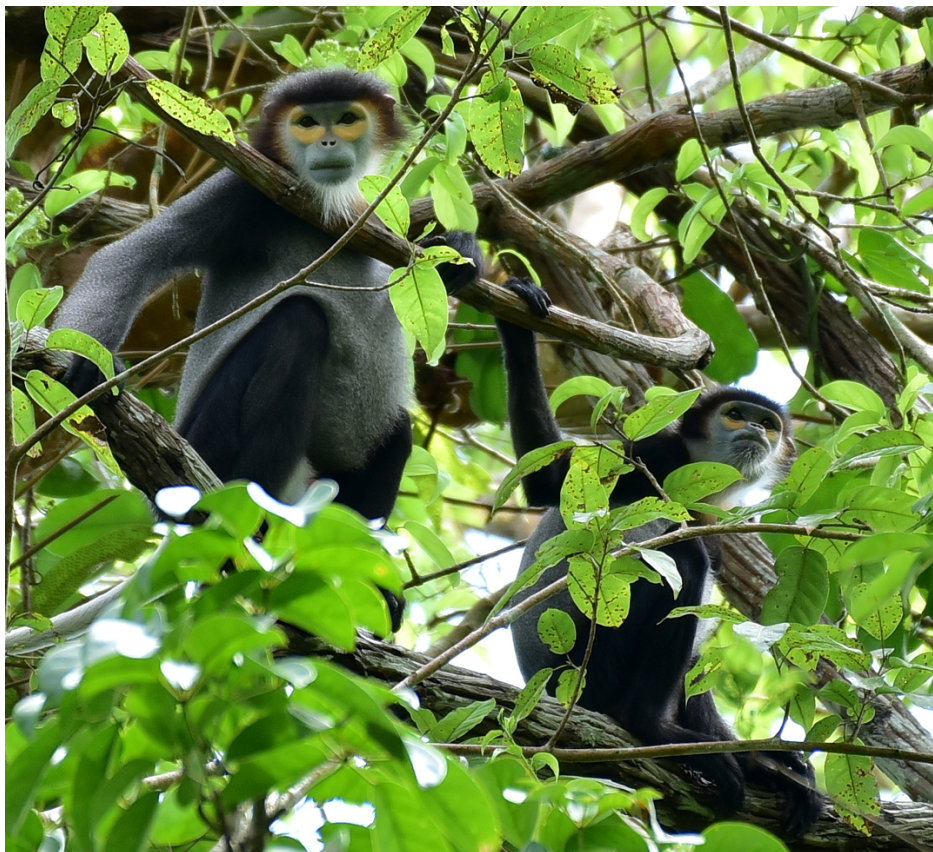


Final report February 2022

**Mid-term Review of the UNDP-GEF project  
“Mainstreaming Natural Resource  
Management and Biodiversity Conservation  
Objectives into Socio-Economic Development  
Planning and Management of Biosphere  
Reserve in Vietnam”**



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PIMS 5659

GEF ID 9361

## **Final Report - Mid-Term Review of Mainstreaming Natural Resource Management and Biodiversity Conservation Objectives into Socio-Economic Development Planning and Management of Biosphere Reserve in Vietnam**

**GEF Operational Focal Areas:** Biodiversity (BD) and Land degradation (LD)

**GEF Implementing Agency:** UNDP

**Implementing Partner:** Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment

**MTR Team Members:** Mr Trond Norheim (Team Leader)  
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Cover photo: Vietnames langurs (from project report)

## TABLE OF CONTENT

1.	PROJECT OVERVIEW AND BACKGROUND CONTEXT .....	1
1.1.	Development context.....	1
1.2.	Project description and strategy .....	1
1.2.1.	Objective.....	1
1.2.2.	Outcomes and expected results.....	1
1.2.3.	Field sites .....	2
1.3.	Project implementation arrangements .....	3
1.3.1.	Implementing partner .....	3
1.3.2.	Implementing partner arrangements.....	3
2.	EVALUATION METHODS.....	6
2.1.	Purpose and objectives of the Mid-term review .....	6
2.2.	Scope and methodology.....	6
2.3.	Target audience for the review findings .....	9
2.4.	Structure of the MTR report .....	9
2.4.1.	Environmental factors .....	9
2.4.2.	Socio-economic factors.....	9
2.4.3.	Institutional factors .....	10
2.4.4.	Policy factors.....	10
2.5.	Development problems that the project sought to address .....	10
2.5.1.	Problem statement.....	10
2.5.2.	Threats .....	10
2.5.3.	Barriers .....	11
3.	REVIEW FINDINGS .....	11
3.1.	Project design and formulation .....	11
3.1.1.	Project design.....	11
3.1.2.	National priorities and country drivenness .....	12
3.1.3.	Theory of Change .....	13
3.1.4.	Gender equality and women's empowerment .....	14
3.1.5.	Social and environmental safeguards .....	15
3.1.6.	Analysis of the results framework.....	16
3.1.7.	Assumptions and risks.....	17
3.1.8.	Lessons learned from other relevant projects incorporated into project design ..	20
3.1.9.	Planned stakeholder participation .....	21
3.1.10.	Linkages between the project and other interventions within the sector .....	21
3.1.11.	Management arrangements in the design .....	21
3.2.	Project implementation .....	21
3.2.1.	Adaptive management .....	21
3.2.2.	Actual stakeholder participation and partnership arrangements.....	22
3.2.3.	Project finance and co-finance.....	23
3.2.4.	Monitoring & Evaluation.....	25
3.2.5.	Implementing agency and executing agency.....	25
3.2.6.	Project risk management.....	26
3.2.7.	Use of social and environmental safeguards.....	27
3.3.	Project results .....	27
3.3.1.	Relevance .....	27

3.3.2.	Coherence.....	28
3.3.3.	Effectiveness .....	28
3.3.4.	Efficiency .....	34
3.3.5.	Sustainability .....	36
3.3.6.	Country ownership .....	38
3.3.7.	Gender equality and women's empowerment .....	38
3.3.8.	Cross-cutting issues .....	40
3.3.9.	GEF and UNDP additionality .....	40
3.3.10.	Catalytic role .....	41
3.3.11.	Progress towards impact .....	41
4.	CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....	41
4.1.1.	Main findings.....	41
4.1.2.	Lessons learned .....	42
4.1.3.	Recommendations .....	43
4.1.4.	Evaluation ratings .....	43

#### Annexes:

1. TOR for the Mid-term Review, excluding TOR annexes
2. MTR evaluative matrix [evaluative criteria with key questions, indicators, sources of data, methodology]
3. Interview Guide used for data collection
4. Rating scales
5. MTR itinerary
6. List of persons interviewed during the MTR
7. List of documents reviewed
8. Proposed updated SESP
9. PMU proposed changes in Results Framework
10. PMU proposed budget allocation adjustments
11. Signed UNEG Code of Conduct Form
12. MTR Report Clearance Form

#### Annexed in separate file:

1. Audit trail from received comments on draft MTR report

Note: Relevant GEF tracking tools are not included at the moment of delivering the final MTR report, since they are still in the process of being updated by the PMU, to be based on local reports

## ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AWP	Annual Work Plan
BD	Biodiversity
BIA	Biodiversity Impact Assessment
BR	Biosphere Reserve
BR-MB	Biosphere Reserve Management Board
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CCM	Climate Change Mitigation
CCP	Community Conservation Plan
CO	Country Office (of UNDP)
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease of 2019
CPD	Country Programme Document (of UNDP)
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DAC	Development Assistance Committee (of OECD)
DIM	Direct Implementation Modality
DNRE	Department of Natural Resources and Environment
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
ES	Ecosystems Services
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organization of United Nations
FPDF	Forest Protection and Development Fund
FPIC	Free, Prior and Informed Consent
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GHG	Greenhouse Gas
HCV	High Conservation Value
HRBA	Human Rights Based Approach
IEO	Independent Evaluation Office (of UNDP)
ILO	International Labour Organization
IT	Information Technology
LEP	Law on Environmental Protection
MAB	Man and Biosphere
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MONRE	Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment
MTR	Mid-Term Review
NAMA	National Appropriate Mitigation Actions
NDC	Nationally Determined Contributions
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NIM	National Implementation Modality
NPC	National Project Coordinator
NPD	National Project Director
NPDD	National Project Deputy Director
NPM	National Project Manager
NPT	National Project Team
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OSP	One Strategic Plan (of UNDP)
PIF	Project Identification Form
PIR	Project Implementation Reports
PFES	Payment for Forest Environmental Services
PMB	Project Management Board
PPG	Project Preparation Grant
PRODOC	Project Document
PSC	Project Steering Committee (PSC)

RTA	Regional Technical Advisor
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SES	Social and Environmental Screening
SESP	Social and Environmental Screening Procedure
SGP	Small Grants Program (of UNDP-GEF)
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant/Results-oriented and Time-bound
TM	Task Manager (in UNDP)
TOC	Theory of Change
TOR	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
UNCBD	United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity
UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
USD	United States Dollar
VEA	Viet Nam Environment Administration
WHO	World Health Organization

## Project identification table

Project title			
UNDP Project ID (PIMS #):	5659	PIF Approval Date:	9 June 2016
GEF Project ID (PIMS #):	9361	CEO Endorsement Date:	14 March 2018
ATLAS Business Unit, Award # Proj. ID:	VNM10 00095982	Project Document (ProDoc) Signature Date (date project began):	6 February 2020
Country (ies):	Vietnam	Date project manager hired:	1 May 2020
Region:	Asia & Pacific	Inception Workshop date:	27 October 2020
Focal Area:	Multi-Focal Areas Biodiversity Land Degradation IP SFM	Mid-term Review Completion Date:	15 February 2022 (Revised)
GEF Focal Area Strategic Objective:	SFM3: Restored Forest Ecosystems: Reverse the loss of ecosystem services within degraded forest landscapes SFM1 Reduce pressures on forest resources and generate sustainable flows of forest ecosystem services. BD-1 Program 1 BD-3 Program 6 BD-4 Program 9 LD-3 Program 4	Planned closing date:	6 February 2025
Trust Fund [indicate GEF TF, LDCF, SCCF, NPIF]:	GEF TF	If revised, proposed op. closing date:	N/A
Executing Agency/ Implementing Partner:	Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment		
Other execution partners:	Management Boards of Cu Lao Cham, Dong Nai, and Western Nghe An Biosphere Reserves		
Project financing	At CEO endorsement (US\$)	At Mid-term Review (US\$) (*)	
[1] GEF financing:	6,660,000	1,475,032	
[2] UNDP contribution:	1,000,000	658,277	
[3] Government:	35,538,222	30,415,213	
[4] Other partners:	-	-	
[5] Total co-financing [2+3+4]	36,538,222	31,073,490	
PROJECT TOTAL COSTS [1+5]	<b>43,198,222</b>	<b>32,548,522</b>	

(\*) As of 31 December 2021

## Executive Summary

The project “Mainstreaming Natural Resource Management and Biodiversity Conservation Objectives into Socio-Economic Development Planning and Management of Biosphere Reserve in Viet Nam” has been implemented by UNDP from 2020 with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE) as executing partner, under a national implementation modality (NIM). The project is financed

with USD 6.66 million from the Global Environment Facility (GEF), USD 1 million from UNDP and USD 35.5 million in national co-financing.

The long-term goal of the project is to mainstream natural resource management and biodiversity conservation objectives into socio-economic development planning and management of biosphere reserves (BR) in Viet Nam. Its objective is to employ integrated BR management planning as a land use planning approach that balances sustainable natural resources management, biodiversity conservation and socio-economic development.

The project is well aligned with Government priorities for environment, biodiversity conservation, and land degradation, and Viet Nam's compliance with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). The project design has some strengths in the areas of institutional analysis the TOC, but also clear weaknesses, especially related to the Results Framework. Despite having detected potential implementation risk in relation to national and local institutional capacity on the main topic of the project (BR), it was agreed on the Nationally Implemented Modality, which is the Government's decision for all GEF funded projects.

The effectiveness in terms of results is low, for many reasons, with an average compliance of the mid-term targets of only 37.3%.

The project planning and reporting structure has many steps in the approval process, which, together with COVID-19, are the two main reasons for the serious project delay.

Considering that the project implementation started only in the year 2020, as well as delay in this first period, it has so far very few concrete results. It is therefore not possible to make a relevant assessment of the possibility of impact and sustainability so early in the implementation period. It is expected that these aspects would be easier to review during the Terminal Evaluation.

#### Ratings and Achievement Summary Table

Measure	MTR Rating	Achievement Description
<b>Project Strategy</b>	N/A	
<b>Progress Towards Results</b>	Objective Achievement Rating: 2	The project activities have advanced very little, partly because it is early in the process, and also due to COVID-19 and slow administrative processes. Initial progress on participatory approaches and institutionalization of BR planning, as well as gender participation improve the rating.
	Outcome 1 Achievement Rating: 2	Very little progress on MTR targets, except adoption of revised BD law and certain institutional capacity building.
	Outcome 2 Achievement Rating: 2	Very little progress on MTR targets, mapping and assessments.
	Outcome 3 Achievement Rating: 1	Nearly no progress on MTR targets, except some awareness raising. Two approved SGP projects to initiate in 2022.
<b>Project Implementation &amp; Adaptive Management</b>	Rating: 3	The project management and governance structure is working, but the slow procedures for planning and reporting plus insufficient capacity lead to delays. There have been some attempts of adaptive management, including reduction of yearly budgets due to Covid-19 and related adjustment of activities with more online work.
<b>Sustainability</b>	Rating: 2	It is too early to draw firm conclusions on sustainability.

#### Summary of conclusions

There is strong national project ownership, and the project is highly relevant in the framework of government policies and Viet Nam's compliance with the UNCBD, UNCCD, and UNFCCC, including REDD+. It is also coherent with the objectives and priorities for Viet Nam's UNDAF and UNDP's CPD that were agreed with the Government.

The project has a logic design, but the MTR considers that it is too optimistic in what is possible to achieve, especially regarding changes in legislation and policies. Another weakness is lack of outputs in the results framework (only in work plans presented in the Inception Report), and it confuses activities, outputs and outcomes. The design is not taking full advantage of being a pilot project, because the local pilot projects are too similar except for the ecosystems.



The effectiveness in terms of results is low, for many reasons. In the three pilot BR, only Western Nghe An has a reasonable progress and the other two sites are far behind. The efficiency is also low, and the two main factors are Covid-19 and insufficient experience with the administrative procedures for planning, reporting, and procurement, as well as the many steps in the review and approval chain. One issue that limits efficiency is to have to comply with both UNDP and national procedures. The significant delays could result in that the project would not finish its targets on time. It is too early to conclude on the project's long-term impact and sustainability. It is however necessary to resolve the efficiency and effectiveness issues to have any expectations regarding impact and sustainability.

The role of local partners (example Hoi An World Culture Heritage Center) is rather limited, because most activities are implemented by consultants. In the communities, the project has focused on training, capacity building and consultations. Under the current project there has not been much priority to proposals from the communities themselves, e.g. for new income-generating activities, however collaboration is planned with UNDP-GEF SGP to support livelihood improvement based on proposals in the Community Conservation Plans (CCPs).

There is good relationship and participation of local stakeholders in project activities. Gender participation has also been relatively good, since the project staff strongly encourages participation of women in training and other project activities. The women's participation is however much higher on central level than in the pilot areas.

If the project is implemented effectively it could improve cross-cutting issues such as BR governance and local livelihoods. It would then also have positive impact on climate change mitigation and adaptation, including disaster risk management. The SESP mentions a moderate risk that the project could potentially affect communities' rights of access and tenure to natural resources. Capacity development and knowledge management is mainstreamed in the project, but the south-south cooperation mentioned in the project document has not been practiced so far.

### Summary of recommendations

No.	Topic	Recommendation
1	Reformulation of goals and targets	The relevant government agencies and UNDP should reformulate the project goals and all targets that are outside project management's control should be taken out.
2	Available funds to support new elements	These changes and slow disbursements give opportunity to use funds for new elements and models in the pilot sites, e.g. competitive community projects, tourist concessions in BRs, PES with watershed approach, certifications, and Ridge-to-Reef.
3	Improve the Results Framework on output level	The project and UNDP should improve the results framework on output level based on the recommendations in the MTR report, with clear baselines, SMART indicators and specific targets, to be used as the main tool for planning, monitoring and reporting.
4	Government and UNDP joint dialogue to reduce delays	The Government and UNDP should dialogue and take strong measures to reduce the delays, e.g. Streamline formats and dates for planning, reporting, and procurement; Strict deadlines for planning and reporting; The budget and procurement plan approved for the whole project with yearly breakdown; Disbursement approved on a revolving basis; Resolve tax refund issue; Common procurement rules with annual audit.
5	Local support	Assure sufficient financing and support for PIT and local community development, including local resident staff and gender participation.
6	Indigenous peoples' / communities' rights	Assure that indigenous peoples and traditional local communities' rights and tenure are not negatively affected, and make the GRM operative.

## 1. PROJECT OVERVIEW AND BACKGROUND CONTEXT

### 1.1. Development context

Located in the Indochina Peninsula in Southeast Asia, Viet Nam is within the Indo-Burma Biodiversity Hotspot. Forests are among the most species-rich ecosystems in the hotspot, and before major anthropogenic change they covered vast majority of its land. The variety of forest types is immense, with evergreen, semi-evergreen and mixed deciduous forests, to deciduous dipterocarp forests relatively poor in species.

This rich biodiversity is threatened by the demands of a high population and fast economic growth. One of growth-sector is tourism, with infrastructure leading to increasing threats to critical habitats and ecosystems. Agriculture has reduced its relative importance compared with other sectors, but still provides the main livelihood for a significant part of the rural population. Pressure from agriculture and fisheries development activities results in pressure on the country's natural resources and biodiversity, and rich terrestrial and marine natural resources that tourism and the local population depend on.

The project "Mainstreaming Natural Resource Management and Biodiversity Conservation Objectives into Socio-Economic Development Planning and Management of Biosphere Reserve<sup>1</sup> in Viet Nam" aims to address the negative impacts of unsustainable sector-led development practices by trying to harmonize socio-economic development, sustainable management of natural resources, and biodiversity conservation, through a landscape approach. It has been implemented by UNDP from 2020 with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE) as executing partner, under a national implementation modality (NIM). The project is financed with USD 6.66 million from the Global Environment Facility (GEF), USD 1 million from UNDP and USD 35.5 million in national co-financing.

### 1.2. Project description and strategy

#### 1.2.1. Objective

The long-term goal of the project is to mainstream natural resource management and biodiversity conservation objectives into socio-economic development planning and management of biosphere reserves (BR) in Viet Nam.

The *Project Document* mentions that the Objective is to employ integrated BR management planning as a land use planning approach that balances sustainable natural resources management, biodiversity conservation and socio-economic development. On the other hand, the *Results Framework* defines the objective somewhat differently, as "to effectively mainstream biodiversity conservation and natural resources management objectives into governance, planning and management of socio-economic development and tourism in Biosphere Reserves". This objective that is being used as the basis for the MTR would be achieved through three outcomes:

- 1) Regulatory and institutional framework to avoid, reduce, mitigate and offset adverse impacts on biodiversity and reduced pressures on ecosystems in Biosphere Reserves in place;
- 2) Integrated multi-sector and multi-stakeholder planning and management operational in three Biosphere Reserves that mainstream protected area management, sustainable resource use and biodiversity-friendly development; and
- 3) Knowledge management and monitoring and evaluation contributing to equitable gender benefits and increased awareness of biodiversity conservation.

#### 1.2.2. Outcomes and expected results

The following table summarizes the project objective and outcomes, as well as the expected results for each component at mid-term.

---

<sup>1</sup> Viet Nam has 11 Biosphere Reserves (BR) recognized by UNESCO: Cát Bà Island, Cát Tiên National Park, Red River Delta, Càn Giò Mangrove Forest, Sea and coastline in Kiên Giang Province, Western Nghệ An, Kien Gian, Western Nghe An, Mũi Ca Mau, Cu Lao Cham and Langbiang.

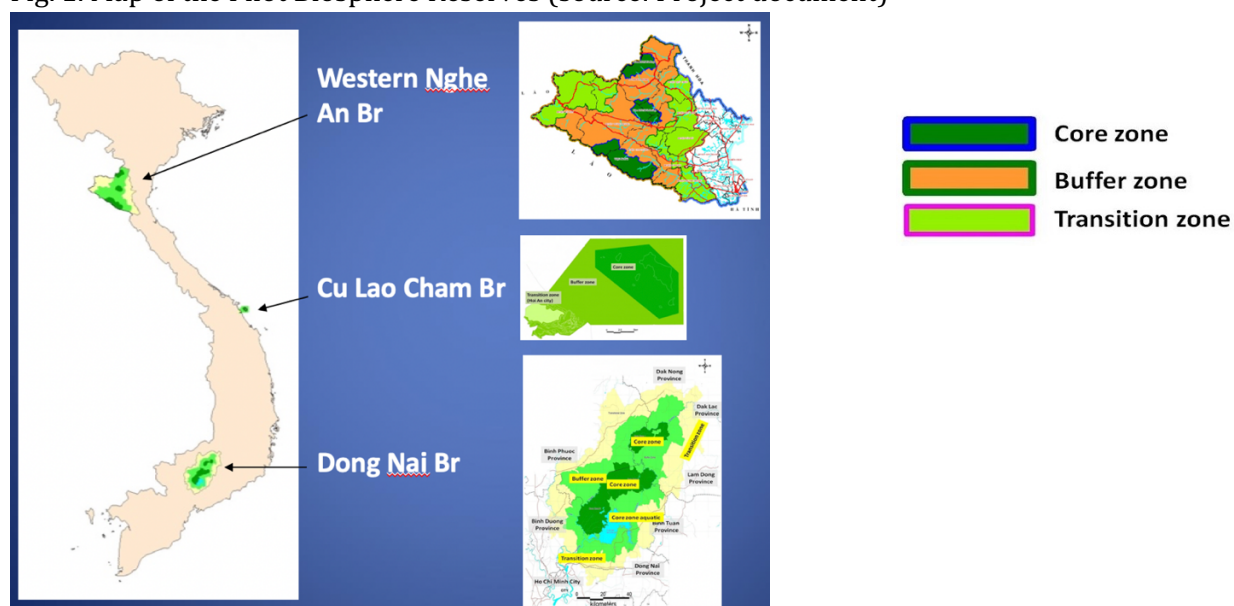
Table 1. Summary of project content (source Inception Report)

Project objective and expected outcomes	Mid-term targets
<b>Project Objective:</b> To effectively mainstream biodiversity conservation and natural resources management objectives into governance, planning and management of socio-economic development and tourism in Biosphere Reserves	0.425 million ha effectively managed through participatory approaches
	500 households directly benefiting from sustainable natural resources management and improved and alternative livelihoods and incomes (at least 40% of the beneficiaries are women)
	Progress towards institutionalization of multiple use and sustainable BR planning and management approaches as measured by National MAB Committee formalized, legally mandated and functional as coordination body
	1,890 direct beneficiaries; 756 women beneficiaries (40%)
<b>Outcome 1.</b> Regulatory and institutional framework to avoid, reduce, mitigate and offset adverse impacts on biodiversity and reduced pressures on ecosystems in Biosphere Reserves in place.	Revised BD Law/Law on Environmental Protection (LEP) adopted by Government for submission to National Assembly; Decrees, Circulars and Guidelines under preparation
	Increase of institutional capacity as measured by a 10% increase in UNDP National and Provincial Capacity Development Scorecard baseline values
	Requirements for BIA application incorporated in the revised BD Law/LEP; Guidelines for its implementation to ensure environmentally sound development
	Strategy and procedures agreed with national and provincial governments for improved financing for BRs
<b>Outcome 2.</b> Integrated multi sector and multi-stakeholder planning and management operational in three Biosphere Reserves that mainstreams protected area management, sustainable resource use and biodiversity-friendly development	Average increase by at least 10 points in METT
	Areas for set-aside mapped, agreed with provincial governments and approved; 10,000 ha set-aside for non-exhaustive use (included within the BR buffer zone)
	500 ha of degraded forests (and other ecosystems) under improved restoration through assisted natural regeneration to improve connectivity.
	Baseline validated and monitoring in progress for selected indicator species. Monitoring trends indicate positive changes.
	Training complete, certification criteria approved and at least 10% of hotel and tourism facilities within selected BRs adopt BD-friendly certification standards.
	New area of landscapes under sustainable management: New baselines (see table 11)
<b>Outcome 3.</b> Knowledge management and monitoring and evaluation contributes to equitable gender benefits and increased awareness of biodiversity conservation	10% sampled community members, hoteliers, tour operators and sector agency staff (at least 40% women) aware of potential conservation threats and adverse impacts of unplanned developments
	At least 3 new best practices identified by the midterm for demonstration during the second term

### 1.2.3. Field sites

Field missions were carried out to Western Nghe An and Cu Lao Cham – Hoi An sites. The national consultant could not visit the Dong Nai Biosphere Reserve because the Covid-19 situation was too serious there, so online interviews were used instead. Since this project so far has very limited results that are possible to observe in the field, the most important information was achieved through direct stakeholder interviews. Complementary information was achieved from UNDP staff and consultants, the Internet, documents and other sources.

Fig. 1. Map of the Pilot Biosphere Reserves (source: Project document)



### 1.3. Project implementation arrangements

#### 1.3.1. Implementing partner

The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE) is the Implementing Partner (IP) on behalf of the Government of Viet Nam.

#### 1.3.2. Implementing partner arrangements

The project is implemented by the Government under UNDP's National Implementation modality (NIM).

**UNDP**, as the GEF Agency, is in charge of project cycle management including (i) financial and audit services; (ii) oversee financial expenditures against budgets; (iii) ensure that activities, procurement and financial management comply with UNDP/GEF rules; (iv) ensure correct reporting to GEF; (v) facilitate project learning, exchange and outreach; (vi) Contract the MTR and final evaluation. The UNDP Country Office (CO) in Hanoi provides programmatic oversight while the UNDP Bangkok Regional Hub provides technical oversight and ensures fiduciary compliance of UNDP/GEF. Project Assurance is undertaken by the UNDP Programme Officer in charge of the project, acting as focal point to facilitate and monitor project implementation. S/he certifies the annual and quarterly work-plans, budgets and progress reports, as well as proposed use of unspecified budget resources.

**The IP** is responsible for the project management and use of the project budget. MONRE is also acting as the “Governing Body” of the project as regulated by the Viet Nam Decree 16/2016/ND-CP, updated Dec 16, 2021 (114/2021/ND-CP).

**The “Project Owner”** is the Viet Nam Environment Agency (VEA), acting on behalf of MONRE as responsible for planning, implementation, monitoring, and reporting of the project. VEA is also in charge of coordinating relevant project stakeholders. VEA's specific tasks are regulated by the mentioned decree, summarized as: (i) organize project management and execution; (ii) financial management; (iii) formulate and submit for approval 5-year plans, overall plan, annual and quarterly project plans; (iv) procurement activities; (v) negotiate, conclude, and supervise implementation of contracts; (vi) cooperate with local governments of the three pilot provinces; (vii) supervise and assess the project to ensure punctuality, quality, and achievement of targets; (viii) provide direction to the Project Management Board; and (ix) take responsibility for any every loss or misconduct.

**The Project Steering Committee (PSC)** is chaired by MONRE on national ministry level, and consists of 14 members: Vice minister of MONRE; Director of VEA-MONRE; BCA, MONRE; International Cooperation Department, MONRE; Planning and Finance Department, MONRE; Personnel Department, MONRE; Vietnam Administration of Seas and Islands, MONRE; Tay Nghe An BR Management Board; Cu Lao Cham BR Management Board; Dong Nai PPC; Ministry of Planning and Investment; Ministry of Finance; Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development; and UNDP Vietnam. The PSC provides objective and independent project oversight and monitoring functions, guides the annual workplans, and ensures budget resources.

Other ministries (**not members of the PSC**), such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), Ministry of Culture, Sport, and Tourism (MOCST), Ministry of Science and Technology (MOSTE), provide guidance related to their sectors, and participate in general technical and operational workshops.

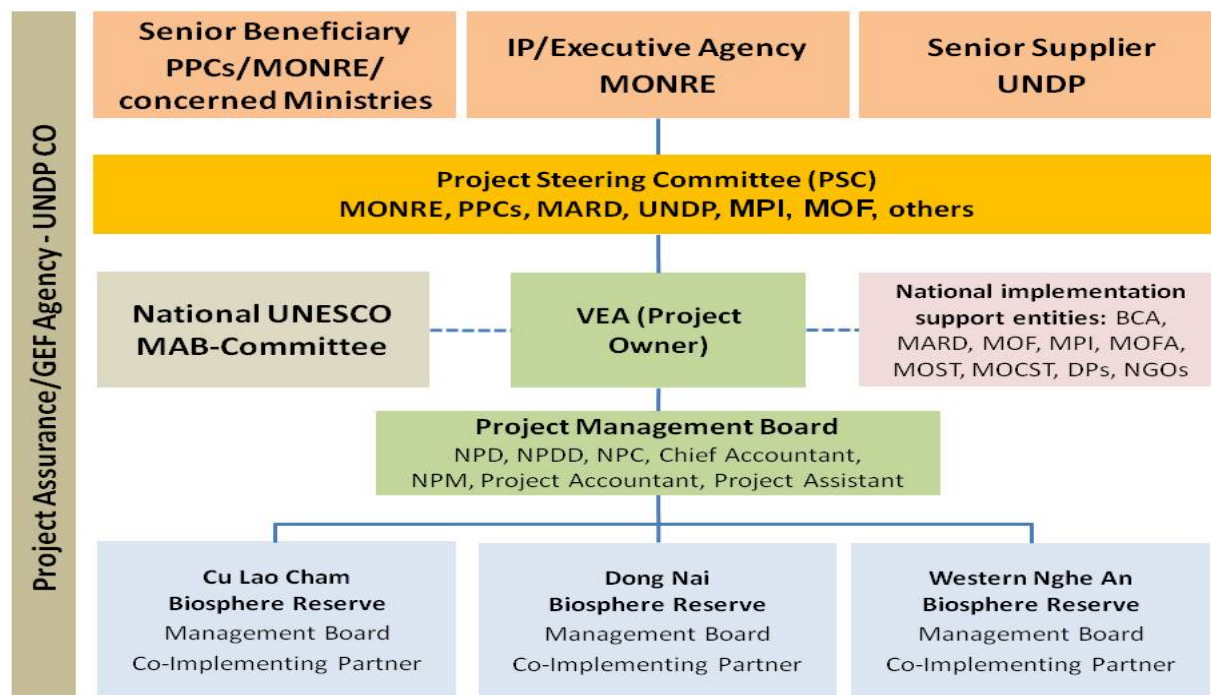
**The Project Management Board (PMB)** assists VEA, consisting of the National Project Director (NPD), National Project Deputy Director (NPDD), National Project Coordinator and the Chief Accountant. The PMB performs the tasks given by the Project Owner, which to a large extent are the same tasks as mentioned above for VEA. The PMB is e.g. responsible for resource mobilization, planning and execution of project activities, and official reports to the PSC. The NPD informs the PSC, VEA, MONRE and UNDP on implementation progress, and possible delays or difficulties that could arise, so appropriate support and corrective measures can be adopted.

