



Terminal Evaluation of ‘Mainstreaming the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity into the Tourism Development and Operations in Threatened Ecosystems in Egypt (PIMS 4590)’ Project

Final Report

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Project title: Mainstreaming the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity into the tourism development and operations in threatened ecosystems in Egypt	UNDP PIMS ID number: 4590 GEF ID number: 5073
GEF executing agency: United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Implementing partner Ministry of Environment (MoE)/ Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency.	GEF focal area: Biodiversity Strategic Objective 1: “Improve sustainability of protected area systems”. Biodiversity Strategic Objective 2 "Mainstream biodiversity conservation and sustainable use into production landscapes, seascapes, and sectors
Evaluation timeframe: January-March 2024	Project start date: November 2018, End date: Extended to 14 th May 2024
GEF funding: USD \$2,574,338 – Co-finance target: USD \$ 50,485,736. Country: Egypt	The project aims to mainstream biodiversity conservation into tourism sector development and operations in ecologically important and sensitive areas.

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Disclaimer

This report is the work of an independent consultant, and does not necessarily represent the views, policy, or intentions of the GEF agency (i.e. UNDP), Government and project partners. The opinions and recommendations in the evaluation will be those of the Evaluator's and do not necessarily reflect the position of UNDP, Government or any of the Programme stakeholders.



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Acronyms and Abbreviations

AUC	American University of Cairo	M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
AWP	Annual Work Plan	MRV	Monitoring, reporting and verification
CAOA	Central Agency for Organization and Administration	MSE	Medium to Small Enterprises
CBNRM	Community-Based Natural Resource Management	NBE	National Bank of Egypt
CDWS	Chamber of Diving and Water Sports	NBSAP	National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan
CBD	Convention on the Conservation of Biological Diversity	NCS	Nature Conservation Sector
CPAP	Country Program Action Plan	NDP	National Development Plan
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations	NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
ECTC	Chamber of Tourist Commodities	NIM	Nationally Implemented Measure
ECTE	Egyptian Chamber of Tourism Establishments Egyptian	NPM	National Project Manager
EEAA	Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency	NSTSP	National Sustainable Tourism Strategic Plan 2020
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment	PA	Protected Areas
EOP	End-of project	PIR	Project Implementation Report
EPC	Engineering, Procurement and Construction	PMU	Project Management Unit
ESTP	Egyptian Sustainable Tourism Portal	PB	Project Board
ETA	Egyptian Tourism Authority	PIF	Project Identification Form
ETF	Egyptian Tourism Federation	PIR	Project Implementation Reviews
ETTA	Egyptian Travel Agents Association	PIU	Project Implementation Unit
EU	European Union	POPP	Programme and Operations Policies and Procedures
EYODER	Association of Energy Efficiency and Management	Prodoc	UNDP Project Document for "Mainstreaming the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity into the tourism development and operations in threatened ecosystems in Egypt"
FSM	Financial support mechanism	PPG	Project Preparation Grant
GDP	Gross Domestic Product	RTA	Regional Technical Advisor
GEF	Global Environment Facility	SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment
GHG	Greenhouse Gas	SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
LIFE	Livelihood and Income from the Environment (LIFE Red Sea project)	STO	Sustainable Tourism Organization (
LPAC	Local Project Appraisal Committee	SMART	Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound
LR	Literature Review	SME	Small and medium-sized enterprise
MAPs	Medicinal and Aromatic Plants	TAHO	Technical Assistance for Hotel Operations
MBDT Project	Mainstreaming Biodiversity in Development of Tourism	TE	Terminal Evaluation
MoDMP	Ministry of Defense and Military Production	TDA	Tourism Development Authority (
MoE	Ministry of Environment	ToR	Terms of Reference
MoFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
MoHUUC	Ministry of Housing, Utilities and Urban Communities	UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
MoPED	Ministry of Planning and Economic Development (previously known as Ministry of Planning, Monitoring and Administrative Reform)	US\$	US Dollar
		WG	Working Group

Terminal Evaluation of 'Mainstreaming the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity into the Tourism Development and Operations in Threatened Ecosystems in Egypt (PIMS 4590)' Project

MoTA	Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities	
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding	
MTR	Mid-Term Review	

Executive summary

Project information table

Project Title:	Mainstreaming the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity into the tourism development and operations in threatened ecosystems in Egypt (MBDT Project)			
GEF Project ID:	5073		<i>at endorsement (US\$)</i>	<i>at completion (US\$)</i>
UNDP Project ID:	4590	GEF financing:	US\$ 2,574,338	US\$ 2,574,338
Countries:	Egypt	IA/EA own:	USD \$ 100,000	US\$ 100,000
Region:	Middle East and North Africa	Co-financing (Gov):	US\$ 200,000	US\$ 626,000
Focal Area:	Biodiversity	Other:	US\$ 50,185,736	US\$ 51,008,000
FA Objectives, (OP/SP):	Biodiversity Strategic Objectives 1 & 2	Total co-financing:	US\$ 50,485,736	US\$ 51,734,000
GEF executing Agency:	UNDP	Total Project Cost:	US\$ 53,060,074	US\$ 54,308,338
Implementing partner	Ministry of Environment (MoE)/ Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency (EEAA)	ProDoc Signature (date project began):		November, 2018
		(Operational) Closing Date:	Original: 31 November 14, 2023	Extended to: 14 th May 2024

Project Description

The Mainstreaming the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity into tourism development and operations in threatened ecosystems in Egypt project (UNDP PIMS 4590; GEF ID 5073) is a 5-year project managed by the Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency (EEAA)

The project was designed at a critical time in Egypt's recent history, with political changes that underway to make government institutions more accountable and to develop the economy. These changes were leading to considerable changes in the way that both tourism and biodiversity resources may be managed in the future. The project aims to work at two levels:

- engaging directly with the industry and government to fill gaps in the existing planning and regulatory framework, namely a Strategic Environmental Assessment to identify key areas, habitats and ecological processes and assess their vulnerability and guidelines for the existing Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) regulations specific to biodiversity and linked to an offsetting mechanism and developing a monitoring programme to track the impacts of tourism on biodiversity for conservation management purposes.
- developing and promoting Egypt as a global destination for ecotourism, and developing community-based systems that would allow people living closest to the resources to benefit and manage them sustainably. The project also envisages creating one new protected area (PA), and increasing the size of two more, while building management capacity and developing these and four more protected areas for sustainable tourism. These areas were under threat from tourism development. Due to the uncertainty and dynamic nature of the

challenge, and because the tourism industry faces adaptive and technical challenges, the project has taken an adaptive approach, and is to be guided by scenario planning exercises.

The MBDT project is implemented by the Egyptian Ministry of Environment following UNDP's National Implementation Modality (NIM). The GEF funding is US \$2,574,338 over the initially 5 years started in 2019 and extended for 6 months to be closed in May 2024.

Evaluation Ratings Table

Table 1: Evaluation rating table

Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E)	Rating
M&E design at entry	Moderately Satisfactory (MS)
M&E Plan Implementation	Satisfactory (S)
Overall Quality of M&E	Satisfactory (S)
Implementation & Execution	Rating
Quality of UNDP Implementation/Oversight	Satisfactory (S)
Quality of Implementing Partner Execution	Satisfactory (S)
Overall quality of Implementation/Execution	Satisfactory (S)
Assessment of Outcomes	Rating
Progress towards objective, expected outcomes and impacts	Satisfactory (S)
Relevance	Satisfactory (S)
Effectiveness	Satisfactory (S)
Efficiency	Satisfactory (S)
Overall Project Outcome Rating	Satisfactory (S)
Sustainability	Rating
Institutional Framework and governance	Moderately Likely (ML)
Socio-political	Moderately Likely (ML)
Environmental	Moderately Likely (ML)
Financial	Moderately Likely (ML)
Overall Likelihood of Sustainability	Moderately Likely (ML)

Summary of the findings & rating justification

Project results: Overall, the MBDT project has demonstrated significant advancements towards its objectives, showcasing notable achievements towards targets (despite challenges with measurability). The project has successfully accomplished transformative outcomes, as it has effectively integrated biodiversity considerations into tourism development, dispelling misconceptions surrounding the perceived limitations of sustainability standards in the tourism sector. Instead, it has positioned these standards as opportunities to preserve natural

services while fostering a thriving tourism industry. However, despite substantial progress, a few targets remain partially unmet. These include the final declaration and extensions of PAs, the implementation of economic and fiscal incentives, endorsement of guidelines for ecolodges establishment and construction, modifications related to EIA, formalization of the MoU between the MoE and MoTA, and the support for a specific number of Community-based NB/BFT enterprises by the MBDT project.

The MBDT project has achieved notable successes in legal, policy, and institutional advancements within Egypt's tourism sector. It introduced and endorsed nine legal instruments, six of which received formal approval from Egyptian authorities, addressing concessions, environmental procedures, visitor fees, and bans on single-use plastic. A key accomplishment is the adoption of the National Sustainable Tourism Strategy by the Egyptian Government, representing a pivotal step in promoting sustainability and biodiversity conservation in the tourism industry. The establishment of institutional frameworks, including the Nature-based Tourism Committee, a new NGO (Sustainable Tourism Organization), and dedicated working groups, has played a crucial role in mainstreaming biodiversity considerations in tourism planning and activities, especially in protected areas. These reforms have significantly contributed to sustainable natural resource use, the promotion of eco-friendly tourism practices, and fostering collaboration among diverse stakeholders, showcasing Egypt's commitment to biodiversity conservation.

Furthermore, the MBDT project has made substantial progress in mitigating the direct adverse impacts of tourism on biodiversity. It enhanced capabilities for integrating biodiversity into SEAs and strengthened the TDA to implement SEA recommendations in tourism planning. The delivery of four SEAs for the Red Sea, North Coast, Siwa, and St. Katherine, along with the development of future tourism scenarios for protected areas, has provided a strategic foundation for informed decision-making in tourism planning. The project has actively contributed to sustainable tourism standards by developing Best Practices for Hotel Operations, introducing the Green Fin certification system, and promoting number of green labelling initiatives such as Green Star, Green Key, Travelife, Green Globe and EarthCheck.

Moreover, the collaboration between the MoE and MoTA facilitated the development and adoption of the National Sustainable Tourism Strategy. This coordination resulted in updated marketing strategies by the Egyptian Tourism Authority (ETA), incorporating content developed by MBDT project through the ECO EGYPT initiative. The project also supported the establishment of a new Marine Protected Area (MPA) in the Red Sea, laying the groundwork with baseline studies, a management plan, and a visitor management plan, though full declaration is pending. Additionally, the development and implementation of Visitor Management Plans, innovative approaches and improvements to informational signs and interpretive facilities in various protected areas. The project also focused on expanding CBNRM opportunities through business models and feasibility studies, supporting local farmers, and initiating handicraft initiatives, thereby enhancing local community participation in NB/BFT.

Relevance: The MBDT project demonstrates a high level of relevance to the Government of Egypt, addressing crucial environmental concerns and aligning with the country's Sustainable Development Strategy (SDS) for 2030. The project supports key strategic objectives within the Egypt Vision 2030 related to sustainable natural resource management and meeting international environmental obligations. Its alignment with the UNDP Country Programme Document and the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework further underscores its relevance in promoting climate resilience and efficient natural resource management. Additionally, the project contributes significantly to the GEF's biodiversity objectives by mainstreaming

conservation measures into various sectors and improving the sustainability of protected area systems. Overall, the project's relevance is rated as Satisfactory (S).

Cohherence: The MBDT project demonstrates a comprehensive understanding of the barriers to mainstreaming biodiversity considerations into Egypt's tourism sector. Its well-structured design offers integrated solutions aimed at removing regulatory, institutional, and financial barriers, thus fostering a conducive environment for sustainable tourism practices. However, the project's theory of change relies on assumptions regarding stakeholders' readiness to embrace biodiversity conservation, which may not align with reality. The project's limited control over involved entities poses challenges in effecting transformative change, emphasizing the need for flexible and adaptive strategies.

A critical assessment of the Project Results Framework (PRF) reveals significant shortcomings, including vague indicators, excessive volume of indicators which were observed to be a blend of activities, targets, and outputs or deliverables, with complex and challenging-to-interpret wording in many instances. The absence of gender-sensitive indicators further detracts from the PRF's effectiveness. As a result, the PRF lacked utility for the project management. Despite proposed modifications post-Mid-Term Review, fundamental flaws persisted, highlighting the missed opportunity for a comprehensive overhaul.

Effectiveness: The MBDT project has proven to be effective in meeting its objectives at the output, outcome, and objective levels, despite shortcomings in indicator and target setting. The project's success can be attributed to its robust partnership strategy, comprehensive consultative processes, effective utilization of opportunities, and the capable Project Management Unit (PMU) with expertise in mainstreaming. Ministerial-level government support has played a crucial role, garnering backing at the highest levels and aligning the project with broader national priorities.

However, the project has faced challenges, including intense competition for natural resources, limited awareness of biodiversity values, and the time-consuming nature of achieving transformational change. The COVID-19 pandemic presented additional hurdles, such as limitations on field activities, tourism industry reluctance to engage, and shifts in government priorities. In conclusion, the MBDT project has achieved considerable success with modest investment, demonstrating its potential impact on sustainable tourism practices in Egypt. Addressing challenges and adapting to externalities have been key factors in the project's overall effectiveness. **Therefore, Effectiveness is rated Satisfactory (S).**

Efficiency: The MBDT project has demonstrated cost-effectiveness through its mainstreaming approach, efficiently achieving outputs and outcomes within budget constraints. The mainstreaming approach targeted key sectors and stakeholders, facilitating positive and rapid change, and aiming for long-term systemic impact. The project's financial management has been commendable, utilizing funds effectively, guarding the budget through careful planning, and leveraging external investments and in-kind support. As of the latest expenditure report until November 2023, the project has spent 82% of the GEF finance, leaving a remaining balance of US\$ 457,036.43. The project's financial delivery is on track, with the 2024 plan and budget aligned for 100% delivery. The devaluation of the Egyptian pound posed challenges in supplier bids, with fluctuating currency exchange rates impacting quotes. Despite these challenges, the project has navigated financial complexities effectively.

The project has experienced considerable delays, with an initial delay of over 42 months in initiating the project, attributed to military concerns near the Libyan border affecting project regions. Subsequent delays, including a 6-

month delay in recruiting the PMU, led to a requested extension without additional cost. The extension, justified by challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic impact, modifications to indicators, and difficulties in receiving proposals, extended the project end date to May 14, 2024.

The UNDP NIM has proven suitable for the context, with the PMU embedded in the Ministry of Environment (MoEnv), fostering strong ownership and enabling strategic partnerships. The adaptability of the project to external challenges has been successful, and competent human resources have played a crucial role in achieving project activities up to quality standards. The NIM modality and effective project management have contributed to the overall success of the MBDT project. **Therefore, the overall ranking of efficiency is Satisfactory (S).**

Project management: The MBDT project has effectively applied adaptive management measures to capitalize on emerging opportunities in mainstreaming biodiversity into the tourism development sector. Notable measures include the establishment and operation of working groups focusing on planning and development, biodiversity mainstreaming into tourism activities, and ecotourism in protected areas. These working groups, facilitated by the project team, have evolved into active entities, driving collaboration and ensuring a comprehensive approach. The project has also demonstrated an ability to leverage opportunities, such as the impact of COVID-19 on reduced tourism activities. Seizing this opportunity, the project advocated for ecotourism development as a key rebound measure post-COVID. Additionally, the hosting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP 27) in Egypt provided a platform to showcase project results and actively promote ecotourism.

Stakeholder engagement is a critical success factor for the MBDT project, involving multiple ministries, complex arrangements, and varying levels of influence. The project has effectively enhanced stakeholder participation through a collaborative approach, bringing together ministries, such as Environment and Tourism, to discuss common grounds and create synergies. This collaborative model has fostered a holistic and integrated perspective on tourism development. Partnerships are effectively managed at the project level, with successful engagement with the private sector, particularly through collaboration with the Egyptian Tourism Federation (ETF). The project's emphasis on participatory and consultative methods sets a positive precedent for future projects in the country.

The overall design of the M&E framework is deemed adequate for projects of this size and complexity, meeting standard templates. The design is supported by sufficient resources (a total of US\$ 98,000 allocated for monitoring and terminal evaluations) and clearly defined roles and responsibilities. The M&E Framework for the MBDT project was initially described in detail in Section 6 of the Project Document. It includes standard M&E items for UNDP-GEF projects such as the Inception Workshop, meetings of the Project Board, annual PIRs, audit, MTR, TE, UNDP/GEF Tracking Tools, and the final report. However, weaknesses on the PRF and the lack of a detailed Monitoring Plan defining the data collection process for the indicators in the PRF, including data collection methods, frequency, means of verification, assumptions, and responsibility for data collection. Therefore, **the M&E design is rated as Moderately Satisfactory (MS).**

The PSC, activated in 2019, has been responsible for making management decisions, acting as the highest strategic and policy-level body of the project. However, it was not held annually as anticipated in the project document, except for 2021 (4 times in total). The MTR took place between August 2021 – February 2022, providing recommendations for project improvements. The PMU found most recommendations useful and implemented and monitored their implementation. Effective response to MTR recommendations is a positive aspect of M&E implementation. The project submitted four PIRs, providing sufficiently detailed information to monitor project

performance. Other monitoring activities included field visits, quarterly reports for UNDP, regular reporting to the Ministry of Environment, and the use of GEF tracking tools/core indicators. The format of reports allows for a thorough description of activities and financial reporting. **The M&E implementation is rated Satisfactory (S).** A composite ranking that considers monitoring and evaluation design at entry together with **the M & E plan's implementation for the overall quality of M&E is Satisfactory (S).**

UNDP's role included providing project management cycle services upon the Government of Egypt's request, covering recruitment, procurement, and support to the Project Management Unit (PMU). While UNDP's services were recognized as compliant, some delays were noted, particularly in procurement and recruitment processes, impacting the overall project timeline. The Government of Egypt, acknowledging UNDP as a supportive partner, sought direct services for specific projects. The UNDP Country Office played a critical role in supervising and monitoring the project, ensuring financial transactions' accuracy, conducting audits, and preventing over-expenditure. **The Quality of UNDP Implementation/Oversight was deemed Satisfactory (S).**

The MOE, particularly through the EEAA, served as the Executing Partner, assuming responsibility for project management. The integration of the PMU into MoEnv facilitated collaboration with other ministries. The National Project Director (NPD) within MoEnv played a crucial role in overseeing project management. The MOE demonstrated strong ownership, providing co-financing and advocating for project outcomes. The Minister of the Environment's endorsement at the highest political levels underscored the project's significance. Collaboration among UNDP, the project board, MoEnv, partners, and the PMU was effective. The project exhibited adaptability to efficiently address challenges, contributing to a cohesive and responsive implementation process. **The Quality of Implementing Partner Execution was rated Satisfactory (S).** Overall, **the combined rating for project implementation/execution was deemed Satisfactory (S).**

Sustainability: The MBDT project successfully catalyzed a sustainable, responsible tourism approach, contributing to Egypt's biodiversity conservation. The project prioritized institutional change, empowering key national and district-level institutions for autonomous and enduring transformation within the dynamic tourism development landscape.

The MBDT initiative played a pivotal role in reshaping the governance of Egypt's tourism sector. Initiatives like the Green Fins certification program and increased Green Star ratings for hotels underscore the project's commitment to sustainable practices. The establishment of the Green Tourism Unit and various committees and NGOs showcased a tangible commitment to fostering environmental awareness. The adoption of legal instruments and development of the National Sustainable Tourism Strategy marked a positive shift in governance. Despite these successes, challenges loom over the future of working groups, pending approval of some legal instruments, and the signing of crucial MoUs between ministries. **Ranking of the Institutional Framework and governance sustainability is Moderately Likely (ML).**

The project strategically engaged the private sector and recognised of the crucial role of local communities in establishing collaborative frameworks. The ECO EGYPT campaign emerged as a successful tool for public and stakeholder engagement, creating a transparent communication channel. However, the campaign's continuity post-project remains uncertain and dependent on follow up projects such as Green Sharm, unless seamlessly integrated into the national tourism strategy. **Ranking of the socio-political sustainability is Moderately Likely (ML).**

Effective interventions by the project mitigated environmental risks associated with tourism. Challenges, such as the non-binding nature of SEA in Egypt and limited enforcement of EIA legislation, require attention. Notably, the project bolstered the resilience of the tourism system, reducing negative impacts and enhancing adaptability.

Ranking of the environmental sustainability is Moderately Likely (ML).

While endorsed policies exhibit financial sustainability, concerns remain regarding the financial sustainability of new Protected Areas. Ongoing efforts to integrate financial support into broader activities and initiatives, with several initiatives, such as the Green Sharm project, USAID project, and Egyptian Italian Environmental Cooperation Phase III, are being explored to provide financial assistance and build upon the achievements of the MBDT project. **Ranking of the financial sustainability is Moderately Likely (ML).**

Recommendations summary table

Given that the project is so close to be operationally closed at the time of drafting this TE evaluation report, the following are a mix of recommendation for corrective actions in the remaining weeks and forward-looking recommendations/lesson learned focussed on future programming: details available in section 4.2

Table 2: recommendations table

#	TE Recommendation	Entity Responsible	Timeframe
1	Strengthen the exit strategy to have specific actions aiming to set out the status of activities under each component and describes what is needed to take the work forward after the close of the project	PMU	March-May 2024
2	Develop and implement dissemination plan for all knowledge products including a final dissemination workshop	PMU	May 2024
3	For future GEF projects, establish a proper tracking systems for co-financing data supported with evidence	UNDP CO and PMUs	Ongoing
4	For future programming, projects to adequately review the strategic results framework during project design, the inception phase, and MTR if needed	UNDP/RTAs	Ongoing
5	For future programming, expand the scope of gender mainstreaming beyond the gender balance in committees and groups	UNDP COs	Ongoing

1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose & scope

The Terminal Evaluation (TE) assesses the achievement of the *Mainstreaming the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity into the tourism development and operations in threatened ecosystems in Egypt* (Mainstreaming Biodiversity in Development of Tourism (MBDT) project's results against what was expected to be achieved and drew lessons that can both improve the sustainability of benefits from this project, and aid in the overall enhancement of UNDP programming. It measures the extent to which the MBDT project has contributed to solve the needs identified in the design phase and degree to which implementation, efficiency and quality delivered on expected results (outputs) and specific objectives (outcomes), against what was originally planned or officially revised, thus, the TE report promotes accountability and transparency and assesses the extent of project accomplishments.

The TE assesses the project performance against expectations set out in the project's Logical Framework/Results Framework and results according to the criteria outlined in the [Guidance for Conducting Terminal Evaluations of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects](#)¹

The TE provides evidence-based information that is credible, reliable and useful and comply with the UNDP/GEF Evaluation Guidelines. The TE was undertaken in line with United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) principles concerning independence, credibility, utility, impartiality, transparency, disclosure, ethical, participation, competencies and capacities. The evaluation process has been independent of UNDP and project partners. The opinions and recommendations in the evaluation are those of the Evaluator's and do not necessarily reflect the position of any stakeholders. The TE was carried out between January- March 2024 with a mix of face-to-face engagement in Egypt and online engagement with project team, stakeholders and UNDP team.

1.2 Methods

Mixed methods² were used for the TE to generate mix of qualitative and quantitative data. The use of mixed methods had the advantage of supporting data triangulation across multiple sources, which helped to increase data accuracy and credibility to inform the reliability of the evaluation results.

Data collection methods

To strengthen the robustness of the evaluation evidence, a mixed method approach was used to generate qualitative and quantitative data to best describe the project results based on the on the results framework as outlined in the project document. The evaluation used methods of document review and interviews for data collection to obtain answer to all evaluation questions outlined in the evaluation's Terms of Reference (ToR). The evaluation had three levels of data collection and validation of information:

- A desk review of project documentation where both qualitative and quantitative data have been collected
– See annex 3 for list of documents reviewed

¹ UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Guidance for conducting terminal evaluations, 2020. Available [here](#).

² Mixed methods involve desk review, semi-structured interviews, and surveys for data collection, and also descriptive analysis, content analysis, thematic analysis and simple quantitative data analysis in excel for survey data and quantitative indicators for data analysis. See below sections for more details.

- Semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders for qualitative data collection (Annex 4 list of persons interviewed),

An evaluation matrix was developed as a base for gathering of qualitative inputs for analysis. The evaluation matrix defined the objective for gathering non-biased, valid, reliable, precise, and useful data with integrity to answer the evaluation questions.

Engaging stakeholders has been critical for the success of the evaluation. The project involved multi-stakeholders and teams in different capacities. Engagement with various stakeholders was undertaken as part of the TE to cover different perspectives taking into account the principle of gender responsiveness. Gender responsiveness was integrated throughout the evaluation process including gender balance during the engagement with stakeholders by ensuring both genders are engaged, assessing gender integration in project design and delivery and ensuring that data collection and analysis are gender sensitive. The evaluation also checked whether all “people count” indicators are gender segregated and if the project had reported women ratio in related indicators. The evaluation reviewed the project gender action plan and assessed delivery against its activities including ways to overcome gender bias in implementing project activities.

Throughout the evaluation process, the main stakeholders have been engaged and interviewed using semi-structured interview³. Interviews relied on targeted and purposive sampling strategy to include a diversity and balance of perspectives from each stakeholder category.

Data analysis methods

Data analysis was based on observed facts, evidence, and data. Findings are specific, concise, and supported by quantitative and/or qualitative information that is reliable, valid and generalizable.

The data analysis method involved 1) descriptive analysis to understand and describe the project main components, including related activities; partnerships; modalities of delivery; etc. 2) content analysis of relevant documents and the literature conducted to identify common trends and themes, and patterns for each of the key evaluation issues (as the main units of analysis), 3) thematic analysis of responses collected from semi-structured interviews and observations, and 4) a simplified quantitative analyses on all quantitative measures by reviewing and validating project datasets on quantitative indicators. Evaluation findings and conclusions were synthesized based on triangulated evidence from the desktop review and interviews.

In this evaluation, triangulation involved validation of data through cross verification from at least two sources, and evaluation findings and conclusions have been synthesized based on triangulated evidence from the desktop review and interviews.

1.3 Ethical Considerations

The TE consultant was held to the highest ethical standards and was required to sign a code of conduct upon acceptance of the assignment. This evaluation was conducted in accordance with the principles outlined in the

³ A semi-structured interview is a method of research used most often in the social sciences. While a structured interview has a rigorous set of questions which does not allow one to divert, a semi-structured interview is open, allowing new ideas to be brought up during the interview as a result of what the interviewee says. The interviewer in a semi-structured interview generally has a framework of themes to be explored.

