Mid-Term Evaluation Report of UNDP-Supported GEF-Financed Project:

Integrated Water Resource Management and Ecosystem-based Adaptation (EbA) in the Xe Bang Hieng river basin and Luang Prabang city

Lao PDR – UNDP GEF PIMS # 6547

December 2024

Acknowledgements

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The MTR also acknowledges the many stakeholders consulted who freely shared their knowledge and experience regarding small wild cat conservation, providing important insights that informed the recommendations provided in the MTR report.

MTR time frame:	19th September, 2024 to 15th January, 2025
Region and countries included in the project:	Asia and Pacific Region, Lao PDR
GEF Operational Focal Area/ Strategic Program:	Climate Change
Executing Agency/Implementing Partner and other project partners:	Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE) - Department of Water Resources (DWR)
MTR team members:	Dr. Brent Tegler – International Consultant & Team Leader (tegler.brent@gmail.com) Sengphachanh Sonethavixay – National Evaluation Consultant (sengphachanh.sonethavixay@gmail.com)

Table of Contents

Acronyms and Abbreviations

AWP	Annual Work Plan
BTOR	Back to Office Reports
CCA	Community Conservation Areas
CSO	Civil Society Organizations
CTA	Chief Technical Advisor
DCC	Department of Climate Change
DMH	Department of Meteorology and Hydrology
DWR	Department of Water Resources
DAFO	District Agriculture and Forest Offices
DONRE	District Office of Natural Resources and Environment
DTEAP	Department of Technical Extension and Agro-processing
EbA	Ecosystem-based Adaptation
ESMF	Environmental and Social Management Framework
EWS	Early Warning Systems
FGD	Focus Group Discussions
GEF	Global Environment Facility (source of grant fun)
ICM	Integrated Catchment Management
ICRFM	Integrated Climate-Resilient Flood Management Strategies
IWRM-EbA	Integrated Water Resource Management and Ecosystem-based Adaptation (project title)
KII	Key Informant Interviews
LNOB	Leave No One Behind
LoA	Letter of Agreement
LUP	Land Use Plan
MTR	Mid-Term Review
MAF	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
MONRE	Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NCE	Nature, Climate and Energy
NIM	National Implementation Modality
NGO	Non-Government Organization
NTFP	Non-Timber Forest Products
PWD	Persons with Disability
ProDoc	Project Document
PIF	Project Identification Form
PIR	Project Implementation Report
PMU	Project Management Unit
PPR	Project Progress Report
PRF	Project Results Framework
PSC	Project Steering Committee
PAFO	Provincial Agriculture and Forest Office
PONRE	Provincial Office of Natural Resources and Environment
RTA	Regional Technical Advisor
SESP	Social and Environmental Screening Procedure
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNDP CO	UNDP Country Office (Lao PDR)
UNEP	United Nations Environment Program

1 Executive Summary

1.1 Project Summary Table

Project Title:	Integrated Water Resource Management and Ecosystem-based Adaptation (EbA) in the Xe Bang Hieng river basin and Luang		
UNDP PIMS#:	6547	**GEF project ID#:**	10514
PIF Approval		**CEO Endorsement:**	3 June 2022
ATLAS Award #: **ATLAS Project ID:**	00098851 00102048	**Project Document Signature Date (date project officially began):**	23 November 2022
Country:	Lao PDR	**Date project coordinator hired:**	18 December 2023
Region:	Asia and the Pacific	**Inception Workshop:**	14 December 2022
GEF Focal Area:	Climate Change	**Mid-Term Review Completion:**	24 June 2024
		Planned Project Closing:	14 November 2026
Trust Fund (Indicate GEF TF, LDCF, SCCF, NPIF	GEF LDCF	**Revised closing date:**	n/a
GEF Implementing Agency:	UNDP		
Executing Agency:	Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, Department of Water Resources		
Executing Partners:	Government		
UNDP-GEF Technical Team:	Nature, Climate and Energy		
Project Financing:	**At CEO Endorsement US$**	**At MTR US$**	
(1) GEF financing:	5,329,452		
(2) UNDP contribution:	250,000		
(3) Government:	24,062,456		
(4) Other partners:	3,150,129		
(5) Total co-financing [2+3+4]:	27,462,585		
TOTAL PROJECT COSTS [1+5]:	**32,792,037**		

1.2 Project Description

The objective of the Integrated Water Resource Management and Ecosystem-based Adaptation in the Xe Bang Hieng river basin and Luang Prabang city (IWRM-EbA) project is to promote the integrated management of target sites in the Mekong River Basin for increased climate resilience of communities in Savannakhet Province and Luang Prabang city vulnerable to floods and droughts. The project aims to build the climate resilience of communities to the impacts of floods and droughts, both of which are projected to become more intense and frequent under future climate scenarios.

The project aims to strengthen the climate resilience of communities in two particularly vulnerable areas of Lao PDR – namely Savannakhet Province and Luang Prabang city – particularly focusing on the impacts of floods and droughts. This improved resilience will be achieved through three complementary project components, specifically:

Component 1: Developing national and provincial capacities for Integrated Catchment Management (ICM) and integrated urban Ecosystem-based Adaptation (EbA) for climate risk reduction.

Component 2: Ecosystem-based Adaptation (EbA) interventions, with supporting protective infrastructure and livelihood enhancement. and

Component 3: Knowledge management and Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E).

The project targets two provinces in Lao PDR—Savannakhet and Luang Prabang—addressing vulnerabilities to climate hazards such as floods and droughts. In Savannakhet, interventions focus on five districts, including lowland areas (Champhone, Songkhone, and Xonbuly) and headwater regions (Nong and Sepone), where communities face recurring destruction of homes, farmlands, and infrastructure due to floods, along with drought-induced food insecurity caused by forest degradation and reduced fisheries. In Luang Prabang, a UNESCO World Heritage City and significant cultural and tourist hub, the project addresses risks associated with its mountainous terrain and limited floodplains, which make it prone to flash flooding and landslides during extreme weather events. The absence of effective early warning systems in both regions further exacerbates vulnerabilities, highlighting the need for comprehensive climate adaptation measures.

1.3 Project Progress Summary

The IWRM-EbA project started quickly with an inception workshop in December 2022 and Project Board meeting in January 2023 to approve the first Annual Work Plan (AWP). The first full year (2023) of the project engaged government stakeholders, recruited PMU members, and developed and advertised contracts for the major start-up tasks of flood and drought risk mapping and optioneering exercises to identify mitigation measures based on mapping.

In 2024 a fully function Project Management Unit (PMU) was operational within the office of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE) Department of Water Resources (DWR). The PMU has engaged and introduced the IWRM-EbA project to key government stakeholders including, Provincial Office of Natural Resources and Environment (PONRE), District Office of Natural Resources and Environment (DONRE), District Office of Forestry and Agriculture (DAFO) and Village Councils in Savannakhet Province and Luang Prabang City. Key government stakeholders are actively participating in the implementation of project activities in the project's 18 target villages.

The PMU has also engaged international and national consulting firms that have completed the important foundational task of flood and drought risk mapping in the project landscapes, including the Xe Bang Hieng river basin and Luang Prabang city and the follow-on task which involved optioneering exercises with government and target communities to identify flood and drought risk mitigation options. Some of the mitigation options such as borehole water supply stations, have been initiated in target villages.

The IWRM-EbA is currently working with government and consulting teams to design and implement a suite of flood and drought risk mitigation options including Community Conservation Areas (CCA), land use planning, tree planting to restore riparian corridors and hill forest landscapes, irrigation storage ponds, climate smart agriculture, alternative income

generating activities and flood disaster shelters. These activities are to be implemented in the target communities within the remaining two years of the project.

The IWRM-EbA project addresses environmental and social risks associated with the implementation of flood and drought risk measures, such selecting native tree species for planting and consideration of the conservation of traditional natural resource use. The IWRM-EbA is also working to ensure there is significant inclusion of women in all project activities.

1.4 MTR Ratings and Achievement Summary Table

Measure	MTR Rating*	Achievement Description
Project Strategy	N/A	• The project strategy outlined in the Project Document remains relevant, with objectives continuing to align well with government and donors' programs, priorities, and plans. • The project strategy aligns with national, regional, and international policies and frameworks. • The project includes a scientific and technical approach to IWRM EbA and efforts should be made to ensure this approach is embedded in the government's implementation framework. • The IWRM-EbA project has identified watershed management needs that are beyond the financial capacity of the GEF grant. • Awareness creation and capacity building should remain the project's primary focus, serving as a guiding principle for all project activities and requiring ongoing monitoring and maintenance.
Progress Towards Results	**Objective** Achievement Rating: ***4 MS***	• The project has made strides in enhancing sustainable land and water management in the target areas, despite challenges in aligning its total direct beneficiaries with the total population of the 18 project villages. • The project has advanced sustainable land and water management by constructing 16 groundwater wells with solar pumps, benefiting 9,632 people (54% of the target population), and training 200 officials in IWRM, GIS, finance, and land use planning. • Efforts align with GEF guidelines to enhance resilience for 27,000 people across five districts and sustainably manage 775,300 hectares, with 200,000 hectares targeted for climate-resilient practices by 2024. • Surveys in six villages are underway to establish Water and Conservation Zones, supporting ecosystem protection and agriculture. • There is a need to improve the measurement of direct and indirect project beneficiaries. • Follow-up training and capacity development will enhance the project's ability to demonstrate its full impact.

Measure	MTR Rating*	Achievement Description
	Outcome 1 Achievement Rating: ***3*** ***MS***	• The project has made significant progress in building capacity for sustainable water resource and land use management. A total of 157 officials received training in WRM, IWRM, and GIS, with 71 completing knowledge surveys. Additionally, 43 officials participated in specialized sessions on flood and drought risk mapping, enhancing their ability to address extreme weather challenges. GIS training focused on map creation, spatial analysis, and project planning, supporting data-driven decision-making. • Progress includes detailed topographic surveys for target villages and Luang Prabang city, providing critical data for climate-resilient planning. By 2024, further training in ICM, CCA, land use planning, and climate strategies will strengthen participants' skills. • Efforts are underway to integrate fine-scale climate-resilience and land use plans across five districts and Luang Prabang city, with stakeholder consultations ensuring alignment with local needs. • Additionally, 30 officials (26 men, 4 women) completed land use planning training, positioning them to implement resilient strategies at district and village levels
	Outcome 2 Achievement Rating: ***2*** ***S***	• The project has made notable progress in land restoration and conservation, including developing work plans for five target districts and conducting surveys to identify over 10,000 hectares of degraded areas for assisted natural regeneration. • EbA initiatives, such as planting 5,100 trees to restore 62 hectares, demonstrate tangible impacts. Consultations for CCAs in five key villages have advanced to the final signature stages, ensuring alignment with local needs and enhancing climate resilience. • Additionally, surveys in six villages aim to establish Water and Conservation Zones, further supporting sustainable land management. However, challenges remain, including unclear implementation of village priorities, incomplete SESP for boreholes, and inadequate drainage management at water stations
	Outcome 3 Achievement Rating: ***3*** ***MS***	• The project's robust progress in establishing foundational systems and fostering community engagement. Baseline surveys involving 50 participants per village provide critical data for measuring the targeted 50% knowledge improvement. • The development of a GAP Detailed Activity Implementation Plan ensures gender-balanced participation in training activities. Procurement of a consultancy to design and implement community-based monitoring systems is a key milestone, with plans to train 15 target villages in sustainable resource management. • Additionally, the creation of a centralized knowledge-sharing platform and targeted communications materials strengthens educational outreach, while community engagement in World Water Day and Environmental Day celebrations further promotes awareness and participation in conservation efforts.

Measure	MTR Rating*	Achievement Description
Project Implementation & Adaptive Management	Achievement Rating: ***3*** ***MS***	• The MTR team's overall rating of project implementation and adaptive management is "Moderately Satisfactory" (MS). • There was a slow start creating effective project management arrangements; however, these are now largely resolved. • Work planning has progressed well in 2024 and with contracts in place to conduct activities in 2025 work planning is satisfactory. • Financial management, project monitoring and evaluation, stakeholder engagement and reporting are effective. • Communication among implementing partners is good, the project should provide more effective communication with beneficiaries. • The MTR has made seven recommendations to enhance project implementation and adaptation.
Sustainability	Achievement Rating: ***L***	• The MTR has determined the overall rating of sustainability to key outcomes is "Likely". • The assessment is based on the support demonstrated by key government stakeholders and their enhanced capacity through participation in the IWRM-EbA project, the institutional frameworks of ICFMS and CCA established and the motivated participation of villages in the mitigation of flood and drought risks.