**The National Project Team** consists of a National Project Manager (NPM), Project Accountant, and Project Assistant, to provide assistance to the PMB on a daily basis.

**Co-implementing Partners (CIPs)** include the Management Boards of the three pilot BR sites Cu Lao Cham, Dong Nai, and Western Nghe An. The CIPs carry out project activities under component 2. For each site there is a full-time Project Facilitation Officer (Coordinator) and variable number of other staff.

**Man and Biosphere (MAB) National Committee:** The project builds on the existing stakeholder coordination system for BR management established under this committee, but it is not part of the project structure. The committee is chaired by MONRE, with a deputy chair person from the Ministry of Science and Technology (MOST).

Fig. 2. Project governance and management structure



The project involves a large number of stakeholders from the public and private sector, NGOs and civil society. The characteristics of the main stakeholders and their roles related with the project are summarized in the following table.

Table 2. Key stakeholders for the project

Stakeholder	Roles and responsibilities in relation with the project	Type of stakeholder <sup>1</sup>
Global Environment Facility (GEF)	Funding agency of the project	IG
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)	GEF Agency. In charge of monitoring and support to project implementation, budget management and reporting to GEF. Important units are UNDP Viet Nam Country Office and UNDP Regional Office (Bangkok)	IG
National Assembly (NA)	Highest representative organ of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam and only organ with constitutional and legislative powers. NA is considered in ProDoc as a project beneficiary.	GO
Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE)	Project National Executing Agency (NEA), and chair of the Project Steering Committee (PSC). The general functions of MONRE include management of air, land and water under the amended Law of Environmental Protection (2005) and biodiversity under the Law of Biodiversity (2008). MONRE leads Annual Review meetings on project planning and reporting, approves the project related documents, including AWP. PMU under MONRE approved Quarterly Work Plans.	GO
	Viet Nam Environment Administration (VEA) is a subsidiary body under MONRE, responsibility for overall project implementation. VEA is also responsible for coordinating relevant project stakeholders.	
	The Biodiversity Conservation Agency (BCA) under VEA is responsible for day-to-day coordination and management of project activities at the national level and coordination of project activities at the provincial level, as well as financial management and reporting.	



Protected Area Management Boards (PAMB)	Protected Area Management Boards and subordinate bodies in pilot BRs: (i) Western Nghe An (Phu Mat National Park, Phu Hoat Nature Reserve, Phu Huong Nature Reserve); (ii) Cu Lao Cham - Hoi An Biosphere Reserve (Cu Lao Cham Marine Protected Area, Hoi An World Culture Heritage Site); and (iii) Dong Nai Biosphere Reserve (Cat Tien National Park and Dong Nai Culture Nature Reserve).	GO
Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD)	MARD collaborate in project activities to identify gaps, priority issues and solutions for sustainable forest management and biodiversity conservation within the core zones of the BRs, including strengthening PA management, identification of HCV set-aside forest and marine conservation areas, forest restoration in pilot BRs, etc. Viet Nam Forest Administration (VNFOREST) is an agency under MARD, advising and assisting State management on forestry, and managing and instructing public service activities. Directorate of Fisheries under MARD aiming to protect Viet Nam's fisheries and sovereignty, with tasks to patrol, check, control, detect and handle violations of the fisheries policy and control investigation of fisheries on the coast of Viet Nam.	GO
Ministry of Culture, Sport and Tourism (MOCST)	Responsible for public services on culture, family, sports and tourism, and national efforts for tourism development. Collaborate with the project to identify gaps and priorities for bio-friendly tourism in BRs through policy development, legislation and models, as well as advisory on certification of tourism products and services.	GO
Ministry of Science and Technology (MOST)	MOST has the deputy chairperson in the MAB Committee. Is responsible for funding and budget for the "Science and Technology Fund" and sponsors many BRs. Serves as technical support agency to the BR network. Project partner for consultations, information and experiences to strengthen management of the pilot BRs. Will also support upscaling,	GO
Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI)	Performs planning and investment, including advice on strategies and plans on socio-economic development, mechanism and policies. MPI would benefit from project capacity building, training and policy advice on integration of land and natural resources in national and provincial planning procedures, strategies and plans.	GO
National Man and Biosphere (MAB) committee	UNESCO MAB committees coordinates national and international exchange amongst BRs and sister-systems, including research results, management methods and lessons on specific issues. The Viet Nam Committee will be a recipient of the project outputs and outcomes, in support of its advisory role to the Prime Minister.	GO/IG
Provincial People's Committee (PPCs)	Under the decentralization policies, PPCs play a major role in provincial development, sector planning and implementation, including environmental and biodiversity management. The PPCs coordinate and oversee project implementation, management, M&E in the pilot BR, including: (i) review work plans and approve budgets; and (ii) preside inter-agency coordination meetings between district authorities and other sector stakeholders.	LA
District People's Committees (DPCs)	The DPCs have the same role as the PPCs on district level	LA
Commune People's Committees (CPCs)	The CPCs have the same role as the PPCs and CPCs on commune level	LA
Local communities and CBOs	Local communities in and around the pilot Biosphere Reserves: Western Nghe An Biosphere Reserve, Cu Lao Cham-Hoi An Biosphere Reserve, Dong Nai Biosphere Reserve, including Commune People Committees	NG
Provincial specialized departments (DONRE, DARD, DCST)	National line ministries usually have specialized departments at provincial and district levels that receive instructions from national level but are accountable to the PPCs. Department of Natural Resources and Environment (DONRE) is the main government project partner at BR level, with key partner support being provided by Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD). Both provide an integrated vision for mapping and planning of natural resources management, environment, and sustainable livelihoods including tourism. Department of Culture, Sport and Tourism (DCST) will support tourism related initiatives, including certification, private-partnerships, and sustainable tourism practices.	LA
Biosphere Reserve Management Boards (BR-MB)	Each BR has a MB, chaired by the vice chairperson of the PPC. It includes representatives of provincial departments, local authorities, conservation agencies, civil society, the business sector, and local communities. The BR-MB is under direct control of PPC, and and supervision of the MAB National Committee, with provincial departments providing technical support. The BR MB is responsible for biodiversity conservation; support to biodiversity research, monitoring, and education; as well as awareness raising and improvement of livelihoods of communities.	LA/NG
Protected Areas Management Boards (PA MBs)	Designated authorities responsible for management of formally established PAs, Special-Use Forests under forest protection and development regulations, Marine protected areas (MPAs) and nature reserves under provincial regulations. Are directly involved in planning, implementation and monitoring of project activities through information, identifying priority	LA

	issues at site level and targeted livelihood activities. Support conservation activities in identified HCV in the BR buffer zones.	
Local communities and community-based organizations (CBOs), e.g. Farmers Unions, Fisheries Associations, Women's Unions and Youth Unions	Custodians, primary users and managers of landscape resources, and key local target groups for the project. Are engaged in fisheries, eco-tourism, NTFP collection, agriculture and husbandry within the BRs. Participate in the project activities and are direct beneficiaries of conservation of biodiversity and ecosystem services in the BRs.	NG/FA/WO/CY
Indigenous peoples (I.P.)	Indigenous communities rely on natural resources, especially forests, for their livelihoods, and are therefore especially affected by their degradation. The poverty rates are high in many I.P. areas. These communities are consulted for BR decision-making processes, commune conservation plans (CCP) and benefit sharing. Investments for households of ethnic minorities are instituted through the CCP process to strengthen their livelihoods and sustainable resources use.	IP
Universities and research institutes	Universities and institutes at national and provincial level have strong environment research units with relevant experience for the project. Viet Nam Academy of Natural Science & Technology (VAST) conducts multi-disciplinary studies in socio-economy, culture, ecology and environmental management, and policy analysis. Two especially relevant VAST Institutes are the Institutes of Ecology and Biological Resources (IEBR) and Marine Environment and Resources (IMER). The Research Institute for Forest Ecology and Environment (RIFEE) under MARD's Viet Nam Academy of Forest Science (VAFS) focuses on sustainable forest management, forest land and monitoring and assessment of forest biodiversity. Research institutions are involved in project consultancies.	ST
Private Sector	The private sector would collaborate in implementation of and support to responsible tourism initiatives, specifically certification and models for sustainable tourism products and services.	BI
Mass media, including public and private national and provincial television and radio networks, printed and online media.	Disseminate information and support awareness on state policies, strategies and plans to the general public. Partnerships with the project, including on workshops and seminars, training and capacity building events as well as results and best practices in the 3 pilot BRs.	GO/BI
Development Partners (USAID, SNV, Winrock, ECODIT, GIZ, JICA)	Ongoing projects in the BRs or covering themes of interest to the project. Coordination and collaboration with partners at national and BR landscape levels to ensure synergies. The PMB and UNDP maintain close relations with development partners. According to ProDoc, they would receive observer status in PSC meetings, but this is so far not in effect to COVID-19.	GO/NG
National and international NGOs: IUCN, Birdlife International, WWF, Fauna and Flora International (FFI) and Centre for Marine Life Conservation and Community Development (MCD).	Play an important role in natural resources use, biodiversity conservation, protected areas and environment, as well as improving rural livelihoods. Coordination and collaboration with the project at national and BR landscape levels to ensure synergies.	NG

<sup>1</sup>Stakeholder group refers to the nine main groups recognized by Agenda 21, where these are included in the table: BI=Business and Industries; ST=Scientific & Technological Community; WO=Women; CY=Children & Youth; IP=Indigenous Peoples; LA=Local Authorities; FA=Farmers; NG=Non-Governmental Organizations and CBOs. The Review Team added Governmental (GO) and Inter-governmental organizations (IG).

## 2. EVALUATION METHODS

### 2.1. Purpose and objectives of the Mid-term review

In line with the UNDP and GEF Monitoring & Evaluation policies and procedures, all full-sized UNDP supported GEF-financed projects are required to undergo a Mid-term Review (MTR).

The purpose of the MTR was to assess progress towards the achievement of the project objectives and outcomes as specified in the Project Document (ProDoc), 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 should also review the project's strategy and its risks to sustainability.

### 2.2. Scope and methodology

**Scope:** The main issues of the MTR were the effectiveness and efficiency of project implementation, relevance, coherence, and expected impact and sustainability. The scope included aspects such as:

- Project strategy: Design, Results framework
- Progress towards results: Outcomes, outputs, and expected impact
- Project implementation and adaptive management: Management arrangements, Work planning, M&E, Financing and co-financing, Stakeholder engagement, Safeguards, Risk management, Communication and knowledge management, and Reporting

- **Sustainability:** Financial, Socio-economic, Institutional, and Environmental risks to sustainability.

The MTR reviewed if the issues of gender equality and women's empowerment were included in the design and implementation of the project. Other cross-cutting issues reviewed were the approach to indigenous peoples and other minority groups, poverty alleviation, resilience, climate change mitigation and adaptation, disaster risk management, and South-South cooperation.

Since the MTR was carried out relatively early during the implementation period, the assessment of project effectiveness is less relevant than for projects that have been going on for longer periods. The MTR however helped to analyze project targets and approaches, and propose solutions, methods, and recommendations to ensure the attainment of project objectives by suggesting adaptive management responses to its planned implementation.

The MTR is expected to fit into the UNDP Country Office (CO) evaluation plan by drawing observations and recommendations to improve the efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of the project measures. It would also aid the overall enhancement of the UNDP Country Programme Document (CPD) and One Strategic Plan (OSP), both for the period 2022-2026. The MTR report includes a section with evidence-based conclusions, in light of the findings. The report also presents recommendations to the Project Team, with suggestions for critical interventions that are specific, measurable, achievable, and relevant. They include how to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 on project deliverables, beneficiaries, and project staff, and suggest measures to ensure successful delivery of project outcomes.

**Principles:** The MTR Team applied the following principles throughout the review:

- Free and open review process*, transparent and independent from Project management and policy-making, to enhance credibility;
- Review ethics* that abides by relevant professional and ethical guidelines and codes of conduct, while the review was undertaken with integrity and honesty;
- Partnership approach*, to build development ownership and mutual accountability for results. A participatory approach was used on all levels (UNDP and its consultants, institutions, partners, beneficiaries);
- Co-ordination and alignment*, to consider national and local reviews and help strengthen country systems, plans, activities and policies;
- Capacity development of partners* by improving review knowledge and skills, stimulating demand for and use of review findings, and supporting accountability and learning; and
- Quality control* throughout the review process.

**Review methodology:** The review paid special attention to the progress and compliance with expected project outputs, and progress towards outcomes and initial impacts, and the influence and integration of the experiences and lessons learned. The MTR Team consisted of one Team Leader stationed in Norway and one National Consultant stationed in Viet Nam. Due to the Corona virus pandemic no international missions were included for the review, but face-to-face meetings and field trips in Viet Nam were carried out by the national consultant. Additional stakeholder interviews were carried out through Skype, phone, Zoom, Teams, GoogleMeet, Whatsapp, etc., with follow-up through e-mail. Based on review of the results, the review team analyzed if the project has given or is expected to give the intended impacts, to comply with the Project objectives.

The specific design and methodology for the MTR was based on the TOR, which was prepared following the UNDP-GEF MTR guidance (2014). The methodology was presented in the Inception Report and agreed with UNDP and PMU. The Team developed a detailed review framework based on the evaluation questions. These questions are those that the MTR team should be able to respond based on information from multiple sources. For each stakeholder interview it was given emphasis to have a flexible approach where the questions would vary according to the specific information held by each stakeholder, which is assuring efficient use of the interview time. This flexible approach also gives the opportunity to go deeper into some important topics that came up during the interviews, to assure that the total information achieved would be as complete as possible. Many questions were however repeated in



interviews with different stakeholders, to triangulate the information, thereby assuring the correct data. The approach still allows for differences of opinion, where opposing opinions (if any) could be mentioned in the report.

The MTR team tried to cover all stakeholders that are relevant for the project, both women and men, from any ethnicity and age group, and the field visits included areas with indigenous population. Those interviewed reflect the stakeholders that are important within the project or in relation to it, including the % of each gender (that was recorded). Since the project has progressed very little so far, the beneficiaries to consider were participants in the training events and local stakeholders that are expected to benefit from project activities later on. Cross-cutting issues covered were gender mainstreaming, indigenous peoples, social and environmental impact, and support to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are all incorporated into different sections of the MTR report.

Many relevant documents were available from the start of the review. However, the GEF Tracking tools for Biodiversity, Land degradation, Sustainable Forest Management, and Management Effectiveness (METT) were not updated. This did not allow the review to consider all updated results and verify data from the mentioned documents before the stakeholder interviews.

The TOR for the MTR are considered adequate for the tasks to be carried out. Carrying out the review during the COVID-19 pandemic gave many challenges. First of all, it was not possible to carry out international travel for the review, and this was also not expected according to the TOR. For that reason the national consultant carried out all the field visits and the majority of the local stakeholder interviews. The international consultant was still able to carry out interviews with some important national stakeholders and the regional project advisor.

The MTR consisted of an analysis of three main elements with a logic sequence:

- a) *Project performance*, with emphasis on effectiveness of outputs and outcomes, as well as relevance and coherence, efficiency, implementation and management issues, and expected impact and sustainability;
- b) *Lessons learned*, including what has worked well and what has not, as well as innovations and success stories that could be replicated or scaled-up; and
- c) *Recommendations* for continuation of the project implementation

The MTR paid special attention to the progress and compliance with the targets defined in the results framework based on relevant baselines, also considering if the baselines and targets were SMART<sup>2</sup>. Since the project is in its early stage of implementation, the MTR report is providing advice on how to improve the results framework, to make it an efficient M&E tool. This aspect goes further than what is normal for a Mid-term review, and follows a participatory approach with the national project team, with the purpose of transferring knowledge. The MTR also considered integration of experiences and lessons learned, to improve project performance.

Based on review of the results, the MTR Team analyzed if they are in the process of giving any impact or are expected to give the intended impacts in the future, to comply with the Project objectives.

**Limitations to the Mid-term Review:** The MTR was carried out with a very limited budget for the International Consultant compared with the standard in his UNDP framework contract. Another limitation is that the review was carried out only approx. 1 ½ year after initiation of the project activities, so the project had limited results so far, and especially to observe in the field. The decision to carry out the MTR so early has to do with the time that has passed after the date for GEF CEO endorsement. The effectiveness of the MTR was also seriously affected by the lack of data that should have been available before initiating the review, especially the lack of updated results framework with progress data and the lack of updated GEF monitoring tools. During the MTR it was agreed to include results and corresponding financial data up to Dec. 31, 2021, to make the project include a bit more results, however this gave the effect that the consultants received this information only a few days before finalizing the MTR report.

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<sup>2</sup> Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant/Results-oriented and Time-bound

*Another very serious limitation of the MTR was the effects of COVID-19:* Carrying out the MTR during a global pandemic gave many challenges. First of all, UNDP decided that the International Consultant should work remotely and participate in interviews through digital platforms, complemented by a national consultant for local interviews, but this is not completely satisfactory to get a complete picture of the situation. The national MTR consultant's tasks were also affected by COVID-19, including travel restrictions, and only being able to visit two of the three pilot areas (Dong Nai was not visited). The national consultant even had to stay in quarantine for a short period after one of the missions.

### **2.3. Target audience for the review findings**

The conclusions, recommendations and lessons learned from the review would be useful especially for UNDP, MONRE and the GEF, public and private project partners, and probably also for the UNEG member organizations UNEP and FAO. Its content should also be reviewed and used by PMU for adaptive management to ensure that the project targets are achieved on time and within budget. It could also be used in the continued process for developing and improving policies, strategies and methods for sustainable management of protected areas and biodiversity in Viet Nam, and inspiration for design and implementation of complementary activities and projects.

### **2.4. Structure of the MTR report**

The MTR report is structured based on an analysis of elements with a logic sequence:

- a) Understand the Project Context, Design and Strategy: *What will the Project like to achieve?* (including review of the content and use of the results framework)
- b) Review the Project performance: *Is the Project achieving what it should, and having sufficient progress?* (progress towards results, barriers to overcome, project management, etc.)
- c) Consider opportunities for or risks to the *sustainability of project outcomes* (including financial, socio-economic, institutional and environmental issues), and
- d) *Recommendations* for the rest of the program implementation.

#### **2.4.1. Environmental factors**

Viet Nam is ranked as the 16<sup>th</sup> most biodiversity rich countries in the world. It hosts 110 Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) and 59 Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBAs). In addition to its high biodiversity, the country stands out for its high level of endemism. It is estimated that 10% of Viet Nam's plants are endemic to the country. However, Viet Nam has also one of the highest proportions of threatened species in the world. The number of species considered as threatened, vulnerable, endangered or critically endangered increased from 617 in the year 2017 (referenced in ProDoc) to 880 in 2021<sup>3</sup> (43% increase).

In year 2020 Viet Nam had 16.6 Mha of tree cover, including 14.7 Mha of natural forests and 1.83 Mha of forest plantations<sup>4</sup>. Primary forests are estimated to represent only 1% of Viet Nam's forests. The marine ecosystems provide habitats to an estimated 10,837 species of plants and animals and over 10 identified marine fish species that are endemic to Viet Nam.

#### **2.4.2. Socio-economic factors**

Viet Nam's high population of approx. 98 million and fast economic growth requires resources and give adverse social and environmental impacts. Between 2002 and 2020, GDP per capita increased 2.7 times, reaching almost USD 2,800. Poverty rates have declined sharply from over 32% in 2011 to below 2% today. Viet Nam's GDP is expected to expand by about 4.8% in the year 2021<sup>5</sup>. One of the growth-sectors is tourism, with related infrastructure development and pollution that are representing increasing threats to critical habitats and ecosystems. In 2019, Viet Nam received more than 18 million international arrivals (World Bank open stats)<sup>6</sup>, up from 2.1 million in year 2000. Agriculture (including forestry and fisheries) has reduced its share of the economy and contributed in 2020 less than 15% to GDP (World Bank l.c.), but is still a key sector that supports rural livelihoods.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.iucnredlist.org>

<sup>4</sup> [www.globalforestwatch.org](http://www.globalforestwatch.org)

<sup>5</sup> World Bank 2021. Viet Nam's economy is forecast to grow by about 4.8 percent in 2021. Press release 24.08.2021.

<sup>6</sup> World Bank open stats accessed Dec. 2021

### 2.4.3. Institutional factors

UNDP is the GEF Agency. The Implementing Partner (IP) on behalf of the Government of Viet Nam is the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE), under UNDP's National Implementation Modality (NIM). The "Project Owner" is the Viet Nam Environment Agency (VEA) on behalf of MONRE. The Project Management Board (PMB) assists VEA in carrying out the tasks for project implementation. More details are given in 1.3.2.

### 2.4.4. Policy factors

Viet Nam ratified the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (UNCBD) Nov 16<sup>th</sup> 1994 and is party to the Convention since Feb 14<sup>th</sup> 1995. The country presented its 6<sup>th</sup> National Report to CBD in 2019, which is the currently valid National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP). The document compares the national NBSAP with the Aichi biodiversity targets and indicators. "Biosphere Reserves" (BRs) is however a relatively new concept in Viet Nam that is not well understood by most decision-makers, and not yet fully integrated into national policies. Weak policies and regulatory system for the tourism sector has resulted in adverse impacts on biodiversity and ecosystem services in the BRs. Viet Nam ratified the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) Aug 25<sup>th</sup> 1998 and presented its Country Report on Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) to the Convention in January 2018<sup>7</sup>. Vietnam has set the national voluntary LDN targets, established a baseline, and formulated associated measures to achieve LDN. Viet Nam is acknowledged as a REDD+ pioneer country, having adopted "Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+)" in 2009, a mechanism recognized by the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

## 2.5. Development problems that the project sought to address

### 2.5.1. Problem statement

Viet Nam has one of the highest proportions of threatened species in the world. Of the 3,990 species assessed by IUCN in 2012, 13% were threatened by extinction. Deforestation and forest degradation are huge threats to biodiversity, driven by fast economic development, roads and sectors such as tourism. The national forest cover was reduced from approx. 50% in the year 2000 to approx. 45% in 2020. In this period Viet Nam lost 689 kha of humid primary forest (10%)<sup>8</sup>. Invasive Alien Species (IAS) is also a growing problem accelerated by climate change. Viet Nam's coastal zones and mangroves are under threat from infrastructure, while the oceans are threatened by overfishing and illegal exploitation of marine products, as well as bleaching of coral reefs due to climate change<sup>9</sup>.

### 2.5.2. Threats

The main threats to biodiversity and causes of ecosystem service degradation are related with the problem statement mentioned above. The threats defined in the ProDoc can be summarized as:

*Overexploitation of land-based, aquatic and marine biodiversity:* Fast changes in socio-economic development and population growth drives the process. It has motivated overexploitation of timber, medicinal plants and wildlife, threatening indigenous communities and other ethnic minorities.

*Localised Deforestation and Fragmentation of Forest Habitats:* Although the national deforestation rate has declined, there is still local legal and informal logging in many parts of the country as a result of land conversion for infrastructure, including tourism, roads, hydropower and agriculture. The remaining natural forests are fragmented and degradation continues, undermining the quality and quantity of ecosystem services including soil & water conservation and carbon sequestration.

*Pollution:* Poorly disposed wastes from industry, tourism, agriculture, fishery production and domestic wastes are threats to biodiversity and wildlife habitats. Freshwater, coastal and marine ecosystems are polluted by various sources, and pesticides contribute to the decline of bird populations.

<sup>7</sup> Government of Viet Nam 2018. Final National report of the LDN Target Setting Programme (LDN TSP)

<sup>8</sup> [www.globalforestwatch.org](http://www.globalforestwatch.org)

<sup>9</sup> MONRE 2019. The 6<sup>th</sup> National Report to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity.

*Climate Change:* Viet Nam is one of the ten countries predicted to be most negatively impacted by climate change. Fragmented ecosystems are less resilient to climate change, and increased temperatures are likely to increase the frequency and severity of forest fires.

### 2.5.3. *Barriers*

The ProDoc defines three main barriers that are briefly commented on in the following:

**1. Lack of an overriding framework** for promoting integrated approaches to sustainable development, ecosystem enhancement and biodiversity conservation in Biosphere Reserves. The MTR team considers that there is also a barrier in the compliance with the existing laws and regulations, partly due to lack of information and partly due to low institutional capacity to comply with established rules.

**2. Institutional structures and stakeholder capacities** at targeted Biosphere Reserve sites are not effective at integrating biodiversity conservation and sustainable resource use into overall Biosphere Reserve planning and management. The MTR team however considers that these barriers are not limited to the project sites, because bureaucratic structures and procedures exist at many levels.

**3. Limited awareness** among the sector agencies, public and key industrial sectors on how to integrate landscape and seascape planning; and lack of awareness amongst communities, public and tourists of risks posed by biodiversity and ecosystem losses. The MTR team considers that the level of awareness in the country is also low regarding the benefits of Biodiversity and ecosystems services, and therefore the stakeholders have limited understanding of the needs for biodiversity conservation.

## 3. REVIEW FINDINGS

### 3.1. Project design and formulation

#### 3.1.1. Project design

The Review Team reviewed the quality of program design, based on the key sources the Project Document with annexes, including the Results Framework, the Project Inception Report and the GEF monitoring tools for BD, SFM and LD. The project design has some strengths, especially the analysis of threats and barriers and theory of change, but also some weaknesses, especially in the results framework. The project is currently monitoring outputs through the quarterly progress reports based on the outputs mentioned in the Inception Report. A topic that should have been dealt with in more detail during the PPG is the institutional structures, and procedures to implement the project efficiently. The project was designed from 2015 and GEF CEO endorsed in March 2018, approved by MONRE in July 2019, but not signed by UNDP and MONRE until February 2020. This is long time, that probably should have affected the project baseline figures, due to the need for updated sets of information compared with the reference documents that were used during the design phase, but only key indicator species were updated (in 2021).

The project has a logical design, reflected in causality between main objective, outcomes and indicators mentioned in the results framework. It does not include any drivers of the process from activities through outputs and outcomes to impact. A definition of the drivers could have affected the design and later on even the project planning. The only drivers mentioned in the design are negative drivers, such as for forest degradation (in ProDoc) and for biodiversity degradation and climate change (in Inception Report). This is something else, and does not permit the project to use drivers in favor of implementation progress. The MTR cannot present a complete list of drivers without a specific study, however it is considered that important drivers in many parts of the processes are e.g. local stakeholder participation and institutional capacity building. A role of the project should be to identify the drivers through a participatory process, and then develop a governance mechanism that enable ecosystem restoration.

The project has a structure with many layers of decision-making that adds time for the administrative processes. The design is also not very clear on who is in charge of actually carrying out the activities and who is governing and supervising the implementation. For instance, ProDoc says that the Project Management Board (PMB) is a *Governing Body* to assist the Project Owner (VEA). On the other hand it says that the PMB shall *perform the tasks* given by the Project Owner. It is therefore not clear if the PMB is part of project governance or execution. On the other hand, the Inception Report presents PMB as a

body in charge of coordination, monitoring and reporting, so it seems like an intermediate level between the execution and project governance. Vietnam has a decree to guide the functions and mandates of PMBs, but the project design has not been able to explain this clearly enough.

It is not the MTRs role to redesign the project management structure, which complies with national law and regulations. However, a general conclusion is that the delays currently experienced by the project to a large extent has to do with this structure, where too much time is being used on planning, reporting, supervision and administration, and leaving too little available time for carrying out the field activities. UNDP highlights that the project has just started, and that it takes time to prepare the actual ground actions. Even though the project would probably have more progress when the preparation period has finalized, the issue of heavy planning- and reporting structure mentioned by many interviewees would be maintained and continue to slow down implementation progress if nothing is done to change it. A better analysis, design and negotiation of this structure should therefore have been done before initiating the project. Since changes in laws and policies takes a long time, normally longer than a project duration, the MTR report will not recommend such changes in the framework of a project. The findings and recommendations in this report should therefore be considered in two ways: (i) to review which improvements could be done under the current national structure, considering that it is a pilot project<sup>10</sup>; and (ii) to review which changes could be done on national level in the medium- and long term (after project implementation), based on the outcomes and lessons learned from the project.

Some pilot alternatives that could be introduced or strengthened within the framework of the project are: (i) competitive funds for community-designed projects. If it is still not possible to support the communities directly, an alternative is to support community-based NGOs, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and micro enterprises<sup>11</sup>; (ii) private sector concessions for tourist services in and around BRs; (iii) PES with a watershed approach; (iii) co-financing of local certification, such as FSC forestry certification, Rainforest Alliance certification, Fairtrade, and organic certification; and (iv) Ridge-to Reef (R2R) approach for islands and coastal areas.

### **3.1.2. National priorities and country drivenness**

MONRE presented the project profile (PIF) to the GEF in June 2015, and played an active role during the PPG project design period. The project is, as the other GEF projects in Viet Nam, implemented through a National Implementation Modality (NIM), which means that the Government is the main actor and in charge of project implementation. It also means that the Government and UNDP has reviewed the institutional capacity and agreed that Viet Nam has the capacity to implement the project efficiently and in line with GEF and UNDP requirements.