UNEG 'Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation'⁴. The evaluator ensured to safeguard the rights and confidentiality of information providers, interviewees, and stakeholders through measures to ensure compliance with legal and other relevant codes governing collection of data and reporting on data. The evaluator also ensured security of collected information before and after the evaluation and protocols to ensure anonymity and confidentiality of sources of information where that is expected. The information knowledge and data gathered in the evaluation process has been solely used for the evaluation and not be used for other purposes without the express authorization of UNDP and partners.

1.4 Limitations

The main limitations encountered during the TE were related to data collections, specifically stakeholders' availability for interview during limited timeframes. In response, the project management team started early on liaising with all stakeholders to ensure availability during the evaluation mission and tried find alternatives for those who are not available during the mission, including online engagement where possible.

1.5 Structure of the Report

The TE draft report follows the format suggested by the UNDP-GEF TE guidelines. The report includes:

- a description of the methodology,
- a description of the project and findings, organized around:
 - project design/formulation;
 - project implementation;
 - project results and impact.
- conclusions, recommendations and lessons learnt.

Consistently with the requirements, certain aspects of the project are rated, according to the rating scale of the Guidelines. Co-financing information is presented under financial management; and the updated scorecard and core indicators are included in Annex 12. Comments addressed have been documented in an Audit Trail, prepared as a separate Annex 11 to the TE Report.

⁴ UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation, 2020, available [here](#).

2. Project Description

2.1 Development context

When the MBDT project was designed in 2015, tourism contributed about 11.3% of the Egyptian Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and provides employment to some 3.5 million Egyptians. Egypt had ambitious tourism development plans, hoping to receive up to 25 million international visitors by 2020 up from a past maximum of 12.8 million.

The 2450 km of coastline on the Red Sea and the Mediterranean is a storehouse of highly distinct marine ecosystems, with high biodiversity. The Red Sea and the Nile River represent two major bio-geographical corridors and represent globally important flyways and resting points for migratory birds in the boreal spring and autumn. Egypt hosts at least 345 species of threatened animals. The Red Sea coast along the Sinai Peninsula and the Eastern coast from Suez to the Sudanese border as well as the Western Mediterranean coast had been particularly seriously affected by this boom in the tourism sector. Inland areas such as Siwa and the St. Katherine Protectorate are also affected by tourism development and likely to face increasing pressure in the future.

The socio-political and economic context in which tourism development was taking place when the project was designed. Following the 2011 "Arab Spring" and the subsequent political changes in 2012-2014 there was considerable uncertainty and unpredictability in Egypt. The predominant view was a pressing need to develop the economy and to create greater employment, and therefore a focus on increasing hotel infrastructure has led to a construction boom in hotels particularly situated along the Red Sea and Mediterranean Coastline. A system of Community-Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) had previously been introduced through a successful UNDP-GEF pilot in St. Katherine Protectorate, South Sinai. This enables local community management of globally important Medicinal and Aromatic Plants (MAPs).

The institutional framework is a complex arrangement of statutory agencies and institutions which on the surface are joined through the policy framework to a common vision but in practice are likely to pursue individual (institutional) and often conflicting agendas. The Ministry of Environment (MoE) through the Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency (EEAA) is responsible for environmental regulations and management, including the vetting of Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) and overseeing the Nature Conservation Sector (NCS). The NCS is part of the EEAA, hosts the Convention on the Conservation of Biological Diversity (CBD) National Focal Point and is in charge of the monitoring and management of Egypt's biodiversity and Protected Areas (PAs). At the time of signature, the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities (MoTA) and its affiliated agencies the Egyptian Tourism Authority (ETA) and Tourism Development Authority (TDA) were responsible for supporting and promoting the tourism industry, for establishing a coherent legal, regulatory and enabling framework for tourism development, and for allocating public lands for tourism development projects. In 2021, the development of Western North Coast region was transferred to the New Urban Communities Authority under the Ministry of Housing, Utilities and Urban Communities (MoHUUC). The General Authority for Physical Planning (also under MoHUUC) has been playing an important role in the project, being responsible for developing all the planning strategies for the entire Matrouh Governorate.

At the time of the MTR, the ETA had moved under the Egyptian Tourism Federation (ETF), along with the Egyptian Travel Agents Association (ETTA), the Egyptian Chamber of Tourism Establishments (ECTE), the Egyptian Chamber of Tourist Commodities (ECTC), and the Chamber of Diving and Water Sports (CDWS); while the TDA moved under

MoHUUC. Several other institutions also affect the course of tourism development and biodiversity resources management which are detailed in the Project Document (ProDoc).

Three main policy documents that drive tourism development and biodiversity conservation in Egypt are the National Development Plan (NDP), the National Sustainable Tourism Strategic Plan 2020 (NSTSP) which was developed by the MBDT project and the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP). Furthermore, Law 102/1983 provides the legislative framework for establishing and managing protected areas in Egypt, while Law 4/1994 for the Environment (amended by Law 9/2009) contains additional provisions for inside and outside protected areas. There is a National System Plan for Protected Areas developed in 1998, which is being implemented and integrated into national strategies and plans. The plan proposed a total of 19 new protected areas for declaration, totaling some 100,000 km²⁵, and greatly improving the coverage and representation of all recognized natural regions and critically important biodiversity resources in Egypt. These plans and laws are intersected by various other policies, laws, edicts and customary laws relating to land ownership resulting in a complex and often unpredictable situation, particularly as there is often weak enforcement of the Law.

2.2 Project Description and Strategy

The MBDT project's objective is to mainstream biodiversity into the Egyptian tourism sector and government. It was designed at a critical time in Egypt's recent history with the political changes that are currently underway to make government institutions more accountable and to develop the economy, both of which are resulting in considerable changes in the way that both tourism and biodiversity resources may be managed in the future. Therefore, the project works on two levels: the first level involves engaging directly with the industry and government to fill gaps in the existing planning and regulatory framework, namely a Strategic Environmental Assessment to identify key areas, habitats and ecological processes and assess their vulnerability and guidelines for the existing EIA regulations specific to biodiversity and linked to an offsetting mechanism and developing a monitoring programme to track the impacts of tourism on biodiversity for conservation management purposes. The second level involves engaging the tourism industry by developing Responsible Tourism Grading and promoting Egypt as a global destination for ecotourism and developing community-based systems to allow those closest to the resources to benefit and manage them sustainably.

The project also envisages creating one new protected area and increasing the size of two more while building management capacity and developing these and four more protected areas for sustainable tourism. All of these areas are currently under threat from tourism development. Because of the uncertainty and dynamic nature of the challenge and because the tourism industry faces an adaptive challenge and to a lesser extent a technical challenge, the project is guided by a scenario planning exercise as a means to bring about the individual and institutional behavioral changes and to ensure that the project is highly adaptive.

The expected key Outcomes of the project are:

Component 1: Changing the trajectory of tourism development and operations to safeguard biodiversity.

- **Outcome 1:** Direct adverse impacts of tourism infrastructure development on biodiversity and land/seascapes (primarily loss and severe degradation of critical habitats in both terrestrial and

⁵ Since then, 11 more protected areas have been declared, totaling around 140,579 thousand km²

marine ecosystems) are avoided, reduced, or compensated in at least the c. 10,000 km² of ecologically sensitive areas (including c. 2324 km² inside protected areas) exposed to development pressures

- **Outcome 2:** Reduction of biodiversity impacts caused by inappropriate practices from tourists and tourism establishments, most notably disturbance effects affecting sensitive animal and plant species, habitat degradation and over-exploitation of resources.

Component 2: Strengthening the PA system and its management in three target regions of high biodiversity value exposed to tourism development and activities - the north-western Mediterranean coast, the southern Red Sea coast and Siwa Oasis/PA

- **Outcome 3:** One new PA (min. 30,000 ha) designated, spatially configured and emplaced, and the boundaries of 2 of the existing 5 PAs (at least 15,000 ha added to the total of 50,000 km²) in the three target regions expanded, to include critical habitats in areas facing immediate or medium-term tourism development pressures expected to adversely affect biodiversity assets, but in which representative PA coverage is lacking.
- **Outcome 4:** Pressures from tourism controlled or reduced in c. 2,324 km² of ecologically sensitive areas inside the existing and new PAs exposed to tourism development pressures.
- **Outcome 5:** PA Financing Scorecard demonstrates progress towards meeting the finance needs to achieve effective management.

The total budget of the project implemented through UNDP under National Implementation Modality (NIM) by MoE/EEAA is USD **53,060,074**, including a GEF contribution of USD **2,574,338** and UNDP TRAC resources of USD **100,000** in addition to co-financing from government of Egypt/UNDP and other partners.

2.3 Theory of change

The Prodoc did not define a Theory of Change for the project, however; defined the threats and barriers that the project is designed to address. The contribution of the project outputs (as described in Section **Error! Reference source not found.**) will lead to desired project and long-term outcomes and eventual long-term impacts sought by the project and that is to reduce adverse impacts of tourism development sector on biodiversity and promote more sustainable tourism practices in Egypt.

The threats and barriers addressed by the project are:

- The loss of habitat and conversion of habitat in ecologically sensitive areas of high biodiversity value, and conversion into urban or peri-urban land. This is caused by the development of hotels, holiday homes and related other tourism infrastructure such as roads. This is particularly threatening given the tourism sector's ambitious plans for expansion at the expense of the stretches of undeveloped coastline with biodiversity values.
- The destruction and disturbance of habitats and species caused by tourist activities and those of operators caused by unsustainable activities by tourists and operators in sensitive environments
- Solid waste accumulation from a public health perspective and as a source of habitat destruction and environmental pollution, caused by hotel waste dumped in ecologically sensitive areas, and weak governorate infrastructure, governance, tax revenues and under-investment.
- Unsustainable abstraction of surface and groundwater water resources for tourism
- Effluent discharges (including from desalinization) from hotel complexes and related urbanised areas

- Increased exploitation pressures on natural resources, including wood collection to make charcoal for hotels; agriculture and animal grazing to meet food demand from tourism, and overfishing and destructive fishing practices.

Barriers targeted by the project related to mainstreaming biodiversity, protected area management, and good governance and decision making:

Barriers to mainstreaming biodiversity at the national and regional landscape levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barrier 1: Insufficient understanding of the importance of biodiversity • Barrier 2: Weaknesses in the enabling environment and governance • Barrier 3: Implementation of the existing regulatory framework • Barrier 4: Voluntary and market-based mechanisms to promote eco-tourism and environmentally benign tourism • Barrier 5: Limited opportunities to involve local communities in tourism and ecotourism-based livelihoods promoting the mainstreaming of biodiversity
Barriers to protected area management relating to tourism development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barrier 6: An incomplete national protected areas system. • Barrier 7: Under-financing and partly weak management of the protected areas system • Barrier 8: A lack of skills and capacity for developing and managing tourism within the protected areas. • Barrier 9: Lack of protected areas planning capacity
Barriers to good governance, informed and balanced decision-making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barrier 10: The scale and complexity of the challenge • Barrier 11: Conflicting policy objectives • Barrier 12: A perceived lack of solutions to the problem and of a mechanism to move current thinking forward • Barrier 13: An inability to deal with a “wicked problem”

2.4 Main stakeholders

At the design level, a series of specific main stakeholder groups were identified with a breakdown of key stakeholder categories, their interest in the project and their anticipated roles. According to the Project Document, the main project stakeholders include:

- **EEAA-MoE:** is responsible for environmental regulations and management, including the vetting of Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs). The EEAA through its senior management is Egypt’s Operational Focal Point for the GEF. It also oversees the Nature Conservation Sector (NCS), which is part of the EEAA and hosts the CBD National Focal Point and is in charge of the monitoring and management of Egypt’s biodiversity and protected areas with a mandate that also extends beyond the protected areas system into production landscapes through sectoral engagement. The EEAA-MoE is lead executing agency

of the project and the central institution concerned with environmental protection and coordination in Egypt and in charge of establishing and managing the protected areas system and biodiversity.

- **The Ministry of Tourism (MoT)** with its affiliated agencies the Egyptian Tourism Authority (ETA) are responsible for supporting and promoting the tourism industry, for establishing a coherent legal, regulatory and enabling framework for tourism development, and for allocating public lands for tourism development projects. The ETA is responsible for Egypt's overall tourism product and as such is involved in promoting and diversifying tourism and in licensing tourism operations of all kinds.

The Tourism Development Authority (TDA) is the principle agency involved in allocating state land for tourism development, and has recently moved under the MoHUUC.

- **Tourism Development Authority (TDA):** The TDA is the authority responsible for tourism planning in the Southern Red Sea and was thus an important stakeholder to consult and engage in the development of the Red Sea SEA. Furthermore, the project revised the TDA resort guidelines, and is now developing the ecolodge establishment guidelines in consultation with the TDA. The project is also working on applying sustainable tourism criteria in Sharm El Foqeiry in the Southern Red Sea, in cooperation with the TDA, aiming to revise the plans for the area to promote sustainable tourism development.
- **Nature Conservation Sector (NCS):** The NCS under the EEAA is among the primary stakeholders for the project. The NCS is responsible for Egyptian protected areas and their management. The project works closely with relevant PA manager and NCS departments in developing project outputs. Relevant outputs include the development of management plans and visitor management plans for 4 PAs, the SEAs, the development of CBNRM and NB/BFT schemes, promoting ecotourism in PAs, and the Shark Spatial Distribution study. Relevant NCS departments are regularly invited to project workshops.
- **The Egyptian Tourism Federation (ETF),** along with other affiliated organisations, represents the private sector, which is a key stakeholder in the project, and the main driver for tourism investment and operations. Moreover, it can play a very important role in encouraging sustainable tourism practices amongst its members and by operationalising the existing regulatory policies to achieve this objective. The ETF has been supporting and collaborating with the project on various levels. The project has been actively working together with the Sustainable Tourism Council to identify barriers to achieving sustainability in the tourism sector as well as providing solutions to help address those barriers.
- **Local Communities:** Local communities are amongst the primary beneficiaries, but they will also take considerable responsibilities for the management of biodiversity resources including El Ababda Tribe – Wadi El Gemal, El Amazigh Tribe – Siwa and Matrouh tribes.
- **ETA-MoTA:** ETA- MoTA has responsibility for planning, coordinating, and promoting new tourism development projects within the framework of the country's general policy and its economic plan. Their role is instrumental in ensuring that the experience from the project is converted into national tourism policy. The project engaged with the ETA to promote ecotourism in Egypt, and the ETA now features ecotourism and nature-based tourism content on their website. The ecotourism webpage redirects visitors to the ECO EGYPT website.

- **Other stakeholder:** the project has a number of stakeholders who have various roles in the project including, General Authority for Fish Resources Development, Ministry of Agriculture, Governorate Administration, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), Higher Council of Antiquities, Ministry of Interior, New Urban Communities Authority, the General Organization for Physical Planning, the Western North Coast Development Authority, and the National Institute for Oceanography and Fisheries, Border Guards, private sector and investors and local communities and resource users (i.e. Siwa, Marsa Matruh, The Ababda).

3. Findings

3.1 Project Design/Formulation

The MBDT project was first designed in 2015 when the Project Identification Form (PIF) was first submitted and approved, the SATP commended the quality of the PIF at the time. The PPG stage, a number of changes have been applied and resulted in a ProDoc that was signed in 2018.

The MBDT project design has successfully captured the barriers towards mainstreaming biodiversity considerations into the tourism sector development and operations in ecologically important and sensitive areas in Egypt. In response, the project design presented well-structured components to remove the identified barriers with specific activities leading to specific outputs and outcomes. The project design offers an integrated solution to achieve successful mainstreaming outcomes by addressing regulatory, institutional and financial arrangements needed for a functioning tourism-related biodiversity offset mechanism.

The MBDT project design offers genuine opportunities to overcome the perception that biodiversity conservation goals are too often viewed as distinct from, and even in opposition to, the goals of development and economic growth, and create a space for institutions to address strategic development and planning, with new forms of governance and more open co-management systems.

However, the MBDT project's theory of change implicit within its design relies on a crucial assumption: that with appropriate tools and training, various partners and stakeholders will inherently grasp the rationale behind conserving biodiversity and safeguarding ecosystem goods and services., and therefore positive impacts on biodiversity populations is going to be realised. Unfortunately, this assumption proves to be inaccurate, or at least highly improbable, especially when anticipating the swift integration of changes into institutions, agencies, and other involved entities within the project's limited timeframe, and then get measurable and attributable impacts on biodiversity and ecosystems. As a result, these entities may still be susceptible to challenges at the conclusion of the project, rather than firmly established in the desired direction.

The nature of a mainstreaming project presents the project with a significant challenge to affect change in organisations and agencies over which it has very little control and whom may have widely differing agendas and means of defining and measuring success, this is often overlooked in the project design. The PMU has adeptly navigated this challenge by establishing trustworthy relationships with partners, yet it certainly caused hiccups along the way. The task to influence the tourism industry in Egypt in a way to acknowledge biodiversity was prescribed as "mission impossible" at the beginning of project.

The MBDT project design is underpinned by another assumption related to the level of readiness, capacities and willingness of stakeholders to participate in the project activities. In the early days of the project, the PMU has come to realise that this assumption is not necessarily accurate and needed to significantly invest time and resources in awareness, capacity building, advocacy and lobbying prior to getting started with implementation of activities.

A valuable lesson derived from this, and similar, mainstreaming projects underscores the necessity for a comprehensive analysis of potential challenges during the design phase. It is crucial to scrutinize fundamental assumptions concerning the preparedness and eagerness of the targeted sector to embrace substantial transformative changes. It is important to clarify that recognizing a lack of willingness does not necessarily imply

abandoning the project, but rather serves as an alert for project design adjustments to initiate appropriate interventions such as advocacy.

Results Framework Analysis: project logic and strategy, indicators

This section provides a critical assessment of the Project Results Framework (PRF) in terms of clarity, feasibility and logical sequence of the project outcomes/outputs and their links to the project objective. It also examines the specific indicators and their target values in terms of the SMART criteria.

The PRF was found to be unsuitable for its intended purpose. Indicators were observed to be a blend of activities, targets, and outputs or deliverables, with complex and challenging-to-interpret wording in many instances. The PRF demonstrated a lack of utility, evident in the PMU's difficulties in effectively utilizing it for monitoring. This struggle was also acknowledged by the TE evaluator, indicating a shared experience in grappling with the limitations of the PRF.

The following are the key flaws identified in the PRF:

- Several indicators don't meet the SMART criteria. Numerous indicators fail to meet the SMART criteria, lacking specific baseline and measurable targets. For instance, Indicator 5, "Tourism infrastructure development after land allocation by the TDA," lacks specificity and makes it challenging to anticipate the expected change. Similarly, vague target statements such as 'Institutional and technical capacity increased' offer little clarity on the nature, recipients, and extent of the required capacity enhancement.
- There are way too many indicators for a project at this scale. The sheer volume of indicators, totaling 36, is excessive for a project of this scale. The TE process revealed that monitoring these indicators demanded substantial efforts and resources, proving overwhelming in terms of maintaining relevance and accuracy.
- Departing from the typical UNDP-GEF guidance, the PRF predominantly presents output indicators, often resembling activities, deliverables, or a 'to-do list.' This deviation raises concerns about the alignment with outcome-oriented monitoring.
- MTR targets have not been identified. The absence of identified MTR (Mid-Term Review) targets for all indicators provides no clear guidance on the sequencing of activities for the PMU and the M&E teams.
- None of the indicators demonstrate gender sensitivity, and the monitoring data does not allow for sex-disaggregation. This oversight neglects a crucial aspect of project evaluation and inclusivity.

The MTR acknowledged most of the identified flaws in the PRF and proposed modifications to the list of indicators, involving rephrasing, removal, and merging. However, the TE deems these changes insufficient. The PRF's fundamental flaws persisted, necessitating a comprehensive and robust review, including the revision of baselines and targets—elements that remained unaddressed post-MTR.

Regrettably, the project missed a crucial opportunity during the MTR to undertake a substantial overhaul of its PRF. This represented a golden opportunity, considering that adjusting the PRF, through additions, removals, or revisions, falls within the scope of outcome and output-level indicators and targets. Moreover, these alterations do not necessitate GEF approval and can be proposed by the PMU, UNDP Country Office (CO), Regional Technical Advisor (RTA), or Mid-Term Review, subject to RTA and Project Executive Board approval. The failure to seize this opportunity has contributed to the persistent challenges associated with the PRF.

Assumptions and Risks

Assumptions and risks were clearly articulated in the project planning documents, and at the time of formulation, the identified risks were both logical and robust. The prodoc outlined 11 key risks, categorizing three as 'high,' six as 'moderate,' and two as 'low' risk. Each risk was systematically assessed, considering impacts on livelihoods, and accompanied by well-defined mitigation measures. Among the anticipated risks, the prodoc foresaw challenges

related to 'access to project sites.' This concern stemmed from Egypt's strategic geographical position, where the Military plays a pivotal role, making security a critical issue. All three project areas are situated in geographically sensitive locations, subject to restrictions on the movement of non-military personnel at times. Historical instances have shown that local community ecotourism efforts were abandoned due to military intervention on security grounds. This risk significantly influenced the initiation of the project and contributed to delays in its commencement.

The PRF effectively articulates assumptions critical to the achievement of project outcomes, such as the identification of a key assumption in the prodoc that states, 'The feasibility study finds that the enabling environment is sufficiently robust, transparent, and accountable to support biodiversity offsetting in the tourism sector.' While these assumptions are vital, there is a notable absence of information on how these critical assumptions, including the mentioned one, will be monitored and tested during the project implementation phase. This gap in detailing the monitoring and testing mechanisms for key assumptions is not unique to this project; rather, it reflects a broader issue within the GEF-UNDP project document template. Although the template allows for the capture of assumptions in the PRF and Theory of Change, it does not provide guidance on how these assumptions, especially the pivotal ones, will be systematically tested and monitored throughout the project's implementation. Addressing this aspect is crucial for ensuring a comprehensive and effective evaluation of the assumptions underlying project outcomes.

Lessons from other relevant projects

The ProDoc makes reference to a number of relevant projects identified during the Project Preparation Grant (PPG) phase, offering limited information on the linkages and lessons learned. These projects are primarily presented as a baseline for the current initiative.

The project design incorporated experiences from Community-Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) practices in other regions of Egypt, drawing insights from community endeavours in Siwa and the Nabq. Additionally, insights from previous applications of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in unspecified locations contributed to the project's design.

The project team's involvement in the closure of the 'Strengthening Protected Area Financing and Management Systems' project (GEF ID 3668) facilitated an appreciation of lessons learned. Key takeaways included the importance of implementing activities specified in the ProDoc, avoiding the assignment of government employees to the Project Management Unit (PMU), emphasis on building policy and institutional frameworks alongside technical studies and training, empowerment through capacitation, and the value of collaboration and dialogue in promoting project success. These lessons informed the design and approach of the current project.

Planned stakeholder participation

The project document provides a comprehensive outline of stakeholders, detailing their contributions and relevance to project activities and outputs. The list of stakeholders has been regularly updated and expanded, now incorporating new organizations identified as relevant during the implementation stage.

The project design faced challenges related to stakeholder involvement, primarily stemming from issues of scale and complexity. The project interacts on a significant scale, both spatially and institutionally, involving numerous stakeholders with diverse motivations. The dynamic nature of stakeholder interests, operating at different scales within the project, adds complexity. Complicating matters further is the selection of three geographically

separated project sites with distinct social and economic characteristics. Balancing stakeholder participation at both the national and local levels was deemed essential, given the multi-faceted nature of the project and the diverse interests and motivations of stakeholders. The design process aimed to address these complexities and ensure effective engagement across various scales and contexts.

Gender responsiveness of project design

During the initial design phase and the approval of the Project Identification Form (PIF) in the GEF5 cycle, the inclusion of a gender mainstreaming element was not mandatory. Consequently, the project document lacks specific references to gender, gender-disaggregated indicators, and there is no evidence of a gender analysis being conducted during the Project Preparation Grant (PPG) stage.

Despite the initial oversight, the project team has since made efforts to address gender considerations. While there are no explicit gender-related components in the original documentation, the team has sought to maintain gender balance in stakeholder and community engagement. Embracing a whole-of-society approach, the project team has worked towards achieving the required outputs while respecting and understanding local cultures and contexts.

Social and Environmental Safeguards

The PIF was developed and approved in 2013, a period when there was no specific UNDP safeguards policy in place. It was during the subsequent approval by the GEF in 2015, and the government in 2018, that the 2014 UNDP Social and Environmental Safeguards became applicable. These safeguards were utilized to draft a preliminary Environmental and Social Screening Summary (ESSS). The information from the ESSS was later adapted to the UNDP's Environmental and Social Screening template (ESS). However, these documents were not finalized, and the Project Document (ProDoc) did not include a Social and Environmental Screening Plan (SESP) among its annexes in 2015 (GEF endorsement) or in 2018 (government signature).

The draft ESSS from 2014 did not anticipate the project resulting in the voluntary or involuntary resettlement of populations. However, it acknowledged the potential for significant impacts on land tenure arrangements and traditional cultural ownership patterns.

During the course of project implementation in 2020, the Social and Environmental Screening Plan (SESP) was compiled. This process identified various risks, including the concern that "Revision of national level strategies and policies may marginalize local communities and local stakeholders and may direct the national strategies to utilize resources that might favor and use to local communities." This risk was accompanied by a mitigation strategy that was effectively implemented throughout the project implementation phase.

Management arrangements

As set out in the Project Document, the project is implemented through National Implementation Modality (NIM), with the Ministry of Environment (MoE) as the National Implementing Partner.

The UNDP Country Office monitors the implementation of the project, reviews progress in the realization of the project outputs, and ensures the proper use of UNDP/GEF funds. Working in close cooperation with the EEAA, the UNDP Country Office (CO) provides support services to the project - including procurement, contracting of service providers, human resources management and financial services - in accordance with the relevant UNDP Rules and Procedures and Results-Based Management (RBM) guidelines. Specifically, the UNDP CO is responsible for: (i) providing financial and audit services to the project; (ii) recruitment and contracting of project staff; (iii) overseeing

financial expenditures against project budgets; (iv) appointment of independent financial auditors and evaluators; and (v) ensuring that all activities, including procurement and financial services, are carried out in strict compliance with UNDP and GEF procedures. Strategic oversight is provided by the UNDP-GEF Regional Technical Advisor (RTA) responsible for the project.

A centralized Project Management Unit (PMU) is based in Cairo and embedded within the EEAA structure. The day-to-day administration of the project is carried out by a National Project Manager (PM), on behalf of the EEAA. The NPM's prime responsibility is to ensure that the project produces the results specified in the project document, to the required standard and within the specified constraints of time and cost. The NPM is responsible for preparing Annual Work Plans (AWP) in advance of each successive year and submitting them to the project Steering Committee (SC) for approval. The NPM is tasked with liaising and working with all partner institutions to link the project with complementary national programs and initiatives. The NPM reports to the National Technical Coordinator (NTA). The NPM is supported by a Chief Technical Advisor (CTA), two subject matter experts, an Administration and Finance Assistant (AFA) and a driver.