* Highly Satisfactory (HS), Satisfactory (S), Moderately Satisfactory (MS), Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU), Unsatisfactory (U), Highly Unsatisfactory (HU). Likely (L), Moderately Likely (ML), Moderately Unlikely (MU), Unlikely (U) (For a more complete description of the ratings used see **Annex 4**)

1.5 Concise summary of conclusions

The IWRM-EbA project has a logical framework based on a valid theory of change. Flood and drought risks are currently significant, and they are increasing in Lao PDR due to climate change. For urban and rural communities, the ability of the IWRM-EbA project to address flood and drought risks is highly relevant.. A key strength of the project lies in its activities that focus on addressing gaps in the knowledge base of flood and drought risk at a local level. This includes data acquisition and technical studies to produce science-based flood and drought risk mapping for a large river basin within the project area.

The project then utilizes the foundational flood and drought risk mapping in optioneering exercises at the village level that are grounded in an understanding of local conditions through field visits and community consultations and brings technical innovation from global best practices to develop sustainable flood and drought mitigation strategies tailored to individual communities. The strategies include conventional flood and drought mitigation strategies such as ring levees and water supply boreholes and EbA-based strategies aimed at long-term sustainable land use solutions that include CCA (forest and wetland protection, aquatic protection zones), riparian buffer planting, forest restoration, and climate smart agriculture.

The project is developing capacity in government stakeholders (DWR, PONRE, DONRE and DAFO) who actively participate in all stages of project implementation at the community level. The knowledge and experience developed by government will support the sustainability of project outcomes, but there are questions regarding financing the scaling up of IWRM-EbA to the many remaining villages in Savannakhet Province and to other river basins in Lao PDR facing similar flood and drought risk challenges. Conventional flood and drought risk mitigation solutions based on infrastructure construction, such as borehole water supply, ring levees, and irrigation infrastructure are capital intensive projects. A weakness of the IWRM-EbA project is that the GEF grant is proving insufficient to fully support implementation of all infrastructure needs identified in optioneering exercises. In addition, the limited financial resources of government raise the question of what mechanisms the IWRM-EbA project can put in place to address the scaling up of flood and drought mitigation required?

The project includes a rural focus in Savannakhet Province and an urban focus in Luang Prabang City. In the urbanizing landscape of Luang Prabang City there is an increasing need to manage surface water runoff during the more frequent and intense high rainfall events associated with climate change. The IWRM-EbA project has an opportunity to demonstrate what can be achieved by utilizing EbA to protect water storage wetlands and enhance the management of natural drainageways in the villages targeted.

The project work in communities has an opportunity to implement more robust strategies that will ensure the inclusion of women in project activities fostering leadership opportunities, promoting women's involvement in decision-making processes, and providing tailored livelihood support that addresses their unique challenges and aspirations. The project could also adopt a more intentional approach to social inclusion, by collecting disaggregated data on the participation of youth, persons with disability and ethnic groups.

Long-term sustainability of the project can be achieved by awareness raising on intensifying climate events and lessons learned to identify and implement locally appropriate sustainable mitigation options. The project has an opportunity to highlight and advocate for large financial investment in flood and drought mitigation efforts, which can lead to significant cost savings when future disasters are avoided.

1.6 Recommendation Summary Table

Recommendation	Key Entity Responsible	Priority Timing	Justification
Actions to correct the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the project			
1. **MTR Recommendation** The PMU in consultation with implementation partners should develop IWRM-EbA activities that are "women-only" targeted to improve the achievement of women's equality and to support women's empowerment and leadership skills. These activities may include: • leadership training; • women only tree planting teams; and • women targeted income generating activities	PMU DWR	High February 2025	***Section 4.2.2***
2. **MTR Recommendation** PMU together with UNDP are recommended to review the contract for the Engagement and Gender Specialist to ensure sufficient time is allocated to complete the tasks required.	PMU UNDP	Medium February 2025	***Section 4.3.1***
3. **MTR Recommendation** The PMU M&E Specialist working with the PMU Finance and Administration Officer should document the co-financing support by all levels of government providing in-kind and direct support.	PMU UNDP	Low Ongoing	***Section 4.3.3***
4. **MTR Recommendation** UNDP and MONRE should request the IWRM-EbA Project Board hold meetings twice each year in 2025 and 2026 to provide regular monitoring and evaluation of project progress and guidance to ensure the timely completion of all project activities.	DWR Project Board	Medium Ongoing	***Section 4.3.4***
5. **MTR Recommendation** The IWRM-EbA Project Progress Reports (PPR) prepared by the PMU should provide an assessment of tasks/activities that includes both (1) identification of their status in terms of "on-track" or "off-track" and (2) clear, implementable recommendations identifying the responsible stakeholder and timing for corrective actions that will ensure the completion of activities before project closure.	PMU	Low Ongoing	***Section 4.3.4***
6. **MTR Recommendation** To ensure effective and efficient use of the IWRM-EbA Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) budget, it is recommended the PMU M&E Specialist work with the PMU Finance and Administration Officer to track, assess and report on M&E activity budgets as defined in the ProDoc. Variation from the original budget should be noted and justified.	PMU	Low Ongoing	***Section 4.3.4***

Recommendation	Key Entity Responsible	Priority Timing	Justification
7. MTR Recommendation The PMU working with the implementing partners should provide effective, timely communication with all project villages in Luang Prabang and Savannakhet regarding: • project next steps, activities to be implemented, clearly identifying what, when, how, and who; and • further discussion of community priorities in the context of IWRM-EbA and why some of the priorities directly related to the project cannot be funded.	PMU	High January 2025	***Section 4.3.7***
Actions to reinforce the sustainable benefits for the IWRM-EbA project.			
8. MTR Recommendation The PMU, working with implementing contractors, must ensure borehole water stations include appropriate water drainage catchment for excess water. This includes retrofitting boreholes that have already been installed and ensuring all new boreholes include water runoff catchment as part of the construction design.	PMU DWR	Medium February 2025	***Section 4.3.1***
9. MTR Recommendation The PMU working with the contract staff managing the project website should remove all irrelevant information from the project website (link: https://laoiwrm-eba.com/en) and populate website pages with information specific to the IWRM-EbA project. As new information becomes available the project website should be continuously updated.	PMU	Medium March 2025	***Section 4.3.7***
10. MTR Recommendation The PMU team working with DWR should conduct a high level cost benefit analysis of IWRM-EbA flood protection activities. This should include an assessment of the IWRM-EbA project costs to implement flood mitigation measures in select target villages against the estimated cost of flood disasters that will be prevented to highlight the value of investing in flood protection for other villages.	PMU	Medium December 2025	***Section 4.4.1***

Recommendation	Key Entity Responsible	Priority Timing	Justification
11. MTR Recommendation The PMU should work with DWR and District government implementing partners to ensure the approval and initial implementation of Integrated Climate-Resilient Flood Management Strategies (ICFMS). To demonstrate sustainability of the IWRM-EbA project the PMU working with DWR should support work to achieve: • Adoption of approved ICFMS by Districts. • Development of policies and/or guidelines for ICFMS implementation. • Inclusion of ICFMS actions in annual/five-year plans and budgets. • Evidence of ICFMS actions being implemented in the districts.	PMU	High Ongoing	***Section 4.4.3***

2 Introduction

2.1 Purpose of the MTR and objectives

The aim is to conduct the Midterm Review (MTR) of the full-sized UNDP-supported GEF-financed IWRM in the Xe Bang Hieng River Basin and Luang Prabang City (PIMS 6547) implemented through the DWR MoNRE, which is to be undertaken in 2024. The project started on November 23rd, 2022, and is in its second full year of implementation. The Terms of Reference (ToR) sets out the expectations for the MTR (**Annex 1**). The MTR process also followed the guidance outlined in the document Guidance for Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects.

The MTR is a formative evaluation to assess project performance and context to inform project management decision-making on course correction during the remaining implementation period. The specific objective of the MTR is to assess the four categories of project progress: (1) Project Strategy; (2) Project Results Framework (PRF); (3) Progress Towards Results, and (4) Project Implementation and Adaptive Management. The MTR also assessed the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, results, impact, coordination and sustainability of the IWRM project's performance and progress over the first two years of implementation.

The MTR identified risks to successful completion of project activities within the remaining project period and to the achievement of project outcomes. The project also assessed risks to the likely sustainability of project outcomes, including the scaling-up of successful IWRM demonstrated by the project. For the risks identified the MTR will provide supportive recommendations (maximum 10) for critical actions to be taken by the Project Management Unit (PMU). The recommendations are specific, measurable, achievable, and relevant. The MTR assessed IWRM M&E, including an analysis of the M&E plan at project start-up, considering whether baseline conditions, methodology and roles and responsibilities are well articulated. Throughout the MTR process, the team employed a participatory and consultative approach ensuring close engagement with the Project Management Unit (PMU), government counterparts (particularly, DWR, MoNRE), Implementing Partners, the UNDP Country Office, direct beneficiaries and other stakeholders.

The MTR team consisted of an International Consultant who is the MTR team leader and a National Consultant who provided support with a focus on a desk review of relevant documents and field missions analyzing best practices, specific lessons learned, and recommendations (including forward looking approaches) on the strategies that have been employed by this project and how they were implemented.

2.2 Scope & Methodology

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

To ensure rigor and alignment with international best practices, the MTR employed an enhanced mixed-methods approach, incorporating a refined data collection strategy. This strategy included diverse stakeholder engagement, focusing on marginalized groups and segmenting respondents by geography, roles, and demographics to ensure inclusive and comprehensive data collection. The selection of key informants was guided by their direct involvement in project implementation and their expertise, and project's target beneficiary. Key informants included representatives from the DWR, the PONRE and DONRE in Savannakhet and Luang Prabang, executing agencies, senior officials, task team/component leaders, key

experts, consultants, Project Board members, local government representatives, and CSOs. Field missions were strategically planned to engage stakeholders from both upstream and downstream villages, ensuring the inclusion of project beneficiaries in Savannakhet and Luang Prabang provinces. Given the focus on key project activities in Savannakhet province, the MTR prioritized three target districts, enabling direct engagement with representatives and beneficiaries from communities directly impacted by project activities. Field missions were conducted in Luang Prabang and Savannakhet provinces, with a focus on three target districts in Savannakhet to capture the experiences of upstream and downstream communities. Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) tools were employed during these visits to ensure broad stakeholder input, while online and hybrid methods were used to overcome logistical challenges.

The specific design and methodology for the MTR emerged from consultations with UNDP and the PMU regarding what is appropriate and feasible to meet the MTR's purpose and objectives and to answer all evaluation questions, within the limitations of budget, time and data. The MTR evaluation followed a collaborative, participatory approach, engaging key partners such as the GEF Operational Focal Point, UNDP's Nature, Climate, and Energy (NCE), Regional Technical Advisor (RTA), and project beneficiaries. The evaluation adhered to the OECD/DAC criteria of relevance/coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability, while addressing cross-cutting issues such as human rights, gender equality, social inclusion, and Leave No One Behind (LNOB). The MTR team followed the UNEG Code of Conduct in Evaluations (**Annex 8**) and used gender-responsive methodologies and tools to support gender equality and women's empowerment, including use of UNDP's *Checklist for Gender Sensitive Midterm Review Analysis*[1] which identifies points to consider in relation to project design and preparation, project monitoring, project implementation and project impact.

The MTR evaluation matrix (Annex 2) was employed to assess the project, enabling evidence-based conclusions on performance. The assessments and ratings adhered to standardized terminology and grading criteria outlined in the Guidance for Conducting Mid-term Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects. Further details are presented in the relevant tables and sections. Field visits incorporated Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) tools to ensure broad and inclusive stakeholder input while online and hybrid methods addressed logistical challenges. This integrated approach facilitated diverse participation, offering a holistic understanding of project performance and impacts. It also helped identify challenges and generate actionable recommendations for improvement.

A summary of the methodology for the MTR is as follows:

1. ***Desk Review.*** The MTR team reviewed all relevant documents as noted in **Annex 7**. This included a review of materials prepared during the preparation phase (e.g., Project Identification Form (PIF), UNDP Initiation Plan, Social and Environmental Screening Procedure (SESP), the Project Document (ProDoc), Project Progress Reports (PPR), Project Implementation Report (PIR), project budget revisions, national policy documents, and baseline/midterm GEF Core Indicators. Where necessary, the MTR requested clarification and additional documents considered important for the MTR.
2. ***Semi-structured Interviews.*** A semi-structured interview approach was used to engage a wide range of stakeholders, such as UNDP staff, the PMU, government partners, CSOs, beneficiary groups, and other key actors (see Annex 6 for the list of stakeholders consulted).

