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FINAL MTR REPORT DEL4

For client UNDP Mali

DELIVERABLE 4)

FINAL MID-TERM REVIEW REPORT AND AUDIT TRAIL

Mid-Term Review (MTR) for UNDP-GEF supported Project titled “*Community-based natural resource management that resolves conflict, improves livelihoods, and restores ecosystems throughout the elephant range.*” [Conservation of the Malian Elephant Project]

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GEF Project ID#:	9661
Atlas Project ID (formerly Award ID):	00108261
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COLOPHON



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Project:

Mid-Term Review (MTR) for UNDP-GEF supported Project titled “Community-based natural resource management that resolves conflict, improves livelihoods, and restores ecosystems throughout the elephant range.” [Conservation of the Malian Elephant Project]

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BASIC REPORT INFORMATION

Title of UNDP supported GEF financed project	Community-based natural resource management that resolves conflict, improves livelihoods, and restores ecosystems throughout the elephant range Title in French “ <i>Gestion communautaire des ressources naturelles qui résout les conflits, améliore les moyens de subsistance et restaure les écosystèmes dans toute l’aire de répartition de l’éléphant</i> ”
UNDP Project ID	PIMS 5778 Atlas Project ID (formerly Award ID): 00108261 Atlas Output ID (formerly Project ID): 00108188
GEFSEC PROJECT ID	9661
Evaluation Time Frame	17 November 2022 to March 2023
Date of Evaluation Report	24 April 2023
Region	Africa
Country	Mali
GEF Operational Program/Strategic Program	Biodiversity Focal Area, Global Wildlife Program (GWP)
GEF Agency	UNDP
National Implementing Partner	Ministry of Environment, Sanitation and Sustainable Development (<i>Ministère de l'Environnement, de l'Assainissement et du Développement Durable</i>)
Other Responsible Parties	Wild Foundation
Evaluation team members	Fabiana Issler, MTR Team Leader Ibrahima Syalla, MTR National Evaluator
Acknowledgements	<p>The Mid-term Reviewers recognize and thank the staff from the Directorate for Waters and Forests in Mali, housing the Project Management Unit (PMU), (among them Moussa Sissoko, who is now the former Project Manager, and Fatoumata Doucoure), and the UNDP Country Office in Mali (Mariam Djibril Keita, Oumar Tamboura and Adam Coulibaly) for the efficient and professional organizational support provided during this review. We also thank the UNDP’s Nature, Climate and Energy Regional Coordination Unit, in particular the Regional Technical Advisor (RTA, Goetz Schroth) for the trust and insights, and Regional Program Associate (Missale Woldegiorgis) for compliance comments. We thank Wild Foundation (Susan Canney and Nomba Ganame) for their valuable time and for having availed a wealth of documentation about the project. We thank all the field staff of Wild Foundation for having answered the survey, as well all other stakeholders who also responded to the survey. We warmly thank local leaders in the Gourma region, who took the time to share their insights over the phone.</p> <p>We gratefully acknowledge all the inputs provided to the present draft report and will complement this list in the final report, in case important acknowledgements are missing.</p>

ACRONYMS

APR/PIR	Annual Project Reports / Project Implementation Reports
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CDR	Combined Delivery Report
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora
COPIL	Project Steering Committee (according to its French acronym)
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CTA	Chief Technical Advisor
DNEF	National Directorate for Waters and Forests (according to its French acronym)
ERC	Evaluation Resource Centre (UNDP's)
GEF	Global Environmental Facility
GRES	Gender Results Effectiveness Scale
GWP	Global Partnership on Wildlife Conservation and Crime Prevention for Sustainable Development of the GEF
IEO	Independent Evaluation Office (of UNDP)
IGA	Income-generating activity
IWT	Illegal Wildlife Trade
MEAD	Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development
METT	Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (for protected area management)
MINUSMA	United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali
MTR	Mid-Term Review
NCE	Nature, Climate and Energy
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NIM	National Implementation Modality
PIMS	UNDP's GEF projects' database
PIF	Project Information Form
PIMS	UNDP's database for GEF projects
PIR	Project Implementation Report
PMU	Project Management Unit
POPP	Program and Operations Policies and Procedures
PRODOC	Project Document
QA	Quality Assurance
RTA	Regional Technical Advisor
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
TE	Terminal Evaluation
TOC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference
TT	Tracking Tool
UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
UNDOC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Table 1. Project Basic Information Table¹

Project title: Community-based natural resource management that resolves conflict, improves livelihoods, and restores ecosystems throughout the elephant range		
Country: Republic of Mali	Implementing Partner: Ministry of the Environment, Sanitation, and Sustainable Development ²	Management Arrangements: National Implementation Modality (NIM)
UNDAF/Country Program Outcome: Outcome 2: Disadvantaged groups, particularly women and young people, benefit from productive capacities in a healthy (natural) environment that is conducive to poverty reduction		
UNDP Strategic Plan: Integrated Results and Resources Framework Output 2.5: Legal and regulatory frameworks, policies and institutions enabled to ensure the conservation, sustainable use, and access- and benefit- sharing of natural resources, biodiversity, and ecosystems, in line with international conventions and national legislation.		
UNDP Social and Environmental Screening Category: High Risk		UNDP Gender Marker: 2 (the project has gender equality as a significant objective)
Atlas Project ID (formerly Award ID): 00108261		PAC meeting date: August 2018
Atlas Output ID (formerly Project ID): 00108188		GEF ID number: 9661
UNDP-GEF PIMS ID number: 5778		

Table 2. Information on projet dates (source (2022 PIR and MTR)

Project duration	72 months
PIF Approval Date	Jun 4, 2015
CEO Endorsement Date	23-Mar-2018 ³
Project Document Signature Date (project start date):	Nov 21, 2018
Date of Inception Workshop	Mar 11, 2021
First Disbursement Date	Nov 11, 2019
Expected Date of Mid-term Review	Mar 23, 2022
Actual Date of Mid-term Review	March 2023, on-going
Expected Date of Terminal Evaluation	Aug 21, 2024
Original Planned Closing Date	Nov 21, 2024
Revised Planned Closing Date	Proposed by MTR: 31-Dec-2025

1.1 Project Description

The “Conservation of the Malian Elephant” project addresses problems within the Gourma region that include illegal wildlife trade, natural resources management and human-elephant conflicts. Located in Mid-Northeast Mali, the Gourma is one of the country’s four natural regions of highest biodiversity and home to endangered Gourma elephants. Accounting for 2% of all West African elephants, these animals are threatened by the substantial surge in poaching after 2012 as well as other anthropogenic factors as unsustainable water consumption, overgrazing, deforestation, and interruption of migration routes.

¹ Source of information (unless otherwise indicated): UNDP GEF PRODOC (downloadable from <https://www.thegef.org/projects-operations/projects/9661>).

² Ministre de l’Environnement, de l’Assainissement et du Développement Durable.

³ Source of information: UNDP NCE Program Associate, via email on 01-March-2023.

The project objective is to protect Mali's elephants in key sites and enhance the livelihoods of the local communities that live along the migration route to reduce human-elephant conflict.

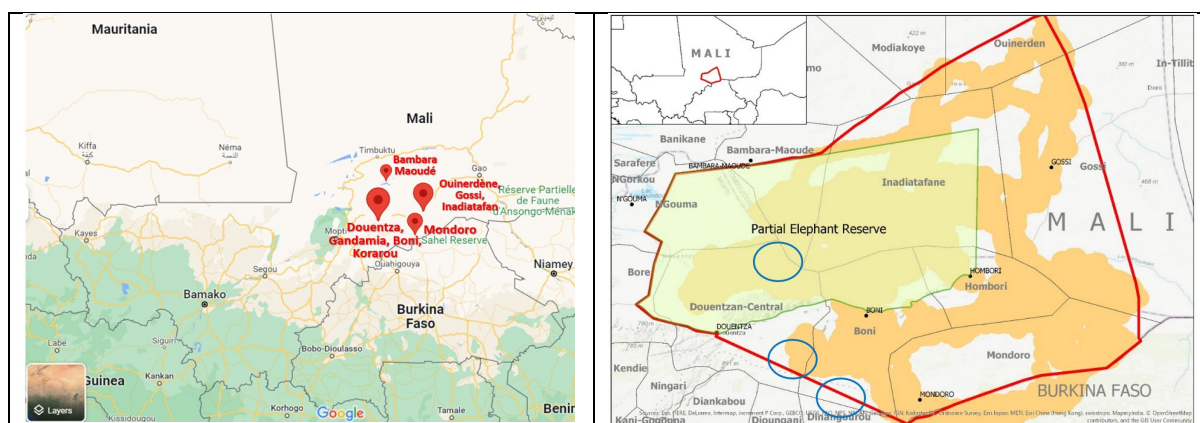
The project's objective will be achieved through the implementation of four components:

- (1) *Strengthening the legislative framework and national capacity to address wildlife crime;*
- (2) *Protecting Gourma elephants from poaching and securing seasonal migration routes and key habitat;*
- (3) *Community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) in the Gourma elephant habitat; and*
- (4) *Gender Mainstreaming, Knowledge Management and M&E.*

This project forms part of the **GEF Programmatic Approach to Prevent the Extinction of Known Threatened Species**. It falls under the **GEF Program Global Partnership on Wildlife Conservation and Crime Prevention for Sustainable Development** (GEF ID 9071) which had been proposed during the GEF6 funding cycle⁴ -- and hence known as the **"GEF-6 Illegal Wildlife Trade (IWT)"**. Under the mentioned IWT programmatic framework, coordinated knowledge management and collaboration among the individual projects is expected assured through enhanced coordination mechanisms, articulated through the program's steering committee.

In the TOR proposed for the assignment, it is indicated that the project collaborates with local authorities spread across the District of Bamako and the new Douentza Region, as well as the Communes of Gandamia, Hairé (Boni), Hombori, Korarou, Mondoro in Douentza Region, and the Circle of Gourma Rharous (Timbuktu Region): Communes of Gossi, Inadiatafane, Bambara Maoudé, Ouinerdène (Adjora) in the Gourma Rharous Circle (Timbuktu Region).. These locations have been indicatively plotted in a map (Figure 1).

Figure 1. [A] Project sites, indicative locations; [B] Project Zone in more detail ⁵



Additionally, the TOR also informs that the Program's implementation strategy is based on partnership and synergy with all non-state stakeholders involved in the fight against elephant poaching, including hereunder the protection of elephants and its habitat in the Gourma region. Partners and stakeholders include NGOs, civil society, local authorities, technical and financial partners (i.e., development partners), etc. Partnerships are implemented following certain principles, *inter alia* (i) the principle of gender mainstreaming in the design, implementation and monitoring & evaluation of development policies, strategies and budgets; (ii) efforts towards strengthening the involvement of GEF coordination (programmatic level) to ensure that GEF themes are taken into account in implementation.

1.2 Project Progress Summary

The Project Document was CEO Endorsed by the GEF on 23 March 2018 and later translated into French. The PRODOC was signed by UNDP and government on 21 November 2018. The 2022 PIR (Project Implementation Report) indicates that project has a scheduled end date of 21 November 2024 (see Table 2). At the same time, there are indications that the project has

⁴ The sixth funding cycle of the Global Environmental Facility (GEF6).

⁵ Project area (red outline) with main elephant habitat (light brown), Partial Elephant Reserve (green outline) and areas proposed for RNRM interventions (blue ovals).

only been under effective implementation (i.e. actively disbursing) since November 2019⁶, meaning that implementation started with approximately one year of delay. According to the 2022 PIR, the project is expected to close in 2024.

According to UNDP Mali and the Regional Technical Advisor (RTA), delays in the inception phase were due to the need for adequately assessing project's socio-environmental risks and for developing comprehensive safeguards, in light of the fragile security situation in the Gourma region. The covid pandemic may also have affected implementation incurring delays since 2020, but the most prominent factor affecting and delaying implementation are the regular disruptions caused by high security tensions that the project zone.⁷

The overall project strategy and its design are in line with national priorities, in spite of important changes in government in Mali since PRODOC signature. The project strategy remains relevant to this day, to the extent that it seeks to protect Mali's elephants in key sites and to enhance the livelihoods of the local communities that live along the migration route to reduce human-elephant conflict.

Historically, issues of IWT have had not received sufficient attention from the government in Mali, as the country has been struggling with several other issues, including poverty, civil conflict and governance in the past years. The long-term engagement and advocacy work of Wild Foundation in Mali relating to the conservation of the Gourma elephants, and the Foundation's more recent work on issues of IWT in Mali have been the driving force behind the project, getting it designed and approved on time for inclusion the GEF's Impact Program on IWT.

From the onset, project arrangements were proposed as having the government (represented by the National Directorate of Waters & Forests, DNEF) and Wild Foundation as key partners in implementation. The former serves as UNDP's 'Implementing Partner', and the second (the NGO Wild Foundation) as the 'Responsible Party'.

Only two PIRs have been produced by the project to date. In the first one (2021), both UNDP CO and the UNDP NCE RTA rated the Development Objective Progress Rating and the Implementation Progress Rating "Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)". In the 2022 PIR, the RTA maintained these ratings, but UNDP Mali rated both criteria as "Moderately Satisfactory (MS)". The ratings in the PIR assessments are justified, even if we consider the slight improvement in performance observed in the period 2021/2022.

The project has 15 key indicators, some of which are broken-down in sub-indicators, tallying 22 indicators and sub-indicators, all of which need to be carefully informed annually in the PIR. The reporting against project indicators depends to a great extent on inputs from Wild Foundation, which helps the PMU inform for the more complex indicators. The quality of reporting is generally good. The planning is though overly ambitious. Implementation results have shortcomings, and for this reason the monitoring assessment expressed through the PIR ratings tended to be negative. The table below summarizes the project's progress against its 15 key indicators (refer to Table 7 further down for details):

Table 3. Summary of Indicator Progress from the 2022 PIR (MTR endorsed assessment)

Indicator achievement	Number of Indicators
Objective	4
Green = Achieved	1
Yellow= On target to be achieved	1
Red= Not on target to be achieved	2
Outcome	11
Green = Achieved	1
Yellow= On target to be achieved	8
Red= Not on target to be achieved	1
UA	1
Total	15

⁶ Confirmed by source: Open UNDP, <https://open.undp.org/projects/00108261>.

⁷ For several years, the Gourma region in Mali has been affected by a complex crisis due to demographic pressures on dwindling resources, widespread poverty, limited access to basic and weak presence of State institutions. In Mali, civil conflict, the presence of armed groups and more recently also of artisanal gold miners contribute to the fragile security situation that constitutes the project's background. See e.g. UNDP (2020): Information Brief | Regional Stabilization Strategy for the Liptako-Gourma Region, dated September 30, 2022 (<https://www.undp.org/africa/publications/information-brief-regional-stabilization-strategy-liptako-gourma-region>).

1.3 MTR Ratings & Achievement Summary Table

Table 4. MTR Evaluation Ratings (dashboard)⁸

Measure	MTR [criteria for] Rating	Rating	Achievement Description
Project Strategy	N/A	N/A	Ambitious, but relevant strategy. Complex and in need of strong partnerships at various levels.
Progress Towards Results	Objective Achievement (To protect Mali's elephants in key sites and enhance the livelihoods of the local communities that live along the migration route to reduce human-elephant conflict.)	Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)	<p>The project has produced some results but faced considerable delays to start up (see timeline in Figure 3).</p> <p>In terms of its key performance indicators, results at mid-term are modest, but important progress has been noted in some areas.</p> <p>The National Anti-Poaching Strategy is in the process of being drafted. A consultancy has been engaged (or was in the process of being engaged by December 2022) to take the work further on this key output (Indicator 1a).</p> <p>Activities for the development of new wildlife crime legislation, one that recognizes poaching and trafficking on wildlife species as a serious crime (Indicator 1b), still show incipient progress.</p> <p>The establishment of a Wildlife Crime Investigation Unit (Indicator 1c) has is facing considerable delays. A mixed environmental and military anti-poaching brigade is otherwise on the ground in the project zone and conducting ground surveillance.</p> <p>On the plus side, it appears that the elephant population remains stable (Indicator 3), but still under threat. However, although it is overdue, no recent elephant surveys have been conducted in the project zone due to security risks.</p>
	Outcome 1 Achievement: (Strengthening the legislative framework and national capacity to address wildlife crime)	Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)	In terms of improving national regulations and capacity to control wildlife crime, there has been limited progress. The law that creates the Gourma Biosphere Reserve was passed and promulgated in December 2021. However, this is only the first step in the management of a new protected area. A management plan exists, but the funds and capacities to implement it on the ground are insufficient. There have been advances in terms of strengthening the capacities of national institutions, but progress is still limited.
	Outcome 2 Achievement: (Protecting Gourma elephants from poaching and securing seasonal	Moderately Satisfactory (MS)	There is evidence on increased levels of protection of Gourma elephants and their habitat (based on indicator reporting through the PIR), especially those that are based on remote sensing (e.g. observed deforestation has gone down in relation to the baseline). However, there is no recent data on the elephant population.

⁸ Following the model suggested in the UNDP GEF 2014 Guidance on MTRs. See <http://web.undp.org/evaluation/guidance.shtml#gef>, accessed on 17/11/2022.

Measure	MTR [criteria for] Rating	Rating	Achievement Description
	migration routes and key habitat		<p>The anti-poaching brigade is operational and there has been a transfer of skills as part of the establishment of a pool of trainers for members of the brigade. This is a good sign.</p> <p>At the same time, the review of the project's completion of the GEF METT (tracking tools) at mid-term shows that the project does not have a good understanding of how to measure the effectiveness of management of protected areas (see Annex 6.12).</p> <p>The situation on the ground is considered fragile and conservation gains achieved by the project risk being lost against a backdrop of civil conflict, the humanitarian crisis and the security context at the local level.</p>
	<p>Outcome 3 Achievement:</p> <p>(Community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) in the Gourma elephant habitat)</p>	Satisfactory (S)	<p>There is good progress in terms of areas under community-based natural resource management (CBRM) for sustainability, and also in terms of improved capacity of local communities to co-exist with Gourma elephants, although the number of hectares reported as protected through CBRM is still much below the mid-term targets. There is also evidence of strong involvement of communities in the surveillance of elephant populations, women included (at approx. 33%). Wild Foundation is in charge of activities under this component and rolls out income generating activities with a good level of outreach and gender sensitivity.</p>
	<p>Outcome 4 Achievement:</p> <p>(Gender Mainstreaming, Knowledge Management and M&E)</p>	Satisfactory (S)	<p>The project is successful in recording lessons and reporting on progress, both nationally and internationally – the latter mostly through Wild Foundation. The project also has results to show in terms of promoting participatory M&E (mainly through community-based efforts). There is some evidence of gender mainstreaming activities, although much more could be done for a more transformative approach to gender equality and women's empowerment. This could be achieved through an enhancement of resources dedicated to income generating activities (IGAs) initiated by women in the project zone, but also by other aspects that are elaborated upon in the report in the sub-section titled "Stakeholder engagement, with focus on Gender aspects".</p>
Project Implementation & Adaptive Management	Achievement	Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)	<p>The Project Management Unit (PMU) is understaffed and not well articulated. The main trend observed by the MTR is that there is limited effective collaboration between the Implementing Partner (DNEF) and the key Responsible Party (Wild Foundation). Project arrangements presuppose that there is trust and good communication between the DNEF and the Wild Foundation, so that the implementation of activities is coherent. However, the relationship between these two parties appears to have elements of institutional rivalry.</p>

Measure	MTR [criteria for] Rating	Rating	Achievement Description
			Although the project's reporting has quality, planning processes are overly ambitious and not based on collaboration. They need to be strengthened in the post-MTR period, if UNDP accepts the MTR's suggestion of extending the project's duration until end 2025. The division of roles and principles of accountability would benefit from being more explicit in the interactions between different entities involved in project implementation.
Sustainability	(financial, socio-economic, institutional framework and governance, and environmental)	1 = Unlikely (U): Severe risks that project outcomes as well as key outputs will not be sustained	Project results reinforce the achievements of previous interventions relating to elephant conservation in the Gourma region, including some that were led by Wild Foundation. Other ongoing and future interventions are needed for an effective and sustainable continuation of elephant conservation efforts in the Gourma region in Mali. Local populations are committed to the objectives of the project. Results pursued within the project's framework are integrated into the communes' development plans in target sites, strengthening local ownership, but not enough to ensure sustainability. The security context at the local level is a dynamic and volatile risk, negatively affecting sustainability and several other aspects of implementation. In the long run, climate variability and change may also threaten project achievements, e.g. if severe drought becomes persistent in upcoming years and if higher temperatures can trigger unexpected forest fires.

1.4 Concise summary of conclusions

The title of GEF Program under which the project was approved suggests that **biodiversity conservation and wildlife crime prevention** go hand in hand. In the strategy for the Mali Elephant there are both the wildlife crime prevention aspect and the conservation of biodiversity – the latter through the operationalization of a newly created Gourma Biosphere Reserve with 4.2 million ha⁹. As for the wildlife crime aspect, the project applies a law enforcement and repressive approach, complemented by a more preventive approach, one that seeks to build trust, promote peace and inclusiveness through the engagement of the local populations and co-participation in project benefits.

The repressive approach is considered necessary, not least also because of the on-going civil conflict that affects the project zone. The community engagement aspects of the project, as well as some aspects of ecological monitoring (elephant surveys e.g.) had been entrusted to Wild Foundation. Interventions on the ground led by Wild Foundation complement and build on some of their previous and on-going projects funded by other non-GEF sources¹⁰.

As the national institution responsible for protected area management in Mali, DNEF has now a considerable challenge in terms managing an enlarged protected area with limited human capacity, and in a region of the country that faces complex problems of poverty and governance, in addition to humanitarian and security challenges.

⁹ The Gourma Biosphere Reserve expands the protected area coverage of what was previously the "Gourma Elephant Reserve in Mali" (*Réserve partielle de faune du Gourma*) with 1.2 million ha, and which had existed since 1959 (see <https://www.fao.org/faolex/results/details/en/c/LEX-FAOC156347/>).

¹⁰ See e.g. <https://wild.org/mali-elephants/>, accessed on 25 April 2023.

DNEF and NGO Wild Foundation must enhance their partnership for achieving the project objective. This enhanced partnership will enable DNEF to learn new methods and acquire new skills for managing wildlife crime through an integrated approach. This approach implies collaboration among national and international institutions. DNEF departs from a fragile institutional and financial capacity baseline, as well documented in the PRODOC.

The main MTR conclusions are:

- Project Design is considered relevant. The project is well designed and it adequately took risks and safeguards into consideration. The PRODOC in English and French are both well edited.
- The Results Framework/Logframe is also highly relevant, presented in a logic and balanced way from the point of view of indicators, which are formulated in a clear way (most of them are SMART¹¹) and they connect well with the core indicators of the GEF's Global Wildlife Program (GWP)¹².
- The project's Theory of Change (TOC) is also well framed and builds well around the GWP's own TOC.
- Project outputs are also relevant and balanced and reflect well the TOC content.
- In terms of implementation, delays were observed in the achievement of outcomes because of the time gap in the project's initiation because of the security context.
- The outcome indicators are generally on track, based on the assessments included in the PIR (2022), but most of the key indicators (at objective level) are not on track – reason why the Objective Achievement was rated as "Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)".
- Data that can actually inform the status of elephant protection in the Gourma will not be available until the elephant survey has been effectively conducted. Considerable delays were registered in the conduct of this important activity. Until the end of 2022 (the limits of the MTR's scope), there was limited evidence that the survey would be soon conducted.
- The PMU is not well articulated and it is also understaffed (this assessment considers the time scope of the MTR, until December 2022). There are also serious difficulties in communication and collaboration between the Implementing Partner (DNEF) and the key Responsible Party (Wild Foundation). These aspects need to be urgently addressed.
- During the MTR, a stakeholders' perception survey was conducted (see [Annex 6.3](#)). Results confirm a relatively strong level national ownership (with caveats), a good policy fit and the project's contributions to capacity development. The survey also highlights issues of efficacy and the limited progress made by the project in certain areas. The survey does not provide certainty about the timelines needed for sustainability or the conditions for it.
- Overall, the year 2022 has seen an acceleration in project implementation towards results, despite the precarious security situation.
- The project will need a duration extension at least until December 2025 for realizing its goals.
- Regular risk management, dialogue and risk management must be enhanced in the implementation approach.

1.5 Recommendation Summary Table

The MTR offers the following recommendations, listed in the table that follows in order of priority (logic, relevance and urgency):

Priority	Recommend. #	Recommendations Description	Addressed to
1	8	Significantly improve the project's internal communication and the institutional collaboration within it. There seems to be an underlying problem of rivalry between DNEF and Wild Foundation, which should not exist in a project of this nature. On the contrary, GEF projects are to a great extent about multi-stakeholder dialogues and collaboration – no matter how difficult these may be. The MTR suggests that UNDP plays a stronger QA role on the project's workplanning and that a productive dialogue between the two main partners/parties (DNEF and Wild Foundation) are promoted by UNDP on a regular basis – rather than	Project Management Unit (PMU), UNDP and Wild Foundation

¹¹ SMART indicators (meaning Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound).

¹² GEF Partnership for the Conservation of Wildlife and the Prevention of Wildlife Crime and for the Sustainable Development ("Global Wildlife Program").