The project mainly depends on external consultants and experts in their work. The ProDoc stated that the project would establish two Field Operation Offices in the Red Sea Coast Area and another to support the two project sites in Siwa and the North-west Mediterranean coast within governate offices/PA HQ, and that a Project Field Officer (PFO) would be recruited for each of these offices to support liaison and coordination; logistics; act as a focal point for district stakeholders; and support access to relevant literature and advisory materials. Only one field officer has been recruited for Siwa.

Field activities in the protected areas and with local communities were partially delayed due to COVID-19, which also delayed the establishment of field offices. This delay, and budget limitations for office rental, mean that project will probably not establish permanent field offices, but will simply deploy staff from Cairo based on implementation needs.

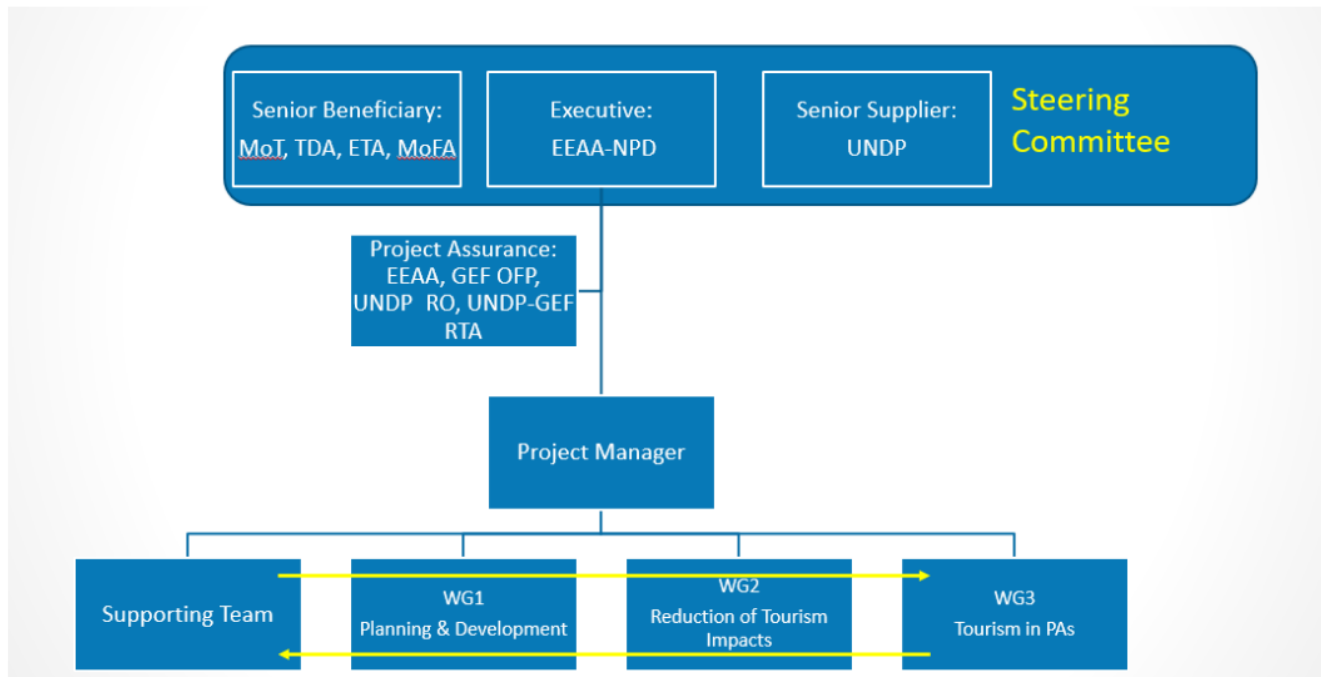
Three working groups, each with a scope of work, were established during the inception phase to support implementation. At the time of the MTR the WG composition was as follows:

- Planning and development – mainstreaming biodiversity into tourism planning: Alignment of policies and practices for the mainstreaming of biodiversity into tourism planning and development
- Mainstreaming biodiversity into tourism activities: Building on the Egyptian natural capital and biodiversity to promote and develop sustainable tourism practices
- Ecotourism in Protected Areas Objective: Develop and manage protected areas serving an attractive and sustainable tourism sector.

Project implementation is overseen by the project SC led by the National Project Director (NPD) of the Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency (EEAA). The ProDoc indicated that senior beneficiaries would include the Tourism Development Agency (TDA) and the Nature Conservation Sector (NCS). Senior beneficiaries were adjusted in the inception report to also include the MoE, the MoTA and ETA (see below Figure). The SC is responsible for making management decisions for the project in particular when guidance is required by the PM. The SC is supposed to play a critical role in project monitoring and evaluations by quality assuring these processes and products, and using evaluations for performance improvement, accountability and learning.

UNDP has designated the Team Leader, Environment Portfolio (UNDP Egypt) to provide independent project oversight and monitoring functions, to ensure that project activities are managed and milestones accomplished. UNDP provides financial and administrative support to the project in accordance with standard NIM procedures.

Figure 1: Institutional arrangements described during project inception.



3.2 Project Implementation

Adaptive management

GEF evaluations assess adaptive management in terms of the ability to direct the project design and implementation to adapt to changing political, regulatory, environmental, and other conditions outside of the control of the project implementing teams. The adaptive approach involves exploring alternative ways to navigate the projects towards meeting the planned objectives using one or more of these alternatives. Adaptive management is defined as the project's ability to adapt to changes to the project design (project objective, outcomes, or outputs) during implementation resulting from: (a) original objectives that were not sufficiently articulated; (b) exogenous conditions that changed, due to which change was needed; (c) the project's restructuring because the original expectations were overambitious; or (d) the project's restructuring because of a lack of progress.

The MBDT project has been successful in applying adaptive management measures by capitalising on the emerging opportunities for strengthening the mainstreaming of biodiversity into the tourism development sectors, among these measures:

- To enhance coordination and foster collaboration among stakeholders, the project recognized the importance of **establishing and operating working groups**. In the initial stages, project stakeholders reached an agreement to form three working groups, ensuring the active engagement of key project participants. These working groups are designed to facilitate the leading role of concerned institutions in integrating biodiversity into

tourism. The project team has assumed the role of facilitator and support, empowering the established working groups to achieve their intended outputs.

The project working groups focus on the following areas:

- Working Group 1: Planning and Development - Mainstreaming biodiversity into tourism planning and development.
- Working Group 2: Mainstreaming Biodiversity into Tourism Activities.
- Working Group 3: Eco-tourism in Protected Areas.

These working groups have evolved into influential and active entities, driving project activities and fostering a participatory environment. Their collaborative efforts contribute significantly to the successful integration of biodiversity into the tourism sector, ensuring a comprehensive and coordinated approach across various facets of project implementation.

- **Effective utilization of opportunities:** Adaptive management not only involves overcoming challenges but also capitalizing on emerging opportunities. The MBDT project effectively leveraged several unfolding opportunities to bring biodiversity issues to the forefront and achieve successful mainstreaming outcomes. Noteworthy opportunities include:
 - 1) COVID Impact: The significant impact of COVID on the tourism sector in Egypt presented a unique opening. With reduced tourism activities, operators had more time to engage in technical matters. Seizing this opportunity, the MBDT project advocated for ecotourism development as a key rebound measure post-COVID.
 - 2) CoP 27 Event: The hosting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP 27) in Egypt provided a crucial platform for the MBDT project to showcase its results. Capitalizing on this international event, the project actively promoted ecotourism in Egypt, including the preparation of sites in Sharm El-Sheikh for demonstrating ecotourism activities.
- **Effective Integration of MTR Findings and recommendations:** The project has showcased commendable utilization of the MTR findings and recommendations. Despite the Terminal Evaluation (TE) expressing concerns about the changes to the PRF following the MTR, the project demonstrated a robust learning process. The MTR recommendations were not only implemented but also meticulously tracked during regular monitoring processes. Leveraging MTRs as crucial opportunities for adaptive measures, the project exhibited a commitment to enhancing effectiveness and efficiency based on well-researched assessments.

Regrettably, the project missed two significant opportunities to comprehensively overhaul the PRF. The inception phase and the MTR were crucial junctures where a radical transformation of the PRF could have occurred. Despite the MTR identifying deficiencies in the PRF, the proposed changes were limited and fell short of what was actually required. For instance, there was a notable absence of updates to baselines and targets during the MTR stage, rendering most indicators unmeasurable due to inadequate baseline and target information. Both the inception phase and MTR presented appropriate avenues to identify and revamp the PRF for the MBDT project, but unfortunately, these opportunities were not fully capitalized upon.

The lack of full documentation of adaptive measures has led to several challenges within the project implementation framework. For instance, while recommended changes to the PRF were documented in the MTR report and approved by the partners, these alterations were not effectively communicated to the GEF for approval. Consequently, the Project Implementation Report (PIR) template for the MBDT continued to include the same indicators as outlined in the Project ProDoc. This oversight resulted in the project team reporting against the original ProDoc PRF, making the application of the newly agreed-upon indicators particularly difficult. As a result, the project team faced difficulties aligning the requirements of the PIR with the format of non-applicable indicators.

Similarly, another instance of inadequate documentation involves the project's undertaking of a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) for St. Katherine in South Sinai, initiated at the request of the Minister of Environment. Despite this significant activity, neither the project site nor the SEA were specified in the ProDoc. Moreover, this project change was not reported in the Steering Committee (SC) meeting minutes or any other management-related documentation reviewed by the TE team. This is not to judge the merit of the activity, but to highlight the importance of documentation to improve project transparency and accountability, making it practical to track project changes and their implications accurately.

Actual stakeholder participation and partnership arrangements

Stakeholder engagement has been a critical aspect of the MBDT project, given its extensive involvement across a wide spectrum of stakeholders, including multiple ministries with complex arrangements and varying levels of influence. The TE recognizes stakeholders' engagement and partnerships as a key success factor for the MBDT project.

The project has been notably effective and efficient in enhancing stakeholder participation at all levels. It stands out as an exemplary model for introducing participatory approaches to meet stakeholder needs. The project played a pioneering role in bringing together different ministries, such as Environment and Tourism, to discuss common grounds and create synergies, particularly at a time when such interactions were not common among these ministries. This collaborative approach has been instrumental in fostering a holistic and integrated perspective on tourism development.

The PMU, with the support of the UNDP CO, played a pivotal role in ensuring strong national ownership of the project. This commitment has been vital in creating a collaborative environment and bringing together stakeholders from diverse backgrounds. The TE acknowledges that this was no easy task for the PMU, especially considering the initial challenges in establishing a healthy relationship with the TDA. It took time and effort for the PMU to build a relationship based on trust and mutual benefits, ultimately contributing to the project's success.

Stakeholders engaged in the TE process have expressed utmost satisfaction with the MBDT project and the collaborative environment facilitated by its PMU. This satisfaction is evident through the strong passion and ownership demonstrated by stakeholders throughout the TE engagement. The acknowledgement of the challenges faced by the PMU and its successful resolution highlights the resilience and dedication that have contributed to the positive stakeholder experiences in the project.

The improved relationship between the Ministry of Environment (MoE) and Ministry of Tourism (MoT) reflects a positive trajectory built on trust and confidence, crowned with signing a MoU between both ministries. The acknowledgment that sustainable tourism, particularly through ecotourism, is essential to preserve biodiversity and safeguard the tourism industry from the negative impacts of mass tourism has been a driving force in strengthening this collaboration. A notable example is the MoE's introduction of new Protected Area (PA) fees, initially leading to conflicts with the tourism sector. However, learning from this experience, the MoE prioritized dialogue with the tourism sector, emphasizing that the additional fees would be reinvested in conservation efforts.

The Working Groups (WGs) have emerged as a successful cooperation model, providing a robust foundation for collaboration and linkages among institutions responsible for tourism, protected areas, and development in Egypt. Project activities have facilitated dialogues and connections between national-level institutions, various departments, and stakeholders involved in tourism at project sites. This includes entities such as hotels, dive

centers, protected areas, local municipalities, local NGOs, and community organizations. While the WGs have demonstrated success, concerns persist about their sustainability after the project concludes, emphasizing the need for institutionalization. The representation from communities and civil society in the WGs raises an important consideration for inclusivity and long-term effectiveness.

Partnerships are effectively managed at the project level by the GEF Focal Point in the MoE. This success is evident in the increased awareness of sustainable tourism and ecotourism within the ministry. This collaborative approach, relatively new for Egypt, deviates from the conventional planning practices conducted in isolation. The project's emphasis on participatory and consultative methods for addressing issues of common interest sets a positive precedent for future projects in the country.

The project has demonstrated successful engagement with the private sector, particularly through active collaboration with the Egyptian Tourism Federation (ETF) and its affiliated organizations. As a key driver for tourism investment and operations in Egypt, the ETF's involvement has been instrumental in promoting sustainable tourism practices among its members. The project's efforts have focused on operationalizing existing regulatory policies to achieve the objective of sustainable tourism, indicating a commitment to aligning private sector activities with environmental conservation goals.

Furthermore, the project has garnered support from the highest political leadership, with the Minister of the Environment playing a pivotal role as a champion for the project agenda. The Minister's advocacy efforts have extended to other ministries, fostering collaboration and garnering support for the project. Notably, the project received endorsement from the Egyptian Prime Minister, including support for the establishment of new Protected Areas (PAs). This high-level political backing underscores the project's significance and aligns it with broader national priorities, contributing to its success and potential impact.

The project facilitated a MoU between the EEAA and IUCN, the objective of this MoU is to provide technical support for on-going activities pertaining to biodiversity conservation and protected areas management, as well as provide peer-review and certification of reports and other related outputs.

Project Finance and Co-finance

The Project had a total planned project cost of USD\$ 53,060,074. Planned GEF financing was to be USD \$2,574,338, and co-financing of USD \$ 50,385,736. At the time of project start, the planned co – financing was to be provided by the following sources: UNDP (cash) USD 100,000, Government and other institutions USD\$ 50,285,736 cash & in-kind, of which \$20 million was meant to be parallel co-financing invested through other projects and the Egyptian Government.

In terms of co-finance the PMU reported a total of 51,734,000 of secured co-financed, which slightly exceeding the target, however, the numbers are not backed with a proper tracking system of co-finance, rather just rough estimates based on the collaborations with partners and budget of the parallel funding projects. The major co-finance contribution comes from the Emirati Project with a total of \$40 mil in its own, this project has been reported to be cancelled through the MTR, which was the case, but then the project came back to life again and working on establishing the Houbara Bustard initiative with the Emirati Bird Breeding Centre for Conservation's (EBBCC) and contribute to attracting ecotourism in the north coast.

Interestingly, there has been quite substantive contribution from the private sector including USD 2 million cash from the National Bank of Egypt (NBE)⁶ contributing to the EcoEgypt's awareness raising campaigns after getting excellent visibility in the public.

Table 3: Finance and co-finance table

Co-financing (type/source)	UNDP own financing (mill. US\$)		Government (mill. US\$)		Partner Agency (NGOs partners) (mill. US\$)		Private sector (mill. US\$)		Total (mill. US\$)	
	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual
Grants	0.1	0.1					0.3	2	0.1	2.1
Loans/Concessions										
• In-kind support			0.2	0.626	49.885	48.766	0.3	0.242	50.385	49.633
• Other										
Total	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.626	49.885	48.766	0.3	2.242	50.485	51.734

The project spent overall US\$ 2,266,239 of the GEF finance, this is 82% of the funds – with US\$ 457,036.43 remaining according to the latest expenditures report until November 2023– see table 4.

The Egyptian pound underwent multiple devaluations throughout the project's lifecycle. While this could potentially enhance the value of project funds in the local market when converted into Egyptian pounds, it has also posed a challenge in soliciting bids from suppliers who adhere to rules and procedures specifying the use of the local currency. Consequently, some suppliers have resorted to providing quotes in pounds with a validity period of 24 hours, aiming to mitigate the impact of fluctuating currency exchange rates.

The financial delivery of the project seems to be on track and well-planned, and it is expected to consume 100% of the GEF budget allocations by the end of the project.

Table 4: GEF funds expenditures report at TE

Component	Budget allocation	Total expenditures ⁷	Balance	% delivery
Outcome 1 / Output 1.1	\$ 600,500.00	\$ 573,928.77	\$ 26,571.23	96%
Outcome 2/ Output 2.1	\$ 185,000.00	\$ 151,997.83	\$ 33,002.17	82%
Outcome 3/ Output 3.1	\$ 213,918.00	\$ 148,775.75	\$ 65,142.25	70%

⁶ At the time the cooperation protocol was signed, the EGP 30 million co-finance were valued at USD 2 million.

⁷ Data represents cumulative expenditures until the end of November 2023.

Outcome 4/ Ouput 4.1	\$ 468,100.00	\$ 395,229.39	\$ 72,870.61	84%
Outcome 4/ Output 4.2	\$ 555,600.00	\$ 442,440.17	\$ 113,159.83	80%
Outcome 4/ Ouput 4.3	\$ 243,700.00	\$ 137,069.25	\$ 106,630.75	56%
Outcome 4/ Ouput 4.4	\$ 70,000.00	\$ 56,934.71	\$ 13,065.29	81%
Outcome 5/ Output 5.1	\$ 114,932.00	\$ 85,378.39	\$ 29,553.61	74%
PMU	\$ 122,588.00	\$ 125,547.31	-\$ 2,959.31	102%
Total	\$ 2,574,338.00	\$2,117,301.57	\$457,036.43	82%

Regarding financial management, the project has been going through an annual mandated audit since 2019. The audit has been delivered by an independent party.

The project was first audited in 2019⁸, and identified issues in (a) procurement processes (obtaining proper quotations from hotels hosting events) (rated high risk); (b) poor planning control and budget monitoring, with expenditure on non-existing budget lines of USD5,947, USD 9,199 and USD 8,023 and expenditure over budget by USD 35,557 (rated medium risk); and (c) misclassifications in budget lines (rated low risk).

The 2020⁹ financial audit found that the issues raised during the 2019 budget (a and c) had been addressed, but the use of non-existent budget lines and overspending (b) was not implemented. For the 2020 financial year, the project was overbudget by USD 398.23, USD 237.51 and (USD 20,019.47), indicating the possible cause was compliance, recommending that the IP's management should monitor expenditure against the budget during implementation. The auditor applied a medium risk level. A budget revision was being finalized at the time of the report. The 2020 audit received lots of comments from UNDP, as it recommended developing an independent financial system, which was not permitted.

The 2021¹⁰ financial audit identified a medium observation related to overspending of a total of US\$ 20,654 over three budget lines, another medium risk observation related to the absence of accounting systems, and low risk observation related to setting up internal control system to maintain accurate and complete records of budget. In response, the project has performed budget revision to rectify the overspending. The 2022¹¹ Audit reported that 2021'budget revision has taken place but another \$6,951 overspending across three budget lines.

Monitoring & Evaluation: design at entry, implementation, and overall assessment of M&E

Assessment element	Rating
Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) Design	Moderately Satisfactory (MS)
Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) implementation	Satisfactory (S)
The overall assessment of the M&E	Satisfactory (S)

⁸ Russel Bedford (2019) Auditors report and management letter. Egypt mainstream biodiversity into tourism development award no. 00087169

⁹ Talal Abu-Ghazaleh & Co (2021) Report of the independent auditor and management letter on UNDP Project ID 00087169 'Mainstream biodiversity into tourism development Output no. 00094274 – Cairo, Egypt

¹⁰ Russel Bedford (2021) Auditors report and management letter. Egypt mainstream biodiversity into tourism development award no. 00087169

¹¹ Russel Bedford (2022) Auditors report and management letter. Egypt mainstream biodiversity into tourism development award no. 00087169

The M&E Framework was described in detail in Section 6 of the Project Document. It comprises standard M&E items for UNDP-GEF project such as the Inception Workshop (IW), meetings of the project board, annual Project Implementation Reviews (PIRs), audit, Mid-Term Review (MTR), Terminal Evaluation (TE), UNDP / GEF Tracking Tools and the final report. The ProDoc, however, doesn't include a Monitoring Plan that defines data collection process for the defined indicators in the PRF including data collection methods, frequency, means of verification, assumptions and responsibility for data collection. The PRF is a key instrument in the M&E design, and as a result of the large number of indicators and repetitive nature of indicators (see comments under Results Framework Analysis section above), there has been a case of double reporting same data for multiple indicators. The overall design of M&E framework meets the standard M&E template for projects of this size and complexity. Overall, the evaluator found the M&E design adequate for monitoring the project results and tracking the progress toward achieving the objectives. The M&E design is backed with adequate resources (a total of US\$ 98,000 allocated for monitoring and terminal evaluations) and clearly defined roles and responsibilities. **Therefore, the M&E design is rated Moderately Satisfactory (MS).**

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) implementation: The Project Steering Committee (PSC) was activated in 2019, with the first meeting taking place on 9th October 2019. The PSC was anticipated to hold at least 1 formal meeting per each year of the project duration in the project document, but the PSC was held annually except in 2021 (4 times in total). The PSC is responsible for making management decisions for the project, acts as the highest strategic and policy-level body of the project and provides overall guidance and direction to ensure the unity and coherence of the project. It can invite other stakeholders to participate in its meetings as needed.

The MTR took place between August 2021 – February 2022, and provided recommendations to help project improvements, the PMU found most of the recommendations to be useful and had implemented and monitored the implementation of the recommendations.

The inception workshop for the project took place on June 18-19, 2019, engaging all stakeholders associated with the project. During the workshop, a comprehensive examination was conducted on the impact of the tourism industry on biodiversity and the challenges encountered by PAs. This initial gathering played a crucial role in fostering a shared understanding of the primary issues addressed by the project and the subsequent planned activities. Project stakeholders demonstrated their unanimous agreement with the project's objectives and activities, expressing a strong commitment and willingness to collaborate. Additionally, consensus was reached to establish three working groups that will involve active participation from key project stakeholders.

The project submitted 4 PIRs in total, the first one was in 2020. The PIRs were sufficiently detailed to monitor the performance and impact of the project.

Other monitoring activities included field visits, conducted by the project manager, and other reporting (i.e other than the PIRs) Quarterly Reports for UNDP and regular reporting to the Ministry of Environment.

The GEF tracking tools/core indicators were carried out during the project development and were updated at the MTR stage and end of the project (**Annex 12**) as part of this TE.

The evaluator has had access to all the reports presented to date and there is evidence of the effective monitoring being conducted by PMU. The format allows for a thorough description of the activities undertaken, hyperlinks to publications and published materials as well as financial reporting. Thus, they receive very well-organized information which helps to build the PIRs.

The **M&E implementation is rated Satisfactory (S)**.

A composite ranking that considers monitoring and evaluation design at entry together with the M & E plan's implementation for the **overall quality of M&E is Satisfactory (S)**.

UNDP implementation/oversight (*) and Implementing Partner execution (*), overall project implementation/execution (*), coordination, and operational issues

Assessment element	Rating
Quality of UNDP Implementation /Oversight	Satisfactory (S)
Quality of Implementing Partner Execution	Satisfactory (S)
Overall project implementation/execution	Satisfactory (S)

The project has been implemented following UNDP's national implementation modality (NIM), according to the Standard Basic Assistance Agreement between UNDP and the Government of Egypt, and the Country Programme Action Plan 2013-2017.

The management arrangements and oversight structure for the MBDT project followed a standard framework. The UNDP served as the GEF Implementing Agency, assuming ultimate responsibility towards the GEF Secretariat and Council regarding the utilization of GEF financial resources, including any cash co-financing passing through UNDP accounts. In its capacity as the GEF Agency for the project, UNDP delivered project management cycle services in accordance with the GEF Council's guidelines.

The Government of Egypt sought UNDP's direct services for specific projects based on its policies and convenience. Both parties acknowledged and agreed that these services were not mandatory and would only be provided upon the government's request. When requested, the services adhered to UNDP policies on the recovery of direct costs, with details specified in the Letter of Agreement. UNDP primarily played a role in offering recruitment and procurement services upon request, as well as providing guidance and support to the Project Management Unit (PMU) and partners.

UNDP Egypt assumed responsibility for the overall supervision and monitoring of the project, ensuring project assurance through the country office and the UNDP-GEF Regional Coordination Unit (RCU). Direct project services, including recruitment, payroll management of project staff, procurement of goods and equipment, and hiring of consultants, were provided by UNDP upon the government's request.

The Government of Egypt recognizes UNDP as a highly supportive partner. With management responsibilities for multiple projects within the biodiversity and ecosystem portfolio in Egypt, UNDP is well-positioned to provide robust support to the MBDT project, leveraging its strategic alliances and partnerships in these domains. While UNDP's procurement and recruitment services for the MBDT project have been compliant with regulations, they have been characterized as slow, leading to delays in implementing activities.

The UNDP Country Office (CO) plays a crucial role in supporting the project by monitoring financial transactions, ensuring delivery, conducting audits, meeting targets, and preventing over-expenditure. The UNDP Team Leader actively engages with the project, participating in field visits, technical workshops, and holding monthly meetings with the PMU team. These interactions serve to review progress, address strategic changes, and tackle any financial or technical challenges

It is essential to note, however, that the project encountered a delay between the signing of the Project Documents. Despite the ProDoc's approval by GEF in 2015 during the GEF5 cycle, its signature was postponed until 2018 in the GEF7 cycle.

The Quality of UNDP Implementation /Oversight is rated Satisfactory (S).

The Ministry of Environment (MOE), specifically through the Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency (EEAA), serves as the Executing Partner for this project. The Executing Partner holds the responsibility and accountability for managing the project, including the monitoring and evaluation of project interventions, the achievement of project outcomes, and the effective utilization of project resources.

The PMU is intricately integrated into the structure of the MoEnv, enabling seamless collaboration with other ministries, particularly with the Ministry of Planning, Water, and Petroleum. Within the MoEnv, a senior official has been designated as the National Project Director (NPD), assuming the role of overseeing project management. The NPD dedicates a substantial portion of their working time to the project and has played a pivotal role in fostering collaborative relationships with line ministries.

The MoEnv has demonstrated complete ownership of the project activities, putting forth significant efforts to advocate for project outcomes at all levels. The MoEnv has not only provided the necessary co-financing but has also made substantial contributions to support the project's activities. The Minister of the Environment has played a crucial role as a champion for the project agenda, extending advocacy efforts to other ministries, fostering collaboration, and garnering widespread support. The Minister's influence has reached the highest levels of government, with the project receiving endorsement from the Egyptian Prime Minister. This support extends to backing the establishment of new Protected Areas (PAs). The high-level political backing reflects the project's significance and aligns it with broader national priorities, enhancing its potential for success and impact.