[1] Guidance for Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects (2014)

Questionnaires aligned with the MTR's objectives were developed to guide interviews while allowing flexibility to adapt questions based on the specific roles and responsibilities of informants. This approach facilitated deep exploration of critical topics and encouraged follow-up questions for clarity (**Annex 9**. Questions to Assess Progress Towards Results).

3. ***Assess Progress Towards Results.*** Utilizing information from the desk review and stakeholder interviews the MTR utilized Organization of the Economic Cooperation Development/Development Assistance Committee (OECD/DAC) Evaluation Criteria of Relevance/Coherence, Effectiveness, Efficiency, and Sustainability, as well as the cross-cutting issues of human rights, gender equality, social inclusion and LNOB.
4. ***Analysis of Project Results Framework.*** The MTR assessed the effectiveness of progress towards indicator mid-term targets established for the PRF indicators and the likelihood of achieving end of project targets (**Annex 3**). Progress towards indicator targets were assigned an achievement rating using a three-point rating system as follows: **Target Achieved**, **On target to be achieved**, **Not on target to be achieved**.
5. ***Analysis of Project Finance.*** With assistance from UNDP and the PMU key financial aspects of the project have been evaluated. Differences between planned and actual co-financing received have been investigated and the reasons for differences explained. Co-financing have been assessed in terms of how well it was integrated and has contributed to project outcomes. The MTR assessed variances between planned and actual expenditures of the GEF grant and the reasons for those variances using data provided by the PMU. The MTR reviewed changes made to budget allocations to assess the appropriateness and relevance of such revisions. The MTR reviewed all available financial audit reports.
6. ***Evaluation of Project Risks.*** The MTR evaluated the risk log as originally presented in the ProDoc and risks identified in the SESP. The MTR followed UNDP Enterprise Risk Management (ERM) 2019 guidelines to consider "likelihood" and "impact" of risk ratings of High, Substantial, Moderate or Low using the ERM Risk Evaluation Matrix. The MTR assessed the effectiveness of implementation of proposed risk treatment and management measures and provide additional risks and risk mitigation measures where warranted.
7. ***Data Triangulation, Analysis and MTR Report Preparation.*** The MTR team verified results by triangulating data that is available from a wide variety of documents with information gathered through site visits, KII and FGD held with project stakeholders. This involved iterative review of multiple project documents, cross-referencing information gathered from multiple stakeholders and in some cases requesting follow-up information from UNDP, the PMU and/or stakeholders to confirm results. The results of data triangulation have been used to complete a narrative evaluation report, with a table of contents as shown in **Section 2.3**. The draft evaluation report has been shared with UNDP and key stakeholders providing an opportunity to validate the data presented

2.3 Limitations of the MTR

The MTR encountered certain limitations primarily due to the quality, level of detail, and timeliness of the project reports, particularly periodic assessments of project performance and progress, such as PIRs and annual and quarterly progress reports. Additionally, time and resource constraints restricted field visits to 6 out of 15 villages in Savannakhet province and 2 out of 5 villages in Luang Prabang city. Some interviews with consultants and service providers were conducted remotely rather than in person. Despite these challenges, the MTR team remains confident that its findings are robust, evidence-based, and reflective of the project's overall performance.

2.4 Structure of the MTR report

The MTR Report opens with acknowledgments, Table of Contents and a list of Acronyms and Abbreviations to facilitate easy navigation. The Executive Summary provides an overview of the report's key points. Section 3 provides an overview of the IWRM-EbA project. Section 4 presents the MTR's core findings, including assessments of the Project Strategy, such as project design, the theory of change, and the project results framework, Progress Toward Results, and Project Implementation and Adaptive Management. Section 4 also covers aspects such as management arrangements, work planning, finance and co-finance, project-level monitoring and evaluation systems, stakeholder engagement, reporting, communication, and the integration of gender and development principles. Section 5 summarizes the MTR's findings and provides key recommendations for the project's future direction. The MTR has been reviewed by UNDP and the government Executing Agency with an Audit Trail of comments provided in a separate file (**Annex 10**).

3 Project Description and Background Context

3.1 Development context

Lao PDR faces a complex interplay of environmental, socio-economic, institutional, and policy factors that directly influence its development and vulnerability to climate change. The country's tropical climate, characterized by high rainfall variability and increasing temperatures, has intensified the frequency and impact of extreme climate events such as floods, droughts, and typhoons. These events have caused significant damages, including infrastructure losses, agricultural disruptions, and food insecurity, with the most vulnerable communities—particularly rural and ethnic groups—bearing the brunt of these impacts. Despite improvements in forest cover from 40% in 2010 to 62% in recent years, historical deforestation and degradation have undermined ecosystem services, increasing the country's susceptibility to extreme weather. Forests continue to play a critical role in regulating water systems and providing Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs) that support livelihoods and food security, particularly in rural areas.

Economically, Lao PDR has experienced rapid growth, driven by investments in agriculture, forestry, hydropower, and mining. However, this growth has heightened pressures on natural resources and ecosystems, exacerbating land degradation and conflicts over land use, particularly in areas with foreign agricultural concessions. Agriculture remains a cornerstone of the economy, supporting 70–80% of livelihoods, though only 4% of land is arable. The informal sector accounts for the majority of employment, with limited access to social protection, leaving the population highly vulnerable to climate-related shocks. Extreme events, such as the 2018 floods caused by Tropical Storm Son-Tinh, resulted in widespread damages and highlighted systemic challenges, including inadequate recovery mechanisms and exacerbation of socio-economic inequalities.

Regionally, the Xe Bang Hieng River Basin in Savannakhet Province and the city of Luang Prabang exemplify the country's challenges and opportunities. Savannakhet, rich in natural resources and agricultural potential, faces growing vulnerability to floods and droughts, driven by land-use changes and climate hazards. Luang Prabang, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and a key tourism hub, is exposed to flash floods and landslides, aggravated by limited early warning systems. Both regions underscore the critical need for integrated approaches to water resource management and climate adaptation that incorporate community resilience, sustainable land use, and institutional capacity building.

In this context, the IWRM EbA project aligns with national priorities to mitigate climate risks, enhance ecosystem services, and promote sustainable development in Lao PDR. By addressing these interconnected factors, the project seeks to build adaptive capacity and foster socio-economic and environmental resilience.

3.2 Problems that the project sought to address

The IWRM EbA project was designed to address critical challenges faced by rural and urban communities in Lao PDR, particularly in the Xe Bang Hieng River Basin in Savannakhet province and Luang Prabang city. These regions are increasingly vulnerable to climate change-induced floods and droughts, which threaten livelihoods, infrastructure, and ecosystem stability. The project was designed to address these challenges by integrating ecosystem-based approaches with climate-resilient water management strategies, aiming to restore ecosystems, enhance community capacity, and build resilience to climate change impacts. Several

interconnected problems and barriers motivated the project. Climate change has intensified extreme weather events, with increasing temperatures and more unpredictable rainfall patterns leading to more frequent and severe floods and droughts. In the Xe Bang Hieng River Basin, lowland areas face recurring floods that damage infrastructure, agricultural land, and homes, while headwater regions are prone to droughts that exacerbate water shortages and food insecurity. Luang Prabang City, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, faces compounded risks from flooding due to its low-lying geography and rapid urban development.

Human activities, including deforestation, unsustainable agricultural practices, and land mismanagement, have degraded ecosystems that provide natural buffers against floods and droughts. This degradation reduces the capacity of forests and rivers to retain water, exacerbating flood risks in lowlands and water scarcity in headwater regions. Commercial plantations, hydropower development, and illegal logging further strain these ecosystems, compounding vulnerability. Communities and local authorities in the Xe Bang Hieng River Basin lack the resources, technical knowledge, and institutional support to implement adaptive measures against climate hazards. Urban communities in Luang Prabang also face challenges in understanding flood risks and adapting infrastructure and behaviors to mitigate them. This lack of capacity inhibits effective disaster response and long-term resilience planning. Economic activities, such as granting land concessions for agriculture and forestry, contribute to land use conflicts and reduced access to natural resources. In rural areas, low agricultural productivity and food insecurity drive unsustainable practices, such as slash-and-burn farming. Urbanization and infrastructure expansion exacerbate flooding by increasing impermeable surfaces, reducing water infiltration, and altering natural drainage patterns.

The COVID-19 pandemic has heightened vulnerabilities, particularly in Luang Prabang, where tourism-dependent livelihoods have been disrupted. National lockdowns have strained financial security, while the return of migrant workers has increased pressure on local ecosystems and resources. Historical data indicate rising temperatures and shifting rainfall patterns, with projections suggesting further increases in temperature (1.4–4.3°C by 2100) and rainfall intensity, especially during the wet season. These changes are expected to intensify the frequency and unpredictability of floods and droughts, further endangering vulnerable communities and ecosystems.

3.3 Project Description and Strategy

The objective of the IWRM-EbA project is to promote the integrated management of target sites in the Mekong River Basin for increased climate resilience of communities in Savannakhet Province and Luang Prabang city vulnerable to floods and droughts.

The project aims to build the climate resilience of communities to the impacts of floods and droughts, both of which are projected to become more intense and frequent under future climate scenarios. This improved resilience will be achieved through three complementary project components, specifically:

Component 1: Developing national and provincial capacities for Integrated Catchment Management (ICM) and integrated urban Ecosystem-based Adaptation (EbA) for climate risk reduction.

Component 2: Ecosystem-based Adaptation (EbA) interventions, with supporting protective infrastructure and livelihood enhancement.

Component 3: Knowledge management and Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E).

The project targets two provinces in Lao PDR—Savannakhet and Luang Prabang—addressing vulnerabilities to climate hazards such as floods and droughts. In Savannakhet, interventions focus on five districts, including lowland areas (Champhone, Songkhone, and Xonbuly) and headwater regions (Nong and Sepone), where communities face recurring destruction of homes, farmlands, and infrastructure due to floods, along with drought-induced food insecurity caused by forest degradation and reduced fisheries. In Luang Prabang, a UNESCO World Heritage City and significant cultural and tourist hub, the project addresses risks associated with its mountainous terrain and limited floodplains, which make it prone to flash flooding and landslides during extreme weather events. The absence of effective early warning systems in both regions further exacerbates vulnerabilities, highlighting the need for comprehensive climate adaptation measures.

3.4 Project Implementation Arrangements

The project is implemented under a National Implementation Modality (NIM) to ensure strong collaboration between UNDP and the Government of Lao PDR. UNDP acts as the GEF Implementing Agency, supported by its Lao PDR Country Office, while the Department of Water Resources (DWR) under MONRE serves as the Implementing Partner, responsible for project planning, execution, and alignment with national systems. The DWR coordinates with government agencies and Responsible Parties (RPs) across MONRE and the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF) to implement project components. Daily project administration is managed by the Project Management Unit (PMU) within the DWR, which monitors progress, fosters collaboration, and ensures compliance with monitoring and evaluation frameworks, concluding its role with the submission of terminal evaluations.

Central to the project is the Project Board (or Steering Committee), which oversees implementation to ensure alignment with objectives, standards, and donor requirements. The Board provides guidance, addresses risks, monitors performance, ensures inter-agency coordination, and fosters transparency while avoiding conflicts of interest. It includes key stakeholders, a Vice Minister of MoNRE serves as Executive Representative and Chair of the Project Board, UNDP Resident Representative serves as Development Partner, with staff from PONRE who serve as representatives for target communities by participating in decision-making to ensure target group needs are addressed. In cases of disagreement, the UNDP Resident Representative mediates and, if needed, will make the final decisions to prevent delays. Through its oversight and strategic direction, the Board ensures effective, fair, and results-driven project implementation.