This project would contribute to the SDG Strategic Goal C - To improve the status of biodiversity by safeguarding ecosystems, species and genetic diversity, and Target 12 which says that “By 2020, the extinction of known threatened species has been prevented and their conservation status, particularly of those most in decline, has improved and sustained”. The main focus of the project in terms of activities and budget is biodiversity, but the project was also moved forward and prepared in line with national priorities on land degradation neutrality and reduced emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (see Relevance 3.3.1).

A large number of institutional stakeholders participated during the PPG design phase and even more now participate directly or indirectly in the project implementation (see 1.3.2). Most stakeholders that participated directly in the design were however ministries or public sector agencies. The Provincial People's Committees (PPCs) in the BRs played an important role during the design phase, while local communities were consulted.

The Vietnamese Government pledged to co-finance the project with USD 35,538,222, all in-kind, however the co-financing letter from VEA mentioned USD 400,000 as cash. PMU informed that the cash amount will be salary for staff who support the project; office payment; conduct some project activities

<sup>10</sup> A pilot project is a project that comes before another project or project phase, to try out different approaches, and on that base continue with the approaches that have most success. The GEF review sheet highlighted that the project design should address how to scale up from the 3 pilot sites to the entire 8 sites.

<sup>11</sup> These type of organizations would be supported by GEF SGP funds (not the project budget) but are not planned as competitive funds

(travel, workshops and others). It seems to be a misunderstanding about what is cash co-financing, because it does definitively not include payment for its own staff and offices, which is in-kind. Cash co-financing is monetary payment for items in the project budget (see also 3.2.3).

### 3.1.3. Theory of Change

The Theory of change presents the process from outputs to outcomes and outcomes to impact, including the long-term impact (global environmental benefits), and assumptions on different levels in the results chain, but no drivers. No restructured TOC is presented in this MTR report since the overall TOC diagram is well presented and does not need any major changes. The MTR team has however several comments to the outputs. In most evaluations these comments would have been treated under analysis of the Results Framework (3.1.6), but since they in the original design were only found in the TOC diagram and work plan they are commented on in the present section. Note that the project's quarterly reports present results on output level based on the Inception Report.

There seems to be some confusion about the difference between outputs and outcomes among those that prepared the TOC. According to the UNDP glossary<sup>12</sup>, **outputs** are *products and services that result from the completion of activities implemented within a project or programme*. **Outcomes** are *the likely or achieved short-term and medium-term effects of an interventions' outputs*. This can be summarized as that an outcome is the use of an output by the intended stakeholders.

A general comment to the outputs presented in the TOC is that many of them include a description that would involve several steps in the process to outcomes, and some in fact are more similar to outcomes. It is recommended to introduce outputs in the results framework, but to make it operational for planning and reporting it would be necessary to divide many of the individual outputs, and use the sequence of the outputs in the yearly project planning according to the progress towards the project end results.

Table 3. Proposed changes to the outputs in the TOC

No.	TOC	Proposed new text	Comments
1.1	Functional governance and coordination mechanism established at a national level to support dialogue, information flow and decision-making between provinces and national levels for facilitating integrated planning and management of BRs	1.1.1 Proposal for governance and coordination mechanism at national level 1.1.2 Improved dialogue, information flow and joint decision-making between provinces and national levels 1.1.3 Improved integrated planning and management of BRs	1.1.1: The project output should be a proposal, while establishment of a mechanism is outside project management's control, and a functional mechanism is an outcome. 1.1.2 and 1.1.3: Only the improvements are results of the project activities.
1.2	Revised legislation in support of integrated landscape planning and management of BRs endorsed and functional	Proposal for revised legislation in support of integrated landscape planning and management of BRs	The output should be a proposal text. Endorsement of the revised legislation is outside project management's control and decided on political level. A project could include activities to make it functional after it is operative (maybe in next phase).
1.3	Legislation technical guidelines, standards and norms for mainstreaming BD conservation	Proposed technical guidelines, standards and norms for mainstreaming BD conservation, based on national legislation	Outputs should be <i>proposals</i> for: (i) technical guidelines; (ii) standards; and (iii) norms. Could be prepared now only if it is based on current legislation.
1.4	Replication strategy developed and implemented to facilitate upscaling of integrated BR management model in other sites	Replication strategy to facilitate upscaling of integrated BR management model in other sites	The output is the Replication strategy. No major change, only taken out the activity words "develop" and "implement".
2.1	Multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral coordination mechanism at BR level to support integrated planning and management established and functional	Multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral coordination mechanism at BR level to support integrated planning and management established	Established coordination mechanism is a project output if it is a direct result of the project. To make it functional is a next step (an outcome or intermediate state)
2.2	Integrated BD conservation and management planning incorporated into provincial economic and sectoral development planning within BR	Improved integrated BD conservation and management planning incorporated into provincial economic and sectoral development planning within BR	Proposed change is based on that some integration of BD conservation and management existed before the project was approved.
2.3	Improved management effectiveness of seven existing protected areas	No proposed change. This is very general and similar to an outcome.	The outputs to achieve improved management effectiveness should be defined.

<sup>12</sup> In Annex to Guidance for MTRs and TEs

2.4	Specific set-aside areas of HCVF, coastal and marine ecosystems conserved and managed for non-exhaustive use to enhance biodiversity conservation and connectivity	No proposed change. This is very broad and could be presented as an outcome, with enhanced biodiversity conservation and connectivity as the impact.	This could be an outcome, and the outputs to reach it should be specified. It also requires definition of areas (hectares).
2.5	Restoration of degraded forests improved connectivity and enhances biodiversity	X hectares of degraded forests restored to improve connectivity and enhance biodiversity	The output are the areas of restored forests. Target (number of ha) should be defined.
2.6	Sustainable livelihood practices implemented by communities in buffer zones of BRs to reduce pressure on BD and ecosystem functions	X sustainable livelihood practices implemented by Y communities in buffer zones of BRs to reduce pressure on BD and ecosystem functions	The output targets should be clearly defined.
2.7	Responsible tourism developed and promoted	This is very general, and seems like the objective of a tourism project.	Eco-tourism development requires to be specified on outcome level and several outputs, such as no. of people trained, no. of communities participating, and no. of new tourism infrastructure in BRs.
3.1	Communications strategy and awareness plan developed and implemented	3.1.1 Communications strategy finalized	The mentioned four outputs should preferably specify more, e.g. number of organizations, BRs or people covered.
		3.1.2 Communications strategy implemented	
		3.1.3 Awareness plan finalized	
		3.1.4 Awareness plan implemented	
3.2	Harmonized information management system operational at BR	3.2.1 Harmonized information management system	The first output is the harmonized BR information management system, the other output of project activities is to make it operational
		3.2.2 Information management system operational at BR	
3.3	Knowledge management contributes to policy revision and upscaling of integrated BR approaches	3.3.1 X stakeholders with increased knowledge of BR policies and integrated approaches	Outputs should be sub-divided and more specific, defining targets of (i) no. of stakeholders with increased knowledge (participants in the process); (ii) no. of knowledge mgmt. products; and (iii) no. of new BRs that introduced integrated approaches.
		3.3.2 Y knowledge management products on BR policies and integrated approaches	
		3.3.3 Integrated BR approaches scaled-up to cover Y BRs	

#### **3.1.4. Gender equality and women's empowerment**

Component 3 includes gender mainstreaming and the outcome 3 of this component mentions that knowledge management and M&E support would contribute to equitable gender benefits. The meaning of the word “mainstreaming” should however indicate that it is covered in all components and all activities.

As baseline information, ProDoc mentions that information collection (pre-project) will likely not consider gender issues. Gender inequality relating to knowledge and attitude will continue as efforts in the past decade have mostly involved men. It was expected to continue to be a lack of gender-disaggregated data, making it difficult to evaluate and plan for gender-based improvements.

The alternative proposed in the project design was to ensure that gender considerations should be mainstreamed into natural resources planning and management. To achieve this objective, it requires improved understanding and participation of key target groups, including women. This would be accomplished through awareness campaigns, and creation and maintenance of an online public access database and documentation repository. The BR Information Management System, planned to be operationalized in each BR, would establish information collection standards that are gender and socially inclusive.

The project alternative is also to enable the gender-equity perspective, analysis and information management with use of a Gender Analysis and Mainstreaming Action Plan. The purpose of this plan is to enhance the role of women in conservation-based actions, providing a voice for them in the local decision-making processes related to conservation, sustainable resource management, livelihoods and other local level activities. The project expects to mainstream gender issues in community-based conservation and sustainable natural resources management. Some goals of the plan are: (i) to assure that gender and socially inclusive perspectives are applied in all activities; (ii) that research on gender and social roles in BR informs plans and ensures equitable distribution of benefits; (iii) to collect information, to be shared across gender and social divides; and (iv) to train staff on application of gender mainstreaming in project activities and communication.



### 3.1.5. Social and environmental safeguards

The environmental and social risks and related management plans will according to the ProDoc be reported in the PIRs. These “risks” are in fact issues to monitor and mitigate through the project safeguards.

The Social and Environmental Screening Procedure (SESP) was followed during project preparation. The SESP identified moderate social and environmental risks with potential negative impacts in the absence of safeguards. To avoid such impacts, the project will ensure plans to screen all proposed investments to determine if there are any potential negative impacts. If the impacts are considered significant or cannot be managed by simple and practical local mitigation measures, these activities will be avoided. When impacts are easily manageable, the IBRMAs and CCPs would include responsibilities for ensuring oversight for the required measures and monitoring of their implementation. UNDP Viet Nam has hired an international SES expert to support updating of the SESP during 2022.

According to ProDoc and the Inception Report, a screening checklist will be developed based on the SESP early during project implementation to screen all investments, to ensure that they comply with sound social and environmental principles. No such checklist has been prepared, however the UNDP standard SESP format (updated Jan 2021)<sup>13</sup> includes a checklist that should be enough. A screening checklist is in the process of development, supported by a consultant on Social and Environmental Screening (SES). The BR Planning and Implementation teams (PITs) would guide this activity in consultation with the BR management boards, and monitor compliance with the environmental and social norms. The PITs would also monitor implementation of the CCPs and assess if the screening has been adequate. Social and environmental mitigation measures would be monitored annually by the PITs and BR Management Boards (BR-MB). Training is planned to be provided to project stakeholders to be well-equipped with knowledge of UNDP SES requirement in order to stay compliant.

The project does not involve large-scale infrastructure development, or other activities that could be a potential risk to health and safety of the environment or local population. It will also not involve any land acquisition or displacement of population, nor need to restrict access to areas and use of natural resources. However, the ProDoc also mentions that *in cases where restrictions are unavoidable, the project will prepare a Livelihood Action Plan for affected households to ensure that this risk is effectively managed and affected households **have access to similar or better land and livelihood options***. This sentence seem to contradict what was previously mentioned, and involves a risk of political decision-making that could potentially go against the interest of local communities. ProDoc however mentions that when relevant, the BR MBs will access the requirement for application of FAO’s Manual for Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC)<sup>14</sup> to ensure that indigenous peoples’ and community rights and good practices are applied. An Indigenous Peoples Plan should be prepared early in the implementation, and collective community decision-making process would be promoted. It was informed by UNDP that an Indigenous Peoples Planning Framework (IPPF) will be prepared by the SES consultant onboarding from December 2021 for this purpose.

A Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM) would facilitate the resolution of conflicts related to resource use and access, and the project would provide multiple ways of submitting complaints or suggestions. The GRM would be managed by MONRE (national level), PPCs and BR MBs (Provincial level) and CPCs and DPCS (at local level). Difficult issues would be brought to the attention of UNDP if the Government is unable to find a solution. The description of the GRM system in the ProDoc is very detailed, while the specific safeguards are not given much space. The MTR Team considers that more developed safeguards and mitigation measures would reduce the complaints through the GRM.

UNDP informed that the GRM will be fully developed in 2022 by the above-mentioned SES consultant, following the requirements set in the ProDoc. The MTR team considers that the GRM mechanism must be officially approved and the ways of presenting grievances must be fully informed to the local stakeholders.

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.undp.org/publications/undps-social-and-environmental-screening-procedure-sesp>

<sup>14</sup> Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) derives from the ILO Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention (No. 169, year 1989), which aims to give indigenous peoples decision-making rights in their land and overcome discriminatory practices.



### 3.1.6. Analysis of the results framework

The Results Framework presents indicators on project objective level and for each of the outcomes, but not for output, while the Inception Report mentions outputs as well as activities. The Inception Report has however not specific targets for all outputs (based on SMART criteria) including Time (when to finish). As mentioned in 3.1.3, the TOC diagram also includes inputs, that could easily be incorporated in the Results Framework. The Results Framework is now a table only for registering main results, not to be used as a tool for planning of project activities to reach outputs, while such planning is done separately.

The framework captures the Project logic and strategy for implementation, which is referred to above regarding the TOC. Par. 3.3.3 in this MTR report presents only the framework at mid-term, including compliance with targets, but the following analysis covers the whole framework.

Apart from the mentioned weakness of the lack of outputs in the results framework, it has targets “at least...”, which is not necessary to mention (everything above a specific target is positive). There are also references to indicators in the SDGs, United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) and the UNDP Strategic Plan for Viet Nam, which could be understood as the causality between outcomes and impacts, but it is not specified which outcomes lead to which impacts. There are baselines, targets and indicators (mostly SMART) for the outcomes defined by both mid-term and end of project. There are however no clear relation between all baselines and targets, and not all baselines were finalized at the moment of approval. The ProDoc presented a separate Work Plan based on the results framework.

The updated results framework presented in the Inception Report has improved, but many weaknesses were still found. Some specific comments to the indicators and baselines are presented in the following, which could be used by the PMU and UNDP to improve the framework, thereby facilitating use of the results framework for project planning and monitoring of results.

Table 4. Comments on targets and baselines in the Results Framework (source Project Inception Report)

Indicator	Baseline	Mid-term target	Comment
Mandatory indicator 1.3.2: Number of households participating in improved and alternative livelihoods and sustainable resource management and best practice approaches	0	At least 500 households are directly benefitting from sustainable natural resources management and improved and alternative livelihood and incomes. alternative livelihoods and incomes. At least 40% of the beneficiaries are women.	The target should be divided in 3 sub-targets: (i) 500 households directly benefitting...; and (ii) 40% women beneficiaries.
4: Extent to which legal or policy frameworks are in place for integration of socio-economic development and tourism into planning and management of BRs	Specific, targeted BR planning and management legislation largely lacking	Revised BD law/ Law on Environmental Protection adopted by Government for submission to National Assembly and Decrees, Circulars, and Guidelines under preparation	These target of a revised law adopted by Government is outside project management's control and represents a high risk since political approval processes often takes longer than project duration. Apart from that, the target should be sub-divided into (i) the revised law; (ii) other instruments...
6: Increase % of new permitted developments in the identified key sectors that trigger requirement for environmental assessment and integrates relevant national policies and practices that mainstream BD	BIA guidelines are developed, but not legally enforced, resulting in unchecked threats and violations and illegal developments.	Requirements for BIA application are incorporated in the revised Law on BD / Law on Environmental Protection and guidelines for its implementation to ensure environmentally sound development	Target is outside project management's control (see above). Target and baseline are not related to indicator: The target should be % increase of new permitted developments in the identified key sectors
7: Increased financing for scaled-up investment in BR management in Vietnam	Lack of adequate resources and commitment to conservation practice in BRs – 2017 baseline for 3 pilot BRs is USD 405,777	Strategy and procedures agreed with national and provincial governments for improved financing for BRs	Target is not related to indicator and baseline. The target should be Increased financing for scaled-up investment in BR management (\$ or %)
9: Number of ha of HCVF or coastal and marine ecosystems, including forests and coastal and marine areas set-aside for non-exhaustive use (includes new protected areas established)	HCVFs outside the protected area network are not formally recognized and lack appropriate management regimes	Areas for set-aside mapped, agreed with provincial governments and approved and 10,000 ha set-aside for non-exhaustive use (included within the BR buffer zone)	Target is not related to baseline because it does not mention anything about formal recognition or management.

10: Number of ha of degraded forest areas restored through sustainable community management regimes	Over 40% forests in pilot BRs under continued degradation through overuse	At least 500 ha of degraded forests under improved restoration through assisted natural regeneration to improve aconnectivity	It is not possible to compare baseline with target without additional information
11: Change in status of key indicator species (mentioned for 3 pilot areas)	(baseline values were updated 2021)	Baseline validated and monitoring in progress for selected indicator species. Monitoring trends indicate positive changes.	Target and baseline are not related to indicator. The target should be number of key indicator species where status was changed
12: Increase in % of hotels and tourism facilities in and around BRs that meet BD-friendly certification standards	No standards or certification procedures exists now	Training complete, certification criteria approved and at least 10% of hotel and tourism facilities within selected BRs adopt BD-friendly certification standards	Indicator should be changed because it is not possible to calculate % increase with baseline 0 (no procedures existed).
14: Increase in % of sampled community members, hoteliers, tour operators and sector agency staff aware of and taking actions to address potential conservation threats and their adverse impacts on BD within BRs as measured by KAP survey approach.	Coordinated outreach on conservation threats lacking. Limited awareness of impact of unplanned development among general public. Baseline survey established in Year 1	10% sampled community members, hoteliers, tour operators and sector agency staff (at least 40% women) aware of potential conservation threats and adverse impacts of unplanned developments	Target is OK, but baseline is lacking, so it is impossible to monitor. The framework still established mid-term and end targets as % increase in awareness. The target should be subdivided into (i) % of sampled community members, hoteliers, tour operators and sector agency staff...; and (ii) % of women.
15: Number of additional best practices of sustainable land, coastal and marine resource use demonstrated, documented and disseminated and upscaled for replication	Existing best practices include e.g. land crab, fishing set aside, # of boats, entry fees, enrichment planting, etc.	At least 3 new best practices identified by the midterm for demonstration during the second term	Due to the word <i>new</i> this should be understood as in the framework of the project, so the baseline should be established as zero.

Even though it is an improvement from ProDoc to the Inception Report that outputs are mentioned, they have many weaknesses, and before integrating them in an updated Results Framework, they should be reviewed one by one, where it is necessary to consider the definition of output mentioned in 3.1.3. It is also recommended to improve the framework with an output level that has SMART indicators and yearly targets, to improved project planning, monitoring and evaluation.

Table 5. Comments to some of the outputs in the Inception Report

Output no.	Text	Comment
1.1	Functional governance and coordination mechanism established at national level to support dialogue, information flow and decision-making between provinces and national levels for facilitating integrated planning and management of BRs.	Not a project output. A coordination mechanism could be an output, but the rest of the text (especially "functional governance..." makes it an outcome.
1.2	Revised legislation in support of integrated landscape planning and management of BRs endorsed and functional.	Not a project output. Proposed revised legislation could be an output, but the rest of the text makes it an outcome.
1.3	Legislation, technical guidelines, standards and norms for mainstreaming BD conservation in natural resource use sectors in BRs developed and adopted.	Not a project output. The project can develop the proposals but not adopt the legislation.
2.3	Improved management effectiveness of six existing protected areas	Not a project output, but an Impact, based on many of the project activities and outputs.
2.4	Specific set-aside areas of HCVF, coastal and marine ecosystems conserved and managed for non-exhaustive use to enhance BD conservation and connectivity.	Not a project output. Outputs could be e.g. areas defined and mapped, and people trained, but "ecosystems conserved..." makes it an impact.
2.5	Restoration of degraded forests improves connectivity and enhances BD.	Not a project output. Restoration of certain areas of degraded forests could be an output, but the rest of the text refer to impact mostly after the project ends.
2.7	Responsible tourism developed and promoted	Not a project output, but two very vaguely defined activities. Many outputs should be defined to develop and promote responsible tourism.
3.3	Knowledge management contributes to policy revision and upscaling of integrated BR approaches.	Not an output. Outputs for knowledge management are e.g. reports produced and people trained, but "contributes to....." makes it an outcome.

### 3.1.7. Assumptions and risks

Assumptions and risks are often reviewed together because it could be said that they are two sides of the same coin: Assumptions are positively or optimistically formulated risks. On the other hand, assumptions that are based on little information would always represent risks. Both assumptions and risks are included in the **project results framework**. These assumptions are good, however many,

which could leave the impression that the project had many uncertainties at the moment of approval. A few assumptions could have been better formulated or eliminated, presented in the following table.

Table 6. Alternative formulations for some assumptions in the project results framework

Indicator	Assumption	Proposed reformulation
6	National policies are in-place that provide specific direction to management priorities granting environmental agencies sufficient authority to manage environmental consequences of development.	The national policies in place provide specific direction to management that grant environmental agencies sufficient authority to manage environmental consequences of development.
7	Additional revenues <i>can be</i> developed to replication and scaling up throughout the country.	Additional revenues <i>will be</i> developed for replication and scaling-up throughout the country.
13	13-1. Project management will be able to identify, document and disseminate the best practices.	(Take this out, because it is a task for the project management, not an assumption. The quality of the work could vary, but it can be carried out).
	13-2. Project Mid Term Review and End of Project Evaluation will also contribute to identifying the best practices.	(Take this out, because it is not an assumption but clearly defined in the TOR for the two evaluations).

The ProDoc's **risk matrix** includes five moderate and five low risks. Risks will be reported as critical when the impact and probability are high (i.e. when impact is rated as 5, and when impact is rated as 4 and probability is rated at 3 or higher). ProDoc mentions that UNDP would fill in the risks and monitor them in the project risk log. Management responses to critical risks will also be reported to the GEF in the annual PIR.

According to the MTR team's analysis, the matrix includes five real risks, four "risks" that should have been treated under safeguards, and one issue of sustainability (after the project implementation). For project design, it should be remembered that safeguards consider issues where the project could negatively affect others, while risks consider effects from others to the project. This is sadly often mixed in project documents, so it is important to highlight the difference between risks and safeguards:

Risks are *issues outside project management's control that could negatively impact project performance*.

Safeguards are management approaches to avoid or mitigate negative social or environmental project effects.

The following table is a review and proposed updating of the risk matrix. The column "mitigation measures" are strongly summarized compared with the original matrix, text that is part of the analysis was taken out. Risk 3 was elevated from low to moderate risk because the probability is at least 3 (detected in the project analysis). On the other hand, risk 7 (natural disasters and climate change) were lowered from moderate to low risk. Even though there would probably be some natural disasters affecting one or more of the project areas during the implementation, the impact of this on the project results would probably not be high because of adaptive project management, e.g. transferring more resources to areas where activities can continue. This leaves no high risks and only one moderate risk, which has to do with institutional capacity, in line with the MTR findings.

Table 7. Review of ProDoc's Risk Matrix

Description	Type	Impact, Probability, Risk Level	Mitigation Measures	Owner
Risk 1: Policymakers and other key stakeholders do not understand the value of Biosphere Reserves or support their function as a framework for landscape level conservation and sustainable development	Socio-political	P: 2; I: 2	(i) revise the Biodiversity Law to clarify roles and responsibilities of key sector and stakeholders, including formal legal status for BRs; (ii) define a framework for participatory landscape planning and management for BRs and Framework for planning, implementation & monitoring of commune conservation activities that assigns clear roles and responsibilities for key sector agencies and communities respectively; (iii) awareness raising to generate political and public support by implementation of Knowledge Management and communication strategy and action plans; and (iv) capacity building of stakeholders to enable them to understand and address landscape intervention approaches.	NPM
<del>Risk 2: Project activities are proposed within and adjacent to critical habitats and/or environmentally</del>	Environment	I = 3, P = 2	Take out. To manage as part of project safeguards.	BR MB

sensitive areas, including national parks.				
Risk 3: Lack of capacity in government and communities to meet obligations related to project	Institutional, Operational	P2P3, I2	Carry out needs assessment of government and local communities capacity building. Tailor training activities to meet specific requirements of the different stakeholders and ensure that they have the skills to participate in relevant aspects of the project. Provide on-the-ground training for communities participating in sustainable natural resource management, forest restoration and livelihoods. Evaluate training programs for their effectiveness and adjusted as appropriate.	NPD
<del>Risk 4: Creation of new set asides or protected areas and improved zoning of the BRs for multiple different uses, community rights of access may be restricted in specific areas.</del>	Social	P2, I3	Take out. To manage as part of project safeguards. See also MTR recommendations.	BR MB
<del>Risk 5: The project could possibly affect land tenure arrangements and/or community based property rights/customary rights to land, territories and/or resources of marginalized groups and indigenous people</del>	Social	P2, I3	Take out. To manage as part of project safeguards.	BR MB
<del>Risk 6: Women may not be fully involved in planning, implementation and monitoring of project interventions and getting benefits from such initiatives, rather land owners and other influential persons at the local level may have more control on local level decision making</del>	Social	P1, I3	Take out. To manage as part of project safeguards and gender mainstreaming.	BR MB
Risk 7: Natural disasters and climate change may affect the implementation and results of project initiatives	Environmental	P2, I3I2	(i) Implement participatory planning processes under Component 2 to ensure that activities are environmentally sustainable, support best practices are managed for their climate risks; (ii) Implement a Monitoring Plan for the condition of the natural ecosystems to ensure that these sensitive ecosystems is in a better overall situation to manage climate changes; and (iii) Implement a Knowledge Management and Communications Strategy to improve awareness of climate and ensuring measures to improve climate resilience.	BR MB
Risk 8: Long gestation periods for alternative livelihoods, and restoration of forest and marine resources can undermine community participation	Operational	P2, I2	Commune Conservation Plan activities will entail a menu of options (including activities with short-term gestation periods as buffer until longer-term investments generate sustainable benefits) to help diversify the livelihood and resource base, including linkage with on-going governmental and NGO programs to supplement and complement project activities. The project will also seek to identify additional options (PES, REDD+) as means to improve incentives for local people	BR MB
Risk 9: Construction of dams on the Dong Nai River	Political	P-1, I-2	Work with the Government of Viet Nam to assess and value the ecosystem services provided by the Dong Nai BR so that there are properly considered in any future dam development decision-making.	NPD
<del>Risk 10 – Financial sustainability of BRs beyond the duration of the project is not ensured</del>	<del>Financial</del>	<del>P-2, I-2</del>	Take out. It is beyond the project implementation period.	NPD

Green: Low Risk; Yellow: Moderate Risk

On the other hand, the **risks mentioned in the results framework** are nearly all real risks, which are highly positive, but no mitigation measures are mentioned. Only two risks included are not real risks, both for Outcome 3:

*Actions among the assorted agencies and NGOs remain uncoordinated:* This is not a risk because the baseline would then be that it is now uncoordinated, and then it would be no surprise if it continues that way. A real risk would be that NGOs become uncoordinated if they were coordinated from the start.

*Community diversity will not be a hindrance to outreach activities:* This is not a risk but rather a positive assumption.

**The Financial planning and management section** in ProDoc mentions only one risk, of funds being unavailable to project BRs because of changing government priorities and lack of political commitment. The corresponding mitigation measure mentioned was that the co-financing will be from existing and proposed government programs; and the Steering Committee and MAB National Committee will facilitate and ensure that co-financing efforts are not severely compromised. It is surprising that this risk was not included in the risk matrix, however based on the Government's priority for the project it might have been considered as a low risk by the design team.

The MTR team considers that there is at least one additional financial risk, which is a major difference in the exchange rate from USD to local currency, potentially impacting how much could be done with the available GEF resources. Since this is standard in most projects, and it is considered a low risk in Vietnam, the MTR team will however not insist on including it.

The project document has also a section called **"Risk Management" (section XII)** that seems to be an adapted version of the agreement between UNDP and the Government. It mentions issues such as not financing terrorism, apply UNDP Social and Environmental Standards, and long texts about no tolerate for sexual harassment, and to avoid misuse of funds, fraud and corruption, with reference to several UNDP policy documents. It also gives emphasis to accountability of the Implementing Partner. Even though all these issues are important and standard in UNDP-Government agreements, *they are not project risk management*. It is stated that the Implementing Partner shall put in place and maintain a security plan, and assume all risks and liabilities related to the Implementing Partner's security. This is another type of risk mitigation, but the security situation in the country is low and is not expected to affect the project performance.

### **3.1.8. Lessons learned from other relevant projects incorporated into project design**

The project design benefitted from lessons learned from several projects identified in the baseline, including the JICA Sustainable Natural Resource Management project (pilot activities in BRs and policy development), and the GIZ ecosystem-based adaptation project (lessons on land use planning and sustainable land management for BRs), as well as ongoing programs on Payment for Ecosystems Services (PES).

It is planned that the project would exchange experiences and lessons learned with these projects, as well as another GEF-UNDP project on "Conservation of Critical Wetland Protected Areas and Linked Landscapes", but this project had its Terminal Evaluation in 2021. The project should however use the opportunity to exchange experiences with other GEF projects in Vietnam, such as the World Bank project 'Strengthening Partnerships to Protect Endangered Wildlife in Vietnam' (GEF ID 9529) and the recently approved FAO project 'Integrated Sustainable Landscape Management in the Mekong Delta of Vietnam' (GEF ID 10245).

The project design focuses on use of available resources to the extent possible, building on the existing PA management planning. It invests in broader land/seascape plans both for mapping and capacity building with use of available information to develop plans that follow the "No Regrets" principle adopted by national policies, and replicate lessons from REDD+, PES, and the UNDP-GEF Small Grants Program (SGP).

### **3.1.9. Planned stakeholder participation**

ProDoc's stakeholder analysis is good and defines the expected involvement of each main stakeholder group in the project, from central government and UNDP down to local communities. An initial stakeholder analysis to prepare the PIF was followed up with consultations during the PPG stage to define the expected role of the planned partners and actors, considering the 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 (see also 1.3.2).

#### **3.1.10. Linkages between the project and other interventions within the sector**

The projects mentioned under 3.1.8 are also those the ProDoc expected to collaborate with. The project would also collaborate extensively with the National Man and Biosphere (MAB) committee and the national REDD Implementation Centre in Nepal.

The project has also national and provincial linkages to public and private initiatives for capacity building, coordination and integration of biodiversity consideration into sectoral planning, especially for Biosphere Reserves. An important link to the private sector is tourism development. In this area it is important to note that Hoi An City and Quang Nam province are implementing a lot of tourism programs aligned with the objective to protect and conserve the Biosphere Reserve, particularly considering the reputation that Hoi An is achieving as the Ecology-Culture-Tourism City in 2030.