Priority	Recommend. #	Recommendations Description	Addressed to
		waiting for the COPIL to engage in substantive debates. The MTR recommends monthly meetings with a core executive group of partners involving UNDP, DNEF and Wild Foundation will help improve communication and also to promote pro-active decision making with respect to project implementation. Planning and implementation should be the main agenda topics in such meetings, as well as sorting operational issues. Regular dialogue between partners helps build trust and avoid menial operational issues are excessively discussed during the COPIL, an organ that should instead be discussing strategies and policies relating to elephant conservation.	
2	4	Accelerate key studies – such as the follow-on study to the Anti-Poaching Strategy and the full operationalization of the Anti-poaching Unit, following international best practices on issues of international wildlife trade (IWT), e.g. from CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) or UNDOC, and by actively learning lessons from other projects in the GEF's Global Wildlife Program (GWP). The MTR also recommends that UNDP engages the new project manager in the revision of the METT scorecard (and related tools), taking into account the detailed revision already provided by the MTR in Annex 6.12 of its D4 report.	UNDP CO and PMU
3	5	Accelerate the legal, institutional and financial consolidation of the Gourma Biosphere Reserve and its operationalization as a well-managed protected area, e.g. learning from the successes and failures of the long-term management of Boucle du Baoulé Biosphere Reserve. This will require vision and a much stronger collaboration among partners.	DNEF and Ministry of the Environment, Sanitation, and Sustainable Development (MEADD)
4	6	Mobilize additional funds for strengthening the resilience of local populations through the scaling up of income-generating actions, actively including women as beneficiaries of such activities.	Wild Foundation, UNDP CO, DNEF, MEADD
5	7	The mid-term review (MTR) suggests that UNDP plays a stronger advocacy role in mainstreaming the principles of accountability and quality of governance in the management of Protected Areas. This work can start through the roll out of skills-focused training course on protected area governance benefiting core staff and DNEF at the central and decentralized levels.	UNDP CO, PMU
6	1	The mid-term review (MTR) makes three related proposals regarding the project's timeline: (1) Extend the project duration until the end of 2025; (2) Commend the Terminal Evaluation by mid-2025; and (3) Accelerate implementation towards results in 2023 and 2024, strengthening the elements of sustainability currently in deficit.	UNDP CO, UNDP NCE
7	13	Clarify as soon as possible the roles, means and the arrangements for conducting the arial survey of elephants. It is urgent to complete the elephant population survey in the Gourma.	UNDP CO, DNEF
8	10	To achieve the project's objective the law enforcement and repressive approach needs to be complemented by a more preventive approach that seeks to build trust, promote peace and inclusiveness. It is therefore essential equally engage and support the local populations, departing from what they are already doing in view of gradually guiding them towards actions that contribute to the protection of elephants and to the overall conservation of biodiversity. In this light, and considering the project's long-term objective (protect elephants, conserve and enhance biodiversity), as well as local people's short-term drivers, it is strongly recommended that the project targets different types of actions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actions such as "total conservation", bringing a few scattered areas under strict protection. The local populations themselves will define which zones will they apply strict conservation. 	UNDP CO, DNEF, Wild Foundation

Priority	Recommend. #	Recommendations Description	Addressed to
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Actions such as "partial conservation", bringing areas under a less strict type of protection as rangeland reserves. Local communities themselves will define which zones will be included and which restricting rules for resource use and exploitation that they commit to applying. Actions such as natural resource management, development of fire-breaks against wildfires, application of local rules and sanctions, as well as laws that govern NRM. The local population defines which actions apply to which resources and strategic areas that will be enhanced, considering a certain number for resource use and exploitation rules through the implementation of actions to improve the productive potential of these areas or resources. 	
9	11	Invite project stakeholders, including at the decentralized level, to participate in training on gender equality and women's empowerment in development cooperation.	UNDP
10	9	Based on unresolved questions related to the nature of certain expenditure lines in the various reports on the state of financial execution of the project, the Mid-Term Review calls for a better elaborated and more discernable justification of certain atypical financial transactions, as well as negative expenditure observed in 2021.	UNDP
11	3	<p>The MTR takes notes of the construction of a warehouse for storing confiscated products from illegal wildlife trade (in this case ivory) being now completed, and calls the attention to the risks linked to maintaining ivory stockpiles over long periods of time, regardless of how secure those storing facilities are designed to be. Experience from elsewhere in Africa show that it is not advisable (e.g. Mozambique) shows that storing illegal items that pick a high price in the international market will only create a strong incentive for theft and corruption, including at the highest levels. The MTR recommends that confiscated ivory should be immediately weighed and quantities recorded in front of multiple witnesses. Thereafter, the products should be immediately destroyed in front of the public, never to be used. Similar principles apply to illegal drugs, and other illicit products. Here are a few advisory resources to be consulted on the topic:</p> <p>https://cites.org/eng/imp/ivory_stockpile_mgmt.html https://www.worldwildlife.org/stories/crush-and-burn-destroying-illegal-elephant-ivory https://www.unodc.org/documents/Wildlife/Toolkit_e.pdf https://www.elephantprotectioninitiative.org/ https://www.elephantprotectioninitiative.org/ivorymanagement https://www.bmj.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/EN/G20/UNODC_Adressing_Corruption.pdf</p>	DNEF
12	12	It is proposed that UNDP engages with DNEF and Wild Foundation in the preparation of joint communication pieces about the project and its positive results. The pieces of communication / outreach to be prepared may be e.g. a short film, a jingle or an App, as long as it can be easily consumed and has strong impact in terms of advocacy. An adequate budgetary allocation should be put aside for the purpose in 2023. It is however important to specify that this is a communication on results and not on the programming of actions and travel of staff in the field, precisely to avoid endangering these staff. It should be an advocacy and decision-oriented communication with the aim of helping the additional resource mobilization effort.	UNDP CO, DNEF, Wild Foundation
13	2	A reflection exercise on the validity of the project's current assumptions should be conducted together as part of its regular risk assessment exercise. To assist in the exercise, the MTR includes in its report, as an	UNDP CO

Priority	Recommend. #	Recommendations Description	Addressed to
		example, the assumptions review matrix. Several assumptions do not appear to be valid and may be disregarded. Others can be reformulated.	

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Purpose of the MTR and objectives

The main goal of the MTR is to identify the necessary changes to be made in project implementation so as to set it on-track to achieve its intended results. More specifically, the MTR assesses **early signs of project success, or failure**, following the general guidance and methodology embedded in official UNDP and GEF documents concerning evaluations and reviews, including hereunder the **core principles of integrity, accountability, respect and beneficence** of the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG).

Gender-sensitive methodologies and tools in the MTR have been used for ensuring that gender equality and women's empowerment, as well as other cross-cutting issues such as the mainstreaming of SDGs, are duly incorporated into the MTR report.

The MTR exercise enables furthermore the review of the project's strategy and the assessment of risks to the sustainability of project results and outcomes.

Methodological Guidance

The assignment's methodology is informed by guidance from both UNDP and the GEF on evaluation processes. The main source of methodological inspiration, knowledge and resources (including examples) is the website of UNDP's Independent Evaluation Office (IEO), which has been explored, and resources actively used:

<http://web.undp.org/evaluation/index.shtml>

As mandated by the TOR for the present MTR exercise, a key 2014 publication that guided the present evaluation is titled "*Guidance for conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-supported, GEF-financed Projects, Project Level Monitoring*"¹³, referred to in this report as the "**UNDP GEF 2014 Guidance on MTRs**" available in English, French and Spanish in the website of UNDP's IEO.¹⁴

The **UNDP GEF 2014 Guidance on MTRs** provides general methodological frameworks for reviewing UNDP GEF projects and also a thorough structure for MTR reports. However, the guidance is not specific about a fixed objective for the MTR process. It can vary according to context. In this case, it was set out in the TOR (included in Annex 6.1). Else, the 2014 Guidance is prescriptive concerning the MTR findings, which should be presented around the following four areas outlined in the standard MTR ToR template included in the Guidance: **(A) Project Strategy, (B) Progress Towards Results, (C) Project Implementation and Adaptive Management, and (D) Sustainability**. The specific assessment of these elements is included in [Section 4](#) of this report (Findings). The recommended structure prescribed was also strictly adopted.

Specific Objectives (from TOR)

In the TOR, the **strategic objectives, scope and use of the evaluation** are mentioned, including hereunder the proposed goals of the present MTR:

¹³ See: http://web.undp.org/evaluation/guideline/documents/GEF/TE_GuidanceforUNDP-supportedGEF-financedProjects.pdf.

¹⁴ See <http://web.undp.org/evaluation/guidance.shtml#gef>, accessed on 17/11/2022.

*The MTR will assess progress towards the achievement of the project's objectives and results, as set out in the Project Document, and **measure early signs of success or failure of the project, in order to identify the changes needed to put the project back on track to achieve its expected results.** The MTR will also examine the project's strategy and sustainability risks to support the overall improvement of UNDP programs.*

The need for measuring the project's early signs of success or failure through the MTR is particularly important, for it enhances learning and innovation by assessing the extent to which certain measures, strategies or policies have been effective or not, how and why. The purpose is "[...] to identify the changes needed to put the project back on track to achieve its expected results". This suggests that the project team and implementing partner(s) are the main target audience for the MTR report, followed by UNDP. Overall, MTR findings are expected to help the project achieve improvements.

The presentation of findings in the final report strived to be systematic and impartial. Above all, the MTR report is evidence-based, credible, reliable and useful to the project, to UNDP and to the stakeholders involved in the project, including and in particular the beneficiaries, among them women.

The MTR's approach applies results-based management (RBM) methodologies aimed at improving the project's management effectiveness and accountability by defining realistic expected results, monitoring progress towards them, learning and integrating lessons into management decisions and donor reporting. The preset report focused the analysis on results and all the connected aspects (*inter alia* relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability). It fully considers gender aspects and the needs for socio-environmental safeguards in UNDP's programming, following the guidelines of current policies and trends.

2.2 Scope & Methodology: principles of design and execution of the MTR, MTR approach and data collection methods, limitations to the MTR

The present MTR covers the entire duration of the project to date, more specifically from its start date in 2018 till the end of 2022.

It is important to remark that the analytical scope of the MTR covers only until December 2022. This applies to the MTR's discovery phase (October to December 2022), and to the analysis of planning processes of financial figures and project achievements which covered the period 2018 to 2022. The MTR's period from January to March 2023 served three purposes only in the MTR process: (1) MTR consultants participated in the latest Project Steering Committee Meeting (COPIL), which took place on 02 February 2023; (2) Complete the assessment of the Tracking Tools and Co-financing (in Annexes 6.12 and 6.8 respectively); and (3) Address comments to the Draft MTR Report. Impressions collected during the mentioned COPIL meeting are also included in the scope of the MTR, as it was an important event for observing the project's functioning and for exchanging views with stakeholders on early MTR results. However, the main conclusions were drawn on the basis of data collected only until December 2022.

The MTR builds its analysis on evidence-based information/data and puts emphasis on the credibility, reliability, and usefulness of the MTR exercise for the project. This implies that recommendations made by the MTR must be pragmatic and focused on how the project can use them to bring about improvements to implementation, processes and results.

Principles and Methodological Basis

UNEG's ethical principles also come into play in guiding MTRs processes. They include **integrity, accountability, respect and beneficence**. These principles are forward-looking and slated to help conceived to help UN Agencies fulfill their mandate in support of the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**. UNEG's principles are listed in full in Annexure as part of the TOR (see also [Annex 6.9](#) with the MTR Team's signed UNEG Code of Conduct form).

The detailed methodology, approach and the specific data collection methods were included in the Inception Report developed by the MTR team. Herein we provide a summary.

The methodology for the present MTR relied on a mix of methods and tools, including qualitative and quantitative methods that underpinned the analysis. These methods were backed by document review and data that was specifically gathered for the MTR. It includes e.g. financial information, tracking tools results and the application of a stakeholder perceptions' surveys tailored to the project (see [Annexes](#) for more information). Careful analysis of the data collected through the Project Implementation Reports (PIR) was the main basis for the assessment of progress and outcomes. This was complemented observations and direct stakeholder consultations conducted by the MTR consultants. Their participation in the COPIL meeting in February 2023 was particularly instructive to gain insight into the project's internal functioning. Other reports and documents were also brought to bear in the analysis.

Regarding stakeholders, the UNDP GEF 2014 Guidance on MTRs clearly indicates that the MTR process should follow a collaborative and participatory approach for ensuring that the MTR team engages with key stakeholders, starting with the Commissioning Unit (in this case UNDP Mali), the UNDP NCE RTA, followed by government counterparts, and other key stakeholders (in this case Wild Foundation as an important Responsible Party). The MTR team must also consult project local beneficiaries. In this case, due to language barriers, this consultation was conducted by the national consultant.

Limitations to the MTR and other considerations

The methodology has been optimally conceived to achieve the goals of the MTR. Due to the pandemic, security risks and other cost-effectiveness considerations, the Commissioning Unit and the MTR Team agreed that the MTR decided should take place remotely. Documentation was shared and explored early during the MTR's discovery phase (see [Annex 6.7](#)). In spite of these considerations, the remote modality of the MTR could have imposed some limitations.

The following was considered:

- Whenever possible, meetings in Bamako were held in person by the national consultant.
- Long telephonic conversations were scheduled and conducted between the national consultant and project beneficiaries.
- Remote Communication between the international MTR consultant, on the one hand, and the project, the CO and/or stakeholders of the project and the local evaluator, on the other, had used all possible means to compensate for the lack of an in-country mission by the international consultant.
- As a site visit did not take place, but the national evaluator held telephonic conversations with at least 5 project stakeholders in project sites (beneficiaries), including among them one woman. Results were descriptive and unstructured, and helped enrich the narrative on ownership and sustainability. The calls took place over a three-week period in December 2022. This is because it is difficult to maintain a structured agenda with local partners over the phone. A culturally and gender sensitive approach applied.
- The results from these consultations and others conducted in Bamako by the national consultant were promptly shared with the international consultant.

Overall, with a remote evaluation process, and even with a good level of communication between the national consultant and stakeholders, and between the two MTR consultants, it is possible that some contextual and subliminal information may have been missed. These, could in theory have constituted a few limitations in the MTR, but none that could compromise the credibility and usefulness of the MTR results.

By generally following a workplan, applying the proposed evaluation questions ([Annexure 6.3](#)) and conducting interviews in the most effective way, it was possible to obtain a very good result from the MTR, without putting people's health, safety and security at risk.

2.3 Structure of the MTR report

The MTR Team followed the report structure prescribed in the UNDP GEF 2014 MTR Guidance, which had been included in the MTR Inception Report in two languages (English and French) for the approval of the Commissioning Unit.

More specifically, this is the structure:

- The report starts with a Basic Table on the first page after the cover page. It includes six sections, the first one (Section 1) is the Executive Summary and the last one (Section 6) contains annexures.
- In Section 1, the main findings are presented in a summary fashion, including a brief project description, the MTR ratings assigned, summary conclusions and recommendations in table format.
- Section 2 includes an introduction, which states the purpose of the MTR and summarizes the methodology used.
- Section 3 provides more thorough descriptions of the project, its strategy, the TOC, project timelines and the main stakeholders. It also includes some analysis and recommendations weaved into the narrative.
- Section 4 is the most important one as it contains 'Findings'. It is sub-divided into four main sub-sections:
 - 4.1) Strategy
 - 4.2) Progress Towards results
 - 4.3) Project Implementation and Adaptive Management
 - 4.4) Sustainability
- Section 5 wraps-up conclusions and recommendations.

MTR recommendations are ordered in Section 1 according to priority. In the body of the report, they are numbered according to the order of appearance. In the conclusions, recommendations are organized according to category. Hence, all recommendations appear in the report three times. Although this is the content repetitive, it was considered as the best way to comply with the guidance and MTR prescribed structure.

3 PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND BACKGROUND CONTEXT

3.1 Development context: environmental, socio-economic, institutional, and policy factors relevant to the project objective and scope

The fauna of Mali is characterized by a diversity of species, including the Gourma Elephants population, with both national and international biodiversity significance, though threatened mainly because of their reduced number and due to anthropic pressures. According to statistics stated in the PRODOC, the Gourma elephant population represented in 2017 nearly 12% of West African elephants.

The Gourma Elephants live in the meanders of the Niger River in Mali, southward to a region neighboring Burkina Faso and they travel long distances in a circular migration pattern over an area of more than 32,000 sq km. What constitutes a natural habitat for these elephants constitutes also the homestead of local communities settled in this area, including the source of their livelihood, water and survival. This creates a high probability of conflict between people and fauna, and represents an added threat to these animals, besides habitat loss. In Mali, hunting elephants for ivory was an emerging threat around 2015, but the number of killings has been going down since.

The project Objective is to protect Mali's elephants in key sites and enhance the livelihoods of the local communities that live along their migration route by reducing human-elephant conflict.

At the political and institutional level, the overall situation in Mali is currently facing serious issues, which are: (i) the current insufficiency of environmental policies and the adequacy of legal frameworks for facing the threat of increased illegal trade in wildlife (in this case affecting elephants for their ivory); (ii) weak capacities of government and key agencies to effectively enforce the law in situations of military conflict; (iii) lack of universally accepted structures and institutions within local communities to enable the sustainable management of natural resources.

3.2 Problems that the project sought to address: threats and barriers targeted

Various threats directly affect the population of Gourma elephants and their habitats, such as poaching (in general, including of elephants), conversion of elephant habitat to agriculture, competition with livestock for habitat and overgrazing, and deforestation of wooded savannah and riparian ecosystems, wildfires and the increased variability in rainfall and increased runoff. All of these threats lead to an increase in conflict between humans and elephants, which can later lead to revenge elephant killings.

For several decades, the management of natural resources throughout the Gourma's elephant range without involving local communities has failed to resolve conflicts, or to improve people's livelihoods and restore ecosystems in the elephant migration pathway.

Within this context, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), in collaboration with the Ministry of the Environment, Sanitation and Sustainable Development (MEADD), initiated in 2018 the initiative for conserving the Elephants of Gourma. Although MEADD has offices throughout the national territory, it has made the National Directorate of Water and Forests (DNEF) its technical arm for a more efficient implementation of the UNDP GEF project in question here, titled: *"Community-based natural resource management that resolves conflict, improves livelihoods and restores ecosystems across elephant range"*. The mentioned UNDP GEF project followed other past and parallel initiatives that had similar goals, including with the involvement of Wild Foundation that has for more than 20 years engaged with stakeholders in Mali for the protection of elephants.

The project strategy considers that the protection protecting the Gourma elephant population is an effective way to promote the conservation of the entire threatened habitat.

There are three main barriers that project proposes to overcome:

- Absence of effective policies and institutional framework for biodiversity conservation and for controlling poaching and illegal wildlife trade (IWT);
- Insufficient capacity of national environmental agencies and PAs to address poaching, IWT, and land degradation issues; and
- Low capacity of local communities to manage natural resources sustainably and protect wildlife.

The human-elephant conflict (HEC) is at the heart of the project strategy. At the same time, according to the PRODOC, poaching of elephants in Mali for the commercial and illegal exploitation of ivory targeting the illegal and illicit international market (issues of "IWT" or illegal wildlife trade) has been very high in the past, but decreased significantly since 2016. However, this specific threat to elephants and its habitats linked to IWT may re-emerge in the Gourma Region, where civil conflict has been aggravated in recent years. Project stakeholders would like to act preventively.

3.3 Project Description and Strategy: objective, outcomes and expected results, description of field sites (if any)

The Project "Mali Elephant Conservation Project" is addressing the following issues in the Gourma Elephant Biosphere Reserve:

- illegal wildlife trade (IWT)
- the management of natural resources and
- human-elephants conflict (HEC).

Located in the center of northeastern Mali, the Gourma is one of the country's four most biodiverse natural regions, home to the endangered Gourma elephants (see the map of project sites in Figure 1). These animals are threatened by the sharp increase in poaching after 2012 as well as by other anthropogenic factors such as unsustainable water consumption, overgrazing, deforestation and the interruption of migratory routes. The project's goal is to protect Mali's elephants at key sites and improve the livelihoods of local communities living along the migration route to reduce human-elephant conflict.

The mentioned objective will be achieved through the implementation of four components:

- Component 1) Strengthening the legislative framework and national capacity to address wildlife crime.
- Component 2) Protecting Gourma elephants from poaching and securing seasonal migration routes and key habitat.

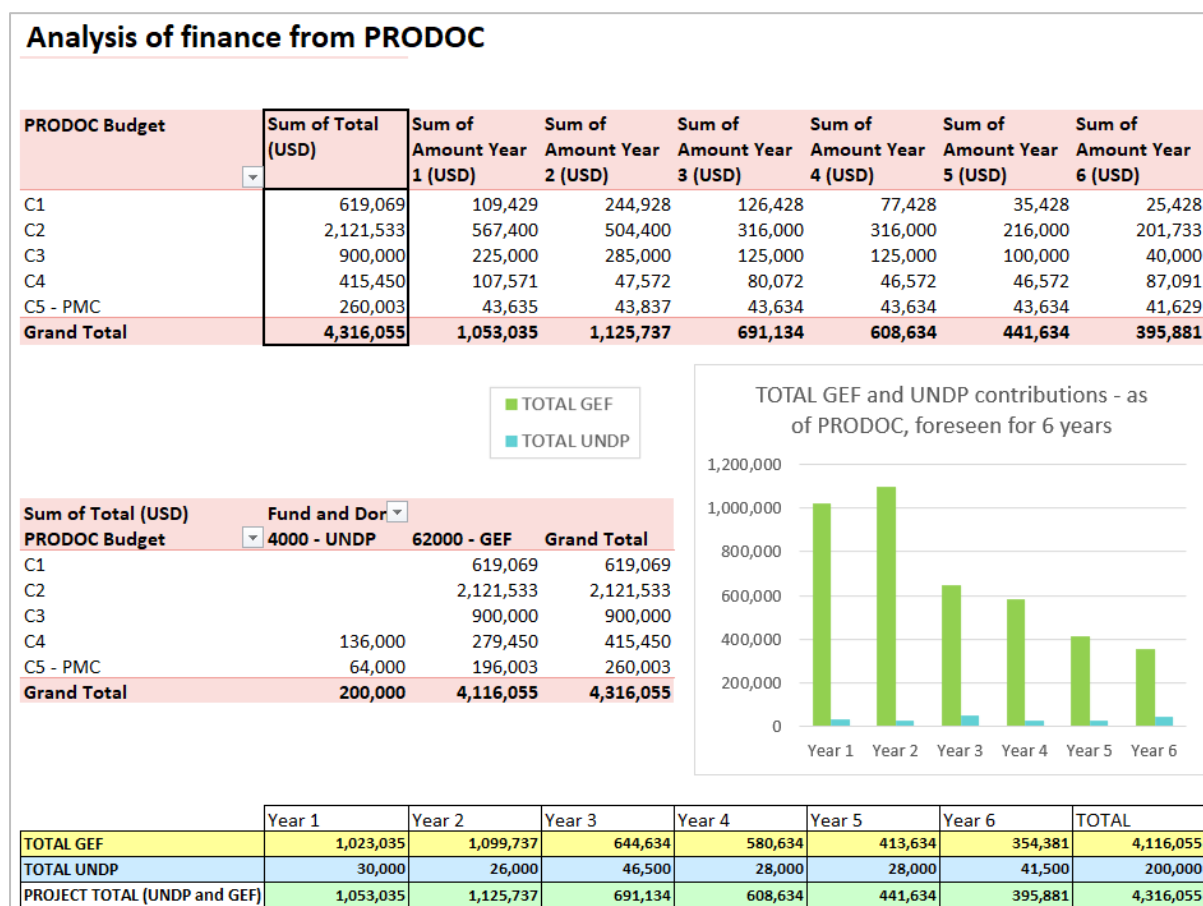
- Component 3) Community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) in the Gourma elephant habitat.
- Component 4) Gender Mainstreaming, Knowledge Management and M&E.

This project forms part of the GEF Programmatic Approach to Prevent the Extinction of Known Threatened Species, and falls under the GEF Program Global Partnership on Wildlife Conservation and Crime Prevention for Sustainable Development (Project 9071). Under this programmatic framework, with the coordination through the Program Steering Committee, coordinated knowledge management and collaboration of the individual projects are expected to be assured.

In terms of the project's strategy for utilizing its funds, a summary of the break-down of funds from the PRODOC is shown in Figure 2. The plan appears to be that the project would start by disbursing high amounts in its year 1 and 2 (more than \$1 million per years) and then gradually decrease annual disbursements, apparently expecting that other sources of funds would step in to ensure financial sustainability. As the MTR has effectively observed, this was not the case. The project faced many delays to actually start up, accumulating start-up delays of more than 1 year (as will be shown in section 3.6). Disbursements in the first two years were much lower than what had been targeted in the PRODOC. Additionally, considering the challenges faced by the Government of Mali to sustain public investment, the expectations towards sustainability (especially financial) had been over-optimistic. The more detailed evidence and analysis behind these early conclusions are included [section 4.3](#).

On a positive note, the UNDP co-financing contribution, initially foreseen in the as \$200,000, ended up being higher than expected (more than \$416K by end 2022). The analysis is included in [section 4.3](#) under "Finance and Co-financing" and in [Annex 6.8](#).

Figure 2. Summary of funds as planned in the PRODOC (per year, per component, per source of funds)



3.4 Project Implementation Arrangements: short description of the Project Board, key implementing partner arrangements, etc.