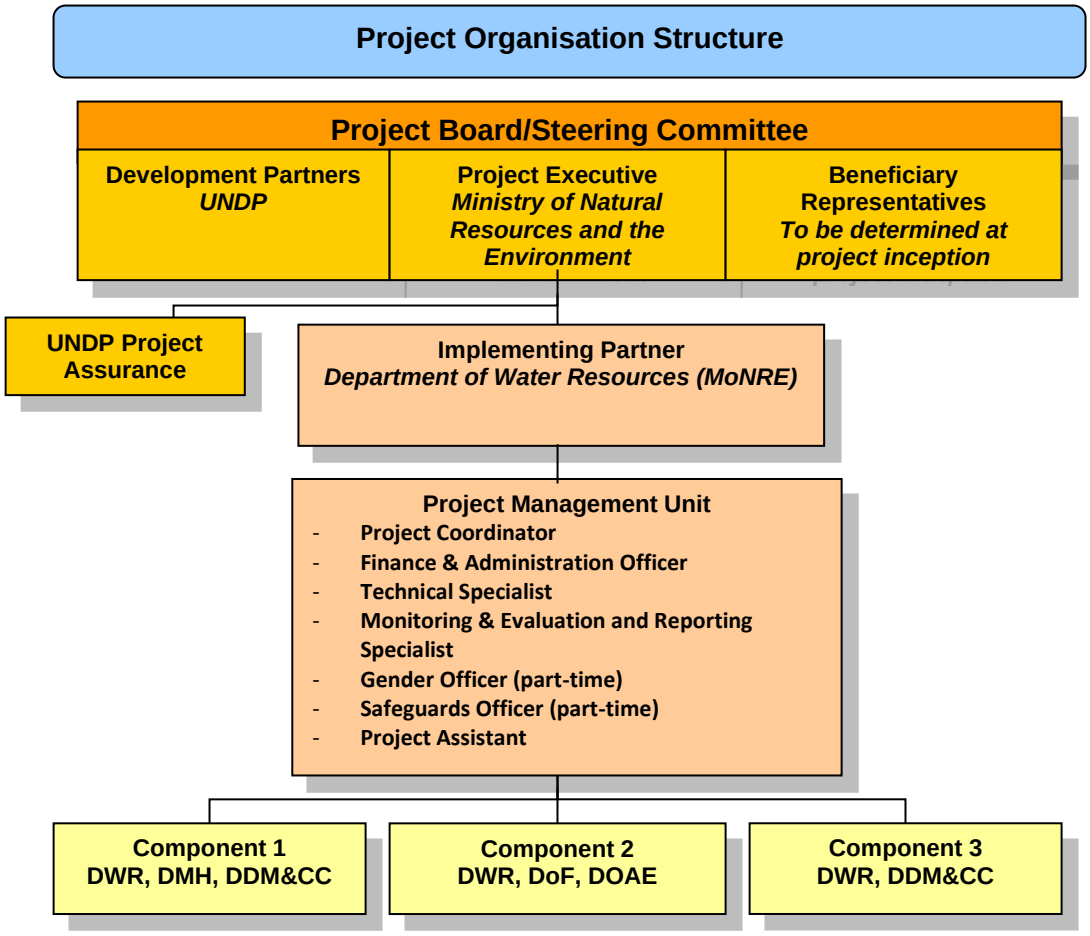


Figure 1. Project organization structure

3.5 Project timing and milestones

The project was originally scheduled to begin on November 23, 2022, but officially commenced during the inception meeting held on December 14, 2022. Its planned completion date is November 14, 2026. A key component of the project's timeline is the Mid-Term Review (MTR), which was originally planned to conclude on June 24, 2024. However, due to adjustments in scheduling, the MTR was conducted over a four-month period from September to December 2024. The MTR serves as a critical juncture in the project, providing an opportunity to assess progress, address any challenges, and make necessary course corrections to ensure the successful achievement of the project objectives. The Project Results Framework (PRF) plays a vital role in tracking progress by outlining specific, time-bound milestones that signify major events or achievements. These milestones help ensure the project remains on track and provide a framework for measuring progress against defined goals. By adhering to this structured timeline, the project can systematically evaluate its impact and maintain accountability to stakeholders.

3.6 Main stakeholders: summary list

The project exemplifies a holistic and inclusive approach to water resource management and ecosystem-based adaptation, emphasizing meaningful stakeholder engagement at every level. The primary stakeholders include central government agencies, local authorities at provincial, district, and village levels, community rights holders, and UNDP Lao PDR. By involving these diverse actors, the project ensures broad-based ownership and relevance. The Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP) was developed to provide a systematic framework to build trust, gather valuable input, and integrate local perspectives into the project's design, implementation, and evaluation. Guided by principles such as transparency, flexibility, and government leadership, the consultation process has fostered a collaborative environment.

Key stakeholder engagement activities, including training enumerators, holding workshops, and forming technical working groups, have strengthened local capacities and refined project strategies. This inclusive engagement has not only identified critical climate change challenges and adaptive needs but also enhanced the project's legitimacy and effectiveness. Ultimately, the project's participatory model serves as a foundation for sustainable water resource management and resilience building in the Xe Bang Hieng River Basin and Luang Prabang City. The main stakeholders and their respective roles and responsibilities are shown in **Table 1**.

Table 1. IWRM-EbA project main stakeholders and their roles and responsibilities

Stakeholder Group	Role & Responsibility
Government Department at the central level	
Department of Water Resources (DWR) in MONRE	Key government counterpart of the project Planning, coordinating, managing, M&E and reporting. Risks management, procurement of goods and services, financial management, approving and signing the multiyear workplan, the combined delivery reports and signing the financial report Development of flood protection infrastructure Supervise the work of PMU in day-to-day operation of the project including administration, management and technical support to Project Manager
Department of Meteorology and Hydrology (DMH) in MONRE	Hydrological monitoring
Department of Climate Change (DCC) in MONRE	Mainstreaming urban EbA Development of knowledge management and community-based ecological monitoring systems
Department of Forestry (DAFO) in MAF	Execution of EbA activities, primarily reforestation, in coordination with target communities
Department of Technical Extension and Agro-Processing (DTEAP) in MAF	Enhance climate-resilient livelihoods
Government departments at the provincial level	
Department of Natural Resources and Environment	Oversee project implementation in their respective provinces Coordination the implementation of the project activities with the district authorities
Department of Agriculture and Forestry	Provision of technical expertise in climate resilient farming and livelihood development

Stakeholder Group	Role & Responsibility
Department of Information and Tourism/Heritage Office	Coordination in the development of sustainable tourism.
Sub-Commission for the Advancement of Women and Mother and Child at the provincial level	Provide expertise in gender mainstreaming and advice on GAP implementation
Community level	
Village Leaders	Mobilize community participation in project activities
Village Development Committee	Assist village leaders in mobilizing community participation in project activities
Village Water User Committee	Mobilize farmers to take ownership in the O&M of the irrigation system after rehabilitation
Lao Women's Union	Working to mobilize women and protect women's rights
Other vulnerable groups (ethnic minorities, elderly, disabled, women and children)	Participation and contribution in project activities
NGOs/CSOs	
International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN)	Coordination in RAMSAR and World Heritage area conservation
Lao Civil Society Organization Coordination Office	Coordination in community-based water resources management
Lao Wildlife Conservation Association (LWCA)	Coordination in wildlife conservation
Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS)	Coordination in wildlife conservation

4 Findings

4.1 Project Strategy

4.1.1 Project Design

The IWRM-EbA project is firmly anchored in science-based flood risk mapping and aligns with national development priorities, including increasing forest coverage to 70%, enhancing land and water governance, and advancing disaster risk reduction. Addressing critical challenges in climate resilience, ecosystem restoration, and sustainable development, the project employs a dual-context approach by focusing on Savannakhet province, a predominantly rural region with vulnerable communities, and Luang Prabang City, an urban hub. This dual focus enables comparative insights into rural and urban adaptation needs. By integrating capacity building, ecosystem-based interventions, and knowledge management, the project enhances adaptive capacity, restores ecosystems, and promotes sustainable livelihoods, with interventions tailored to the distinct socio-economic and ecological characteristics of each area. Flood risk mapping guided the selection of 15 high-priority villages in Savannakhet for pilot activities, supported by community consultations and field assessments. In Luang Prabang, the urban context facilitates the exploration of IWRM and EbA strategies, implemented by DWR, PONRE, DONRE, and DAFO in partnership with local contractors.

The project builds on a range of prior initiatives, including the SAFE Ecosystems project (2016–2022), leveraging its policy frameworks, training programs, and financing mechanisms to advance forest restoration and ecosystem management. Lessons from the World Bank's Mekong Integrated Water Resources Management Project contribute to the development of integrated, climate-resilient strategies for flood and drought management, while the Wildlife Conservation Society's wetland biodiversity initiative strengthens community engagement and land-use planning. Together, these efforts aim to address resource degradation, foster sustainable practices, and enhance climate resilience in the region. Furthermore, building on baseline initiatives, it targets root causes of climate vulnerability in Lao PDR, such as deforestation and fragmented water resource management. The project draws from foundational efforts, including the Protection and sustainable use of forest ecosystems and biodiversity project (GIZ), participatory agriculture development in Savannakhet Province (JICA), and the Building Capacities for Resilient Recovery initiative (Luxembourg and UNDP). It also incorporates insights from successful interventions like Participatory Forest and Agriculture Land Use Planning (FALUPAM) and Strengthening Agro-Climatic Monitoring and Information Systems (SAMIS), which have provided valuable lessons in land-use planning and agricultural monitoring.

The project is designed to be comprehensive and well-aligned with other donor and government programs, priorities, and plans. Its foundation rests on a robust Theory of Change, a detailed Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) plan, and a thorough Project Risk Register. By integrating Ecosystem-based Adaptation (EbA), protective infrastructure, and capacity-building initiatives, the project addresses vulnerabilities to floods and droughts while promoting sustainable economic growth and environmental restoration. However, there is significant potential to deepen the integration of these lessons and strengthen collaboration with external projects. Doing so would enhance the project's innovation, scalability, and replicability in similar contexts, maximizing its impact on climate resilience and sustainable development.

The project emphasis on ICM and urban EbA aligning with national objectives to improve water governance and disaster risk reduction, the project's impact could be enhanced by

systematically capturing lessons from both rural and urban contexts to inform scalable interventions. Local stakeholder engagement ensures ecological and socio-economic priorities are addressed, but stronger efforts to include marginalized groups, particularly in underserved rural areas, would improve equity and effectiveness.

While the project demonstrates notable strengths, several critical gaps need attention to enhance its impact. In terms of social and environmental safeguards, issues have been identified with the constructed boreholes, particularly inadequate drainage, which requires immediate remediation to prevent environmental degradation and ensure sustainability. Gender inclusion remains a significant shortfall, underscoring the need for robust strategies to empower women. This includes fostering leadership opportunities, promoting their involvement in decision-making processes, and providing tailored livelihood support that addresses their unique challenges and aspirations. The absence of targeted measures for individuals with disabilities poses a risk of further marginalizing this vulnerable group. Incorporating accessible infrastructure, designing disability-specific programs, and ensuring their voices are heard through inclusive consultations are vital steps to address this gap.

Additionally, the project has a unique opportunity to document and analyze lessons from both rural and urban settings, providing a valuable knowledge base for future interventions. Strengthening inclusion strategies for marginalized groups, especially at the community level, would not only enhance the project's equity but also significantly improve its overall outcomes. Enhanced efforts in gender and disability inclusion, combined with a focus on learning and adaptability, can ensure the project delivers transformative and sustainable impacts.

The implementation of flood and drought risk management requires significant financial resources to address integrated watershed management within the Xe Bang Hieng River basin. The IWRM-EbA project will pilot examples of high-cost interventions, such as ring levees and irrigation infrastructure, within the financial scope of the GEF grant. The IWRM-EbA project will provide a means to estimate the cost of comprehensive, scalable solutions to replicate integrated flood and drought risk management to enhance resilience within all communities of the Xe Bang Hieng River basin. The IWRM-EbA project should demonstrate an integrated watershed management model, with clear evidence of success, that will attract additional funding and foster stakeholder confidence, to enhance the project's long-term sustainability and scalability

Long-term sustainability will depend on adaptive strategies that consider intensifying climate events, economic fluctuations, and evolving policy priorities. Success will require robust funding mechanisms, institutional commitment, and local ownership. Embedding climate adaptation within broader development plans, strengthening participatory approaches, and prioritizing gender-responsive and inclusive strategies will enhance the project's resilience, legitimacy, and impact.

4.1.2 Project Results Framework

The IWRM-EbA Project Results Framework (PRF) was reviewed against "SMART" criteria, to evaluate whether the indicators and targets were sufficiently *specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time bound* (**Table 2**). Considering the SMART criteria, the MTR determined the following:

Specific: While all outcomes included identified targets and indicators, some were not described with sufficient clarity to define a precise future condition.

Measurable: It is noted that quantitative indicators of material changes alone may not sufficiently capture sustainable progress toward desired outcomes. Effective indicators should measure progress in ways that align with and contribute to the Theory of Change. This often involves establishing baseline knowledge scores and comparing them with post-intervention scores to determine the percentage of improvement and the impact of the intervention.