Collaboration among UNDP, the project board, MoEnv, partners, and the PMU has been effective. When necessary, the project has demonstrated adaptability to address shortcomings efficiently, contributing to a cohesive and responsive implementation process.

Based on the above the **Quality of Implementing Partner Execution is rated Satisfactory (S).**

A combined rating of **overall project implementation/execution is rated Satisfactory (S).**

Risk management and Social and Environmental Standards

An effective risk management strategy is essential for the project to assess its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. By proactively planning mitigation measures, the project can be better prepared to respond to challenges as they arise.

In adherence to standard UNDP requirements, the PMU regularly monitors risks semi-annually and provides status reports to the UNDP Country Office. The PMU consistently updates the risks log, incorporating additional risks as necessary, and records them in ATLAS (and the new system known as Quantum). While PIRs may have limited information on emerging risks and mitigation measures, the risks are systematically updated semi-annually, aligning with the project's ProDoc guidelines. This systematic approach ensures that the project remains vigilant in identifying and addressing potential risks throughout its implementation.

3.3 Project Results

Progress towards objective, expected outcomes and impacts ()*

Assessment element	Rating
Progress towards objective, expected outcomes and impacts	Satisfactory (S)

Overall, the MBDT project has demonstrated significant advancements towards its objectives, showcasing notable achievements towards targets (despite challenges with measurability). The project has successfully accomplished transformative outcomes, as it has effectively integrated biodiversity considerations into tourism development, dispelling misconceptions surrounding the perceived limitations of sustainability standards in the tourism sector. Instead, it has positioned these standards as opportunities to preserve natural services while fostering a thriving tourism industry. However, despite substantial progress, a few targets remain partially unmet. These include the final declaration and extensions of PAs, the implementation of economic and fiscal incentives, endorsement of guidelines for ecolodges establishment and construction, modifications related to EIA, formalization of the MoU between the MoE and MoTA, and the support for a specific number of Community-based NB/BFT enterprises by the MBDT project.

The MBDT project has achieved notable successes in legal, policy, and institutional advancements within Egypt's tourism sector. It introduced and endorsed nine legal instruments, six of which received formal approval from Egyptian authorities, addressing concessions, environmental procedures, visitor fees, and bans on single-use plastic. A key accomplishment is the adoption of the National Sustainable Tourism Strategy by the Egyptian Government, representing a pivotal step in promoting sustainability and biodiversity conservation in the tourism industry. The establishment of institutional frameworks, including the Nature-based Tourism Committee, a new NGO (Sustainable Tourism Organization), and dedicated working groups, has played a crucial role in mainstreaming biodiversity considerations in tourism planning and activities, especially in protected areas. These reforms have significantly contributed to sustainable natural resource use, the promotion of eco-friendly tourism practices, and fostering collaboration among diverse stakeholders, showcasing Egypt's commitment to biodiversity conservation.

Furthermore, the MBDT project has made substantial progress in mitigating the direct adverse impacts of tourism on biodiversity. It enhanced capabilities for integrating biodiversity into SEAs and strengthened the TDA to implement SEA recommendations in tourism planning. The delivery of four SEAs for the Red Sea, North Coast, Siwa, and St. Katherine, along with the development of future tourism scenarios for protected areas, has provided a strategic foundation for informed decision-making in tourism planning. The project has actively contributed to sustainable tourism standards by developing Best Practices for Hotel Operations, introducing the Green Fin certification system, and promoting number of green labelling initiatives such as Green Star, Green Key, Travelife, Green Globe and EarthCheck..

Moreover, the collaboration between the MoE and MoTA facilitated the development and adoption of the National Sustainable Tourism Strategy. This coordination resulted in updated marketing strategies by the Egyptian Tourism Authority (ETA), incorporating content developed by MBDT project through the ECO EGYPT initiative. The project also supported the establishment of a new Marine Protected Area (MPA) in the Red Sea, laying the groundwork with baseline studies, a management plan, and a visitor management plan, though full declaration is pending. Additionally, the development and implementation of Visitor Management Plans, innovative approaches and improvements to informational signs and interpretive facilities in various protected areas. The project also

focused on expanding CBNRM opportunities through business models and feasibility studies, supporting local farmers, and initiating handicraft initiatives, thereby enhancing local community participation in NB/BFT.

The MBDT project has achieved notable successes in legal, policy, and institutional realms. The project developed and adopted nine legal instruments, with six formally endorsed by Egyptian authorities. These include decrees addressing concessions, environmental procedures, visitor fees, and bans on single-use plastic. A flagship result of the MBDT project is the development of the National Sustainable Tourism Strategy that was adopted by the Egyptian Government, the strategy outlines a turning point in advancing sustainability and biodiversity conservation in tourism sector. The project established institutional settings to support sustainability in tourism sector including the Nature-based Tourism Committee, a new NGO (Sustainable Tourism Organization) and working groups focused on biodiversity mainstreaming in tourism planning, activities, and eco-tourism in protected areas. These regulatory, policy and institutional reforms contributed significantly to ensuring the sustainable use of natural resources, promoting eco-friendly tourism practices, and fostering collaboration among various stakeholders, thereby enhancing Egypt's commitment to biodiversity conservation.

The MBDT project successfully contributed to the development and adoption of the National Sustainable Tourism Strategy by MoTA. Close coordination ensured the integration of biodiversity and sustainability into existing tourism plans and marketing strategies. The collaboration between the MoE and MoTA led to the update of marketing strategies by the Egyptian Tourism Authority (ETA) to incorporate natural and cultural heritage content developed by ECO EGYPT. The official tourism portal redirects visitors to the ECO EGYPT website, making information about Egypt's natural assets accessible in multiple languages.

The MBDT project supported the designation of a new Marine Protected Area (MPA) covering an area of 1,602 km² in the Red Sea, although it is not yet fully declared, but project has set up the new MPA with baseline studies, a management plan, and visitor management plan.

The project has made significant efforts in controlling and reducing the adverse impacts of tourism on ecologically sensitive areas by developing and supporting the implementation of Visitor Management Plans for selected PAs were a key focus. Through extensive workshops and consultations involving various stakeholders, government officials, NGOs, and private sector representatives, the project ensured these plans adhered to international best practices. Innovative approaches, such as assessing the limits of acceptable change, were introduced to enhance the management of visitation, especially in ecologically sensitive areas. Efforts were also directed towards improving informational signs, interpretive facilities, and guidelines, with specific upgrades witnessed in Siwa and the development of interpretation facilities in Nabq and Ras Muhammad PAs.

For expanding the potential CBNRM opportunities, business models and feasibility studies were developed, focusing on conservation efforts, support for local farmers, and various handicraft initiatives. Efforts to increase local community participation in NB/BFT were evident through collaborations with communities and tourism service providers, for example, the "Traditional Oriental Nights" program showcased cultural heritage, promoted Egypt's PAs, and supported environmental labels for cultural heritage preservation and community development.

Project Objective: To mainstream biodiversity conservation into tourism sector development and operations in ecologically important and sensitive areas.

Indicator 1 (IRRF 2.5.1.A.1.1): Legal frameworks for conservation, sustainable use, and/or access and benefit sharing of natural resources, biodiversity and ecosystems are in place.

The MBDT project has developed a total of 9 legal framework instruments that contribute to sustainable use of natural resources in Egypt, of which 6 legal documents have been formally adopted by the Egyptian Governmental authorities (Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Tourism, Red Sea Governor, and South Sinai Governor) and 3 are yet to be fully endorsed:

Adopted legal frameworks/instruments include:

- Decree no. 202 of 2019 (Minister of Environment), which aims at establishing a system to provide concessions and permits for activities in South Sinai and Red Sea PAs.
- Decree no. 203 of 2019 (Minister of Environment), which aims at establishing a committee to prepare the environmental, financial and administrative procedures for the permit system related to activities undertaken in PAs.
- Decree no. 204 of 2019 (Minister of Environment), which aims at increasing visitor fees of PAs in South Sinai and the Red Sea to increase revenue.
- Decree no. 167 of 2019 (Red Sea Governor), which aims at banning single-use plastic in the Red Sea Governorate.
- Decree no. 172 of 2019 (South Sinai Governor), which aims at banning single-use plastic bags in the South Sinai Governorate.
- Decree no. 90 of 2023 (Minister of Tourism), which aims at adopting the ecolodge operation criteria and licensing system.

Legal frameworks developed by the MBDT project but not yet been adopted

- Ecolodges Establishment and Construction Guidelines and Criteria.
- Modifications to the Environmental Law No.4 (1994), these modifications include defining environmental sensitivity, simplifying licensing and permit procedures for coastal projects, and legalizing SEAs.
- Declaration of New Marine Protected Area and adoption of the developed management plan.

Indicator 2 (IRRF 2.5.1.B.1.1): Policy frameworks for conservation, sustainable use, and/or access and benefit sharing of natural resources, biodiversity and ecosystems are in place.

The following policy frameworks were developed by the project:

- **National Sustainable Tourism Strategy Action Plan 2020:** it is a comprehensive plan that serves as a strategic framework for integrating biodiversity considerations into Egypt's future tourism development endeavors. The plan sets forth ambitious targets aimed at fostering sustainable tourism growth. The plan outlines actions to leverage Egypt's comparative tourism advantages and pursue sustainable development through product diversification. In pursuit of this, the government has undertaken initiatives to establish an enabling legislative and regulatory framework, foster investment in the tourism sector, and modernize tourism infrastructure. The strategy's performance indicators were also developed in 2020. MoTA officially adopted the National Sustainable Tourism Strategy and performance indicators developed by the project.
- **PA Strategy and Business Model** developed for the Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency/NCS. The PA strategy outlines a comprehensive plan of action and operational approach tailored to the unique needs and objectives of the agency. The model delineates the strategic direction, goals, and initiatives aimed at advancing environmental sustainability and conservation efforts within Egypt. Furthermore, it encompasses a detailed business model that outlines the agency's revenue generation mechanisms,

resource allocation strategies, and partnerships to ensure the effective implementation and sustainability of its programs and projects.

- **Policy recommendation report for the diving sector**, to increase sustainability (NCS and Chamber of Diving and Water Sports (CDWS)) and prohibit diving/snorkeling trips from land without a certified CDWS diver. This was developed and was implemented by the CDWS.
- **Green Fins policy recommendation** proposed and submitted to MoE to reduce PA fees for certified operators (entrance, licensing, and permit discounts).
- **Policy banning use of single-use plastic bags in South Sinai Governorate**. The policy reflects a proactive approach to addressing plastic pollution and advancing environmental sustainability goals at the local level. By implementing and enforcing such measures, the region can contribute to global efforts to combat plastic waste and preserve natural ecosystems for future generations.
- **Policy recommendations for COVID-19**, tourism and biodiversity were developed in May 2020, which included an assessment of the current scenario, recommendations for crisis management, recovery, tourism and environment protection measures, and cooperation between the MoTA and the MoE. The document also explored the short term and medium-term outlook for tourism resilience and reform.
- **Ecolodge operations guidelines** developed along with criteria for a licensing system. A survey of ecolodges and tour operators was also conducted. The Ecolodge guidelines and licensing criteria were adopted by the MoTA.
- **Strategy for the inclusion of environmental criteria in touristic Restaurants** (see indicators 14 and 16 for more details).

Indicator 3 (IRRF 2.5.1.C.1.1): Institutional frameworks for conservation, sustainable use, and/or access and benefit sharing of natural resources, biodiversity and ecosystems are in place.

The MBDT project has developed a number of institutional frameworks and setting to support sustainable use of natural resources, biodiversity and ecosystems. Among these:

- Decision no. 5 of 2023 (Egyptian Tourism Federation): Establishing the Nature-based Tourism Committee under the ETF. The committee focuses on coordinating efforts to preserve and protect natural resources, while also enhancing visitor experiences and economic opportunities associated with nature-based tourism activities. It works to raise awareness, provide guidance, and advocate for policies that support the growth of nature-based tourism while ensuring environmental conservation and community engagement.
- Establishment of the Sustainable Tourism Organization (STO) as a first NGO mainly concerned with ecotourism in Egypt. The project supported the establishment of an ecotourism NGO, the STO, which will play a key role in representing this sector and advocate for ecotourism policies capable to address challenges that the ecotourism sector faces. The establishment of the STO supports good governance in the tourism sector and fills in an institutional gap by bringing in the civil society to play a pivotal role.
- Establishment of the Green Tourism Unit within MoTA. It is noted that though it is named 'the Green Tourism Unit'; however, institutionally, it is a committee not a unit. Nonetheless, the unit/committee will play important roles in advancing the eco-tourism agenda in Egypt.
- To enhance coordination and foster collaboration among stakeholders, the project recognized the importance of establishing and operating working groups. In the initial stages, project stakeholders

reached an agreement to form three working groups, ensuring the active engagement of key project participants. These working groups are designed to facilitate the leading role of concerned institutions in integrating biodiversity into tourism. The project team has assumed the role of facilitator and support, empowering the established working groups to achieve their intended outputs.

The project working groups focus on the following areas:

- Working Group 1: Planning and Development - Mainstreaming biodiversity into tourism planning and development.
- Working Group 2: Mainstreaming Biodiversity into Tourism Activities.
- Working Group 3: Eco-tourism in Protected Areas.

Developed but not fully endorsed yet

- Nature Conservation Sector Restructure (approved by MoE, awaiting approval from the Central Agency for Organization and Administration). The restructuring aims to enhance the efficiency, effectiveness, and coordination of various departments or units within the NCS. This involves changes in organizational structure, staffing, budget allocation, and strategic priorities to better address conservation needs and promote sustainable tourism practices.
- MoU between the MoE and the MoTA, which aims to establish the coordination and governance of the project and enhance cooperation between MoTA and MoE, particularly in the following areas:
 - Eco Tourism Development of Nabq, Qaroun, Abou Galoum, Wadi ElGemal and Elba PAs.
 - Support Egyptian Sustainable Tourism Sector.
 - Capacity Development of members of both Ministries.
 - Training Program for tourist Guides and escorts.
- Establishment of joint committee to monitor and implementing the MoU.
- MoU between the MoE and the MoDMP, which aims to establish the coordination and governance of the project and enhance cooperation between MoDMP and MoE as well as on the inclusive management of PAs.

Indicator 4: A national-level policy mainstreaming committee overseeing policy and planning coherence between tourism development and environmental/biodiversity management is established with action plan

The project achieved the operationalization of the Environment and Sustainable Tourism Committee and the establishment of the Nature-Based Tourism Committee under the ETF. Both committees have been integrated into the project's sustainability strategy as key stakeholders, ensuring their continued involvement in certain areas post-project completion.

These committees will play a crucial role in preventing unsustainable infrastructure development in critical habitats within and near protected areas, particularly in coastal regions targeted for mass tourism. They will review current and future land allocation maps against the SEA, with a focus on integrating biodiversity and protected area considerations. Furthermore, they will work to protect plots not already in private ownership or subject to development according to the law, especially in sensitive areas, by imposing strict limitations on development activities.

Indicator 5: Biodiversity explicitly included in plans and policies for tourism development by government, planning authorities and the private sector.

The project worked extensively on mainstreaming biodiversity into specific plans and policies that resulted in explicit mentioning of biodiversity in key tourism policies and strategies, including, but not limited to:

- National Sustainable Tourism Strategy

- Review of TDA resort guidelines
- Ecolodge establishment/construction guidelines.
- Integration of biodiversity conservation measures into the hospitality criteria system of the MoTA during the initial review of Hotel Criteria guidelines.
- Leveraging the Technical Assistance for Hotel Operations (TAHO) activity, the project devised a roadmap for implementing green initiatives across various sectors in Sharm El Sheikh.
- SEAs in North Coast/Siwa promote incorporation of biodiversity considerations into policies, plans, and programs related to tourism development.
- Sustainable tourism guidelines was developed in collaboration with the TDA in the Southern Red Sea region.

The Egyptian Sustainable Tourism Portal (ESTP) website was in the process of updating its scope to encompass content from the Green Fins program, including beach guidelines, diving sector guidelines, and best practices (Website: <https://estportal.org/>).

Indicator 6: Newly established tourism infrastructure/establishments designed and constructed applying sustainable tourism guidelines

The project facilitated the creation of a pilot model that implements sustainable tourism guidelines in Sharm El Fokeiry, located in the Southern Red Sea region, aligning with recommendations from the Red Sea SEA. The proposal for this initiative was presented to the Steering Committee, which approved allocating a portion of the project budget to the re-planning effort. Consequently, the project initiated the environmental assessment process for the area.

As mentioned above, the ecolodge establishment DA resort guidelines were prepared, submitted to the TDA for feedback and undergone revisions based on TDA comments (the guidelines have not yet been adopted). The TDA has endorsed the creation of a pilot model that implements sustainable tourism guidelines in the Southern Red Sea area. Additionally, the TDA is actively involved in conducting an environmental baseline study to provide crucial support for planning the pilot model.

Outcome 1 Direct adverse impacts of tourism infrastructure development on biodiversity and land/seascapes (primarily loss and severe degradation of critical habitats in both terrestrial and marine ecosystems) are avoided, reduced, or compensated in at least the c. 10,000 km² of ecologically sensitive areas (including c. 2324 km² inside protected areas) exposed to development pressures

Output 1.1 Coherent and effective legal, policy, regulatory and institutional frameworks in place at the national and sub-national levels for multi-sectoral land-use planning at the landscape level, to avoid, reduce, mitigate and offset adverse impacts of tourism pressures on biodiversity

Indicator 7: MSEA/EEAA/NCS, MoT/TDA and governorate and municipal authority staff are trained and capable of developing scenarios from the SEA, and capable of integrating biodiversity into SEAs, EIAs and related regulations in tourism planning and permitting, and can undertake compliance monitoring and enforcement.101

A specific capacity-building program for the TDA on SEAs and applying the Red Sea SEA recommendations was completed in January 2023.

The capabilities of WG1, comprising the MoE, the EEAA, the NCS and the TDA, were strengthened to effectively implement Western North Coast SEA and the Siwa SEA recommendations in tourism planning and development.

WGs attended five scenario planning exercises and are capable of integrating biodiversity measures in tourism planning and permitting.

Furthermore, the capacity of the NCS has been reinforced through a restructuring proposal that has been formulated and endorsed by the EEAA and the CAO. This restructuring initiative encompasses the development of the PA Strategy & Business Model, enhancing NCS's effectiveness in conservation efforts and sustainable management practices.

Indicator 8. Future scenarios for the tourism in the PAs developed.

Scenarios for ecotourism sector growth developed (Nabq, Qaroun, Abou Galoum, Wadi El Gemal and Elba PA), through participation of ecotourism sector leaders, stakeholders, and relevant authorities.

Scenarios for ecotourism sector growth developed, through participation of ecotourism sector leaders, stakeholders, and relevant authorities. A Scenario-Planning workshop for ecotourism industry leaders and stakeholders (including eco-tour operators and STO) was completed in February 2023, which led to conducive dialogue between different stakeholders in the ecotourism industry. Scenario-planning methodology was used in the Sustainability Assessment phase of the NC-Siwa SEA to review the baseline and develop alternative scenarios for tourism planning in the target areas, including El Omayed PA and Siwa PA.

For instance, for the Wado El Gemal, the following four scenarios were developed:

- Scenario A: The situation of the area in case of overcoming difficulty in presenting to the Supreme Council of Planning (biodiversity - water quality - freshwater scarcity) & the causes of competitive threats.
- Scenario B: The situation of the area in case of overcoming: difficulty in presenting to the Supreme Council of Planning (biodiversity - water quality - freshwater scarcity).
- Scenario C: The situation of the area in case of overcoming competitive threats: (High number of hotel rooms reduces rarity factors and reduces prices).
- Scenario D: The situation of the area in case of overcoming: difficulty in presenting to the Supreme Council of Planning and the causes of competitive threats (High number of hotel rooms reduces rarity factors and reduces prices).

Indicator 9: Strategic Environmental Assessments to inform tourism development plans about spatial areas where tourism development and/or operations are desirable/acceptable from the biodiversity standpoint, where they may be permitted subject to management-mitigation-offsetting, and where they should be altogether avoided.

4 SEAs in total were delivered. The Red Sea, North Coast, Siwa and St. Katherine SEAs were finalized. The SEAs were designed and implemented based on extensive consultation and engagement processes. However, SEAs recommendations are not systematically tracked in terms of status, which is increasingly important in absence of legally binding framework for SEAs in Egypt.

In accordance with the Midterm Review recommendations, the project approached IUCN to request peer review of project outputs, particularly the SEAs. A meeting was held in January 2023 to discuss the scope of the cooperation and it was agreed that an MoU is to be signed between both parties, in order to formalize the agreement. The IUCN shared a draft MoU, which was revised to proceed with signing and implementing the terms of the agreement.

Indicator 10. Biodiversity concerns requirements integrated in EIA and tourism -related landscape planning, with a new EIA template"

A review of the EIA process and systems was conducted to ensure that at least 70% of new tourism-related infrastructural developments and hotels adhere to SEA recommendations and undergo rigorous EIAs, the findings of which are respected in the permitting process. The recommendations for EIA improvements were provided in the final draft of the Red Sea SEA (Section 8.3.3). The Red Sea SEA included the following recommendations pertaining to EIAs and biodiversity in tourism-related landscape planning.

- Legal frameworks – areas that need revision, change and to be implemented into the legislation and current regulations.
- Templates – templates to be assessed and updated for each set of EIA categories.
- Procedures – revision of procedures applicable to the EIA, with the aim of streamlining the process, make it more efficient, cost effective and transparent.
- Capacity development – the capacity of departments managing EIA will be enhanced through training, capacity building, manuals, documentation and analysis of case-studies.
- Guidelines – the development of guidelines with the aim of enhancing the current EIA process and categories.

Based on the findings regarding necessary EIA improvements, the MBDT project initiated correspondence to evaluate the applicability of SEA recommendations to the EIA department within the EEAA. This activity primarily focused on addressing gaps identified in the EIA system, this is still in process and no final approval of EIA suggested improvements. Furthermore, capacity building for EIAs was integrated into the replanning activity for Sharm El Foqeiry.

Indicator 11: Regulatory, institutional and financial arrangements for tourism-related biodiversity offset mechanism assessed and (if viable) established to define offset activities/outcomes and site selection and create a supply/ demand database

The MBDT project team had been actively involved in reviewing the theoretical foundations and existing literature on biodiversity offsetting. Additionally, the project had analyzed international best practices, guidelines, experiences, applications, and methodologies to gain insights into how an offsetting policy could be tailored to suit the Egyptian context and conditions. It was observed that Egyptian legislation lacks a legal foundation for introducing offsetting mechanisms.

A feasibility study had recently been initiated recently by the project and is presently in the phase Of finalize the policy options report (due to delays in is procuring a biodiversity offsetting consultant), The situational analysis and legal review have been conducted . The consultant is examining the feasibility, efficacy and suitability of offsetting to obtain biodiversity conservation gains in Egypt within the tourism sector; consider the existing and plausible future governance situation with a view to making recommendations on the development of a biodiversity offsetting mechanism for the tourism sector, and consider the pre-conditions of such a system and assess whether these currently exist in Egypt or the likelihood of these existing in the foreseeable future.

The feasibility study put forth policy options to address biodiversity loss in the tourism sector. The situational analysis has concluded that the current legal, institutional, and policy contexts will not allow the implementation of a proper biodiversity offset policy, so other options that are more suitable to the local context will be proposed..

Indicator 12: Management systems for regulating dive industry use of reefs are in place

The MBDT project supported the introduction of the Green Fins voluntary certification system for diving operators in 2019 and facilitated its implementation through CDWS. The results achieved in the past four years have exceeded expectations, with Green Fins Egypt becoming the fastest country in the Green Fins network to achieve independence within four years.

Key achievements of Green Fins Egypt include:

- Certification of 41 members, the highest number of Green Fins members in a single country worldwide, including six liveaboard operators—the first six operators to be certified globally.
- Project support resulted in the training and certification of 11 assessors and three assessor trainers.
- Environmental awareness courses for diving and watersports centres were attended by 621 individuals through 46 conducted sessions.
- 285 individuals were trained through Green Fins assessments.
- Ongoing project support includes assessing the interest of dive centres in and around Marsa Alam in the Red Sea, conducted in May 2023.

The project also developed a policy action plan for the diving industry's structure. This plan addresses key areas such as minimum discharge, waste management, coastal zonation and management plans, mooring buoy systems, awareness raising, and fiscal incentives for Green Fins members.

Indicator 13: A biodiversity monitoring and evaluation mechanism or process created to assess disturbance of habitats and key species from tourism and related pressures, determine acceptable limits of change, and provide management recommendations

Collaboration with the CDWS was established to improve the monitoring of crucial marine species and habitats by creating a mobile application. This initiative aims to enhance the effectiveness of biodiversity monitoring and evaluation. Furthermore, efforts were made to reinforce biodiversity M&E by ensuring alignment between PA management plans and the NBSAP. This alignment will facilitate a more comprehensive and integrated approach to conservation and management practices, contributing to the sustainable preservation of marine biodiversity.

The project supported the establishment of the Galala Bird Observatory by Nature Conservation Egypt (NCE). This initiative aims to promote long-term monitoring of migratory raptor populations and encourage ecotourism around birdwatching.

Moreover, the project undertaken an assessment of the potential to establish a volunteer program in PAs, with the pilot model being implemented in Wadi El Gemal PA. One objective of this initiative is to assist the PA in developing and implementing a biodiversity monitoring mechanism.

The project has initiated a Shark spatial distribution study to inform Coastal Zone Management (CZM). The first stakeholder consultation workshop was held in June 2023, with attendance from various stakeholders, including PA managements, relevant EEAA departments, NGOs, GAFRID, and NIOF.

Furthermore, the Green Fins report included recommendations for annual monitoring of dive operator impacts.

Outcome 2 Reduction of biodiversity impacts caused by inappropriate practices from tourists and tourism establishments, most notably disturbance effects affecting sensitive animal and plant species, habitat degradation and over-exploitation of resources

Output 2.1 Frameworks and tools for fostering adoption by tourism operators of best-practice standards for sustainable tourism and nature-based/biodiversity-friendly tourism (NB/BFT)

Indicator 14. Sustainable Tourism Strategy and relevant marketing strategies developed by MoT/ETA and private sector and in place.