The project's management arrangements include the following bodies:

- National Steering Committee (CNP – or the “COPI” in French): Strategic Orientation and approval of Work Plans.
- Project Management Unit (PMU): Daily management of the Project and ensures the secretariat of the CNP.
- Technical Committee: All technical stakeholders at the operational level (Wild Foundation, local NGOs, Community-based Organizations (CBOs), decentralized technical services of the government, the local Administration and Authorities, etc.).

The decisions of the steering committee are taken in compliance with standards for UNDP projects, ensuring a results-based management, impartiality, integrity, transparency and effective international competition. The COPI is chaired by the Minister of the Environment, Sanitation and Sustainable Development (MEADD) and has as members representatives of the Directorate for Water and Forests (nationally and at the decentralized level), customs, police, chiefs of staff of national institutions, etc.

The Project Management Unit (PMU) ensures the daily execution and management of activities as well as close collaboration with the communes and communities of intervention. It also ensures the secretariat of the National Steering Committee.

The PMU includes:

- a National Coordinator¹⁵;
- a Chief Technical Advisor (CTA);
- a Monitoring and Evaluation Expert;
- a Project Manager;
- an Administrative and Financial Assistant; and
- a driver.

Wild Foundation: International organization involved in the implementation of specific outputs under Components 2 and 3 of the project and functioning as a ‘Responsible Party’ (according to UNDP’s terminology). Under Component 2, Wild Foundation has a minor role under Output 2.2 relating to training and the conduct of the elephant survey. For Component 3, Wild Foundation is responsible for all Outputs. As a US-based Civil Society Organization (CSO), Wild Foundation preferred signing a Standard Agreement directly with UNDP for the execution of their activities. This happened in May 2021. The agreement is results-based and has a potential total amount of \$1,620,733. The implementation of Wild Foundation activities started only in November of that year, as per more detailed analysis under section 4.3 > [Finance and Co-financing](#).

3.5 Project timing and milestones

The project's main milestones are according to the figure below, which refers to data in Table 2.

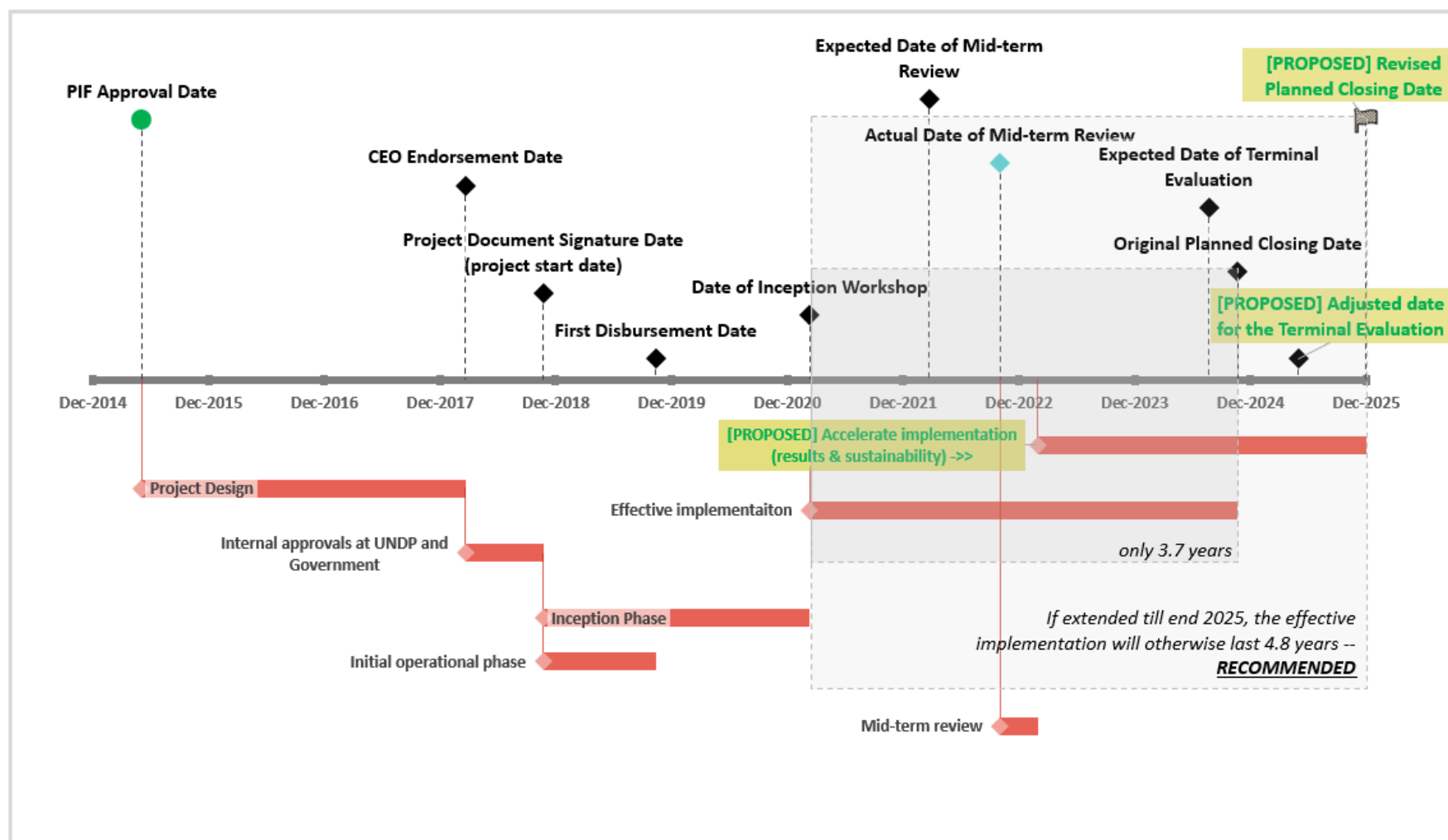
A recommendation to extend the project's duration until at least December 2025 is also made directly in the figure. The main argument in favor of the extension is that the project's effective implementation would have lasted only 3.7 years, if it should close before December 2024, which is the originally planned closing date. Given the pace of disbursements and the delays accumulated, a total duration of 4.8 to 5.0 years would be more reasonable.

It is also important to consider that the PRODOC provides for 6 years of implementation (this is covered in Figure 9 under sub-section “Workplanning”). Hence, the project extension proposed herein would fall short of the PRODOC's target duration. However, the goal of this proposal is not only to compensate for lost time. The speed at which funds are being utilized and the fact that Component 3 appears underfunded have also weighed on the MTR's recommendation relating to the project's duration.

Figure 3. Project Timeline

[see next page]

¹⁵ The MTR team interaction with a project coordinator who held the post on an interim basis during the time of MTR.



Given the delays in starting up of the project, its entire implementation timeline after 2020 had been delayed.

According to the RTA, these delays in the project's initial operationalization phase were due to the need to complete an in-depth study on the project's compliance with UNDP's policy concerning Social and Environmental Safeguards. This study was only concluded in 2020, and the project's effective implementation started only in 2021.

Although 2022 was a year that witnessed some acceleration in the pace of activity implementation, progress has not been sufficient, as will be seen in the analysis in section 4.2 of this report. A recommendation is therefore made.

Recommendation 1.	The mid-term review (MTR) makes three related proposals regarding the project's timeline: (1) Extend the project duration until the end of 2025; (2) Commend the Terminal Evaluation by mid-2025; and (3) Accelerate implementation towards results in 2023 and 2024, strengthening the elements of sustainability currently in deficit.
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3.6 Main stakeholders: summary list

<i>Project stakeholders according to their role (number of individuals consulted x gender)</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>Total</i>
Implementing Partner	1	4	5
• Ministry of Environment, Sanitation and Sustainable Development (MEADD)		1	1
• National Directorate for Water and Forests (DNEF)	1	3	4
Responsible Party	4	4	8
• Wild Foundation, Mali	3	4	7
• Wild Foundation, Department of Zoology, University of Oxford, Zoology Research and Administration	1		1
Support to M&E		1	1
• UNDP CO Mali		1	1
PMU, project management	1	1	2
• Project Management Unit (PMU)	1	1	2
Engaging the government (GEF Focal Point)		1	1
• Ministry of Environment, Sanitation and Sustainable Development (MEADD)		1	1
QA (quality assurance) and oversight	4	3	7
• UNDP CO Mali	2	2	4
• UNDP NCE (Nature Climate and Energy Unit)	1	1	2
• UNDP Regional Bureau	1		1
Representative of project beneficiaries in the Gourma region (local elected leader)	1	5	5
• Local leader in Bambara Maoudé		1	1
• General Secretary in Hairé		1	1
• General Secretary at the local Local authority in Gandamia	1		1
• Local leader in Gossi		1	1
• Local leader in Inadiatafane		1	1
Total	11	18	29

4 FINDINGS

4.1 Project Strategy

Project Design

The title of GEF Program under which the project was approved suggests that biodiversity conservation and wildlife crime prevention go hand in hand. In the strategy for the “Conservation of the Malian Elephant Project” (PIMS 5778), there are both the wildlife crime prevention aspect and conservation of biodiversity – the latter through the operationalization of a newly created Gourma Biosphere Reserve with 4.2 million ha. As for the wildlife crime aspect, the project applies a law enforcement and repressive approach, which is expected to be complemented by a more preventive approach, one that seeks to build trust, promote peace and inclusiveness through the engagement of the local populations and co-participation in project benefits.

The repressive approach is considered necessary, not least also because of the on-going civil conflict that affects the project zone. It includes the establishment of an anti-poaching brigade and the ostensive patrolling of the elephant range, among other elements of law enforcement to discourage illegal elephant killings and ivory traffic.

As a counterpoint to it, the project strategy also includes the community engagement aspect. Along with some interventions regarding capacity development and ecological monitoring (elephant surveys e.g.), this important aspect of the project was entrusted to Wild Foundation. Interventions on the ground led by Wild Foundation complement and build on some of their previous and on-going projects funded by other non-GEF sources.

Project Design is considered relevant. The project is well designed and it adequately took risks and safeguards into consideration. The PRODOC in English and French are both well edited.

The above conclusion is based on the following evidence:

- The project objective is well formulated and remains relevant, although somewhat ambitious in light of the volatile security situation in Mali.
- The justification sections of the project’s PRODOC include a thorough description of threats to biodiversity, their manifestations and impacts on both species (with a core focus on elephants, but not also other species that share the same habitat) and on the landscapes (grasslands and woodlands).
- Statements on the threats affecting biodiversity and ecosystem services (e.g. deforestation, wildfire and poaching) are underpinned by data. There is a meticulous reference to studies and to the figures included in the Tracking Tools.
- The Theory of Change (TOC) is represented by a figure with complex relationships among the different elements depicted. These elements are indeed included in the text (threats, barriers, components...). However, the TOC lacks a well-developed narrative that explains the relationships shown in this figure. More importantly, the assumptions behind the TOC are not made explicit in the narrative.
- There are a set of assumptions in the Project’s results’ framework (see next section), but these bear no relationship to either the TOC or the project’s risks.
- This shows a disconnect between the TOC and the other elements of project design that are meant to underpin the Project Strategy. This is considered a weak point. A recommendation on it is made.
- The barriers that underpin the Project Strategy are logically developed and well presented, with thorough reference to factual evidence and quantitative data. The barriers have a strong relationship to the project’s outcomes – that is, the latter actually address the barriers.
- Project risks in the PRODOC tally eight and the overall level is substantive. There are good reasons to believe that risks were relevant when the project was designed and approved. The only issue is that the nature of these risks is very dynamic. Hence, a recommendation is made on more frequent exercises of risk assessment for this project and to link this exercise with the review of project assumptions. This recommendation departs from the best practices in project design and development of a solid TOC. These best practices suggest that when an assumption is no longer valid, it becomes a project risk.¹⁶
- This above also applies to social and environmental risks.

¹⁶ Here is example: if a key assumption behind the project strategy says that “Political will is strong”, then the corresponding project risk would be “Political will is not strong enough to support the project strategy”. That is, project risks should be formulated as *“the opposite of the assumptions”*; and the level of risks must thereafter be assessed according to the level of validity of assumptions.

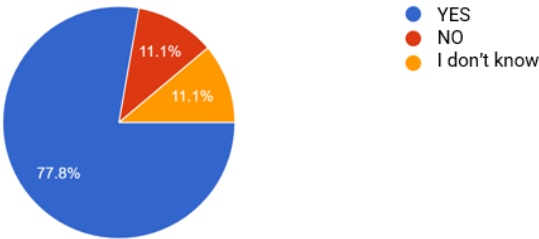
- Gender aspects: The project’s incorporation of gender in design is adequate. However, there is little evidence that the content is being actively used by the project in implementation (e.g. with reference to the “Proposed gender mainstreaming activities in the project components” included in the PRODOC).

Recommendation 2.	A reflection exercise on the validity of the project's current assumptions should be conducted together as part of its regular risk assessment exercise. To assist in the exercise, the MTR includes in its report, as an example, the assumptions review matrix. Several assumptions do not appear to be valid and may be disregarded. Others can be reformulated.
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Else, the MTR notes that most stakeholders have a positive take on the issue of project relevance, as illustrated by Figure 4.

Figure 4. Results from stakeholder survey relating to the project’s Adaptive Management

Q4) RELEVANCE | Does the project adapt to the development plans of the municipalities in the area?



Results Framework/Logframe

There are excellent design elements in the project’s logframe, in particular the following:

- The project indicators are quite precise. All of them. They have a strong and logical link to the subject matter of the objective and/or outcome to which they refer to.
- Indicator targets and how indicators achievement will be informed is quite clear from the PRODOC. This has greatly facilitated reporting, as it will be seen in the next section.
- Project Outputs also connect very well to the Outcomes under the Components to which they belong.
- Outputs and their description provide a balanced guide to what implementation should focus on, including the relative importance of certain activities and the sequence among them.

The above are the elements that make the Results Framework/Logframe strong. However, one of its elements that leaves to be desired is the formulation of assumptions behind the project strategy.

As explained in the previous section, project assumptions are not made explicit in the narrative pertaining to the TOC – which they should. Instead, a series of loosely connected assumptions of varied value added to the project are included in the Results Framework/Logframe. The MTR assessed these in Table 5.

It is important to point out that assumptions are by definition situations whose validation favors the achievement of the project results, without their validity being due to any direct action of the project. In the case of the project “Conservation of the Malian Elephant” (PIMS 5778), most of the assumptions have not realized, according to the analysis in Table 5 The non validation of assumptions has exposed weaknesses in the project strategy, but mostly in its adaptive management. This can undoubtedly impact the achievement of results. As explained in the previous section, the theme of assumptions not being validated must be reflected in the formulation of project risks and in risk assessment (project risks are to be formulated as the “inverse of the assumptions”). This simple adaptive management mechanism avoid project risks being formulated in a random fashion.

The context in which the project is being implemented has not been favorable and it is understandable that, even if the assumptions were well formulated in the design stage, this situation can change. As part of an adaptive management approach, it is even more important to review project assumptions and risk on a regular basis.

Table 5. Assessment of project assumptions, as included in the Results Framework/Logframe

Assumptions as per the Logframe	Assessed validity
Objective Level	
<i>Assumption 1. National Anti-Poaching Strategy and updated wildlife crime and Partial Elephant Reserve legislation documents will be officially approved and supported for implementation by the Mali Government.</i>	Compounded statements. Ambitious. Currently unrealistic This is underpinned by an anonymous statement elaborated by a stakeholder through the stakeholder survey.
<i>Assumption 2. WCIU will have sufficient staff and funding from the Government and other donors for effective control of wildlife crime in the country;</i>	Currently unrealistic This is underpinned by the same stakeholder statement.
<i>Assumption 3. Local communities will have sustainable, safe, and sufficient income from CBNRM comparable or higher with income from poaching, unsustainable agriculture, pasture, and forest use\</i>	Ambitious and relative. The project does not have the means or capacity to produce the data that could verify this statement beyond the project implementation period. Projections could be assumed from results during the active project duration. Communities are spread across different communes. After the project, there is no structure that will monitor and report on this situation.
<i>Assumption 4. Elephant population will stabilize and increase as a result of decreased poaching (the key threat)</i>	Remains valid and relevant.
<i>Assumption 5. Other environmental factors are favorable for the elephant population restoration.</i>	Not a valid assumption. The description of threats to biodiversity points out e.g. to climate variability and change being favorable.
<i>Assumption 6. All key threats for the project conservation targets (including forests) are correctly identified</i>	Remains valid and relevant.
Outcome 1	
<i>Assumption 1. Law enforcement officers will use new skills, and tools provided by the project to increase their effectiveness in IWT control and achieve higher results.</i>	Remains valid and relevant.
<i>Assumption 2. Law enforcement agencies have sufficient support from Government and other donors</i>	Questionable statement. This conclusion is underpinned by an elaborated stakeholder statement provided anonymously through the stakeholder survey. There is a certain level of paralysis in DNEF, which makes it not very agile in seeking the engagement of government and donors.
Outcome 2	
<i>Assumption 1. APU will be provided with [funds] additional and complementary to the project support from Mali Government and international donors</i>	Currently unrealistic This is underpinned by the same stakeholder statement referred further up.
<i>Assumption 2. Partial Elephant Reserve's staff will use knowledge, skills, and equipment provided by the project to improve PA management and protection</i>	Remains valid and relevant, but the correct reference should be to the Biosphere Reserve.
<i>Assumption 3. Security situation in Gourma region will allow effective law enforcement and the PA management</i>	Questionable statement. The situation is volatile and the current trends not very encouraging.
<i>Assumption 4. Increased effectiveness of law enforcement will have strong deterrent effect on poachers and unsustainable NRM practices in the project area because of threat of severe punishment and decreased income from illegal activities</i>	Remains valid and relevant, but mostly as a logic statement. Its applicability to the Mali situation is questionable.
Outcome 3	
<i>Assumption 1. Local communities can see economic and social benefits and have interest to develop and implement CBNRM practices in the project area;</i>	Remains valid and relevant. According to Wild Foundation, and relating to this assumption, communities have developed local agreements that are binding for the protection of the Gourma area (the Biosphere Reserve). The main of rules in these by-laws are:

Assumptions as per the Logframe	Assessed validity
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No agricultural fields in the zones that are protected or in the zones in the periphery of the Gourma Biosphere Reserve; Transhumants from outside the zone are not allowed around ponds and forests that frequented by elephants; No bushfires in the entire Gourma area; No tree cutting in the demarcated areas (protected zones, pastoral perimeters and in the Gourma Biosphere Reserve).
<i>Assumption 2. Local people will use knowledge and skills on CBNRM provided by the project to practice sustainable NRM.</i>	<p>Remains valid and relevant.</p> <p>According to Wild Foundation, it is important to note the following aspects in relation to this assumption:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Actions to protect pastures through the construction of fire-breaks are replicated elsewhere in the project zone; Each village has a local team engaged in surveillance against bush fires, charcoal manufacturing and use of ponds and forests frequented by elephants; Systematic collection of data on the monthly spatial distribution of elephants.
<i>Assumption 3. Local people will maintain high level of tolerance to elephants and HECs.</i>	<p>Remains valid and relevant.</p> <p>The narrative relating to the two previous assumptions also applies here.</p>
<i>Assumption 4. Security situation in Gourma region will allow effective development CBNRM and alternative sources of income.</i>	Questionable statement. The situation is volatile and the current trends not very encouraging.
Outcome 4	
<i>Assumption 1. Other stakeholders have interest to learn from lessons and successful practices developed by the project, including gender mainstreaming practices.</i>	Remains valid and relevant.
<i>Assumption 2. Other projects make references to the GEF project if they use its experience and lessons</i>	Remains valid and relevant.
<i>Assumption 3. Women have high interest to the project participation to improve their livelihood and social status</i>	Remains valid and relevant.

According to the analysis in Table 5, only 11 out of 19 assumptions remain valid and relevant. In any case, the assumptions are not being regularly used for assessing project risks, which could otherwise be useful. Recommendation 2 already takes this into account.

4.2 Progress Towards Results

Progress towards outcomes analysis

In this section, progress is assessed through a matrix / dashboard, as per MTR requirement summarized in Table 3. Also, as per the official UNDP GEF MTR Guidelines (2014), the notation used in Figure 5 is shown in the figure below.

Figure 5. Notation for assessing progress against the projects' indicators

Project Strategy	Indicator [a]	Baseline Level [b]	Level in PIR (self-reported)	Midterm Target [c]	End-of-project Target	Midterm Level & Assessment [d]	Achievement Rating [e]	Justification for Rating
Objective:	Indicator (if applicable):							
Outcome 1:	Indicator 1:							
	Indicator 2:							
Outcome 2:	Indicator 3:							
	Indicator 4:							
	Etc.							
Etc.								
Notation Indicator Assessment Key Green= Achieved Yellow= On target to be achieved Red= Not on target to be achieved [a] From PRODOC and PIR [b] Populate with data from the Project Document [c] If available [d] Color code this column only								

The summary findings for this evaluation criterion are as follows in Table 6:

Table 6. Summary achievements for the Objective and per Outcome¹⁷

Level	Descriptive text	Assessment
Objective Achievement	<i>To protect Mali's elephants in key sites and enhance the livelihoods of the local communities that live along the migration route to reduce human-elephant conflict.</i>	Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)
Outcome 1 Achievement:	<i>Strengthening the legislative framework and national capacity to address wildlife crime</i>	Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)
Outcome 2 Achievement:	<i>Protecting Gourma elephants from poaching and securing seasonal migration routes and key habitat</i>	Moderately Satisfactory (MS)
Outcome 3 Achievement:	<i>Community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) in the Gourma elephant habitat</i>	Satisfactory (S)
Outcome 4 Achievement:	<i>Gender Mainstreaming, Knowledge Management and M&E</i>	Satisfactory (S)

[See Table 4 for summary justifications, and to Table 7 for the details per indicator behind the assessment.]

¹⁷ Ratings are according to notation explained in [Annex 6.2](#).