Achievable: Achievability depends on factors like the quality and frequency of training, baseline capacity levels of officials, and institutional support for plan integration. Indicators related to capacity building may face challenges such as cultural barriers, varying literacy levels, or difficulties in accessing project sites. These factors can significantly impact the feasibility of achieving desired outcomes and must be proactively addressed to ensure success.

Relevant: The MTR concludes that the project is poised to make significant contributions to national development priorities. However, some targets and indicators may need to be realigned to better drive the desired changes and maximize impact.

Time-bound: The project's outcomes are clearly defined with specific targets set for both the mid-term and end of the project, enabling effective and measurable tracking of implementation progress. However, it is important to note that certain livelihood activities require a longer timeframe beyond the project's duration to fully assess their impact.

Table 2. SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound) review of Project Results Framework Indicators

Project Objective / Outcome Indicators	End of Project target	MTR Review					MTR Review Comments
		S	M	A	R	T	
Project Objective: Promote integrated management of sites in the Mekong River Basin for increased climate resilience of Savannakhet Province and Luang Prabang communities vulnerable to floods and droughts, which are expected to worsen under future scenarios							
Mandatory Indicator 1: (GEF Core Indicator #11): Number of direct project beneficiaries disaggregated by gender (individual people)	• 492,462 (75%of the population of the target districts in Savanakhet & target communities & target communities in Luang Prabang city	✓	✓	x	x	x	• The project's target of 492,462 direct beneficiaries is highly unrealistic, given the target villages in Savannakhet province and Luang Prabang City have a total population of only 28,288 people. This discrepancy highlights planning flaws and risks undermining the project's credibility. An evidence-based approach to beneficiary estimation is needed to ensure realistic and meaningful impact measurement. • MTR recommendation 11 directs the project to undertake activities that will lead to the collection of credible evidence that demonstrates the Integrated Climate-Resilient Flood Management Strategies developed by the project do result in direct benefits to entire population of target districts.
Mandatory Indicator 2: (GEF Core Indicator #4): Area of landscapes under climate-resilient management (ha)	• 100,000 ha under improved practices, including: sustainable grazing management; improved arable cropping practices (e.g. reduced chemical use); community-based natural resource management; etc.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	

Project Objective / Outcome Indicators	End of Project target	MTR Review					MTR Review Comments
		S	M	A	R	T	
Project Component 1: Developing national and provincial capacities for Integrated Catchment Management (ICM) and integrated urban Ecosystem-based Adaptation (EbA) for climate risk reduction							
Outcome1. Developing national and provincial capacities for Integrated Catchment Management (ICM) and integrated urban Ecosystem-based Adaptation (EbA) for climate risk reduction							
Indicator 3: Increased score on UNDP-GEF Capacity Development Scorecard for government officials who attended trainings	• All 5 target districts and Luang Prabang city integrating fine-scale climate-resilience development and land use plans	✓	✓	x	x	✓	• Achievability depends on factors like the quality and frequency of training, baseline capacity levels of officials, and institutional support for plan integration. • With adequate resources and tailored capacity-building efforts, this target will be realistic.
Indicator 4: Level of use of fine-scale climate-resilient development and land use plans in target intervention sites	• ~10,000 ha conserved in protected areas and • ~500 ha of degraded ecosystems restored	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Project Component 2 Ecosystem-based Adaptation (EbA) interventions, with supporting protective infrastructure and livelihood enhancement							
Outcome 2. Reduced flood risk through headwater conservation, restoration and protective infrastructure, supported by climate-resilient and alternative livelihoods.							
Indicator 5: Area (ha) of land restored and conserved through Ecosystem-based Adaptation interventions	• ~ 10,000 ha conserved in protected areas and • ~500 ha of degraded ecosystems restored	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Indicator 6: CCAs under implementation supporting alternative climate-resilient livelihoods	• 5 CCAs under implementation in target communities	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	• The indicator lacks an explicit timeframe in its current formulation

Project Objective / Outcome Indicators	End of Project target	MTR Review					MTR Review Comments
		S	M	A	R	T	
Project Component 3 Knowledge management and Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)							
Outcome 3. Effective knowledge management and M&E through awareness/advocacy and monitoring of climate change impacts and adaptation opportunities in target rural and urban communities.							
Indicator 7: Level of knowledge and awareness on integrated catchment management and extreme climate events of men and women living in the project intervention sites	• At least a 50% improvement in knowledge score of men and women	✓	x	x	x	✓	• A need to specify how knowledge will be measured (e.g., surveys, tests, focus groups) and the scale used for scoring. • Measuring requires a baseline knowledge score and post-intervention scores to assess the percentage of improvement. • Foreseen challenges such as cultural barriers, literacy levels, or accessibility of project sites may affect achievability and need to be addressed
Indicator 8: Number of communities operating and maintaining water resource and ecological monitoring systems.	• 15 communities from target villages in Savannakhet Province trained	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	• The 15 communities could be measured, it could be more realistic to set target of number of individuals in the 15 target communities.

4.2 Progress Towards Results

4.2.1 Progress towards outcomes analysis

The MTR assessed the PRF of the project, highlighting progress, challenges, and the alignment of activities with intended outcomes (see **Annex 3**). The analysis indicates a mixed level of achievement across objectives and indicators, with some areas demonstrating strong progress and others requiring attention to address gaps and ensure sustainability. The MTR review PRF indicators assessed progress towards mid-term and end of project targets for each of IWRM-EbA project's 8 indicators to determine the likelihood of achieving end of project targets (see **Annex 3** for a complete assessment of each indicator). The results for the PRF indicators are as follows:

End of project target achieved	**3**
Partially achieved, on target to achieve end of project target	**4**
At high risk of not achieving end of project target	**1**

The MTR found that the project has made considerable strides in certain areas, such as ecosystem restoration and stakeholder engagement. However, misaligned targets, incomplete capacity-building efforts, and operational delays in several components highlight areas requiring immediate attention. Strengthening monitoring mechanisms to track the application of project outputs and co-financing at the local level, aligning beneficiary estimation methods, and accelerating training and implementation processes will be critical for achieving end-of-project goals.

The MTR observed that indicator No. 1 targeting direct project beneficiaries appears misaligned with the actual population of the 18 project villages identified as "direct beneficiaries." The methodology for estimating beneficiaries lacks a robust, evidence-based approach, compromising the ability to generate realistic and meaningful impact measurements. This oversight risks inflating or misrepresenting project outcomes, undermining the credibility of the reported figures. Critically, there is no systematic follow-up mechanism to document how local authorities utilize project outputs, such as the Integrated ICFMS, for policy development. This gap severely limits the project's capacity to demonstrate broader population-wide benefits or influence sustainable policy impacts. To address this, the project should establish a robust tracking system that monitors the practical application of outputs and evaluates their long-term impact on target communities.

While reaching 9,632 people through water infrastructure and training 200 government staff is commendable, these achievements fall short of the ambitious end-of-project target. Progress in some areas, such as initiating land-use planning and surveys across target districts, is notable. However, achieving the goal of 200,000 hectares under sustainable management will require more decisive action, including stronger evidence of implemented practices and their impact on resilience and livelihoods. Furthermore, while 157 officials have been trained, the incomplete nature of capacity-building efforts, particularly in ICM and land use planning, highlights ongoing gaps. Accelerated implementation of comprehensive training programs and targeted support to address these gaps are essential to ensure meaningful and sustainable capacity development.

The project has completed preparatory work for integrating fine-scale plans but faces challenges in translating these efforts into district-level implementation. Significant progress has been made in ecosystem restoration, with 62 hectares restored and surveys identifying over

10,000 hectares for further conservation. The development of five CCAs is a notable milestone, but delays in formalizing agreements and addressing operational challenges at the village level hinder full implementation. Strong engagement through consultations, awareness campaigns, and baseline surveys has laid a foundation for meeting knowledge improvement targets. However, the time spent working with communities is relatively short raising concerns over community ownership and the sustainability of some project outputs including awareness of links between human land use practices and flooding/drought and IWRM-EbA practices, implementation of CCA and community-based monitoring. Although progress in procurement and system design is promising, the lack of community-level training at midterm review reflects a need for greater urgency in implementation.

The MTR noted a significant risk of double counting between Outcome 1 and Outcome 3, which could compromise the accuracy of project reporting and impact evaluation. To address this issue, the project must urgently establish a methodology for tracking capacity-building beneficiaries. This could include implementing a coding system or unique identifier to ensure clarity and prevent overlap in data collection and reporting processes.

The MTR highlights commendable progress in areas like ecosystem restoration and stakeholder engagement while identifying key challenges, including misaligned targets, capacity-building gaps, and implementation delays that jeopardize sustainability. Though the logical framework is sound, adaptive management is critical to aligning activities with transformative outcomes and national priorities. Strengthening monitoring systems, refining measurement of direct and indirect beneficiaries, and accelerating capacity-building and district-level integration will be essential to achieving resilience, sustainable resource management, and improved livelihoods. A focused, outcome-driven approach is vital for realizing the project's ambitious goals.

The assessment of project indicators (**Annex 3**) has been used to provide a narrative summary of MTR ratings for progress towards the achievement of the Project Objective and Outcomes 1 to 4 (**Table 3**). The results of findings presented in **Sections 4.3** and **4.4** are used to provide a narrative MTR rating for Project Implementation & Adaptive Management and Sustainability (**Table 3**).

Table 3. MTR Ratings and Achievement Summary Table for the IWRM-EbA project

Measure	MTR Rating*	Achievement Description
Project Strategy	N/A	• The project strategy outlined in the Project Document remains relevant, with objectives continuing to align well with government and donors' programs, priorities, and plans. • The project strategy aligns with national, regional, and international policies and frameworks. • The project includes a scientific and technical approach to IWRM EbA and efforts should be made to ensure this approach is embedded in the government's implementation framework. • The IWRM-EbA project has identified watershed management needs that are beyond the financial capacity of the GEF grant. • Awareness creation and capacity building should remain the project's primary focus, serving as a guiding principle for all project activities and requiring ongoing monitoring and maintenance.

Measure	MTR Rating*	Achievement Description
Progress Towards Results	**Objective** Achievement Rating: ***4*** ***MS***	• The project has made strides in enhancing sustainable land and water management in the target areas, despite challenges in aligning its total direct beneficiaries with the total population of the 18 project villages. • The project has advanced sustainable land and water management by constructing 16 groundwater wells with solar pumps, benefiting 9,632 people (54% of the target population), and training 200 officials in IWRM, GIS, finance, and land use planning. • Efforts align with GEF guidelines to enhance resilience for 27,000 people across five districts and sustainably manage 775,300 hectares, with 200,000 hectares targeted for climate-resilient practices by 2024. • Surveys in six villages are underway to establish Water and Conservation Zones, supporting ecosystem protection and agriculture. • There is a need to improve the measurement of direct and indirect project beneficiaries. • Follow-up training and capacity development will enhance the project's ability to demonstrate its full impact.
	Outcome 1 Achievement Rating: ***3*** ***MS***	• The project has made significant progress in building capacity for sustainable water resource and land use management. A total of 157 officials received training in WRM, IWRM, and GIS, with 71 completing knowledge surveys. Additionally, 43 officials participated in specialized sessions on flood and drought risk mapping, enhancing their ability to address extreme weather challenges. GIS training focused on map creation, spatial analysis, and project planning, supporting data-driven decision-making. • Progress includes detailed topographic surveys for target villages and Luang Prabang city, providing critical data for climate-resilient planning. By 2024, further training in ICM, CCA, land use planning, and climate strategies will strengthen participants' skills. • Efforts are underway to integrate fine-scale climate-resilience and land use plans across five districts and Luang Prabang city, with stakeholder consultations ensuring alignment with local needs. • Additionally, 30 officials (26 men, 4 women) completed land use planning training, positioning them to implement resilient strategies at district and village levels

Measure	MTR Rating*	Achievement Description
	Outcome 2 Achievement Rating: ***2*** ***S***	• The project has made notable progress in land restoration and conservation, including developing work plans for five target districts and conducting surveys to identify over 10,000 hectares of degraded areas for assisted natural regeneration. • EbA initiatives, such as planting 5,100 trees to restore 62 hectares, demonstrate tangible impacts. Consultations for CCAs in five key villages have advanced to the final signature stages, ensuring alignment with local needs and enhancing climate resilience. • Additionally, surveys in six villages aim to establish Water and Conservation Zones, further supporting sustainable land management. However, challenges remain, including unclear implementation of village priorities, incomplete SESP for boreholes, and inadequate drainage management at water stations
	Outcome 3 Achievement Rating: ***3*** ***MS***	• The project's robust progress in establishing foundational systems and fostering community engagement. Baseline surveys involving 50 participants per village provide critical data for measuring the targeted 50% knowledge improvement. • The development of a GAP Detailed Activity Implementation Plan ensures gender-balanced participation in training activities. Procurement of a consultancy to design and implement community-based monitoring systems is a key milestone, with plans to train 15 target villages in sustainable resource management. • Additionally, the creation of a centralized knowledge-sharing platform and targeted communications materials strengthens educational outreach, while community engagement in World Water Day and Environmental Day celebrations further promotes awareness and participation in conservation efforts.
Project Implementation & Adaptive Management	Achievement Rating: ***3*** ***MS***	• The MTR team's overall rating of project implementation and adaptive management is "Moderately Satisfactory" (MS). • There was a slow start creating effective project management arrangements; however, these are now largely resolved. • Work planning has progressed well in 2024 and with contracts in place to conduct activities in 2025 work planning is satisfactory. • Financial management, project monitoring and evaluation, stakeholder engagement and reporting are effective. • Communication among implementing partners is good, the project should provide more effective communication with beneficiaries. • The MTR has made seven recommendations to enhance project implementation and adaptation.