The MoTA officially adopted the National Sustainable Tourism Strategy. A close coordination with MoTA/ETA ensured the integration of biodiversity and sustainability into current tourism plans and marketing strategies. Additionally, support for sustainable tourism standards implementation includes the development of Best Practices for Hotel Operations and a strategy for the inclusion of environmental criteria in touristic restaurants. The collaborative framework between the MoE and MoTA, marketing strategies of the ETA were updated to incorporate natural and cultural heritage content developed by ECO EGYPT which is a nationwide ecotourism awareness campaign launched by the project. The official Egypt tourism portal (<https://egypt.travel/>) now redirects visitors to the ECO EGYPT website when they click on the Ecotourism webpage. Information about Egypt's natural assets is readily accessible to the public in English and Arabic, with some content also provided in Spanish.

Indicator 15: Economic/fiscal and other incentives (e.g. subsidies, tax deductions, promotion through national or regional government tourism materials/ websites) and penalties (e.g. special taxes), to advance the adherence of private sector and local community businesses to the certification systems.

Overall, there has been limited progress on this indicator, and no finalized incentives or disincentives have been introduced and endorsed thus far. A discounted PAs fees for Green Fins members has been proposed by the Green Fins Policy Recommendations report (reduced fees for certified operators, i.e. entrance, licensing, and permit discounts), which was preliminary approved by the Minister of Environment but not formally endorsed yet.

Cooperation with various international organizations, such as AFD, aimed to raise awareness about ecotourism activities in Egypt. Additionally, ECO EGYPT's participation in local and international expos, including COP27, engaged participants through virtual tours of Egypt's PAs and promoted awareness about ecotourism activities and environmental conservation efforts.

Three social media platforms were utilized to raise public awareness about Egypt's PAs and ecotourism activities. Public awareness regarding Egypt's local communities, their customs, traditions, products, and services was intensified.

Additionally, ECO EGYPT launched a Green List and eco-shop for green products in Sharm El Sheikh. The project promoted selected local eco-friendly products through a PR campaign, which included distributing VIP kits with product samples to various target audiences. A continuing partnership with the Jaz Hotel Group involves featuring ECO EGYPT videos at receptions and guest rooms, with further development of the Oriental Nights Programme agreed upon during a visit to Marsa Alam in May 2023.

Moreover, efforts were made to enhance public awareness regarding green labels and alternatives to single-use plastic (SUP) products. This includes increasing visibility for green-labeled hotels, Green Fins operators, and small businesses offering SUP product alternatives, thereby raising awareness among public audiences.

Indicator 16: Number of clearly labelled NB/BFT operators in the target regions. Target: At least 10 new operators in each target region.

The project aimed at creating at least 10 Nature-Based/Biodiversity-Friendly Tourism (NB/BFT) operators in each target region. The project achieved the following:

- Green Fins: 41 diving centers.
- Greens Star: more than 180 hotels. (80 hotels in Sharm El Sheikh, 12 hotels in the Southern Red Sea and 3 hotels in the western north coast).
- Green Key label in Egypt introduced by the Sustainable Tourism Organization NGO, handling all the operations of the label.
- Hotels and diving centers incentivized to become certified by green labels.
- Wadi El Gemal local community members capacitated and certified by the Wadi El Gemal PA as safari guides.
- Ecolodges now have a reference on best practices for ecolodge operations.

The project also conducted a training programme for safari guides in Siwa with the support of the PA management, which resulted in training over 130 safari guides. The project conducted tour guide training in Wadi El Gemal PA, in cooperation with the PA and expert ecotour operators to certify tour guides.

The project built the capacity of 258 people, who were trained through Green Fins Assessments. There were also 46 Environmental Awareness course sessions for diving & watersports centers, attended by 621 people.

The project launched the Egyptian Sustainable Tourism Portal, which makes all the best practices and pre-feasibilities for resource efficiency and environmental management available online at no cost for hotels and operators to utilize. The project also audited 22 hotels resulting tailormade recommendations as well as technical assistance to implementing certain solutions. The audits also emphasized how hotels can apply for green funding and linked to financial feasibility/technical complexity, CapEx needs and expected savings. Series of 'best practice' factsheets produced were also produced.

A strategy for the inclusion of environmental criteria in touristic Restaurants was developed, including water conservation, energy efficiency, waste management, environmental policies and biodiversity conservation.

The project also integrated biodiversity into hospitality criteria system through the support to the Green Star Program to update the criteria, and revise and update the Green Star Program manual "How to Become a Green Star Hotel".

Outcome 3: One new PA (min. 30,000 ha) designated, spatially configured and emplaced, and the boundaries of 2 of the existing 5 PAs (at least 15,000 ha added to the total of 50,000 km²) in the three target regions expanded, to include critical habitats in areas facing immediate or medium term tourism development pressures expected to adversely affect biodiversity assets, but in which representative PA coverage is lacking.

Output 3.1: Gazettement of the new protected areas especially in the north-west Mediterranean coastal belt, and expansion of boundaries of existing protected areas.

Indicator 17: Number and area of protected areas in the target areas. EOP target: 6 protected areas in the target areas and an additional 30,000 ha of new PA and 15,000 ha of expanded PA.

1 New MPA designated not fully declared, area: 1602 km².

The project conducted assessments to identify potential locations for the establishment of a new Marine Protected Area (MPA). In January 2023, field visits were made to three dive sites proposed for MPA declaration. These visits aimed to gather information on the status, health, and biodiversity of these sites, alongside conducting baseline assessments. The EEAA approved the recommended MPA and associated baseline assessments, the new MPA is not yet fully declared, but going through the process leading for final declaration. The MPA's management plans was also prepared.

During UNFCCC COP27, the Minister of Environment announced Egypt's commitment to protect the Red Sea's Fringing Reef. Consequently, the project supported an ongoing feasibility study. Additionally, the project assessed the net change in PA's area size. As per the NCS, the current PAs size is 140,579 km².

EEAA communicated a policy change regarding the expansion of PAs, opting not to increase PA numbers. Instead, NCS formed a committee to adjust the areas and boundaries of approximately 14 PAs in the country, with the aim of removing areas with incompatible activities, such as mining.

Outcome 4 Pressures from tourism controlled or reduced in c. 2,324 km² of ecologically sensitive areas inside the existing and new PAs exposed to tourism development pressures

Output 4.1: Institutional and technical management framework in place in the new and existing PAs, depending on specific site needs: staffing, capacitation, physical demarcation of boundaries, basic infrastructure and equipment, participatory management planning, multi-stakeholder management boards, etc

Indicator 18 PA Management Effectiveness Tracking Tools (METTs) demonstrate satisfactory improvements, in particular in relation to a) tourism planning and visitor management, b) a reduction of the direct and indirect impacts from tourism, c) revenue generation and d) relations with local communities. Baseline METT scores: Siwa: 59. Omayed: 47. Wadi Gemal: 59. Target: Baseline METT scores + 20%.

The project revised the METT scores at the time of the TE, yielding the following outcomes:

- Siwa: 66
- Omayed: 50
- Wadi Gemal: 66

The assessments were updated in February 2023 through interviews with PA managers by the project team and utilizing the expertise of project consultants. It's important to note that comparing these results with the previous assessment may not accurately reflect the management effectiveness, as the previous documents were incomplete and underdeveloped.

Output 4.2: Effective management and servicing of tourism flows, minimizing adverse impacts on biodiversity, and maximizing positive opportunities for protected area and biodiversity

Indicator 19: Visitor Management Plans for selected PAs developed and in use

The project engaged in developing Management Plans for five PAs, namely Nabq, Siwa, Wadi El Gemal, and El Omayed, alongside the proposed MPA, these are inclusive of visitors management plans. Various workshops were organized as part of this assignment, including the kickoff meeting, inception workshop, strategic planning workshop, and stakeholder consultation workshop. These workshops were attended by members of the working groups, comprising protected area managers, government officials, NGOs, and stakeholders from the private sector.

It was agreed upon that the management plans will adhere to international best practices such as Limits of Acceptable Change, Visitor Use Management Framework, and restrictions on Carrying Capacity. One significant innovation introduced by the project is the assessment of limits of acceptable change, enabling a more attentive management of visitation, particularly in sensitive nature-rich areas like PAs.

Furthermore, the project is supporting tourism in PAs within the target areas by ensuring the availability of informational signs, interpretive facilities, and guidelines. Scoping visits were conducted to Wadi El Gemal Protected Area in May 2023 and to Siwa Protected Area in June 2023 to assess needs and determine appropriate installation locations. During the same visit to Siwa PA, the project upgraded some signs in the Visitor Centre. Additionally, the project developed interpretation facilities in Nabq and Ras Muhammad PAs.

The project enhanced the management capacity of the NCS for Wadi El Gemal PA through the revision of the baseline, development of management plans, and preparation of visitor management plans.

Output 4.3: Community-based integrated land and resource management plans developed, and implementation initiated

Indicator 20: CBRNM agreements with local communities in place in project sites

The project evaluated the financial aspects of Community-Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) schemes to identify the most viable options. A field visit was conducted to the Western North Coast (El Hammam/El Omayed and Marsa Matourh) and Siwa in June 2023, involving 20 site visits/meetings with stakeholders to explore opportunities for CBNRM scheme development. Stakeholders included local community development associations, research centres, craftspeople, bazaar owners, hotel/ecolodge managers, business owners, and community leaders. Business model canvases will be developed to assess the feasibility of different schemes.

Opportunities identified for the North Coast include conservation of endangered and medicinal plants, support for local farmers, dried fruits, jam production, storage facilities for fresh fruit, and carpet (Kleem) production. For Siwa, opportunities include silver making, basket making, El Gara ecotourism products, packaged products and handicrafts from El Gara, handicraft workshops, palm tree (Greed) furniture, and Siwan pottery.

Additionally, the project collaborated with the Egyptian Italian Environmental Cooperation Phase III project to create marketing opportunities for handicrafts produced by craftswomen in Wadi El Gemal. The project provided production tools and materials to create leather bags, leather wallets, and leather and wood frames.

Five business models and feasibility studies developed for Wadi El Gemal, which are:

1. Biking and Trekking trail.
2. Hankorab Restaurant.
3. Mountain Safari Office.
4. Qulaan Ecolodge.
5. Beyt el Ababda Ecolodge.

Six business models developed for Matouh (Siwa and North West Coast), which are:

1. Awlad Aly Ecolodge.
2. Fruits Refrigerator, and Fruits Dryer.
3. Heritage Store/Showroom.
4. Marsa Matruh Desert Safari.

5. Marsa Matrouh Handicrafts Center.

6. Marsa Matruh Heritage Restaurant.

The project contributed to enhanced partnership opportunities through linking stakeholders and proposing income generating opportunities and enhanced income for Wadi El Gemal craftswomen through establishing marketing channels for Wadi El Gemal handicrafts.

Output 4.4: Local communities engaged in NB/BFT ventures for livelihood including services and products (e.g. hotels, eco-lodges, environmental camp sites, eco-products and environmentally-friendly transportation and managed hunting tourism where appropriate)

Indicator 21. Local community participation in NB/BFT increased (with at least 30% female participation in decision making processes)

The project collaborated with three local communities (Tarabin, Mazayna, Jabaliya) and supported local tourism service providers (Al Madawa Lodge, Navig8, Dune Raider, and Reef Oasis Dive Club) to develop the Eco South Sinai tourism product. These initiatives, although outside the project sites, align with the project's objectives of integrating biodiversity into Egypt's tourism sector and assisting PAs in generating financial benefits for sustainability, while concurrently creating opportunities for local communities.

The "Traditional Oriental Nights" program initiative featured a series of night shows in Sharm El Sheikh and Marsa Alam, aims to showcase the cultural and traditional heritage of local communities in South Sinai and the South Red Sea. It served to promote Egypt's PAs, highlighted opportunities for nature-based and beach, diving, fishing tourism products, and supported the hospitality sector in implementing environmental labels that prioritize cultural heritage preservation and community development.

Nature Services Partnerships Guidelines were developed in cooperation with the Egyptian Italian Environmental Cooperation Phase III Project. The objective of this document is to provide guidance to PA managers, private sector, and policy makers, as well as other interested parties, on developing partnerships with local communities for the sustainable use, access and management of natural resources.

Indicator 22: Number of Community-based NB/BFT enterprises increased. Target: 5 community-based NB/BFT enterprises in each target region (with at least 30% female headed)

The project established a sustainable source of livelihood for local communities in Wadi El Gemal through collaborative partnerships with a private sector hotel chain, operating within a community-based scheme. Moreover, private sector investors presented proposals for concessions in several PAs, including Wadi El Gemal PA.

The Oriental Nights program was developed in Marsa Alam through collaboration with the Abo Ghosoun association, functioning as a community-based initiative under the association's sponsorship. It became a regular feature of the entertainment program offered by the Jaz Hotel Group in Marsa Alam. Discussions were held regarding the involvement of Wadi El Gemal craftswomen in the program, with plans to showcase their handicrafts arranged through the association.

Field visits were conducted by the project team to Wadi El Gemal, Siwa, and the North Coast to engage with various stakeholders, including local community members, CBOs, research institutes, private sector

representatives and craftspeople to evaluate potential nature-based and beach, diving, fishing tourism (NB/BFT) enterprises. While implementing tourism-based ventures directly involving local communities in the North Coast proved challenging due to local customs, other opportunities for benefiting from tourist influx were identified. However, several potential ventures were identified in Siwa and Wadi El Gemal.

Furthermore, the project provided support to private sector investors in mapping concessions, establishing partnership agreements, and identifying investment opportunities within Wadi El Gemal PA.

The project cooperated with EIECP III to enhance the business and management capacities of the AGA and Hamata Association, as well as the development of the Eco South Sinai tourism product in partnership with three local communities (Tarabin, Mazayna, Jabaliya) and local tourism service providers. Additionally, the Traditional Oriental Nights program exemplifies collaboration between local communities and the private sector, aimed to showcase cultural heritage, promote Egypt's PAs, and highlight opportunities for NB/BFT tourism products and services while supporting environmental sustainability initiatives.

Outcome 5: PA Financing Scorecard demonstrates progress towards meeting the finance needs to achieve effective management.

Output 5.1: Site-specific effective PA financing systems based on integration into Egypt's PA system and national PA financing strategy and on gate and tourism operator concession fees, ecotourism taxes, and on biodiversity offset and reinvestment schemes involving the tourism industry.

Indicator 23. Score in PA Financial Sustainability Scorecard increased by 30%

Baseline: 54% (122 of 225) and EoP target is 70%.

As assessed at the TE stage, the score is 119/216 i.e 55%. This indicates that no substantial change has occurred on the PA financial sustainability overall. And by linking this back to the progress under new other targets, and Management plans have recently been developed and still under implementation, the change on financial sustainability is expected to take time and will be mainly contingent upon delivering effective business models that generate revenues sustainably for the PAs.

The project has reported that the revision of the scorecard against the baseline has revealed that the scorecard presented at the baseline was incomplete and did not accurately report on the financial resources available for PAs. Therefore, it is difficult to measure if significant change has occurred.

Relevance (*)

Assessment element	Rating
Relevance	Satisfactory (S)

Relevance is the extent to which a project's objectives are consistent with beneficiaries' requirements, country needs, global priorities and partners' and donors' policies.

All evidence showed that the MBDT project is very relevant to the Government of Egypt and addressed highly important matters. The key stakeholders and beneficiaries interviewed during the TE mission have appreciated the added value of the MBDT project and emphasized their ownership and the need to build on what has been achieved and continue the work that has been started is very critical and needed.

Relevance to Egypt vision 2030: The environment pillar in the Sustainable Development Strategy: Egypt Vision 2030' (SDS) has two strategic objectives to which the proposed project would support. The first strategic objective

relates to the sustainable management of the natural resources and the second objective is “Egypt meets its international and regional obligations for environmental conventions and develops the necessary mechanisms, while ensuring their consistency with local policies”; the project is particularly well aligned to these objectives.

Relevance to UNDP strategic framework: The MBDT project is aligned with the UNDP Country Programme Document (CPD) (2023–2027), specifically with the ‘Priority planet: enhanced climate resilience and natural resources management’, under this area UNDP works towards more efficient, effective and sustainable use of natural resources in the economy, including water and biodiversity. It will also require more sustainable production and consumption systems and leveraging of investments for adapting rapidly to climate change. It is also aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework, specifically to Outcome 3: By 2027, enhanced climate resilience and efficiency of natural resource management for all people in a sustainable environment.

Relevance to the GEF: In working towards its overall objective, the MBDT project contributed to Biodiversity Strategic Objective 2 "Mainstream biodiversity conservation and sustainable use into production landscapes, seascapes, and sectors", specifically Outcome 2.2: “Measures to conserve and sustainably use biodiversity incorporated in policy and regulatory frameworks”. The project also contributed to Biodiversity Strategic Objective 1: “Improve sustainability of protected area systems”, specifically Outcome 1.1: “Improved management effectiveness of existing and new protected areas”.

Therefore, relevance is assessed on a six-point scale as **Satisfactory (S)**.

Effectiveness ()*

Assessment element	Rating
Effectiveness	Satisfactory (S)

The effectiveness of a project is defined as the degree to which the development intervention’s objectives were achieved or are expected to be achieved. The valorization of effectiveness is used as an aggregate for judgment of the merit or worth of an activity, (i.e., the extent to which an intervention has attained, or is expected to attain, its major relevant objectives proficiently in a sustainable fashion and with a positive institutional development impact).

The effectiveness of this MBDT project can be rated as S (Satisfactory) since it met expectations as to the degree of objectives being achieved. This is factual at the objective, output and at the outcome’s levels. Despite deficiencies in the way indicators and targets are set, it can be concluded, based on the evidence collected, that the MBDT project has generally achieved its objectives and targets.

The MBDT project has achieved considerable successes with a very modest investment, it has achieved what it set out to do, any shortcomings in this are largely due to the project’s design. The factors that have aided or supported effective achievement of goals have been identified as follows:

- **Robust partnership and engagement approach, emphasizing private sector involvement:** The project's complex nature, involving multiple stakeholders and diverse levels of mainstreaming, necessitated the development of an effective partnership strategy. To address all facets of the project concurrently, the MBDT project actively included stakeholders in every aspect of its implementation. Additionally, the project forged new collaborations with governmental entities and the private sector to advance biodiversity mainstreaming, fostering particularly close ties with the private sector through the EFT to effectively engage with tourism operators.

- **Comprehensive consultative processes:** Key project deliverables, including SEAs, guidelines, tourism strategies, etc., have undergone thorough development via an inclusive consultative approach. This involved reaching out to a broad spectrum of stakeholders and facilitating iterative rounds of consultations. While this approach might have extended the time dedicated to product development, it has concurrently resulted in enhanced ownership and elevated product quality.
- **Effective utilization of opportunities:** Adaptive management not only involves overcoming challenges but also capitalizing on emerging opportunities. The MBDT project effectively leveraged several unfolding opportunities to bring biodiversity issues to the forefront and achieve successful mainstreaming outcomes. Noteworthy opportunities include:
 - o 1) COVID Impact: The significant impact of COVID on the tourism sector in Egypt presented a unique opening. With reduced tourism activities, operators had more time to engage in technical matters. Seizing this opportunity, the MBDT project advocated for ecotourism development as a key rebound measure post-COVID.
 - o 2) CoP 27 Event: The hosting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP 27) in Egypt provided a crucial platform for the MBDT project to showcase its results. Capitalizing on this international event, the project actively promoted ecotourism in Egypt, including the preparation of sites in Sharm El-Sheikh for demonstrating ecotourism activities.
- **Capable Project Management Unit (PMU) with profound mainstreaming expertise:** The PMU is supported by a skilled team possessing technical expertise and an exceptional grasp of the mainstreaming approach. Demonstrating adept skills in establishing and sustaining strategic partnerships, the PMU has garnered commendation from stakeholders for its leadership role throughout the project implementation.
- **Ministerial-Level Government Support:** The Minister of the Environment has been a pivotal champion for the project agenda, undertaking advocacy efforts across ministries, fostering collaboration, and garnering extensive support. The Minister's influential role extends to the highest levels of government, earning endorsement from the Egyptian Prime Minister. This support is not merely symbolic but extends practically to facilitate the establishment of new PAs. The substantial political backing at the highest levels underscores the project's significance, aligning it with broader national priorities and thereby enhancing its potential for both success and impactful outcomes.

On the other hand, the project faced a number of very forceful challenges that, although taken care of adaptively to the degree possible, in some ways required resources (mainly time) to adapt and these externalities had had an impact on the project implementation as well as on the results. The main hindering issues are:

- **Intense competition for natural resources poses challenges for environmental advocacy:** Egypt is currently navigating a period of unique challenges where the government is predominantly focused on economic development. This heightened emphasis on economic progress exacerbates the existing strain on natural resources and intensifies competition among various industries for these resources. In this fiercely competitive environment, advocating for biodiversity concerns becomes especially challenging, as social and economic considerations take precedence over environmental agendas. The prevailing circumstances underscore the difficulty of promoting ecological sustainability amidst the broader economic and societal priorities.
- **Limited awareness regarding biodiversity values:** A notable challenge faced by the project was the limited awareness among stakeholders about the intrinsic values of biodiversity conservation. Particularly within the Egyptian tourism industry, the concepts of sustainable and responsible tourism were not widely embraced, especially in the project's initial stages. This initial lack of common understanding led to significant resistance and necessitated a considerable investment of time and resources to advocate for the project's objectives. Overcoming this awareness gap emerged as a crucial aspect of the project's efforts to foster a deeper appreciation for biodiversity conservation and sustainable tourism practices within the local industry.
- **Transformational change requires time:** The project was designed with the objective of achieving a transformational change, particularly in altering mindsets toward more responsible and sustainable tourism practices. It is crucial to acknowledge that such significant change does not happen overnight; rather, it is a gradual and continuous process that demands time and sustained efforts to realize the anticipated outcomes.

The project recognizes the necessity for a patient and persistent approach in fostering the desired shift in perspectives and practices within the tourism sector.

- **COVID:** The pandemic has had multiple impacts on the MBDT project, including: 1) Limitation on field activities and face to face interactions with stakeholders: The pandemic coincided with a crucial period for the MBDT project where field activities and direct engagement with stakeholders were scheduled, primarily for awareness purposes. However, due to restrictions, these activities had to be shifted online, posing challenges to the planned in-person interactions; 2) Industry reluctance and uncertainty: The uncertainties brought about by COVID-19 had a significant impact on various industries, including the tourism sector. This uncertainty led to a reluctance among stakeholders to actively engage in and embrace changes, potentially affecting the progress of the project's objectives; and 3) Government priorities shift: The government's priorities understandably shifted toward dealing with the immediate impacts of the pandemic. This re-focusing of priorities had implications for the MBDT project, as resources and attention were redirected to address the pressing challenges posed by COVID-19.

Efficiency (*)

Assessment element	Rating
Efficiency	Satisfactory (S)

Efficiency is defined as the extent to which results have been delivered with the least costly resources possible. Efficiency is a measure of how economically resources/inputs (funds, expertise, time, etc.) are converted into results.

Cost-effectiveness: The cost-effectiveness of the MBDT stems from its foundation on the mainstreaming approach, which is inherently cost-effective, as reasonably argued in the project document. It allows for targeting key sectors and multiple stakeholders by effecting change more positively and quickly and achieving systemic impact and a transformational change among stakeholders and biodiversity in the long term.

The Project has been efficient in achieving outputs/products and in achieving some of the outcomes, it has provided value-for-money since it achieved the results within budgets, agreed disbursement, etc., while leveraging investments and in-kind support from sources external to the project per se (real co-funding based on coherent partnerships). The PMU has guarded the budget by taking time to carefully think through initiatives, ensuring that the partners are fully “onboard” with an intervention, careful drafting of TORs and selection of consultants.

As explained in table 4 (section 3.2), the project spent overall US\$ \$2,117,301.57 of the GEF finance, this is 82% of the funds – with US\$ \$457,036.43 remaining according to the latest expenditures report until November 2023– see table 4. The 100% financial delivery on financial resources seems to be on track based on 2024 plan and budget.

The Egyptian pound underwent multiple devaluations throughout the project's lifecycle. While this could potentially enhance the value of project funds in the local market when converted into Egyptian pounds, it has also posed a challenge in soliciting bids from suppliers who adhere to rules and procedures specifying the use of the local currency. Consequently, some suppliers have resorted to providing quotes in pounds with a validity period of 24 hours, aiming to mitigate the impact of fluctuating currency exchange rates.

Project timeframe: the project has been going through a considerable delay including over 42 months delay in initiating the project, where the CEO Endorsement Date was April 2015, and ProDoc Signature Date (date project began) November 2018, this meant that parts of the prodoc needed to be brought up to date. The delay was largely attributed to military concerns about Defense issues close to the border with Libya, which affected Project regions (The North-West Mediterranean project region (i.e. Salum PA on the Libyan border) and Siwa region (i.e.

the Western Sector on the Libyan border). Project region 2 has been further complicated with cancellation of the TDA mandate for the region, as the government planned to develop a major city around Alamein (located at the eastern edge of the project region, and with negative implications for biodiversity in the El Omayed MAB Biosphere Reserve²⁰). This delay was followed by another 6 months delay in recruiting the PMU to get the project up and running.

The project requested 6 months extension at no cost, taking the end date of the project from 31 December 2023 to 14th May 2024. The extension was justified by the delays caused by several significant obstacles that have impacted its activities and outcomes. The most notable challenges include the prolonged impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, modifications to indicators and recommendations from the Midterm Review, difficulties in receiving proposals for the Biodiversity Offsetting Feasibility Study, constraints on conducting capacity building workshops, and concerns related to the implementation of the project's sustainability strategy.

Human resources and project management: The UNDP NIM modality is extremely appropriate to the context and is in fact the option for most of the UNDP projects in Egypt. The fact that the PMU was firmly embedded in the MoEnv has been a strong ownership element in the project and enabled the MoEnv to take lead on building strategic and durable partnerships. As explored elsewhere in this report, the project had to adapt (successfully) to a series of externalities that could have profoundly hindered achievements largely. As noted in the effectiveness section, the project has been equipped with competent human resources for delivering project activities up to quality standards and this has been a success factor.

Given the above, the efficiency of implementation met expectations with some shortcomings. Therefore, the overall ranking of efficiency is Satisfactory (S).

Overall Outcome (*)

Given the high degree of relevance and the satisfactory degree of effectiveness and efficiency, the overall project outcome is ranked as Satisfactory (S).

Sustainability: financial (*), socio-political (*), institutional framework and governance (*), environmental (*), and overall likelihood (*)

Assessment element	Rating
Institutional Framework and governance	Moderately Likely (ML)
Socio-political	Moderately Likely (ML)
Environmental	Moderately Likely (ML)
Financial	Moderately Likely (ML)
Overall Likelihood of Sustainability	Moderately Likely (ML)

Sustainability of the project is judged by the commitment of the project benefits to continue and replicate beyond the project completion date. The evaluation identifies key risks to sustainability and explains how these risks may affect continuation of the project benefits after the project closes. The assessment covers institutional/governance risks, financial, socio-political, and environmental risks.