Table 7. Progress Towards Results Matrix (achievement of outcomes against targets)

Project Strategy	Indicator [a]	Baseline Level [b]	Level in PIR (self-reported and shortened, as of Aug 2022)	Midterm Target [c]	End-of-project Target [b]	Midterm Level & Assessment – early 2023 [d]	Achievement Rating [e]	Justification for Rating
Objective: To protect Mali's elephants in key sites and enhance the livelihoods of the local communities that live along the migration route to reduce human-elephant conflict.	Mandatory Indicator 1: Extent to which legislation and institutional frameworks are in place for conservation, sustainable use, and access and benefit sharing of natural resources, biodiversity and ecosystems (IRRF Indicator 2.5.1):	[as below]	Activities under this indicator are delayed.	[as below]	[as below]	Red= Not on target to be achieved	Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)	There have been considerable delays in initiating the key consultancies that would result in the legislation and institutional frameworks are in place for conservation, sustainable use, and access and benefit sharing of natural resources, biodiversity and ecosystems. Legally establishing the Gourma Biosphere Reserve (achieved in end-2021) is only but a first step in its management as a large protected area with many challenges. <u>More specifically:</u>
	1a) National Anti-Poaching Strategy;	No any [none]	The recruitment of international consultants in charge of developing the national anti-poaching strategy, mentoring and updating wildlife crime legislation is underway.	Drafted and discussed with stakeholders;	Officially approved	One stakeholder commented in the Stakeholder Survey on the collaborative management arrangement on the project "A lack of ownership of the Project by the DNEF, mainly on aspects relating to the functioning of the Anti-poaching Brigade and aerial surveillance." Continued below...		The National Anti-Poaching Strategy is not yet drafted, but a consultancy is now commanded for delivering key products (Indicator 1a). Activities for development of new wildlife crime legislation, one that recognizes it as a serious crime (Indicator 1b), still shows incipient progress.
	1b) Updated wildlife crime legislation, recognizing it as a serious crime;	Not updated	To reinforce the above two activities, the Wildlife Crime Investigation Unit is being created to support the Direction Nationale des Eaux et Forêts in investigating, monitoring and prosecuting wildlife crime in Mali in cooperation with other law enforcement agencies.	Updated and submitted for official approval	Officially approved	Another one commented on the same topic "There is a flagrant lack of will to collaborate on the part of the DNEF". MTR assesses that this is the case and proposes improvements. The MTR strongly advises against the construction of storage facilities for confiscated ivory, or to		The establishment of a Wildlife Crime Investigation Unit (Indicator 1c) has not made significant progress. Yet, the elephant population probably remains stable

Project Strategy	Indicator [a]	Baseline Level [b]	Level in PIR (self-reported and shortened, as of Aug 2022)	Midterm Target [c]	End-of-project Target [b]	Midterm Level & Assessment – early 2023 [d]	Achievement Rating [e]	Justification for Rating
						give continuity to such activities. This could create a strong incentive for theft and corruption at the highest levels.		(Indicator 3), but still under threat. No population survey was conducted due to the security situation.
	1c) Wildlife Crime Investigation Unit	No any	<p>TORs for the establishment of the unit have been developed by the PMU and validated by the DNEF for the purpose of recruiting an international consultant with expertise in wildlife crime (Development of Terms of Reference, Establishment of the Wildlife Crime Investigation Unit Team, Development of Operational Plan).</p> <p>An engineering consulting firm was recruited to develop a plan for the installation of the storage warehouse for confiscated products from the site to the DNEF and also to monitor and control the general work for the proper functioning of the investigation unit. The consulting work has not started yet.</p>	Established;	Fully operational	<p>The same difficulties related to the above indicators also applies to this. There is still a long way to go before the Wildlife Crime Investigation Unit can be considered 'Fully operational'.</p> <p>The MTR calls the attention of DNEF to the risks linked to maintaining ivory stockpiles over long periods of time, regardless of how secure storing facilities may be. Experience from elsewhere in Africa shows that this creates a strong incentive for theft and corruption (e.g. Mozambique). Confiscated ivory should be immediately weighed and quantity recorded in front of multiple witnesses, but the materials should be immediately destroyed.</p>		<p>Regarding Indicator 4, there are indications that the target has been achieved, but there is doubt if the numbers reported actually refer to unique stakeholders.</p> <p>It is urgent to complete the elephant survey for the inventory of the Gourma elephant population, but at the same time the roles, means and modalities of the aerial elephant survey are not clear.</p> <p>The overall assessment applicable to the objective indicators (and to the project in its quest to achieve the objective) is MU. There is room for improvement.</p>
	Mandatory Indicator 2: Number of people directly benefitting from CBNRM, including SFM, and SLM in target communes (female/male)	0	This indicator is on track. [...] a total of 18443 people, including 6175 women (33.48%)	>=3,000 (at least 50% females)	>= 14,200 (at least 50% females)	Green =Achieved		
	Indicator 3: Elephant population in the Gourma area	192-242 (2017)	Off track.	>=197-248	>=206-259	Red= Not on target to be achieved		
	Indicator 4: Total area of forest and woodlands in the project area, ha	4,012-4,033	On track.	>=4,012-4,033	>=4,012-4,033	Yellow= On target to be achieved		

Project Strategy	Indicator [a]	Baseline Level [b]	Level in PIR (self-reported and shortened, as of Aug 2022)	Midterm Target [c]	End-of-project Target [b]	Midterm Level & Assessment – early 2023 [d]	Achievement Rating [e]	Justification for Rating
Outcome 1: Strengthening the legislative framework and national capacity to address wildlife crime	Indicator 5: Capacity of National Enforcement Agencies to control [Illegal Wildlife Trade] IWT (UNDP Capacity scorecard, %): DNEF	0.34	This indicator is only slightly delayed compared to the mid-term target. However, for consistency with the Objective level indicators, it is classified as off track, even though the delays of institutional level activities is not fully captured by the capacity scorecard assessment.	0.4	0.5	Red= Not on target to be achieved	Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)	As the national institution responsible for the management of protected areas in Mali, DNEF now has a considerable challenge in terms of managing an expanded protected area with limited human capacity, and in an area of the country that faces complex poverty, governance and security issues.
	Indicator 6: Effectiveness of IWT enforcement in Mali:	[as below]	[not reported in the PIR]	[as below]	[as below]	UA		Significant progress has been made. The law creating the Gourma Biosphere Reserve was passed and promulgated in December 2021. However, this is only the first step in the management of a protected area.
	6a) annual number seizures;	0	[not reported in the PIR]	10	20	UA		In the 2022 PIR 2022, the project had mentioned the updating of the legislation needed to operationalize the new protected area, but adequate and institutional frameworks for fighting wildlife crime (IWT) and for managing the Gourma biosphere Reserve in the long-term are not fully consolidated.
	6b) annual number of arrests;	0	[not reported in the PIR]	5	10	UA		Indicator 6 and its sub-indicators have not been reported upon in the 2022 PIR. The MTR wonders if the national institution is collecting systematic data on Illegal Wildlife Trade (IW). This is an important miss.
	6c) annual % of successful prosecutions on poaching and IWT.	0	[not reported in the PIR]	20%	70%	UA		

Project Strategy	Indicator [a]	Baseline Level [b]	Level in PIR (self-reported and shortened, as of Aug 2022)	Midterm Target [c]	End-of-project Target [b]	Midterm Level & Assessment – early 2023 [d]	Achievement Rating [e]	Justification for Rating
								Activities that could lead to the approval of legislative texts and strategies for the regulation of wildlife crime in Mali (ITW) have started but are delayed. Progress has been made in terms of strengthening the capacities of national institutions, but it is still limited. The overall assessment has to be MU.
Outcome 2: Protecting Gourma elephants from poaching and securing seasonal migration routes and key habitat	Indicator 7: Annual intensity of anti-poaching in the project area:	[as below]	This indicator is on track.	[as below]	[as below]	Yellow= On target to be achieved	Moderately Satisfactory (MS)	There is evidence on increased levels of protection of Gourma elephants and their habitat, although the set of GEF tracking tools at mid-term is incomplete. Yet, the situation on the ground is considered fragile and conservation gains may be quickly lost against a background of human insecurity at the local level. The MTR has conducted a thorough review of the project's tracking tools in (Annex 6.12). According to this assessment, and putting emphasis on the Protected Areas Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT) featured in Indicator 8, the MTR concluded that a score of 85 at mid-term, which the project had attributed to itself, is an overestimation and it is unrealistic. A score of 49 is more balanced and realistic.
	7a) total number of staff available for anti-poaching	35	There are 45 agents available for the anti-poaching brigade, including 30 from the Malian army and 15 forestry agents.	>=40	>= 60	There are good indications that the project is achieving the target for this indicator.		
	7b) intensity of patrolling (inspector/days/ month)	525	This anti-poaching brigade conducted two (02) patrols per month, or 24 in total during the reporting period.	>=700	>=1050	<i>UA (no specific data to inform the indicator)</i>		
	Indicator 8: METT score for Partial Elephant Reserve (see Annex D. GWP GEF TT)	36	The METT dimensions will have to be revised because the Partial Reserve of Gourma is no longer relevant. It has been replaced by the Gourma Biosphere Reserve since December 2021. The re-assessment will be done as part of the MTR.	46	56	Green =Achieved		
	Indicator 9: Number of elephants poached annually in the project area	9	On track.	<= 0-2	<= 0-2	Yellow= On target to be achieved		

Project Strategy	Indicator [a]	Baseline Level [b]	Level in PIR (self-reported and shortened, as of Aug 2022)	Midterm Target [c]	End-of-project Target [b]	Midterm Level & Assessment – early 2023 [d]	Achievement Rating [e]	Justification for Rating
								<p>Considering that the project's own target at mid-term is 46 (as of the logframe), a total METT score of 49 for Indicator 8 indicates that the project has slightly surpassed its target. The positive trends are commended and must be maintained.</p> <p>Else, DNEF informed that no cases of poaching were reported during the 2022 PIR's period (Indicator 9), which is a good sign, but results are still fragile. It would be too early to consider the target for Indicator 9 as achieved.</p> <p>Outcome assessment remains MS.</p>
Outcome 3: Community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) in the Gourma elephant habitat	Indicator 10: Annual number of Human-Elephant Conflicts in the project area	27-40	On track.	<=27-40	<=27-40	Yellow= On target to be achieved	Satisfactory (S)	<p>There is good progress in terms of areas under sustainable community-based natural resource management (CBRM) and improved capacity of local communities to co-exist with Gourma elephants, although the number of hectares reported protected is still much below mid-term targets. There is also evidence of strong involvement of communities in the surveillance of elephant populations.</p> <p>Wild Foundation reports that 1399 Eco guards including 83 women have been mobilized in the project area to support the fight against poaching, the</p>
	Indicator 11: [Deforestation and biocarbon]	[as below]	Largely on track.	[as below]	[as below]	Yellow= On target to be achieved		
	11a) Deforestation rate in the project area, ha and %/year	4.1	In the GBA there was no deforestation during this reporting period. This situation may be influenced by armed conflicts in the Gourma region.	1	0	The project is commended for keeping tabs of this indicator and reporting accurately. Yet the situation remains fragile.		
	11b) Total volume of CO2 mitigated in the project area (tCO2eq):	0.001	There are no data yet on CO2 emissions, however given the low deforestation rate and effective fire control, it is likely that this target is on track.	0.00025	0	This indicator follows the previous one and the same assessment applies.		
	Indicator 12: Area of uncontrolled bush fires in the project area (ha/year) in the dry season (October-May)	17647	On track.	<= 12,000	<=8,500	Yellow= On target to be achieved		

Project Strategy	Indicator [a]	Baseline Level [b]	Level in PIR (self-reported and shortened, as of Aug 2022)	Midterm Target [c]	End-of-project Target [b]	Midterm Level & Assessment – early 2023 [d]	Achievement Rating [e]	Justification for Rating
	Indicator 13: [Community-based natural resource management (CBNRM)]	[as below]	Off track	[as below]	[as below]	Yellow= On target to be achieved		collection of information on elephant movements and their monthly distribution in the reserve, the protection of isolated animals in case of high heat, the mobilization of communities for the actions of defending the elephant range against fire etc. These are young volunteers who can be mobilized as needed. Overall, the situation is mixed, but with positive tendencies (S).
	13a) Total area of grazing and forest reserves established and managed by local people, ha	175000	The project has supported the creation of community protected areas ("mises en défens") totalling 18 296,96 ha. This work is delayed by the difficult security situation in the project area.	>= 200,000	>= 225,000	There are reports of small areas under community-based forest protection, but still much below target.		
	13b) Total area under implemented community NRM Plans (excluding area of grazing reserves), ha	0	[as above]	>=100,000	>=222,000	Same as above but for grasslands but reporting in insufficient.		
Outcome 4: Gender Mainstreaming, Knowledge Management and M&E	Indicator 14: Number of the lessons on anti-poaching and CBNRM learned by the project that used in other national and international projects	0	On track	At least 2	At least 5	Yellow= On target to be achieved	Satisfactory (S)	The project is successful in recording lessons and reporting on progress, both nationally and internationally. The project also has results to show in terms of promoting participatory M&E (mainly community-based efforts). There is some evidence of gender mainstreaming activities, although much more could be done. Overall, the situation is positive (S), although the impression is that Wild Foundation is doing most of the work.
	Indicator 15: % of women among the project participants	0	On track	0.3	0.5	Yellow= On target to be achieved		

Based on the above reporting and assessment, some recommendations are proposed.

Recommendation 3.	The MTR takes notes of the construction of a warehouse for storing confiscated products from illegal wildlife trade (in this case ivory) being now completed, and calls the attention to the risks linked to maintaining ivory stockpiles over long periods of time, regardless of how secure those storing facilities are designed to be. Experience from elsewhere in Africa show that it is not advisable (e.g. Mozambique) shows that storing illegal items that pick a high price in the international market will only create a strong incentive for theft and corruption, including at the highest levels. The MTR recommends that confiscated ivory should be immediately weighed and quantities recorded in front of multiple witnesses. Thereafter, the products should be immediately destroyed in front of the public, never to be used. Similar principles apply to illegal drugs, and other illicit products. Here are a few advisory resources to be consulted on the topic: https://cites.org/eng/imp/ivory_stockpile_mgmt.html https://www.worldwildlife.org/stories/crush-and-burn-destroying-illegal-elephant-ivory https://www.unodc.org/documents/Wildlife/Toolkit_e.pdf https://www.elephantprotectioninitiative.org/ https://www.elephantprotectioninitiative.org/ivorymanagement https://www.bmj.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/EN/G20/UNODC_Adressing_Corruption.pdf
Recommendation 4.	Accelerate key studies – such as the follow-on study to the Anti-Poaching Strategy and the full operationalization of the Anti-poaching Unit, following international best practices on issues of international wildlife trade (IWT), e.g. from CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) or UNDOC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime), and by actively learning lessons from other projects in the GEF's Global Wildlife Program (GWP). The MTR also recommends that UNDP engages the new project manager in the revision of the METT scorecard (and related tools), taking into account the detailed revision already provided by the MTR in Annex 6.12 of its D4 report.
Recommendation 5.	Accelerate the legal, institutional and financial consolidation of the Gourma Biosphere Reserve and its operationalization as a well-managed protected area, e.g. learning from the successes and failures of the long-term management of Boucle du Baoulé Biosphere Reserve. This will require vision and a much stronger collaboration among partners.

Remaining barriers to achieving the project objective

All of the three barriers identified at PRODOC stage remain valid and have not yet been overcome. They include:

Barrier 1) Absence of effective policies and institutional framework for biodiversity conservation and [illegal wildlife trade] IWT control.

There has been some progress in the development of policies and legal frameworks, but progress is still very incipient. To achieve such progress, various processes need to be put in place. Political will would need to be in place for it. The analysis of assumptions in Table 5 shows that it is not.

Barrier 2) Insufficient capacity of national environmental agencies and PAs to address poaching, IWT, and land degradation issues

In the assessment of progress in Table 7 there is ample evidence that the necessary progress for expanding the capacity of environmental agencies and PAs (i.e. management units for protected areas) still has significant deficits.

At the political and institutional level, the overall situation in Mali is currently facing serious issues, which are: (i) the current insufficiency of environmental policies and of an adequate legal framework for the illegal trade in wildlife; (ii)- weak capacities of government and key agencies to effectively enforce the law in situations of military conflict; (iii)- the lack of universally accepted structures and institutions within local communities to enable the sustainable management of natural resources.

Concerning Barriers 1 and 2, as well as the political and institutional situation in Mali, the MTR formulated at least two recommendations that directly address the work needed for overcoming the barriers. See [further up](#).

Barrier 3) Low capacity of local communities to manage natural resources sustainably and protect wildlife.

Although the work developed by Wild Foundation under component 3 appears to have made more progress than the other two components, there are still gaps. Yet, it is possible that there is a financial constraint. Component 3 is likely underfunded. A recommendation stands out:

Recommendation 6.	Mobilize additional funds for strengthening the resilience of local populations through the scaling up of income-generating actions, actively including women as beneficiaries of such activities.
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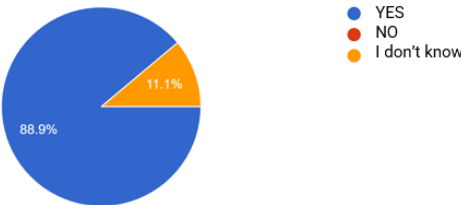
Interestingly, and in contrast with the MTR assessment of the project’s contributions to policy frameworks and capacity development, stakeholders have a more positive take on these aspects. This is illustrated by Figure 6.

Figure 6. Results from stakeholder survey relating to Policy Frameworks and Capacity Development

Q2) CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT | Has the project contributed to capacity building at the national level?



Q3) POLICY FRAMEWORK | Does the project fit the country's development priorities and policies?



4.3 Project Implementation and Adaptive Management

This aspect of the project was rated as **‘Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)’**. The Project Management Unit (PMU) is understaffed and not well articulated. There is no effective collaboration between the Implementing Partner (DNEF) and the key Responsible Party (Wild Foundation). The arrangements require good communication and trust between the Government and Wild Foundation, so that activities can be cohesive. Yet, this is not the case. Institutional relationships need serious improvements through dialogue and trust-building.

Further justification for the rating assigned to aspect of project Implementation and Adaptive Management is developed in the sections that follow.

Management Arrangements

The adequacy of adaptive management is closely linked to that of the human resources committed to managing a project. In the case of the “Gourma Elephants” project, there is a confluence of factors that explain a certain ‘disarticulation’ of the

project’s team. This disarticulation has undoubtedly impacted the project’s ability to adapt its management approach to new challenges and contextual changes.

Indeed, the PMU in charge of the operational aspects of project implementation has experienced disruptions that affected the efficiency of its operation. The project manager exercised his rights to retirement but was not replaced. He is still an interim staff, who has been playing a coordinating role for almost a year. Additionally, the post of Monitoring and Evaluation Officer has been vacant for more than six months due to the incumbent's illness. In addition to the unavailability of project staff, the PMU is located to Bamako, for security reasons, but far from the project zone.

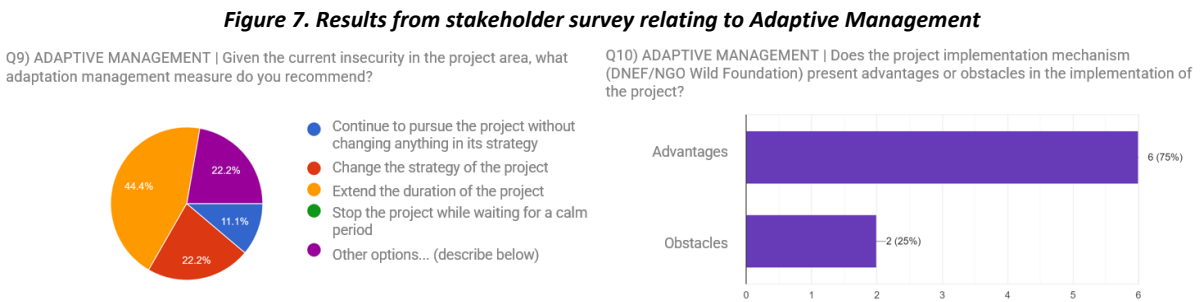
As part of administrative reforms undertaken by the Government of Mali, Douentza (the epicenter of project interventions) becomes an operational administrative region. This raises the question of whether the PMU should not be relocated to Douentza, where a regional water and forest department will be operational shortly, in view of bringing project implementation structures closer to its intervention area.

In addition, the phenomenon of artisanal gold panning is taking on worrying proportions in the project zone. This phenomenon could preempt all efforts made so far in terms of protecting and managing natural resources in the area. It is necessary to obtain success in adding to project implementation effective measures to deter this environmentally destructive activity. Further down, in the section on Sustainability, there is reference to the need to mobilize funds for the post-project period, in order to ensure the consolidation of the achievements.

In relation to all these questions, no anticipatory and proactive dynamic is noted in the conduct of project actions. Halfway through the project’s duration, there is still time for putting in place an effective project team capable of carrying it through.

More importantly, the current project management arrangements, involving DNEF and Wild Foundation require good communication and trust between the two parties, which do not appear to be fully in place at present. For example, compared to the last activity report presented to the Project Steering Committee (COPIL) in February 2023, shortcomings were noted mainly due to a lack of collaboration between the two structures in its preparation.

Of interest, the MTR notes that stakeholders have a positive take on Adaptive Management relating to a certain number of issues, as illustrated in Figure 7:



The arrangement with two structures implementing the project (DNEF/ONG) does create some limitations, but the model implemented by African Parks elsewhere in Africa which consists of full accountability of government organizations throughout the chain of monitoring and protection of the resource could be useful as inspiration.

This model implies that NGOs can play a supporting role, including as subcontracted entities for the management of protected areas, within a balanced framework of shared accountability. At the same time, the MTR does not believe that this model can be immediately implemented in Mali, because of governance deficits – including good governance applied to the management of natural resources and protected areas.

Concerning this last point, IUCN has developed a set of criteria and checklist for how accountability and good governance apply to the management of protected areas. According to the relevant publication¹⁸, quality of governance of a protected area system, or of specific site, can be measured in terms of adherence to a set of IUCN principles of good governance (equitable and effective governance) in a protected area management context.

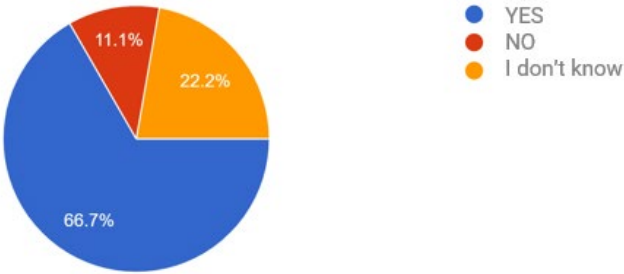
¹⁸ Borrini-Feyerabend, G., N. Dudley, T. Jaeger, B. Lassen, N. Pathak Broome, A. Phillips and T. Sandwith (2013). Governance of Protected Areas: From understanding to action. Best Practice Protected Area Guidelines Series No. 20, Gland, Switzerland: IUCN. xvi + 124pp.

Recommendation 7.	The mid-term review (MTR) suggests that UNDP plays a stronger advocacy role in mainstreaming the principles of accountability and quality of governance in the management of Protected Areas. This work can start through the roll out of skills-focused training course on protected area governance benefiting core staff and DNEF at the central and decentralized levels.
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Of note, the issues of national accountability and governance are deeply linked with those of national ownership. Ownership is a pre-condition for accountability and governance, though not nearly enough to achieve it. When queried about the project’s national ownership’s aspect, stakeholders had a generally optimistic view on it. Most, but not all, think that the project benefits from sustained support from the national authorities (Figure 8).

Figure 8. Results from stakeholder survey relating to the project’s National Ownership

Q1) NATIONAL OWNERSHIP | Does the project benefit from sustained support from the national authorities?



Work planning

PRODOC provides for 6 years of implementation and serves as a basis for project planning. The analysis of the amounts and distribution of funds in PRODOC were included in: Figure 2. Summary of funds as planned in the PRODOC (per year, per component, per source of funds) in section 3.3.

The project’s effective implementation did not start until 2021 (Inception Workshop). Nevertheless, there was expenditure in 2019 and 2020 (as it will be seen in the analysis in next section). The first year of the project can then be considered as 2020. However, the project has not prepared workplans in 2020 or in 2021. According to UNDP, in such situations, UNDP considers the planning contained in PRODOC to guide activities.

There are two types (and formats) of ‘workplans’ that were identified by the MTR for this project:

- 1) **Annual workplans and budgets in Atlas format** (UNDP’s financial system in use till end 2022¹⁹). These contain budget lines and other details on the implementing agency, the component and the category of budget lines according to Atlas’ typology. Atlas Annual Workplans focuses on ‘inputs’. They do not contain any narrative, nor any details of activities, arrangements, results expected or risks. Two files containing two **Annual** workplans and budgets in Atlas format were found in Open UNDP platform²⁰: The first one ("Atlas_AWP_1019") is dated 22 January 2020 and it covers financial years 2019 through 2024. The second file is dated March 2022 and covers only the financial year 2021. The latter served apparently to increase the core funds amount from UNDP ("4000 UNDP") into the Atlas Award for the Mali Elephants project. The Annual workplans and budgets in Atlas format for this project bears many similarities to the Total Work Plan and Budget contained in the PRODOC for the years 2019 to 2024, but with differences, which are highlighted in Figure 9.
- 2) **Comprehensive Annual Workplans from the partners implementing the project (called “PTA” in French)**. These include a narrative, a detailed chronogram and budget, which links up to Atlas budget lines using codes for budgetary inputs. Until end 2022, the project only prepared two of such Workplans (PTAs), one for 2021 and one

¹⁹ The scope of this part of the MTR’s analysis is only up to end 2022, so the implications or data in UNDP’s new system will not be taken into consideration.
²⁰ Open UNDP, <https://open.undp.org/projects/00108261> - accessed on 28/02/2023.

for 2022 – and none for 2019 or 2020, even though expenditure had indeed been registered in Atlas in those two first years (as it will be seen in the next section). Although the project’s official annual workplan prepared by the PMU covers both the outputs for which DNEF and Wild Foundation are respectively responsible, there seems to be a parallel Workplan prepared by Wild Foundation, at least for the year 2022. The amounts requested by Wild Foundation in the official and in the “parallel” PTAs differ.

Figure 9. Summary analysis of Atlas Annual Workplans compared to the Total Workplan and Budget in the PRODOC

Atlas Annual Plan 2019-2024		Sum of Amount US\$	
4000 UNDP		1,000	
70000 Operating Expenses		-88,500	
71300 Local Consultants		89,500	
72400 Communic & Audio Visual Equip		0	
<= In the PRODOC, the amount UNDP would commit from core resources to the project would add up to \$200,000. Here we note negative budget and a balance of only \$1,000. Teh reason for it is not clear, but this is not very relevant for the MTR. So we focus mostly on GEF funds. ↓			
From Atlas_AWP_2019 =>	62000 GEFTrustee	4,066,484	From PRODOC - GEF funds 4,116,055 difference
	71200 International Consultants	195,000	71200 International Consultants 195,000
	71300 Local Consultants	214,005	71300 Local Consultants 214,005
	71600 Travel	410,000	71600 Travel 410,000
	72100 Contractual Services- Companies	1,798,302	72100 Contractual services 1,798,302
	72200 Equipment and Furniture	428,300	72200 Equipment and Furniture 428,300
	72500 Supplies	6,203	72500 Office Supplies 6,203
	72600 Grants	665,000	72600 Grants 750,000 difference
	74100 Professional Services	12,000	74100 Audit 12,000
	74500 Miscellaneous Expenses	117,655	74500 Miscellaneous + 74596 Direct Pro 67,226 difference
	75700 Training, Workshops and Confer	220,019	75700 Training, meetings workshop, 235,019 difference
	Grand Total	4,067,484	
		Differential (GEF underbudgeted?)	-49,571
Sum of Amount US\$	Source of funds		
Financial Years entered	4000 UNDP	62000 GEFTrustee	Grand Total
2019	1,000	1,023,035	1,024,035
2020		1,099,737	1,099,737
2021		644,634	644,634
2022		580,634	580,634
2023		364,063	364,063
2024		354,381	354,381
Grand Total	1,000	4,066,484	4,067,484

The MTR faced difficulties in analyzing the workplans and in understanding the workplanning processes for this project because the information is patchy and the formats not helpful. Nevertheless, the information gathered in the documents availed is summarized in Table 8.

The format of the “PTAs” as prepared by the project in 2021 and 2022 (often presented in MS Word or PDF formats) must be it quite challenging for UNDP to conduct verification, analysis and quality assurance (QA), which is their role. The same formats also made it challenging for the MTR to assess the project’s workplans and delivery (the latter topic is included in the next section). According to UNDP, the project’s Annual Workplans are prepared jointly and they cover both activities planned by DNEF and Wild Foundation. Yet, the MTR found discrepancies and gaps when trying to identify the budget breakdown under for each organization (evidence is in Table 8 and its notes).

