closure? What evidence is available that demonstrates budget allocations have been or will be made to sustain project results?	Budget allocations, progress reports, government publications	Desk review, interviews, field visits
Socioeconomic Risks to Sustainability:	What incentives are in place or under development to sustain socioeconomic benefits? What evidence is available that demonstrates capacities and resilience of local communities have been strengthened?	Project outputs realized, progress reports	Desk review, interviews, field visits
Institutional Framework and Governance Risks to Sustainability:	How have management plans and other approaches promoted by the project	Tracking tool, training records, evidence of policy reform, governance platform records	Desk review, interviews, field visits

Evaluation theme	Questions	Sources	Methodology
	been integrated into institutional frameworks? What is the operating status of multi-stakeholder governance platforms? What is the level of ownership of approaches promoted by the project? What policies are in place that enhance the likelihood that project results will be sustained?		
Environmental Risks to Sustainability:	What evidence is available that demonstrate reduction of key threats to biodiversity and ecosystems? Have any new environmental threats emerged?	Tracking tool, budget allocations, training record, statistics on awareness campaigns	Desk review, interviews, field visits
Progress towards Impact			
Environmental stress reduction	What evidence is available that demonstrates progress towards environmental stress reduction?	Delivered outputs, progress reports, feedback from stakeholders, monitoring and evaluation reports	Desk review, interviews, field visits
Environmental status change	What evidence is available that demonstrates progress towards environmental status change?	Delivered outputs, progress reports, feedback from stakeholders, monitoring and evaluation reports	Desk review, interviews, field visits
Community well-being	What evidence is available that demonstrates progress towards improving community well-being?	Delivered outputs, progress reports, feedback from stakeholders, monitoring and evaluation reports	Desk review, interviews, field visits
Policies	What evidence is available that demonstrates progress towards changes in policies?	Delivered outputs, progress reports, feedback from stakeholders, monitoring and evaluation reports	Desk review, interviews, field visits
Governance mechanisms	What evidence is available that demonstrates progress towards changes in governance mechanisms?	Delivered outputs, progress reports, feedback from stakeholders, monitoring and evaluation reports	Desk review, interviews, field visits
Capacities	What evidence is available that demonstrates progress towards changes in capacities?	Delivered outputs, progress reports, feedback from stakeholders, monitoring and evaluation reports	Desk review, interviews, field visits
Unintended consequences	What unintended consequences have occurred?	Delivered outputs, progress reports, feedback from stakeholders, monitoring and evaluation reports	Desk review, interviews, field visits

Annex 2: List of documents reviewed

1. Project Identification Form (PIF)
2. Project Document (including full set of annexes and tracking tools)
3. GEF CEO Endorsement Request (including comments-responses matrix)
4. Project inception report(s)
5. Grievance lodged on through the UNDP mechanism and the SECU report
6. Revised Implementation Strategy
7. Updated versions of the UNDP Social and Environmental Screening Procedure (SESP)
8. Two-year work plans for each year of implementation
9. Annual financial project reports (combined delivery reports - CDR), broken down by components and project management
10. Cofinancing table filled in
11. Project Implementation Reports (PIR's) for each year of project implementation
12. METT (baseline and mid-term assessments)
13. Capacity Development Scorecards (baseline and mid-term assessments)
14. Project deliverables (report, technical studies, etc.)
15. National and State level Steering Committee meetings minutes
16. Communication products
17. UNDP India Country Programme Document

Annex 3: List of persons interviewed

Date	Name	Position	Organization	Outcome	Activity
6 January 2021 VM	Ruchi Pant	Head, NRM & Biodiversity	UNDP India	All outcomes	Introductory call. The project management unit team presented project progress.
	Anusha Sharma	Project Officer	UNDP India		
	Arun Ramachandran Ganesan	Project Officer, Convergence	Project management unit		
	Vrindhanath M C	National Project Officer	Project management unit		
14 January 2021 VM	Lisa Farroway	Regional Technical Advisor	UNDP Asia-Pacific Regional Bureau	All outcomes	Overall progress, challenges, implementation, safeguards, finances.
	Somaya Bunchorntavakul	Programme Associate	UNDP Asia-Pacific Regional Bureau		
22 & 24 January 2021 VM	Dr. Khanduri	Former project focal point	Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change	All outcomes	Project development, stakeholder consultations, grievance, implementation arrangements and modality.
27 Jan., 2021 VM	Dr T N Seema	Executive Director	Haritha Keralam Mission		Meeting not held as ED indisposed
28 January 2021 VM	…	Principal Consultant Junior Consultant	SACON-Salim Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History	Outcome 2	Spatial mapping of the landscape under GoI-GEF-UNDP India High Range Mountain Landscape Project, Munnar, Kerala"
29 January 2021 VM	Johnson Daniel Suresh Babu, Sarath	Energy Auditor	Energy Management Centre	Outcome 2	Energy Audit of two facilities of KDHP company, one Orthodox tea processing facility & one CTC tea factory
29 January 2021 VM	Dr Suresh Kumar Dr Leena Dr Anwar Chiranjiv Pradhan	Domain Experts Biologist	Kerala University of Fisheries and Ocean Studies (KUFOS)	Outcome 1	Enhancing reservoir fish production and creation of livelihood opportunities for the tribal community in the Munnar landscape through development of aquaculture practices of native fishes
2 Feb, 2021 PM	Arun Ramachandran Vrinda Nath	PO (Convergence) NPO	PMU	Outcome 1-3	Local Action Plan for Climate Change & Capacity Building
3 February 2021 VM	Abraham Koshi Jagajeevan & Others	State Project Director Technical Consultants	Haritha Kerala Mission	All Outcomes	Review Meeting with HKM
3 February 2021 PM	Ganga Sanjana Jismon Benith A Iqbal Elvin Anna Joy Alen Thomas	Individual Consultant Recycle Bin Team Members		Outcome 1	Green Corridor Initiative

Date	Name	Position	Organization	Outcome	Activity
3 February 2021 PM	Albert Paul Subash	Asst. Co-ordinator Regional Co-ordinator	IRTC	Outcome 1	Waste Management interventions in Athirapilly and other GPs in the landscape
3 February 2021 PM	Community Members	Haritha Karma Sena	Athirapilly Grama panchayath	Outcome 1	
3 February 2021 PM	Pradeep Aathira Devarajan SauminiManilal	Secretary Vice President Member	Athirapilly Grama panchayath	Outcome 1	
3 February 2021 PM	S SSalimon SwathySugathan Rani M A Sindhu P V	Asstt Director, Agri Dept (Nodal Officer) Field Associate Project Associate Field Associate	Athirapilly Tribal Valley Project	Outcome 1	Sustainable livelihood practices for Tribal communities
4 February 2021 PM	Maneesh Midhun Thampi Felix Community Members	Panchayath Member, MNREGA Asst. Executive Engineer Haritha Keralam Resource Person MNREGA Workers	Adimali Grama panchayath Adimali Grama panchayath HKM Community members	Outcome 2	Adopting Soil stabilization measures outside forest
4 February 2021 PM	I V koshi E K Shaji Thampi Felix Farmers	Asst. Director Agriculture, Devikulam Agriculture Officer, Adimali Haritha Keralam Resource Person Pettimudi	Agriculture Department Adimali Grama panchayath Haritha Keralam Mission Community Members	Outcome 1	Sustainable livelihood practices among communities supporting biodiversity (Pettimudi Seed Conservation)
4 February 2021	School Officials and students Naveen Thampi Felix	Head Master & Teachers Technical Expert, TIES Resource Person SHG, Kudumbasree Members	Adimali Govt High School, Adimali TIES Haritha Keralam	Outcome 2	Removal of invasive and exotic species and Eco-restoration of degraded locations outside forest areas (Pachathuruthu)