#### **3.1.11. Management arrangements in the design**

The project has a National Implementation Modality (NIM), where the management arrangements are covered in 1.3.2. This sub-chapter will therefore only give additional information and mostly focus on Project Assurance and UNDP's role. The NIM follows the Standard Basic Assistance Agreement between UNDP and the Government, Vietnam Government's regulations for ODA project/program management (Decree 16/2016/NĐ-CP, Circular 12/2016/TT-BKHĐT), and the Joint Harmonized Project/Program Management Guidelines of the UN and Government of Vietnam.

As the GEF Agency, UNDP is ultimately responsible and accountable for the delivery of project results through its Country Office. The UNDP Programme Officer in charge acts as a focal point for facilitating and monitoring the project implementation, maintaining partnership with the project team, and participating in all project reviews, work/budget planning meetings, monitoring visits and evaluations. S/he certifies annual and quarterly work-plan, budgets and progress reports, as well as proposed use of unspecified budget items.

UNDP provides the following project cycle management services: (i) financial services and project audit; (ii) overseeing expenditures against budgets; (iii) ensuring that activities are carried out in compliance with UNDP/GEF procedures; (iv) ensuring that reporting is undertaken in line with GEF requirements; (v) facilitating learning, exchange and outreach; and (vi) Contract the MTR and TE, and trigger additional reviews/evaluations. Additional services could be given based on recovery of direct costs.

The PSC has a key role in project assurance, to ensure that appropriate project milestones are managed and completed. Since PSC is a governance mechanism and is not implementing the activities, the project assurance must be independent of the NPM, and therefore no part of this task should be delegated to the NPM.

## **3.2. Project implementation**

*The Overall Project Implementation & Adaptive management is rated Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)<sup>15</sup>*

### **3.2.1. Adaptive management**

Due to the strong delays, especially related to the COVID-19 pandemic, the project had to rely on adaptive management to achieve its goals. Some adaptive management is already going on, such as increased use of online meetings for courses, seminars and consultations, cooperation with local organizations to collect data, and contracting local consultants in the project sites that can act under

<sup>15</sup> See rating scales, Annex 4. Based only on target achievements the rating would have been unsatisfactory (U), however it was considered that the MTR was carried out quite early.

instructions, backstopping and supervision of more experienced consultants. This has however had variable results based on the opportunities for achieving relatively qualified local consultants.

The PIR June 2021 proposed to develop a contingency plan together with the RTA, to adopt adaptive measures, which is a good idea, however much can be done right now, before having the plan. One example is to assure that all sites are fully staffed, and have the incentives and online support to carry out the planned activities. If these activities for any reason cannot be carried out, adaptive management should include listening more to the local communities, and support them in small-scale pilot activities that should be financed as long as they are in line with the overall goals of the project. Competitive funds is an efficient way of using the project to try out different models, but it might need budget adjustments.

With the COVID-19 pandemic it is however a danger that it could camouflage other weaknesses in the project implementation, because it is easy to blame the pandemic when activities are being delayed. Adaptive management should therefore focus on all areas where it is possible to achieve improved efficiency, especially the planning and reporting procedures, as well as procurement. Par. 3.3.4 mentions several measures that could be taken in this regard. Based on the MTR interviews, it seems like many public sector staff are surprised by ideas about other ways to do it, and often the reply is “that’s the way it is”. However, considering that this is a pilot project, it should not be afraid to try out new models for implementation, as long as an agreement can be reached between UNDP and the Government.

### **3.2.2. *Actual stakeholder participation and partnership arrangements***

Since participation of national and provincial stakeholders are covered in sections 1.3.2 and partly in 3.1.11, the present sub-chapter will focus on local stakeholder participation.

There has so far not been any major changes of the implementation procedure that was planned for the project, except for the previously mentioned adaptations due to COVID-19. The project continues to work with the local communities, CSOs, NGOs, and is trying to strengthen collaboration with partners on all levels, including indigenous peoples and women in the communities. Most project field activities have been training and capacity building. There is good relationship and participation of local stakeholders in project activities, such as in the PA in the Management Board, and collaboration with forestry owners in the BR buffer zones. The GAP mainstreaming activities include awareness raising on gender equality and roles of women in biodiversity conservation, community-based management, sustainable use of natural resources, and livelihood in the BRs (see gender participation, section 3.3.7).

Several training courses and workshops were carried out in Tay Nghe An BR, including: (i) Workshop to prepare regulations and orientation to integrate BR project activities; (ii) Technical meeting for comments on the draft Report on status assessment and development of socio-economic, biodiversity, environmental and institutional maps of the BR; (iii) Two cluster meetings at district level to assess the needs and services expected from the inexhaustible use of the reserved areas, and completing the criteria for selecting priority communes; (iv) Cluster meeting at commune level to assess the needs and services expected from the use of inexhaustible resources in the dedicated set aside areas; and (v) Ten Consultation meetings at priority communes to assess inexhaustible resource use needs in reserved areas and Development of a commune-level conservation plan. In Dong Nai BR and Cu Lao Cham BR, the project carried out training on conservation monitoring of target species, while a second training on management of coral ecosystems and land crabs was held at the Cu Lao Cham BR.

The BR Project Implementation Teams at the three target Biosphere Reserve sites carried out various training sessions on monitoring of (i) biodiversity and key endangered species; and (ii) coral ecosystems and land crabs. The BR Project Management Unit carried out technical meetings in April-June 2021 on: (i) stakeholder coordination mechanisms in biosphere reserve management; (ii) draft guidelines for integrating BR management in provincial planning; (iii) deliberation and suggestions on guiding content of BR management; (iv) review guidelines on identification and management of high conservation value areas; and (v) review content of guidelines for application, identification and management of HCVF. Additional training sessions were implemented through technical bidding packages, on BR management and the BR draft strategy.



The MTR Team noticed that the project's ways of interaction with local communities have been mostly through training, capacity building and consultations. Even though these are all positive activities, the MTR team noticed certain weakness in the process of presenting new proposals from below, and in community-based decision-making. It is a big difference between giving opinions on drafts presented from outside and coming up with new proposals prepared by the community members *within their local structure*. The project does not have a Stakeholder Engagement Plan, but intends to prepare it in 2022 after a UNDP consultant has finalized the work to update the SESP. The same consultant will then support preparation of the engagement plan as well as related training to central and local stakeholders.

The project however already engaged with local stakeholders to develop CCPs for communes, where consultants facilitated the process of defining priority activities, since a problem is the lack of local capacity to prepare proposals. The Cam Kim Commune (Hoi An) mentioned that they are not able to prepare a concept note, and need external support. Due to COVID-19, the consultants often had to use questionnaires to collect local proposals. It is however expected that the project's work in this area could improve once the impact of the pandemic has been reduced and it is better opportunities for personal interaction.

### **3.2.3. Project finance and co-finance**

The Project Management set up financial management internal controls with the aim to properly use all funding resources from GEF, UNDP and co-financing sources. This was based on the Harmonized Programme and Project Management Guidelines (HPPMG), revisions to HPPMG and the Harmonized Framework for Cash Transfers to implementing partners (HACT).

According to information from UNDP CO, the cumulative disbursement of GEF funds by Dec 31, 2021 was USD 1,475,032, which gives a corresponding GL delivery against total approved amount of 22%. This has to do with the general low progress on activities, to a large extent due to COVID-19, but has also other reasons, such as slow planning and reporting processes. Also, procedure for tax-refund is not clear, with the result that 10% of budget remain. According to UNDP regulation, the project should use at least 80% of the budget to approve the next financial quarter workplan. With 10% of budget remained as tax-refund, all sites have to expense at least 90% of the budget to get the following quarter plan approved, which is very hard.

One project audit has been carried out<sup>16</sup> by Mazars Vietnam Company Ltd, covering the period June 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021. It is not a complete audit, but referred to as "Report of factual findings". The following is a brief summary of the findings:

- 1) No significant issues were noted on: (i) documentation describing the Implementing Partner's financial management internal controls; (ii) controls over authorization of expenditures, including FACE forms and requests for direct payment; (iii) controls over expenditures made in accordance with applicable policies and procedures; (iv) controls over budget estimation and revision except for finding 3 below; (v) controls over adequacy of the accounting and financial operations and reporting systems; (vi) controls over maintenance and security of accounting records; (vii) controls over procurement/contracting of supplies and services; and (viii) controls over asset management.
- 2) The audit report noted that due to waiting for instructions on new tax refund procedures for the last 6 months of 2020, the PMU had not submitted a tax refund application for the first 6 months of 2021. The audit report observed that some VAT with total of VND 150,784 were recorded as the expense of the project. This practice is not in compliance with the guidance in HPPMG: "VAT should be accounted for in a separate account".
- 3) The PMU was late in paying for some consulting contracts, from one to three/four months.

The COVID-19 pandemic is one of the most important factors that have affected project progress, with the result that the disbursement by Sept 30-2021 was only 45% of the revised annual budget, while UNDP's requirement was at least 50% by June 30<sup>th</sup>. In a letter to the Government dated Oct 1<sup>st</sup> 2021, UNDP however gave its no objection to a reduction of the revised 2021 budget by USD 379,137 to a total

<sup>16</sup> No spot checks have been carried out so far. UNDP CO informs that spot check are normally not done in years of audits.



of USD 1,263,495, as well as corresponding changes in the AWP. UNDP encouraged the Implementing Partner to accelerate the implementation progress with the goal of reaching 100% of the revised budget by the end of the year. This goal was nearly reached, and by Dec 31<sup>st</sup> the yearly disbursement 2021 was USD 1,149,823, which gave a cumulative disbursement for the project of USD 1,475,032.

The project co-financing is high. UNDP and the Government have both presented co-financing letters that mention “grant”, however this would require cash contribution to the project budget. Based on the explanation in the Government co-financing letter, it is clearly in-kind contributions, and co-financing so far has been registered as that in the following tables. Regarding the USD 1 million co-financing from UNDP, these are funds from the projects “Improving resilience of coastal communities to climate change related impacts in Viet Nam” and “Biodiversity Finance Initiative” (BIOFIN). The co-financing letter mentions USD 800,000 as grant and USD 200,000 as cash contribution, without defining the respective amounts from each project.

On the other hand, to be accepted as cash contribution it must provide cash finance to the project itself and not be parallel financing in another project budget. If any financing will end up as “cash” should be concluded in the Terminal Evaluation. JICA and USAID have provided co-financing that was included in the amounts pledged by the provinces at the moment of project approval, and is therefore not registered separately in table 9.

Table 8. Co-financing Table<sup>1</sup> (GEF format, US\$1,000)<sup>1</sup>

Co-financing (Type/Source)	UNDP own financing		Government		Other <sup>2</sup>		Total	
	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual
Grants <sup>3</sup>	200	0	842	0	0	0	1,042	0
Loans/Credits	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Equity investments	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
In-kind support <sup>3</sup>	800	658	34,696	30,415	0	0	35,496	31,073
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,000</b>	<b>658</b>	<b>35,538</b>	<b>30,415</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>36,538</b>	<b>31,073</b>

<sup>1</sup>Represents updated co-financing data (Jan 2022); <sup>2</sup>This refers to contributions mobilized for the project from other multilateral agencies, bilateral development cooperation agencies, NGOs, the private sector and beneficiaries; <sup>3</sup>See discussion in text.

Table 9. Approved co-financing at the moment of GEF CEO endorsement and until Dec 31, 2021.

Sources of co-financing <sup>1</sup>	Cash pledged		Cash final		In-kind pledged		In-kind final		Total final	
	US\$	%	US\$	%	US\$	%	US\$	%	US\$	%
Govt of Viet Nam (MONRE/VEA)	400,000	38.4	0	0	1,993,429	5.6	1,024,000	3.3	1,024,000	3.3
Nghe An Province	113,500	10.9	0	0	13,896,806	39.2	23,911,500	77.0	23,911,500	77.0
Quang Nam Province	128,755	12.4	0	0	6,751,414	19.0	3,695,597	11.9	3,695,597	11.9
Dong Nai Province	200,000	19.2	0	0	12,054,318	34.0	1,784,116	5.7	1,784,116	5.7
UNDP	200,000	19.2	0	0	800,000	2.3	658,277	2.1	658,277	2.1
<b>Total pledged</b>	<b>1,042,255</b>	<b>100</b>			<b>35,495,967</b>	<b>100</b>			<b>36,538,222</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Total final</b>			<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>			<b>31,073,490</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>31,073,490</b>	<b>100</b>

<sup>1</sup>These figures refer to information from UNDP based on the signed co-financing letter and registered co-financing so far.

According to information during interviews, the project activities received additional resources from Payment for Forest Environmental Services (PFES)<sup>17</sup> and from the State budget for sustainable forest development and management. This explains the high co-financing figures realized for Nghe An province so far.

According to the figures in tables 8 and 9, the pledged total co-financing is high but the *cash* co-financing is low. The in-kind actual co-financing provided is very high (USD 31 million), or 87.4% of the expected total national co-financing. The total amount of resources leveraged relative to the project budget is very high, which is positive. However, according to these figures most of the pledged co-financing is already used, while most of the GEF budget funds are still available. This raises some important questions: (i) why have so few project targets been achieved with a co-financing of more than USD 31 million?; (ii) will the the rest of the project period get into problems due to lack of sufficient co-financing?; and (iii) is there an opportunity to raise the total co-financing for the rest of the project to a

<sup>17</sup> PFES was introduced in 2011, when the Forest Protection and Development Fund (FPDF) was established, contributing to local economic development and generating capital for forest restoration. UNDP requested PMU to explain amounts from PFES, but the MTR team has not received any information about this.

level per year similar to 2020-2021?. The MTR does not provide the answers, but it is recommended to take this discussion between UNDP and the Government.

### **3.2.4. Monitoring & Evaluation**

The design at entry for M&E is based on the Results Framework and the GEF monitoring tools to monitor global environmental benefits (BD tracking tool, LD tracking tool, and SFM tracking tool), as well as the METT and gender tracking tool. The project was approved under GEF-6, but GEF policy required the project to transition to GEF-7 Core Indicators, which was done at the end of the Inception Period with support from an International Technical Advisor. Some indicators were however not presented until the Inception Report, and the GEF-6 BD, LD and SFM tracking tools were developed in early 2018 and not reviewed in the inception phase. According to PMU, some indicators in the tracking tools do not fit with the ProDoc, especially targeted species and areas of PAs in the core zone of 3 BRs. The PMU has sent data collection form to the BRs to collect new data.

The GEF-6 tracking tools were annexes to ProDoc and are approved. The GEF-7 core indicators is an annex to the Inception Report and were approved by the NSC and UNDP RTA. The process to update and complete those tracking tools and indicators is still on-going, and the final updated versions have not yet been provided to the MTR Team.

The Results Framework has indicators only on outcome level, and ProDoc mentions outputs only in the TOC. This Results Framework is relevant for a Terminal Evaluation but is difficult to use for project planning and monitoring, and not very functional for the MTR. On the other hand, the Inception Report mention several outputs, but often without specific targets, and never with time of delivery. This makes it impossible for the MTR team to use it for reviewing compliance at mid-term. The PMU comments that “it is very difficult to implement the project because the results framework focuses on results (outcome level), but UNDP likes to focus on activities”. The MTR team agrees with PMU that this is a problem, and therefore recommends to improve the results framework with SMART indicators, especially on output level (see 3.1.3). Activities should however not been part of the results framework, but included in the workplans to be developed with the purpose of achieving the outputs. Regarding this issue, the UNDP CO comments that activities are only means to achieve outcomes, and UNDP don’t just focus on activities. However, UNDP highlights that they need evidence of the budget spent (which often is related to activities). The MTR team considers that UNDP and PMU should have a better dialogue about this, to avoid misunderstandings. It is also important that the yearly workplans relates to the overall results framework and not seen as a separate instrument. For instance, even though compliance with yearly plans could be measured, what is important is the progress towards the project targets.

The MTR team has reviewed the quality and adequacy of the project monitoring mechanisms, which is based on the results framework and therefore strongly related with what is mentioned under 3.1.6-3.1.7. The PSC’s has participated with review of plans and reports, and given inputs, quality and timeliness of reports, etc. Quarterly progress reports (QPR) and PIRs are presented from the Government to UNDP. The QPRs include activities to reach the outputs and progress on achievement, specified as “not started”, “in progress” and finalized. The reports are however related to the approved annual work plans and not the targets in the results framework, which makes it difficult to use the information for review of overall progress towards the expected end results.

*The MTR overall assessment* is that implementation of M&E during the project is working, but is not efficient. It is affected by bureaucratic procedures and use of both the national and the UNDP monitoring system (see efficiency 3.3.4).

### **3.2.5. Implementing agency and executing agency**

The GEF agency (UNDP) and the project executing agency (MONRE) are presented in 1.3.1 and 1.3.2. UNDP provides overall project oversight, external monitoring and support when needed, as well as financial control, audit and evaluations. MONRE is in charge of progress execution, based on the UNDP National Implementation Modality.

The decision to approve NIM modality requires that the national executing agency has the required capacity to carry out the tasks, however this is practiced very differently from country to country<sup>18</sup>. The MTR team has not seen any confirmation of this capacity through a complete institutional analysis, but has been informed that NIM is standard for GEF projects in Vietnam. As mentioned in other sections of the report, more emphasis should have been paid to institutional structures and processes during the design phase. In practice, the level of involvement, support and training from UNDP towards the government must be adjusted according to the capacity of the public agencies involved. In this case, the delay on project initiation and procurement, as well as lack of timeliness of initial results could indicate that it would have moved faster with a Direct Implementation Modality (DIM), but this is not sure. An advantage with the NIM is of course that the agencies that will follow-up the project results are in charge from the start, thereby improving the expectation of sustainability.

UNDP's oversight and supervision roles are appreciated by national partners. However, the delays experienced during implementation could probably have been less serious if the UNDP CO had given more training of local partner staff and also been stricter in its requirements, especially on compliance with deadlines. Additional support by UNDP staff and consultants have partly mitigated this issue, but has been complicated by the COVID-19 pandemic that is limiting international and national travel. It is not expected that there would be any major difference between NIM and DIM for risk management and social-environmental safeguards, including SESP, because UNDP is anyway supervising these issues even under a NIM arrangement (see the specific sections on these issues).

### **3.2.6. Project risk management**

The project risk monitoring and reporting is done through the PIR, which considers the risks outlined in the risk register and PIMS+ risk tab. The PIR mid-2021 rated the project risk as "moderate", mainly due to low financial delivery. The overall project Social & Environmental Standards (SES) risk categorization<sup>19</sup> for the project is also "Moderate", but the project was assessed before the new UNDP SESP came into effect. Therefore, the Regional Technical Advisor (RTA) recommended updating the SESP and FPIC, and prepare a stakeholder engagement plan (last updated in the Inception Report), as well as a grievance redress mechanism. This process is critical to ensure that the project remains in compliance with UNDP and GEF SES Standards.

The key risks and barriers to achieve the project objective and generate Global Environmental Benefits were considered by the MTR team through stakeholder interviews and document reviews, being:

- (i) The COVID-19 pandemic, which has several negative impacts, such as reduced quality of technical assistance due to travel restrictions, and reduced quality of training events that are done remotely instead of with personal presence. It is especially negative for local beneficiaries that sometime have no Internet access or poor Internet quality.
- (ii) Time consumption in preparation and approval of activity plans and budget plans: This issue is flagged in the MTR as a main reason for delays - see 3.3.4 where some possible solutions are proposed. Even though the situation could improve, it would probably continue as a barrier to achieving improved effectiveness.
- (iii) Bidding processes are complicated and time consuming, and local staff is not very familiar with the procedures. A barrier to improved effectiveness is the requirement to comply with both UNDP and national regulations<sup>20</sup>.

<sup>18</sup> Examples from two other UNDP-GEF projects evaluated by the MTR team leader 2021-22: Brazil (GEF ID 4718) used DIM and Tuvalu (GEF ID 9220) used NIM.

<sup>19</sup> Note that even though the PIR format treats both project risks and safeguards under the title "Risk Management", project risks and safeguards are two completely different things: Risks are factors outside project management's control that could negatively affect project performance, while safeguards (3.2.7) are measures to be taken to avoid that the project negatively impacts others or the environment.

<sup>20</sup> This issue was frequently mentioned in interviews, even though PMU comments that they think all local staff is familiar with the procedures. UNDP comments that items procured by UNDP follow UNDP rules; those procured by MONRE shall follow GOV rules, and as the project progresses, this should no longer be an issue. The evaluation team concludes based on the local interviews that this is still a problem.

### **3.2.7. Use of social and environmental safeguards**

As mentioned under 3.2.6, the PIR format treats both risk and safeguards as “Risk Management”, however safeguards are social and environmental issues to be monitored, and measures to be taken to avoid that the project negatively impacts local stakeholders or the environment. The PIR June 2021 reported that the project's safeguards management plan and monitoring is on track.

The Project Inception Report provided an update to the original social and environmental screening, where five ‘moderate’ social and environmental risks were stated. So far none of these risks have materialized or increased its significance and no new environmental or social risks have been identified during the course of project implementation

There is no guarantee that environmental projects would have no negative environmental impacts, so all project investments should continue to be screened for potential impacts, and EIA carried out if required. Based on the type of project investments, it is expected that EIAs would be used very seldom or never. The project's social and environmental safeguards should be strictly observed and the impacts monitored. There are also certain environmental risks (outside project management's control), such as waste and polluted waters from upper parts of the watersheds that could damage the environment down-stream, where the project could collaborate with public agencies and other projects to avoid or reduce these impacts.

As mentioned under 3.1.5, the ProDoc opens for potential reallocation of local people, which the MTR team considers a social risk. However, no such reallocations have been carried out, and none are currently planned. In case reallocation is proposed, both an EIA and an FPIC process should be carried out. The ProDoc also mentions to establish a grievance redress mechanism (GRM) for project-affected communities, but this mechanism is not finalized, and logically no grievances have been raised. The project has also not received any other complaints related to social or environmental impacts.

The MTR Team considers that the safeguards and mitigation measures should be further detailed and used to avoid complaints through the GRM (see also Environmental sustainability under 3.3.5).

## **3.3. Project results**

### **3.3.1. Relevance**

*The extent to which the intervention objectives and design respond to beneficiaries', global, country, and partner/institution needs, policies, and priorities, and continue to do so if circumstances change.*

The project is aligned with Viet Nam's national policies and strategies for biodiversity and commitments to CBD, land degradation neutrality, national SDGs, NCDs and REDD+ goals (see 3.1.2). It is however most focused on biodiversity, while land degradation is given less importance and is mostly a secondary impact of reduced forest degradation. The project's integrated approach helps harmonizing biodiversity conservation and BR development into national economic planning. It is therefore also clearly in line with MONRE's institutional objectives, policies and strategies in a long-term perspective. The project is also strongly aligned with GEF strategic priorities, especially for the biodiversity focal area, but also for the focal areas of land degradation and climate change, as well as sustainable forest management.

The project is according to interviews during the MTR also aligned with the policies and strategies for the provinces where it is being implemented, particularly the objectives of sustainable natural resource management, biodiversity conservation and local livelihood improvement. It would benefit local communities inside and around the BRs, and the local population in these communities support the project goals.

Both national and local stakeholders participated in preparing the PIF, implementing the PPG and preparing the project proposal. During the design process, national stakeholders informed about the opportunities for the project and gave the general goals, then the local stakeholders, according to their assigned functions and responsibilities participated strongly in the required activities, e.g. consultation meetings, surveys, developing activities proposals, and comment on draft documents. The degree of local community involvement varied however much between the areas, where the BR Nghe An site has most involvement and the two sites Quang Nam and Dong Nai have limited involvement. This has to

do with several factors, such as already established community collaboration and external financing before the project started, as well as less impact of COVID-19.

### **3.3.2. Coherence**

*The compatibility of the intervention with other interventions in the country, sector or institution.*

The project is coherent with the objectives and priorities for Viet Nam's UNDAF and UNDP's CPD that was agreed with the Government of Viet Nam. It will help to improve sustainable natural resources management, reduce the impact of climate change and improve the livelihood of local communities, including women, indigenous peoples and other vulnerable groups.

### **3.3.3. Effectiveness**

*The extent to which the Project's objectives and results that have been achieved so far, or are expected to be achieved, including any differential results across groups.*

The MTR team has reviewed the results achieved so far compared with the indicators and targets in the Project Results Framework. There were no outputs defined in the framework, but progress on outputs was still reported in the quarterly reports. According to the third quarter report 2021, only the following outputs were so far finalized: (i) Accounting software; and (ii) Participation in project management course. Other costs have covered project staff.

The assumptions are included in the results framework and their continued relevance should therefore be monitored, or the assumptions could be updated or issues confirmed, but this was not done in the PIR mid-2021. Impact drivers are not included in the ProDoc, and these are not monitored or reported (except for social & environmental impact assessment, which is related with safeguards).

The activities on central level (sometimes called site 4) has, as the project is general, much delay. The COVID-19 pandemic is one reason, but this cannot explain all delays (see 3.3.4). Some of these delays is a reflection of the delay on local level, and the ability to provide information in time to the central level. The annual workplan 2021 was approved so late as May 2021, due to wait for inception report and then the project team had to revise and adjust the whole workplan, reducing time for actual implementation.

One financial aspect that reduces effectiveness is the requirement of co-financing from the local beneficiaries, since the provincial budgets are limited. Financial support from the provinces would theoretically improve the efficiency (cost/benefit), but the low % of staff salary paid by the provinces leads to low priority, and therefore also low productivity. One limitation to this adaptive management is that bidding processes must be published and opened for all potential candidates in the online bidding system. Since it is a competitive process it is difficult to give priority to local consultants.

The two sites Quang Nam and Dong Nai have huge delays in project implementation. They hired consultants from Ha Noi, but due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the consultants could not travel to the provinces to work. To mitigate this impact on the project they tried the alternative to contract local consultants that work under the online guidance and supervision from the more experienced consultants. This had so far limited effect due to the low capacity of the local consultants.

Interviews with local stakeholders share some light on different reasons for the delays. Several persons commented that the project is very broad and vague, and not in line with the local situation. In the Cat Tien National Park (Dong Nai) they think the project document uses terms that are difficult to understand. They don't know the project workplan but the Park implemented many activities on livelihoods, biodiversity and natural resources assessment that according to the Park staff were not considered or used by the project. They think that the project should be more detailed and measurable, with budget for capacity building, biodiversity and livelihood improvement, and less focused on mapping and reporting. The same opinion was mentioned by Viet Nam Administration of Forestry (VNFOREST), who also commented that since much information was created by other projects, there is no need to start from the beginning with surveys, and use this budget for other necessary activities. PMU does not agree with this assessment, and considers the mapping process as an important step to identify potential investments.

The BR Nghe An site has advanced most and achieved positive results through bidding packets for local

consultants, and would maybe be able to meet the local planning targets. One important reason is that they so far have not been significantly impacted by COVID-19. There is strong involvement of PPC and the MB of Western Nghe An BR. The local team has carried out activities on natural resource assessment and biodiversity monitoring, and has also submitted a project proposal on livelihood improvement for the call from PMU and UNDP-GEF Small grants program (SGP), based on proposals in the Community Conservation Plans (CCPs).

Table 10. Characteristics of the project sites

Issues	Sites		
	Western Nghe An	Cu Lao Cham – Hoi An	Dong Nai
<b>Situation and coverage</b>	North-central. 1,303,285 ha, part of 9 mountain districts, bordering Laos. Covers the whole Ca River upstream watershed.	Central coast. 33,146 ha. Two cores zones covering include the terrestrial Hoi An WCHS and the marine Cu Lao Cham Marine Protected Area, which includes 8 offshore islands.	South. 969,993 ha, 5 provinces. Core zone consists of Cat Tien National Park, Bau Sau RAMSAR Site and Dong Nai Culture and Nature Reserve, incl. Tri An Terrestrial Wetland Reserve.
<b>Ecosystems</b>	Diverse forests and freshwater ecosystems, forest plantations, grasslands.	Mountain rainforests, archipelago and marine ecosystems.	Tropical rainforest and semi-evergreen tropical humid forest
<b>PIT</b>	7 people, only Site Coordinator paid by Central PMU (full-time) – open position since Sept 2021; the rest is DARD staff, part-time in the project (15% of basic salary is Province subsidy). PIT Director is Vice Director of MB.	11 people, only Site coordinator paid by Central PMU (full-time), the rest is staff from Cu Lao Cham Marine Reserve, part-time in the project (30% of basic salary is Province subsidy). PIT Director is Director of the Marine Reserve.	12 people, only Site coordinator paid by Central PMU (full-time), the rest is staff from Dong Nai Culture and Nature Reserve, part-time in the project (30% of basic salary is Province subsidy). PIT Director is Director of the Nature Reserve.
<b>Local partners</b>	Provincial People's Committee (PPC) MB of Western Nghe An BR; DARD; DNRE; Pu Mat National Park; Pu Hoat Nature Reserve; Pu Huong Nature Reserve; Forest Owners of set-aside areas; Local authorities/communities in and around the W. Nghe An BR; NGOs (consultants)	PPC; MB of Cu Lao Cham – Hoi An BR ; DARD ; DNRE; Cu Lao Cham Marine Reserve; Hoi An World Heritage Site; Local authorities and communities; NGOs (consultants)	PPC; MB of Dong Nai BR. ; DARD ; DNRE; Cat Tien National Park; Dong Nai Culture and Nature Reserve; Local authorities and communities; NGOs (consultants).
<b>Activities so far</b>	Strengthen BR Management Board functionality and sector coordination. Multi-disciplinary assessment/mapping, incl. BD/ES values and threats, climate risks, HCVF/KBAs, land degradation and mitigation. Protocols for monitoring of key endangered species. Identify set-asides areas (map, field). Site-specific planning for non-consumptive resource use in set-asides. Extensive consultations, incl. local communities, on demand and services. Bio-physical and socio-economic resource mapping and development of commune conservation plans (CCP)	Same type of activities as Western Nghe An, but much further behind schedule	Same type of activities as Western Nghe An, but much further behind schedule
<b>Strengths</b>	Strong responsibility of relevant authorities. Local people are interested. Local consultants were hired. Less impact of Covid-19, so less restriction in local meetings and field work.	Strong responsibility of relevant authorities. PIT is within the Cu Lao Cham Marine Reserve, so that the management and operation of PIT is more effective. Local people are interested.	Strong responsibility of relevant authorities. PIT is within Dong Nai Culture and Nature Reserve, so that the management and operation of PIT is more effective. Local people are interested
<b>Weaknesses and challenges</b>	Challenges with planning, reporting and procurement (see 3.3.4). Changes in PIT structure. Much PIT staff turnover. Staff working part-time (15%) gives lower priority to project activities and lower work effectiveness.	Challenges with planning, reporting and procurement (see 3.3.4). Staff working part-time (30%) gives lower priority to project activities and lower work effectiveness. Strong impact of Covid-19, so contracted consultants from outside could not come. Bad weather Q1/Q4, 2021	Challenges with planning, reporting and procurement (see 3.3.4). Staff working part-time (30%) gives lower priority to project activities and lower work effectiveness. Strong impact of Covid-19, so contracted consultants from outside could not come.