The MBDT project team has developed a document titled 'Lessons Learned and Sustainability Upscale' that identifies the key lessons learned and innovations introduced by the MBDT project, and identifies the areas where the project achieved significant impact and delineates its exit strategy, focusing on sustainability and upscale of the areas where project efforts proved to be relevant.

Institutional framework and governance risks to sustainability

The MBDT project has functioned as a catalyst for a sustained, responsible tourism approach that acknowledges and values Egypt's diverse biodiversity. The capacities cultivated through the project are anticipated to manifest in enhanced coordination within environmental governance. Significantly, the project has spurred institutional change, marked by a genuine understanding and endorsement of the institutions involved, ensuring that the transformation is both effective and enduring.

The primary goal of the MBDT project was to empower key national and district-level institutions with experience, know-how, and technical proficiency. This approach was designed to enable these institutions to autonomously comprehend and drive change, aligning with the dynamic landscape of tourism development. The overarching aim is to establish a foundation for self-sufficiency within these institutions, ensuring their capability to navigate and respond to the evolving challenges in the space of tourism development.

The project has strengthened the institutional framework and governance of the tourism sector as it relates to biodiversity by:

- **Tourism Environmental Certification Initiatives:** The MBDT project actively sustained and supported various activities focused on environmental certification, with a particular emphasis on the tourism sector's most impactful industries, notably hotels, diving, and water sports activities. Noteworthy among these efforts are two key activities: 1) development of green fins certification system: The project facilitated the expansion of the Green Fins certification program, aiming to mitigate the environmental impact of diving and water sports activities. This initiative represents a significant step toward promoting sustainable practices within these sectors. And 2) Increased green star rating for hotels: The project contributed to a notable increase in the number of hotels obtaining Green Star ratings. This certification acknowledges and promotes environmentally responsible practices within the hotel industry, showcasing a commitment to sustainability and responsible tourism. These initiatives collectively demonstrate the project's dedication to fostering environmental awareness and sustainable practices within critical segments of the tourism industry. An important sustainability element that certifications are driven by the private sector directly and do not depend on Government Intervention or funding. Both activities are driven by the interest of the private sector to implement more sustainable business models.
- The project supported number of **sustainable institutional set ups** such as the green tourism unit within the Ministry of Tourism, this unit will be responsible for operationalising the principles of sustainable and responsible tourism. The Green Tourism Unit (GTU) embedded in MOTTA and has biodiversity as its mandate within tourism sector. Other institutional set ups included:
 - o Decision no. 5 of 2023 (Egyptian Tourism Federation): Establishing the Nature-based Tourism Committee
 - o Establishment of the Sustainable Tourism Organization NGO
 - o Establishment of the Green Tourism Unit in the Ministry of Tourism (It is called the Green Tourism Unit, but institutionally, it is a committee not an actual unit)
-
- The MBDT project introduced number of legal instruments that have been officially adopted by the Egyptian Governmental authorities including:
 - o Decree no. 202 of 2019 (Minister of Environment): Establishing a system to provide concessions and permits for activities in the PAs
 - o Decree no. 203 of 2019 (Minister of Environment): Establishing a committee to put the environmental, financial and administrative procedures for the permit system for activities in PAs
 - o Decree no. 204 of 2019 (Minister of Environment): Increasing the visitor fees of PAs in South Sinai and the Red Sea to generate more revenue
 - o Decree no. 168 of 2019 (Red Sea Governor): single-use plastic ban in the Red Sea Governorate

- Decree no. 172 of 2019 (South Sinai Governor): ban single-use plastic bags in the South Sinai Governorate
- Decree no. 90 of 2023 (Minister of Tourism): Adopting the ecolodge criteria and licensing system.
- The project developed National Sustainable Tourism Strategy which was formally adopted by the Ministry of Tourism including the associated indicators framework developed by the MBDT project.
- Also, the PA Strategy and Business Model developed for the Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency/NCS was endorsed by the Ministry of Environment.

On the other side, there are sustainability challenges facing the MBDT, including:

- Working groups continuation after the project ends: The MBDT project's implementation followed an ad hoc governance model, organized into three working groups. Through the establishment of these institutional governance structures, the project placed a strong emphasis on stakeholder involvement and ownership, fostering a shared vision for tourism strategic development and management in Egypt. This approach played a pivotal role in promoting environmental consciousness within the sector. While these working groups proved instrumental during the project implementation, there is currently no defined pathway for sustaining their existence beyond the project's conclusion. The lack of a binding framework raises concerns about the continuity of the groups' functionality, potentially resulting in a loss of momentum. Establishing a robust and enduring framework is essential to ensure the continued effectiveness and impact of these groups beyond the project's lifecycle.
- Some of the legal instruments developed by the MBDT project have not been approved as of yet, including:
 - SEA Legislation
 - Modifications to Law 4/1994, including defining environmental sensitivity, and simplifying licensing and permit procedures for coastal projects.
 - New Marine Protected Area Declaration
 - Ecolodge Establishment/Construction GuidelinesThe likelihood for these instruments to be endorsed formally by the Government varies from one to another, based on evidence gathered during this TE, the declaration of a new PA seems to be Moderately Likely while it is moderately unlikely for the SEA legislations, modifications to Law 4/1994 and ecolodge construction guidelines to be approved in the short term.
- The MBDT project has developed two MoUs, 1 MoU between the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Tourism, and 2) MoU between the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Defense. Both MoUs have not been signed between the parties yet despite the significant improvements in the relationship between these institutions over the course of the project lifecycle.
- A formal MoU between the MoE and the MoTA, which aims to establish the coordination and governance of the project and enhance cooperation between MoTA and MoE, particularly in the following areas:
 - Eco Tourism Development of Nabq, Qaroun, Abou Galoum, Wadi ElGemal and Elba PAs.
 - Support Egyptian Sustainable Tourism Sector.
 - Capacity Development of members of both Ministries.
 - Training Program for tourist Guides and escorts.

Therefore, due to this combination of factors, the general likelihood of institutional/governance sustainability is ranked Moderately Likely (ML).

Socio-political risks to sustainability

When analysing socio economic risks to sustainability, an examination is made of the potential social or political risks that may jeopardize sustainability of project outcomes.

Efficient management of natural resources in protected areas centers on the adoption of a new governance model, where PAs actively engage in positive and constructive partnerships with diverse stakeholders and

organizations. The project strategically concentrated on two pivotal areas to unlock the potential of such partnerships for enhancing sustainable management:

- Private sector engagement through eco-tourism concessions: The project prioritized involving the private sector in developing eco-tourism within PAs through concession arrangements. This approach aimed at fostering partnerships that contribute to sustainable practices and positive environmental impact.
- Structured partnerships with local communities: Another focus area was the promotion of more structured partnerships with local communities. Recognizing the vital role communities play, the project aimed to establish collaborative frameworks that enhance sustainable management practices and align with local needs.

However, the future replication of concession arrangements involving the private sector for eco-tourism development in PAs is contingent on the presence of clearly articulated and endorsed concession management guidelines, which are currently absent. Similarly, the institutionalization of future partnerships with communities lacks a structured framework that ensures continuity and long-term effectiveness. Addressing these aspects is essential for the sustained success and impact of the project's initiatives.

The project is actively implementing the ECO EGYPT campaign, aiming to underscore the value of ecotourism in Egypt. This campaign strategically utilizes social media and social communication platforms to create an interactive space for open dialogue and communication about ecotourism. A noteworthy outcome of this initiative is the establishment of a more direct and transparent communication channel between Egyptian institutions in the tourism and environmental management sectors and the wider society, resource users, stakeholders, and eco-conscious tourists. Through ECO EGYPT, the project has not only promoted real-time sharing of tourist information but has also facilitated a collaborative conversation among various stakeholders in the tourism space, including institutions responsible for natural resource and environmental management. Despite its success, like many other awareness campaigns, the continuity of ECO EGYPT beyond the project's duration is uncertain unless it becomes an integral part of the national tourism strategy. Embedding it within the broader strategic framework would ensure its institutionalization and sustained impact in promoting ecotourism in Egypt.

Therefore, the ranking for **socio – political sustainability is Moderately Likely (ML)**.

Environmental risks to sustainability

The project successfully implemented various interventions and innovations aimed at supporting the tourism industry towards more sustainable practices. Key achievements in this regard include strategic tourism development through the utilization of SEA, the revision of PA management plans, enhancement of PA visitor management, and the expansion of marine environment protection, particularly crucial due to threats from tourism overuse.

However, there are significant challenges to achieving sustainable environmental risk management:

- **Non-binding SEA in Egypt:** Despite the successful implementation of SEA, it has not been legally binding in Egypt. Both its application and the incorporation of its recommendations are not mandated by law, limiting its impact and effectiveness in guiding sustainable practices.
- **Limited enforcement of EIA legislation:** This poses a constraint on the comprehensive assessment of environmental risks, hindering the adoption of sustainable practices.

Addressing these challenges, particularly by enhancing the legal standing of SEA and incorporating robust biodiversity considerations into the EIA process, is crucial for ensuring the long-term sustainability of

environmental risk management in the tourism sector. These are not necessarily seen as priorities at the moment by the Egyptian Government authorities.

Tourism constitutes a substantial component of the Egyptian economy, wielding considerable influence that has, in the past, manifested as a influential and negative force impacting all facets of the ecosystem. However, the project has effectively activated changes in the system's dynamics, demonstrating a capacity to mitigate these negative impacts. Resilience, in this context, is characterized by the system's ability to withstand disturbances while preserving its existing functions and controls, while also maintaining the capacity for future adaptation and change.

The project has notably contributed to enhancing the components of the system—such as government agencies, the private sector, local communities, and others—by fostering their ability for self-organization, learning, and adaptation. This positive reinforcement has bolstered the overall resilience of the tourism system, reducing its negative impacts and enabling it to navigate disturbances while maintaining its ecological functions and adaptability for the future.

Therefore, the ranking for environmental sustainability is **Moderately Likely (ML)**.

Financial sustainability

While all the endorsed policies mentioned above are considered financially sustainable, the new PA financial sustainability remains a concern despite project support in terms of revenue collection and business planning. Nevertheless, there is substantial evidence that the partners, including the UNDP Country Office and the PMU, are actively planning to ensure that ongoing financial support is strategically integrated into a range of other government and project activities.

Several initiatives, such as the Green Sharm project, USAID project, and Egyptian Italian Environmental Cooperation Phase III, are being explored to provide financial assistance and build upon the achievements of the MBDT project. These projects present opportunities to secure additional funding and support for the continued pursuit of MBDT outcomes.

Moreover, the legacy of the ECO EGYPT campaign is poised to endure, with the Green Sharm project expected to carry forward similar messages and persist in advocating for biodiversity conservation and sustainable tourism. This seamless transition ensures that the positive impact of the awareness campaign can persist beyond the MBDT project, contributing to the broader goals of promoting ecological sustainability in Egypt.

Therefore, due to this combination of factors, the general likelihood ranking of the **financial sustainability is Moderately Likely (ML)**.

Country ownership

The evidence presented in this report strongly supports the notion of country, institutional, and individual ownership of the MBDT project process, products, and outcomes. The use of the UNDP NIM has proven highly appropriate in the Egyptian context, aligning with the chosen option for most UNDP projects in the country. A key factor contributing to ownership has been the robust integration of the PMU within the Ministry of Environment, fostering a strong sense of ownership within the ministry. This, in turn, empowered the MoEnv to lead the establishment of strategic and enduring partnerships, further promoting ownership of the project's various products.

Country ownership is prominently reflected in the unwavering ministerial support extended to the MBDT project, particularly from the Minister of Environment. The active interest and participation of high-level government officials in various project meetings further underscore the depth of ownership. Formal endorsements of legal instruments and decrees developed by the project provide an additional layer of country ownership.

The MBDT project's effective formation of strong partnership arrangements, exemplified by the working groups, has played a pivotal role in cultivating an environment of ownership among participating stakeholders. This approach has facilitated the seamless integration of project products into the working practices of partners, exemplifying the successful accomplishment of a mainstreaming project's objectives.

Gender equality and women empowerment

During the initial design phase and the approval of the Project Identification Form (PIF) in the GEF5 cycle, the inclusion of a gender mainstreaming element was not mandatory. Consequently, the project document lacks specific references to gender, gender-disaggregated indicators, and there is no evidence of a gender analysis being conducted during the PPG stage. Unfortunately, no indicators on gender issues were developed in PRODOC, nor were indicators and goals established and assumed by the project.

Despite the initial oversight, the project team has since made efforts to address gender considerations. While there are no explicit gender-related components in the original documentation, the team has sought to maintain gender balance in stakeholder and community engagement. Embracing a whole-of-society approach, the project team has worked towards achieving the required outputs while respecting and understanding local cultures and contexts.

The project's endeavours to enhance the governance and sustainability of natural resources and assets are anticipated to curb exclusionary decision-making processes related to land-use and resource management. By addressing these issues, the project is challenging prevailing gender inequalities and discriminatory practices that disproportionately impact women, hindering their full and equal participation in the management of natural resources. Through its initiatives, the project aims to foster a more inclusive and equitable approach, ensuring that women are afforded the opportunity to contribute meaningfully to decision-making processes related to the utilization and management of crucial natural resources.

The project had little reflections on gender when it comes to reviewing and streamlining regulatory frameworks relevant for biodiversity and natural resource management, these legal frameworks would have been an avenue to ensure gender sensitivity at the product level by clearly defining the different roles of women and men in managing natural resources.

Cross-cutting Issues

The project has intentionally incorporated the mainstreaming of human rights, gender equality, and community development into its design. Through its initiatives, the project actively addresses local poverty and advocates for resource-based livelihoods. A key focus has been the promotion of community-based resource management, aiming to safeguard community rights over resources within the framework of Egyptian protected areas.

One of the significant strategies employed by the project is the promotion of Community-Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) systems situated in and around protected areas. This approach is designed to facilitate preferential access and sustainable utilization of natural resources by the relevant communities. In exchange for these benefits, the project encourages collaborative management responsibilities, fostering a mutually beneficial

relationship between communities and the protected areas they inhabit. This approach aligns with the project's commitment to promoting inclusive, rights-based, and sustainable practices in resource management.

GEF Additionality

GEF additionality, defined as the additional outcome (both environmental and otherwise) that can be directly associated with the GEF-supported project. In December 2018, the GEF Council approved 'An Evaluative Approach to Assessing GEF's Additionality'. GEF IEO classifies additionality into six factors: Specific Environmental Additionality; Legal/Regulatory Additionality; Institutional Additionality/Governance additionality; Financial Additionality; Socio-Economic Additionality; and Innovation Additionality¹².

The GEF additionality in the MBDT project involves overcoming the key barrier to the mainstreaming biodiversity into the tourism development in Egypt that would have not been achieved without the GEF funding, the MBDT project contributes 4 main types of additionalities, these include:

Additionality	BMDT project contribution
Legal/Regulatory Additionality	<p>The MBDT project introduced number of legal instruments that have been officially adopted by the Egyptian Governmental authorities including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decree no. 202 of 2019 (Minister of Environment): Establishing a system to provide concessions and permits for activities in the PAs • Decree no. 203 of 2019 (Minister of Environment): Establishing a committee to put the environmental, financial and administrative procedures for the permit system for activities in PAs • Decree no. 204 of 2019 (Minister of Environment): Increasing the visitor fees of PAs in South Sinai and the Red Sea to generate more revenue • Decree no. 168 of 2019 (Red Sea Governor): single-use plastic ban in the Red Sea Governorate • Decree no. 172 of 2019 (South Sinai Governor): ban single-use plastic bags in the South Sinai Governorate • Decree no. 90 of 2023 (Minister of Tourism): Adopting the ecolodge criteria and licensing system.
Institutional Additionality/Governance additionality	<p>Overcoming the limited capacity barrier building the individual and institutional capacities for sustainable and responsible tourism, developing the national sustainable tourism strategy, and operating collaborative working groups bringing together multiple stakeholders to drive transformational changes.</p>
Financial Additionality	<p>Development of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decree no. 203 of 2019 (Minister of Environment): Establishing a committee to put the environmental, financial and administrative procedures for the permit system for activities in PAs • Decree no. 204 of 2019 (Minister of Environment): Increasing the visitor fees of PAs in South Sinai and the Red Sea to generate more revenue. <p>Also exploring financial opportunities for future project such as the Green Sharm project, USAID project, and Egyptian Italian Environmental</p>

¹² GEF -IEO, An Evaluative Approach to Assessing GEF's Additionality, 2018.

	Cooperation Phase III, to provide financial assistance and build upon the achievements of the MBDT project.
Specific Environmental Additionality	The project has successfully initiated changes within the tourism sector and the associated system, showcasing its capability to mitigate the negative impacts of tourism on biodiversity. Through its interventions and initiatives, the project has influenced the dynamics of the tourism sector, implementing measures that contribute to the conservation of biodiversity and minimize the adverse effects traditionally associated with tourism activities. This underscores the project's effectiveness in promoting sustainable and responsible tourism practices, aligning with its objectives to safeguard biodiversity and enhance ecological resilience.

Catalytic Role / Replication Effect

Conceptually, the project is designed to eliminate barriers and facilitate the integration of biodiversity into the tourism development sector in Egypt. It aims to establish a sustainable institutional and legal framework that recognizes the enduring value of biodiversity. Key to fulfilling this catalytic role are the established regulatory framework and capacity-building initiatives embedded within the project.

The project's Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) component has been particularly noteworthy, with stakeholders recognizing its added value. Despite not being legally binding, there is a perceived opportunity for future replication of the SEA approach. The project has laid the groundwork for fostering a SEA culture among key institutions, suggesting the potential for continued adoption and expansion of this valuable component in future endeavours.

Progress to impacts

The MBDT project is anticipated to yield both short-term and long-term impacts across various dimensions. In the short term, the project's accomplishments in regulatory framework development, capacity building, institutional reforms, PA establishment, and awareness initiatives are expected to result in several positive impacts. These include a reduction in direct threats posed by the tourism development sector to biodiversity.

Looking into the long term, the project is set to contribute to a transformative shift in the tourism sector in Egypt. The mainstreaming successes of the MBDT project are likely to foster a culture of responsible and sustainable tourism practices. This may manifest in a continual reduction of the environmental footprint associated with tourism activities and a notable increase in the prevalence of eco-tourism developments. The cumulative effect of these long-term impacts is anticipated to shape a more sustainable and ecologically conscious tourism industry in Egypt in the future.

4. Conclusions, Recommendations & Lessons

4.1 Main Findings & conclusions

Project results: Overall, the MBDT project has demonstrated significant advancements towards its objectives, showcasing notable achievements towards targets (despite challenges with measurability). The project has successfully accomplished transformative outcomes, as it has effectively integrated biodiversity considerations into tourism development, dispelling misconceptions surrounding the perceived limitations of sustainability standards in the tourism sector. Instead, it has positioned these standards as opportunities to preserve natural services while fostering a thriving tourism industry. However, despite substantial progress, a few targets remain partially unmet. These include the final declaration and extensions of PAs, the implementation of economic and fiscal incentives, endorsement of guidelines for ecolodges establishment and construction, modifications related to EIA, formalization of the MoU between the MoE and MoTA, and the support for a specific number of Community-based NB/BFT enterprises by the MBDT project.

The MBDT project has achieved notable successes in legal, policy, and institutional advancements within Egypt's tourism sector. It introduced and endorsed nine legal instruments, six of which received formal approval from Egyptian authorities, addressing concessions, environmental procedures, visitor fees, and bans on single-use plastic. A key accomplishment is the adoption of the National Sustainable Tourism Strategy by the Egyptian Government, representing a pivotal step in promoting sustainability and biodiversity conservation in the tourism industry. The establishment of institutional frameworks, including the Nature-based Tourism Committee, a new NGO (Sustainable Tourism Organization), and dedicated working groups, has played a crucial role in mainstreaming biodiversity considerations in tourism planning and activities, especially in protected areas. These reforms have significantly contributed to sustainable natural resource use, the promotion of eco-friendly tourism practices, and fostering collaboration among diverse stakeholders, showcasing Egypt's commitment to biodiversity conservation.

Furthermore, the MBDT project has made substantial progress in mitigating the direct adverse impacts of tourism on biodiversity. It enhanced capabilities for integrating biodiversity into SEAs and strengthened the TDA to implement SEA recommendations in tourism planning. The delivery of four SEAs for the Red Sea, North Coast, Siwa, and St. Katherine, along with the development of future tourism scenarios for protected areas, has provided a strategic foundation for informed decision-making in tourism planning. The project has actively contributed to sustainable tourism standards by developing Best Practices for Hotel Operations, introducing the Green Fin certification system, and promoting number of green labelling initiatives such as Green Star, Green Key, Travelife, Green Globe and EarthCheck..

Moreover, the collaboration between the MoE and MoTA facilitated the development and adoption of the National Sustainable Tourism Strategy. This coordination resulted in updated marketing strategies by the Egyptian Tourism Authority (ETA), incorporating content developed by MBDT project through the ECO EGYPT initiative. The project also supported the establishment of a new Marine Protected Area (MPA) in the Red Sea, laying the groundwork with baseline studies, a management plan, and a visitor management plan, though full declaration is pending. Additionally, the development and implementation of Visitor Management Plans, innovative approaches and improvements to informational signs and interpretive facilities in various protected areas. The project also focused on expanding CBNRM opportunities through business models and feasibility studies, supporting local

farmers, and initiating handicraft initiatives, thereby enhancing local community participation in NB/BFT. The development of guidelines for Nature Service Partnership is also an important legacy by helping PAs managers, private sector tourism operators, policy makers, NGOs and other institutions in developing partnership and CBNRM, linking the Egyptian PAs system with the rich diversity of local communities.

Relevance: The MBDT project demonstrates a high level of relevance to the Government of Egypt, addressing crucial environmental concerns and aligning with the country's Sustainable Development Strategy (SDS) for 2030. The project supports key strategic objectives within the Egypt Vision 2030 related to sustainable natural resource management and meeting international environmental obligations. Its alignment with the UNDP Country Programme Document and the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework further underscores its relevance in promoting climate resilience and efficient natural resource management. Additionally, the project contributes significantly to the GEF's biodiversity objectives by mainstreaming conservation measures into various sectors and improving the sustainability of protected area systems. Overall, the project's relevance is rated as Satisfactory (S).

Coherence: The MBDT project demonstrates a comprehensive understanding of the barriers to mainstreaming biodiversity considerations into Egypt's tourism sector. Its well-structured design offers integrated solutions aimed at removing regulatory, institutional, and financial barriers, thus fostering a conducive environment for sustainable tourism practices. However, the project's theory of change relies on assumptions regarding stakeholders' readiness to embrace biodiversity conservation, which may not align with reality. The project's limited control over involved entities poses challenges in effecting transformative change, emphasizing the need for flexible and adaptive strategies.

A critical assessment of the Project Results Framework (PRF) reveals significant shortcomings, including vague indicators, excessive volume of indicators which were observed to be a blend of activities, targets, and outputs or deliverables, with complex and challenging-to-interpret wording in many instances. The absence of gender-sensitive indicators further detracts from the PRF's effectiveness. As a result, the PRF lacked utility for the project management. Despite proposed modifications post-Mid-Term Review, fundamental flaws persisted, highlighting the missed opportunity for a comprehensive overhaul.

Effectiveness: The MBDT project has proven to be effective in meeting its objectives at the output, outcome, and objective levels, despite shortcomings in indicator and target setting. The project's success can be attributed to its robust partnership strategy, comprehensive consultative processes, effective utilization of opportunities, and the capable Project Management Unit (PMU) with expertise in mainstreaming. Ministerial-level government support has played a crucial role, garnering backing at the highest levels and aligning the project with broader national priorities.

However, the project has faced challenges, including intense competition for natural resources, limited awareness of biodiversity values, and the time-consuming nature of achieving transformational change. The COVID-19 pandemic presented additional hurdles, such as limitations on field activities, tourism industry reluctance to engage, and shifts in government priorities. In conclusion, the MBDT project has achieved considerable success with modest investment, demonstrating its potential impact on sustainable tourism practices in Egypt. Addressing challenges and adapting to externalities have been key factors in the project's overall effectiveness. **Therefore, Effectiveness is rated Satisfactory (S).**

Efficiency: The MBDT project has demonstrated cost-effectiveness through its mainstreaming approach, efficiently achieving outputs and outcomes within budget constraints. The mainstreaming approach targeted key sectors and stakeholders, facilitating positive and rapid change, and aiming for long-term systemic impact. The project's financial management has been commendable, utilizing funds effectively, guarding the budget through careful planning, and leveraging external investments and in-kind support. As of the latest expenditure report until November 2023, the project has spent 82% of the GEF finance, leaving a remaining balance of US\$ 457,036.43. The project's financial delivery is on track, with the 2024 plan and budget aligned for 100% delivery. The devaluation of the Egyptian pound posed challenges in supplier bids, with fluctuating currency exchange rates impacting quotes. Despite these challenges, the project has navigated financial complexities effectively.

The project has experienced considerable delays, with an initial delay of over 42 months in initiating the project, attributed to military concerns near the Libyan border affecting project regions. Subsequent delays, including a 6-month delay in recruiting the PMU, led to a requested extension without additional cost. The extension, justified by challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic impact, modifications to indicators, and difficulties in receiving proposals, extended the project end date to May 14, 2024.

The UNDP NIM has proven suitable for the context, with the PMU embedded in the Ministry of Environment (MoEnv), fostering strong ownership and enabling strategic partnerships. The adaptability of the project to external challenges has been successful, and competent human resources have played a crucial role in achieving project activities up to quality standards. The NIM modality and effective project management have contributed to the overall success of the MBDT project. **Therefore, the overall ranking of efficiency is Satisfactory (S).**

Project management: The MBDT project has effectively applied adaptive management measures to capitalize on emerging opportunities in mainstreaming biodiversity into the tourism development sector. Notable measures include the establishment and operation of working groups focusing on planning and development, biodiversity mainstreaming into tourism activities, and ecotourism in protected areas. These working groups, facilitated by the project team, have evolved into active entities, driving collaboration and ensuring a comprehensive approach. The project has also demonstrated an ability to leverage opportunities, such as the impact of COVID-19 on reduced tourism activities. Seizing this opportunity, the project advocated for ecotourism development as a key rebound measure post-COVID. Additionally, the hosting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP 27) in Egypt provided a platform to showcase project results and actively promote ecotourism.