Date	Name	Position	Organization	Outcome	Activity
		About 20 students of class 10			
5 February 2021	Lekshmi R Job Neriamparambil	Wildlife Warden Munnar Asst. Wildlife Warden, Rajamala National Park	Forest Department	Outcome 1	Sustainable livelihood practices among communities supporting biodiversity
5 February 2021 PM	Sebastain K J SreyasValson, Damodaran P N Dr. G S Madhu	Resource Person District Coordinator,	Haritha Keralam Mission IRTC IRTC Haritha Keralam Mission	Outcome 1	Waste Management interventions in Athirapilly and other GPs in the landscape
5 February 2021 PM	Manimozhi Ajithkumar Peter Community members	President Secretary Vice President Haritha Karma Sena	Munnar Grama Panchayath	Outcome 1	Waste Management interventions in Athirapilly and other GPs in the landscape
5 Feb., 2021 PM	PMU Team + NPO	Members	IHLP	All Outcomes	Review & Feedback
6 February 2021 PM	M V G Kannan IFS Sajeesh Kumar Arun Maharaja	Divisional Forest Officer, Munnar Asst. Conservator Forest, Munnar Range Forest Officer	Forest Department	Outcome 3	RESTORATION OF HIGH VALUE BIODIVERSITY AREAS AND DEGRADED ECOSYSTEMS
6 February 2021 PM	Georgi P Mathachan B N Anjankumar Anoop K R Rahul B B Ranjith Suhyb P J Lekshmi R Kannan M V G Jose Prakash B Sajeesh Kumar	 CCF High Range Circle Kottayam State Nodal Officer Field Director Periyar Tiger Reserve, Kotayam Wildlife Warden Idukki Divisional Forest officer, Marayoor Divisional Forest officer, Mankulam Wildlife Warden, Munnar Divisional Forest officer, Munnar FDA Malayatoor Asst Conservator of Forest, Munnar	Forest Department	Outcome 3	Meeting with FDA Officials in the Project Landscape
6 February 2021 PM	Lekshmi R Arun Kumar	Wildlife Warden Munnar Asst. Wildlife Warden Shola National park	Forest Department	Outcome 3	RESTORATION OF HIGH VALUE BIODIVERSITY AREAS AND DEGRADED ECOSYSTEMS

Date	Name	Position	Organization	Outcome	Activity
6 Feb., 2021 VM	Dr Joy	Director	KILA	Outcome 1,2	Capacity Building & Studies
7 February 2021 PM	B Renjith Vinod	DFO, Marayoor Range Forest Officer	Forest Department	Outcome 3	Marayoor DFO interaction @ DFO office: Sandal wood interventions
7 February 2021 PM	B Renjith Vinod	DFO, Marayoor Range Forest Officer	Forest Department	Outcome 3	Establishment of centralised grassland/shola/ nursery at Devikulam & Pampadumshola. Sandalwood nursery at Marayoor.
7 February 2021 PM	B Renjith Vinod K V Binoji	DFO, Marayoor Range Forest Officer PFM facilitator, Chilla	Forest Department	Outcome 3	Chilla Market automation
7 February 2021 PM	Lekshmi R Renjith B Community Leaders & Members, ST (Indigenous Tribe) Sriram Paramasivan Padmakumar R	 Wildlife Warden Munnar DFO, Marayoor NellipettiKudi Tribal Settlement CIMAP Project Assistants	Forest Department Community Members CIMAP	Outcome 1	Interaction with tribal community members - Lemon Grass Project
7 February 2021 PM	Lekshmi R Ashiq A	Wildlife Warden Munnar Dy. RFO, Chinnar Wildlife Sanctury	Forest Department	Outcome 3	Habitat Improvement - Chinnar Tree Ladder/ signages & interactions with forest staff
7 February 2021 PM	Dhanush Kodi Mini K Community Members	 Social Worker, Chinnar Wildlife Thayanamkudi Tribal Settlement Chambakkad Tribal Settlement	 Forest Department Community Members	Outcome 3	Sustainable livelihood practices among communities supporting biodiversity
8 February 2021 PM	Sumesh Mangalasseri James Joseph Jithin P Issac Abiroop K B	Director, Kabani Team members Kabani Ex-Ward Members	Kabani Kuttampuzha Panchayath	Outcome 2	Demonstration of potential strategies in the tourism sector in the landscape

Date	Name	Position	Organization	Outcome	Activity
	Usha Ayyapanpilla Shyni Ratheesh Surjith K M Jolly Kunjumon Community Members	Kumdumbasree Guide Kumdumbasree Vellaramkuthu Tribal Settlement	Kudumbasree members Community members		
8 Feb., 2021 PM	Ruchi Pant Anusha Sharma PMU Team	UNDP UNDP UNDP		Review	Overall review and debrief after MTR mission site visits
9 Feb., 2021 PM	Ruchi Pant Anusha Sharma		UNDP	One-to-one review	
23 Feb, 2021 VM	Venu	ACS, Planning	Govt of Kerala	All outcomes	
26 Feb., 2021 VM	Tashi Dorji Soon		UNDP	All Outcomes	
4 March, 2021 VM	Padma	Forest Officer & Ex- Nodal Officer	Govt of Kerala		
5 March, 2021 VM	Rohit Tiwari Sonali Ghosh	IG DIG	MoEFCC	All Outcomes	
9 March, 2021 VM	Ruchi Pant Anusha Sharma Sehajdeep		UNDP	Draft Recommendations, MTR	
31 March, 2021 PM	Saumitra Dasgupta Rohit Tiwari Sonali Ghosh Rakesh Jagenia	Addl DG IG DIG DIG	MoEFCC	Draft Recommendations MTR	

Annex 4: Self-assessment of progress towards results (submitted by the project team)