Table 11 presents the updated results framework at Dec 31, 2021, based on information from the PMU. The outcome indicators has a compliance with the mid-term targets of only 37.5%, which is quite low, however **the MTR was carried out a bit too early**.

The project team mentions many activities that are planned to be carried out in 2022, however a MTR cannot measure “results” in the Results Framework based on plans, but must stick strictly with the targets, and measure results based on exactly the same issue. The evaluations have however had the

flexibility to include results up to Dec 31, 2021, even though the MTR was then well underway, and even accepting as complied a target that was achieved in January 2022 (Decree for guidance for implementing LEP). It should however be mentioned that measuring compliance of targets on output level probably would have given a more positive picture. During the time that has passed so far, especially three issues outside project management's control have delayed the implementation progress: (i) late initiation due to the process of formally approve and initiate the project on national level; (ii) having to comply with rigorous planning and reporting processes established on national level; and (iii) the COVID-19 pandemic. The PMU is actively trying to resolve the project delays, but the mentioned issues still remain, and these are broadly discussed in other sections of the report.

Table 11. Progress on the indicators in the Results Framework at mid-term (Dec. 31-2021)

Objective and outcomes	Indicators	Baseline	Mid-term Target	Mid-term result	% of target/ Rating
<b>Project Objective:</b> To effectively mainstream biodiversity conservation and natural resources management objectives into governance, planning and management of socio-economic development and tourism in Biosphere Reserves	<i>Mandatory Indicator 1.3.1 (MI-1):</i> Area of sustainable management solutions at sub-national level for conservation of BD and ES that benefit from integrated landscape and seascape planning and management approaches	<i>Approx. 0.367 million ha (managed effectively)</i>	<i>0.425 million ha effectively managed through participatory approaches</i>	0,405 million ha	95
	<i>Mandatory Indicator 1.3.2 (MI-2):</i> Number of households participating in improved and alternative livelihoods, sustainable resource management and best practice approaches	<i>0 (Baseline of households participating in improved and alternative livelihoods and sustainable resource management will be established through commune/village microplanning process)</i>	<i>500 households directly benefiting from sustainable natural resources management, improved and alternative livelihoods and incomes (40% of beneficiaries are women)</i>	No result measured yet. Activities planned to start in 2022	0
	<i>Mandatory indicator 2.5.1 (MI-2-1):</i> Extent to which Institutional frameworks are in place for integration of conservation, sustainable natural resource use, BD and ecosystems, and improved livelihoods into BR planning and management	<i>Multiple use sustainable BR planning and management approaches absent or limited within the country</i>	<i>Progress towards institutionalization of multiple use and sustainable BR planning and management approaches as measured by National MAB Committee formalized, legally mandated and functional as coordination body</i>	Revised Law on Environmental Protection (LEP) adopted Nov 17, 2020. Decree for guidance for implementing LEP approved Jan 20, 2022	50
	<i>Mandatory (new) Indicator 3.1:</i> Number of direct beneficiaries (% of which are women) incl. people trained and people participating in management, improved and sustainable practices (GEF Core Indicator 11).	0	<i>1,890 direct beneficiaries 756 women beneficiaries (40%)</i>	No result measured yet. Activities planned to start in 2022	0
	<i>Mandatory (new) Indicator 3.2:</i> Carbon sequestered, or emissions avoided in the AFOLU sector (GEF Core Indicator 6). Refer to EXACT file for the details.	0	0	Not reviewed in the MTR	n/a
<b>Outcome 1</b> Regulatory and institutional framework to avoid, reduce, mitigate and offset adverse impacts on biodiversity and reduced pressures on ecosystems in Biosphere Reserves in place.	<i>Indicator 4:</i> Extent to which legal or policy frameworks are in place for integration of socio-economic development and tourism into planning and management of BRs ( <i>UNDP mandatory indicator: IRRF Output 2.5 (2.5.1)</i> )	<i>Specific, targeted Biosphere Reserve planning and management legislation largely lacking</i>	<i>Revised BD Law /Law on Environmental Protection adopted by Government for submission to National Assembly and Decrees, Circulars and Guidelines under preparation</i>	The revised Law on Environmental Protection was adopted Nov 17, 2020	100
	<i>Indicator 5:</i> Level of institutional capacities for planning, implementation and monitoring integrated BR management as measured by UNDP's capacity development scorecard	<i>Limited institutional capacities for planning, implementation and monitoring of multiple use landscape and seascapes in BRs as measured by UNDP Capacity Development Scorecard baseline values: National level: 39%; Quang Nham Province: 47%; Dong Nai Province: 36%; W Nghe An Province: 38%</i>	<i>Increase of institutional capacity as measured by a 10% increase in UNDP National and Provincial Capacity Development Scorecard baseline values</i>	Capacity Development values not yet measured	n/a



	<i>Indicator 6:</i> Increase % of new permitted developments in the identified key sectors that trigger requirement for environmental assessment and integrates relevant national policies and practices that mainstream BD	<i>EIA guidelines are developed, but not legally enforced, resulting in unchecked threats and violations and illegal developments.</i>	<i>Requirements for BIA application are incorporated in the revised Law on BD / Law on Environmental Protection and guidelines for its implementation to ensure environmentally sound development</i>	a. Requirement to apply BIA is stated in art. 30 & 38 of the law. b. Requirement for EIA in BRs is stated in Chapter 3 of guidance to LEP (approved Jan 20, 2022). c. Guidelines for EIA implementation in submitted to MONRE for approval	67
	<i>Indicator 7:</i> Increased financing for scaled-up investment in BR management in Vietnam	<i>Lack of adequate resources and commitment to conservation practice in BRs – 2017 baseline for 3 pilot BRs is USD 405,777</i>	<i>Strategy and procedures agreed with national and provincial governments for improved financing for BRs</i>	Regulations for BR financing mentioned in the guidance to LEP.	50
<b>Outcome 2</b>  Integrated multi sector and multi-stakeholder planning and management operational in three Biosphere Reserves that mainstreams protected area management, sustainable resource use and biodiversity-friendly development	<i>Indicator 8:</i> Improved management effectiveness of protected areas and biological rich areas within designated BRs	<i>Baseline METT scores: Dong Nai NR: 37; Cat Tien NP: 38; Pu Mat NP: 37; Pu Hoat NR: 25; Pu Huong NR: 25; Cu Lao Cham MPA: 41</i>	<i>Average increase by at least 10 points in METT</i>	(the METT scores will be calculated in 2022)	n/a
	<i>Indicator 9:</i> Number of ha HCVF or coastal and marine ecosystems, including forests and coastal and marine areas set-aside for non-exhaustive use (includes new protected areas established)	<i>HCVF (dispersal corridors, BD rich areas and buffer areas) outside protected area network are not formally recognized and lack appropriate management regimes</i>	<i>Areas for set-aside mapped, agreed with provincial governments and approved; and 10,000 ha set-aside for non-exhaustive use (included within the BR buffer zone)</i>	Mapping process finalized in 3 BRs identified 63,698.30 ha potential areas.	33
	<i>Indicator 10:</i> Number of ha of degraded forest areas restored through sustainable community management regimes	<i>Over 40% forests in pilot BRs (DN and WNA BRs) under continued degradation through overuse</i>	<i>500 ha of degraded forests (and other ecosystems) under improved restoration through assisted natural regeneration to improve connectivity. Note: 250 ha for each of Western Nghe An BR and Dong Nai BR (see GEF Core Indicator 4.1)</i>	Mapping process identified areas of degraded forests. Proposals are being developed to start implementation 2022	10
	<i>Indicator 11:</i> Change in status of key indicator spp: Baseline was changed.	<b><u>Baseline Values were updated 2021 (see text after the table)*</u></b>	<i>Baseline validated and monitoring in progress for selected indicator species. Monitoring trends indicate positive changes.</i>	Baseline in ProDoc is very old and should be replaced by 2021 data for monitoring in 2023 and 2024 to estimate trends.	50
	<i>Indicator 12:</i> Increase in % of hotels and tourism facilities in and around BRs that meet BD-friendly certification standards	<i>No standards or certification procedures exists now</i>	<i>Training complete, certification criteria approved and at least 10% of hotel and tourism facilities within selected BRs adopt BD-friendly certification standards</i>	No results yet. Activities will be carried out in 2022.	0
	<i>Indicator 13 (new):</i> New area of landscapes under sustainable management practices (excluding PA core areas)	0	978,392 ha. Sustainable Management Solutions: Western Nghe An BR (BZ): 608,297 ha; Dong Nai BR (BZ): 349,745 ha; Cu Lao Cham - Hoi An BR (BZ): 20,350 ha. Note: 10,000 ha from	No results yet.	0

Mid-term Review, Mainstreaming natural resource management and biodiversity conservation objectives into socio-economic development planning and management of biosphere reserve in Viet Nam

			the total 3 BRs is accounted in PRF indicator 9 (contributing ha for Indicator from 3 BRs is 968,392 ha		
<b>Outcome 3</b> Knowledge management and monitoring and evaluation contributes to equitable gender benefits and increased awareness of biodiversity conservation	<i>Indicator 14:</i> Increase in % of sampled community members, hoteliers, tour operators and sector agency staff aware of and taking actions to address potential conservation threats and their adverse impacts on BD within BRs as measured by KAP survey approach.	<i>Coordinated outreach on conservation threats lacking. Limited awareness of impact of unplanned development among general public. Baseline survey established in Year 1</i>	<i>10% sampled community members, hoteliers, tour operators and sector agency staff (at least 40% women) aware of potential conservation threats and adverse impacts of unplanned developments</i>	No results yet. Activities will be carried out in 2022.	0
	<i>Indicator 15:</i> Number of additional best practices of sustainable land, coastal and marine resource use demonstrated, documented and disseminated and upscaled for replication	<i>Existing best practices include e.g. land crab, fishing set aside, # of boats, entry fees, enrichment planting, etc.</i>	<i>At least 3 new best practices identified my mid-term for demonstration during second term</i>	2 livelihood projects approved by UNDP-GEF/SGP.	67
				<b>Average</b>	<b>37.3</b>

#### Indicator Assessment Key

Green= Achieved	Yellow= On target to be achieved	Red= Not on target to be achieved
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**\*New baseline for indicator species (2021).** When two figures are given, the first number is actual field observations:

**CLC BR<sup>21</sup>** (Monitoring period: May-Jul 2021): (i) Land crab (*Gecarcoidea lalandii*): estimated 27,000 individuals; (ii) Coral reef (live coral cover): 53,2% ( ± 16,1%).

**Dong Nai BR<sup>22</sup>** (Monitoring period: May-Jul 2021): (i) Gaur (*Bos gaurus*): 57 individuals (estimated 100 individuals); (ii) Yellow-crested Gibbon (*Nomascus gabriellae*): 80 individuals (estimated 1.024 individuals); (iii) Black Shank Douc (*Pygathrix nigripes*): 142 individuals (estimated 1.474 individuals)

**Western Nghe An BR<sup>23</sup>** (Monitoring period: Q2 2021): (i) Barbe's Langur (*Presbytis barbei*): 26 individuals (Estimated 58 individuals); (ii) White-cheeked crested gibbon (*Nomascus leucogenys*): 32 individuals.

<sup>21</sup> Source: Report on targeted species monitoring in Cu Lao Cham - Hoi An BR 2021.

<sup>22</sup> Source: Report on targeted species monitoring in Dong Nai BR 2021.

<sup>23</sup> Source: Report on targeted species monitoring in Tay Nghe An BR 2021.

### 3.3.4. Efficiency

*The extent to which the project delivers, or is likely to deliver results in an economic and timely way.*

The project was approved on national level (signed by the Government and UNDP) in February 2020, nearly two years after GEF CEO endorsement of the implementation (March 2018). According to government representatives interviewed it is common that the national government take long time for approval after GEF CEO endorsement. The present section is however focusing on efficiency and reasons for delay since 2020. Level of documentation of and preparation for project risks, assumptions and impact drivers are covered in other sections, especially under project design (3.1).

An issue detected during the MTR that has to do with efficiency is the form of local community participation. They have participated enthusiastically in project activities, and have been consulted during project formulation and monitoring. It is expected that their enthusiasm for the project would be higher if they were able to come up with completely new proposals. This could be done e.g. with the use of community-based funds, managed by the communities within certain simple rules. The problem is that communities in Viet Nam are not “legal entity” with the right to enter into legal agreements, however agreements could be made through local NGOs or community-based micro enterprises.

The project’s financial management procedures are in line with what has been agreed between UNDP and the Government, including NIM, and is based on national policies, legislation, and procedures. So far one financial audit has been carried out (see 3.2.3). As mentioned under financial management, national co-financing has been very high, with approx. 87% of what was pledged already being delivered. Despite the positive aspect of high national co-financing, it underlines the low efficiency that so few targets have been reached even with this large amount of co-financing. One reason is that the pledged co-financing is just parallel investment and does not contribute directly to the project results. This is a general problem for many GEF projects, where the high co-financing requirement leads to presenting sources of co-financing without direct impact on achievement of the project targets.

The quality and adequacy of financial management, planning and reporting in line with UNDP and national procedures and do however not necessarily mean that it is an efficient way of managing the project. The MTR analysis discovered serious delays, which according to national and local stakeholders interviewed is due to bureaucratic rules, frequent planning and reporting, and double reporting (UNDP and national requirements). The following reasons were most frequently mentioned:

- Long national approval processes lead to delays
- Time used for administration: Quarterly work plans and quarterly reports to PMU, then to VEA and UNDP, give long approval processes.
- Financial reports experience long approval processes, and thereby delay of disbursements: Reporting flow from 3 PITs takes time, then to PMU and to UNDP.
- Much insecurity about the procurement procedures and therefore long time for consultations, corrections, etc. in each step of the procurement process. Many procurements, were each process must follow the same line of approvals, give annual delays of planned procurement.
- If the work plan for one site is delayed, the other two sites must wait, because they share a common work plan. According to UNDP they can only relate to one work plan.
- Most people involved in the project management on site level are not giving it the highest priority, because they are working part-time, with a minor part dedicated to the project.

Regarding the last-mentioned issue, for instance, in Western Nghe An only the Site Coordinator is paid by the PMU, while five other staff members are working part-time for the PIT subsidized by the Province. These payments were proposed to cover 30% of the basic salary, but so far the staff has received only 15%, which is very low compared with the volume of work within the framework of the project. Since Sept 2021 the position of Site Coordinator in W Nghe An is no longer filled, waiting for recruitment and approval from PMU and UNDP, which could lead to further delays.

As mentioned in 3.1.1. the project has a structure with many layers of decision-making that adds time

for the administrative processes. It is for instance both complicated and time consuming to get a plan approved. For the **annual activity and budget plan**, a site needs to present an English version to get approval from UNDP and a Vietnamese version to get approval from MONRE. These two documents are different in format, and require much time to prepare. When the two individual plan documents are completed, the site submits them to the Central PMU to check, revise, and give green light, then the Central PMU submits all plans for the three sites to VEA to check, revise, and approve. Finally, VEA submits the plans to UNDP and MONRE for approval. Additionally, every three months, the three sites have to report and prepare the **quarterly activity and budget plan** to the Central PMU and UNDP for checking and approval. As mentioned, if one site is delayed, the other two sites have to wait.

A related issue that leads to delays is that UNDP requires the project to spend at least 80% of the budget to approve the next financial quarter workplan. With 10% of budget remained as tax-refund, all sites have to spend at least 90% of the budget for approval of the following quarter plan approved (see 3.2.3).

There are several measures that could be done to reduce the level of bureaucracy and thereby improve efficiency of planning and reporting:

- Discussion between UNDP and MONRE to agree on that UNDP accepts the Government formats *or* MONRE accepts the UNDP formats for planning and reporting (both languages could use the same format)<sup>24</sup>
- If a common format is not agreed, an alternative is to simplify the formats (both national and UNDP). The PIR should basically follow the project results framework, with very little text, and just updating the figures from the quarter before.
- Establish and respect strict deadlines for the whole planning and reporting process. If one site does not present its quarterly plan time it should be understood that it does not require more resources, and the other two should still be moved forward.
- PMU should receive the individual site plans and take care of presenting it to UNDP as one plan.
- Strengthen capacity building on procurement.
- Reduce the number of procurement processes, combining procurement of several items in the same process.
- Instead of having quarterly budgets based on quarterly plans, the budget and procurement plan should be for the whole project period (with yearly breakdown). Disbursement applications that are in line with these documents should be approved on a revolving basis, not quarterly, but as soon as the project has used at least 80% of the previous disbursement.
- The tax refund is a separate issue that should be resolved independently, and not affect the required percentage used to achieve a new disbursement.

There are probably also other measures that could be implemented to improve the efficiency of planning and reporting. It is recommended to improve communication and information flow between the main stakeholders involved (PITs, PMU, VEA and UNDP) and have a broad dialogue about this to reach solutions. There is however good relation between the mentioned stakeholders, which could help to resolve the problems.

The first disbursement was May 2020, so the MTR comes a bit too early to draw secure conclusions about implementation efficiency. The cumulative disbursement through Dec 31, 2021 was USD 1,475,032, which is 22% of the approved amount, while the project had been implemented during 38% of its expected duration.

The project expenditures so far are rather low compared with other comparable projects in Viet Nam, such as the UNDP project “Conservation of Critical Wetland Protected Areas and Linked Landscapes” (GEF ID 4760) and GEF projects in general. It should however be considered that disbursements often follow a sigmoid function with a slow beginning and most costs in the middle of the implementation period. The faster disbursement pace during the second part of 2021 could give hope of improvement.

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<sup>24</sup> This requires flexibility because UNDP works with different partners and MONRE works with different donors. If both require to use the same format for all, they will continue with double planning and reporting.

One important reason for the low financial delivery is COVID-19, because various consultations and workshops have been conducted online without major cost, and therefore significant budget has not been spent for workshops and associated travel, per diem, and accommodation.

At the time of the MTR only 37.3% of the mid-term targets were achieved, however during 38% of the total implementation time and with 22% of the total GEF budget. Considering that the project not yet has been implemented 50% of the time, the expected results *at mid-term* would be approx. 49%, which is still less than half of what should be expected. Since there is not sufficient data on outputs achieved, no efficiency rate was estimated.

The output targets are not defined in the results framework, and the project's QPRs only monitor progress on activities included in the AWP. This is not efficient monitoring, because most outcomes would finalize towards the end of project implementation, while finalization of outputs would normally come earlier. Despite the difficulty of estimating efficiency, the large difference between achieved targets and the time that has passed so far indicate an expectation of low cost-effectiveness and delivery rate also in the future if the issues of long planning and reporting processes are not being resolved.

### 3.3.5. Sustainability

**Financial sustainability:** It is too early to draw any conclusions regarding the expectations of financial sustainability. Expected co-financing at the moment of approval was USD 36.5 million, and so far UNDP informs that USD 31 million has been achieved. The level of co-financing could be an indication of future financial sustainability, however, the few project results so far despite this high funding indicates that under the present *modus operandi* the funding is not enough. Even though in-kind co-financing does not contribute directly to achieving project results, it should be expected higher achievements with most of the co-financing already used. The State budget and Provincial resources are supporting BR activities, and the PPCs are expected to facilitate the convergence of provincial government financial resources for conservation and sustainable community livelihoods. This is however far from covering the areas' needs for maintenance of the project benefits, impact and sustainability beyond the project period.

Another source of financing is the Forest Protection and Development Fund (FPDF) including PFES, which is already supporting the Nghe An BR, contributing to local economic development and generating capital for forest restoration. The mechanism Payment for Ecosystems Services (PES) could be strengthened also in other areas than forest conservation. Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) has with support from UNEP-GEF made efforts to integrate also biodiversity conservation, watershed protection, climate change mitigation and other criteria for ecosystems services into forest certification, where Viet Nam was one of the four pilot countries<sup>25</sup>. PES resources could be achieved from public resources, e.g. when a BR protects the water resources used for drinking water. It could also include private resources, such as new business models related with eco-tourism, e.g. yearly concession payments for restaurants, lodging, tourist guides or other services, as well as a fee for conservation of biodiversity that could be included in the ticket for entering a BR. Community-based micro-enterprises could provide labor opportunities and socioeconomic development with strong benefits for the local population, and linkages to national and international markets.

The project is expected to further develop partnerships with provincial, national and international NGOs. The ProDoc mentions the international NGOs IUCN <https://www.iucn.org>, Birdlife International <https://www.birdlife.org>, WWF <https://www.worldwildlife.org>, Fauna & Flora International (FFI) <https://www.fauna-flora.org>, and the Vietnamese NGO Centre for Marine Life Conservation and Community Development (MCD) <https://mcdvietnam.org>. Some of them could be sources of co-financing, but no such funding has been reported to the MTR team. There are also many other relevant alternatives for international collaboration, such as the environmental NGO Bioversity International (BI) <https://www.bioversityinternational.org>, and International Centre for Environmental Management (ICEM) <https://icem.com.au>, both already working in Viet Nam.

The financial resources required to support maintenance of the project benefits varies from one area to

<sup>25</sup> Certification at landscape level through incorporating additional ecosystem services. GEF ID: 3951 IMIS number: 2328-2740-4C27. 124 pp. <https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/27317>

the other, and have not been calculated by the project. The MTR team does not have enough information to estimate these budgets, but since it is expected to be a new project phase such estimations should be done through a consultancy towards the end of the current project or during the next phase.

**Institutional sustainability:** MONRE and its different sections participating in the project are well trained on environmental and biodiversity issues in general, but BRs is a relatively new concept in Viet Nam, requiring institutional capacity building and specialized training, which on national level should include the MAB National Committee. This capacity building should, as mentioned in the ProDoc, include BR MBs, PPCs, DARD, DONRE, NGOs, Commune Conservation Committees (CCC) and other civil society organizations (CSOs), as well as the private sector and other stakeholders that operate in or around BRs.

The country has still a very small resource base that dominates this thematic area, and the benefits of the project's training events could improve with support from international consultants or collaboration with environmental NGOs such as those mentioned above. Institutional sustainability would also depend on an efficient functional institutional framework for biodiversity conservation and protected areas. It goes beyond the tasks of this MTR to propose changes in the institutional structure, and such changes might not even be required, however the lack of efficiency mentioned in other parts of this report indicates that modifications of the current institutional modalities could be required.

Another important issue is the regulatory and policy framework for the establishment, governance and operation of BRs. New Decree guidelines for implementation of the Law on Environmental Protection were approved by the Government on 20 Jan 2022, with regulations on BR management and operation.

**Socio-political sustainability:** The socio-political issues that affect the expectations of sustainability include the provinces' willingness to set aside areas for environmental protection versus areas for other types of development, including the agricultural sector. If the local population is poor, it is often hard to maintain and protect forests, environment and biodiversity in competition with other land use, and therefore awareness raising on all levels is a key element.

There is so far certain level of technical capacity among the BR staff and community members which is required to sustain project benefits, but it should be remembered that the MTR is carried out early in the implementation process. There is need for continuous technical training and awareness campaigns for relevant stakeholders, for the institutions and organizations mentioned under institutional sustainability, and particularly for the local communities.

According to ProDoc, the project was expected to strengthen community institutions, and ensure their active participation in project planning and implementation to ensure sustainability. A Knowledge Management & Communication strategy was developed during the design phase to enhance awareness and stakeholder participation. Frameworks for Participatory BR Planning and Participatory Commune Conservation planning were designed during the PPG to ensure adequate consultation and participatory decision-making with local communities. The implementation of these tools have however met challenges, such as language barriers and cultural barriers with indigenous communities, Covid-19 that has limited travel and degree of face-to-face contact with local stakeholders, and the general delays of project processes that have limited the interaction between the project staff/consultants and the communities. Due to reduced interaction, the characteristic of community participation has been most consultant-facilitated consultations (e.g. for the CCPs); less decision-making based on local proposals. The reason is logical – the mentioned communication barriers require to invest much time to achieve the confidence of local communities, and social specialists to facilitate the interaction. The MTR team recommends to strengthen this part of the project work as soon as the Covid-19 situation permits.

**Environmental sustainability** is normally a strong area in all GEF projects, and in this project no adverse environmental impacts were observed. In an environmental project like this, environmental sustainability is mainstreamed through the project implementation and would be a product of the project's outcomes and impact. Any negative environmental impacts during the implementation would be an indication that long-term environmental sustainability would not be reached. Environmental sustainability would also not be reached if the project is failing in one or more of the other dimensions (financial, institutional, or social/socio-political).

Future environmental sustainability would be achieved through an integrated approach for BR management, including economic activities such as sustainable use of forests/NTFPs, as well as aquatic and marine resources, to improve local livelihoods and the support from communities for biodiversity conservation. Capacity building for communities and other relevant stakeholders mentioned above is required also to achieve environmental sustainability.

**To conclude:** It is considered too early to draw any firm conclusions about the overall likelihood of project sustainability. One reason is the short implementation time and also that failure in only one of the mentioned sustainability dimensions would be enough to ruin the sustainability of project outcomes. For instance, it doesn't help to establish "perfect" institutional and policy frameworks, and have the technical knowledge about what to do if there are insufficient resources to finance it. It is expected that the Terminal Evaluation will go deeper into the issue of sustainability. The UNDP RTA still requests the MTA team to assign an overall Sustainability rating, which would be *Moderately Unlikely (MU)*.

### **3.3.6. Country ownership**

There is a strong national ownership of the project, and as mentioned it is implemented through the NIM modality. It was designed and prepared based on national priorities, and all the most relevant national agencies working on biodiversity took active part in the design and PPG phase. Agencies working on land degradation/LDN are also involved, especially Department of Natural Resources and Environment (DONRE) which is the main government project partner at BR level, supported by the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD). The Department of Culture, Sport and Tourism (DCST) is expected to support tourism related project initiatives, including certification, private-partnerships, and sustainable tourism practices, but has been less involved so far.

A weakness in the project country ownership is the low participation of the private sector (understood as firms, not NGOs). The communities inside and around the BRs could also have been more strongly involved in the project design and implementation, not only for consultations. A limitation is however that the communities are not registered as "legal persons", which is a requirement to be beneficiaries of project funds.

### **3.3.7. Gender equality and women's empowerment**

Gender participation has been relatively good in the project. The project staff strongly encourages the participation of women and vulnerable groups in training and other project activities. The project has also helped improving the awareness and knowledge of women and vulnerable groups about biodiversity conservation and other environmental issues. The current rating for the Gender Marker is GEN2, the same as the original rating.

There are certain logical linkages between the gender results and the project results. For instance, women are responsible for many activities related to environmental management and the use of natural resources, such as agriculture and forestry production and trade, collection of firewood and NTFPs, and sometimes collection of water. By improving the capacity and knowledge of women in natural resources management, they would be better fit to improve the quality of the local environment and thereby the local livelihoods and general life quality for themselves and their families.

One of the areas with most progress is training and capacity building, where 30% of the participants have been women, however the Results Framework's indicators require 40% of direct project beneficiaries to be women. This overall target includes of course more than participants in training, for instance provincial government staff and 2,500 beneficiaries of sustainable natural resource management and livelihood improvements.

The training and capacity building events that are driving up the average percentage of women are especially those organized at central (national) level, while many local events had low participation. One reason is tradition, but according to stakeholder interviews another reason might be the approach that the trainers have to the communities, especially if they don't know the local community members. Local women are more reserved than the men in contact with persons they don't know. Another reason for low women's participation, experienced in Dong Nai BR and Cu Lao Cham BR, was that some courses were organized for the forest rangers, and most forest rangers in Vietnam are men.



Table 12. Gender participation in project training and capacity building events.

Place	Topic	Number of participants	No. of women	%
GAP 1(a): Support capacity building for national parliaments in BR related legislation making. Target 30% women participants				
Central level	3 technical workshops to comment on BR legislation	83	40	48
GAP 1(b): Support capacity building for central level BR related managers and officials on BR establishment and management. Target 30% women participants				
Central level	3 technical workshops to review and comment on BR management	50	25	50
GAP 2: Support gender studies and awareness raising for relevant institutions at central and local level on gender equality and roles of women in biodiversity conservation, community-based management, sustainable use of natural resources, and livelihood in the BRs. Scheduled from 2022*				
GAP 3: Technical training programs and other skill development activities for relevant target groups of women incl. managers at central and local level, Women's Union at community levels, and team leaders of co-management team, on BR management, livelihood, and biodiversity conservation. Target: 50% of technical front-line staff and Women's Union leaders trained				
Dong Nai BR/ Cu Lao Cham BR	3 trainings on conservation monitoring of target species	30	7	23
Cu Lao Cham BR	Management of coral ecosystems and land crabs	10	1	10
GAP 4(a): Support the 3 sites to build capacities for community women and communal Women's Union in BR co-management and sustainable use of natural resources. Target: 50% Women's Union/ Community women trained. Scheduled from 2022.				
GAP 4 (b): Support Women's Union of all communes in these 3 sites to advocate for greater involvement of community women in planning, establishment, and management of BRs and natural resources. Target: 50% Women's Union/Community women trained.				
Tay Nghe An BR	Consultation workshop to prepare regulations, and orientation to integrate BR project activities	30	3	10
Tay Nghe An BR	Meeting to comment on draft Report - Status assessment and development of socio-economic, biodiversity, environmental and institutional maps of the BR	30	4	13
Tay Nghe An BR	14 cluster meetings at commune level to assess needs and services expected from the use of inexhaustible resources in the dedicated set aside areas	387	153	40
Tay Nghe An BR	2 district cluster meetings: Assess expected needs/services from inexhaustible use of reserved areas; Complete criteria for selecting priority communes; Consultation to identify 10 priority communes	100	27	27
Tay Nghe An BR	10 Consultation meetings at priority communes to assess inexhaustible resource use needs in the reserved areas; and Development of a commune-level conservation plan	250	72	29
GAP 5: Provide technical training for community women on organic farming, sustainable tourism, medicinal plantation, NTFP collection, handicraft production. Support communal Women's Union to promote women's participation in all livelihood activities in 3 sites. Target: 70% Women's Union members/ community women for technical training and further support.				
Cu Lao Cham BR	Training on monitoring of biodiversity and key endangered species	30	7	23
Cu Lao Cham BR	Monitoring of coral ecosystems and land crabs on Cham islands	10	1	10
<b>Total</b>		<b>1,010</b>	<b>304</b>	<b>30.1</b>

\*Target is not defined

Apart from the mentioned events, other gender focused activities were:

GAP 6: Incorporating gender-sensitive indicators and collection of sex-disaggregated data for monitoring and evaluating project results, targeting gender disaggregated data.