Measure	MTR Rating*	Achievement Description
Sustainability	Achievement Rating: ***L***	• The MTR has determined the overall rating of sustainability to key outcomes is "Likely". • The assessment is based on the support demonstrated by key government stakeholders and their enhanced capacity through participation in the IWRM-EbA project, the institutional frameworks of ICFMS and CCA established and the motivated participation of villages in the mitigation of flood and drought risks.

* Highly Satisfactory (HS), Satisfactory (S), Moderately Satisfactory (MS), Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU), Unsatisfactory (U), Highly Unsatisfactory (HU). Likely (L), Moderately Likely (ML), Moderately Unlikely (MU), Unlikely (U) (For a more complete description of the ratings used see **Annex 4**)

4.2.2 Remaining barriers to achieving the project objective

Delays due to staffing and procurement encountered in the first year (2023) of the IWRM-EbA project were largely resolved at the beginning of the second year (2024). In the second year there has been good progress engaging government partners and consultants to complete the foundational tasks of flood and drought risk mapping and optioneering with communities which inform on the ground activities to be undertaken in 15 target villages in Savannakhet Province and Luang Prabang City.

On the ground activities have commenced with water supply system improvements and government partners and consultants are beginning to implement land use planning, Community Conservation Area (CCA) identification, climate smart agriculture and tree planting. Engineering work is proceeding on the infrastructure work associated with ring levees and flood shelters.

There are no significant barriers to achieving the project objective. Nonetheless, the MTR notes the importance of community engagement and ongoing awareness raising and capacity development to ensure the sustainability of project outcomes. As a GEN2 project The MTR recommends the IWRM-EbA project go beyond encouraging women's participation and collecting gender disaggregated data and develop women-only targeted activities to boost women's participation.

MTR Recommendation The PMU in consultation with implementation partners should develop IWRM-EbA activities that are "women-only" targeted to improve the achievement of women's equality and to support women's empowerment and leadership skills. These activities may include:

- leadership training;
- women only tree planting teams; and
- women targeted income generating activities

4.3 Project Implementation and Adaptive Management

4.3.1 Management Arrangements

GEF Partner Agency Execution

The management arrangements have included significant support from the GEF partner agency the UNDP Country Office (UNDP CO) Lao PDR. The UNDP CO support has included recruitment and direct salary payment of most of the Project Management Unit (PMU) staff, including the Project Coordinator (PC), Finance Officer, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) specialist, Chief Technical Advisor (CTA), Stakeholder Engagement and Gender specialist, Social and Environmental Safeguards specialist. The PMU Project Manager (PM) is not hired by the project as they are a full-time staff member of the DWR.

The MTR noted that the PMU structure includes a PM who is a full-time government employee within the Implementing Partner (IP) organization supported by a PC hired by the project is an effective management structure that develops capacity (project management and technical skills) within the government IP that will contribute to sustainable implementation of IWRM-EbA when the project is closed. The relationship between the PM and PC is further enhanced by the fact they are both native Lao speakers familiar with the social, environmental, economic and institutional setting of the project. The PMU structure relies on the PC to manage the day-to-day project implementation activities and as the PMU is located within DWR offices, the PM and PC can consult on issues that arise as necessary and appropriate, so the PM is fully engaged in project implementation and adaptive management.

Lessons Learned

A Project Management Unit (PMU) structure that includes a Project Manager (PM) who is a full-time government employee within the Implementing Partner (IP) organization and a full-time Project Coordinator (PC) is an effective PMU management structure that develops project management and technical skills capacity within the government IP that can contribute to the continued sustainable implementation of IWRM-EbA activities by government after project financial and technical ends at project closure. To be effective this PMU structure should:

- Embed the PMU in IP government offices with easy access to the PM;
- Engage a national PC to facilitate good communication with the PM;
- Establish the PC as responsible for day-to-day project management tasks; and
- Establish the PM as responsible for broad oversight of all project activities.

In many GEF/UNDP projects a PM is hired by the project and the project management and technical capacity skills developed over the course of project implementation are often poorly transferred to the government IP staff upon project closure, thereby making sustainable scaling up and replication by government more challenging when GEF/UNDP financial and technical support ends.

The MTR team noted the IWRM-EbA project had a highly qualified full-time CTA up to August 2024. A temporary, half-time CTA has been filling the position, the post was re-advertised, and a candidate has been selected. As the CTA has been maintained as a six-month contract, the MTR recommends in future longer term, one year or more, contracts may preclude the loss of CTA staff which make an important contribution to successful project implementation.

The MTR team also notes the hiring of a MEL specialist, Stakeholder Engagement and Gender specialist, and Social and Environmental Safeguards specialist has faced challenges, particularly in terms of recruiting qualified staff. The MEL specialist, for example, required an international recruitment. The latter positions have only recently been filled, which is now the half-way point of the four-year project. Given the short duration of the IWRM-EbA project the establishment of a fully functioning PMU in the first year would have supported a more effective achievement of project results.

The initiation of GEF UNDP projects involves important steps that establish a foundation for successful and sustainable project implementation. The IWRM-EbA project was slow to fill some important PMU staff positions that support project startup activities (see **Table 4**).

Table 4. Ghant chart illustrating when PMU staff positions were filled up to the time of the MTR.

PMU Staff Positions	2022		2023												2024											
	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Project Manager	Project Start November 22, 2022																									
Project Coordinator																										
Technical Specialist																										
Finance & Administration Officer																										
Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning and Reporting Specialist																										
Project Assistant																										
Stakeholder Engagement and Gender Specialist (Part time)																										
Safeguards Officer (Part time)																										
Knowledge Management Hub and Database Specialist																										
Project Field Coordinator (Savannakhet)																										
Project Finance and Admin Assistant (Savannakhet)																										

In terms of lessons learned, early engagement in the project cycle of the following PMU staff supports the following activities of the IWRM-EbA project:

- A MEL specialist is required to establish baselines and initiate monitoring to measure project progress and provide feedback for adaptive management. The MTR team determined data was not available to definitively assess the achievement of SRF Indicator mid-term targets and based on the available data most mid-term targets had not been achieved.
- A SESP specialist is required to assess the potential social and environmental impact of project activities in target villages. For example, the construction of boreholes.
- A Stakeholder Engagement and Gender specialist engaged at project startup supports stakeholder and community engagement activities that ensure good communication, build trust and establish the foundation to enhance implementation of sustainable project activities. With a GAP in place from the ProDoc, issues of gender equality, GAP M&E, and the development of gender and social inclusion targeted activities are addressed.

Lessons Learned

Early engagement in the project cycle of PMU staff for Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL), Stakeholder Engagement and Gender, Social and Environmental Safeguards supports the following activities of an IWRM-EbA project:

- A MEL specialist is required to establish baselines and initiate monitoring to measure project progress and provide feedback for adaptive management. The MTR team determined data was not available to definitively assess achievement of SRF Indicator mid-term targets and based on the available data most mid-term targets had not been achieved.
- A SESP specialist is required to assess the potential social and environmental impacts of project activities in target villages. For example, the construction of boreholes.
- A Stakeholder Engagement and Gender specialist engaged at project startup supports stakeholder and community engagement activities that ensure good communication, build trust and establish the foundation to enhance implementation of sustainable project activities. With a GAP in place from the ProDoc issues of gender equality, GAP M&E, and the development of gender and social inclusion targeted activities are addressed.

The UNDP CO has prepared ten Back to Office Reports (BTOR) and one Project Implementation Report (PIR). BTOR reports are well organized, provide gender disaggregated data, good documentation of field mission activities with photos documentation attached, and key follow-actions to be implemented. The PIR dated 2024 covering the period from project startup (November 23rd, 2022) to June 30th, 2024, is well written and comprehensive with all PIR sections fully completed.

The PIR rated the IWRM-EbA implementation performance as *moderately unsatisfactory* due to the project's slow start in project initiation, that was due to slow mobilization of a fully functioning PMU which is needed to coordinate and engage government partners and assist in the coordination of the procurement process for international and national consultants undertaking a succession of project implementation tasks. For the IWRM-EbA project the tasks included: (1) flood and drought risk mapping (*Technical Support for modelling and development of risk maps in Lao PDR* prepared by Antea Group February 2024) which provided a foundation for; (2) the identification of options for flood and drought risk reduction (*Optioneering Report for flood and drought risk reduction in Xe Bang Hieng River Basin* prepared by Alluvium June 2024). Both tasks required considerable assistance from UNDP CO in the recruitment of international consulting companies working with support from national consulting companies.

With these two critical project tasks completed, the IWRM-EbA project has now proceeded to work in communities to implement some of the risk reduction and mitigation activities identified in the Optioneering Report. The PIR reported there have been delays in the compliance assessments of the SES for the construction of the community groundwater wells due to the staff vacancy of the Safeguards Officer in the PMU. The UNDP CO Vertical Fund safeguards team has been assisting the IWRM-EbA project, ensuring close consultations with the communities were conducted to ensure the required site-specific assessments are undertaken and documented. With a part-time Safeguards Officer now in place the implementation of upcoming community activities such as ring levee construction and storage pond rehabilitation will have the benefit of a dedicated PMU staff person.

The PIR reported the project's Quantum Risk Register is being updated through oversight by the project's UNDP Regional Technical Advisor (RTA), the UNDP CO, and the PMU. The Vertical Fund's Risk Dashboard shows no risks currently (PIR 2024).

Executing Agency/Implementing Partner Execution

The IWRM-EbA project is a Nationally Implemented Project (NIM) with the MONRE DWR as the government Executing Agency (EA). The IWRM-EbA PMU is situated in the offices of DWR and the PM is full-time DWR staff (Head of Basin Development and Planning Division, DWR).

The EA is demonstrating ownership of the IWRM-EbA project by providing good support to the project, including coordination with strategic government partners PONRE, Provincial Agriculture and Forest Office (PAFO), DONRE and DAFO staff engaged in implementing project activities with staff directly participating in village awareness raising, oversite of borehole design specifications and construction, climate resilient agriculture, and tree planting.

During the field mission to visit project sites the MTR team noted DONRE and DAFO showed strong commitment to the IWRM-EbA project with focal persons appointed, their engagement in project activities and participation in the MTR team's visits to project villages. The project was acknowledged as a most welcome opportunity for District level government offices to actively participate in IWRM-EbA activities. While co-financing from MONRE, PONRE, DONRE and DAFO is not tracked, it is apparent these government partners are making important in-kind and direct contributions that are essential to successful and sustainable implementation of IWRM-EbA activities. Furthermore, these same government partners carry the responsibility of replication, scaling-up and ongoing support of IWRM-EbA both with the project villages and within the many other villages in Lao PDR that face similar flood and drought impacts.

The Stakeholder Engagement and Gender Specialist role involves a significant workload that warrants a full-time position. The ProDoc identified 40 weeks for a Gender Officer, the current Stakeholder Engagement and Gender Specialist is on a part-time contract. Given the critical role of stakeholder engagement and the GEN2 marker of the IWRM-EbA project where gender equality is a significant objective it is recommended the Engagement and Gender Specialist contract be reviewed to ensure sufficient time is allocated to complete the tasks required.

> **MTR Recommendation** The PMU together with UNDP are recommended to review the contract for the Engagement and Gender Specialist to ensure sufficient time is allocated to complete the tasks required.