The UNDP CO Program Associate is tasked with entering financial content from the PTAs in MS Word or PDF into their financial system, a process that is manual, laborious and susceptible to errors. When queried about the discrepancies between amounts and the difficulties that the MTR faced in conducting workplan analysis, UNDP CO informed that they receive the PTAs from the PMU in PDF-format and cannot do otherwise. The MTR thinks that it is just a matter of asking the project to submit the files differently. Else, an accurate analysis of the 2022 Annual Work Plan with narrative (“PTBA 2022 SIGNE.pdf”) was not possible because page 16 was missing.

The final approval of annual workplans is the responsibility of the Project Steering Committee (COPIL). For the fluidity of project implementation, annual workplans for all UNDP projects should preferably be approved either at the end of a financial year (around November/December) or early in the beginning of a new one (January). However, this is not always the case. In 2023, the COPIL only took place late in end-February.

Delays in approving or clearing workplans can create constraints to implementation and to UNDP's monitoring function. It is also not clear if quality assurance of a more technical nature is conducted on the workplans.

Table 8. Overview of Annual Workplans in Atlas and of narrative "PTAs" according to source

A Workplan with narrative for 2019 had not been prepared by the project, but the MTR found the Atlas AWP online (Open UNDP)			
	2019 – "PTA" from DNEF	Atlas_AWP_2019 (Open UNDP)	
GEF	[no "PTA" prepared]	1,023,035	
UNDP	[no "PTA" prepared]	1,000	
TOTAL	[NA]	1,024,035	
A Workplan with narrative for 2020 had not been prepared by the project, but the MTR found the Atlas AWP online (Open UNDP)			
	2020 – "PTA" from DNEF	Atlas_AWP_2020 (Open UNDP)	
GEF	[no "PTA" prepared]	1,099,737	
UNDP	[no "PTA" prepared]	0	
TOTAL	[NA]	1,099,737	
A PTA was prepared for 2021, both by the PMU and Wild Foundation, but there is uncertainty about Wild Foundation's amount.			
	2021 – "PTA" from DNEF	Atlas_AWP_2021 (Open UNDP)	Wild Found.: UNDP's FACE Form for 2021, May-Dec. [*]
GEF	2,122,772	644,634	58,611
UNDP	56,000	155,640	0
"Budget Spéciale d'Investigation" [sic.]	148,351	[NA]	[NA]
TOTAL	2,327,123	800,274	58,611
of which Wild F (est.)	862,245		
No Atlas AWP was made available for 2022. Amounts in the first column refer to the "PTA" with narrative [**] and in the last one to file from Wild Foundation indicated in the heading.			
	2022 – "PTBA" from DNEF [**]	Atlas_AWP_2022 (not published)	Wild Found. : « Programme Annuel janvier-décembre 2022 »
GEF	2,061,333	[no info]	1,119,769
UNDP	56,227	[no info]	
TOTAL	2,117,560	[no info]	1,119,769
of which Wild F (est.)	1,119,769		

[*] Source file: "WILD-MEP – FACE FORM Financial Report TR 1 & TR 2.xls". Note: In the UNDP compliant "FACE" form as prepared by Wild Foundation in 2021, the request for funds for quarters 1 and 2 was US\$ 58,611.44. This amount contrasts sharply with the amount of \$862K allocated by the PMU to Foundation in the 2021 "PTA".

The MTR assesses that the quality of the project's workplanning leaves much to be desired. The MTR has not observed the existence of a mechanism for the concerted technical review of activity planning involving all partners (DNEF and Wild Foundation). It is as if there are two separate workplans developed, without any cohesive direction about where the project is heading, without any visible coordination and collaboration among the entities responsible for the components. Maintaining a concerted technical review mechanism for workplans and implementation within the project would be a task for the PMU. However, as discussed in a previous section, the PMU is disarticulated and at least until end 2022 it was not capable of playing this role.

The quality of workplanning also varies considerably between the two main partners (DNEF and Wild Foundation). The plan prepared by DNEF is mostly focused on activities and their details, and much less on what would be strategic for the project to implement moving forward. The workplan prepared by Wild Foundation has more quality pertaining to those elements, but some elements seem unrealistic. The remainder of the content in the project's workplans, including risk assessment, could be improved.

Although the MTR tried repeatedly to obtain more clarity from UNDP on the workplanning processes, as well as on the monitoring and QA processes linked to these, it has been difficult. The overall quality and formats of workplans also posed unsurmountable constraints to the analysis of delivery included in the next section (pages missing, unstructured and confuse

data, and patchy information). The MTR thinks that there is much room for improvement in the workplanning process. Above all, there is room for improvement in the relationship between Wild Foundation and DNEF, both with respect to workplanning and implementation.

Recommendation 8.	Significantly improve the project's internal communication and the institutional collaboration within it. There seems to be an underlying problem of rivalry between DNEF and Wild Foundation, which should not exist in a project of this nature. On the contrary, GEF projects are to a great extent about multi-stakeholder dialogues and collaboration – no matter how difficult these may be. The MTR suggests that UNDP plays a stronger QA role on the project's workplanning and that a productive dialogue between the two main partners/parties (DNEF and Wild Foundation) are promoted by UNDP on a regular basis – rather than waiting for the COPIL to engage in substantive debates. The MTR recommends monthly meetings with a core executive group of partners involving UNDP, DNEF and Wild Foundation will help improve communication and also to promote pro-active decision making with respect to project implementation. Planning and implementation should be the main agenda topics in such meetings, as well as sorting operational issues. Regular dialogue between partners helps build trust and avoid menial operational issues are excessively discussed during the COPIL, an organ that should instead be discussing strategies and policies relating to elephant conservation.
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Finance and co-finance

In this section, the main purposes are to: **(1) analyze status and trends of financial management** and **(2) to validate the realization of co-financing**.

For co-financing part (item number 2), refer to Table 15 in Annex 6.8, for which the details behind the figures are in a separate file, complying with the MTR's TOR requirements. As foreseen at the CEO Endorsement stage, the co-financing to the UNDP GEF project "Conservation of the Malian Elephant" (PIMS 5778) was of \$14.195 million. Of this amount: 51% would come from the Malian government (through allocations of public funds allocated to MEADD and through the PRAPS project of the Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries); 48% from the Wild Foundation through their projects; and 1% from UNDP. To prepare Table 15 and the details behind its data, the MTR consulted with partners to analyze the achievement rate of each co-financing line. The MTR can confirm that at least 73% of this co-financing (i.e. \$10.473 million) has been realized by December 2022. The amount is broken-down as follows: 15% from the Malian government, 80% from Wild Foundation and 5% from UNDP.

Concerning the financial management for this project (item number 1), and covering the funds entrusted to UNDP (GEF and UNDP core funds), analyzing the project's delivery against its workplans should on focus here. The analysis faced some challenges²¹, but it could in the end be completed.

A summary analysis based on Atlas Combined Delivery Reports (CDRs) for the period 2018 to 2022 is included in Table 9, but it cannot be immediately compared to workplans in Table 8.

²¹ These difficulties were due to lack of clarity regarding both the workplanning aspect (covered in the previous section), but also expenditure (covered in this section). Normally, it would be sufficient for the MTR to analyze Atlas CDRs, which are summaries. The MTR had access to annual CDRs for 2018 through 2022 (all completed and closed financial years). Nevertheless, two of these reports were made available as images PDF'ed, rather than in structured text format (e.g. Excel, MS Word or even as PDF with editable text). This made the MTR's financial analysis much more difficult, but not impossible.

Table 9. Analysis of expenditure from CDRs (2018-2022) - summary²²

Sum of TOTAL Source of funds	Expenditure in USD (rounded off)			Grand Total
	Fund : 04000 (TRAC (Lines 1.1.1 and 1.1.2))	Fund: 04000 (Core Programme, UNU Centre)	Fund : 62000 (GEF Voluntary Contribution)	
2018	0		0	0
2019	389		721,398	721,787
2020		31,326	310,570	341,897
2021		102,043	-511,025	-408,982
2022	362,970		1,437,816	1,800,786
Grand Total	363,359	133,369	1,958,759	2,455,488

TOTAL UNDP co-financing (2018-2022)	496,729
TOTAL GEF expenditure (2018-2022)	1,958,759

The following important aspects are highlighted by the MTR on the basis of CDR analysis in Table 9:

- UNDP's co-financing to the project reached almost \$500K by end 2022. This is good news for the project, as only \$200K had been committed at PRODOC signature stage.
- The project did not incur expenditure in 2018 (hence zero delivery), although this contrasts with the information included in the PIR, which states that the first disbursement took place in 2018. The MTR recommends that an audit brings clarity to this aspect.
- The project appeared to have expenditure of more than \$700K in 2019, but as it turned out (on basis of additional analysis), the relevant expenditure entries recorded had little to do with project activities. According to an initial explanation by the UNDP Country Office, the amount executed was instead linked to "erroneous accounting entries".
- The financial year of 2020 showed a financial execution (delivery) of more than \$300K, but it is not totally possible to compare this delivery against a workplan for that year (i.e. a "PTA" with a narrative), as none had been prepared for 2020. If we consider the Atlas Workplans and Budgets in Table 8 in the previous section, then the 2020 expenditure amount would represent a very low delivery rate of either 27% or 32%. The uncertainty in the financial delivery rate is linked to whether the financial year 2019 or 2020 should be considered as the project's "Year 1" of effective implementation. In any case, 2020 had a rather low delivery rate, and is unfortunately obfuscated by the "erroneous accounting entries" from 2019, as informed by UNDP and verified by the MTR.
- In 2021 The project had negative expenditure of more than -\$400K, which is odd (very unusual for UNDP projects). This was explained by the UNDP CO as being due to accounting operations reversing accounting entries from 2019 that UNDP had categorized as "erroneous". The MTR noted that the CDR did not provide clarity on what would be the project's actual delivery against the workplan for that year, and continued to query UNDP for explanations during March 2023.
- Financial delivery in 2022 was strong, but it is not immediately possible to analyze it against an annual workplan. The information on the 2022 workplan in Table 8 lacks clarity, because it was delivered in PDF with only images behind it, rather than structured text.
- Total cumulative delivery against the GEF grant has reached approximately 48% by end 2022 (\$1.958 million over \$4.006 million in the workplan) but this remains an estimation, given the lack of clarity pertaining to both the workplans and expenditure.

When UNDP CO was specifically queried, in March 2023 during a conference call, about the reason why there was negative expenditure in 2021, they again indicated that this was due to erroneous entries that were later reversed. However, UNDP agreed that CDR reports, which would normally be sufficient for the purposes of an MTR, did not offer enough clarity on this. UNDP then insisted on the MTR actually analyzing a different set of Atlas reports titled "AAA". The comparison between CDRs and Reports AAA is in Table 10.

According to CDRs total cumulative delivery between 2019 and 2022 (all closed financial years) is \$2,455K and according to the AAA Reports it is \$2559K (Table 10). The MTR notes a \$104K differential that could not be explained by UNDP.

²² The consolidated structured financial data behind the analysis was shared with UNDP in Excel in March 2023.

Table 10. Adjusting the CDRs for reversals and comparing results with AAA Reports

Comparison (all funds)	AAA reports Sum of USD Amount	CDRs USD amounts Sum of USD Amount	CDRs <i>ADJUSTED*</i> - USD amounts Sum of USD Amount	Annual Workplans	Sources for « Plans de Travail » and notes
2019	656,861	721,787	603	[no AWP]	No workplan, expenditure were later reversed
2020	321,971	341,897	341,897	[no AWP]	No workplan but, acc. to UNDP, yet the project “had to have expenditure”, so salaries were paid and equipment purchased.
2021	-87,645	-408,982	312,202	2,327,123	Includes BSI (\$73K).
2022	1,668,091	1,800,786	1,800,786	2,117,560	Includes amount for Wild, but how much is not clear.
Grand Total	2,559,279	2,455,488	2,455,488	[NA]	Total GEF grant = \$4.1 million GEF + > \$400K from UNDP
	Differential between CDRs and AAA (USD)	-103,791	*Note: “Adjusted” here means that the sums include the figures of the CDRs with the expenses related only to the Elephants project		

Although UNDP offered full disclosure to the MTR team through the “Atlas AAA reports”, covering all expenditure and reversal transactions in the project between 2019 and 2022, the information contained in the datasets belongs to the scope of an audit and was considered excessive. The information in Table 10 reflects uncertainty in financial data, which is not so useful in an MTR. The MTR recommends that an audit exercise should look into the details of the project’s expenditure.

When queried about why “erroneous accounting entries” were only reversed two years later, UNDP Country Office mentioned that they had indeed tried to do it earlier, but and that it would otherwise affect their corporate “Dashboard” by year end in 2019.

Recommendation 9.	Based on unresolved questions related to the nature of certain expenditure lines in the various reports on the state of financial execution of the project, the Mid-Term Review calls for a better elaborated and more discernable justification of certain atypical financial transactions, as well as negative expenditure observed in 2021.
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Table 11. Summary analysis of Reports AAA (2019-2022)

AAA reports Sum of USD Amount	Financial Years				Grand Total	Notes
Expenditure Analysis	2019	2020	2021	2022		
Fund ID 62000 - GEF Trust Fund	721,398	318,327	-252,319	1,443,835	2,231,241	
National Implementing Partner (DNEF/PMU)		281,667	346,746	534,709	1,163,122	[1]
Wild Foundation, Implementing Agency = 10635			35,914	0	35,914	[2]
Wild Foundation, Implementing Agency = 13988			58,611	885,765	944,376	[2]
UNDP, Implementing Agency = 10635	214	36,660	27,593	23,361	87,829	[3]
(UNDP managed) Grants reversed - zero sum	721,184	0	-721,184		0	[4]
Fund ID 04000 UNDP (TRAC Lines 1.1.1 and 1.1.2 or Core Programme, UNU Centre)	-35,898	15,854	151,590	285,443	416,990	[5]
National Implementing Partner (DNEF/PMU)		31,326	135,012	362,970	529,308	[1]
UNDP	-35,898	-15,472	16,578	-77,527	-112,318	
Fund ID 62999	-28,639	-12,211	13,084	-61,187	-88,952	[6]
UNDP	-28,639	-12,211	13,084	-61,187	-88,952	
Grand Total	656,861	321,971	-87,645	1,668,091	2,559,279	
<i>Grand Total excluding “Grants reversed - zero sum”</i>	<i>-64,322</i>	<i>321,971</i>	<i>633,539</i>	<i>1,668,091</i>	<i>2,559,279</i>	

[1] Funds executed by DNEF

[2] Funds executed by Wild Foundation

[3] UNDP managed activities such as Evaluation and the safeguards consultancies

[4] Consolidated sum of all lines that represented erroneous expenditure (or expenditure related to other projects) and which were registered in 2019 (\$721K) and reversed in 2021.

[5] Consolidated sum of UNDP’s co-financing to this project.

[6] No information about what the fund or the expenditure lines mean, but they appears to relate to GEF.

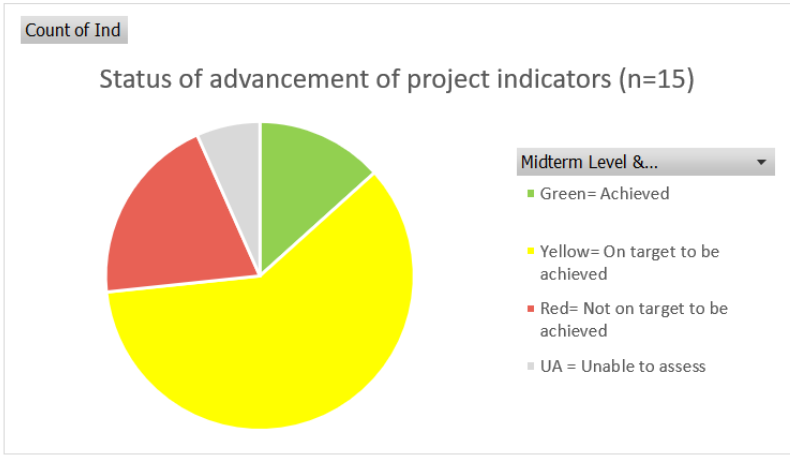
Finally, even with uncertainties, the analysis of Reports AAA can be summarized in Table 11. To wrap up, it is not possible to analyze delivery against the workplan for this project. Differently from CDRs, Atlas AAA Reports indicate that, by end December 2022, approximately 55% of the project’s GEF budget have been consumed (\$2,231K / \$4,066K – as per Table 11). According to CDRs this figure would be 48% (\$1,959K / \$4,066K – see Table 9).

Project-level monitoring and evaluation systems

The extended absence of a dedicated M&E Officer in the PMU represents an important void in the consolidation of the project’s M&E Systems. Nevertheless, the PIR seems well organized and the style of reporting adequate.

The project’s M&E System includes 15 key indicators, some of which are broken-down in sub-indicators, tallying 22 indicators and sub-indicators that need to be carefully informed in the PIR. The reporting against project indicators depends by and large on Wild Foundation informing for the more complex indicators. The quality of reporting is good. The planning is however overly ambitious, the main reason why PIR ratings on progress in 2021 and 2022 tended to be negative. Figure 10 provides the overview. Most indicators are not yet achieved but on track (yellow) and many are either off-track (red) or cannot be informed (grey). Only two out of 15 are currently achieved. (The details that generated Figure 10 are in Table 7.)

Figure 10. Relative proportion of state of advancement of project indicators according to the “traffic lights” assessment



Stakeholder engagement

As designed, the project aims to achieve results through two distinct approaches that are not necessarily the responsibility of the same stakeholders in their implementation. Strengthening the legislative framework, national capacity to combat wildlife crime and, in turn, protecting Gourma elephants from poaching and securing seasonal routes and key habitats, is naturally the responsibility of government structures, while Community-Based Natural Resource Management (CBRNM) in Gourma elephant habitat can only be effectively implemented by specialized NGOs on the ground.

Community engagement is a sensitive process that requires specific expertise, as mistakes can easily be made in this area causing more harm than good. As in many such situations, NGOs are able to fill this gap and, over the years, the Wild Foundation has developed a successful model of community engagement, which involves local government and the network needed to reach the community.

According to the project implementation arrangements, DNEF and Wild Foundation are the main stakeholders. It appears, however, that for some aspects of the project the perceptions of the two stakeholders diverge. These are essentially aspects relating to the functioning of the Anti-Poaching Brigade and aerial survey, or the accountability of one or the other in relation to the reporting and the conduct of activities on the ground. It should be recalled that, due to the national implementation modality of the project, it is DNEF that ensures the coordination of the project. The basis of an agreement between Wild Foundation and UNDP can be questioned, but not the point that the relevance of the mechanism or its principles would become an issue in and on itself.

The collaborative relationship between the two structures needs to be made more explicit, considering that the institutional project’s support in its entirety falls under the DNEF and that, within the limits of its mandate (according to the standard agreement signed with the UNDP), Wild Foundation is responsible for the results in terms of community-based natural resource management.

With respect to the project’s engagement with local communities, a strong recommendation is made:

Recommendation 10.	<p>To achieve the project's objective the law enforcement and repressive approach needs to be complemented by a more preventive approach that seeks to build trust, promote peace and inclusiveness. It is therefore essential equally engage and support the local populations, departing from what they are already doing in view of gradually guiding them towards actions that contribute to the protection of elephants and to the overall conservation of biodiversity. In this light, and considering the project's long-term objective (protect elephants, conserve and enhance biodiversity), as well as local people's short-term drivers, it is strongly recommended that the project targets different types of actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actions such as "total conservation", bringing a few scattered areas under strict protection. The local populations themselves will define which zones will they apply strict conservation. • Actions such as "partial conservation", bringing areas under a less strict type of protection as rangeland reserves. Local communities themselves will define which zones will be included and which restricting rules for resource use and exploitation that they commit to applying. • Actions such as natural resource management, development of fire-breaks against wildfires, application of local rules and sanctions, as well as laws that govern NRM. The local population defines which actions apply to which resources and strategic areas that will be enhanced, considering a certain number for resource use and exploitation rules through the implementation of actions to improve the productive potential of these areas or resources.
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Stakeholder engagement, with focus on Gender aspects.

In the PRODOC's cover, the project is classified as:

"UNDP Gender Marker: 2 (the project has gender equality as a significant objective)"

There is a gender equality action plan. In all community activities, the project requires the active participation of women, for example: concerning support for income-generating activities (IGA) to associations, there are 1,743 women and 1,432 men and concerning land use stabilization, 245 women against 59 men.

Nevertheless, the Project reported the following content in the 2022 PIR:

"A strategy for gender mainstreaming in project activities has been developed. Its implementation began with the systematic inclusion of women in project activities. Thus, women were targeted in capacity building activities. This strategy also allowed for a better selection of IGA (income generating activities) beneficiaries by targeting women as a priority".

Continued quote:

"116 associations have been surveyed, of which 91 are formally established, including 4,282 members.

116 associations submitted projects of which a total of 86 associations were supported; these included 1432 men and 1743 women, i.e. 3175 members as beneficiaries of which the majority were women.

IGAs were supported in the following areas: small trade, livestock, sheep, goat and cattle fattening, agriculture, welding, metalwork and environment (NTEPs).

Amounts requested were 209,812,500 FCFA including an own contribution of 18,802,850 FCA and 191,009,650 FCFA of subsidy from the project. Of this, the amount financed was 62,831,900 FCFA according to the following criteria: formal existence (receipt), experience, number of active members, relevance of the project and the activities carried out, location."

The above is a positive token of gender mainstreaming at the level of activities. However, at a more fundamental level, there is still much to be done for living up to the Gender Marker 2. The content from the PRODOC table titled "Proposed gender mainstreaming activities in the project components" is not being actively used by the PMU in implementation.

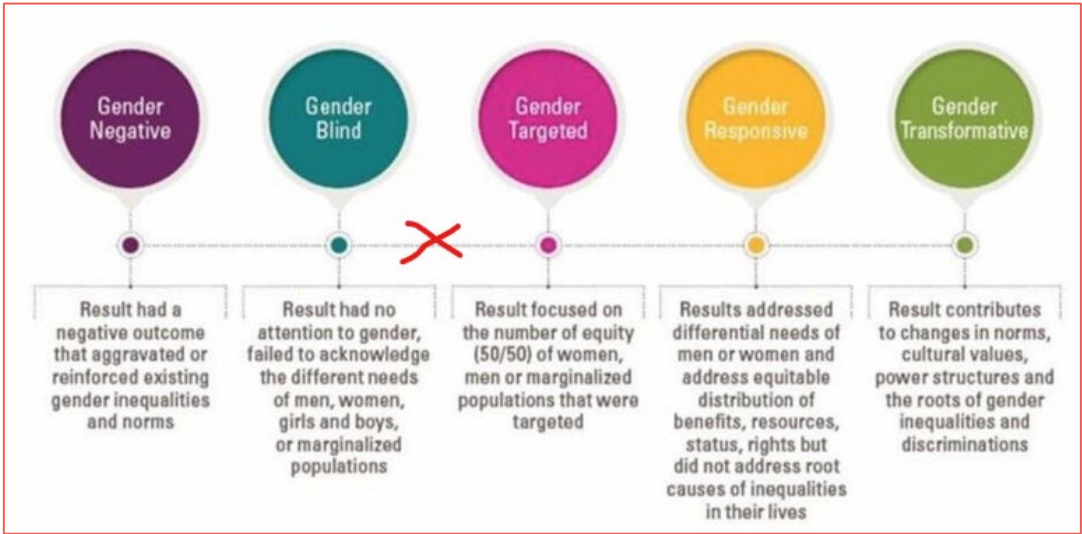
Among the entities involved in the project, at the central and decentralized levels, the MTR notes that most of the key posts are occupied by men (for example at the PMU, in DNEF and in the local government, with exceptions – see for example the table in [section 3.6](#)). Only at UNDP and Wild Foundation are some leadership positions held by women. DNEF is a militarized service, and therefore by default, in the Malian context, male-dominated institution. The MTR did not observe a visible effort

to include women in national institutions. Without this effort, the patterns of gender inequality that are prevalent in society are by default replicated in the project as well.

The very project objective in French shows limited gender sensitivity -- it makes reference to “réduire les conflits entre les hommes et les éléphants”. In English it says “human” rather “men”. Yet, this is just a token of how important it is to change the language for changing ideas.

Overall, the gender mainstreaming classification using the GRES scale on the project is somewhere between “Gender blind” and “Gender targeted” (Figure 11).

Figure 11. Assessment of Analytical Frameworks: Gender Results Effectiveness Scale (GRES)



To add a bit more background to the gender aspect, Wild Foundation brought to the attention of the MTR a concrete example of the difficulties faced by them in addressing the gender gap through their activities. In a comment related to the draft MTR report they mentioned:

"In this gender aspect, it is absolutely necessary to take into account the socio-cultural barriers in certain areas of the project. For example, in the Tamasheq community, which is the most important, women move less around. In addition to this, the security aspect should be considered; terrorists attack women more often than men, mainly because of the [local rules on] wearing a veil."

In a project like the present one, which operates in a zone riddled by civil conflict, and in a country like Mali, where the full realization of women’s potential is constrained on a daily basis by a number of cultural barriers, there are certainly additional challenges to the promotion of gender equality and women’s empowerment. Without any doubt, women’s safety comes first as a concern when planning project activities on the ground. It is not worth exposing them to the risk of violence and rape, just to complete a project activity. In such situations, it is important to “think outside the box” and conceive e.g. activities linked to capacity development that minimize this risk (e.g. digital inclusion). The report on socio-environmental safeguards prepared during the project’s Inception Phase offered quite a few suggestions on how this apparent dilemma raised by Wild Foundation can be addressed.