Indicator	Baseline	End of Project target	Mid-term self-assessment (Jan 2021)	Means of verification
Objective: To protect biodiversity of the High Range Mountain Landscape of the southern Western Ghats in peninsular India from existing and emergent threats through building an effective collaborative governance framework for multiple use management				
1. Extent brought under multiple use management planning framework	0 ha	300,000 Ha* '* The total area of the landscape is 2,06,827 Ha as measured through spatial mapping done by SACON	Since there are 3 key entities in the landscape – Grama Panchayaths (Local Self Government Institutions selected through a democratic process), Plantations (private as well as government run plantations) & Forest areas (with Forest Department as the custodians), the project's strategy has been to incorporate principles of multiple use management into the planning process of these three key entities through both capacity building programmes as well as demonstrations of sustainable resource use. The area under the control of these entities are as below: Grama Panchayaths – 2,06,827 Ha Plantations – 38,280 Ha (included in panchayath boundaries) Protected Areas – 25,342 Ha (included in panchayath boundaries) The annual plan 2021-22 of PRIs, the management and working plans of forest divisions and the sectoral plans for production sectors will contribute to multi use management planning framework. The activities undertaken under each entity is as below: 1. Grama Panchayaths: - The Annual Plans 2021-22 for 11 Grama Panchayaths are being developed as Green Plans. This is sensitisation and handholding of panchayath officials and elected representatives on mainstreaming of biodiversity considerations in planning process. Capacities of 250 individuals (128 panchayath officials and 122 elected representatives) have been built on the same. - Green Appraisal Tool has been developed for assessing projects for incorporating biodiversity considerations in GPs planning process. This has been integrated into the training process for panchayath officials and elected representatives - High resolution geospatial mapping completed for 4 GPs (Mankulam, Kuttampuzha, Adimaly and Athirapilly GPs) with land use patterns under various categories. The ground truthing for the rest of the Panchayaths are ongoing. These maps will be	- Annual Plans of 11 Grama Panchayaths - Sectoral Plans (Tea, Coffee, Cardamom, Oil palm, forest plantations and Tourism highlighting multi-use management) for production sectors - Working Plans of Forest Divisions & Management Plans of Protected Areas

Indicator	Baseline	End of Project target	Mid-term self-assessment (Jan 2021)	Means of verification
			used for preparation of sectoral plans for each panchayaths - Integrated Water Resource Management Plan developed for the project landscape with policy recommendations in information system, ground water development, water allocation priorities, institutional mechanism, inter-basin transfer, water use efficiency, participatory water management and flood/drought management. - As part of developing a sustainable agriculture plan for the landscape, demonstration activities for one agriculture season has been carried out for promoting traditional agriculture practices and conservation of traditional seeds - State of Sector document for Tourism sector has been prepared with recommendations on the legal & operational powers of the panchayaths on the tourism sector; a handbook for panchayaths being developed based on these recommendations - Draft Responsible Tourism protocols developed for the project landscape - Detailed Project Reports prepared for solid waste management in 6 Grama Panchayaths - Athirappilly, Kuttampuzha, Mankulam, Chinnakanal, Marayoor & Kanthalloor 2. Plantations: - Preliminary recommendations for Tea, Coffee, Cardamom, Oil Palm and Forest plantations developed as part of the preparation of State of Sector documents. - Energy efficiency plan developed for 2 types of tea factories – CTC and Orthodox to reduce dependency on fuel wood for energy needs 3. Forest Areas: - The management and working plans of wildlife and territorial divisions of forest department are incorporating landscape approach to conservation inside and outside PA respectively. - Review and redrafting of Management Plans and Working Plans with landscape approach & based on National Working Plan Code – drafted 2 Management Plans for Pampadumshola and Anamudishola national park. Munnar and Marayoor Forest Division working plan is in progress	

Indicator	Baseline	End of Project target	Mid-term self-assessment (Jan 2021)	Means of verification
			Major focus is given to water for the future and priority has been given to activities such as phase wise removal of invasive species and restoration of montane shola and grasslands ecosystems. All the past and present local movements paths of wild animals between the natural vegetation and between PAs and the plan for reestablishment and conservation are being made part of Working Plans. Conservation plans for the high value biodiversity areas in each Forest Division irrespective of its ownership also are being incorporated.	
2. Population status of following critical species remain stable or increases:	Nilgiri tahr: 944* '* Proposed change in baseline – 816 (214 – outside Eravikulam NP and 575 – inside Eravikulam NP) (2017 data may be considered since this is the earliest period when census was conducted inside and outside PA)	Remain stable or increases by project end	947 {526 (census data for 2019 within Eravikulam NP) + 421 (census data for 2019 outside Eravikulam NP)} Kerala Forests and Wildlife Department is conducting annual census for Nilgiri Tahr. Due to the pandemic, General Wildlife Census for 2020 in the landscape was not done, however the Tahr Census inside Eravikulam NP has been conducted. In this context, the population census for the year 2019 has been considered for Tahr population in the landscape (inside and outside Eravikulam NP) Activities taken up towards preserving the habitats of Nilgiri Tahr: - Ecosystem restoration in 49 Ha at Idalimotta and adjoining areas under Munnar FDA	Kerala Forests and Wildlife Department, annual census
	Grizzled giant squirrel: 195* '* - the baseline data is incorrect. 2016 data – 104 is the population status; This data may be considered as baseline. The next data available is for 2019 – 107 is the population status; This may be considered as the mid-term value		107 Kerala Forests and Wildlife Department is conducting annual census for Grizzled Giant Squirrel. However, the last census was carried out in 2019. Activities taken up towards preserving the habitats of Grizzled Giant Squirrel: - Established canopy bridges at 14 locations in Chinnar WLS to reduce road kills - Developed guidelines for installation of signages along highways passing through Protected Areas - Installed signages at 14 locations along state highway in Chinnar WLS to reduce road kills and reduce waste littering	Kerala Forests and Wildlife Department, annual census
	Tiger: 34		Tiger as a targeted species under the project has been removed as per the prescriptions in the revised implementation strategy and change in landscape boundaries.	…NA
	~~PA: 207.5 km2~~	~~20% increase~~	…NA	…NA