GAP 7 (a): The project tries to engage local women as community workers for social mobilization, thereby encouraging greater participation of women from local communities, with the target of 50% women participation in project management, implementation, M&E. There is however not necessarily a link between gender participation at project management level and in the communities. An effective measure is contracting of women in the communities to be in charge of project activities in their own communities<sup>26</sup>.

GAP Mainstreaming Activity 7 (b): Ensure women are involved in the project activity planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, targeting at least 50% women in participation: The PMU carried out eight technical meetings April-June 2021 with an average 48% women participation. The meetings covered topics such as (i) technical bidding packages; (ii) stakeholder coordination mechanisms in BR management; and (iii) draft guidelines for integrating BR management in provincial planning.

GAP Mainstreaming Activity 8: To encourage women's role in the project communication strategy etc., targeting 50% women in communications: BR Project awareness-raising programs are scheduled to start in 2022.

<sup>26</sup> For example, the UNEP-GEF project "Mainstreaming agrobiodiversity conservation and use in Sri Lankan agro-ecosystems for livelihoods and adaptation to climate change" (GEF ID 4150) had much delay until they contracted female resident coordinators in all project sites.

### 3.3.8. Cross-cutting issues

*Poverty alleviation:* The local populations are in general poor, with few opportunities to improve their incomes. The project helps to improve their livelihoods through sustainable natural resources management, and is expected to also improve income-generating activities.

*Governance:* The project has the goal to effectively mainstream BD conservation and NRM objectives into governance, planning, and management of socio-economic development and tourism in the BRs, which requires inter-institutional coordination and improved governance, especially at local level. The interaction between the main sector stakeholders through their participation in the PSC is also expected to improve governance. PSC meetings have been held on February 2<sup>nd</sup> and July 15<sup>th</sup> 2021.

*Climate change mitigation and adaptation:* The project's main impacts in this area are: (i) expected reduced deforestation and forest degradation in the project areas (mitigation); and (ii) protection of soil, watersheds and biodiversity (including coastal zones and coral reefs), with improved livelihoods and community resilience (adaptation). The project's focus on native species would reduce the impact of IAS caused by climate change. A project task is to assess past trends of climate change impacts on ecosystems and their functions, to analyze potential future scenarios, including barriers, and manage climate risks at landscape level. Since the project has very few concrete results, it is so far not possible to measure any of these impacts.

*Disaster risk management:* This is related to the previous issue of adaptation. Resilience to natural disasters such as flooding and landslides would be reduced if the vegetation cover in the project areas are increased, and especially if the BRs are protecting the upper parts of the watersheds and the coastlines, including mangrove forests and coral reefs.

*Human rights:* The Social and Environmental Screening (annex 8 to the Inception Report) describes quite detailed how the project would mainstream a human rights-based approach. The SESP mentions as a moderate risk that the project could potentially affect the rights of access and tenure arrangements to natural resources in the communities, but no such issues have been noted during the implementation.

*Capacity development* is mainstreamed through the complete project structure, on all levels from national institutions to local communities, and is one of the areas where progress has been made.

The related issue of *Knowledge management:* The communities at the three target BRs have knowledge of project goals and objectives. The general public at national level has been the recipient of project communication through websites including 'The Resources and Environment News', 'Culture News', 'Thien Nhlen.Net', and communications from MONRE through VEA, as well as from UNDP.

*South-South cooperation:* The project plans to exchange experiences with other countries in the Asia & Pacific region and other developing countries, but no such experiences have been registered so far, expect for through international consultants such as the Project Advisor situated in Bangkok. Since it is a new pilot project, it has probably more to learn from other projects than to transmit of experience so far. The South-South cooperation could be on topics such as: (i) Effective M&E management and availability of information; (ii) alignment of BR goals and local legislation; (iii) guidelines and procedures for multi-stakeholder and multi-sector integration; (iv) BR planning with integration of climate change aspects; (v) sustainable BR management for poverty alleviation and rural economic development; and (vi) certification and branding of tourism and sustainable use of forest and fisheries resources. The World Network of Biosphere Reserves (WNBR), the Biosphere Smart Information Platform and the UNESCO MAB committees can serve as useful networks for exchange of lessons learned on best practices for BR management, as well as exchanges with the international NGO partners.

### 3.3.9. GEF and UNDP additionality

Global Environment Facility, GEF ([www.thegef.org](http://www.thegef.org)) is the world's largest agency for funding of environmental projects. GEF brings its experience from nearly all developing and middle-income countries of the world, which have been synthesized in the focal area strategies, but on national level the experience is transmitted through UNDP as the GEF Implementing Agency. GEF funds are justified by the project's global environmental benefits, and require a large amount of co-financing. To monitor

compliance with the global benefits, the GEF projects should use the GEF tracking tools for the relevant focal areas.

UNDP ([www.undp.org](http://www.undp.org)) is the Implementing agency for the projects. UNDP's additionality is its vast experience on implementing GEF projects and other similar environmental projects. UNDP is in charge of monitoring and support to project implementation, budget management and reporting to GEF. Important units are UNDP Viet Nam Country Office and the UNDP Regional office in Bangkok. The GEF small-grants program (SGP) is implemented all over the world by UNDP and provides financing directly to communities and other small local stakeholders, including collaboration with the present project.

### **3.3.10. Catalytic role**

The project is designed as a pilot project, to provide demonstration models to be replicated and/or scaled-up in other BRs in Viet Nam. The whole idea of a pilot project is to try out something new before it is confirmed as a good approach and scaled-up. As previously mentioned, this effect could have been stronger if the pilots and management models had been more different, because for the moment it is mostly different ecosystems that makes the difference.

A replication strategy is planned to be formulated in the second half of the project, based on lessons learned at the field level, ensuring that the integrated land use planning approach and BR management framework and models developed and pilot tested in the three sites are scaled-up to include all nine BR sites. Viet Nam has however since design of the project increased the number of BRs to eleven, which all potentially could benefit from the project's experience.

### **3.3.11. Progress towards impact**

*The extent to which the project has generated or is expected to generate significant positive or negative, primary or secondary long-term effects, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended<sup>27</sup>.*

Impacts are in other words long-lasting higher-level results. These are the results (sometimes through several intermediate states) of using the project outcomes. The project impact should not be confused with the social and environmental impacts that are mostly short-term.

Since the project activities have been going on for only one and a half year, it is too early to expect any significant positive impact or contribution to achievement of the overall project objective. There are however some indications of logical linkages between the initial project results and expectations of the future impact. Based on field visits with local interviews, it seems likely that the project would contribute to more sustainable natural resources management, improved biodiversity conservation and improved local livelihoods. The project could also have certain impact on climate change mitigation through reduced deforestation where the trees provide carbon sequestration, but this is not expected to be a major impact considering the project size and duration.

## **4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **4.1.1. Main findings**

- There is strong national project ownership, which is one of the factors that led to the NIM modality.
- The project is highly relevant in the framework of government policies and Viet Nam's compliance with the UNCBD, UNCCD, and UNFCCC, including REDD+. It however has a much stronger focus on biodiversity than on land degradation neutrality and sustainable forest management.
- The project is coherent with the objectives and priorities for Viet Nam's UNDAF and UNDP's CPD that were agreed with the Government of Viet Nam.
- The project has a logic design, but it is too optimistic in what is possible to achieve. Another weakness is lack of outputs in the results framework, and it confuses activities, outputs and outcomes. The design is not taking full advantage of being a pilot project, because the local pilot sites are too similar except for the ecosystems.

<sup>27</sup> Based on UNDP glossary in Guidance for UNDP-supported GEF financed projects.

- The effectiveness in terms of results is low, for many reasons, with an average compliance of the mid-term targets of only 37.3%. In the three pilot BR, Western Nghe An has a reasonable progress and the other two sites are far behind.
- The efficiency is low, and the two main factors are Covid-19 and insufficient experience with the administrative procedures for planning, reporting, and procurement, as well as the many steps in the review and approval chain. One issue that limits efficiency is the limited experience and capacity on procurement.
- The delays experienced so far would make it hard to finish the project targets on time, if no significant changes are being made.
- It is too early in the implementation period to conclude on the project's long-term impact and sustainability. It is necessary to resolve the efficiency and effectiveness issues to have any expectations regarding impact and sustainability.
- Gender participation has been relatively good, since the project staff strongly encourages participation of women in training and other project activities. The women's participation is however much higher on central level than in the pilot areas.
- The role of local institutional partners (example Hoi An World Culture Heritage Center) is rather limited, because most activities are implemented by consultants. Instead of using consultants to do the actual tasks, consultants would have a more positive role as advisors and trainers for local stakeholder engagement.
- In the communities, the project has focused on training, capacity building, consultations and CCP planning. There has not been so much priority to encouraging decision-making in the communities themselves<sup>28</sup>, e.g. for new income-generating activities. The project is planning to resolve this through collaboration with the UNDP-GEF small grants program that could be effective soon.
- The Grievance Redress Mechanism was defined in much detail in the ProDoc, but it is not operative, because it is not formally approved and informed to local stakeholders.
- Regarding cross-cutting issues, if the project is implemented effectively it would improve BR governance and local livelihoods. It would then also have a positive impact on climate change mitigation and adaptation, including disaster risk management. The SESP mentions a moderate risk that the project could potentially affect the community rights of access and tenure to natural resources. Capacity development and knowledge management is mainstreamed in the project, but no south-south exchange of experiences have been carried out so far.

#### **4.1.2. Lessons learned**

- Complex administrative procedures for planning and reporting could be an important factor that reduces the effectiveness and efficiency of project activities.
- A project should never have changes in legislation and policies as part of its expected results, because it is completely outside project management's control, and the process often takes longer time than the project implementation. Despite the fact that the project has achieved results in this area, the MTR team considers that the project should only prepare proposals.
- A good results framework with detailed and specific targets on output and outcome level is needed to be able to plan and monitor the project efficiently.
- The impact of COVID-19 on local level can make a huge difference between the results from different project areas.
- One efficient method of achieving local results despite COVID-19 travel restrictions is to contract local consultants that can work under online backstopping and supervision from outside. This is however still dependent on reasonable quality of available local consultants.

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<sup>28</sup> PMU however comments that in some cases the capacity of local partners is limited to propose.

- The communities' difficulty of entering into legal contracts is limiting their support.
- Even an environmental project could have adverse impact on local communities' rights and tenure to natural resources, if not the right measures are taken.
- To encourage gender participation, different approaches are needed for central and local level.

#### **4.1.3. Recommendations**

- 1) The relevant government agencies and UNDP should reformulate the project goals and if required present to the GEF for no-objection (depending on the level of change). These changes should assure realistic goals within the project period, but could also affect GEF funding. In this exercise all targets that are outside project management's control should be taken out.
- 2) These changes, together with the slow disbursements so far, give the opportunity to use available funds to introduce some new elements, and try out different models in the pilot sites, where the following are recommended: (i) competitive funds for community-designed projects; (ii) private sector concessions for tourist services in and around BRs; (iii) PES with a watershed approach; (iv) co-financing of different local certifications; and (v) R2R approach for islands and coastal areas.
- 3) The project staff with support from UNDP should improve the results framework on output level based on the recommendations in the MTR report, with clear baselines, SMART indicators and specific targets. This framework should be used as the main tool for planning, monitoring and reporting of project results. During the yearly planning exercise, order of the activities should consider when the outputs are needed.
- 4) The Government and UNDP should dialogue on the project delays, and take strong measures. This discussion should include, but not be limited to the following: (i) Streamline formats and dates for UNDP and national planning and reporting, as well as procurement. A simplified planning and reporting format should be based on the results framework, and the QPRs should follow the same framework, with very little text, just updating the figures from previous quarter, to avoid having to transfer information between formats; (ii) Establish and respect strict deadlines for the whole planning and reporting process, with the AWP to be approved not later than January; (iii) The budget and procurement plans should not be quarterly but based on the yearly budget. Disbursement applications in line with these documents should be approved on a revolving basis, as soon as the project has used at least 80% of the previous disbursement; (iv) The tax refund issue must be resolved independently, and not affect the mentioned required percentage.
- 5) Assure sufficient financing and support for PIT and local community development. Further develop the model of local consultants to be supported from central level. This could include residents of the communities, preferably female to improve local participation of women.
- 6) UNDP and the Government should assure that indigenous peoples and other traditional local communities' rights of access and tenure to natural resources is not negatively affected, even if they are situated in the core zone of the BRs. In this relation, the Grievance Redress Mechanism should be formally approved and informed to local stakeholders, to make it operative.

#### **4.1.4. Evaluation ratings**

The following is an MTR Ratings & Achievement Summary Table for 'Mainstreaming Natural Resource Management and Biodiversity Conservation Objectives into Socio-Economic Development Planning and Management of Biosphere Reserve in Vietnam'. All issues have 6 pt scales, except sustainability, which has a 4 pt scale.

Table 13. Evaluation Ratings Table<sup>1</sup>

Measure	MTR Rating	Achievement Description
<b>Project Strategy</b>	N/A	
<b>Progress Towards Results</b>	<b>Objective:</b> (mainstreaming BD and NRM) <b>Achievement Rating: 2</b>	The project activities have advanced very little, partly because it is early in the process, and also due to COVID-19 and slow administrative processes. Initial progress on participatory approaches and institutionalization of BR planning, as well as gender participation improve the rating.
	Outcome 1 (Regulatory and institutional framework) <b>Achievement Rating: 2</b>	Very little progress on MTR targets, except adoption of revised BD law and certain institutional capacity building.
	Outcome 2 (Integrated planning and management) <b>Achievement Rating: 2</b>	Very little progress on MTR targets, mapping and assessments.
	Outcome 3 (Knowledge mgmt, M&E) <b>Achievement Rating: 1</b>	Nearly no progress on MTR targets, except some awareness raising. Two approved SGP projects to initiate in 2022.
<b>Project Implementation &amp; Adaptive Management</b>	<b>Achievement Rating: 3</b>	The project management and governance structure is working, but the slow procedures for planning and reporting plus insufficient capacity lead to delays. There have been some attempts of adaptive management, including reduction of yearly budgets due to Covid-19 and related adjustment of activities with more online work.
<b>Sustainability</b>	<b>Rating: 2</b>	It is too early to draw firm conclusions on sustainability.

<sup>1</sup>Rating scales mentioned in Annex 4. For further reference, see relevant sections in the report.

## ANNEX 1. TERMS OF REFERENCE

### Terms of Reference for ICs and RLAs through /GPN ExpRes

**Services/Work Description:** International Consultant

**Project/Programme Title:** Project Mainstreaming Natural Resource Management and Biodiversity Conservation Objectives into Socio-Economic Development Planning and Management of Biosphere Reserve in Vietnam

**Consultancy Title:** International Consultant- GEF Midterm Evaluation (PIMS#5659)

**Duty Station:** Home-based

**Duration:** 3 months (15 Nov 2021 – 15 Jan 2022)

**Expected start date:** 15 Nov 2021

### 1. INTRODUCTION

This is the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the Midterm Review (MTR) of the full -sized UNDP-supported GEF-financed project titled Mainstreaming Natural Resource Management and Biodiversity Conservation Objectives into Socio-Economic Development Planning and Management of Biosphere Reserve in Vietnam (PIMS#5659), hereinafter called “BR Project”, implemented through the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE), which is to be undertaken in 2021. The project started on 6 February 2020 and is in its second year of implementation. This ToR sets out the expectations for this MTR. The MTR process must follow the guidance outlined in the document [Guidance For Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects](#).

### 2. PROJECT BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The project was designed to address consequential threats to biodiversity and ecosystem services caused by the rapid development of new infrastructure, expansion of transportation networks, tourism and socio-economic growth. To achieve this, the project deploys an integrated landscape approach in the planning and management of Biosphere Reserves in Vietnam by harmonizing socio-economic development, sustainable management of natural resources, and biodiversity conservation. The project’s key interventions include to strengthen capacities and coordinated planning at the national and provincial levels for socio-economic development and for demonstrating sustainable natural resources management, biodiversity conservation and restoration, and alternative livelihood initiatives at the three project Biosphere Reserve sites.

The Project Objective is to **“To effectively mainstream biodiversity conservation and natural resources management objectives into governance, planning and management of socio-economic development and tourism in Biosphere Reserves”**. This will be achieved through the implementation of three inter-related and mutually complementary components (Project Outcomes) that are focused to address existing barriers. The three Project Outcomes are:

Outcome 1: Regulatory and institutional framework to avoid, reduce, mitigate and offset adverse impacts on biodiversity and reduced pressures on ecosystems in Biosphere Reserves in place.



- Outcome 2: Integrated multi sector and multi-stakeholder planning and management operational in three Biosphere Reserves to mainstream protected area management, sustainable resource use and biodiversity-friendly development.
- Outcome 3: Knowledge management and monitoring and evaluation support contributes to equitable gender benefits and increased awareness of biodiversity conservation.

The BR Project is within the GEF Focal Areas of Land degradation and Biodiversity. It will contribute to the following Sustainable Development Goals: Strategic Goal C – To improve the status of biodiversity by safeguarding ecosystems, species and genetic diversity, and Target 12 – By 2020, the extinction of known threatened species has been prevented and their conservation status, particularly of those most in decline, has improved and sustained. GEF funding to BR Project is of US\$ 6,660,000 and with the planned co-financing of US\$ 36,538,222 the total project budget is of US\$ 43,198,222. The project is executed under UNDP's National Implementation (NIM) Modality (i.e. national execution), with MONRE acting as the Implementing Partner (IP). At site level, three project locations have been selected based on their biological importance to demonstrate the conservation of biodiversity and enhancement of ecosystem services, with three Project Implementation Teams (PITs): (i) Cu Lao Cham - Hoi An Biosphere Reserve; (ii) Western Nghe An Biosphere Reserve; and (iii) Dong Nai Biosphere Reserve. At national level, the Implementing Partner assigns the Vietnam Environment Administration (VEA) under MONRE to be the project owner. The Project Management Board established by VEA and three Co-implementing Partners, including three PITs (Cu Lao Cham – Hoi An Biosphere Reserve, Dong Nai Biosphere Reserve, and Western Nghe An Biosphere Reserve) are responsible for project implementation from 06 February 2020 to 06 February 2025.

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. Travel to Vietnam has been restricted since 01 April 2020; travel within the country has been also restricted. As of the time of writing (30 June 2021), Vietnam confirms 16,623 total cases of COVID-19, with 9,698 cases being treated, and 6,840 cases having recovered discharged from hospitals. To 30 June 2021 Vietnam also recorded 81 deaths due to the pandemic. The latest community transmission cases have been reported from Bac Giang, Bac Ninh, Ho Chi Minh City, and Ha Tinh. Updated information can be found at <https://ncov.moh.gov.vn>.

### 3. MTR PURPOSE

The MTR will assess progress towards the achievement of the project objectives and outcomes as specified in the Project Document (ProDoc), 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.

The ProDoc was signed on 06 February 2020, followed by the three first waves of COVID-19 hitting Vietnam, which severely affected BR Project implementation for most of 2020 and 2021 (to the time of writing). The Inception Report to the project was completed in March 2021, after adjusting the document to adopt GEF Core Indicators for inclusion within its Project Results Framework. Despite the fact that the MTR timeline was extended to buffer the negative impact from COVID-19, by the time the MTR is scheduled to take place in August/ September 2021 it is likely that the majority of project activities will still be in the formulation and planning stages. With merely several months of effective implementation, it will be difficult to assess project effectiveness thus far. The MTR will therefore be an important mission to help analyze project targets and approaches, and to propose solutions, methods, and recommendations to ensure the attainment of project objectives by suggesting adaptive management responses to its thus far and planned implementation. The MTR will also fit into the UNDP CO's evaluation plan by drawing observations and recommendations to improve the efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability of project measures and to aid in the overall enhancement of the 2021-2026 UNDP Country Programme (CPD), and the One Strategic Plan 2021-2026 (OSP).

## SCOPE OF WORK, RESPONSIBILITIES AND DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED WORK

### 4. MTR APPROACH & METHODOLOGY

#### Approach

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 Initiation Plan, UNDP Social and Environmental Screening Procedure/SESP), the Project Document, 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 field mission begins.

The MTR team is expected to follow a collaborative and participatory approach<sup>29</sup> ensuring close engagement with the Project Team, government counterparts (the GEF Operational Focal Point), the UNDP Country Office(s), the Nature, Climate and Energy (NCE) Regional Technical Advisor, direct beneficiaries, and other key stakeholders.

Engagement of stakeholders is vital to a successful MTR.<sup>30</sup> Stakeholder involvement should include interviews with stakeholders who have project responsibilities, including but not limited to the organizations listed below (List 1); 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 national evaluator may be required to conduct field missions to the three project sites: Cu Lao Cham – Hoi An Biosphere Reserve, Western Nghe An Biosphere Reserve, and Dong Nai Biosphere Reserve, in Quang Nam, Nghe An, and Dong Nai provinces.

#### List 1: Stakeholders to be consulted/ interviewed:

1. Project Management Board
2. Project Implementation Teams at three Biosphere Reserve sites
3. Biodiversity Conservation Agency (BCA)/Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE)
4. Vietnam Forest Administration (VNFOREST) and Directorate of Fisheries of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD)
5. Ministry of Culture, Sport and Tourism (MOCST)
6. UNDP Vietnam Country Office, UNDP RBH (Bangkok), UNDP-GEF grant team
7. Viet Nam UNESCO National Man and Biosphere (MAB) committee
8. Provincial People's Committees (PPCs) of three Biosphere Reserve locations in the provinces of Nghe An, Quang Nam, and Dong Nai
9. Biosphere Reserve Management Boards of the three Biosphere Reserve pilots: Western Nghe An Biosphere Reserve, Cu Lao Cham-Hoi An Biosphere Reserve and Dong Nai biosphere reserve
10. Protected Area Management Boards and subordinate bodies in pilot Biosphere Reserves:
  - a- Western Nghe An (ie. Phu Mat National Park, Phu Hoat Nature Reserve, Phu Huong Nature Reserve);
  - b- Cu Lao Cham- Hoi An Biosphere Reserve (ie. Cu Lao Cham Marine Protected Area, Hoi An World Culture Heritage Site);
  - c- Dong Nai Biosphere Reserve (ie. Cat Tien National Park and Dong Nai Culture Nature Reserve)
11. Local communities in and around the three pilot Biosphere Reserves: Western Nghe An Biosphere Reserve, Cu Lao Cham-Hoi An Biosphere Reserve, and Dong Nai Biosphere Reserve, including Commune People Committees, and village communities and organizations.
12. Selected and relevant community-based organizations/mass organizations involved in project implementation.

<sup>29</sup> For ideas on innovative and participatory Monitoring and Evaluation strategies and techniques, see [UNDP Discussion Paper: Innovations in Monitoring & Evaluating Results](#), 05 Nov 2013.

<sup>30</sup> 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.

## Methodology

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. The MTR team must, however, use gender-responsive methodologies and tools and ensure that gender equality and women's empowerment, as well as other cross-cutting issues and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are incorporated into the MTR report.

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. Travel to Vietnam has been restricted since 01 April 2020 and travel within the country is also restricted. 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, for example to conduct some aspects of the MTR virtually and remotely, including the use of remote interview methods and extended desk reviews, data analysis, surveys, and evaluation questionnaires.

Direct one-one one consultations with key informants and stakeholders are likely to be limited, and therefore use of internet platforms such as Skype, Zoom, Teams and similar are recommended for some of the interviewing. But because not all stakeholders may have access to the internet, the use of questionnaires via paper formularies or even the use of mobile phones and messaging to deliver key questions may need to be used. 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 counterparts may be working from home.

The MTR team might suggest using other measures, but in all cases the final methodological approach including interview schedules, field visits, and data to be used in the MTR must be clearly outlined in the MTR Inception Report and be fully discussed and agreed upon with the Commissioning Unit. 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.

The International Consultant (Team Leader) can work remotely as needed, with the National Consultant (Team Member) supporting in the field if it is safe for the latter to operate and travel. In any case, no stakeholder, consultant, or UNDP staff should be put in harm's way and safety is at all times the key priority.

## 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 program country, involvement of women's groups, engaging women in project activities) raised in the Project Document?
- Review any direct or indirect impact of COVID-19 to project implementation. What is the impact of this health risk towards project progress? Are there any grave implications towards achieving project outcomes?
- 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? Will the thus far impact of COVID-19 to the project hinder completion of outcomes within the set timeframe? If so, what are suggested measures?
- Examine if progress so far has led to, or could in the future catalyze 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.
- Examine the Results Framework stated METT scores for each of the Biosphere Reserve core protected areas, in particular to help determine the feasibility of stated METT score indicators at project end. If deemed needed, determine revised METT scores per protected area.

#### **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'; color 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).
- In assessing project progress towards outcomes, recognition of the COVID-19 threat and impact to project progress for most of 2020 and half (to date) of 2021 should be recognized the impact of COVID-19 and clearly stated.

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

Project Strategy	Indicator <sup>31</sup>	Baseline Level <sup>32</sup>	Level in 1 <sup>st</sup> PIR (self-reported)	Midterm Target <sup>33</sup>	End-of-project Target	Midterm Level & Assessment <sup>34</sup>	Achievement Rating <sup>35</sup>	Justification for Rating
<b>Objective:</b>	Indicator (if applicable):							

<sup>31</sup> Populate with data from the Logframe and scorecards

<sup>32</sup> Populate with data from the Project Document

<sup>33</sup> If available

<sup>34</sup> Colour code this column only

<sup>35</sup> Use the 6 point Progress Towards Results Rating Scale: HS, S, MS, MU, U, HU

<b>Outcome 1:</b>	Indicator 1:							
	Indicator 2:							
<b>Outcome 2:</b>	Indicator 3:							
	Indicator 4:							
	Etc.							
<b>Etc.</b>								

### **Indicator Assessment Key**

Green= Achieved

Yellow= On target to be achieved

Red= Not on target to be achieved

In addition to the progress towards outcomes analysis:

- Compare and analyze 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, inclusive of possible barriers brought forth by the COVID-19 all around health risk.
- 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<sup>36</sup>**

#### **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.

<sup>36</sup> For all of the below, determine whether the health risk and impact brought in by COVID-19 will bring direct impact

- 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
		<b>TOTAL</b>			

- 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<sup>37</sup> (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.

#### 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:

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<sup>37</sup> 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.



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

Socio-economic risks to sustainability:

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

Institutional Framework and Governance risks to sustainability:

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

Environmental risks to sustainability:

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

**Conclusions & Recommendations**

The MTR team will include a section in the MTR report for evidence-based conclusions, in light of the findings.

Additionally, the MTR consultant/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.

Given the impact of COVID-19 to the thus far implementation of project activities, the MTR team is expected to provide concrete recommendations regarding project deliverables, outcomes, and indicators in terms of measures taken to mitigate impact to the project, beneficiaries, and personnel and regarding measures to be taken to ensure successful delivery of sought project outcomes.

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

**Ratings**

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

**Table. MTR Ratings & Achievement Summary Table for 'Mainstreaming Natural Resource Management and Biodiversity Conservation Objectives into Socio-Economic Development Planning and Management of Biosphere Reserve in Vietnam'**

Measure	MTR Rating	Achievement Description
Project Strategy	N/A	

<b>Progress Towards Results</b>	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.	
<b>Project Implementation &amp; Adaptive Management</b>	(rate 6 pt. scale)	
<b>Sustainability</b>	(rate 4 pt. scale)	

### Expected Outputs and deliverables

#### 6. TIMEFRAME, DUTY STATION AND EXPECTED PLACES OF TRAVEL

**Duty station:** Home based and Hanoi with in-country travel. In case of in-country travel (if required) for National Team Expert, local travel cost shall be covered by the project management unit or UNDP based on UNDP policy or UN-EU cost-norm.

**Duration and Timing:** Estimated 30 working days for an international consultant and 30 working days for a national team expert during November 2021 – Jan 2022.

The total duration of the MTR is over 12 weeks—including MTR Mission and MTR report writing and shall not exceed five months from when the consultant(s) are hired. The tentative MTR timeframe is as follows:

ACTIVITY	NUMBER OF WORKING DAYS	COMPLETION DATE
Document review and preparing MTR Inception Report (MTR Inception Report due no later than 2 weeks before the MTR mission)	3 days	15 Nov. 2021
MTR mission: stakeholder meetings, interviews, field visits (Note:	10 days	22 Nov. 2021
Presentation of initial findings- last day of the MTR mission	1 day	10 Dec. 2021
Preparing draft report (due within 3 weeks of the MTR mission)	10 days	25 Dec. 2021
Finalization of MTR report/ Incorporating audit trail from feedback on draft report (due within 1 week of receiving UNDP comments on the draft)	6 days	15 Jan. 2022

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

#### 7. MIDTERM REVIEW DELIVERABLES

#	Deliverable	Description	Timing	Responsibilities
1	<b>MTR Inception Report</b>	MTR team clarifies objectives and methods of Midterm Review	No later than 2 weeks before the MTR mission <i>Date: 15 Nov. 2021</i>	MTR team submits to the Commissioning Unit

				(UNDP/GEF) <sup>38</sup> and Project Management Unit (VEA/MONRE)
2	<b>Presentation</b>	Initial Findings	End of MTR mission <i>Date: 10 Dec. 2021</i>	MTR Team presents to project management and the Commissioning Unit
3	<b>Draft MTR Report</b>	Full draft report (using guidelines on content outlined in Annex B) with annexes	Within 3 weeks of the MTR mission <i>Date: 25 Dec. 2021</i>	Sent to the Commissioning Unit, reviewed by RTA, Project Coordinating Unit, GEF OFP
4	<b>Final Report*</b>	Revised report with audit trail detailing how all received comments have (and have not) been addressed in the final MTR report	Within 1 week of receiving UNDP comments on draft <i>Date: 15 Jan. 2022</i>	Sent to the Commissioning Unit

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

### Institutional arrangements/reporting lines

## 8. MTR ARRANGEMENTS

The principal responsibility for managing this MTR resides with the Commissioning Unit. The Commissioning Unit for this project's MTR is UNDP Vietnam country office.