The PMU had prepared three semi-annual Project Progress Reports (PPR) to June 2024, and one Quarter 3 2024 update to provide additional information for the MTR. The PPR are well written and comprehensive, providing a balanced assessment of project progress, clear identification of project issues and risks and meaningful strategies, including adaptative management, to address issues and risks. For example, the first Progress Report acknowledged the large scope of community-based activities to be undertaken by the project and stated *a dedicated Community Engagement and Gender Specialist is warranted*.

The IP PPR includes an analysis of risk management that reports on risks identified during the reporting period providing risk category, a risk description, rating, critical mitigation measures undertaken during the reporting period and the responsible party. The PPR also includes a section outlining minor amendments, documenting the PMU's adaptive management of project implementation.

The PMU completed a social and environmental screening template for each of the villages where boreholes were to be installed. The survey was conducted in target villages to establish 16 boreholes, drill Badan water wells, construct water tank systems, and install solar-powered water pumps in the seven villages of five project districts in Savannakhet province. The checklist noted for some villages the need to protect the borehole facilities to be constructed and that the boreholes were being constructed on land that would not affect others. The screening did not identify any other social or environmental issues. In addition to the survey, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed by the DWR, PONRE, DONRE, the construction company, and the village heads. The MoU included landowners' consent, documented through their fingerprints, to proceed with the borehole establishment in each village

The MTR team noted during the field mission that water runoff from a borehole water station was not well managed, with excess water running over the surface and pooling to form muddy stagnant water areas in the village. This environmental impact oversite can be corrected on existing and future borehole water stations through the inclusion of a water drainage catchment feature such as a "French drain".

> **MTR Recommendation** The PMU working with implementing contractors must ensure borehole water stations include appropriate water drainage catchment for excess water. This includes retrofitting boreholes that have already been installed and ensuring all new boreholes include water runoff catchment as part of the construction design.

The ProDoc SESP identified risks, ten of *moderate* significance and two of *substantial* significance. The MTR team considers the SESP risks identified to be well researched with comprehensive assessment and appropriate management responses identified. The risks cover social issues of marginalized groups, women, children, customary land rights and access to resources and environmental issues related to flood mitigation construction activities, impacts to important natural features and functions such as Ramsar wetlands, and assurance activities are resilient to a changing climate. In response to the SESP, the ProDoc prepared an Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF) which the PPR 1 and 2 state "no progress made" and PPR 3 states "*A Project Safeguards Specialist is currently under recruitment and will start in Q3 2024*". The PMU is currently finalizing the procurement process to complete a full update of the ProDoc SESP risk assessment.

The IWRM-EbA project includes substantial engagement of communities, some of which has already taken place as part of awareness raising and the flood and drought optioneering. Implementation of the ESMF should be part of all community engagement activities support by appropriate PMU staff. As noted in the lessons learned above, the MTR has identified the need for early engagement in the project cycle of a Stakeholder Engagement and Gender specialist and a Social and Environmental Safeguards specialist.

The survey team utilized a project-developed checklist to identify potential environmental and social risks. This checklist was instrumental in addressing questions 2-6 of the risk assessment form, ensuring all items were thoroughly evaluated. The inspection process aimed to (1) identify potential risks, (2) determine the overall risk classification of the project, and (3) establish necessary control measures and management strategies. Additional guidance on completing the checklist was provided through district-specific packages.

The findings revealed no concerns raised by the community. Most villages expressed no

grievances or objections from potentially affected stakeholders, and they supported the engagement of security personnel to protect facilities and property or to support project activities.

4.3.2 Work planning

The IWRM-EbA project reported having a slow start due to challenges mobilizing a fully functioning PMU needed to coordinate and engage government partners and assist in the coordination of the procurement process for international and national consultants. PMU staffing shown in **Table 4** illustrates there was limited PMU staffing after one year and full PMU staffing after two years. An ambitious AWP approved for 2023 ($1,497,069) and limited PMU staff resulted in a limited number of activities being completed as the PMU focused on procuring the international and national consultants required to undertake project activities.

The initiation of the IWRM-EbA project required the completion of complex technical activities, such as flood and drought risk mapping and optioneering of flood and drought mitigation strategies which formed the foundation for the work to be undertaken in target communities. The technical tasks required the engagement of suitably qualified consultants, which are generally larger international consulting companies. The procurement process for large technical undertakings requires careful development of terms of reference and a comprehensive selection and hiring process before the actual technical work can begin and funds disbursed. It was unlikely the IWRM-EbA project could both complete project startup activities (PMU establishment, stakeholder engagement, inception workshop) and complete the activities outlined in the 2023 AWP.

With the ongoing establishment of the PMU in 2023 and 2024, and the procurement of several firms to undertake project activities, there has been considerable project progress in 2024. The project progress in 2024 is consistent with what is expected following an initial year of project startup.

Lessons Learned

The project cycle for UNDP/GEF projects should acknowledge the tasks and time required for project start-up in the first year. Completion of foundational tasks contribute to project success, including the sustainability of project outcomes. The first year AWP should limit the number of project activities to be completed (and their associated budgets) in recognition of the time required for project startup. Project startup includes:

- PMU establishment which requires:
  - Develop ToR for PMU staff (Project Manager, Technical Specialist, Finance Officer, M&E specialist, safeguards officer, GESI officer).
  - Establish salary range to ensure staff positions attract well qualified candidates.
  - Confirmation of funding/payment mechanisms for each position.
  - Advertise all positions to attract suitable candidates.
  - Establish hiring interview team.
  - Confirm office space within government IP offices and procure required furnishings.
  - Conduct training of PMU to meet UNDP / GEF financial/activity reporting requirements.
- Development of the first AWP.
- Formation of Project Board/Steering Committee and hosting of first meeting to approve the first AWP and budget.
- Establishment of an effective and efficient funding flow mechanism.
- Stakeholder engagement including hosting Inception Workshop.
- Development of terms of reference and undertaking of hiring processes for international and national consultants and/or firms required for the implementation or project activities.

The IWRM-EbA project implementation follows a results-based approach with AWP identifying activities and associated budgets which follows PRF project outputs. The PMU PPR provides follow up on implementation of the AWP using the PRF to provide detailed analysis of project progress on individual project activities and tasks.

4.3.3 Finance and co-finance

The ProDoc includes annexes with independent micro-assessment reports (audits) conducted for MONRE and DWR in August 2021. The summary risk assessment for MONRE was moderate with six recommendations provided based on the findings and the risk assessment was low for DWR with six recommendations provided based on findings. An independent spot check for DWR was conducted to cover the project period July to December 2023. The spot check outlined three findings with a risk level of medium. Recommendations for corrective actions were followed by DWR to mitigate the risk.

The PMU has a full time Finance & Administration Officer (contracted March 2023) and PMU PPR provides a detailed table of the financial status and utilization of the project budget. To support the implementation of project activities in Savannakhet Province a full time Project Finance and Admin Assistant was contracted in July 2024. Based on the financial audits, staffing and reporting, the IWRM-EbA project has strong financial management controls in place that assist the PMU and PEB in making informed budgetary decisions. Independent contractors relayed there was a timely flow of funds and satisfactory payment for deliverables.

The ProDoc provided a four-year budget for the IWRM-EbA project as shown in **Table 5**. The first AWP and budget was prepared for 2023 with approval on February 8th, 2023. The MTR has noted above in **Section 4.3.2** that the first year of many GEF/UNDP projects have over-ambitious work plans and budgets. Both the ProDoc and approved AWP budgets for 2023 (i.e., year one of the project) represent an amount that is difficult to disburse given the requirements of project startup. A more realistic budget would see limited spending in year one during project startup, larger amounts of spending in years two and three with a fully functioning PMU operating and stakeholders engaged, and potentially a reduction in spending in year four associated with project closure and reduction in project activities.

Table 5. IWRM-EbA planned project budgets and actual spending. (data from ProDoc, approved AWP, with actual spending provided by PMU)

Planned Budget and Actual Spending	Year 1 (2023)	Year 2 (2024)	Year 3 (2025)	Year 4 (2026)
ProDoc Budget	$1,401,518	$1,410,774	$1,356,955	$1,410,205
Approved AWP budgets	$1,497,069	$2,029,579		
Actual Spending	$1,043,786			

Lessons Learned

UNDP/GEF project budgets should develop realistic, multi-year budgets based on the normal project cycle that includes:

1. Startup in year one, requiring less budget as few project activities are implemented.
2. A main project activity implementation phase in years two and three (or more for longer project cycles), requiring more substantial annual budgets.
3. A final year of reduced project activities, requiring a moderate budget.

The PMU reported a cumulative disbursement of $1,930,778.66 as of July 31st, 2024, equivalent to 35% of the total project budget (**Table 6**). This will require the project to disburse the remaining 65% of the budget in the remaining 28 months of the four-year project period. Based on the current and proposed project activities for 2025 and the consultant contracts awarded it is likely the IWRM-EbA project will fully utilize the project budget prior to the date of project closure (November 2026).

Table 6. Assessment of IWRM-EbA project spending at time of MTR (figures in USD, data provided by PMU for project up to July 2024)

Activity	ProDoc Budget	Revised Budget	Project Spending at MTR	Project Spending (%)
Outcome 1	905,598.00	905,598.00	721,815.81	80%
Outcome 2	3,078,948.00	3,078,948.00	466,631.69	15%
Outcome 3	1,091,124.00	1,091,124.00	542,785.01	50%
Project Management	503,782.00	503,782.00	199,546.15	40%
Totals	**5,579,452.00**	**5,579,452.00**	**1,930,778.66**	**35%**

A substantial amount of co-financing ($28,534,852) was confirmed for the IWRM-EbA project at CEO endorsement (**Table 7**). The co-financing identified is associated with ongoing activities supporting IWRM-EbA related activities in Lao PDR, such as:

- United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) flood management in Savannakhet Province.
- Republic of Korea support to climate risk and water resource management to enhance community preparedness and Early Warning Systems (EWS).
- Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) community-led initiatives to conserve critical wetland biodiversity in four districts of Savannakhet Province.
- Department of Finance support to IWRM activities in the Xe Bang Hieng River Basin and Luang Prabang city such as upgrading hydrological and meteorological monitoring and sustainable irrigation and drainage.
- Department of Irrigation supports EbA in Luang Prabang city, including intensified agricultural development and associated value chains for improved nutrition.
- PONRE to support activities in the Xe Bang Hieng River Basin and Luang Prabang city for Climate-Friendly Agribusiness Value Chains Sector to improve commercial crop production.

The co-financing from UNDP TRAC funds provides direct support to the IWRM-EbA project PMU.

Table 7 documents co-financing received to July 2024 by the IWRM-EbA project. Most co-financing is achieving the expected amounts at the time of the MTR. The Department of Planning and Finance has achieved 100% of co-financing as the project supported in now complete. The Republic of Korea has achieved 241% of co-financing with KOICA providing substantial support to the upgrading of hydrometeorology stations in Savannakhet Province. WCS co-financing is ongoing, and the amount mobilized has not yet been documented.

Table 7. Assessment of IWRM-EbA co-financing at time of MTR (figures in USD, data provided by PMU for project up to July 2024)

Sources of Co-financing	Name of Co-financer	Type of Co-financing	Co-financing amount confirmed at CEO Endorsement	Actual Amount Contributed at stage of Midterm Review	Actual % of Expected Amount
UNDP TRAC	UNDP	Grant	250,000	89,518	36%
UNEP	GCF	In kind	864,000	423,600	49%
Department of Planning & Finance	Government of Lao PDR	Public Investment	13,030,740	13,030,740	100%
Department of Irrigation	Government of Lao PDR	Public Investment	5,258,716	1,820,000	35%
Provincial Department of Agriculture and Forestry, Savannakhet	Government of Lao PDR	Public Investment	5,773,000	3,107,225	54%
Republic of Korea	Republic of Korea	In kind	1,072,267	66,647	6%
KOICA	Republic of Korea	Grant	1,072,267	2,579,740	241%
WCS	EU	Grant	1,213,862	0	0
		TOTALS	**28,534,852**	**21,117,470**	**74%**

During the MTR mission it was noted the participating District governments are providing a significant, undocumented co-financing contribution to the IWRM-EbA project. The MTR team observed in-kind contributions of DONRE and DAFO staff participating in the MTR and direct contributions by supplying government vehicles for site visits. Provincial and District government staff knowledgeable of and with existing, trusted relationships with villages have participated in and made important contributions to community awareness raising activities and they will be involved in future project activities related to land use planning, tree planting, and climate smart agriculture. The strong reliance of the IWRM-EbA project on the in-kind and direct co-financing support of government partners is not currently being documented.