Recommendation 11.	Invite project stakeholders, including at the decentralized level, to participate in training on gender equality and women's empowerment in development cooperation.
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Reporting

The quality of reporting from the project is generally high, considering the two PIRs prepared by the project to date. The content of PIRs is coherent and the reporting against indicators is generally adequate.

The content of implementation reports is consistent and the reports against the indicators are generally adequate, except for indicator 8 which refers to the METT (tracking tool) on the effectiveness of the management of protected areas (“Indicator 8: METT score for the partial elephant reserve”, which now applies to the Gourma Biosphere Reserve).

The MTR conducted a thorough review of all GEF tracking tools under the project (Annex 6.12). Based on this review and with a focus on the Protected Area Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT) scoring, the MTR found that the overall score of 85, which the project had given itself in 2022, is clearly overestimated and unrealistic. The MTR reviewed each METT question and proposed a new score of 49 at mid-term as more realistic.

For more details on this content refer to Table 7 in section 4.2.

Communications

Another aspect related to ‘Reporting’ is ‘Communication’. In terms of project performance, there is an important discrepancy between the quality of communication pieces prepared by Wild Foundation, and those of DNEF.

As a public institution with national outreach, DNEF could do more to communicate what it does concerning this project. The Directorate maintains a Facebook page with regular posting, but none are recent regarding the Mali Elephants Conservation Project.²³ The PMU could be in charge of preparing communication content. this and include relevant activities in 2023.

In contrast, Wild Foundation maintains thorough and up-to-date information in its website about the project, including on the achievement of results reflected on key indicators.²⁴

As for UNDP, it is worth highlighting that the project won an Equator Prize in 2017 and a thorough and well developed 18-page brochure was published depicting the CBNRM work of Wild Foundation back then. It is interesting to note that the GEF project, as signed, was not yet fully active in 2017. The MTR assumes that the activities mentioned in the brochure must refer to a precursor initiative vis-à-vis the GEF project.²⁵ Else, UNDP maintains standardized information on its project though the Open UNDP platform.²⁶

More collaborative work among the partners on communications could be beneficial for the project and for promoting a better relationship among them, especially between DNEF and Wild Foundation. A recommendation is made.

Recommendation 12.	It is proposed that UNDP engages with DNEF and Wild Foundation in the preparation of joint communication pieces about the project and its positive results. The pieces of communication / outreach to be prepared may be e.g. a short film, a jingle or an App, as long as it can be easily consumed and has strong impact in terms of advocacy. An adequate budgetary allocation should be put aside for the purpose in 2023. It is however important to specify that this is a communication on results and not on the programming of actions and travel of staff in the field, precisely to avoid endangering these staff. It should be an advocacy and decision-oriented communication with the aim of helping the additional resource mobilization effort.
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²³ <https://www.facebook.com/people/Minist%C3%A8re-de-lEnvironnement-de-lAssainissement/100068568245581/> - accessed on 28/02/2023.

²⁴ <https://wild.org/mali-elephants/> - accessed on 28/02/2023.

²⁵ <https://www.equatorinitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Mali-Elephant-Project-Case-Study-English-FNL-2.pdf> - accessed on 28/02/2023.

²⁶ Open UNDP, <https://open.undp.org/projects/00108261> - accessed on 28/02/2023.

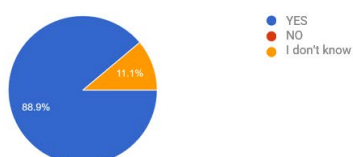
4.4 Sustainability

The overall rating for the project's sustainability is "1 = Unlikely (U)". This means that there are severe risks that project outcomes as well as key outputs will not be sustained. Key outcomes from the project may be achieved by project end. This will depend on whether implementation conditions can be improved and if the existing local ownership of the project strengthened (the MTR made specific recommendations on these in previous sections). Yet, these achievements remain fragile due to a number of factors that are analyzed herein, and they may not be enough to secure sustainability more generally. The security context at the local level is a dynamic and volatile risk played a strong role in the assessment of sustainability.

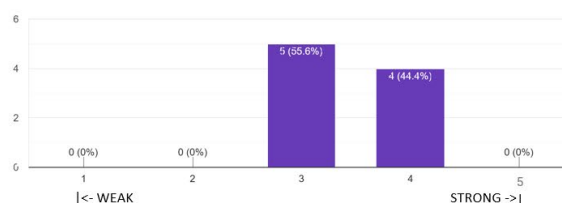
Project reinforce the achievements of previous interventions. Also, a project's sustainability cannot be assessed in a vacuum. It must also be put in perspective vis-à-vis previous and future interventions. The present assessment of sustainability starts by looking at stakeholders' views on it, on the basis of the stakeholders' perceptions survey (Figure 12).

Figure 12. Results from stakeholder survey relating to the project's Sustainability

Q5) SUSTAINABILITY | Are measures planned or already taken to ensure the sustainability of the project's achievements?



Q6) SUSTAINABILITY | What measures has the project or UNDP put in place to ensure the sustainability of the project's effects?



When queried, most respondents to the MTR's Stakeholder Survey (89% for Q5) indicated that the project does foresee / has implemented measures to ensure the sustainability of its achievements. Respondents' view on Sustainability was generally positive (according to Q6). Answers range between moderate (index 3/5) to relatively strong (index 4/5). They show that they recognize the measures put in place by UNDP and national stakeholders relating to sustainability. The average for this indicator in Q6 is 3.44 in a 5-point scale showing strength levels.

However, these generally positive perceptions by stakeholders are in contrast with MTR findings, which express concern about the project's general sustainability.

Ratings for the different dimensions of the project's Sustainability are in Table 11. The justification for the assessment of these dimensions (financial, socio-economic, institutional framework and governance, and environmental) is included in the sections that follow.

Table 12. Assessment of Sustainability Aspect

Sustainability aspect	MTR Assessment (ratings) ²⁷
Financial Sustainability	1 = Unlikely (U)
Socio-economic Sustainability	1 = Unlikely (U)
Institutional Sustainability and Governance risks to Sustainability	1 = Unlikely (U)
Environmental Sustainability	3 = Moderately Likely (ML): moderate risks to sustainability
Sustainability in general (pondered result from the above)	1 = Unlikely (U): Severe risks that project outcomes as well as key outputs will not be sustained

In the assessment of sustainability, the MTR looked at the project's past and present to be able to infer conclusions on its prospects for the future. The MTR noted that project results do indeed reinforce the achievements of previous interventions

²⁷ According to scale in Annex 6.2.

– some of which included the strong involvement of Wild Foundation, but also of DNEF. Previous collaboration instances between Wild Foundation and DNEF have however never taken place in a security context that is so challenging as the current one. Also, they have never been expected to work so closely together as the present project requires. Some difficulties were noted in the collaboration as a result, without this really compromising the desired results. Other interventions from the past involving the two stakeholders serve to point out that there is not only a certain continuity in the effort but also a desire to consolidate past achievements.

Nevertheless, by the time of the mid-term review, and based on the status of progress and the achievement of project results (section 4.2), the picture is rather mixed. The MTR confirms that nothing is definitely compromised and that the project still has the possibility of enhancing its level of performance and achieving the expected results. This is more relevant now than when the MTR formulated its working questions on the issue of sustainability.

Indeed, the need for the protection of the Gourma biosphere and the protection of elephants will definitively not be satisfied at the end of the current phase of the project. Still, are partners already thinking of the necessary provisions in terms of actions to support and finance this support beyond the project? The answer is no. The low level of collaboration among partners has not made this possible.

The project has a chance to recuperate and accelerate its performance. However, the most bearing issue relating to sustainability is that other ongoing and future interventions will certainly be needed for an effective and sustainable elephant conservation in Mali.

It is obvious that this project alone will not be able to address all of the fundamental and systemic issues that still represent important barriers to the conservation of the Malian elephant – not against a background of challenging human security within the Gourma region. Therefore, not only pursuing the implementation of this project is needed, but also new interventions. Conserving populations of large mammals require by default a long-term perspective, possibly decades of investments. The present project should be seen as part of a sequence of initiatives that together can potentially sustain the elephant population in question and its habitat.

With human insecurity at play, interventions become riskier and more expensive, but still worthwhile.

Financial risks to sustainability

A key issue pertaining to financial sustainability is what will happen to the recurrent costs of maintaining essential project activities, such as CBNRM and the Anti-poaching brigade and unit, once project funding is finished.

Considering the current global context of recession, it may be difficult but not impossible for the Malian government to gradually take over some of the costs of maintaining an optimal level of environmental management in the area. Therefore, the rating for Financial risks to sustainability is “1 = Unlikely (U)”.

At the same time, it must be considered that project efforts are in many ways subsidized by humanitarian and peacekeeping efforts in the Gourma region. A key stakeholder in this regard is MINUSMA (the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali), which can help advocate at the highest level of the Malian government for maintaining a minimum level of patrols on the elephant route to avoid poaching incidents,

During the last Project Steering Committee meeting (COPIL) (02-Feb-2023), members were informed of the signature of a protocol between the Directorate of Water and Forests and the General Staff of the Armed Forces for the re-composition of the Anti-poaching brigade, its operating methods and support. This is a satisfactory response to the risk of financing linked to the fight against poaching, but it is not nearly enough for the long-term management of the newly created Biosphere Reserve.

Decision was also made during the COPIL's meeting on the transfer to the to the Malian Air Force of the ULM (the light aircraft) that had been used by Wild Foundation for the aerial survey of elephant routes, as well as the means for its operation that had been provided for purpose. Should this be considered a transfer of the aerial survey responsibility to the Air Force? The MTR considers that, if necessary, this will have to be regulated by a separate protocol.

Recommendation 13.

Clarify as soon as possible the roles, means and the arrangements for conducting the arial survey of elephants. It is urgent to complete the elephant population survey in the Gourma.

Socio-economic risks to sustainability

Local populations are committed to the objectives of the project. The fact that CBNRM initiative received an Equator Prize is commendable, but not at all enough to secure sustainable of socio-economic gains obtained through the GEF project.

On a positive note, CBNRM results pursued within the project's framework are integrated into the communal development plans in target sites. Yet, the security context at the local level is dynamic and volatile, negatively affecting the socio-economic sustainability. The issue of local livelihoods requires more investment coupled with humanitarian assistance – both of which are outside the project scope, but which the project can help mobilize or enhance.

UNDP had further requested the MTR to also assess "Socio-political risks to sustainability". In several sections of the report, we discuss the impact of civil unrest and conflict in the project. The project's political risk is generally high. The rating of this sustainability criteria would not change. In the next section, the MTR looks at governance issues and sustainability, which adequately covers political risk.

All considered, the rating for Socio-economic risks to sustainability is "1 = Unlikely (U)".

Institutional framework and governance risks to sustainability

In light of the high security risks to the Gourma region, the project is necessary, but it is not sufficient to secure the elephant populations beyond the project implementation period. Other interventions and investments will be needed, accompanied by peace-building, humanitarian and enhanced governance / accountability efforts.

As noted, the security context at the local level is dynamic and volatile. If the results expected with respect to institutional and frameworks are successful, they may have a chance to be sustained, depending on governance conditions at the national level.

The MTR also notes a slowness in the pace of certain essential activities, such as the establishment of a comprehensive Anti-poaching Unit that reaches out to other entities, such as the Gendarmes, Police, Customs and the Judiciary. The 18-month period for achieving goals within a reasonable scenario since November 2022 has seen very little progress.

The MTR considers the rating for Institutional framework and governance risks to sustainability as "1 = Unlikely (U)".

Environmental risks to sustainability

On a more positive note, there is a lower level of risk regarding environmental sustainability when compared to the remainder of the risk aspects for the project. Still, the level is 3 = Moderately Likely (ML): moderate risks to sustainability.

Project indicators relating to environmental outcomes show positive trends (e.g. Indicators 2, 3 and 4), but with caveats and information gaps. Therefore, the assessment is cautious and the risk level is moderate. Climatic risk may also contribute to it. Prolonged drought could aggravate the human-elephant conflict in the zone. Because drought is recurrent in the region, it should not be discarded.

In the long run, climate variability and change may also threaten overall project achievements, e.g. if severe drought becomes persistent in upcoming years and if higher temperatures can trigger unexpected forest fires.

5 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusions

Comprehensive and balanced statements (that are evidence-based and connected to the MTR's findings) which highlight the strengths, weaknesses and results of the project

The overall MTR rating is **Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)**, similar to the rating accorded to the achievement of the project's objective, under results' assessment.

Ultimately, the success of the project rests on the stakeholder's ability to deliver on the enforcement of IWT legislation, for which anti-poaching legislation, strategies and actions are needed. DNEF is expected to show leadership in this respect, through enhancing its institutional capacity to deliver, consolidating the structures proposed under the project (the anti-poaching unit), and enhancing its presence on the ground. Through a more preventive approach (as opposed to the repressive one), Wild Foundation is expected to continue to deliver on Component 3 activities, although it expressed concerns about the continuation of the project in the case of the proposed duration extension. A strategy for the project exists for all partners to be able to deliver on these complementary aspects. Commitment, according to several stakeholders, and this MTR, is however faltering.

The success of the project also depends on the articulation between the activities under DNEF's mandate and how these are co-supported on the ground through CBNRM approaches spearheaded by Wild Foundation.

The attitude of mutual distrust between key players observed during the COPIL is highly detrimental to the project and must be addressed through enhanced dialogue. This is why the MTR is making a strong, unequivocal and priority recommendation to project on embracing open and enhanced dialogue. This applies both to DNEF and Wild Foundation. In this context, the PMU and UNDP must play a catalytic role to ensure that the dialogue will be pragmatic and productive.

The main MTR conclusions, according to topic, are included in Table 12.

Table 13. Main MTR conclusions

Topics	Description
Project Design and Relevance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project Design is considered relevant. The project is well designed and it adequately took risks and safeguards into consideration. The PRODOC in English and French are both well edited. Relevance is recognized by most stakeholders. The project is worthwhile. The project should not be closed, in spite of poor performance in the past. The Results Framework/Logframe is also highly relevant, presented in a logic and balanced way from the point of view of indicators, which are formulated in a clear way (most of them are SMART²⁸) and they connect well with indicators in the GEF's Global Wildlife Partnership (GWP). The project's Theory of Change (TOC) is also well framed and builds well around the GWP's own TOC. However, there is a disconnect between project assumptions (as of the Logframe), the TOC and project Risks – while good design practice recommends that these elements are closely connected.
Implementation and Results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delays were observed in the achievement of outcomes because of the time that was lost in the project's initiation (more than 1 year). The year 2022 has seen an acceleration towards results, despite the precarious security situation. Outcome indicators are generally on track, based on the assessments included in the PIR (2022), but key indicators (objective level) are not – reason why the Objective Achievement was rated as "Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)".

²⁸ SMART indicators (meaning Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound).

Topics	Description								
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are indications that show an increased level of protection of Gourma elephants and their habitat, (based on the balance of indicators in the PIR). At the same time, there is an urgent need to complete the survey for the count of the Gourma elephant population. The Project Management Unit (PMU) is disarticulated and does not have enough staff (considering the time scope of the MTR is until December 2022). There is no effective collaboration between the Implementing Partner (DNEF) and the Wild Foundation. There is apparently an underlying problem of institutional rivalry between them, which should not exist in a project of this nature. The situation on the ground is considered fragile and the project's conservation results are at risk of being reversed, given the context of civil conflict, humanitarian crisis and insecurity at the local level. <p>Achievements per project Outcome are as follows:</p> <table> <tr> <td>Outcome 1) Strengthening the legislative framework and national capacity to address wildlife crime:</td><td>Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)</td></tr> <tr> <td>Outcome 2) Protecting Gourma elephants from poaching and securing seasonal migration routes and key habitat:</td><td>Moderately Satisfactory (MS)</td></tr> <tr> <td>Outcome 3) Community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) in the Gourma elephant habitat:</td><td>Satisfactory (S)</td></tr> <tr> <td>Outcome 4) Gender Mainstreaming, Knowledge Management and M&E:</td><td>Satisfactory (S)</td></tr> </table>	Outcome 1) Strengthening the legislative framework and national capacity to address wildlife crime:	Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)	Outcome 2) Protecting Gourma elephants from poaching and securing seasonal migration routes and key habitat:	Moderately Satisfactory (MS)	Outcome 3) Community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) in the Gourma elephant habitat:	Satisfactory (S)	Outcome 4) Gender Mainstreaming, Knowledge Management and M&E:	Satisfactory (S)
Outcome 1) Strengthening the legislative framework and national capacity to address wildlife crime:	Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)								
Outcome 2) Protecting Gourma elephants from poaching and securing seasonal migration routes and key habitat:	Moderately Satisfactory (MS)								
Outcome 3) Community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) in the Gourma elephant habitat:	Satisfactory (S)								
Outcome 4) Gender Mainstreaming, Knowledge Management and M&E:	Satisfactory (S)								
Results from Stakeholder Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> During the MTR, a stakeholders' perception survey was conducted. Results confirms progress in good directions relating to several topics but does not provide certainty about the timelines, relative roles and underlying problems relating to sustainability. Therefore, certain results from stakeholder perceptions were interpreted with caution. The analysis is included in the body of the report and more details in Annex 6.3. Survey results also confirm relevance and the overwhelming significance of the civil conflict in the Gourma region on project implementation. 								

5.2 Recommendations

A total of 13 recommendations were made by the MTR, throughout this report's narrative, aimed at helping the project get on track and deliver. These recommendations are listed in the next sub-sections according to three categories (as per the UNDP GEF 2014 Guidance on MTRs).

Corrective actions for the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Project

#	Recommendations	Addressed to
1	The mid-term review (MTR) makes three related proposals regarding the project's timeline: (1) Extend the project duration until the end of 2025; (2) Commend the Terminal Evaluation by mid-2025; and (3) Accelerate implementation towards results in 2023 and 2024, strengthening the elements of sustainability currently in deficit.	UNDP CO, UNDP NCE
7	The mid-term review (MTR) suggests that UNDP plays a stronger advocacy role in mainstreaming the principles of accountability and quality of governance in the management of Protected Areas. This work can start through the roll out of skills-focused training course on protected area governance benefiting core staff and DNEF at the central and decentralized levels.	UNDP CO, PMU

#	Recommendations	Addressed to
8	Significantly improve the project's internal communication and the institutional collaboration within it. There seems to be an underlying problem of rivalry between DNEF and Wild Foundation, which should not exist in a project of this nature. On the contrary, GEF projects are to a great extent about multi-stakeholder dialogues and collaboration – no matter how difficult these may be. The MTR suggests that UNDP plays a stronger QA role on the project's workplanning and that a productive dialogue between the two main partners/parties (DNEF and Wild Foundation) are promoted by UNDP on a regular basis – rather than waiting for the COPIL to engage in substantive debates. The MTR recommends monthly meetings with a core executive group of partners involving UNDP, DNEF and Wild Foundation will help improve communication and also to promote pro-active decision making with respect to project implementation. Planning and implementation should be the main agenda topics in such meetings, as well as sorting operational issues. Regular dialogue between partners helps build trust and avoid menial operational issues are excessively discussed during the COPIL, an organ that should instead be discussing strategies and policies relating to elephant conservation.	Project Management Unit (PMU), UNDP and Wild Foundation
9	Based on unresolved questions related to the nature of certain expenditure lines in the various reports on the state of financial execution of the project, the Mid-Term Review calls for a better elaborated and more discernable justification of certain atypical financial transactions, as well as negative expenditure observed in 2021.	UNDP
10	To achieve the project's objective the law enforcement and repressive approach needs to be complemented by a more preventive approach that seeks to build trust, promote peace and inclusiveness. It is therefore essential equally engage and support the local populations, departing from what they are already doing in view of gradually guiding them towards actions that contribute to the protection of elephants and to the overall conservation of biodiversity. In this light, and considering the project's long-term objective (protect elephants, conserve and enhance biodiversity), as well as local people's short-term drivers, it is strongly recommended that the project targets different types of actions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actions such as "total conservation", bringing a few scattered areas under strict protection. The local populations themselves will define which zones will they apply strict conservation. • Actions such as "partial conservation", bringing areas under a less strict type of protection as rangeland reserves. Local communities themselves will define which zones will be included and which restricting rules for resource use and exploitation that they commit to applying. • Actions such as natural resource management, development of fire-breaks against wildfires, application of local rules and sanctions, as well as laws that govern NRM. The local population defines which actions apply to which resources and strategic areas that will be enhanced, considering a certain number for resource use and exploitation rules through the implementation of actions to improve the productive potential of these areas or resources. 	UNDP CO, DNEF, Wild Foundation
11	Invite project stakeholders, including at the decentralized level, to participate in training on gender equality and women's empowerment in development cooperation.	UNDP
13	Clarify as soon as possible the roles, means and the arrangements for conducting the arial survey of elephants. It is urgent to complete the elephant population survey in the Gourma.	UNDP CO, DNEF

Actions to follow up or reinforce initial benefits from the Project

#	Recommendations	Addressed to
3	The MTR takes notes of the construction of a warehouse for storing confiscated products from illegal wildlife trade (in this case ivory) being now completed, and calls the attention to the risks linked to maintaining ivory stockpiles over long periods of time, regardless of how secure those storing facilities are designed to be. Experience from elsewhere in Africa show that it is not advisable (e.g. Mozambique) shows that storing illegal items that pick a high price in the international market will only create a strong incentive for theft and corruption, including at the highest levels. The MTR recommends that confiscated ivory should be immediately weighed and quantities recorded in front of multiple witnesses. Thereafter, the products should be immediately destroyed in front of the public, never to be used. Similar principles apply to illegal drugs, and other illicit products. Here are a few advisory resources to be consulted on the topic: https://cites.org/eng/imp/ivory_stockpile_mgmt.html https://www.worldwildlife.org/stories/crush-and-burn-destroying-illegal-elephant-ivory https://www.unodc.org/documents/Wildlife/Toolkit_e.pdf https://www.elephantprotectioninitiative.org/ https://www.elephantprotectioninitiative.org/ivorymanagement https://www.bmj.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/EN/G20/UNODC_Adressing_Corruption.pdf	DNEF
4	Accelerate key studies – such as the follow-on study to the Anti-Poaching Strategy and the full operationalization of the Anti-poaching Unit, following international best practices on issues of international wildlife trade (IWT), e.g. from CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) or UNDOC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime), and by actively learning lessons from other projects in the GEF's Global Wildlife Program (GWP). The MTR also recommends that UNDP engages the new project manager in the revision of the METT scorecard (and related tools), taking into account the detailed revision already provided by the MTR in Annex 6.12 of its D4 report.	UNDP CO and PMU
5	Accelerate the legal, institutional and financial consolidation of the Gourma Biosphere Reserve and its operationalization as a well-managed protected area, e.g. learning from the successes and failures of the long-term management of Boucle du Baoulé Biosphere Reserve. This will require vision and a much stronger collaboration among partners.	DNEF and Ministry of the Environment, Sanitation, and Sustainable Development (MEADD)

Proposals for future directions underlining main objectives

#	Recommendations	Addressed to
2	A reflection exercise on the validity of the project's current assumptions should be conducted together as part of its regular risk assessment exercise. To assist in the exercise, the MTR includes in its report, as an example, the assumptions review matrix. Several assumptions do not appear to be valid and may be disregarded. Others can be reformulated.	UNDP CO
6	Mobilize additional funds for strengthening the resilience of local populations through the scaling up of income-generating actions, actively including women as beneficiaries of such activities.	Wild Foundation, UNDP CO, DNEF, MEADD
12	It is proposed that UNDP engages with DNEF and Wild Foundation in the preparation of joint communication pieces about the project and its positive results. The pieces of communication / outreach to be prepared may be e.g. a short film, a jingle or an App, as long as it can be easily consumed and has strong impact in terms of advocacy. An adequate budgetary allocation should be put aside for the purpose in 2023. It is however important to specify that this is a communication on results and not on the programming of actions and travel of staff in the field, precisely to avoid endangering these staff. It should be an advocacy and decision-oriented communication with the aim of helping the additional resource mobilization effort.	UNDP CO, DNEF, Wild Foundation

6 ANNEXES

6.1 MTR ToR (excluding ToR annexes)

The original Term of Reference for this assignment (in French) is included herein (without its annexes to avoid repetition of content).

TERMES DE REFERENCE RECRUTEMENT D'UN CONSULTANT INTERNATIONAL POUR L'EVALUATION A MIS-PARCOURS.

Nom du projet : « *Gestion communautaire des ressources naturelles qui résout les conflits, améliore les moyens de subsistance et restaure les écosystèmes dans l'ensemble de l'aire de répartition des éléphants* »

Titre de l'article : Recrutement d'un consultant International pour l'évaluation à mi-parcours du projet Eléphant

Pays / Lieu d'affectation : Mali/ Bamako

Lieux de voyage prévus (le cas échéant) : Mopti, Douentza, Tombouctou et Bamako

Date de début d'affectation : September 1, 2022

Durée de la mission / ou date de fin (le cas échéant) : 35 jours

Nom et fonction du superviseur : Oumar Tamboura, Chef de l'Unité Environnement et Changement Climatique

Modalités de paiement : Lump Sum (payments linked to deliverables)

Dispositions administratives : La responsabilité principale de la gestion de cette évaluation revient au bureau de pays du PNUD au Mali. Le bureau de pays du PNUD contactera les évaluateurs en vue de garantir le versement en temps opportun des indemnités journalières à l'équipe d'évaluation et de finaliser les modalités de voyage de celle-ci dans le pays. L'équipe de projet sera chargée d'assurer la liaison avec l'équipe d'évaluateurs afin d'organiser des entretiens avec les parties prenantes et des visites sur le terrain, ainsi que la coordination avec le gouvernement, etc.