Indicator	Baseline	End of Project target	Mid-term self-assessment (Jan 2021)	Means of verification
~~Percentage increase in habitats categorized as high conservation value over the baseline~~* *The above indicator was modified as below: Proportion of degraded habitats within the 6 PAs rehabilitated	~~Non-PAs: 846 km2~~ Baseline* Proposed baseline is 2153 Ha as on 2014 (as per information endorsed by Munnar Wildlife Division)	~~15% increase~~ 10% increase by mid-term 30% increase by end of the project* Proposed target is 5% reduction by end of project term	- Draft Integrated Fire Management Plan developed for Munnar FDA - 2153 ha degraded area mapped & proposal developed to restore model plots - Developed site-specific strategy for removal of exotics/IAS and restoration - Developed nurseries for montane shola and grassland species at Devikulam & Pampadumshola - Pilot removal of IAS & restoration initiated in 118 ha (both under PAs & Territorial Division) - Draft proposal and strategy for conservation of elephant population at Anayirangal prepared after public consultation - Elephant crossings across the NH from Munnar to Bodimettu identified, mapped, and developed proposal for doing alternate solutions for elephant crossings	Survey Reports by the Munnar Forest Division
3. Improvements in water quality in the water bodies of the landscape* '* - State Government requests for modification of this indicator, the baseline against the indicator as well as the project targets. The justification note and the suggested modifications have been attached as a note.	BOD: 1.5 mg/l at Neriamangalam and BOD: 1.4 mg/l at Bhoothathankett	10% improvement by project end	Through the project, decentralised solid waste management systems have been established in 6 panchayaths - (Athirappilly, Kuttampuzha, Mankulam, Chinnakanal, Marayoor & Kanthalloor) including: - Formation of Kudumbashree Haritha Karma Sena (SHG groups) for waste collection & segregation; 111 women have become Haritha Karma Sena members - Setting up Material Collection Facilities (local body level facilities for storing and segregation of non-bio waste) at Panchayath level; (Technical assistance provided to Panchayaths in setting up and operationalising of 6 Material Collection Facilities) - Closing of open dump yards (3 dump yards in Mankulam, Kanthalloor and Marayoor closed permanently) - Initiated household and institutional level collection of non-bio waste in 6 local bodies - Segregation of non-bio waste and market linkages with recyclers established in 6 local bodies -	Means of verification
Outcome 1: Effective governance framework for multiple-use mountain landscape management in place				
4. Landscape Level Land Use Plan (LLLUP) developed adhering to multiple use management decisions	0	1	Landscape Level Land Use Plan is being developed to enable Grama Panchayaths, Plantations and Forest Department to adopt multiple use management in their planning process. Some of the preliminary activities towards developing a land use plan that have been carried out are: • Mapping of spatial distribution of sectors with underlying attributes for the project landscape: - Time series analysis (1990, 2000, 2010 and 2020) using Landsat ETM completed for 11 GPs for 2000 and 2010	Landscape Level Land Use Plan endorsed by Grama Panchayaths, Plantation Sector stakeholders and Forest Department

Indicator	Baseline	End of Project target	Mid-term self-assessment (Jan 2021)	Means of verification
			- Completed spatial mapping of Land Use Land Cover using RESOURCESAT data for the 2200 Sq Km landscape (2020 data) - Inventory on decadal Land Use Land Cover change for 11 GPs based on 2000 and 2010 data generated - Digital Elevation Model generated - Ground truthing on the classification has been completed for 4 Grama Panchayaths and is ongoing for rest of the Panchayaths • State of sector document for production sectors in the landscape i.e. tea, coffee, cardamom, oil palm, forest plantations and tourism are being prepared; Draft state of sector for tourism sector has been prepared • Revision of Forest Management Plans (MP)and Working Plans (WP) with landscape approach is in progress; Revised draft Management Plans for Anamudishola National Park and Pampadumshola National Park were completed. The Working Plans of Munnar Forest Division and Marayoor Forest Division is in progress	
5. Sector-specific biodiversity-plans compatible with LLLUP developed leading to effective integration of biodiversity considerations into production practices	0	At least six Sector Plans (Forestry, Tourism, Tea, Cardamom, Agriculture and Tribal Development) and Biodiversity Conservation Plans (5) in place	Sectoral reviews and assessments being conducted for 6 sectors (Tea, Coffee, Cardamom, Oil palm, Forest plantations and Tourism) for mainstreaming biodiversity conservation into plans, policies, and management of the sectors. Draft State of Sector document for Tourism has been prepared Biodiversity Conservation Plans targeted include the below: - Conservation plan for shola patches within tea gardens - Conservation plan for Biodiversity Heritage Site in Mankulam - Inclusion of HVBA conservation within State Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plan - Conservation plan for revival of water channels for migratory birds in Thattekad Bird Sanctuary - Conservation plan for riparian vegetation along Chalakudy River in Athirapilly	Sectoral plans Annual Plans of Panchayaths adhering to the Green appraisal tool. Forest management Plans & Working Plans adopting Landscape approach Biodiversity Conservation Plans
6. Effective and functioning cross-sectoral, multi-stakeholder institution (including conservation, livelihood and production) established	0	1	With revised implementation strategy in place, the project is being anchored with the Haritha Keralam Mission, Department of Planning, Government of Kerala. The mission is an umbrella programme focusing on water conservation, agriculture, waste management and sanitation and hygiene. The Mission works closely with other missions of the	Endorsement by State Level Steering Committee

Indicator	Baseline	End of Project target	Mid-term self-assessment (Jan 2021)	Means of verification
			government, state departments and line agencies to implement actions for sustainable development. Consultations are ongoing for setting up a cross-sectoral, multi stakeholder committee for sustainability and up-scaling of interventions under the project.	
7. Number of key policy and management framework/ decisions adopted at local and state level related to sustainable mountain landscape management* '* - State Government requests removal of this indicator since adoption of the said key policies are undertaken through the relevant departments	0	7 (Wildlife Protection Act, Forest Conservation Act, Environment Protection Act, Forest Rights Act, Cardamom Rules, KDH Act, Land Assignment Act, Commodities Act), National Working Plan Code and other Management decisions	Management Plan Revision in accordance with Wildlife Protection Act and the guidelines of Working Plan Code for the conservation of the Endangered, Threated and Vulnerable species. Drafted 2 Management Plans and 2 Revision of 2 Working plan is ongoing.	…
8. Improvement in Systemic Level Indicators of Capacity Development Scorecard (Annex 19)* '* State Government would like to define the stakeholders for this exercise as officials and elected representatives of Panchayathi Raj Institutions and Protected Area Managers	1.Capacity to conceptualize and formulate policies, legislations, strategies, programme* 40%** '* As per the latest monitoring guidelines of Capacity Development in GEF Operations the sub indicator is "Capacities for engagement" ** Pool of people considered for Baseline information is not clear. Assessment was done for PRIs in 2020 & the values are quoted in the Mid-term self-assessment column	80%	This has been conducted for the Panchayathi Raj Institutions with the latest UNDP Capacity Building score card. Capacities for Management and Implementation is 7%;	Reassessment of Capacity Development Scorecard at Mid Term/ End Term
	2.Capacity to implement policies, legislation, strategies and programmes* 33% '* As per the latest monitoring guidelines of Capacity Development in GEF Operations the sub indicator is "Capacities to generate, access and use information and knowledge" ** Pool of people considered for Baseline information is not clear. Assessment was done for PRIs in 2020 & the values are quoted in the Mid-term self-assessment column	80%	Capacities for Strategy, Policy and Legislation development is 7%;	
	3. Capacity to engage and build consensus among all	80%	Capacities for engagement is 40%;	