The Commissioning Unit will contract the consultants and ensure the timely provision of per diems and travel arrangements within the country 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. The Commissioning Unit and Project Team will facilitate and provide all the support that is required to carry out the MTR mission remotely/ virtually as needed in the event of travel restriction to the country.

### Experience and qualifications

#### Required Skills and Experience

##### Qualifications of the Successful Applicants

A team of two independent consultants will conduct the MTR - one Team Leader (with experience and exposure to projects and evaluations in other regions globally) and one team National Expert from Vietnam. The consultants cannot have participated in the project preparation, formulation, and/or implementation (including the writing of the Project Document) and should not have a conflict of interest with project's related activities.

The Team Leader will be responsible for the overall MTR implementation design, suggesting MTR timeline reviews as deemed needed, guiding the process of stakeholder interviews, writing of the MTR Inception Report and finalization of the MTR report. The Team Leader will need to operate remotely, given the present COVID-19 health risks and travel restrictions to and within Vietnam. The Team Leader will work on MTR needed items directly with the national Team Expert. The National Team Expert will follow the guidance of the Team Leader, and support the Team Leader in drafting and finalizing the MTR report. The National Team Expert will work with the Project Team

<sup>38</sup> It must be noted that all MTR deliverables should be consulted with UNDP Vietnam and the Project Management Unit (PMU) before reviewed by UNDP Regional Technical Advisor.

in developing the MTR itinerary, support the Project Team in organizing field missions and otherwise virtual discussions as needed, help with the identification of stakeholders by UNDP and the PMU, and participate in bilateral and group consultations with the stakeholders, and support in preparation of the workshop to share preliminary MTR mission findings. Technical inputs by the National Team Expert should include aspects related to the assessment of emerging trends with respect to regulatory framework, budget allocations, capacity building, and other governance-type items related to the project.

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

**A. International Consultant (Team Leader)**

**Profile**

Education

- As a minimum, a Master of Science degree in Natural Sciences, Environment Management, Environmental Studies, Natural Resources, or other closely related fields

Experience

- Minimum of ten (10) years accumulated and recognized experience in the implementation and/ or assessment of projects related to biodiversity and conservation governance, protected areas and links (integration with) to sustainable livelihoods. Work experience in the Asia-Pacific region is required, experience in Vietnam of similar nature to the project is highly desirable.
- Minimum of eight (8) years’ experience in project evaluation and/or implementation experience with result-based management frameworks and result-based management evaluation methods, experience in the application of SMART indicators and in the reconstruction and/ or validation of baseline scenarios.
- Experience in relevant technical areas of at least ten (10) years; competence in adaptive management as applied to biodiversity conservation; demonstrated understanding of issues related to gender and biodiversity; experience in gender sensitive evaluation and analysis; excellent communication skills; demonstrable analytical skills.
- Experience in working remotely on technical matters, preferably on conducting assessments and evaluations away from field sites and though on-the-ground counterparts.
- Project evaluation/review experiences within United Nations system will be considered an asset.
- Experience with implementing evaluations remotely will be considered an asset.

Language

- Fluency in written and spoken English (International consultant)

**Payment Modality**

Payments will be done upon completion of the deliverables/outputs and as per below percentages:

% Payment	Deliverable Milestones
20%	Upon satisfactory delivery of the final MTR Inception Report and approval by the Commissioning Unit
40%	Upon satisfactory delivery of the draft MTR report to the Commissioning Unit
40%	Upon satisfactory delivery of the final MTR report and approval by the Commissioning Unit and RTA (via signatures on the TE Report Clearance Form) and delivery of completed TE Audit Trail

**Criteria for issuing the final payment of 40%<sup>39</sup>:**

<sup>39</sup> The Commissioning Unit is obligated to issue payments to the MTR team as soon as the terms under the ToR are fulfilled. If there is an ongoing discussion regarding the quality and completeness of the final deliverables that cannot be resolved between the

- The final MTR report includes all requirements outlined in the MTR TOR and is in accordance with the MTR guidance.
- The final MTR report is clearly written, logically organized, and is specific for this project (i.e. text has not been cut & pasted from other MTR reports).
- The Audit Trail includes responses to and justification for each comment listed.

Note: In line with the UNDP's financial regulations, when determined by the UNDP Vietnam and/or the consultant that a deliverable or service cannot be satisfactorily completed due to the impact of COVID-19 and limitations to the MTR, that deliverable or service will not be paid. Due to the current COVID-19 situation and its implications, a partial payment may be considered if the consultant invested time towards the deliverable but was unable to complete to circumstances beyond his/her control.

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Commissioning Unit and the MTR team, the Regional M&E Advisor and Vertical Fund Directorate will be consulted. If needed, the Commissioning Unit's senior management, Procurement Services Unit and Legal Support Office will be notified as well so that a decision can be made about whether or not to withhold payment of any amounts that may be due to the evaluator(s), suspend or terminate the contract and/or remove the individual contractor from any applicable rosters.

## ANNEX 2. MTR EVALUATIVE MATRIX

Evaluation Questions	Indicators	Sources	Data Collection Method
<b><i>Evaluation Criteria: Relevance</i></b>			
• Does the project's objective align with the priorities of the local authorities and communities?	• Level of coherence between project objective and stated priorities of local stakeholders	• Local stakeholders • Document review of local development strategies, environmental policies, etc.	• Interviews • Desk review
• Does the project's objective fit within the national government environmental and development priorities?	• Level of coherence between project objective and national policy priorities and strategies, as stated in official documents	• National policy documents	• Desk review • Interviews
• Did the project concept originate from local or national stakeholders, and/or were relevant stakeholders sufficiently involved in project development?	• Level of involvement of local and national stakeholders in project origination and development (number of meetings held, project development processes incorporating stakeholder input, etc.)	• Project staff • Local and national stakeholders • Project documents	• Interviews • Desk review
• Does the project objective fit GEF strategic priorities?	• Level of coherence between project objective and GEF strategic priorities (including alignment of biodiversity focal area indicators)	• GEF strategic priority documents for the period when project was approved • GEF strategic priority documents for biodiversity focal area	• Desk review
• Was the project linked with and in-line with UNDP priorities and strategies for the country?	• Level of coherence between project objective/design and UNDP strategies, UNDAF, CPD	• UNDP strategic priority documents	• Desk review
• Does the project's objective support implementation of the CBD?	• Linkages between project objective and elements of the CBD Aichi targets and Vietnam's compliance with the convention	• CBD website • Vietnam communications to the convention • Project document	• Desk review
<b><i>Evaluation Criteria: Efficiency</i></b>			
• Is the project cost-effective?	• Quality and adequacy of financial management procedures (in line with UNDP and national policies, legislation, and procedures) • Financial delivery rates. expected rate • Management costs as percentage of total costs	• Project documents • Project staff	• Desk review • Interviews with project staff
• Are expenditures in line with international standards and norms?	• Cost of project inputs and outputs relative to other comparative projects in Vietnam	• Project documents • Project staff	• Desk review • Interview with project staff

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is the project implementation approach efficient for delivering the planned project results?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adequacy of implementation structure and mechanisms for coordination and communication</li> <li>Planned and actual level of human resources available</li> <li>Extent and quality of engagement with relevant partners / partnerships</li> <li>Quality and adequacy of project monitoring mechanisms (oversight bodies' input, quality and timeliness of reports, etc.)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project documents</li> <li>National and local stakeholders</li> <li>Project staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Desk review</li> <li>Interviews with project staff</li> <li>Interviews with national and local stakeholders</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is the project implementation delayed? If so, has that affected cost-effectiveness?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project milestones in time</li> <li>Planned results affected by delays</li> <li>Required project adaptive management measures related to delays</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project documents</li> <li>Project staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Desk review</li> <li>Interviews with the project staff</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What is the contribution of cash and in-kind co-financing to project implementation?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Level of cash and in-kind co-financing relative to expected level</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project documents</li> <li>Project staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Desk review</li> <li>Interviews with the project staff</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To what extent is the project leveraging additional resources?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Amount of resources leveraged relative to project budget</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project documents</li> <li>Project staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Desk review</li> <li>Interviews with the project staff</li> </ul>
<b>Evaluation Criteria: Effectiveness</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are the project objectives likely to be met? To what extent are they likely to be met?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Level of progress toward project indicator targets relative to expected level at current point of implementation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project documents</li> <li>Project staff</li> <li>Project stakeholders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interviews</li> <li>Desk review</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What are the key factors contributing to project success or underachievement?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Level of documentation of and preparation for project risks, assumptions and impact drivers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project documents</li> <li>Project staff</li> <li>Project stakeholders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interviews</li> <li>Desk review</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What are the key risks and barriers that remain to achieve the project objective and generate Global Environmental Benefits?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Presence, assessment of, and preparation for expected risks, assumptions and impact drivers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project documents</li> <li>Project staff</li> <li>Project stakeholders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interviews</li> <li>Desk review</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are the key assumptions and impact drivers relevant to the achievement of Global Environmental Benefits likely to be met?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Actions undertaken to address key assumptions and target impact drivers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project documents</li> <li>Project staff</li> <li>Project stakeholders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interviews</li> <li>Desk review</li> </ul>



<b><i>Evaluation Criteria: Results</i></b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have the planned outputs been produced? Have they contributed to the project outcomes and objectives?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Level of project implementation progress relative to expected level at current stage of implementation</li> <li>Existence of logical linkages between project outputs and outcomes/impacts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project documents</li> <li>Project staff</li> <li>Project stakeholders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interviews</li> <li>Desk review</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are the anticipated outcomes likely to be achieved? Are the outcomes likely to contribute to the achievement of the project objective?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Existence of logical linkages between project outcomes and impacts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project documents</li> <li>Project staff</li> <li>Project stakeholders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interviews</li> <li>Desk review</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are impact level results likely to be achieved? Are they likely to be at the scale sufficient to be considered Global Environmental Benefits?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Environmental indicators</li> <li>Level of progress through the project's Theory of Change</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project documents</li> <li>Project staff</li> <li>Project stakeholders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interviews</li> <li>Desk review</li> </ul>
<b><i>Evaluation Criteria: Sustainability</i></b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To what extent are project results likely to be dependent on continued financial support? What is the likelihood that any required financial resources will be available to sustain the project results once the GEF assistance ends?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Financial requirements for maintenance of project benefits</li> <li>Level of expected financial resources available to support maintenance of project benefits</li> <li>Potential for additional financial resources to support maintenance of project benefits</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project documents</li> <li>Project staff</li> <li>Project stakeholders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interviews</li> <li>Desk review</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do relevant stakeholders have or are likely to achieve an adequate level of "ownership" of results, to have the interest in ensuring that project benefits are maintained?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Level of initiative and engagement of relevant stakeholders in project activities and results</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project documents</li> <li>Project staff</li> <li>Project stakeholders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interviews</li> <li>Desk review</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do relevant stakeholders have the necessary technical capacity to ensure that project benefits are maintained?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Level of technical capacity of relevant stakeholders relative to level required to sustain project benefits</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project documents</li> <li>Project staff</li> <li>Project stakeholders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interviews</li> <li>Desk review</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To what extent are the project results dependent on socio-political factors?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Existence of socio-political risks to project benefits</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project documents</li> <li>Project staff</li> <li>Project stakeholders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interviews</li> <li>Desk review</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To what extent are the project results dependent on issues relating to institutional frameworks and governance?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Existence of institutional and governance risks to project benefits</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project documents</li> <li>Project staff</li> <li>Project stakeholders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interviews</li> <li>Desk review</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are there any environmental risks that can undermine the future flow of project impacts and Global Environmental Benefits?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Existence of environmental risks to project benefits</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project documents</li> <li>Project staff</li> <li>Project stakeholders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interviews</li> <li>Desk review</li> </ul>
<b><i>Gender equality and women's empowerment</i></b>			

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How did the project contribute to gender equality and women's empowerment?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Level of progress of gender action plan and gender indicators in the results framework</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project documents</li> <li>• Project staff</li> <li>• Project stakeholders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• Desk review</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In what ways did the project's gender results advance or contribute to the project's climate change mitigation or adaptation outcomes?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Existence of logical linkages between gender results and project outcomes and impacts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project documents</li> <li>• Project staff</li> <li>• Project stakeholders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• Desk review</li> </ul>
<b><i>Cross-cutting and UNDP Mainstreaming Issues</i></b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How were effects on local populations considered in project design and implementation?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive or negative effects of the project on local populations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project document, progress reports, monitoring reports</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• Desk review</li> </ul>

## ANNEX 3. INTERVIEW GUIDE WITH RESULTS TABLE

### General considerations

The following considerations should be applied during stakeholder interviews:

- a) Free and open review process**, transparent and independent from Project management and policy-making, to enhance credibility;
- b) Review ethics** that abides by relevant professional and ethical guidelines and codes of conduct, while the review is undertaken with integrity and honesty;
- c) Partnership approach**, to build development ownership and mutual accountability for results. A participatory approach should be used on all levels (communities, institutions, partners, implementing and executing agencies);
- d) Co-ordination and alignment**, to consider national and local reviews and help strengthen country systems, plans, activities and policies;
- e) Capacity development of partners** by improving review knowledge and skills, stimulating demand for and use of review findings, and supporting accountability and learning.

### Special considerations due to the COVID-19 pandemic

Since international travel is not included, the interviews will rely much on remote data collection techniques, such as Teams, Zoom, Skype, GoogleMeet, phone and WhatsApp, as well as e-mail communication and follow-up with stakeholders. In Viet Nam carry out interviews on national and local level as much as possible through person-to-person interviews, however remote connections would be used when this is not possible.

### Pilot sites

The national consultant will interview relevant local stakeholders in all the project three project areas (pilot sites), if the COVID-19 situation permits it. The interviews on local level should include BR authorities and staff, the local project team, national parks and reserves, public and private sectors partners, including NGOs/CSOs, and local community representatives. It is a goal to achieve gender balance among interviewees.

### Interview procedure

An interview would typically be around one hour, but could last from half an hour up to max two hours. If more time is needed with the same person, it is better to divide it in two sessions.

The table below is based on the TOR and includes the issues that the MTR team should be able to respond, based on interviews and other sources. It should therefore not be used as a questionnaire, but rather as a guide, where the interviewer will select and frame the questions for each interview based on each individual stakeholder, and each person will only respond to a part of the questions.

The interviews should be held in an informal and relaxed way, to enter into confidence and achieve as much relevant information as possible. The questions should not be interpreted as an exam, because there are no right or wrong answers. If any interesting topic comes up, the interviewer might use extensive time to go deeper into it, including potentially issues that are not mentioned in the format.

Several stakeholders should answer each of the questions. If information comes up that contradicts information from written sources or other persons interviewed, this should be confirmed through a direct question during the interview to avoid that there might be a misunderstanding. Any contradictory information should later be verified through triangulation with a third source or multiple sources.

After the interview, the interviewers should as soon as possible fill in the form with key words and the most important information, which will later facilitate report writing.

**RESULTS OF INTERVIEWS** (names and responses are not included in this annex, since opinions of individual persons should not be identified in the report)<sup>40</sup>.

No	Issues and questions	Response from persons interviewed	Person interviewed, title, institution and gender
<b>A</b>	<b>Project design</b>		
1	Changes in the project compared with originally approved project document		
2	Effect of these changes		
3	Relevance of the project strategy and whether it provides the most effective route towards expected/intended results		
4	Lessons from other relevant projects not incorporated into the project design?		
5	Address of country priorities/ownership		
6	Did the person/institution interviewed participate in the design phase?		
7	Gender issues/participation in design?		
8	Areas of concern?		
<b>B</b>	<b>Project management</b>		
1	Have changes been made in project mgmt and are they effective?		
2	Are responsibilities and reporting lines clear? (+areas of improvement)		
3	Is decision-making transparent and timely? (+areas of improvement)		
4	Quality of execution (MONRE, partners) and areas of improvement?		
5	Quality of support from UNDP and areas of improvement?		
6	Capacity to benefit or involve women, and how? (MONRE, partners, UNDP)		
7	Gender balance of project staff and steps to assure this balance?		
8	Gender balance of Project Board and steps to assure this balance?		
9	Causes for delays and if they have been resolved		
10	Is the work-planning results-based, and if not, how to re-orientate it?		
11	Is the results framework a management tool, and was changes made in it?		
12	Quality of financial management according to UNDP and audits		
13	Any changes to fund allocations as result of budget revision (are they appropriate and relevant)?		
14	What are the financial controls, to allow decisions on budget and flow of funds?		
15	Is co-financing being used strategically for the project objectives?		
16	Is PMU meeting regularly with all co-financing partners to align financing priorities and work plans?		
<b>C</b>	<b>Project level M&amp;E and reporting</b>		
1	Monitoring of outputs		
2	Monitoring of outcomes		
3	Monitoring of risk		
4	Monitoring of safeguards		
5	Monitoring of gender participation/impact		
6	Reports presented, types and frequency		
7	Do the monitoring tools use existing info and provide necessary information?		
8	Do the monitoring tools involve key partners, and are they aligned or mainstreamed with national systems?		
9	Are the monitoring tools efficient and cost-effective?		
10	How could the monitoring tools be more participatory and inclusive?		
11	Are new monitoring tools required?		
12	Is it M&E budget sufficient and used efficiently?		
13	Are gender issues incorporated in M&E?		
14	How can project enhance gender benefits?		
15	Were any adaptive management changes reported, and shared with Project Board?		

<sup>40</sup> Note that information about who said what is only used internally in the MTR team, since it is confidential, and it would not allow people to speak freely if names were mentioned in the report.

16	How is PMU fulfilling UNDP/GEF reporting and addressing poorly-rated PIRs?		
17	How are lessons from adaptive mgmt documented and shared with partners?		
<b>D</b>	<b>Stakeholder engagement</b>		
1	Are there good partnerships with project partners and other stakeholders?		
2	Do government stakeholders support the project objectives?		
3	Do government stakeholders have an active role in project decision-making?		
4	Has stakeholder involvement and public awareness contributed to project progress?		
5	How does the project engage women and girls?		
6	Would the project have the same effects independently of gender and age?		
7	Identify legal, cultural, or religious constraints on women's participation		
<b>E</b>	<b>Communication and knowledge management</b>		
1	Is communication with stakeholders regular and effective? (any left out)?		
2	Are there feedback mechanisms for the communication?		
3	Does stakeholder communication lead to awareness and investment?		
4	Is there proper communication to the public (website, outreach, campaigns)?		
5	Which knowledge activities and products were developed? (comply with ProDoc?)		
<b>F</b>	<b>Effectiveness (results achievement)</b>		
1	Progress so far (in areas the stakeholder participates in)		
2	Would progress so far lead to future beneficial effects (i.e. income generation, gender equality improved governance)?		
4	What are the main barriers for results and how can they be best removed?		
5	How can the project further expand its benefits?		
6	What are the project's contributions to SDGs and global environmental benefits?		
<b>G</b>	<b>Efficiency</b>		
1	Are the project interventions cost-effective (figures to prove it)?		
2	Is the project's progress in line with implementation time and budget used?		
3	Which factors are promoting or limiting project efficiency?		
<b>H</b>	<b>Sustainability and social/environmental standards</b>		
1	Are the risks and ratings identified in the ProDoc still valid, or are revisions needed?		
2	Revisions since GEF CEO Endorsement to: (i) safeguards risk categorization; (ii) types of risks (in SESP); (iii) individual risk ratings (in SESP)		
3	Which progress has been made on the social and environmental management measures outlined in the SESP/ESMP?		
4	Are all risks identified in ProDoc, PIRs and ATLAS appropriate and up to date?		
5	Likelihood of financial resources not being available when GEF project ends?		
6	Social or political risks to sustainability?		
7	Risk that ownership will be insufficient?		
8	Interest and awareness of stakeholders to continue the project benefits?		
9	Are lessons learned documented and shared by PMU (for replication/ scale-up)?		
10	Do legal frameworks, policies, governance mean any risk to project benefits?		
11	Are systems and mechanisms for accountability/transparency in place?		
12	Are there any environmental risks to sustainability?		

## ANNEX 4. RATING SCALES

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

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

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

## ANNEX 5. MID-TERM REVIEW ITINERARY

ACTIVITY	PERIOD
Document review and preparing MTR Inception Report	01-15 Nov 2021
Stakeholder meetings, interviews and field visits	12 Nov-31 Dec 2021
Visit of national consultant to Nghe An site	19-22 Nov 2021
Visit of national consultant to Cu Lao Cham – Hoi An site	08-11 Dec 2021
Stakeholder meetings and interviews; field visits and face-to-face interviews by national consultant	12 Nov-31 Dec 2021
Preparing draft report	15 Dec 2021 - 10 Jan 2022
UNDP and partners' review and presentation of comments to the draft MTR Report	10 Jan – 3 Feb 2022
MTR Team update of draft MTR Report	29 Jan – 7 Feb 2022
Presentation and discussion of report and audit trail (online)	9 Feb 2022*
UNDP final review and final responses to audit trail	8 – 11 Feb 2022
Approval of Final Report	Feb 2022

\*Proposed date (TBC)



## ANNEX 6. PERSONS INTERVIEWED

Name	Gender	Organisation	Designation	Contact
<b>UNDP</b>				
1. Dao Xuan Lai	Male	UNDP Vietnam Country Office	Assistant Resident Rep./ Head of Climate Change and Environment Unit	<a href="mailto:dao.xuan.lai@undp.org">dao.xuan.lai@undp.org</a>
2. Bipin Pokharel	Male	UNDP Bangkok Regional Hub	Regional Technical Advisor	<a href="mailto:Bipin.Pokharel@undp.org">Bipin.Pokharel@undp.org</a>
3. Hoang Thu Thuy	Female	UNDP Vietnam Country Office	UNDP Project Manager	<a href="mailto:hoang.thu.thuy@undp.org">hoang.thu.thuy@undp.org</a> 0912372143
4. Nguyen Thi Thu Huyen	Female	UNDP Vietnam Country Office		<a href="mailto:nguyen.thi.thu.huyen@undp.org">nguyen.thi.thu.huyen@undp.org</a> 0904584582
5. Fernando Potess	Male		International Technical Advisor (UNDP-MONRE)	<a href="mailto:fpotess.bccgef@gmail.com">fpotess.bccgef@gmail.com</a> +66-906066081
<b>VEA/BCA (MONRE)</b>				
1. Hoang Thi Thanh Nhan	Female	Project steering Committee VEA (MONRE)	Member Vice Director of BCA	024.37956868/3110
2. Nguyen Thin Kim Tinh	Female	BCA (MONRE)	Vice Director of Depart	<a href="mailto:kimtinhivea@gmail.com">kimtinhivea@gmail.com</a> 0914948868
3. Tran Huyen Trang	Female	BCA (MONRE)	Official	<a href="mailto:huyentrang1601@gmail.com">huyentrang1601@gmail.com</a> 0967188999
4. Doan Hong Ngan	Female	BCA (MONRE)	Official	<a href="mailto:hoangnhan.nbca@gmail.com">hoangnhan.nbca@gmail.com</a>
<b>PMU</b>				
1. Bui Xuan Truong	Male	PMU	Project Manager	<a href="mailto:truongbui.envi@gmail.com">truongbui.envi@gmail.com</a> 0983288663
2. Hoang Thi Thanh Nhan	Female	PMU	Project Vice Director	
3. Tran Huyen Trang	Female	PMU	Project Coordinator	
4. Doan Hong Ngan	Female	PMU	Staff	
<b>MAB Viet Nam</b>				
1. Vu Thuc Hien	Female	MAB Viet Nam	Secretariat	0904834379
<b>VNFOREST (MARD)</b>				
1. Nguyen Manh Hiep	Male	VNFOREST (MARD)	Department of Protection and Special Use Forest	0912216808
<b>MOCST</b>				
1. Pham Trung Luong	Male	Research Institute for Tourism Development	Vice Director	0904364979
<b>Nghe An site</b>				
1. Nguyen Khac Lam	Male	MB of Western Nghe An BR	Vice Director	0915557646
		BR Project Implementation Team	Director	
2. Nguyen Huy Ninh	Male	BR Project Implementation Team	Coordinator	0987530280
3. Doan Thi Hanh Lam	Female	BR Project Implementation Team	Accountant	
4. Luu Trung Kien	Male	Pu Mat National Park	Vice Director	0383873374
5. Tran Quoc Hoa	Male	MB of Con Cuong Protection Forest	Head of planning and Technical Division	0383730552
6. Trinh Van Thinh	Male	MB of Con Cuong Protection Forest	Vice-Head of planning and Technical Division	0383730552

7. Le Van Chau	Male	Con Cuong Forest Protection Division	Ranger	0383873380
8. Nguyen Ngoc Anh	Male	Con Cuong Forestry Company	Vice Director	0912188344
9. Mong Van Viet	Male	Yen Hoa Commune, Tuong Duong Dist	Vice President	0942032818
10. Vi Quoc Mau	Male	Yen Hoa Commune, Tuong Duong Dist	Cadastral official	
11. Kha Thi Sum	Female	Yen Hoa Commune, Tuong Duong Dist	Famer association president	
12. Luong Van Son	Male	Yen Hoa Commune, Tuong Duong Dist	Yen Hop Village leader	
13. Vi Van Chom	Male	Yen Hoa Commune, Tuong Duong Dist	Nan Coc Village leader	
14. Kha Van Minh	Male	Yen Hoa Commune, Tuong Duong Dist	Dinh Yen Village leader	
15. Luong tuan Dung	Male	Nga My Commune, Tuong Duong Dist	Commune President	0942032818
16. Vi Thi Mui	Female	Nga My Commune, Tuong Duong Dist	Women Association President	
17. Luong Thi Ngoc	Female	Nga My Commune, Tuong Duong Dist	Women Association vice-president	
18. Lu Van Uan	Male	Nga My Commune, Tuong Duong Dist	Na Kho Villagae leader	
19. Vi Van Kieu	Male	Nga My Commune, Tuong Duong Dist	Dang Village leader	
20. Lo Thi Nhan	Female	Nga My Commune, Tuong Duong Dist	Women Association	
21. Lu Van Tuyen	Male	Nga My Commune, Tuong Duong Dist	Sop Kho Village leader	
22. Vo Minh Son	Male	Pu Huong Nature Reserve	Vice Director	0982398995
23. Nguyen Xuan Bac	Male	Pu Huong Nature Reserve	Planning Division Head	
24. Nguyen Thanh Tu	Male	Pu Huong Nature Reserve	Ranger	
25. Nong Trung Hieu	Male	Pu Huong Nature Reserve	Ranger	
26. Le Thi Duong	Female	Pu Huong Nature Reserve	Integrated Division	
27. Truong Thi Lan	Female	Pu Huong Nature Reserve	Integrated Division	
29. Nguyen Van Hieu	Male	Pu Hoat Nature Reserve	Vice Director	02383885118
30. Le Van Nghia	Male	Pu Hoat Nature Reserve	Vice Director	
31. Le Van Hoai	Male	Pu Hoat Nature Reserve	Ranger	
32. Le Thi Sinh	Female	Pu Hoat Nature Reserve	Planning and International Coord. Division	
33. Luong Kim Oanh	Female	Pu Hoat Nature Reserve	Administration Division	
34. Sam Thi Quynh	Female	Pu Hoat Nature Reserve	Administration Division	
35. Lo Van Ly	Male	Agriculture Division, Con Cuong District	Division Head	
36. Nguyen Thanh Nham	Male	Consultant Center for Forestry Development/Consultant	Director	0904657347
37. Dao Minh Chau	Female	Biological Resource and Environment Center	Vice Director	0918618358
<b>Quang Nam site</b>				
1. Tran Thi Hong Thuy	Female	MB of Cu Lao Cham-Hoi An BR	Vice Director	0914242036
		Cu Lao Cham Marine Protected Area	Director	
		BR Project Implementation Team	Director	
2. Tran Phuong Thao	Female	BR Project Implementation Team	Site Coordinator	0905550019
3. Pham Thi Kim Phuong	Female	Cu Lao Cham Marine Protected Area	Technical staff	
		BR Project Implementation Team	Technical staff	
4. Le Ngoc Thao	Male	MB of Cu Lao Cham-Hoi An BR	Secretariat	0914049016
5. Pham Van Hiep	Male	MB of Cu Lao Cham-Hoi An BR	Secretariat	
6. Nguyen Van Vu	Male	Cu Lao Cham Marine Protected Area	Vice Director	0905276941

7. Phan Cong Sanh	Male	Cu Lao Cham Marine Protected Area	Staff	0981933177
8. Quang Van Quy	Male	Hoi An World Culture Heritage site	Vice Director	0905662739
9. Huynh Ngoc Binh	Male	Cam Kim Commune, Hoi An City	Commune Office Leader	02353934244
10. Do Van Ty	Male	Cam Kim Commune, Hoi An City	Veteran Association President	
11. Huynh Trang Sy	Male	Cam Kim Commune, Hoi An City	Farmer Association President	
12. Nguyen Thi Luan	Female	Cam Kim Commune, Hoi An City	Women Association President	
13. Ngo Huyen Chan	Female	Cam Thanh Commune, Hoi An City	Vice President	0905838454
14. Ta Thi Phuong Thao	Female	Cam Thanh Commune, Hoi An City	Staff	
15. Pham Van Hiep	Male	Cam Thanh Commune, Hoi An City	Head of Tourism Division	
<b>Dong Nai site</b>				
1. Nguyen Hoang Hao	Male	MB of Dong Nai BR	Vice Director	0989758877
		Dong Nai Culture Nature Reserve	Director	
		BR Project Implementation Team	Director	
2. Nguyen Thi Lan Phuong	Female	BR Project Implementation Team	Site coordinator	0918149707
3. To Nguyen Duc	Male	BR Project Implementation Team	Technical staff	
4. Nguyen Duc Tu	Male	MB of Dong Nai BR	Secretariat	
		Dong Nai Culture Nature Reserve	Technical staff	
5. Nguyen Van Thanh	Male	Cat Tien National Park	Vice Director	0919521485
6. Pham Huu Khanh	Male	Cat Tien National Park	Head of Science & International Cooper	
7. Nguyen Ngoc Thin	Female	Cat Tien National Park	Vice Head of Science & International Cooper	
8. Ha Quoc Lap	Male	Ma Da Commune, Vinh Cuu District	President	02513960249
9. Tran Lam Dong	Male	Silviculture Research Institute/Consultant	Director	0986506018