Méthode de sélection : Desk review

1. BACKGROUND

Conformément aux politiques et procédures de suivi et d'évaluation du PNUD et du FEM, tous les projets de moyenne ou grande envergure soutenus par le PNUD et financés par le FEM doivent faire l'objet d'une évaluation à mi-parcours au cours de la mise en œuvre. Ces termes de référence (TOR) énoncent les attentes d'une évaluation à mi-parcours du projet « *Gestion communautaire des ressources naturelles qui résout les conflits, améliore les moyens de subsistance et restaure les écosystèmes dans l'ensemble de l'aire de répartition des éléphants* » PIMS N° 5778 » appelé couramment projet éléphant.

Le Projet Eléphant au Mali est une initiative conjointe du Gouvernement du Mali et du Programme des Nations Unies pour le Développement (PNUD) et du FEM destiné à protéger les éléphants du Mali dans des sites clés et d'améliorer les moyens de subsistance des communautés locales qui vivent le long de la route de migration afin de réduire les conflits entre les hommes et les éléphants.

L'objectif du projet est de protéger les éléphants du Mali dans des sites clés et d'améliorer les moyens de subsistance des communautés locales qui vivent le long de la route de migration afin de réduire les conflits entre les hommes et les éléphants.

L'objectif sera atteint grâce à la mise en œuvre de quatre composantes :

Composante 1 : Renforcement du cadre législatif et de la capacité nationale à lutter contre la criminalité liée aux espèces sauvages ;

Composante 2 : Protection des éléphants du Gourma contre le braconnage et la sécurisation des routes migratoires saisonnières et des habitats clés ;

Composante 3 : Gestion Communautaire des Ressources Naturelles (GCRN) dans l'habitat de l'éléphant du Gourma ;

Composante 4 : Intégration des considérations de parité hommes-femmes, la gestion des connaissances et le suivi et l'évaluation.

Ce projet fait partie de l'approche programmatique du FEM visant à prévenir l'extinction des espèces menacées connues et s'inscrit dans le cadre du Partenariat mondial du FEM portant sur la conservation de la faune sauvage et la prévention de la criminalité pour le développement durable. Dans le cadre de ce programme, la gestion coordonnée des connaissances et la collaboration des différents projets seront assurées grâce à la coordination du programme mondial de la faune sauvage.

Le projet bénéficie de l'appui financier des partenaires suivants pour un budget total de : \$ **18.311.730 USD** soit [...].

Ministère de l'Agriculture, de l'Élevage et de la Pêche dans le cadre du projet PRAPS	1 464 000 USD
Projet éléphants du Mali (Mali Éléphant Project)	6 781 675 USD
(1) Cofinancement total	13 995 675 USD
Total général des financements du projet (1) + (2)	18.311.730 USD

Le projet, est piloté par un comité de pilotage national, présidé par le Ministre de l'Environnement, de l'Assainissement et du Développement Durable. Sa gestion est assurée par la coordination du projet sous la supervision du Directeur National des Eaux et Forêts (DNEF). Ce comité a pour attributions, d'appuyer et accompagner, la mise en œuvre du plan de travail annuel du Projet. Sa direction est assurée par la DNEF. Les partenaires cibles du projet, incluent, la Direction Nationale des Eaux et Forêts (DNEF) et Wild Foundation en collaboration avec les forces de défenses et de sécurité. Les autres parties prenantes incluent : La Direction Générale des Collectivités Territoriales, la Direction Nationale de la Promotion de la Femme, la Direction Nationale des Productions et des industries Animales, le Direction Générale de la Police, la Direction Générale de la Gendarmerie ; les services déconcentrés de l'Etat, les élus communaux.

En outre, le projet collabore avec les autorités locales réparties à travers le District de Bamako, la nouvelle Région de Douentza : Communes Gandamia, Hairé (Boni), Hombori, Korarou, Mondoro et le Cercle de Gourma Rharous (Région de Tombouctou) : Communes de Gossi, Inadiatafane, Bambara Maoudé, Ouinerdène (Adjora).

La stratégie de mise en œuvre du programme se fonde sur le partenariat et la synergie avec toutes les parties prenantes non Etatiques impliquées dans la lutte contre le braconnage des éléphants, d'où la protection des éléphants et de son habitat dans le gourma (ONG, Société civile, collectivités territoriales, Partenaires Techniques et Financiers, etc.). Ce partenariat se met en œuvre autour d'un certain nombre de principes :

- L'application du principe de la transversalité du genre dans l'élaboration, la mise en œuvre et le suivi-évaluation des politiques, stratégies et budgets de développement ;
- Un effort de renforcement de l'implication de la coordination du FEM pour s'assurer de la prise en compte des thèmes du FEM ;

2. PRINCIPAUX OBJECTIFS DE LA MISSION

L'examen à mi-parcours évaluera les progrès accomplis vers la réalisation des objectifs et des résultats du projet, tels qu'énoncés dans le Document de projet, et mesurera les premiers signes de réussite ou d'échec du projet, de manière à définir les changements qu'il faut opérer pour remettre le projet sur la voie de la réalisation des résultats escomptés. L'examen à mi-parcours examinera aussi la stratégie du projet et les risques concernant sa durabilité pour favoriser l'amélioration globale des programmes du PNUD.

3. DESCRIPTION DES RESPONSABILITÉS / PORTÉE DES TRAVAUX

Une approche et une méthode globale [*] pour la réalisation des évaluations à mis de projets soutenus par le PNUD et financés par le FEM se sont développées au fil du temps. L'évaluateur doit articuler les efforts d'évaluation autour des critères de **pertinence, d'efficacité, d'efficience, de durabilité et d'impact**, comme défini et expliqué dans les directives du PNUD pour la réalisation des évaluations finales des projets soutenus par le PNUD et financés par le FEM. Une série de questions couvrant chacun de ces critères ont été rédigées et sont incluses dans ces termes de référence. L'évaluateur doit modifier, remplir et soumettre ce tableau dans le cadre d'un rapport initial d'évaluation et le joindre au rapport final en annexe.

L'évaluation doit fournir des informations factuelles qui sont crédibles, fiables et utiles. L'évaluateur doit adopter une approche participative et consultative garantissant une collaboration étroite avec les homologues du gouvernement, en particulier avec le point focal opérationnel du FEM, le bureau de pays du PNUD, l'équipe chargée du projet, le conseiller technique du PNUD-FEM au niveau régional et les principales parties prenantes. L'évaluateur devrait effectuer une mission sur le terrain au Mali, y compris à, Mopti et Bamako. Compte tenu des contraintes de déplacement et du contexte le consultant national effectuera ces missions selon un programme validé par le PNUD et l'équipe du projet. Les entretiens auront lieu au minimum avec les organisations et les particuliers suivants : Bureau du PNUD ; MAEDD ; DNEF ; Comité National chargé du pilotage du projet (le CNP) ; UGP ; les Autorités administratives (Gouverneurs, Préfets de Cercles) ; les Collectivités Territoriales (Région et Cercles) ; les services déconcentrés de l'Etat ; les autorités communales au niveau local (Sous-Préfets et Maires) ; les communautés locales et les représentants des populations vulnérables (Comités de veille, comités de suivi), sur les réalisations du projet.

L'évaluateur passera en revue toutes les sources pertinentes d'information, telles que le descriptif de projet, les rapports de projet, notamment le RAP/RMP et les autres rapports, les révisions budgétaires du projet, l'examen à mi-parcours, les rapports sur l'état d'avancement, les outils de suivi du domaine focal du FEM, les dossiers du projet, les documents stratégiques et juridiques nationaux et tous les autres documents que l'évaluateur juge utiles pour cette évaluation fondée sur les faits. Une liste des documents que l'équipe chargée du projet fournira à l'évaluateur aux fins d'examen est jointe à l'annexe B des présents termes de référence.

A la fin de l'évaluation un plan d'action de mise en œuvre des recommandations doit être proposé au PNUD.

4. PRODUITS LIVRABLES

Les éléments suivants sont attendus de l'équipe d'évaluation :

Produits livrables	Table des matières	Durée	Responsabilités
Rapport initial	L'évaluateur apporte des précisions sur le calendrier et la méthode	Au plus tard deux semaines avant la mission d'évaluation.	L'évaluateur envoie au BP du PNUD
Présentation des constats et des tendances	Conclusions initiales	Fin de la mission d'évaluation	À la direction du projet, BP du PNUD
Rapport provisoire	Rapport complet, (selon le modèle joint) avec les annexes	Dans un délai de trois semaines suivant la mission d'évaluation	Envoyé au BP, examiné par le CTR, le service de coordination du programme et les PFO du FEM
Rapport final*	Rapport révisé intégrant les commentaires du PNUD avec aussi le plan d'action pour adresser les recommandations	Dans un délai d'une semaine suivant la réception des commentaires du PNUD sur le projet	Envoyé au BP aux fins de téléchargement sur le site du CGELE du PNUD.

*Lors de la présentation du rapport final d'évaluation, l'évaluateur est également tenu de fournir une « piste d'audit », expliquant en détail la façon dont les commentaires reçus ont (et n'ont pas) été traités dans ledit rapport

5. EXIGENCES EN MATIÈRE DE SUIVI/RAPPORTS

Les évaluateurs :

1. Doivent présenter des informations complètes et équitables dans leur évaluation des forces et des faiblesses afin que les décisions ou les mesures prises soient bien fondées ;
2. Doivent divulguer l'ensemble des conclusions d'évaluation, ainsi que les informations sur leurs limites et les mettre à disposition de tous ceux concernés par l'évaluation et qui sont légalement habilités à recevoir les résultats ;
3. Doivent protéger l'anonymat et la confidentialité à laquelle ont droit les personnes qui leur communiquent des informations ; Les évaluateurs doivent accorder un délai suffisant, réduire au maximum les pertes de temps et respecter le droit des personnes à la vie privée. Les évaluateurs doivent respecter le droit des personnes à fournir des renseignements en toute confidentialité et s'assurer que les informations dites sensibles ne permettent pas de remonter jusqu'à leur source. Les évaluateurs n'ont pas à évaluer les individus et doivent maintenir un équilibre entre l'évaluation des fonctions de gestion et ce principe général.
4. Découvrent parfois des éléments de preuve faisant état d'actes répréhensibles pendant qu'ils mènent des évaluations. Ces cas doivent être signalés de manière confidentielle aux autorités compétentes chargées d'enquêter sur la question. Ils doivent consulter d'autres entités compétentes en matière de supervision lorsqu'il y a le moindre doute à savoir s'il y a lieu de signaler des questions, et comment le faire.
5. Doivent être attentifs aux croyances, aux us et coutumes et faire preuve d'intégrité et d'honnêteté dans leurs relations avec toutes les parties prenantes. Conformément à la Déclaration universelle des droits de l'homme, les évaluateurs doivent être attentifs aux problèmes de discrimination ainsi que de disparité entre les sexes, et s'en préoccuper. Les évaluateurs doivent éviter tout ce qui pourrait offenser la dignité ou le respect de soi-même des personnes avec lesquelles ils entrent en contact durant une évaluation. Sachant qu'une évaluation peut avoir des répercussions négatives sur les intérêts de certaines parties prenantes, les évaluateurs doivent réaliser l'évaluation et en faire connaître l'objet et les résultats d'une façon qui respecte absolument la dignité et le sentiment de respect de soi-même des parties prenantes.
6. Sont responsables de leur performance et de ce qui en découle. Les évaluateurs doivent savoir présenter par écrit ou oralement, de manière claire, précise et honnête, l'évaluation, les limites de celle-ci, les constatations et les recommandations.
7. Doivent respecter des procédures comptables reconnues et faire preuve de prudence dans l'utilisation des ressources de l'évaluation.

6. LES EXIGENCES EN MATIÈRE D'EXPÉRIENCE ET DE QUALIFICATIONS

Le candidat doit posséder les qualifications suivantes :

- Diplôme d'études supérieures (au moins bac + 4) en sciences environnementales, climatologie, agriculture, gestion de projet, gestion des risques de catastrophes ou autres secteurs étroitement liés ;
- 5 ans minimum d'expérience professionnelle dans les évaluations de projets et de programmes ;
- Une expérience dans les évaluations des projets du PNUD et du FEM ;
- Une expérience antérieure avec les méthodologies de suivi et d'évaluation axées sur les résultats ;
- Des connaissances techniques dans l'adaptation au changement climatique, en particulier en termes de gestion des risques d'inondations, ainsi que le genre ;
- Avoir une expérience de travail dans les pays du Sahel
- Une bonne connaissance du contexte du Mali et des régions d'intervention du Projet
- LA connaissance de l'anglais peut constituer un atout,

[...]

[*] Note : Pour de plus amples informations sur les méthodes, lire le chapitre 7 du Guide de la planification, du suivi et de l'évaluation axés sur les résultats de développement, à la page : 163.

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6.2 MTR evaluative matrix (evaluation criteria with key questions, indicators, sources of data, and methodology)

The Evaluation Criteria matrix summarizes the MTR’s core methodology through a series of working questions, organized by topic, how they applied, and how data had been specifically collected, and conclusions drawn.

Table 14. Evaluation Questions (core methodology)
[See next pages]

Evaluative Questions	Indicators	Sources	Methodology
Project Strategy: To what extent is the project strategy relevant to country priorities, country ownership, and the best route towards expected results?			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the project strategy remain relevant vis-à-vis its development context? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Results from stakeholder survey pondered by qualitative expert analysis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PRODOC National policy documents Stakeholder interviews Results from stakeholder survey Qualitative analysis by the MTR Consultants 	<p>Document analysis, data analysis, interviews with project staff, interviews with stakeholders, etc.</p> <p>Development context analysis</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent does the Theory of change (TOC) behind the results framework provide a relevant and appropriate vision for the project and its strategy? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Results from stakeholder survey pondered by qualitative expert analysis Quality of risk mitigation strategies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stakeholder interviews Results from stakeholder survey Qualitative analysis by the MTR Consultants Risk log 	<p>Careful review of TOC.</p> <p>Discussions with the project manager and RTA through structured working sessions</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does the project adjust to the country's development priorities and policies? And to local development plans? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Survey questions 3 and 4 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stakeholder interviews Results from stakeholder survey Qualitative analysis by the MTR Consultants 	<p>Document analysis, data analysis, interviews with project staff, interviews with stakeholders, etc.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How high is the country ownership of the project? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Survey question 1, with qualitative elaboration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National policy documents Stakeholder interviews Results from stakeholder survey 	<p>Document analysis, data analysis, interviews with project staff, interviews with stakeholders, etc.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How has the project contributed to capacity building at the national levels? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Survey question 2, with qualitative elaboration Logframe capacity building indicators Tracking tool targeted indicators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stakeholder interviews Results from stakeholder survey PIRs and other reports Tracking Tool 	<p>Document analysis, data analysis, interviews with project staff, interviews with stakeholders, etc.</p> <p>Development context analysis</p>
Progress Towards Results: To what extent have the expected outcomes and objectives of the project been achieved thus far?			
Objective level: Evaluate progress towards the project's development objective on the basis of objective level indicators, the assessment of progress according to the PIRs by different	Objective level indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PIRs Other project reports Stakeholder interviews 	<p>Examine the ratings and the narrative of progress towards project indicator targets in the PIRs. Cross-check the evidence. Validate conclusions through interviews with the project manager, UNDP CO, UNDP RTA and, if possible, beneficiaries.</p>
(C1) Strengthening the legislative framework and national capacity to address wildlife crime	Component 1 indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PIRs Other project reports Stakeholder interviews 	Same as above.
(C2) Protecting Gourma elephants from poaching and securing seasonal migration routes and key habitat	Component 2 indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PIRs Other project reports Stakeholder interviews 	Same as above.

Evaluative Questions	Indicators	Sources	Methodology
(C3) Community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) in the Gourma elephant habitat; and	Component 3 indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PIRs - Other project reports - Stakeholder interviews 	Same as above.
(C4) Gender Mainstreaming, Knowledge Management and M&E.	Component 4 indicators Gender Results Effectiveness Scale (GRES)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PIRs - Other project reports - Stakeholder interviews - Gender Action Plan - Qualitative analysis using GRESS 	Same as above.
Project Implementation and Adaptive Management: Has the project been implemented efficiently, cost- effectively, and been able to adapt to any changing conditions thus far? To what extent are project-level monitoring and evaluation systems, reporting, and project communications supporting the project's implementation?			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the implementation strategy and management arrangements adequate to achieve the results? 	Effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PRODOC - PIRs - Workplans and quarterly plans - Other project reports, especially technical reports - Stakeholder interviews 	Document analysis, data analysis, interviews with project staff, interviews with stakeholders, etc. Analysis of the implementation approach. Analysis of project communications supporting the project's implementation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent are the operational arrangements (including the procurement approach) being conducive to achieving the goals of an efficiently implemented project? 	Efficiency Cost-effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PRODOC - PIRs - Workplans and quarterly plans - Various other implementation reports - Financial data - Other project reports, including audit - Stakeholder interviews 	Document analysis, data analysis, interviews with project staff, interviews with stakeholders, etc. Analysis of the implementation approach. Analysis of project communications supporting the project's implementation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the project its achieving goals relating to gender and women's empowerment? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Indicators in the Gender Action Plan (GAP) - Gender Results Effectiveness Scale (GRES) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PRODOC - PIRs - Workplans and quarterly plans - Various other implementation reports - Gender Action Plan - Qualitative analysis using GRESS 	Document analysis, data analysis, interviews with project staff, interviews with stakeholders, etc.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the security situation in project site an impediment for project implementation? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Analysis of UN Security risk level log 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Interview with UNDSS official - Other interviews 	Assess if the project's security risk is critical and not manageable

Evaluative Questions	Indicators	Sources	Methodology
Sustainability: To what extent are there financial, institutional, socio-economic, and/or environmental risks to sustaining long-term project results?			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent has a sustainability strategy been elaborated or implemented? What actions/strategies has the project considered for the search for sustainability? What measures is the project / UNDP putting in place to ensure that the capacities developed by the project remain installed after project-end? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Survey questions 5, 6, 7 Risk log Efficiency and Cost-effectiveness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Survey Results PRODOC, especially the TOC PIRs Other project reports Stakeholder interviews Risk log 	Careful review of TOC and of the Discussions with the project manager and RTA through structured working sessions

6.3 Questionnaire used for data collection through the stakeholder survey & key results

- As planned and announced in the MTR Inception Report, Stakeholder Survey Questionnaire was prepared in French by the MTR Team in GoogleForm online format.
- The Survey contains 10 questions about the project (see next pages – automated translation). The original title of the survey in French is “*ENQUÊTE - Projet PNUD FEM de conservation de l'éléphant du Mali | Examen à mi-parcours*”. The main questions included in the Questionnaire were also included the [MTR Evaluative Matrix in section 6.2](#), which provides context on why they were posed (e.g. how they fit into the evaluation themes).
- Initially, a total of 18 stakeholders (8 women)** would be targeted for receiving the Stakeholder Survey Questionnaire online. A total of 5 stakeholders did not wish to inform their email address for the purpose of receiving and responding to the stakeholder survey. Some of them indicated not used to this type of consultation method and preferred not to respond.
- It was clearly indicated that the responses would remain confidential and survey results would be presented in an anonymous fashion.
- A total of 9 responded to the online Stakeholder Survey were received. The number of responses is small but significant.
- It was not considered viable to apply an online questionnaire to project beneficiaries in the Gourma region, due to difficulties in connectivity and literacy.
- Responses were received between 05 December 2022 and 03 January 2023. On 20 February 2023, the online form was closed for receiving answers.
- Results are summarized after the form and they were used in the analysis in the body of the report, according to the methodology set out in the MTR Evaluative Matrix.

[See complete online form in next pages and [Results](#) next.]

SURVEY - UNDP GEF Elephant Conservation

Project in Mali | *Mid-term review*

Mid-term review of the UNDP-supported, GEF-funded project titled "Community-based natural resource management that resolves conflict, improves livelihoods and restores ecosystems across the elephant range".

[Mali Elephant Conservation Project]

[Projet de conservation de l'éléphant du Mali]

>> Individual responses provided through this survey are confidential and will be used exclusively for evaluation purposes and in the form of aggregated results .

* Required

1. What is your role in the project? *

Fabiana Issler , Head of Mission, Mid-Term Evaluation, CEO of BE EDB Global Optimum, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Ibrahima Sylla , National Consultant, Mid-Term Evaluation, Director of BE. CSAGE-SARL, Bamako, Mali



EBD Global Optimum
Consult



2. Q1) NATIONAL OWNERSHIP | Does the project benefit from sustained support from the national authorities? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ YES
☐ NO
☐ I don't know

3. Q2) CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT | Has the project contributed to capacity building at the national level? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ YES
☐ NO
☐ I don't know

4. Q3) POLICY FRAMEWORK | Does the project fit the country's development priorities and policies? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ YES
☐ NO
☐ I don't know

5. Q4) RELEVANCE | Does the project adapt to the development plans of the municipalities in the area? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ YES
☐ NO
☐ I don't know

6. Q5) SUSTAINABILITY | Are measures planned or already taken to ensure the sustainability of the project's achievements? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ YES
☐ NO
☐ I don't know

7. Q6) SUSTAINABILITY | What measures has the project or UNDP put in place to ensure the sustainability of the project's Outcome? *

Mark only one oval.

WEAK

1 ☐

2 ☐

3 ☐

4 ☐

5 ☐

STRONG

8. Q7) EFFICIENCY | Based on the current level of achievement of project activities, can all the expected results be achieved by the end of the project? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ YES
☐ NO
☐ I don't know

9. Q8) EFFICIENCY | Did the following contextual elements impact the implementation of the project? *

Check all that apply.

- ☐ Lack of qualified human resources
☐ Insecurity
☐ Insufficient financial resources
☐ Insufficient UNDP support
☐ Distance from supervisory structures
☐ Other aspects... (describe below)

10. Q8) Describe other aspects please.

11. Q9) ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT | Given the current insecurity in the project area, what adaptation management measure do you recommend? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Continue to pursue the project without changing anything in its strategy
- ☐ Change the strategy of the project
- ☐ Extend the duration of the project
- ☐ Stop the project while waiting for a calm period
- ☐ Other options... (describe below)

12. Q9) Other adaptation management measures that you recommend?

13. Q10) ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT | Does the project implementation mechanism (DNEF/NGO Wild Foundation) present advantages or obstacles in the implementation of the project?

Check all that apply.

- ☐ Advantages
- ☐ Obstacles

14. Q10) ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT | Does the project implementation mechanism (DNEF/NGO Wild Foundation) present advantages or obstacles in the implementation of the project?

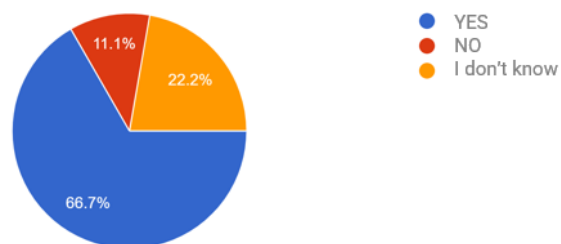
> Justify your answer

This content is neither created nor endorsed by Google.

Google Forms

Main Results from Stakeholder Survey

Q1) NATIONAL OWNERSHIP | Does the project benefit from sustained support from the national authorities?

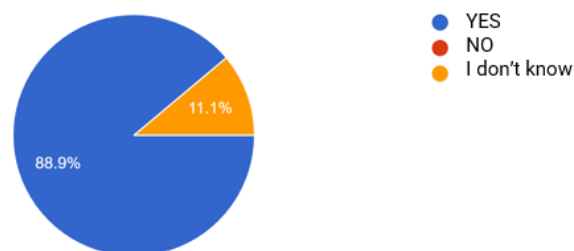


Q2) CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT | Has the project contributed to capacity building at the national level?

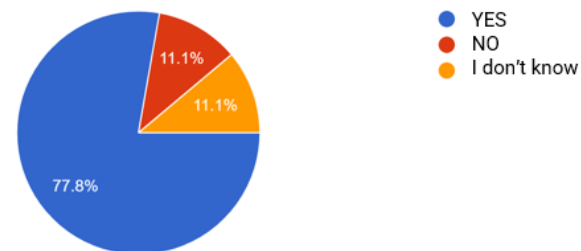


- Most respondents (67%) believe that **the project promotes NATIONAL OWNERSHIP** (Q1) and all of them agree that the project contributes to **CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT** (Q2).
- Yet, a good number of respondents are not sure if the project actually promotes **NATIONAL OWNERSHIP** or not (22.5% responded “I don’t know” to Q1).
- The issue of **NATIONAL OWNERSHIP** was further investigated by the MTR Team using other methods, such as semi-structured stakeholder interviews and observation during the COPIL meeting.

Q3) POLICY FRAMEWORK | Does the project fit the country's development priorities and policies?