Indicator	Baseline	End of Project target	Mid-term self-assessment (Jan 2021)	Means of verification
	Stakeholders* 15% '* As per the latest monitoring guidelines of Capacity Development in GEF Operations the sub indicator is "Capacities for policy and legislation development" ** Pool of people considered for Baseline information is not clear. Assessment was done for PRIs in 2020 & the values are quoted in the Mid-term self-assessment column			
	4.Capacity to mobilize information and knowledge* 35% '* As per the latest monitoring guidelines of Capacity Development in GEF Operations the sub indicator is "Capacities for management and implementation" ** Pool of people considered for Baseline information is not clear. Assessment was done for PRIs in 2020 & the values are quoted in the Mid-term self-assessment column	80%	Capacities to Generate, Access and Use Information and Knowledge is 21%;	
	5.Capacity to monitor, evaluate and report and learn at the sector and project levels. 30% '* As per the latest monitoring guidelines of Capacity Development in GEF Operations the sub indicator is "Capacities to monitor and evaluate" ** Pool of people considered for Baseline information is not clear. Assessment was done for PRIs in 2020 & the values are quoted in the Mid-term self-assessment column	80%	Capacities to monitor and evaluate is 18%;	
Outcome 2: Multiple use mountain landscape management is applied securing the ecological integrity of HRML				
9. Improved management effectiveness PAs as measured and recorded by Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT) (Note: endorsed change to reduce number of PA sites)	168 out of 300* '* - Baselines needed to be re-established as PA sites have been changed as part of Revised Implementation Strategy. The reassessment was done during May 2020. The METT scores reassessed were 484 out of 594. This may be considered as baseline.	By 20% by Year 5* '* State Government proposes to revise the target to improvement by 5% from reassessed METT scores in 2020. This is considering the limited time period, the realistic	METT assessment for PAs has been done during May 2020. The scores are given below Eravikulam National Park - 85 Chinnar Wildlife Sanctuary - 81 Pampadumshola National Pak - 81 Anamudi Shola National Park - 80 Kurinjimala Sanctuary - 79 Thattekad Bird Sanctuary - 78	METT Score Card prepared Annually

Indicator	Baseline	End of Project target	Mid-term self-assessment (Jan 2021)	Means of verification
		improvement in METT scores will be considerably less based on the ongoing activities	484 out of 594	
10. Proportion of degraded habitats rehabilitated within the PA system (NEW Indicator approved; it was 'Increase in area under PA system')	2152.55 ha as per Annexure - 1 Baseline Information, Munnar Wildlife Division	5% increase (considering the limited time 5% will be realistic target)	Same as Point 3	
11. Number of new demonstration programmes/ featuring biodiversity friendly production practices (e.g. curing units/ energy efficiency options/ farming practices) adopted	0	20	1. Project on reviving traditional agricultural practices and seed conservation for achieving food self-reliance was initiated reaching out to 1160 community members, across the project landscape initiating the activities in 345 acres 2. Promotion of Farm Tourism - Set up a pick and pack model for enhanced value from strawberry farming in Munnar 3. Promotion of Mankulam Panchayath as an organic panchayath - Baseline survey of 1800 farmers has been completed 4. Pilot project on safe to eat/ organic cultivation of Cardamom is initiated in Chinnakanal with focus on capacity building & demonstrations in Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) 5. Setting up 15 demonstration plots for promoting integrated farming approach – beneficiary farmers identified with the support of panchayaths 6. Demonstration of paddy cultivation in degraded land in Marayoor, Kanthalloor, Adimali & Mankulam – degraded land & farmers collectives identified 7. Demonstration of Sustainable Sugarcane Initiative in Marayoor-Kanthalloor – model plots set up in Marayoor and Kanthalloor; targeting reduced water usage	Progress reports submitted by the technical agencies.
12. Areas of forest fragments/ HVBAs in tea gardens inventorised and secured (Note: this indicator was missing from results framework and has been re-added in 2019 based on ProDoc)	0	4,000 ha	GPS based mapping of shola forests inside and adjoining tea estate were mapped and categorized based on present ownership status. There are 331 patches of remnant shola patches with an extent of 5608 ha. The taxonomic inventory of selected shola patches also done for flora and fauna. Strategy for securing the remnant shola patches need to be developed with stakeholder consultation	The surveyed sketches will be incorporated in the Working Plans of Munnar Forest Division.
13. % reduction in fuel wood consumption for processing in tea and cardamom* using energy efficient technology and	Baseline to be established in the first year* '* Baseline assessed for 2 types of tea factories in 2020 is as below:	10% decline over baseline usage	Investment Grade Energy Audit has been done at two tea factories of Kannan Devan Hill Plantations Company for assessing the baseline. Thermal energy in the form of firewood hold 94 % of the	IGEA after demonstration for energy efficiency measures

Indicator	Baseline	End of Project target	Mid-term self-assessment (Jan 2021)	Means of verification
improved design (indicator, baselines and targets will have to be re-visited once the Sector Plans are prepared by mid-term) (Note: this indicator was missing from results framework and has been re-added in 2019 based on ProDoc) '* - As per the revised implementation strategy, major areas under Cardamom cultivation were excluded from the project landscape. Hence cardamom may be excluded from this indicator.	Thermal energy (biomass) of 22.92 kWh/kg of CTC production Thermal energy (biomass) of 26.14 kWh/kg of production of Orthodox production		total energy consumed in CTC factory. This quantifies to thermal energy (biomass) of 22.92 kWh/kg of CTC production Thermal Energy in the form of firewood hold 97 % of the total energy consumed in Orthodox tea factory. This quantifies to thermal energy (biomass) of 26.14 kWh/kg of production of Orthodox production	
Outcome 3: Strengthened community capacities for community based sustainable use and management of wild resources				
14. Number of development plans of PRIs/ CBOs that incorporate bio-diversity friendly practices (Note: was missing from Results Framework in error and added in 2019)	0	11 * (100 in ProDoc) '* - The focus is on greening the annual plans of 11 Grama Panchayaths	The Annual Plans 2021-22 for 11 Grama Panchayaths are being developed as Green Plans. This is done through workshops and handholding of panchayath officials and elected representatives. 250 persons (128 panchayath officials and 122 elected representatives) have been trained as part of the same	Verification of 2021-22 annual plans using green methodology developed by KILA
15. Number of community representatives/ PRIs trained in biodiversity mainstreaming activities	0	500	Total achieved as of January 2021 = 529 - 40 tribal women trained on commercial beekeeping in Kuttampuzha - Enrolled 5 candidates from forest depended community for doing course on Advanced wood working at IWST, Bangalore - 15 VSS/ EDC members conducted exposure visit to Keystone Foundation, Kotagiri for sustainable harvesting & processing of NTFP - 111 women entrepreneurs trained in waste collection, segregation at source and management of waste collected in 6 Grama Panchayaths - 108 members trained for developing a community-based tourism model focusing on biodiversity conservation and local economic development initiated in Kuttampuzha and Mankulam; Trainings provided to Home Stay owners, guides, and taxi drivers in Kuttampuzha - 250 members trained in greening PRI annual plans; Representatives and officials of 11 GPs and 4 Block panchayath are being trained for developing green annual plans. As on Januray 2021; three trainings including one Training of Trainers were conducted and	Letter of endorsement by Grama Panchayaths/ Forest Department