Stakeholder engagement is a critical success factor for the MBDT project, involving multiple ministries, complex arrangements, and varying levels of influence. The project has effectively enhanced stakeholder participation through a collaborative approach, bringing together ministries, such as Environment and Tourism, to discuss common grounds and create synergies. This collaborative model has fostered a holistic and integrated perspective on tourism development. Partnerships are effectively managed at the project level, with successful engagement with the private sector, particularly through collaboration with the Egyptian Tourism Federation (ETF). The project's emphasis on participatory and consultative methods sets a positive precedent for future projects in the country.

The overall design of the M&E framework is deemed adequate for projects of this size and complexity, meeting standard templates. The design is supported by sufficient resources (a total of US\$ 98,000 allocated for monitoring and terminal evaluations) and clearly defined roles and responsibilities. The M&E Framework for the MBDT project was initially described in detail in Section 6 of the Project Document. It includes standard M&E items for UNDP-

GEF projects such as the Inception Workshop, meetings of the Project Board, annual PIRs, audit, MTR, TE, UNDP/GEF Tracking Tools, and the final report. However, weaknesses on the PRF and the lack of a detailed Monitoring Plan defining the data collection process for the indicators in the PRF, including data collection methods, frequency, means of verification, assumptions, and responsibility for data collection. Therefore, **the M&E design is rated as Moderately Satisfactory (MS).**

The PSC, activated in 2019, has been responsible for making management decisions, acting as the highest strategic and policy-level body of the project. However, it was not held annually as anticipated in the project document, except for 2021 (4 times in total). The MTR took place between August 2021 – February 2022, providing recommendations for project improvements. The PMU found most recommendations useful and implemented and monitored their implementation. Effective response to MTR recommendations is a positive aspect of M&E implementation. The project submitted four PIRs, providing sufficiently detailed information to monitor project performance. Other monitoring activities included field visits, quarterly reports for UNDP, regular reporting to the Ministry of Environment, and the use of GEF tracking tools/core indicators. The format of reports allows for a thorough description of activities and financial reporting. **The M&E implementation is rated Satisfactory (S).** A composite ranking that considers monitoring and evaluation design at entry together with **the M & E plan's implementation for the overall quality of M&E is Satisfactory (S).**

UNDP's role included providing project management cycle services upon the Government of Egypt's request, covering recruitment, procurement, and support to the Project Management Unit (PMU). While UNDP's services were recognized as compliant, some delays were noted, particularly in procurement and recruitment processes, impacting the overall project timeline. The Government of Egypt, acknowledging UNDP as a supportive partner, sought direct services for specific projects. The UNDP Country Office played a critical role in supervising and monitoring the project, ensuring financial transactions' accuracy, conducting audits, and preventing over-expenditure. **The Quality of UNDP Implementation/Oversight was deemed Satisfactory (S).**

The MOE, particularly through the EEAA, served as the Executing Partner, assuming responsibility for project management. The integration of the PMU into MoEnv facilitated collaboration with other ministries. The National Project Director (NPD) within MoEnv played a crucial role in overseeing project management. The MOE demonstrated strong ownership, providing co-financing and advocating for project outcomes. The Minister of the Environment's endorsement at the highest political levels underscored the project's significance. Collaboration among UNDP, the project board, MoEnv, partners, and the PMU was effective. The project exhibited adaptability to efficiently address challenges, contributing to a cohesive and responsive implementation process. The Quality of **Implementing Partner Execution was rated Satisfactory (S).** Overall, the **combined rating for project implementation/execution was deemed Satisfactory (S).**

Sustainability: The MBDT project successfully catalyzed a sustainable, responsible tourism approach, contributing to Egypt's biodiversity conservation. The project prioritized institutional change, empowering key national and district-level institutions for autonomous and enduring transformation within the dynamic tourism development landscape.

The MBDT initiative played a pivotal role in reshaping the governance of Egypt's tourism sector. Initiatives like the Green Fins certification program and increased Green Star ratings for hotels underscore the project's commitment to sustainable practices. The establishment of the Green Tourism Unit and various committees and NGOs showcased a tangible commitment to fostering environmental awareness. The adoption of legal instruments and

development of the National Sustainable Tourism Strategy marked a positive shift in governance. Despite these successes, challenges loom over the future of working groups, pending approval of some legal instruments, and the signing of crucial MoUs between ministries. **Ranking of the Institutional Framework and governance sustainability is Moderately Likely (ML).**

The project strategically engaged the private sector and recognised the crucial role of local communities in establishing collaborative frameworks. The ECO EGYPT campaign emerged as a successful tool for public and stakeholder engagement, creating a transparent communication channel. However, the campaign's continuity post-project remains uncertain and dependent on follow up projects such as Green Sharm, unless seamlessly integrated into the national tourism strategy. **Ranking of the socio-political sustainability is Moderately Likely (ML).**

Effective interventions by the project mitigated environmental risks associated with tourism. Challenges, such as the non-binding nature of SEA in Egypt and limited enforcement of EIA legislation, require attention. Notably, the project bolstered the resilience of the tourism system, reducing negative impacts and enhancing adaptability. **Ranking of the environmental sustainability is Moderately Likely (ML).**

While endorsed policies exhibit financial sustainability, concerns remain regarding the financial sustainability of new Protected Areas. Ongoing efforts to integrate financial support into broader activities and initiatives, with several initiatives, such as the Green Sharm project, USAID project, and Egyptian Italian Environmental Cooperation Phase III, are being explored to provide financial assistance and build upon the achievements of the MBDT project. **Ranking of the financial sustainability is Moderately Likely (ML).**

4.2 Recommendations and Lessons Learned

Given that the project is so close to be operationally closed at the time of drafting this TE evaluation report, the following are a mix of recommendations for corrective actions in the remaining weeks and forward-looking recommendations/lesson learned focussed on future programming:

1. **Strengthen the exit strategy to have specific actions** aiming to set out the status of activities under each component and describes what is needed to take the work forward after the close of the project. The exit strategy should be focussed on handing over the final products to the stakeholders, ensuring access to the project resources after the project ends, and more importantly documenting the future arrangements for hosting and pursuing the work on:
 - a. SEA Legislation
 - b. Modifications to Law 4/1994, including defining environmental sensitivity, and simplifying licensing and permit procedures for coastal projects.
 - c. New Marine Protected Area Declaration
 - d. Ecolodge Establishment/Construction Guidelines
 - e. Arrangements for the working groups
 - f. Income generation activities in Pas
 - g. Signing the MoU between the MoU and MoTA
 - h. SEA recommendation tracking process
 - i. Feasibility assessment of the biodiversity offset mechanism

These interventions have been begun by the project will require a home after the project's closure. These still need time to mature or, that their benefits to materialise, so it is important to upscale them through other projects or existing government programmes.

2. **Develop and implement dissemination plan for all knowledge products including a final dissemination workshop.** This approach aims to guarantee the organized storage and accessibility of valuable knowledge products for recipient stakeholders. The final dissemination workshop serves as a strategic platform to enhance the project's visibility, showcase its accomplishments, articulate the benefits derived, and elicit expressions of interest from specific stakeholders willing to take over and sustain each benefit.
3. **For future GEF projects, establish a proper tracking systems for co-financing data supported with evidence,** this is not only enabling effective reporting, but also defining clear linkages with parallel projects and identifying opportunities for partnerships.
4. **For future programming, projects to adequately review the strategic results framework during project design, the inception phase, and MTR if needed.** The PRF plays a pivotal role as an informative tool for project planning and implementation, aiding in achieving consensus among stakeholders regarding project objectives and targets. To enhance the effectiveness of the PRF, it is recommended to involve RTAs and experts in the design or validation process. The inception phase and MTR are pivotal stages in project development, involving assessments of changes in project factors and a thorough review of PRF indicators, baseline/target data, with necessary adjustments made to the PRF as needed, and this role of inception and MTR shouldn't be overlooked.
5. **For future programming, expand the scope of gender mainstreaming beyond the gender balance in committees and groups.** Rather, gender mainstreaming strategy should identifies specific activities to promote gender equality and more importantly ensuring that the project products and services are gender sensitive, example, national sustainable tourism strategy.

Lessons learned

Effective engagement of the private sector on a win-win basis. The MBDT project demonstrated a commendable practice by proactively involving the private sector in a mutually beneficial manner. Recognizing the crucial role of the private sector, particularly in the tourism industry with its technical implementation capacities, the project effectively engaged the private sector in Egypt, notably through the Egyptian Tourism Federation (ETF) and its

affiliated organizations. This engagement proved pivotal in advancing sustainable tourism practices among the private sector stakeholders. What sets this approach apart is the project's presentation of itself as an opportunity for the private sector to thrive and sustain its business whilst protecting and sustaining the natural resources, contrary to the traditional and incorrect portrayal of environmental projects as restrictive. This involved early involvement of the private sector in policy-making and collaborative testing of solutions on the ground.

A mainstreaming project is not meant to play the 'doer' role, rather a 'facilitator' role. In the context of a mainstreaming project, the evaluator emphasizes the importance of recognizing the project's role as a facilitator rather than an implementer. Success requires a clear understanding of the responsibilities associated with a mainstreaming project. The evaluator draws on his experience with other mainstreaming projects, noting that the concept and approach are often misunderstood by PMUs and partners. However, the MBDT project stands out positively in this regard. Both the MBDT team and stakeholders demonstrated a strong comprehension of the mainstreaming project's role. They effectively facilitated change, creating a collaborative space for institutions to actively participate in the journey to address strategic development and planning, fostering new forms of governance, and promoting more open co-management systems. This approach helped the PMU to affect change in organisations and agencies over which it has very little control and whom may have widely differing agendas and means of defining and measuring success.

Creating a collaborative environment is a key success factor in project management: The TE has commended the modality of stakeholders engagement implemented by the MBDT project at length. It is evident that this has been fundamental success factor. Stakeholders engaged in this TE have expressed their utmost satisfaction with the MBDT project collaborations, in fact, most of the interviewed stakeholders were talking about the MBDT project with great sense of ownership mixed with enthusiasm in presenting the project results. There have been multiple factors contributing to reach that level of engagement and collaborations in the MBDT project, including, *inter alia*, a competent PMU, a committed implementing partner (the Ministry of Environment) including ministerial support and a supportive UNDP office (Egypt CO). The MBDT project has been exemplary in playing the incremental role of GEF project by removing barriers and adding value through triggering support along with effective collaboration, and the work that MBDT project has done with different ministries and authorities is a good example on this.

Annexes

Annex 1: TE ToR (excluding ToR annexes)

Terminal Evaluation Terms of Reference

Template 2 - formatted for the [UNDP Jobs website](#)

BASIC CONTRACT INFORMATION

Location: Egypt

Application Deadline: 15 June 2023

Category: IC

Type of Contract: Terminal Evaluation (TE) International Consultant (Individual Consultant)

Assignment Type: Short-Term

Languages Required: English

Starting Date: 20 June 2023

Duration of Initial Contract: 25 working days (over a time period of 12 weeks)

Expected Duration of Assignment: 20 June 2023 – 31 August 2023

BACKGROUND

1. Introduction

In accordance with UNDP and GEF M&E policies and procedures, all full- and medium-sized UNDP-supported GEF-financed projects are required to undergo a Terminal Evaluation (TE) at the end of the project. This Terms of Reference (ToR) sets out the expectations for the TE of the full-sized project titled **Mainstreaming the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity into the tourism development and operations in threatened ecosystems in Egypt (PIMS 4590)** implemented through the Ministry of Environment (MoE)/ Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency (EEAA). The project started on the 14 November 2018 and is in its 5th year of implementation. The TE process must follow the guidance outlined in the document 'Guidance For Conducting Terminal Evaluations of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects' ([link](#)).

2. Project Description

The project was designed to mainstream biodiversity into the Egyptian tourism sector and government. It comes at a critical time in Egypt's recent history with the political changes that are currently underway to make government institutions more accountable and to develop the economy, both of which are resulting in considerable changes in the way that both tourism and biodiversity resources may be managed in the future. Therefore, the project will work on two levels: The first level will engage directly with the industry and government to fill gaps in the existing planning and regulatory framework, namely a Strategic Environmental Assessment to identify key areas, habitats and ecological processes and assess their vulnerability and guidelines for the existing EIA regulations specific to biodiversity and linked to an offsetting mechanism and developing a monitoring programme to track the impacts of tourism on biodiversity for conservation management purposes. The second level will engage the tourism industry by developing Responsible Tourism Grading and promoting Egypt as a global destination for ecotourism and developing community-based systems to allow those closest to the resources to benefit and manage them sustainably.

The project will also create one new protected area and increase the size of two more while building management capacity and developing these and four more protected areas for sustainable tourism. All of these areas are currently under threat from tourism development. Because of the uncertainty and dynamic nature of the challenge and because the tourism industry faces an adaptive challenge and to a lesser extent a technical challenge, the project will be guided by a scenario planning exercise as a means to bring about the individual and institutional behavioral changes and to ensure that the project is highly adaptive.

The expected key Outcomes of the project are

- **Outcome 1:** Direct adverse impacts of tourism infrastructure development on biodiversity and land/seascapes (primarily loss and severe degradation of critical habitats in both terrestrial and marine ecosystems) are avoided, reduced, or compensated in at least the c. 10,000 km² of ecologically sensitive areas (including c. 2324 km² inside protected areas) exposed to development pressures
- **Outcome 2:** Reduction of biodiversity impacts caused by inappropriate practices from tourists and tourism establishments, most notably disturbance effects affecting sensitive animal and plant species, habitat degradation and over-exploitation of resources.
- **Outcome 3:** One new PA (min. 30,000 ha) designated, spatially configured and emplaced, and the boundaries of 2 of the existing 5 PAs (at least 15,000 ha added to the total of 50,000 km²) in the three target regions expanded, to include critical habitats in areas facing immediate or medium-term tourism development pressures expected to adversely affect biodiversity assets, but in which representative PA coverage is lacking.
- **Outcome 4:** Pressures from tourism controlled or reduced in c. 2,324 km² of ecologically sensitive areas inside the existing and new PAs exposed to tourism development pressures.
- **Outcome 5:** PA Financing Scorecard demonstrates progress towards meeting the finance needs to achieve effective management.

The total budget of the project implemented through UNDP under National Implementation Modality (NIM) by MoE/EEAA is USD **53,060,074**, including a GEF contribution of USD **2,574,338** and UNDP TRAC resources of USD **100,000** in addition to co-financing from government of Egypt/UNDP and other partners.

3. TE Purpose

The TE report will assess the achievement of project results against what was expected to be achieved and draw lessons that can both improve the sustainability of benefits from this project, and aid in the overall enhancement of UNDP programming. The TE report promotes accountability and transparency and assesses the extent of project accomplishments.

The evaluation will contribute to the following:

- Assess the achievement of project results supported by evidence
- Assess the contribution of the project results towards the relevant outcome and output of the Country Programme Document for Egypt (2018-2022) and recommendations on the way forwards
- Assess any cross cutting and gender issues
- Assess impact of the project in terms of its contribution to, or enabled progress toward reduced environmental stress

The TE will be conducted according to the guidance, rules and procedures established by UNDP and GEF as reflected in the UNDP Evaluation Guidance for GEF Financed Projects.

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

4. TE Approach & Methodology

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

The TE Consultant 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, Mid Term Review, lesson learned reports, national strategic and legal documents, and any other materials that the Consultant considers useful for this evidence-based evaluation. The TE Consultant will review the baseline and midterm GEF focal area Core Indicators/Tracking Tools submitted to the GEF at the CEO endorsement and midterm stages and the terminal Core Indicators/Tracking Tools that must be completed before the TE field mission begins.

The TE Consultant is expected to follow a participatory and consultative approach ensuring close engagement with the Project Management Unit, government counterparts (the GEF Operational Focal Point), Implementing Partners, the UNDP Country Office, the Regional Technical Advisor, direct beneficiaries and other stakeholders.

Engagement of stakeholders is vital to a successful TE. Stakeholder involvement should include interviews with stakeholders who have project responsibilities, including but not limited to the stakeholder list below; executing agencies, senior officials and task team/component leaders, key experts and consultants in the subject area, Project Board, Project Advisory

Committee, project beneficiaries, academia, local government and CSOs, etc. Additionally, the TE Consultant is expected to conduct field missions to Egypt, including sample of project sites.

Stakeholder list:

- Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency, Ministry of Environment
- Nature Conservation Sector, Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency
- Tourism Development Authority (TDA), Ministry of Tourism
- Egyptian Tourism Promotion Authority (ETA), Ministry of Tourism
- General Authority for Fish Resources Development (GAFRD)
- United Nations Development Programme, Egypt Country Office
- Local government (governorates)
- Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) and Civil Society Organizations (CSO)
- Ministry of Agriculture
- Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities
- Governorate Administration
- Local communities and resource users
- Private Sector and Investors

Locations: Around Greater Cairo, Egypt.

- The TE Consultant is expected to visit Egypt for one week to meet with the above stakeholders and project site.

The specific design and methodology for the TE should emerge from consultations between the TE Consultant and the above-mentioned parties regarding what is appropriate and feasible for meeting the TE purpose and objectives and answering the evaluation questions, given limitations of budget, time and data. The TE Consultant 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 SDGs are incorporated into the TE report.

The final methodological approach including interview schedule, field visits and data to be used in the evaluation should be clearly outlined in the inception report and be fully discussed and agreed between UNDP, stakeholders, and the TE Consultant. The final TE report should describe the full TE approach taken and the rationale for the approach making explicit the underlying assumptions, challenges, strengths and weaknesses about the methods and approach of the evaluation.

5. Detailed Scope of the TE

The TE will focus on evaluating the overall impact of the project in the context of its goal, objectives outcomes and outputs. The TE will look at impact and sustainability of results, including the contribution to capacity development and the achievement of global environmental goals. The TE should also provide recommendations for follow-up activities.

The TE will assess project performance against expectations set out in the project's Logical Framework/Results Framework (see TOR Annex A). The TE will assess results according to the criteria outlined in the Guidance for TEs of UNDP-supported GEF-financed Projects ([link](#)).

The Findings section of the TE report will cover the topics listed below.

A full outline of the TE report's content is provided in ToR Annex C.

The asterisk "(*)" indicates criteria for which a rating is required.

Findings

i. Project Design/Formulation

- National priorities and country driven ness

- Theory of Change
 - Gender equality and women's empowerment
 - Social and Environmental Safeguards
 - Analysis of Results Framework: project logic and strategy, indicators
 - Assumptions and Risks
 - Lessons from other relevant projects (e.g. same focal area) incorporated into project design
 - Planned stakeholder participation
 - Linkages between project and other interventions within the sector
 - Management arrangements
- ii. Project Implementation
- Adaptive management (changes to the project design and project outputs during implementation)
 - Actual stakeholder participation and partnership arrangements
 - Project Finance and Co-finance
 - Monitoring & Evaluation: design at entry (*), implementation (*), and overall assessment of M&E (*)
 - Implementing Agency (UNDP) (*) and Executing Agency (*), overall project oversight/implementation and execution (*)
 - Risk Management, including Social and Environmental Standards
- iii. Project Results
- Assess the achievement of outcomes against indicators by reporting on the level of progress for each objective and outcome indicator at the time of the TE and noting final achievements
 - Relevance (*), Effectiveness (*), Efficiency (*) and overall project outcome (*)
 - Sustainability: financial (*), socio-political (*), institutional framework and governance (*), environmental (*), overall likelihood of sustainability (*)
 - Country ownership
 - Gender equality and women's empowerment
 - Cross-cutting issues (poverty alleviation, improved governance, climate change mitigation and adaptation, disaster prevention and recovery, human rights, capacity development, South-South cooperation, knowledge management, volunteerism, etc., as relevant)
 - GEF Additionality
 - Catalytic Role / Replication Effect
 - Progress to impact
- iv. Main Findings, Conclusions, Recommendations and Lessons Learned
- The TE Consultant will include a summary of the main findings of the TE report. Findings should be presented as statements of fact that are based on analysis of the data.
 - The section on conclusions will be written in light of the findings. Conclusions should be comprehensive and balanced statements that are well substantiated by evidence and logically connected to the TE findings. They should highlight the strengths, weaknesses and results of the project, respond to key evaluation questions and provide insights into the identification of and/or solutions to important problems or issues pertinent to project beneficiaries, UNDP and the GEF, including issues in relation to gender equality and women's empowerment.
 - Recommendations should provide concrete, practical, feasible and targeted recommendations directed to the intended users of the evaluation about what actions to take and decisions to make. The recommendations should be specifically supported by the evidence and linked to the findings and conclusions around key questions addressed by the evaluation.

- The TE report should also include lessons that can be taken from the evaluation, including best and worst practices in addressing issues relating to relevance, performance and success that can provide knowledge gained from the particular circumstance (programmatic and evaluation methods used, partnerships, financial leveraging, etc.) that are applicable to other GEF and UNDP interventions. When possible, the TE team should include examples of good practices in project design and implementation.
- It is important for the conclusions, recommendations and lessons learned of the TE report to include results related to gender equality and empowerment of women.

The TE report will include an Evaluation Ratings Table, as shown in the ToR Annex.

6. Expected Outputs and Deliverables

The TE Consultant shall prepare and submit:

- TE Inception Report: TE Consultant clarifies objectives and methods of the TE no later than *2 weeks* before the TE mission. TE Consultant submits the Inception Report to the Commissioning Unit and project management. Approximate due date: (before 11 July 2023)
- Presentation: TE team presents initial findings to project management and the Commissioning Unit at the end of the TE mission. Approximate due date: (20 July 2023)
- Draft TE Report: TE team submits full draft report with annexes within 3 weeks of the end of the TE mission. Approximate due date: 30 July 2023)
- Final TE Report* and Audit Trail: TE team submits revised report, with Audit Trail detailing how all received comments have (and have not) been addressed in the final TE report, to the Commissioning Unit within 1 week of receiving UNDP comments on draft. Approximate due date: (13 August 2023)

*The final TE 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.

All final TE reports will be quality assessed by the UNDP Independent Evaluation Office (IEO). Details of the IEO's quality assessment of decentralized evaluations can be found in Section 6 of the UNDP Evaluation Guidelines.¹³

7. TE Arrangements

The principal responsibility for managing the TE resides with the Commissioning Unit. The Commissioning Unit for this project's TE is UNDP Egypt 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 TE team. The Project Team will be responsible for liaising with the TE team to provide all relevant documents, set up stakeholder interviews, and arrange field visits.

8. Duration of the Work

The total duration of the TE will be approximately (**25 working days**) over a time period of (**12 weeks**) starting (5 July **2023**) and shall not exceed five months from when the TE team is hired.

The tentative TE timeframe is as follows:

- (15 June 2023): Application closes
- (20 June 2023): Selection of TE Consultant
- (29 June 2023): Prep the TE Consultant (handover of project documents)

¹³ Access at: <http://web.undp.org/evaluation/guideline/section-6.shtml>

- (04 July 2023): 5 days: Document review and preparing TE Inception Report
- (14 July 2023): 10 days: Finalization and Validation of TE Inception Report- latest start of TE mission
- 25 July-29 July 2023): 5 days: TE mission: stakeholder meetings, interviews, field visits
- (29 July 2023): Mission wrap-up meeting & presentation of initial findings- earliest end of TE mission
- (08 August 2023): 10 days: Preparation of draft TE report
- (09 August 2023): Circulation of draft TE report for comments
- (16 August 2023): 7 days: Incorporation of comments on draft TE report into Audit Trail & finalization of TE report
- (23 August 2023): Preparation & Issue of Management Response
- (30 August 2023): Expected date of full TE completion

The expected date start date of contract is **29 June 2023**.

9. Duty Station

This is a home-based consultancy with a mission to Egypt for one week tentatively (between 11 August – 20 August 2023) to hold interviews and project site visits. Most meetings will be around Greater Cairo

Travel:

- International travel will be required to Egypt during the TE mission
- The BSAFE course must be successfully completed prior to commencement of travel;
- Individual Consultants are responsible for ensuring they have vaccinations/inoculations when travelling to certain countries, as designated by the UN Medical Director.
- Consultants are required to comply with the UN security directives set forth under: <https://dss.un.org/dssweb/>
- All related travel expenses will be covered and will be reimbursed as per UNDP rules and regulations upon submission of an F-10 claim form and supporting documents.

REQUIRED SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE

10. TE Team Composition and Required Qualifications

An independent evaluator will conduct the Terminal Evaluation (TE). The TE Consultant – (with experience and exposure to projects and evaluations in other regions). The Consultant will assess emerging trends with respect to regulatory frameworks, budget allocations, capacity building, work with the Project Team in developing the TE itinerary, etc.

The TE Consultant cannot has participated in the project preparation, formulation and/or implementation (including the writing of the project document), must not have conducted this project's Mid-Term Review and should not have a conflict of interest with the project's related activities.

The TE Consultant should have the following:

Education

- At least Master's degree in environmental studies, tourisms, development subject or other closely related field.

Experience

- At least 7 years of work experience in environment related projects in particular areas of biodiversity, land degradation and climate change
- Familiar with Multi-lateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs)
- Relevant experience with results-based management evaluation methodologies.
- Experience applying SMART indicators and reconstructing or validating baseline scenarios.
- Competence in adaptive management, as applied to (*capacity development*).
- Experience in evaluating projects is a must; in particular GEF capacity development projects
- Experience working in Arab States is desired,

- Demonstrated understanding of issues related to gender and capacity development, experience in gender responsive evaluation and analysis.
- Excellent communication skills.
- Demonstrable analytical skills.
- Project evaluation/review experience within United Nations system will be considered an asset.

Language

- Fluency in written and spoken English.

11. Evaluator Ethics

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

12. Payment Schedule

- 20% payment upon approval of the final TE Inception Report
- 40% payment upon satisfactory delivery of the draft TE report to the Commissioning Unit
- 40% payment upon satisfactory delivery of the final TE 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%

- The final TE report includes all requirements outlined in the TE TOR and is in accordance with the TE guidance.
- The final TE 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.

APPLICATION PROCESS

13. Scope of Price Proposal and Schedule of Payments

Financial Proposal:

- Financial proposals must be "all inclusive" and expressed in a lump-sum for the total duration of the contract. The term "all inclusive" implies all cost (professional fees, travel costs, living allowances etc.);
- For duty travels, the UN's Daily Subsistence Allowance (DSA) rates are (Cairo), which should provide indication of the cost of living in a duty station/destination (*Note: Individuals on this contract are not UN staff and are therefore not entitled to DSAs. All living allowances required to perform the demands of the ToR must be incorporated in the financial proposal, whether the fees are expressed as daily fees or lump sum amount.*)
- The lump sum is fixed regardless of changes in the cost components.