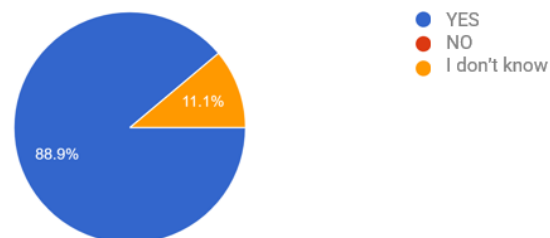


Q4) RELEVANCE | Does the project adapt to the development plans of the municipalities in the area?

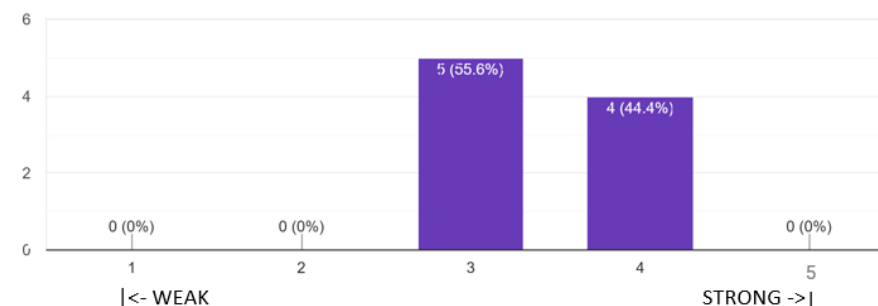


- Most stakeholders (89%) believe that **the project is a good fit vis-à-vis the country's POLICY FRAMEWORKS** (Q3), though a small minority (11%) is not so sure.
- Concerning a targeted question on the project's **RELEVANCE** (Q4), most respondents (78%) think that **the project adapts to the development plans of localities in the [project] zone**. Yet, some disagree (11%) and an equal number is not so sure (11% responded “I don’t know” to Q4).

Q5) SUSTAINABILITY | Are measures planned or already taken to ensure the sustainability of the project's achievements?

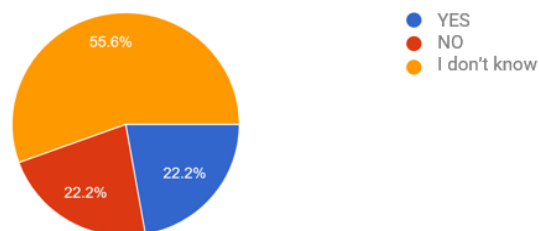


Q6) SUSTAINABILITY | What measures has the project or UNDP put in place to ensure the sustainability of the project's effects?

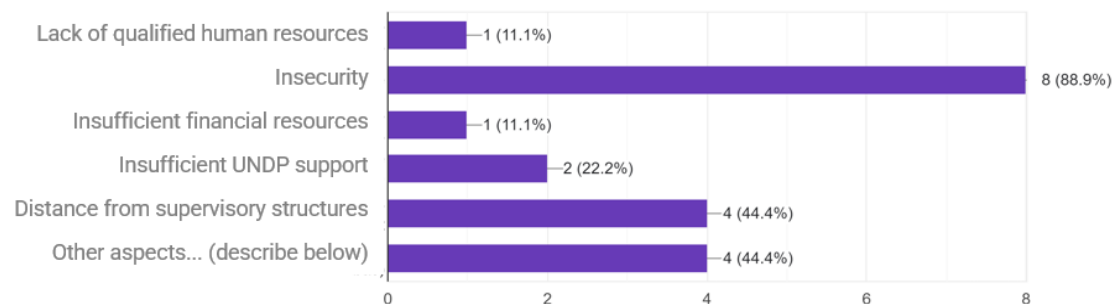


- Concerning **SUSTAINABILITY** (Q5 and Q6), most respondents (89% for Q5) think that **the project foresees / has implemented measures to ensure the sustainability of its achievements**.
- Respondents' view on SUSTAINABILITY is generally positive** (according to Q6). Answers show that they recognize the measures put in place by UNDP range between moderate (index 3/5) to relatively strong (index 4/5). The average for this indicator in Q6 is 3.44 in a 5-point scale showing strength levels).

Q7) EFFICACY | Based on the current level of achievement of project activities, can all the expected results be achieved by the end of the project?

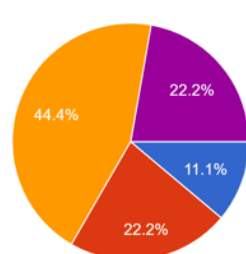


Q8) EFFICACY | Did the following contextual elements impact the implementation of the project?



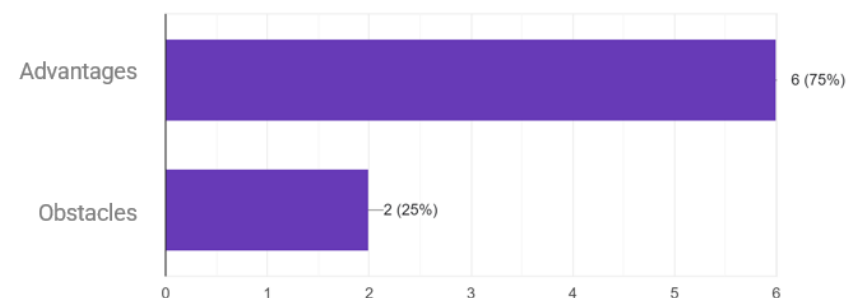
- Concerning **EFFICACY** (Q7 and Q8), answers are varied and interesting. **Most respondents are not sure if the project can expect to achieve all of its results until its closure, based on the current level of achievement of its activities** (55.6% for Q7). This is a reason for concern, including because 22.5% of respondents think that the project will not achieve its results, while an equal number thinks that it will.
- Q8 provides more insight into issues of **EFFICACY**, including through qualitative answers that were thoroughly responded by a small number of very pro-active stakeholders.
- Most 68 respondents selected "Insecurity" as the contextual element mostly impacting project implementation and its EFFICACY** (89% for Q8). This was followed by "Distance to supervisory structures" and "Other aspects", both marked by 44% of respondents to Q8. Very few (11%) marked "Insufficient financial resources" or "Lack of qualified human resources".

Q9) ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT | Given the current insecurity in the project area, what adaptation management measure do you recommend?



- Continue to pursue the project without changing anything in its strategy
- Change the strategy of the project
- Extend the duration of the project
- Stop the project while waiting for a calm period
- Other options... (describe below)

Q10) ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT | Does the project implementation mechanism (DNEF/NGO Wild Foundation) present advantages or obstacles in the implementation of the project?



- Concerning **ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT** (Q9 and Q10), answers gave very good insight into what respondents think the solutions are, moving forward.
- Most respondents think that the management arrangement for the project present an “advantage” in its implementation** (75% for Q10), though the rest (25%) so see it as an “obstacle”.
- Q9 was a multiple-choice question, and **approximately 44% of respondents marked “Extend the duration of the project” as the measure they would recommend**.
- Still on Q9, 22% of respondents would prefer to either “Change the strategy of the project” or proposed “Other options”, which they described.
- Responses to Q9 also yielded more insight into issues of **EFFICACY**, including through qualitative answers that were thoroughly responded by a small number of very pro-active stakeholders.
- None of the respondents to Q9 think that the solution is to “Stop the project while waiting for a calm period”** – a view which is shared by the MTR Team.

Qualitative answers to Q8 and Q10 under “Other aspects...” or “Other options...” were rich in content and insight. The responses were carefully analyzed and summary of relevant responses weaved into the body of the report, where applicable.

6.4 Ratings Scales

Box 1. Six-point Rating Scale

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

Box 2. Four-point Sustainability Rating Scale

<i>Applies to various aspects of Sustainability (financial, socio-economic, institutional framework and governance, and environmental)</i>
4 = Likely (L): negligible risks to sustainability
3 = Moderately Likely (ML): moderate risks to sustainability
2 = Moderately Unlikely (MU): significant risks to sustainability
1 = Unlikely (U): severe risks to sustainability
Unable to Assess (U/A): Unable to assess the expected incidence and magnitude of risks to sustainability

6.5 MTR mission itinerary

October 2022	November 2022	December 2022
Contract negotiations	<p><u>Engagement of the full MTR team</u></p> <p><u>Key activities:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MTR Kick-off launch calls • Analysis of materials • Work plan update • Development of the methodological tools (English and French) • Working sessions with the national consultant (the first 24/10 meeting is informal) • Working sessions with the project team • Preparation of the Inception Report, methodology refinement <p><u>Deliverable(s)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ DELIVERABLE 1) MTR Inception Report (MTR Team) 21-Nov-2022 ✓ Review and approval of DELIVERABLE 1 by UNDP CO Mali 25-Nov-2022 	<p><u>Key Activities:</u></p> <p><i>"MTR Mission" -- remotely</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews with stakeholders in Bamako • Mission to Mopti by National Consultant • Analyzing data collected • Preparing the presentation of findings in two languages <p><u>Deliverable(s)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ DELIVERABLE 2) Presentation [of Findings]: MTR consultant presents initial findings to project management and the Commissioning Unit ✓ UNDP approves the MTR Deliverable 2 Presentation (DEL2 - APPROVED) <p><i>[end of year pause]</i></p>

January 2022	February 2023	March 2023	April/May 2023
<p><i>[early year pause / other commitments by the team]</i></p> <p><u>Key Activities:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading the documentation • Preparations for the Project Steering Committee Meeting (COFIL) 	<p><u>New Agreed Activity:</u></p> <p>Participation of the MTR team in the Project Steering Committee meeting, the COFIL (on 02-February online and face-to-face)</p> <p><u>Key Activity: Preparing the MTR Report – including:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gathering additional stakeholder feedback from presentation, if any • Report writing in English • Translation of report into French and general review by MTR Team Leader • Thorough editorial review of French language MTR Report by National Consultant (Joint working sessions as needed) <p><u>Deliverable(s)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ DELIVERABLE 3) Draft MTR Report (MTR Team) 26-Février-2023 	<p><u>Deliverable(s)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ UNDP Approves DELIVERABLE 3 15-Mar-2023 <p><u>Key Activities:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addressing compliance comments from UNDP NCE's PA (received on 10 March) and minor comments from RTA (received on 28 Feb) • Addressing stakeholder comments received on 15th, 28th and 29th March • Translation and editorial • Confirmation of co-financing (Annex 6.8) • Finalization and review of GEF tracking tools (Annex 6.12) • Feedback meetings with UNDP on the report delivered (as needed). • Finalizing DEL4 <p><u>Deliverable(s)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Annexes 6.8 and 6.12 of DELIVERABLE 3 (Draft MTR Report) – complementing previous submission 16-Mar-2023 	<p><u>Key Activities:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuing to address stakeholder comments received on 15th, 28th and 29th March • Debriefing conference call with UNDP CO • Addressing comments from DNEF, which were only received on 17-Apr-2023. <p><u>Deliverable(s)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ DELIVERABLE 4) Final MTR Report in English and French and Audit Trail * Rapport final de l'examen à mi-parcours en anglais et Français et piste d'audit * 29 28-Apr-2023 <p>✓ <u>UNDP Approves DELIVERABLE 4 05-May-2023 (proposed)</u></p> <p>END OF ASSIGNMENT</p>

6.6 List of persons interviewed

Date(s)	#	Meetings / Consultations conducted
Thu, 17-Nov-2022	1	Meeting #1) Kickoff MTR Meeting with UNDP Country Office
Fri, 18-Nov-2022	2	Meeting #2) MTR initial meeting with DNEF (informal), followed by other working meetings in December 2022 (#5) and in January 2023 (#10)
Fri, 02-Dec-2022	3	Meeting #3) Meeting with RTA, Goetz Schroth
Mon, 05-Dec-2022	4	Meeting #4) Meeting with Nomba Ganame, Wild Foundation, Mali
Tue, 06-Dec-2022	5	Meeting #5) With staff from the National Directorate for Water and Forests (DNEF)
Tue, 06-Dec-2022	6	Meeting #6) With Oumar Tamboura (head of the Environment Unit) and Mariam Djibril Keita (Program Associate), UNDP Mali
Wed, 07-Dec-2022	7	Meeting #7) With Susan Canney, Scientific focal point for the project at Wild Foundation
Mon, 12-Dec-2022	8	Meeting #8) With the Project Management Unit (PMU): Mr. Moussa SISSOKO, Ing.EF, Coordonnateur PI/ Direction Nationale des Eaux et Forêts, plus other PMU staff
Thu, 02-Feb-2023	9	Meeting #9) Project Steering Committee Meeting (COFIL)
01-March-23	10	Meeting #10) Meeting with DNEF about the co-financing
10-March-23	11	Exchanges #11) With Mr. Oumar Tamboura and Ms. Mariam Djibril Keita about UNDP's financial data
14-April-2023	12	Meeting #12) Debriefing call with Mr. Oumar Tamboura and Ms. Safia Guindo (M&E Focal Point at the CO), UNDP Mali
December 2022	X	Conference calls with local stakeholders : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Le Maire de Bambara Maoudé • Le Maire de Hairé • Mme Mariam MAIGA from the Maire de Gandamia • Le Maire de Gossi • Le Maire de Inadiatafane

²⁹ TOR in French mentions the following in relation to the final report: “*Lors de la présentation du rapport final d'évaluation, l'évaluateur est également tenu de fournir une « piste d'audit », expliquant en détail la façon dont les commentaires reçus ont (et n'ont pas) été traités dans ledit rapport.”

6.7 List of documents reviewed

Table 15. Indicative list of documents to be availed electronically in connection with the MTR

#	Documents & other resources (non-exhaustive list)	Documents & autres ressources (liste non exhaustive)
1	Project Identification Form (PIF)	Fiche d'identité du projet (FIP)
2	UNDP Initiation Plan (PPG Phase)	Plan d'initiation du projet du PNUD (Phase PPG)
3	Final UNDP-GEF Project Document with all annexes	Document de projet du PNUD, avec toutes les annexes
4	CEO Endorsement Request	Document GEF "CEO Endorsement Request"
5	UNDP Social and Environmental Screening Procedure (SESP) and associated management plans (if any)	Procédure de Diagnostic Environnemental et Social (PDES) du PNUD
6	Inception Workshop Report	Rapport d'initiation de projet
7	Any previous review reports and management responses containing recommendations	Tout rapport d'examen antérieur et toute réponse de la direction avec des recommandations
8	All Project Implementation Reports (PIRs)	Tous les rapports de mise en œuvre de projets (PIR)
9	Progress reports (quarterly, semi-annual or annual, with associated workplans and financial reports)	Rapports d'activité et plans de travail trimestriels des différentes équipes de travail
10	Oversight mission reports	Rapports des missions de contrôle / supervision
11	Minutes of Project Board Meetings and of other meetings (i.e. Project Appraisal Committee meetings - LPAC)	Procès-verbaux des réunions du Comité de pilotage du projet et autres réunions (par exemple, réunions du Comité local d'examen des projets - LPAC)
12	GEF Tracking Tools (from CEO Endorsement, midterm– the latter prepared by the project in advance)	Outils de suivi finalisés par domaine d'intervention du GEF après approbation du Responsable et à mi- parcours (indiquer les outils de suivi spécifiques aux domaines d'intervention de ce projet)
13	GEF Core Indicators (from PIF, CEO Endorsement and at midterm – the latter prepared by the project in advance)	Indicateurs clés du GEF (du PIF, du CEO Endorsement Request et à mi-parcours – ce dernier préparé à l'avance par le projet)
14	Financial data, including actual expenditures by project outcome, including management costs, and including documentation of any significant budget revisions	Données financières, y compris les dépenses réelles du projet par résultat, y compris les coûts de gestion, et y compris la documentation relative aux révisions budgétaires importantes

#	Documents & other resources (non-exhaustive list)	Documents & autres ressources (liste non exhaustive)
15*	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	Données sur le cofinancement avec contributions attendues et effectives, ventilées par type de cofinancement, source et si la contribution est considérée comme un investissement mobilisé ou des dépenses récurrentes
16	Audit reports	Rapports d’audit
17	Electronic copies of project outputs (booklets, manuals, technical reports, articles, etc.)	Copies électroniques des produits préparés par le projet (brochures, manuels, rapports techniques, articles, etc.)
18	Sample of project communications materials	Exemple de matériel de communication du projet
19	Summary list of formal meetings, workshops, etc. held, with date, location, topic, and number of participants	Liste sommaire des réunions officielles, ateliers, etc. tenus, avec date, lieu, sujet et nombre de participants
20	Any relevant socio-economic monitoring data, such as average incomes / employment levels of stakeholders in the target area, change in revenue related to project activities	Toutes les données de suivi socio-économique pertinentes, telles que les revenus moyens / niveaux d’emploi des parties prenantes dans la zone cible, la variation des revenus liés aux activités du projet
21	List of contracts and procurement items over ~US\$5,000 (i.e. organizations or companies contracted for project outputs, etc., except in cases of confidential information)	Liste des contrats et des achats d’un montant supérieur à USD 5 000 (soit pour les organisations ou les entreprises ayant conclu des contrats pour des produits de projet, etc., sauf dans le cas d’informations confidentielles)
22	List of related projects/initiatives contributing to project objectives approved/started after GEF project approval (i.e. any leveraged or “catalytic” results)	Liste des projets/initiatives connexes contribuant à la réalisation des objectifs des projets approuvés/lancés après l’approbation des projets par le FEM (c’est-à-dire tout résultat obtenu ou « catalyseur »)
23	Data on relevant project website activity – e.g. number of unique visitors per month, number of page views, etc. over relevant time period, if available	Données sur l’activité pertinente du site Web du projet – par exemple, nombre de visiteurs uniques par mois, nombre de pages vues, etc. au cours de la période pertinente, si elles sont disponibles
24	Project site location maps	Carte indiquant le lieu du projet
25	UNDP Country Program Document (CPD)	Documents programmatiques PNUD pour le pays

The TOR had additionally mentioned the following items that are NOT covered in Table 14:

- TOR in GEF format [*Version des TDRS sous format GEF*]
- Annual Workplans [*Plans de travail annuels*]
- List of contact details of project personnel and of main stakeholders to be consulted [*Liste et coordonnées du personnel du projet, des principales parties prenantes à consulter*]
- Minutes of meetings for the Project Steering Committee [*Comptes rendus des réunions annuelles du Comité de pilotage*]
- HACT Assessment, the most recent from the implementing partner [*Evaluation HACT la plus récente du partenaire de mise en œuvre*]

6.8 Co-financing table

-- See separate file for Annex 6.8 for all details --

Table 16. Co-financing information monitoring (according to the PRODOC, 2018)

Sources of Co-financing	Name of Co-financier (source)	Type	Co-financing Amount (\$)	Type	Amount mobilized
National Government	Ministry of the Environment, Sanitation, and Sustainable Development	Grant	1,350,000	Public expenditure	124,336
National Government	Ministry of the Environment, Sanitation, and Sustainable Development	In-kind	4,400,000	Public expenditure, including availability of office space and government staff	[Not possible to assess in-kind co-financing]
National Government	Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries in the framework of PRAPS project	Grant	1,464,000	Through Project "Regional Support Project Pastoralism in the Sahel (PRAPS)", Phase I 2015-2021, et Phase II (ongoing)	1,464,000
NGO	Mali Elephant Project	Grant	5,780,525	Grant, estimated	8,388,000
NGO	Mali Elephant Project	In-kind	1,001,150	[no information]	-
GEF Agency	UNDP	Grant	200,000	Grant	496,729
TOTAL			14,195,675		10,473,065

The total co-financing has been classified and calculated according to the following criteria:

- [1] UNDP contribution
- [2] Government
- [3] Other multi-/bi-laterals
- [4] Private Sector
- [5] NGOs

6.9 Signed UNEG Code of Conduct form

ENGLISH

Evaluators/Consultants:

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

MTR Consultant Agreement Form

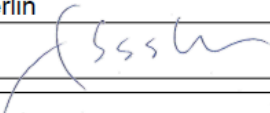
Agreement to abide by the Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN System:

Name of Consultant: Fabiana Issler

Name of Consultancy Organization (where relevant): EBD GLOBAL OPTIMUM EIRELI

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

Signed at Berlin (Place) on 27 February 2023 (Date)

Signature: 

FRANÇAIS

Les évaluateurs/Consultants :

1. Doivent présenter des informations complètes et équitables dans leur évaluation des forces et des faiblesses afin que les décisions ou les mesures prises soient bien fondées.
2. Doivent divulguer l'ensemble des conclusions d'évaluation, ainsi que les informations sur leurs limites et les mettre à disposition de tous ceux concernés par l'évaluation et qui sont légalement habilités à recevoir les résultats.
3. Doivent protéger l'anonymat et la confidentialité à laquelle ont droit les personnes qui leur communiquent des informations. Les évaluateurs doivent accorder un délai suffisant, réduire au maximum les pertes de temps et respecter le droit des personnes à la vie privée. Les évaluateurs doivent respecter le droit des personnes à fournir des renseignements en toute confidentialité et s'assurer que les informations dites sensibles ne permettent pas de remonter jusqu'à leur source. Les évaluateurs n'ont pas à évaluer les individus et doivent maintenir un équilibre entre l'évaluation des fonctions de gestion et ce principe général.
4. Découvrent parfois des éléments de preuve faisant état d'actes répréhensibles pendant qu'ils mènent des évaluations. Ces cas doivent être signalés de manière confidentielle aux autorités compétentes chargées d'enquêter sur la question. Ils doivent consulter d'autres entités compétentes en matière de supervision lorsqu'il y a le moindre doute à savoir s'il y a lieu de signaler des questions, et comment le faire.
5. Doivent être attentifs aux croyances, aux us et coutumes et faire preuve d'intégrité et d'honnêteté dans leurs relations avec toutes les parties prenantes. Conformément à la Déclaration universelle des droits de l'homme, les évaluateurs doivent être attentifs aux problèmes de discrimination ainsi que de disparité entre les sexes, et s'en préoccuper. Les évaluateurs doivent éviter tout ce qui pourrait offenser la dignité ou le respect de soi-même des personnes avec lesquelles ils entrent en contact durant une évaluation. Sachant qu'une évaluation peut avoir des répercussions négatives sur les intérêts de certaines parties prenantes, les évaluateurs doivent réaliser l'évaluation et en faire connaître l'objet et les résultats d'une façon qui respecte absolument la dignité et le sentiment de respect de soi-même des parties prenantes.
6. Sont responsables de leur performance et de ce qui en découle. Les évaluateurs doivent savoir présenter par écrit ou oralement, de manière claire, précise et honnête, l'évaluation, les limites de celle-ci, les constatations et les recommandations.
7. Doivent respecter des procédures comptables reconnues et faire preuve de prudence dans l'utilisation des ressources de l'évaluation.

Formulaire d'accord avec le Consultant chargé de l'examen à mi-parcours

Accord pour le respect du Code de conduite du système des Nations Unies en matière d'évaluation :

Nom du Consultant : Ibrahima Sylla

Nom de l'Organisation de conseils (le cas échéant) : Bureau d'études CSAGE-SARL

Je confirme avoir reçu et compris le Code de conduite des Nations Unies en matière d'évaluation et je m'engage à le respecter.

Signé à Bamako (Lieu) le 03 mars 2023 (Date)

Signature: signature confirmé par email

6.10 Signed MTR final report clearance form UNDP

[-- To be signed by UNDP Mali --]

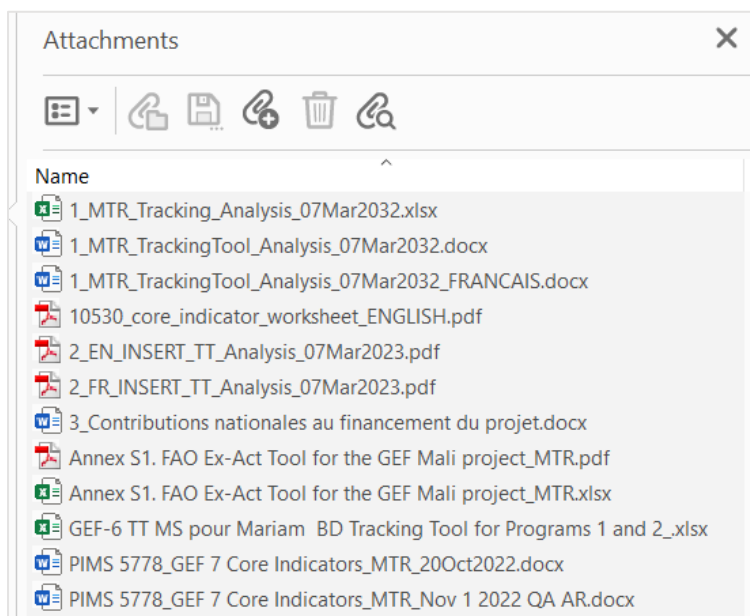
Midterm Review Report Reviewed and Cleared By:	
Commissioning Unit	
Oumar Tamboura /Lead Cluster Environnement	
Name: _____	DocuSigned by: _____
Signature: _____	Date: 11-Jul-2023
152B497ECE404A9...	
UNDP-GEF Regional Technical Advisor	
Tasila Banda	
Name: _____	DocuSigned by: _____
Signature: _____	Date: 26-Jul-2023
6EC4416C3851465...	

6.11 Annexed in a separate file: Audit trail from received comments on draft MTR report

-- See separate file --

6.12 Annexed in a separate file: Relevant midterm tracking tools (METT, FSC, Capacity scorecard, etc.)

-- See separate file in PDF, including attachments in Excel, MS Word and PDF --



END OF REPORT

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