Indicator	Baseline	End of Project target	Mid-term self-assessment (Jan 2021)	Means of verification
			250 people (128 panchayath officials and 122 elected representatives) were trained	
16. Number of new micro-enterprises at individual/SHG/ CBO/ and other local institution levels based sustainable resource use	0	Target to be define after design of the micro-plans* '* - 10 Micro Enterprises is planned to be targeted based on identification of enterprise building opportunities in the landscape	Progress towards starting new enterprises in the landscape: 1. Initiated the work with women collectives on bamboo & reed in Athirapilly, Kuttampuzha, Adimali and Mankulam. Facilitated market linkage with order worth more than INR 1.5 Lakhs 2. Passion fruit value chain activities was initiated with community mobilization and production side activities. Over 7500 passion fruit saplings were distributed to community members across 5 Gram Panchayats. Initial discussion with farmer collective for value addition completed in Mankulam. 3. Athirappilly Tribal Valley Agricultural Project (ATVAP): In convergence with the Agriculture Department for Athirappilly Tribal Valley Agricultural Project (project cost of INR 100 million for three years) the activity envisages to improve the livelihood of tribal farmers through the adoption of better farming practices, better output from unit farm area, Organic and rainforest certified products, value addition of farm products and exploring the tribal farm tourism potential of Athirapilly. As part of this initiative, revival of the community organization - Sholayar Girijan Cooperative Society was done, Society board was reconstituted by inducting new office bearers and the Society started functioning. An inception workshop with participation of State Agricultural Minister and senior officials at the project site was conducted. Procurement of agri produce – 6.6 tonnes of Coffee beans and 198 kgs of pepper with the support from tribal community members. 4. Lemon grass value chain activities initiated with production side intervention support to 220 tribal farmers. 5. Under Organic Mankulam project initiated the baseline study, the objective is the development of certified organic production in a value chain mode to link growers with consumers. The activities initiated include the value chain starting from inputs, seeds, certification, to the creation of facilities for collection, aggregation, processing, packaging, marketing and brand building initiative and converting the Mankulam village into organic village	Progress report of partner agencies

Indicator	Baseline	End of Project target	Mid-term self-assessment (Jan 2021)	Means of verification
			6. Orchidarium and Orchid Interpretation Centre near Eravikulam National Park has been set up to promote conservation of orchids in Western Ghats and as a livelihood option for tribal communities 7. Green Innovation Fund launched in partnership with Kerala Startup Mission to promote technology innovation in the space of biodiversity conservation; 11 startups selected to work in the landscape addressing biodiversity challenges 8. Native fish based micro enterprise in Kuttampuzha & Athirapilly. Captive breeding technology of brood of a native species developed 9. Medicinal Plant based enterprise in Marayoor & Kanthalloor – beneficiaries identified 10. NTFP based enterprise promoting sustainably harvested produce in association with Malayatoor FDA benefitting community members in Kuttampuzha	
17. % reduction in biomass consumption in lemon grass enterprises through adoption of improved technology	494,361 kg/ year	20 percent by project end	- Improved technologies identified for reducing biomass consumption.	Energy Audit Document
18. Appropriate model agreement between different agencies on the effective implementation of FRA as evidence through sustainable use and protection of biodiversity in Edamalakudy Panchayat	0	1	Training completed on FRA Implementation process for 25 Forest Department officials and VSS members in November 2020	Model Agreement Document Progress Reports submitted by Technical agencies.

Annex 5: Cofinancing Table

Sources of Cofinancing[1]	Name of Cofinancer	Type of Cofinancing[2]	Amount Confirmed at CEO Endorsement USD	Actual Amount Contributed at Stage of Mid-term Review USD	Expected Amount by Project Closure[3] USD	Actual % of Expected Amount USD
GEF Agency	UNDP	Grant	$1,000,000	$300,000	Not provided	Unable to assess
Recipient Government	MoEFCC and Kerala State Government	Grant	$28,000,000	$4,628,439*	Not provided	Unable to assess
Private Sector	Cardamom Growers Association	Grant	$1,000,000	$0	Not provided	Unable to assess
		Total	**$30,000,000**	**$4,928,439**	Not provided	Unable to assess

Notes:

1	Sources of Co-financing may include: Bilateral Aid Agency(ies), Foundation, GEF Partner Agency, Local Government, National Government, Civil Society Organization, Other Multi-lateral Agency(ies), Private Sector, Other
2	Type of Co-financing may include: Grant, Soft Loan, Hard Loan, Guarantee, In-Kind, Other
3	Expected amount by project closure includes actual materialized by mid-term and expected cofinancing during the second half of the project.

*Breakdown provided by project team:

Government Departments	2019-20	2020-21 (Till Dec 2020)	Overall (INR)	USD
Forest Department	108,244,281.86	150,601,469.86	258,845,751.72	3,543,890.36
Grama Panchayaths	24,779,049.00	29,144,602.33	53,923,651.33	738,275.62
Haritha Keralam Mission (SPV)	2,029,894.67	1,709,912.22	3,739,806.89	51,202.18
MGNREGS	432,791.00	85,880.00	518,671.00	7,101.19
Other State Govt. Departments	3,040,500.00	17,992,814.00	21,033,314.00	287,969.80
Total	**138,526,516.53**	**199,534,678.42**	**338,061,194.94**	**4,628,439.14**

USD to INR rate - Feb 2021: 73.04

Annex 6: Rating Scales

Ratings for progress towards results:

Highly Satisfactory (HS)	Project is expected to achieve or exceed all its major global environmental objectives, and yield substantial global environmental benefits, without major shortcomings. The project can be presented as "good practice".
Satisfactory (S)	Project is expected to achieve most of its major global environmental objectives, and yield satisfactory global environmental benefits, with only minor shortcomings.
Moderately Satisfactory (MS)	Project is expected to achieve most of its major relevant objectives but with either significant shortcomings or modest overall relevance. Project is expected not to achieve some of its major global environmental objectives or yield some of the expected global environment benefits.
Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)	Project is expected to achieve its major global environmental objectives with major shortcomings or is expected to achieve only some of its major global environmental objectives.
Unsatisfactory (U)	Project is expected not to achieve most of its major global environment objectives or to yield any satisfactory global environmental benefits.
Highly Unsatisfactory (U)	The project has failed to achieve, and is not expected to achieve, any of its major global environment objectives with no worthwhile benefits.

Ratings for project implementation and adaptive management:

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

Ratings for sustainability (one overall rating):

Likely (L)	Negligible risks to sustainability, with key Outcomes on track to be achieved by the project's closure and expected to continue into the foreseeable future
Moderately Likely (ML)	Moderate risks, but expectations that at least some Outcomes will be sustained due to the progress towards results on Outcomes at the Mid-term Review
Moderately Unlikely (MU)	Significant risk that key Outcomes will not carry on after project closure, although some outputs and activities should carry on
Unlikely (U)	Severe risks that project Outcomes as well as key outputs will not be sustained

Annex 7: Signed UNEG 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 limitations, findings and recommendations.
7. Should reflect sound accounting procedures and be prudent in using the resources of the evaluation.