## ANNEX 7. LIST OF DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

<b>Name of document</b>	<b>Links</b>
UNDP-GEF PIF	<a href="#">LINK HERE</a>
UNDP Project Initiation Plan with annexes	<a href="#">LINK HERE</a>
UNDP Project Document with annexes	<a href="#">LINK HERE</a>
UNDP Social and Environmental Screening Procedure (SESP)	
Gender Analysis and Mainstreaming Action Plan	<a href="#">LINK HERE</a>
Knowledge Management and Communications Strategy	<a href="#">LINK HERE</a>
Social and Environment Screening	<a href="#">LINK HERE</a>
Project Inception Report	<a href="#">LINK HERE</a>
All Project Implementation Reports (PIR's)	
BR_PIR 2021 (period through June 2021)	<a href="#">LINK HERE</a>
Quarterly progress reports and work plans for implementation task teams	
<b>Annual work-plans and quarter work-plan</b>	
Annual Work Plan (AWP) 2020	<a href="#">COVER PAGE AWP 2020</a>
Quarterly Work Plan (QWP) Q3 2020	<a href="#">LINK HERE</a>
QWP Q4 2020	<a href="#">LINK HERE</a>
AWP 2021	<a href="#">COVER PAGE AWP 2021</a>
QWP Q1 2021	<a href="#">LINK HERE</a>
QWP Q2 2021	<a href="#">LINK HERE</a>
QWP Q3 2021	<a href="#">LINK HERE</a>
QWP Q4/2021	
AWP 2021 (Revised Sept 2021)	<a href="#">NOL FROM UNDP DRAFT REVISED AWP 2021</a>
<b>Annual report and quarter reports</b>	
Project progress report Q3/2020	<a href="#">LINK HERE</a>
Project progress report Q4/2020	<a href="#">LINK HERE</a>
Project report 2020	<a href="#">LINK HERE</a>
Project progress report Q1/2021	<a href="#">LINK HERE</a>
Project progress report Q2/2021	<a href="#">LINK HERE</a>
Project progress report Q3/2021	

## Monitoring and audit

Audit report 2021 (For period June 1st 2020 to June 30th 2021)

GEF 6 focal area Tracking Tools/Core Indicators at CEO endorsement (METT, [LINK HERE](#)  
Biodiversity, Land Degradation, Sustainable Forest Management

GEF 7 Core Indicators

Oversight mission reports

All monitoring reports prepared by the project

Financial and Administration guidelines used by Project Team

UNDP HPPMG [LINK HERE](#)

BR Project Management procedure [LINK HERE](#)

## Other documents

Project Brief

Vietnam UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF)

Vietnam UN management Guidelines (HPPMG)

All co-financing letters

BR communication materials [LINK HERE](#)

Project pictures [LINK HERE](#)

Project knowledge products

Project news and media press (see below) [LINK HERE](#)

## Project outputs/reports

Project outputs by objectives [LINK HERE](#)

Project outputs of Outcome 1 [LINK HERE](#)

Project outputs of Outcome 2 [LINK HERE](#)

Project outputs of Outcome 3 [LINK HERE](#)

## Media coverage: New BR project

### (a) News in Vietnamese

1. <https://baotainguyenmoitruong.vn/thuc-day-hoan-thien-hanh-lang-phap-ly-ve-khu-du-tru-sinh-quyen-313816.html>
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4. <http://www.baovanhoa.vn/doi-song/moi-truong-khi-hau/artmid/2165/articleid/34775/dam-bao-muc-tieu-kep-trong-quan-ly-tai-nguyen-thien-nhien-va-phat-trien-sinh-ke-cho-nguoi-dan>
5. <http://ktcatbd.com.vn/social/detail/bao-dam-muc-tieu-kep-trong-quan-ly-tai-nguyen-thien-nhien-16606.html>
6. <https://www.thiennhien.net/2020/10/28/thuc-day-hoan-thien-hanh-lang-phap-ly-ve-khu-du-tru-sinh-quyen/>
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11. <http://baodongnai.com.vn/tintuc/202010/khu-du-tru-sinh-quyen-dong-nai-duoc-trien-khai-du-an-bao-ton-da-dang-sinh-hoc-cua-lhq-3027955/>
12. <http://tapchimoitruong.vn/pages/article.aspx?item=Khởi-động-Dự-án-Lồng-ghép-quản-lý-tài-nguyên-thiên-nhiên-và-các-mục-tiêu-về-bảo-tồn-DDSH-vào-quy-hoach-phát-triển-kinh-tế---xã-hội-và-quản-lý-các-KDTSQ-ở-Việt-Nam-51969>

## **(b) News in English**

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16. <https://en.vietnamplus.vn/project-launched-to-boost-biodiversity-preservation-management/189349.vnp>
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24. <https://www.lecourrier.vn/le-vietnam-sefforce-de-preserver-ses-reserves-de-biosphere/880198.html>
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## ANNEX 8. PROPOSED UPDATED SESP<sup>41</sup>

### UNDP Social and Environmental and Social Screening Template (SESP)

#### Project Information

<b>Project Information</b>	
1. Project Title	Mainstreaming Natural Resource Management and Biodiversity Conservation Objectives into Socio-Economic Development Planning and Management of Biosphere Reserve in Vietnam
2. Project Number	PIMS 5659 (GEF ID 9361 )
3. Location (Global/Region/Country)	Viet Nam

#### Part A. Integrating Overarching Principles to Strengthen Social and Environmental Sustainability

<b>QUESTION 1: How Does the Project Integrate the Overarching Principles in order to Strengthen Social and Environmental Sustainability?</b>	
<b><i>Briefly describe in the space below how the Project mainstreams the human-rights based approach</i></b>	
Maintain current text, but proposed to add the following: The Government and UNDP will assure that indigenous peoples and other traditional local communities' rights of access and tenure to natural resources is not negatively affected, even if they are situated in the core zone of the BRs.	
<b><i>Briefly describe in the space below how the Project is likely to improve gender equality and women's empowerment</i></b>	
No proposed change	
<b><i>Briefly describe in the space below how the Project mainstreams environmental sustainability</i></b>	
No proposed change	

<sup>41</sup> UNDP has contracted a SES expert that will support updating the SES during 2022



## Part B. Identifying and Managing Social and Environmental Risks

<b>QUESTION 2: What are the Potential Social and Environmental Risks?</b> <i>Note: Describe briefly potential social and environmental risks identified in Attachment 1 – Risk Screening Checklist (based on any “Yes” responses). If no risks have been identified in Attachment 1 then note “No Risks Identified” and skip to Question 4 and Select “Low Risk”. Questions 5 and 6 not required for Low Risk Projects.</i>	<b>QUESTION 3: What is the level of significance of the potential social and environmental risks?</b> <i>Note: Respond to Questions 4 and 5 below before proceeding to Question 6</i>			<b>QUESTION 6: What social and environmental assessment and management measures have been conducted and/or are required to address potential risks (for Risks with Moderate and High Significance)?</b>
<b>Risk Description</b>	<b>Impact and Probability (1-5)</b>	<b>Significance (Low, Moderate, High)</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>Description of assessment and management measures as reflected in the Project design. If ESIA or SESA is required note that the assessment should consider all potential impacts and risks.</b>
<b>Risk 1:</b> Project activities are proposed within and adjacent to critical habitats and/or environmentally sensitive areas, including national parks.	I=1 P=4	Low	No proposed change of text	No proposed change of text
<b>Risk 2:</b> Would the potential outcomes of the Project be sensitive or vulnerable to potential impact of climate change or natural disasters?	I=2 P=2	Low	No proposed change of text	No proposed change of text
<b>Risk 3:</b> The Project involves new set-asides of 60,000 ha for non-consumptive use. There is therefore a risk that the project will limit access to resources in some specific areas.	I=3 P=2	Moderate	Same text but add: The Government and UNDP will assure that indigenous peoples and other traditional local communities' rights of access and tenure to natural resources is not negatively affected, even if they are situated in the core zone of the BRs.	No proposed change of text
<b>Risk 4:</b> Would the Project possibly affect land tenure arrangements and/or community based property rights/customary rights to land/territories and/or resources of marginalized groups and indigenous peoples?	I=3 P=2	Moderate	Same comment as above. <i>Risk 3 and 4 are related and could be combines into one risk.</i>	No proposed change of text
<b>Risk 5:</b> Women among the local community may not be fully involved in planning, implementation and monitoring of project interventions and getting benefits from such initiatives, compared with land owners and other influential persons at the local level that may have more control on decision-making.	I=3 P=4	Moderate	This has already be confirmed. Strong mesures should be taken by the project.	No proposed change of text

	<b>QUESTION 4: What is the overall Project risk categorization?</b>	
	<b>Select one (see SESP for guidance)</b>	<b>Comments</b>
	<i>Low Risk</i>	√ Low to moderate impact (see above)
	<i>Moderate Risk</i>	
	<i>High Risk</i>	
	<b>QUESTION 5: Based on the identified risks and risk categorization, what requirements of the SES are relevant?</b>	
	Check all that apply	<b>Comments</b>
	<i>Principle 1: Human Rights</i>	√ Ref. SESP Attachment 1: Principle 1, Q 1, 2, 3, 4
	<i>Principle 2: Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment</i>	√ Ref. SESP Attachment 1: Principle 2, Q 1, 2, 4
	<i>1. Biodiversity Conservation and Natural Resource Management</i>	√ Ref. SESP Attachment 1: Principle 3, Standard 1, Q 1.2, 1.5, 1.6, 1.7
	<i>2. Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation</i>	(√) Ref. SESP Attachment 1: Principle 3, Standard 2, Q 2.2
	<i>3. Community Health, Safety and Working Conditions</i>	
	<i>4. Cultural Heritage</i>	
	<i>5. Displacement and Resettlement</i>	√ Ref. SESP Attachment 1: Principle 3, Standard 5, Q 5.4
	<i>6. Indigenous Peoples</i>	√ Ref. SESP Attachment 1: Principle 3, Standard 6, Q 6.1, 6.3, 6.4, 6.9
	<i>7. Pollution Prevention and Resource Efficiency</i>	

### Final Sign Off

<i>Signature</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Description</i>
QA Assessor		UNDP staff member responsible for the Project, typically a UNDP Programme Officer. Final signature confirms they have “checked” to ensure that the SESP is adequately conducted.
QA Approver		UNDP senior manager, typically the UNDP Deputy Country Director (DCD), Country Director (CD), Deputy Resident Representative (DRR), or Resident Representative (RR). The QA Approver cannot also be the QA Assessor. Final signature confirms they have “cleared” the SESP prior to submittal to the PAC.
PAC Chair		UNDP chair of the PAC. In some cases PAC Chair may also be the QA Approver. Final signature confirms that the SESP was considered as part of the project appraisal and considered in recommendations of the PAC.

## SESP Attachment 1. Social and Environmental Risk Screening Checklist

<b>Checklist Potential Social and Environmental Risks</b>	
<b>Principles 1: Human Rights</b>	<b>Answer (Yes/No)</b>
1. Could the Project lead to adverse impacts on enjoyment of the human rights (civil, political, economic, social or cultural) of the affected population and particularly of marginalized groups?	Yes
2. Is there a likelihood that the Project would have inequitable or discriminatory adverse impacts on affected populations, particularly people living in poverty or marginalized or excluded individuals or groups? <sup>42</sup>	No
3. Could the Project potentially restrict availability, quality of and access to resources or basic services, in particular to marginalized individuals or groups?	Yes
4. Is there a likelihood that the Project would exclude any potentially affected stakeholders, in particular marginalized groups, from fully participating in decisions that may affect them?	No
5. Is there a risk that duty-bearers do not have the capacity to meet their obligations in the Project?	No
6. Is there a risk that rights-holders do not have the capacity to claim their rights?	Yes
7. Have local communities or individuals, given the opportunity, raised human rights concerns regarding the Project during the stakeholder engagement process?	No
8. Is there a risk that the Project would exacerbate conflicts among and/or the risk of violence to project-affected communities and individuals?	No
<b>Principle 2: Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment</b>	
1. Is there a likelihood that the proposed Project would have adverse impacts on gender equality and/or the situation of women and girls?	No
2. Would the Project potentially reproduce discriminations against women based on gender, especially regarding participation in design and implementation or access to opportunities and benefits?	No
3. Have women's groups/leaders raised gender equality concerns regarding the Project during the stakeholder engagement process and has this been included in the overall Project proposal and in the risk assessment?	No
4. Would the Project potentially limit women's ability to use, develop and protect natural resources, taking into account different roles and positions of women and men in accessing environmental goods and services? <i>For example, activities that could lead to natural resources degradation or depletion in communities who depend on these resources for their livelihoods and well being</i>	No
<b>Principle 3: Environmental Sustainability:</b> Screening questions regarding environmental risks are encompassed by the specific Standard-related questions below	
<b>Standard 1: Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Natural Resource Management</b>	
1.1 Would the Project potentially cause adverse impacts to habitats (e.g. modified, natural, and critical habitats) and/or ecosystems and ecosystem services? <i>For example, through habitat loss, conversion or degradation, fragmentation, hydrological changes</i>	No
1.2 Are any Project activities proposed within or adjacent to critical habitats and/or environmentally sensitive areas, including legally protected areas (e.g. nature reserve, national park), areas proposed for protection, or recognized as such by authoritative sources and/or indigenous peoples or local communities?	Yes
1.3 Does the Project involve changes to the use of lands and resources that may have adverse impacts on habitats, ecosystems, and/or livelihoods? (Note: if restrictions and/or limitations of access to lands would apply, refer to Standard 5)	No

<sup>42</sup> Prohibited grounds of discrimination include race, ethnicity, gender, age, language, disability, sexual orientation, religion, political or other opinion, national or social or geographical origin, property, birth or other status including as an indigenous person or as a member of a minority. References to "women and men" or similar is understood to include women and men, boys and girls, and other groups discriminated against based on their gender identities, such as transgender people and transsexuals.

1.4	Would Project activities pose risks to endangered species?	No
1.5	Would the Project pose a risk of introducing invasive alien species?	No
1.6	Does the Project involve harvesting of natural forests, plantation development, or reforestation?	Yes
1.7	Does the Project involve the production and/or harvesting of fish populations or other aquatic species?	No
1.8	Does the Project involve significant extraction, diversion or containment of surface or ground water? <i>For example, construction of dams, reservoirs, river basin developments, groundwater extraction</i>	No
1.9	Does the Project involve utilization of genetic resources? (e.g. collection and/or harvesting, commercial development)	No
1.10	Would the Project generate potential adverse trans-boundary or global environmental concerns?	No
1.11	Would the Project result in secondary or consequential development activities which could lead to adverse social and environmental effects, or would it generate cumulative impacts with other known existing or planned activities in the area? <i>For example, a new road through forested lands will generate direct environmental and social impacts (e.g. felling of trees, earthworks, potential relocation of inhabitants). The new road may also facilitate encroachment on lands by illegal settlers or generate unplanned commercial development along the route, potentially in sensitive areas. These are indirect, secondary, or induced impacts that need to be considered. Also, if similar developments in the same forested area are planned, then cumulative impacts of multiple activities (even if not part of the same Project) need to be considered.</i>	No
<b>Standard 2: Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation</b>		
2.1	Will the proposed Project result in significant <sup>43</sup> greenhouse gas emissions or may exacerbate climate change?	No
2.2	Would the potential outcomes of the Project be sensitive or vulnerable to potential impacts of climate change?	No
2.3	Is the proposed Project likely to directly or indirectly increase social and environmental vulnerability to climate change now or in the future (also known as maladaptive practices)? <i>For example, changes to land use planning may encourage further development of floodplains, potentially increasing the population's vulnerability to climate change, specifically flooding</i>	No
<b>Standard 3: Community Health, Safety and Working Conditions</b>		
3.1	Would elements of Project construction, operation, or decommissioning pose potential safety risks to local communities?	No
3.2	Would the Project pose potential risks to community health and safety due to the transport, storage, and use and/or disposal of hazardous or dangerous materials (e.g. explosives, fuel and other chemicals during construction and operation)?	No
3.3	Does the Project involve large-scale infrastructure development (e.g. dams, roads, buildings)?	No
3.4	Would failure of structural elements of the Project pose risks to communities? (e.g. collapse of buildings or infrastructure)	No
3.5	Would the proposed Project be susceptible to or lead to increased vulnerability to earthquakes, subsidence, landslides, and erosion, flooding or extreme climatic conditions?	No
3.6	Would the Project result in potential increased health risks (e.g. from water-borne or other vector-borne diseases or communicable infections such as HIV/AIDS)?	No
3.7	Does the Project pose potential risks and vulnerabilities related to occupational health and safety due to physical, chemical, biological, and radiological hazards during Project construction, operation, or decommissioning?	No
3.8	Does the Project involve support for employment or livelihoods that may fail to comply with national and international labor standards (i.e. principles and standards of ILO fundamental conventions)?	No
1.9	Does the Project engage security personnel that may pose a potential risk to health and safety of communities and/or individuals (e.g. due to a lack of adequate training or accountability)?	No
<b>Standard 4: Cultural Heritage</b>		

<sup>43</sup> In regards to CO<sub>2</sub>, 'significant emissions' corresponds generally to more than 25,000 tons per year (from both direct and indirect sources). [The Guidance Note on Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation provides additional information on GHG emissions.]

4.1	Will the proposed Project result in interventions that would potentially adversely impact sites, structures, or objects with historical, cultural, artistic, traditional or religious values or intangible forms of culture (e.g. knowledge, innovations, practices)? (Note: Projects intended to protect and conserve Cultural Heritage may also have inadvertent adverse impacts)	No
4.2	Does the Project propose utilizing tangible and/or intangible forms of cultural heritage for commercial or other purposes?	No
<b>Standard 5: Displacement and Resettlement</b>		
5.1	Would the Project potentially involve temporary or permanent and full or partial physical displacement?	Yes
5.2	Would the Project possibly result in economic displacement (e.g. loss of assets or access to resources due to land acquisition or access restrictions – even in the absence of physical relocation)?	Yes
5.3	Is there a risk that the Project would lead to forced evictions? <sup>44</sup>	Yes
5.4	Would the proposed Project possibly affect land tenure arrangements and/or community based property rights/customary rights to land, territories and/or resources?	Yes
<b>Standard 6: Indigenous Peoples</b>		
6.1	Are indigenous peoples present in the Project area (including Project area of influence)?	Yes
6.2	Is it likely that the Project or portions of the Project will be located on lands and territories claimed by indigenous peoples?	Yes
6.3	Would the proposed Project potentially affect the human rights, lands, natural resources, territories, and traditional livelihoods of indigenous peoples (regardless of whether indigenous peoples possess the legal titles to such areas, whether the Project is located within or outside of the lands and territories inhabited by the affected peoples, or whether the indigenous peoples are recognized as indigenous peoples by the country in question)? <i>If the answer to the screening question 6.3 is “yes” the potential risk impacts are considered potentially severe and/or critical and the Project would be categorized as either Moderate or High Risk.</i>	Yes
6.4	Has there been an absence of culturally appropriate consultations carried out with the objective of achieving FPIC on matters that may affect the rights and interests, lands, resources, territories and traditional livelihoods of the indigenous peoples concerned?	No
6.5	Does the proposed Project involve the utilization and/or commercial development of natural resources on lands and territories claimed by indigenous peoples?	No
6.6	Is there a potential for forced eviction or the whole or partial physical or economic displacement of indigenous peoples, including through access restrictions to lands, territories, and resources?	Yes
6.7	Would the Project adversely affect the development priorities of indigenous peoples as defined by them?	No
6.8	Would the Project potentially affect the physical and cultural survival of indigenous peoples?	No
6.9	Would the Project potentially affect the Cultural Heritage of indigenous peoples, including through the commercialization or use of their traditional knowledge and practices?	No
<b>Standard 7: Pollution Prevention and Resource Efficiency</b>		
7.1	Would the Project potentially result in the release of pollutants to the environment due to routine or non-routine circumstances with the potential for adverse local, regional, and/or trans-boundary impacts?	No
7.2	Would the proposed Project potentially result in the generation of waste (both hazardous and non-hazardous)?	No
7.3	Will the proposed Project potentially involve the manufacture, trade, release, and/or use of hazardous chemicals and/or materials? Does the Project propose use of chemicals or materials subject to international bans or phase-outs? <i>For example, DDT, PCBs and other chemicals listed in international conventions such as the Stockholm Conventions on Persistent Organic Pollutants or the Montreal Protocol</i>	No
7.4	Will the proposed Project involve the application of pesticides that may have a negative effect on the environment or human health?	No
7.5	Does the Project include activities that require significant consumption of raw materials, energy, and/or water?	No

<sup>44</sup> Forced evictions include acts and/or omissions involving the coerced or involuntary displacement of individuals, groups, or communities from homes and/or lands and common property resources that were occupied or depended upon, thus eliminating the ability of an individual, group, or community to reside or work in a particular dwelling, residence, or location without the provision of, and access to, appropriate forms of legal or other protections.

## ANNEX 9 PMU proposed indicators in the SRF at TE (to be reviewed by UNDP)

No	Indicator in the Inception Report	Proposed changes	Explanations
1.	<b>Indicator 4: Target at the TE</b> Revised legislation under Biodiversity Law/ Law on Environmental Protection and at least three legal instruments (Decrees, Circulars and Guidelines) clarifying BR planning and management submitted to be adopted	<b>Indicator 4: revised target at the TE</b>  Revised legislation under Biodiversity Law/ Law on Environmental Protection and at least three legal instruments (01 Decrees Implementing the Law on Environmental Protection, Circulars and 02 Guidelines) clarifying BR nomination, planning and management submitted to be adopted	- The government does not have the plan to revise the biodiversity law (The LEP was revised) - Legal instruments for BRs were defined for developing in this period
2.	<b>Indicator 7: Target at the TE</b>  20% increase in funding over baseline for BR management in Vietnam (all BRs)	<b>Indicator 7: Revised target at the TE</b>  20% increase in funding over baseline for BR management in 03 BRs covered by the BR project Vietnam (all BRs)	- The legal documents on budget for biodiversity protection will be developed in 2023 for approval and it needs time for approving and applying in BRs - Project supports only focus on 3 BRs that will contribute to increase their funding - The baseline was only evaluated for 3 BRs
3.	Indicator 11: Update baseline followings the monitoring results in 2021	<b>CLC BR (Monitoring period: May-Jul 2021<sup>45</sup>):</b> -Land crab ( <i>Gecarcoidea lalandii</i> ): estimated 27,000 individuals -Coral reef (live coral cover): 53,2% ( ± 16,1%)  <b>Dong Nai BR <sup>46</sup>(Monitoring period: May-Jul 2021):</b> -Gaur ( <i>Bos gaurus</i> ): 57 individuals (estimated 100 individuals). -Yellow-crested Gibbon ( <i>Nomascus gabriellae</i> ): 80	It is stated in the inception report (The baseline of Indicator 11 in the ProDoc is very old, before 2017 with some data from 2011, that should be revised at the MTR)  The number of individuals have lower value due to the monitoring methods and organization of monitoring points and trails. It is incomparable to the data in the ProDoc due to different monitoring methods.

<sup>45</sup> Source: Report on targeted species monitoring in Cu Lao Cham - Hoi An BR 2021.

<sup>46</sup> Source: Report on targeted species monitoring in Dong Nai BR 2021.

		<p>individuals (estimated 1.024 individuals)</p> <p>-Black Shank Douc (<i>Pygathrix nigripes</i>): 142 individuals (estimated 1.474 individuals)</p> <p><b><i>Western Nghe An BR</i></b>  <sup>47</sup><b>(Monitoring period: Q2 2021):</b></p> <p>- Barbe's Langur (<i>Presbytis barbei</i>): 26 individuals (Estimated 58 individuals).</p> <p>- White-cheeked crested gibbon (<i>Nomascus leucogenys</i>): 32 individuals</p>	<p>Hence, the monitoring results in 2021 is the baseline for monitoring targeted species in BRs (The monitoring in 2023, 2024 will be conducted with the same method)</p>
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<sup>47</sup> Source: Report on targeted species monitoring in Tay Nghe An BR 2021.

## ANNEX 10. PMU PROPOSED REVISED TOTAL BUDGET AND WORK PLAN

GEF Component/ Atlas Activity	Responsible Party/[1] (Atlas Implementing Agent)	Fund ID	Donor Name	Atlas Budgetary Account Code	ATLAS Budget Description	Amount in the ProDoc (USD)	Revised amount in Inception Report	Proposed revised amount at MTR <sup>48</sup>	Adjustment explanations
<b>OUTCOME 1:</b> Regulatory and institutional framework to avoid, reduce, mitigate and offset adverse impacts on biodiversity and reduced pressures on ecosystems in Biosphere Reserves in place.	<b>MONRE</b>			71200	International Consultants	264,000	260,000	260,000	
		<b>62000</b>	<b>GEF</b>	71300	Local Consultants	208,000	442,000	442,000	
				72100	Contractual services	217,000			
				71600	Travel	169,000	111,500	111,500	
				75700	Training and Workshops	147,500	205,000	205,000	
				74200	Audio-visual and print	25,000	12,000	12,000	
					<b>Sub-total GEF</b>	<b>1,030,500</b>	<b>1,030,500</b>	<b>1,030,500</b>	
					<b>Total Outcome 1</b>	<b>1,030,500</b>	<b>1,030,500</b>	<b>1,030,500</b>	
<b>OUTCOME 2:</b> Integrated multi sector and multi-stakeholder planning and management operational in three Biosphere Reserves that mainstreams protected area management, sustainable resource use and biodiversity-friendly development	<b>MONRE</b>			71200	International Consultants	219,000	219,000	219,000	
		<b>62000</b>	<b>GEF</b>	71300	Local Consultants	617,000	2,057,500	2,947,500	Investment budget for set-aside areas (\$240,000) and forest restoration (\$650,000) with a total of \$890,000 has been changed from grants under LVGs to bidding packages as approved in the Inception Report
				72100	Contractual services	1,554,500			
				71600	Travel	109,600	233,100	233,100	
				75700	Training and Workshops	87,500	221,000	221,000	
				72200	Equipment	156,000	74,000	74,000	
				72600	Grants	1,940,000	1,790,000	900,000	Investment budget for set-aside areas (\$240,000) and forest restoration (\$650,000) with a total of \$890,000 has been changed from grants under LVGs to bidding packages as approved in the Inception Report
				74500	Miscellaneous	6,000	82,000	82,000	
				74200	Audio-visual and print	0	13,000	13,000	
					<b>Sub-total GEF</b>	<b>4,689,600</b>	<b>4,689,600</b>	<b>4,689,600</b>	
					<b>Total Outcome 2</b>	<b>4,689,600</b>	<b>4,689,600</b>	<b>4,689,600</b>	
<b>OUTCOME 3:</b> Knowledge management and monitoring and evaluation contributes to equitable gender benefits and increased awareness of biodiversity conservation	<b>MONRE</b>			71200	International Consultants	70,000	70,000	70,000	
		<b>62000</b>	<b>GEF</b>	71300	Local Consultants	155,900	272,280	272,280	
				72100	Contractual services	120,500			
				71600	Travel	59,500	33,720	33,720	
				72200	Equipment	31,500	35,000	35,000	
				75700	Training, and Workshops	91,500	137,900	137,900	
				74200	Audio visual and Print production	81,000	61,000	61,000	

<sup>48</sup> Additionally, PMU proposed based on the content of the MTR report, to contract 1 full-time technical staff for each PIT, using the GEF fund to supervise and monitor field activities at site level.



				74100	Professional services (audit)	15,000	15,000	15,000	
					Sub-total GEF	624,900	624,900	624,900	
					Total Outcome 3	624,900	624,900	624,900	
PROJECT MANAGEMENT	MONRE	62000	GEF	71300	Local Consultants	207,000	205,200	205,200	
				71600	Travel	25,000	24,800	24,800	
				72200	Equipment	10,000	12,000	12,000	
				64397/ 74596	Direct project costs	73,000	73,000	73,000	
					Sub-total GEF	315,000	315,000	315,000	
					Total Management	315,000	315,000	315,000	
PROJECT TOTAL (USD)						6,660,000	6,660,000	6,660,000	

## ANNEX 11a. UNEG Code of Conduct for Evaluators/Midterm Review Consultants<sup>49</sup>

### Evaluators/Consultants:

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

### MTR Consultant Agreement Form

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

Name of Consultant: Trond Norheim (Team Leader)

Name of Consultancy Organization (where relevant):

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

Signed at Tårnåsen, Norway (Place) on 07-09-2021

Signature:

<sup>49</sup> <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/100>

## ANNEX 11b. UNEG Code of Conduct for Evaluators/Midterm Review Consultants<sup>50</sup>

### Evaluators/Consultants:

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

### MTR Consultant Agreement Form

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

Name of Consultant: Pham Đức Chiên (National Consultant)

Name of Consultancy Organization (where relevant):

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

Signed at Hanoi, Viet Nam (Place) on 15-10-2021

Signature:



<sup>50</sup> <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/100>

## Mid-Term Review Report Clearance Form

**Mid-Term Review Report for:**

**Reviewed and Cleared By:**

**Commissioning Unit (M&E Focal Unit)**

Name: Nguyen Thi Ngoc Han

Signature:  Date: 10 February 2022

**Regional Technical Advisor (Nature, Climate and Energy)**

Name: Bipin Pokharel

Signature:  Date: 14 February 2022