14. Recommended Presentation of Proposal

- a) **Letter of Confirmation of Interest and Availability** using the template provided by UNDP;
- b) **Personal History Form** (P11 form);

- c) **Brief description of approach to work/technical proposal** of why the individual considers him/herself as the most suitable for the assignment, and a proposed methodology on how they will approach and complete the assignment; (max 1 page)
- d) **Financial Proposal** that indicates the all-inclusive fixed total contract price and all other travel related costs (such as flight ticket, per diem, etc.), supported by a breakdown of costs, as per template attached to the Letter of Confirmation of Interest template. If an applicant is employed by an organization/company/institution, and he/she expects his/her employer to charge a management fee in the process of releasing him/her to UNDP under Reimbursable Loan Agreement (RLA), the applicant must indicate at this point, and ensure that all such costs are duly incorporated in the financial proposal submitted to UNDP.

All application materials should be submitted to the procurement unit indicating the following reference “Consultant for Terminal Evaluation of (Mainstreaming the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity into the tourism development and operations in threatened ecosystems in Egypt (PIMS 4590)” by email at the following address ONLY: (procurementnotice.egypt@undp.org) by (15 June 2023). Incomplete applications will be excluded from further consideration.

15. Criteria for Selection of the Best Offer

Only those applications which are responsive and compliant will be evaluated. Offers will be evaluated according to the Combined Scoring method – where the educational background and experience on similar assignments will be weighted at 70% and the price proposal will weigh as 30% of the total scoring. The applicant receiving the Highest Combined Score that has also accepted UNDP’s General Terms and Conditions will be awarded the contract.

16. Annexes to the TE ToR

- ToR Annex A: Project Logical/Results Framework
- ToR Annex B: Project Information Package to be reviewed by TE Consultant
- ToR Annex C: Content of the TE report
- ToR Annex D: Evaluation Criteria Matrix template
- ToR Annex E: UNEG Code of Conduct for Evaluators
- ToR Annex F: TE Rating Scales and TE Ratings Table
- ToR Annex G: TE Report Clearance Form
- ToR Annex H: TE Audit Trail template

Annex 2: Evaluation Question Matrix

Evaluation matrix is important to identifying the key evaluation questions and how they will be answered through the selected methods. The evaluation matrix is a tool that evaluators create as a map and reference in planning and conducting an evaluation. It also serves as a useful tool for summarizing and visually presenting the evaluation design and methodology for discussions with stakeholders. It details evaluation questions that the evaluation will answer, data sources, data collection and analysis tools or methods appropriate for each data source, and the standard or measure by which each question will be evaluated.

Table 5: Evaluation Matrix

Evaluative Criteria Questions	Indicators/evidence	Sources	Methodology
Relevance: How does the project relate to the main objectives of the GEF Focal area, and to the environment and development priorities at the local and national level?			
To what extent was the project in line with GEF focal area, UNDP CPD, UNSDCF, Egypt's National development agenda and priorities?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level of alignment of project's activities with relevant stakeholders' plans Stakeholders' perceptions on the relevance of project's activities to their needs Degree of involvement and inclusiveness of beneficiaries and stakeholders in project design and implementation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> project documentations national policies or strategies, project websites Project stakeholders feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desk review Stakeholders' interviews
Are the project objectives and outputs clear, practical and feasible within its frame? Do they clearly address target groups?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Degree of coherence of the project design in terms of theory of change, components, choice of partners, structure, delivery mechanism, scope, budget, use of resources, etc. Level of coherence between programme design and project implementation approach Identification of the problem and its causes in the project being addressed? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> project documentations Project stakeholders feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desk review Stakeholders' interviews
To what extent were lessons learned from other relevant projects considered in the design?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Degree to which other projects are referenced in the project design with lessons identified and built upon 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> project documentations Project stakeholders feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desk review Stakeholders' interviews
To what extent does the Project create synergy/linkages with other projects and interventions in the country?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project's strategic partnerships and complementarities with other projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> project documentations Project stakeholders feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desk review Stakeholders' interviews

To what extent was this Project designed as rights based and gender sensitive?	Degree to which the project design identifies and address gender and human rights issues Existence of gender actions plan	project documentations Project stakeholders feedback	Desk review Stakeholders' interviews
Effectiveness: To what extent have the expected outcomes and objectives of the project been achieved?			
To what extent did the Project contribute to the attainment of the development of outputs and outcomes initially expected/stipulated in the Project Document's logical framework until the end of the project duration?	Delivery on project targets defined in the PRF Stakeholder feedback on the delivery and most significant achievements	project documentations (PIRs) Progress reports Project deliverables Project stakeholders feedback	Desk review Stakeholders' interviews
To what extent has the UNDP partnership strategy been appropriate and effective?	Partners feedback Evidence on co-design and co-delivery of project activities	project documentations (PIRs) Progress reports Project deliverables Project stakeholders feedback	Desk review Stakeholders' interviews
In which areas does the project have the greatest achievements? Why and what have been the supporting factors? How can the project build on or expand these achievements?	Geographical distribution of benefits Evidence of success factors Stakeholders feedback on the upscaling potential	project documentations (PIRs) Progress reports Project deliverables Project stakeholders feedback	Desk review Stakeholders' interviews
In which areas does the project have the fewest achievements? What have been the constraining factors and why? How can or could they be overcome?	Geographical distribution of benefits Stakeholders perceptions on the constraints	project documentations (PIRs) Progress reports Project deliverables Project stakeholders feedback	Desk review Stakeholders' interviews
What, if any, alternative strategies would have been more effective in achieving the project objectives?	Evidence of adaptive management actions where alternative strategies have been identified and addressed Stakeholders feedback on project implementation strategies and alternatives	project documentations (PIRs) Progress reports Project deliverables Project stakeholders feedback	Desk review Stakeholders' interviews

<p>To what extent are project management and implementation participatory, and is this participation of target groups/stakeholders contributing towards achievement of the project objectives?</p>	<p>Stakeholders feedback on the effectiveness of their participation Number, and type, of engagements with stakeholders Extent to which stakeholders are aware of the project and its activities</p>	<p>project documentations (PIRs) Progress reports Project deliverables Project stakeholders feedback</p>	<p>Desk review Stakeholders' interviews</p>
<p>To what extent has the project been appropriately responsive to the needs of the target groups and changing partner priorities?</p>	<p>Stakeholders feedback on the extent to which their needs are addressed Documented adaptive management actions to accommodate the changing priorities</p>	<p>project documentations (PIRs) Progress reports Project deliverables Project stakeholders feedback</p>	<p>Desk review Stakeholders' interviews</p>
<p>Efficiency: Was the project implemented efficiently, in line with international and national norms and standards?</p>			
<p>How well did Project Management work for achievement of results?</p>	<p>Extent to which project targets are met Stakeholders feedback on the effectiveness of the project management Effectiveness of the M&E functions Frequency and effectiveness of the board in decision making and strategic guidance</p>	<p>project documentations (PIRs) board MoM Progress reports Project deliverables Project stakeholders feedback</p>	<p>Desk review Stakeholders' interviews</p>
<p>To what extent has there been an economical use of financial and human resources? Have resources (funds, staff, time, expertise, etc.) been allocated strategically and cost-effectively to achieve outcomes?</p>	<p>Cost in view of results achieved compared to costs of similar projects from other organizations Project team feedback</p>	<p>project documentations (PIRs) board MoM Progress reports Project deliverables Project stakeholders feedback</p>	<p>Desk review Stakeholders' interviews</p>
<p>To what extent have project funds and activities been delivered in a timely manner?</p>	<p>Level of discrepancy between planned and utilized financial expenditures Planned vs. actual funds leveraged Timeliness of activities delivery Co-financing data and evidence</p>	<p>project documentations risk/issue register PIRs Project stakeholders feedback</p>	<p>Desk review Stakeholders' interviews</p>

	Level of cash and in-kind co-financing relative to expected level		
To what extent do the M&E systems utilized by UNDP ensure effective and efficient project management?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existence, quality and use of M&E, feedback and dissemination mechanism to share findings, lessons learned and recommendation Quality of M&E at the design stage Quality of M&E throughout the implementation Adequacy of the M&E budget Alignment of M&E to the GEF requirements Response to the MTR findings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> project documentations (PIRs) board MoM Progress reports Project deliverables Project stakeholders feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desk review Stakeholders' interviews
To what extent was there any identified synergy between UNDP initiatives/projects that contributed to reducing costs while supporting results?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Linkages with the UNDP environment portfolio in the country Documented cooperation and complementarities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> project documentations (PIRs) board MoM Progress reports Project deliverables Project stakeholders feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desk review Stakeholders' interviews
Sustainability: To what extent are there financial, institutional, socio-political, and/or environmental risks to sustaining long-term project results?			
To what extent will targeted beneficiaries benefit from the project interventions in the long-term?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beneficiaries feedback on the long term benefits Level of ownership of the project benefits by the beneficiaries Existence of financial and institutional settings to support long term benefits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> project documentations (PIRs) Risk log Progress reports Project deliverables Project stakeholders feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desk review Stakeholders' interviews
Are there any political or financial risks that may jeopardize sustainability of project results?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of commitments from government or other stakeholder to financially support relevant sectors of activities after project end Level of recurrent costs after completion of project and funding sources for those recurrent costs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> project documentations (PIRs) Risk log Progress reports Project deliverables Project stakeholders feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desk review Stakeholders' interviews
Are the legal frameworks, policies and governance structures and processes in place for	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Efforts to support the development of relevant policies at the country level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> project documentations (PIRs) Risk log Progress reports Project deliverables 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desk review Stakeholders' interviews

sustaining Project benefits?		Project stakeholders feedback	
To what extent have development partners committed to providing continuing support? What is the risk that the level of stakeholder ownership will be insufficient to allow for the Project outcomes/benefits to be sustained?	Level of project stakeholders ownership Evidence of commitments from government or other stakeholder to financially support relevant sectors of activities after project end Level of capacities at the country level to continue delivering on the project results	project documentations (PIRs) Risk log Progress reports Project deliverables Project stakeholders feedback	Desk review Stakeholders' interviews
To what extent does this UNDP intervention have a well-designed and well-planned exit strategy?	Exit strategy in place and actively operationalisation	project documentations (PIRs) Risk log Progress reports Project deliverables Project stakeholders feedback	Desk review Stakeholders' interviews
Cross-cutting issues and gender equality and women's empowerment: How did the project contribute to gender equality and women's empowerment?			
To what extent have gender equality and the empowerment of women been addressed in the design, implementation and monitoring of the project?	Extent to which programme products are sensitive to gender Extent to which project data are sex-disaggregated Existence of logical linkages between gender results and project outcomes and impacts	project documentations Project stakeholders feedback List of project participants	Desk review Stakeholders' interviews
Is the gender marker assigned to this project representative of reality?	Existence of gender marker	project documentations	Desk review

Annex 3: List of documents reviewed.

List of documents that have been reviewed includes, but not limited to:

I. Project Documents, Monitoring Tools, and Project Management Tools

1. Project Identification Form (PIF)
2. Final UNDP-GEF Project Document with all annexes
3. CEO Endorsement Request
4. UNDP Social and Environmental Screening Procedure (SESP) Form
5. Inception Workshop Report
6. Mid-Term Review report and management response to MTR recommendations

7. All Project Implementation Reports (PIRs)
8. Minutes of Project Board Meetings and of other meetings (i.e., Project Appraisal Committee meetings)
9. GEF Tracking Tools (from CEO Endorsement, midterm and terminal stages)
10. GEF/LDCF/SCCF Core Indicators (from PIF, CEO Endorsement, midterm and terminal stages); for GEF-6 and GEF-7 projects only
11. Financial data, including actual expenditures by project outcome, including management costs, and including documentation of any significant budget revisions
12. Co-financing data with expected and actual contributions broken down by type of co-financing, source, and whether the contribution is considered as investment mobilized or recurring expenditures
13. Audit reports
14. Electronic copies of project outputs (booklets, manuals, technical reports, articles, etc.)
15. Sustainability Strategy

II. Project Outputs

Activity	Documents
1. SEAs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • North Coast and Siwa SEAs • Red Sea SEA • St. Katherine SEA
2. National strategic and legal documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RfP and ToRs for Ecotourism NGO • Sustainable Tourism Strategy with Performance Indicators and letter from the Egyptian Hotel Association to the Egyptian Tourism Federation presenting the STS. • COVID-19 Policy Action Plan for Tourism Sector • Decree No.90/2023 concerning the MoTA's adoption of the ecolodge licensing criteria system • Decree No.202/2019 concerning permits for undertaking activities in PAs • Decree No. 204/2019 concerning increasing PA fees • Decree No. 203/2019 concerning establishing a committee to formulate the permits system for PA activities • NCS Restructure Proposal • Support to ban of SUP bags in South Sinai (Governor's Decision and supporting documents) • Roadmap to integrating sustainability in Sharm El Sheikh • Official establishment of a nature-based tourism committee under the Egyptian Tourism Federation, with its own federation.
3. Biodiversity Offset Feasibility Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ToRs • Selected Consultant Proposal • Awarded consultant's proposal
4. Sharm El Foqeiry Plan Revision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preliminary consultation meeting minutes • Environmental baseline scope of work proposal
5. Sustainable Diving Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposal for a certification scheme • Green Fins reports • Green Fins Policy Recommendations report • Policy action plan structure for diving industry

6. Jetties Guidelines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental Conditions for Jetties Renovations report with annexes
7. Ecolodge Guidelines and criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ecolodge Establishment Guidelines • Ecolodge Operations Guidelines • Ecolodge licensing criteria for 1-, 2- and 3-star establishments • Ecolodge Best Practices Manual
8. Hotel Certification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green Star Hotel updated criteria • Green Star Hotel newsletter • List of certified Green Star hotels (May 2023) • Final report for Green Star Hotel ToT program and training of auditors.
9. Technical Assistance for Hotel and Restaurant Operations (TAHO and TARO)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TAHO Best Practices Guide for Environmental Behavior and Resources Management in Hospitality Sector Facilities • Sustainable Management for Touristic Restaurants in Egypt manual • Comparative Study between different types of hotel business models • Training reports (Phase 1: Siwa and Red Sea, Phase 2: Sharm El Sheikh) • Environmental audit reports for 22 hotels • Egyptian Sustainable Tourism Portal including 53 factsheets.
10. Ecotourism Research and Market Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ecolodge Survey Analysis • Ecolodge and eco-tour operator questionnaires • Eco-tour operators survey results • Ecotour operators list of survey participants
11. Sustainable Safari Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training Manuals • Training Program report
12. PA Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT) 2022 • PA management and Marine Protected Area establishment: RfP and ToRs, Inception Workshop meeting minutes, PA Management Plans (Siwa, Nabq, Wadi El Gemal and El Omayed), and MPA reports with annexes, MPA questionnaire, and MPA Management Plan
13. Community Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CBNRM Schemes: Business Model Canvases and feasibility studies • Nature Services Partnerships Guidelines
14. PA Financial Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial Sustainability Scorecard 2022
15. PA Visitor and Interpretation Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concept note for interpretation facilities • Wadi El Gemal scoping visit
16. Marine Monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft MoU with CDWS • Marine Monitoring concept presentation

17. Social Media Platforms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instagram • Facebook • + Samples of Calanders and Reports
18. Brochures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English Brochure • Arabic Brochure • Spanish Brochure
19. Samples of Concept Papers and Press Releases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tribal Talks Launch Event • Wadi Degla Anti-Littering Campaign • ECO South Sinai • Towards A Green Development in the Tourism Sector (Green List) Event • Ramadan Hikes
20. Sample of Infographic material	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECO South Sinai • Towards A Green Development in the Tourism Sector Event • VR (English VR Tours and Arabic VR Tours) • Marine Conservation Campaign
21. Green List	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green List data sheet with list of hotels, ecolodges, diving centers and eco-friendly products
22. Cooperation and Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft MoU between MoTA and MoE, IUCN Draft MoU
23. Workshops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SEA workshops, ecotourism stakeholders workshop report and TDA SEA training workshop

Annex 4: list of persons consulted

Stakeholders and beneficiaries engaged:

- Mr. Sylvain Merlen, Deputy Resident Representative
- Ms. Amany Nakhla, UNDP Biodiversity and Protected Areas Team Leader
- Ms. Amira Abdel Latif, UNDP M&E Officer
- Eng. Mohammed Elewa, MBDT Project Manager
- Mr. Paolo Caroli, MBDT Chief Technical Advisor
- Dr. Ahmed Fawzy, MBDT Scenario Planning Consultant
- Mr. Mohamed Gad, Ecotourism expert, former PA manager, and investor
- Mr. Hany George, Manager of the Green Fins Programme, CDWS
- Ms. Marian, GM Assistant, CDWS
- Eng. Ahmed Yehia, STO Founding Member/ MBDT Business Development Consultant
- Ms. Hoda El-Shawadfy, Assistant Minister of Environment for Ecotourism Affairs and GEF Unit Focal Point
- Dr. Ahmed Salama, Advisor to the EEAA CEO
- H.E. Minister of Environment, Dr. Yasmine Fouad
- Eng. Fatma Hegazy, Environmental Affairs Department, Tourism Development Authority
- Mr. Ayman Afifi, Managing Director of Mawael Consultancy Firm
- Dr. Mahmoud Fouad, Co-managing Director of Mawael Consultancy Firm
- Mr. Johannes Girardi, Owner Representative of Gorgonia Beach Resort
- Mr. Ibrahim Baghy, Siwa PA Manager

- Mr. Ismail Maalem, MBDT Siwa Field Coordinator
- Eng. Ahmed Khaled, Manager, Green Star Hotel Programme
- Dr. Nashwa Talaat, Ministry of Tourism; Advisor to the Minister for Sustainable Tourism
- Mr. Alaa Akel, Chairman of the Egyptian Hotel Association and CEO of Jaz Hotel Group
- Dr. Khaled El Noby, CEO of Nature Conservation Egypt NGO

Annex 5: Interview questions

It should be noted that below interview questions has been used as a guide in the interviews, however, each individual interview is unique, and questions have been tailored to the interviewees' roles and perspectives. In addition, follow up questions have been asked based on the responses to obtain a full story from each response.

Questions

Introductory question

Could you please introduce yourself and explain your involvement and the role of your organization/agency in the project?

Effectiveness

- 1) In your opinion, what has been the greatest achievement in the MBDT project to date? And why?
- 2) What were the challenges in delivering MBDT project? How could we overcome these challenges?
- 3) What factors have contributed to achieving intended MBDT outputs and outcomes?
- 4) What worked so well and what didn't work so well? and why?

Impacts

- 5) What sort of impacts did the MBDT project deliver to its stakeholders?
- 6) What trends do you foresee in the implementing biodiversity conservation in tourism sector?

Relevance

- 7) In your opinion, to what degree the MBDT project activities are aligned to the needs of the participating stakeholders?
- 8) In your opinion, to what degree the MBDT project activities are aligned with the strategic plans and strategies of the participating stakeholders?

Efficiency

- 9) In your opinion, has the MBDT project been delivered on time and on budget? Has there been anything underachieved or overachieved within agreed framework of the MBDT project, and what are the reasons/explanation for it?
- 10) In what ways has the MBDT project been adaptive to emerging issues and opportunities? Examples?

Sustainability

- 11) Do you foresee any social, financial or political risks that may jeopardize sustainability of the MBDT project outputs and outcomes?
- 12) What would happen to the MBDT project output and benefits when the GEF funding finishes?
- 13) Going forward, how do you see the capacity of participating stakeholders to pursue delivering on MBDT related outcomes?
- 14) What lessons have been learnt for the MBDT project in achieving outcomes?

Closing

- In what ways gender has been mainstreamed in the project? Do you have any gender-related concerns?

- Anything else you would like to add that we haven't covered?

Thank you for your kind participation!

Annex 6 TE Mission itinerary and meetings agenda

Duration of assignment (28 January – 2 February 2024)

Time	Meeting	Venue
Consultant arrives on the 27th of January 2024		
Day 1: Sunday 28 January 2024		
9:30 am to 11 am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mr. Sylvain Merlen, Deputy Resident Representative Ms. Amany Nakhla, UNDP Biodiversity and Protected Areas Team Leader Ms. Amira Abdel Latif, UNDP M&E Officer 	UNDP Egypt
12 pm to 1 pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eng. Mohammed Elewa, MBDT Project Manager Mr. Paolo Caroli, MBDT Chief Technical Advisor 	MBDT Office
1:30 pm to 2:30 pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dr. Ahmed Fawzy, MBDT Scenario Planning Consultant 	MBDT Office
3 pm to 4 pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mr. Mohamed Gad, Ecotourism expert, former PA manager, and investor 	Zoom
Day 2: Monday 29 January 2024		
10 am to 11 am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mr. Hany George, Manager of the Green Fins Programme, CDWS Ms. Marian, GM Assistant, CDWS 	Zoom
1:30 pm to 2:30 pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eng. Ahmed Yehia, STO Founding Member/ MBDT Business Development Consultant 	MBDT Office
Day 3: Tuesday 30 January 2024		
9:30 am – 10:30 am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ms. Hoda El-Shawadfy, Assistant Minister of Environment for Ecotourism Affairs and GEF Unit Focal Point Dr. Ahmed Salama, Advisor to the EEAA CEO 	Cairo House
11:30 am – 12:30 am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> H.E. Minister of Environment, Dr. Yasmine Fouad 	New Administrative Capital
2:00 – 3:00 pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eng. Fatma Hegazy, Environmental Affairs Department, Tourism Development Authority 	Cairo House
Day 4: Wednesday 31 January 2024		
10 am – 11 am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mr. Ayman Afifi, Managing Director of Mawael Consultancy Firm Dr. Mahmoud Fouad, Co-managing Director of Mawael Consultancy Firm 	MBDT Office
11:30 am – 12:30 pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mr. Johannes Girardi, Owner Representative of Gorgonia Beach Resort 	Zoom
1:00 pm – 2:00 pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mr. Ibrahim Baghy, Siwa PA Manager 	Phone Call

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Ismail Maalem, MBDT Siwa Field Coordinator 	
2:30 pm – 3:30 pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eng. Ahmed Khaled, Manager, Green Star Hotel Programme 	Zoom
Day 5: Thursday 1 February 2024		
10 am – 11 pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Nashwa Talaat, Ministry of Tourism; Advisor to the Minister for Sustainable Tourism 	Zoom
11:30 pm – 12:30 pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Alaa Akel, Chairman of the Egyptian Hotel Association and CEO of Jaz Hotel Group 	Zoom
1:30 pm – 2:30 pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Khaled El Noby, CEO of Nature Conservation Egypt NGO 	Zoom
3 pm – 4 pm	<p>Debriefing to Ministry of Environment, PMU and UNDP</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms. Amany Nakhla, UNDP Biodiversity and Protected Areas Team Leader • Ms. Hoda El-Shawadfy, Assistant Minister of Environment for Ecotourism Affairs and GEF Unit Focal Point • Eng. Mohammed Elewa, MBDT Project Manager • Mr. Paolo Caroli, MBDT Chief Technical Advisor 	Zoom
Consultant depart to his duty station on Friday, 2 February 2024		

Annex 7: TE Rating scales

Evaluation criteria and ratings: The standard evaluation criteria according to UNDP/GEF evaluation policy are Relevance, Impact, Effectiveness, Efficiency and Sustainability. The different scales for rating various criteria are shown in the tables below.

Table 6: TE Rating Scales & Evaluation Ratings Table

TE Rating Scales	
Ratings for Outcomes, Effectiveness, Efficiency, M&E, Implementation/Oversight, Execution, Relevance	Sustainability ratings:
6 = Highly Satisfactory (HS): exceeds expectations and/or no shortcomings	4 = Likely (L): negligible risks to sustainability
5 = Satisfactory (S): meets expectations and/or no or minor shortcomings	3 = Moderately Likely (ML): moderate risks to sustainability
4 = Moderately Satisfactory (MS): more or less meets expectations and/or some shortcomings	2 = Moderately Unlikely (MU): significant risks to sustainability
3 = Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU): somewhat below expectations and/or significant shortcomings	1 = Unlikely (U): severe risks to sustainability
2 = Unsatisfactory (U): substantially below expectations and/or major shortcomings	Unable to Assess (U/A): Unable to assess the expected incidence and magnitude of risks to sustainability
1 = Highly Unsatisfactory (HU): severe shortcomings	
Unable to Assess (U/A): available information does not allow an assessment	

Annex 8: Signed UNEG Code of Conduct form

Independence entails the ability to evaluate without undue influence or pressure by any party (including the hiring unit) and providing evaluators with free access to information on the evaluation subject. Independence provides legitimacy to and ensures an objective perspective on evaluations. An independent evaluation reduces the potential for conflicts of interest which might arise with self-reported ratings by those involved in the management of the project being evaluated. Independence is one of ten general principles for evaluations (together with internationally agreed principles, goals, and targets: utility, credibility, impartiality, ethics, transparency, human rights and gender equality, national evaluation capacities, and professionalism).

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 imitations, 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 and did not carry out the project's Mid-Term Review.

Evaluation Consultant Agreement Form

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

Name of Evaluator: _____ Mohammad Alatoom _____

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 _____ January 2024 _____ (Place) on _____ (Date)

Signature: _____ Mohammad Alatoom _____

Annex 9: Signed TE Report Clearance form

Terminal Evaluation Report for Terminal Evaluation of 'Mainstreaming the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity into the Tourism Development and Operations in Threatened Ecosystems in Egypt (PIMS 4590)' project. Reviewed and Cleared By:

Commissioning Unit (M&E Focal Point)

Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Regional Technical Advisor (Nature, Climate and Energy)

Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Annex 10: Co-Financing for The Project By Name and By Type

Please complete for all projects at MTR and TE Stages

Please include evidence for co-financing for the project with this form (please add rows as necessary)

Sources of Co-financing	Name of Co-financier	Type of Co-financing	Investment Mobilized	Amount (\$)
Recipient Government	Government of Egypt	In Kind	Investment mobilized	500,000

GEF Agency	UNDP: Italian Cooperation	Grants	Investment mobilized	3,900,000
GEF Agency	UNDP: EU	Grants	Investment mobilized	4,866,000
GEF Agency	UNDP: Emirati Bird Breeding Center for Conservation	Grants	Investment mobilized	40,000,000
GEF Agency	UNDP: TRAC	Grants	Investment mobilized	100,000
Private Sector	Verona Land – Gorgonia Resort	In Kind	Investment mobilized	140,000
Recipient Government	Ministry of Civil Aviation	In Kind	Investment mobilized	35,000
Recipient Government	Ministry of Tourism	In Kind	Investment mobilized	11,000
Private Sector	Chamber of Hotels	In Kind	Investment mobilized	70,000
Recipient Government	Governorate of South Sinai	In Kind	Investment mobilized	80,000
Private Sector	German University of Egypt	In Kind	Investment mobilized	32,000
Private Sector	National Bank of Egypt	Grants	Investment mobilized	2,000,000
Total Co-financing				51,734,000

Annex 11: TE Audit Trail (in a separate file)

Annex 12: Tracking Tools (in a separate file)