MTR Consultant Agreement Form

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

Name of Consultants: James Lenoci, Dr. Nivedita P. Haran

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

Signed on 20 January 2021

	*Nivedita Haran Sd/-*
James Lenoci International Consultant / Lead Mid-term Reviewer	**Dr. Nivedita P. Haran** National Consultant

Annex 8: MTR Terms of Reference

Mid-Term Review of the India High Range Mountain Landscape Project

Purpose

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

MTRs will identify challenges and outline corrective actions to ensure that the project is on track to achieve maximum results by its completion. The results and recommendations from the MTR will be used by UNDP and the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, to design and implement strategy and action plan for achieving desired outcomes under the project. The process will also help identify potential challenges and risks that will affect the project delivery. The MTR will also lay the foundation for a strong Terminal Evaluation (TE). Though the project began in the year 2014, the MTR is taking place in the seventh year of implementation as the project was put on hold for a period of four years due to some grievance raised by a group of stakeholders. On the request of the Government of India, the concerns were addressed by UNDP through the Social and Environmental Compliance Unit. Several rounds of consultations were done with a range of stakeholders at various levels and the implementation strategy of the project was revised. The project reinitiated in the year 2018 and received one-time extension from the GEFSEC till March 2022. Considering the limited time left for the implementation of the project, the MTR will also assess the feasibility of undertaking planned interventions and expected outcomes.

The project landscape is one of the first and most affected from the on-going pandemic and hence several measures have been undertaken by the project to support the stakeholders especially w.r.t sustainable livelihoods. MTR will also assess the viability of the interventions *vis-à-vis* the project outcomes and expected results, identify the challenges related to the same and suggest appropriate measures.

MTR Approach & Methodology

The MTR report must provide evidence-based information that is credible, reliable and useful.

The MTR team will review all relevant sources of information including documents prepared during the preparation phase (i.e. PIF, UNDP Social and Environmental Screening Procedure/SESP), the Project Document, Revised Implementation Strategy, project reports including annual PIRs, project budget revisions, national strategic and legal documents, and any other materials that the team considers useful for this evidence-based review. The MTR team will review the baseline GEF focal area Core Indicators/Tracking Tools submitted to the GEF at CEO endorsement, and the midterm GEF focal area Core Indicators/Tracking Tools that must be completed before the MTR mission begins.

The MTR team is expected to follow a collaborative and participatory approach[1] ensuring close engagement with the Project Team, government counterparts (the GEF Operational Focal Point), the UNDP Country Office(s), Regional Technical Advisor, direct beneficiaries, and other key stakeholders.

Engagement of stakeholders is vital to a successful MTR.[2] Stakeholder involvement should include interviews (virtual if required) with stakeholders who have project responsibilities, including but not limited to Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Haritha Kerala Mission, Kerala Forest Department, Kerala Local Self Government Department, executing agencies, senior officials and task team/ component leaders, key experts and consultants in the subject area, Project Board, project stakeholders, academia, local government and CSOs, etc. Additionally, the MTR team is expected to conduct field missions to the Idukki, Thrissur and Ernakulam districts in Kerala (India). Considering the recent outbreak of COVID-19, virtual tools may be used for stakeholder consultations and evidence-based reporting of results.

[1] For ideas on innovative and participatory Monitoring and Evaluation strategies and techniques, see UNDP Discussion Paper: Innovations in Monitoring & Evaluating Results, 05 Nov 2013.

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

The specific design and methodology for the MTR should emerge from consultations between the MTR team and the above-mentioned parties regarding what is appropriate and feasible for meeting the MTR purpose and objectives and answering the evaluation questions, given limitations of budget, time and data. However, gender-responsive methodologies and tools should be used to ensure that gender equality and women's empowerment, as well as other cross-cutting issues and SDGs are incorporated into the MTR report.

The final methodological approach including interview schedule, field visits and data to be used in the MTR must be clearly outlined in the Inception Report and be fully discussed and agreed between UNDP, stakeholders and the MTR team.

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

As of 11 March 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 a global pandemic as the new coronavirus rapidly spread to all regions of the world. If it is not possible to travel to or within the country for the MTR mission then the MTR team should develop a methodology that takes this into account the conduct of the MTR virtually and remotely, including the use of remote interview methods and extended desk reviews, data analysis, surveys and evaluation questionnaires. This should be detailed in the MTR Inception Report and agreed with the Commissioning Unit.

If all or part of the MTR is to be carried out virtually then consideration should be taken for stakeholder availability, ability or willingness to be interviewed remotely. In addition, their accessibility to the internet/computer may be an issue as many government and national counterparts may be working from home. These limitations must be reflected in the final MTR report.

If a data collection/field mission is not possible then remote interviews may be undertaken through telephone or online (skype, zoom etc.). International consultants can work remotely with national evaluator support in the field if it is safe for them to operate and travel. No stakeholders, consultants or UNDP staff should be put in harm's way and safety is the key priority.

A short validation mission may be considered if it is confirmed to be safe for staff, consultants, stakeholders and if such a mission is possible within the MTR schedule. Equally, qualified and independent national consultants can be hired to undertake the MTR and interviews in country as long as it is safe to do so.

5. Detailed Scope of the MTR

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

i. Project Strategy

Project design:

- Review the problem addressed by the project and the underlying assumptions. Review the effect of any incorrect assumptions or changes to the context to achieving the project results as outlined in the Project Document.
- Review the relevance of the project strategy and assess whether it provides the most effective route towards expected/intended results. Were lessons from other relevant projects properly incorporated into the project design?
- Review how the project addresses country priorities. Review country ownership. Was the project concept in line with the national sector development priorities and plans of the country (or of participating countries in the case of multi-country projects)?
- Review decision-making processes: were perspectives of those who would be affected by project decisions, those who could affect the outcomes, and those who could contribute information or other resources to the process, taken into account during project design processes?

- Review the extent to which relevant gender issues were raised in the project design. See Annex 9 of *Guidance For Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects* for further guidelines.
    - Were relevant gender issues (e.g. the impact of the project on gender equality in the programme country, involvement of women's groups, engaging women in project activities) raised in the Project Document?

- Review the impact of COVID in the landscape and on the project implementation
- If there are major areas of concern, recommend areas for improvement.

Results Framework/Logframe:

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

ii. Progress Towards Results

Progress Towards Outcomes Analysis:

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

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

Project Strategy	Indicator[3]	Baseline Level[4]	Level in 1st PIR (self-reported)	Midterm Target[5]	End-of-project Target	Midterm Level & Assessment[6]	Achievement Rating[7]	Justification for Rating
Objective:	Indicator (if applicable):							
Outcome 1:	Indicator 1:							
	Indicator 2:							
Outcome 2:	Indicator 3:							
	Indicator 4:							
	Etc.							
Etc.								

Indicator Assessment Key

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

In addition to the progress towards outcomes analysis:

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

- Compare and analyse the GEF Tracking Tool/Core Indicators at the Baseline with the one completed right before the Midterm Review.
- Identify remaining barriers to achieving the project objective in the remainder of the project.
- By reviewing the aspects of the project that have already been successful, identify ways in which the project can further expand these benefits.

iii. Project Implementation and Adaptive Management

Management Arrangements:

- Review overall effectiveness of project management as outlined in the Project Document. Have changes been made and are they effective? Are responsibilities and reporting lines clear? Is decision-making transparent and undertaken in a timely manner? Recommend areas for improvement.
- Review the quality of execution of the Executing Agency/Implementing Partner(s) and recommend areas for improvement.
- Review the quality of support provided by the GEF Partner Agency (UNDP) and recommend areas for improvement.
- Do the Executing Agency/Implementing Partner and/or UNDP and other partners have the capacity to deliver benefits to or involve women? If yes, how?
- What is the gender balance of project staff? What steps have been taken to ensure gender balance in project staff?
- What is the gender balance of the Project Board? What steps have been taken to ensure gender balance in the Project Board?

Work Planning:

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

Finance and co-finance:

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

Sources of Co-financing	Name of Co-financer	Type of Co-financing	Co-financing amount confirmed at CEO Endorsement (US$)	Actual Amount Contributed at stage of Midterm Review (US$)	Actual % of Expected Amount
		TOTAL			

- Include the separate GEF Co-Financing template (filled out by the Commissioning Unit and project team) which categorizes each co-financing amount as 'investment mobilized' or 'recurrent expenditures'. (This template will be annexed as a separate file.)

Project-level Monitoring and Evaluation Systems:

- Review the monitoring tools currently being used: Do they provide the necessary information? Do they involve key partners? Are they aligned or mainstreamed with national systems? Do they use existing information? Are they efficient? Are they cost-effective? Are additional tools required? How could they be made more participatory and inclusive?
- Examine the financial management of the project monitoring and evaluation budget. Are sufficient resources being allocated to monitoring and evaluation? Are these resources being allocated effectively?
- Review the extent to which relevant gender issues were incorporated in monitoring systems. See Annex 9 of *Guidance For Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects* for further guidelines.

Stakeholder Engagement:

- Project management: Has the project developed and leveraged the necessary and appropriate partnerships with direct and tangential stakeholders?
- Participation and country-driven processes: Do local and national government stakeholders support the objectives of the project? Do they continue to have an active role in project decision-making that supports efficient and effective project implementation?
- Participation and public awareness: To what extent has stakeholder involvement and public awareness contributed to the progress towards achievement of project objectives?
- How does the project engage women and girls? Is the project likely to have the same positive and/or negative effects on women and men, girls and boys? Identify, if possible, legal, cultural, or religious constraints on women's participation in the project. What can the project do to enhance its gender benefits?

Social and Environmental Standards (Safeguards)

- Validate the risks identified in the project's most current SESP, and those risks' ratings; are any revisions needed?
- Summarize and assess the revisions made since CEO Endorsement/Approval (if any) to:
    - The project's overall safeguards risk categorization.
    - The identified types of risks[8] (in the SESP).
    - The individual risk ratings (in the SESP) .
- Describe and assess progress made in the implementation of the project's social and environmental management measures as outlined in the SESP submitted at CEO Endorsement/Approval (and prepared during implementation, if any), including any revisions to those measures. Such management measures might include Environmental and Social Management Plans (ESMPs) or other management plans, though can also include aspects of a project's design; refer to Question 6 in the SESP template for a summary of the identified management measures.

A given project should be assessed against the version of UNDP's safeguards policy that was in effect at the time of the project's approval.

Reporting:

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

[8] Risks are to be labeled with both the UNDP SES Principles and Standards, and the GEF's "types of risks and potential impacts": Climate Change and Disaster; Disadvantaged or Vulnerable Individuals or Groups; Disability Inclusion; Adverse Gender-Related impact, including Gender-based Violence and Sexual Exploitation; Biodiversity Conservation and the Sustainable Management of Living Natural Resources; Restrictions on Land Use and Involuntary Resettlement; Indigenous Peoples; Cultural Heritage; Resource Efficiency and Pollution Prevention; Labor and Working Conditions; Community Health, Safety and Security.

Communications & Knowledge Management:

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

iv. Sustainability

- Validate whether the risks identified in the Project Document, Annual Project Review/PIRs and the ATLAS Risk Register are the most important and whether the risk ratings applied are appropriate and up to date. If not, explain why.
- In addition, assess the following risks to sustainability:

Financial risks to sustainability:

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

Socio-economic risks to sustainability:

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

Institutional Framework and Governance risks to sustainability:

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

Environmental risks to sustainability:

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

Conclusions & Recommendations

Evidence-based conclusions, in light of the findings, should be a part of the MTR report.

Additionally, the MTR team is expected to make recommendations to the Project Team. Recommendations should be succinct suggestions for critical intervention that are specific, measurable, achievable, and relevant. A recommendation table should be put in the report's executive summary. See the *Guidance For Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects* for guidance on a recommendation table.

There should be no more than 15 recommendations in total.

Ratings

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

Table. MTR Ratings & Achievement Summary Table for India High Range Mountain Landscape Project

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

6. MTR ARRANGEMENTS

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

The Commissioning Unit will contract the consultants and ensure the timely provision of per diems and all necessary arrangements for the MTR team and will provide an updated stakeholder list with contact details (phone and email). The Project Team will be responsible for liaising with the MTR team to provide all relevant documents, set up stakeholder interviews, and arrange field visits.

6. ETHICS

The MTR team will be held to the highest ethical standards and is required to sign a code of conduct upon acceptance of the assignment. This MTR will be conducted in accordance with the principles outlined in the UNEG 'Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation'. The MTR team must safeguard the rights and confidentiality of information providers, interviewees and stakeholders through measures to ensure compliance with legal and other relevant codes governing collection of data and reporting on data. The MTR team must also ensure security of collected information before and after the MTR and protocols to ensure anonymity and confidentiality of sources of information where that is expected. The information, knowledge and data gathered in the MTR process must also be solely used for the MTR and not for other uses without the express authorization of UNDP and partners.

Annex 9: Signed MTR final report clearance form

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

Midterm Review Report Reviewed and Cleared By:

Commissioning Unit

UNDP- Chief, Climate Change, Resilience, NR and Chemical Management

Name: Ruchi Pant

Signature: _____ Date: 19 July 2021

UNDP-GEF Regional Technical Advisor

Name: *Tashi Dorji*

Signature: _____ Date: *19 July 2021*