> **MTR Recommendation.** The PMU M&E Specialist working with the PMU Finance and Administration Officer should document the co-financing support by all levels of government providing in-kind and direct support.

4.3.4 Project-level monitoring and evaluation systems

The project design includes a comprehensive, costed Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) plan to monitor project progress at multiple levels, with the UNDP CO providing overall assurance for project implementation. The ProDoc meets GEF monitoring policy, as it includes GEF Core Indicators, a Project Results Framework (PRF) with indicators, baselines and targets (see **Annex 3** and ProDoc Annex 5) and a M&E plan that provides budgets, timelines and responsibilities. A Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning specialist was added to the PMU in August 2024 and an updated M&E Plan (August 2024) was prepared to guide MEL for the remaining project period. The MEL specialist supported the MTR team, including providing up to date financial and PRF data for analysis.

M&E includes Project Board meeting minutes, tour reports by PMU staff from field visits, PPR prepared by the PMU, PIR prepared by UNDP, as well as a mid-term review and terminal evaluation. The total cost for M&E identified in the ProDoc is USD $150,000, which is 3% of the GEF grant and within the cap for projects over $5M.

The IWRM-EbA project has the following measurement tools to both inform project activities and measure success. Updates for the tools were available at the time the MTR was conducted. The IWRM-EbA M&E tools include:

- Atlas Risk Register to track risks identified in the ProDoc.
- Least Developed Country Fund Core Indicators.
- Project Results Framework Indicators for Objective and Outcomes.
- Gender Action Plan (GAP) with gender balanced targets identified for project activities.

At the national level the Project Board was constituted shortly after project commencement, with the first meeting held on January 27th, 2023, with 28 participants (6 women). The Project Board is intended to provide quality assurance and accountability through regular project monitoring and evaluation. The Project Board has so far met once each year, given the short time remaining in the project and the many activities yet to be completed, the MTR recommends the Project Board meet twice each year in 2025 and 2026 to ensure the project remains on track.

> **MTR Recommendation.** UNDP and MONRE should request the IWRM-EbA Project Board hold meetings twice each year in 2025 and 2026 to provide regular monitoring and evaluation of project progress and guidance to ensure the timely completion of all project activities.

The PMU has prepared and submitted three semi-annual PPR to UNDP. The PPR follows the required formats to provide regular updates on project progress. The quality of report writing is good and the assessment of risks accurate. The PPR assessed progress for project activities and indicators, but did not provide an assessment as to “on-track” or “off-track” that could be used to identify the need for corrective actions.

> **MTR Recommendation.** The IWRM-EbA Project Progress Reports (PPR) prepared by the PMU should provide an assessment of tasks/activities that includes both (1) identification of their status in terms of “on-track” or “off-track” and (2) clear, implementable recommendations identifying the responsible stakeholder and timing for corrective actions that will ensure the completion of activities before project closure.

The MTR team were provided one PIR, dated 2024 outlining cumulative project progress to June 30th, 2024. The quality of report writing and assessment of risks were accurate. The assessment of cumulative progress for indicators provided data that could be used to assess progress towards mid-term and end of project targets. The PIR’s overall ratings were:

- ***Moderately Satisfactory*** for progress towards the project’s development objective.
- ***Moderately Unsatisfactory*** for the Implementing Partner performance.
- ***Low*** overall risk rating.

The MTR team considers PIR assessment accurate, however the MTR will provide ratings based on the continued improved performance of the project in 2024 with consideration of contractors in place to implement activities in 2025.

Based on the financial data provided to the MTR team in PPR and PIR, data on spending specific to M&E activities is not available. It is recommended the IWRM-EbA project track the M&E budget as defined in the ProDoc to allow an assessment of the validity of the original budget defined for M&E.

> **MTR Recommendation** To ensure effective and efficient use of the IWRM-EbA Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) budget, it is recommended the PMU M&E Specialist work with the PMU Finance and Administration Officer to track, assess and report on M&E activity budgets as defined in the ProDoc. Variation from the original budget should be noted and justified.

4.3.5 Stakeholder engagement

The IWRM-EbA project is utilizing the IP MONRE DWR to develop the required partnerships with other levels of government (Provincial and District), that have the skills, knowledge and experience to work the communities in target villages. PONRE is assisting with land use planning and DONRE and DAFO are working with community agriculture, irrigation and forestry. The PMU is also working with DMH in MONRE to access hydrological monitoring data and the DCCM in MONRE on the development of knowledge management and community-based ecological monitoring systems.

The PMU working with UNDP procurement engaged international firms to conduct technical studies in collaboration with national consulting firms. Community facilitation is being led by national consulting firms that are familiar with the local social, economic, cultural and governance conditions.

The national, provincial, district and village government stakeholders interviewed by the MTR team all demonstrated strong support for the IWRM-EbA project as demonstrated by the commitment of their resources to implement project activities. Government stakeholders are active participants in the identification of flooding and drought issues and the optioneering exercise to find solutions. PONRE, DONRE, and DAFO are playing a key role implementing activities directed at increasing community resilience to flooding and drought.

The villages that were visited during the MTR mission face significant challenges related to flooding and drought with severe flooding impacts on community infrastructure and agriculture and increasingly unpredictable and severe droughts creating water and food insecurity. The project communities have therefore a strong vested interest in the IWRM-EbA project. As noted in **Section 4.1.1** working with communities the IWRM-EbA project has identified flood and drought management needs that go beyond the capacity of the project budget. For example, communities identified the need to upgrade irrigation infrastructure, including storage ponds and irrigation canals. The IWRM-EbA project is proposing to improve storage ponds, but, is not planning to restore or upgrade irrigation infrastructure.

4.3.6 Reporting

The UNDP CO has prepared ten Back to Office Reports (BTOR) and one Project Implementation Report (PIR). BTOR reports are well organized, provide gender disaggregated data, good documentation of field mission activities with photos documentation attached, and key follow-actions to be implemented. The PIR dated 2024 covering the period from project startup (November 23rd, 2022) to June 30th, 2024, is well written and comprehensive with all PIR sections fully completed.

As noted in **Section 4.3.4** the PMU has prepared three PPR of good quality, in the required formats with an accurate assessment of risks to provide regular updates on project progress. The UNDP CO has prepared one PIR providing a well written, comprehensive assessment with all sections completed documenting project progress, risks and adaptive management strategies to June 30th, 2024.

The challenges and solutions outlined in PPR have been conveyed to UNDP and the Project Board supporting close cooperation and mutually agreed upon actions to overcome challenges. Of note was slow project progress due to delays in PMU staff recruitment and the procurement of contractors to implement project activities. Regular project progress meetings held between UNDP and DWR facilitated accelerated approvals for these. Project Board minutes also show the challenges identified in PPR were raised and discussed at meetings with the Project Board providing suggestions and support to address challenges to facilitate project progress.

The project PPR and PIR do not include documentation of lessons learned. The PIR states:

> *The project is developing a dedicated project website that serves as a platform for capturing and disseminating best practices and lessons learned throughout the project lifecycle. It includes a variety of resources such as case studies, success stories, training materials, and technical reports, all aimed at facilitating knowledge sharing among stakeholders.*

The weblink provided in the PIR (http://dwr.thedigitalswan.net/en) is not currently working.

The IWRM-EbA project is planning to host an IWRM-EbA symposium in December 2024 with project stakeholders. The symposium will facilitate communication among flood and drought risk practitioners with a focus on sharing the best practices and lessons learned.

4.3.7 Communications

Upon project startup (November 23rd, 2022) the IWRM-EbA project quickly organized an Inception Workshop (December 14th, 2022) to introduce the project and provide stakeholders with an understanding of project's goal, objectives and expected outcomes as well as roles and responsibilities of all involved parties. This was followed by a Project Board meeting on January 27th, 2023, to share and approve the first AWP (2023). PPR prepared by the PMU provides good documentation of ongoing communication among stakeholders and beneficiaries.

To support IWRM-EbA project implementation the PMU maintains good communication among key stakeholders with monthly meetings of DWR, PMU and UNDP to review project progress, implementation of activities and any challenges. Project consultants engaged to implement project activities reported good, regular communication with the PMU to review progress and discuss and resolve implementation challenges.

Project Board meetings held once each year receive comprehensive feedback from DWR and the PMU for effective decision making. In **Section 4.3.4** the MTR recommends the Project Board meet twice each year for the remaining two years to ensure the many tasks remaining are kept on track to ensure completion prior to project closure.

During the field mission the MTR team noted community members in target villages had participated in project sensitization and the identification of flood and drought risks and mitigation options. Community members demonstrated some understanding of the links between land use practices, climate change and the risks of flooding and drought impacting communities. One community recognized the need to halt infilling of "water lands" (wetlands, seasonally flooded areas) that continues to take place. Target community members had a weak understanding of which the flood and drought mitigation options would be supported and were planned for implementation in their respective villages. As the IWRM-EbA project develops plans for the implementation of activities in 2025, these plans should be communicated to participating communities.

1. **MTR Recommendation.** The PMU working with the implementing partners should provide effective, timely communication with all project villages in Luang Prabang and Savannakhet regarding:
   - project next steps, activities to be implemented, clearly identifying what, when, how, and who; and
   - further discussion of community priorities in the context of IWRM-EbA and why some of the priorities directly related to the project cannot be funded.

The IWRM-EbA project is developing a dedicated project website that serves as a platform for capturing and disseminating best practices and lessons learned throughout the project lifecycle. It is intended to include a variety of resources such as case studies, success stories, training materials, and technical reports, aimed at facilitating knowledge sharing among stakeholders. The IWRM-EbA project website (link: https://laoiwrm-eba.com/en) is currently under development and contains much information irrelevant to the project which may be misleading for persons visiting the website.

MTR Recommendation. The PMU working with the contract staff managing the project website should remove all irrelevant information from the project website (link: https://laoiwrm-eba.com/en) and populate website pages with information specific to the IWRM-EbA project. As new information becomes available the project website should be continuously updated.

Overall Rating of Project Implementation and Adaptive Management

The MTR team's overall rating of project implementation and adaptive management is "***Moderately Satisfactory***" (***MS***). There was a slow start in the creating effective project management arrangements, however these are now largely resolved. Work planning has progressed well in 2024 and with contracts in place to conduct activities in 2025 work planning is satisfactory. Financial management, project monitoring and evaluation, stakeholder engagement and reporting are effective. Communication among implementing partners is good, the project should provide more effective communication with beneficiaries. The MTR has made seven recommendations to enhance project implementation and adaptation.

4.4 Sustainability

The ProDoc includes a risk register (ProDoc Annex 7) that identified 11 low to moderates risks in categories of operational (5), organizational (3), strategic (1), and environmental (2). The Risk Register ratings dated November 7th, 2024, remained unchanged from the ProDoc. The MTR assessment of risks concluded that the risks are valid, and the risk treatment measures relevant to project implementation. The PMU is encouraged to review and document the implementation of risk treatment measures of all risks, particularly those risks contributing to the sustainability of project Outcomes which includes environmental risks (risk 3 biodiversity and forest resources and risk 7 climate change and natural disasters), strategic risks (risk 8 livelihoods support) and operational risks (risk 10 SESP implementation and risk 11 ethnic group planning).

4.4.1 Financial risks to sustainability

The IWRM-EbA project relied on the GEF grant to completed flood and drought risk mapping of the Xe Bang Hieng River Basin (19,600 km^2) covering most of Savannakhet Province. Based on flood and drought risk mapping an optioneering exercise to identify mitigation options was undertaken covering approximately 27,000 people in 15 Villages across five Districts. The mitigation options include capital intensive activities such as improved water supply systems (boreholes, solar panels and pumps and elevated storage tanks), irrigated agriculture infrastructure improvement (water storage ponds and irrigation canals), and flood protection (construction of ring levees and flood shelters). The IWRM-EbA project is supporting improved water supply systems for 8 villages and is currently reviewing its available budget to determine the extent of support it will be able to provide for irrigated agriculture infrastructure and flood protection in target villages.

Some mitigation options are less capital intensive and therefore at less financial risk for government implementation after project closure. This includes the activities of tree planting, land use zoning, climate smart agricultural methods and early warning systems.

The IWRM-EbA project work in Laung Prabang city is providing limited support to address flood and drought risk. Whereas the infrastructure needs to address flood and drought risks within the urban landscape are large, costly and well beyond the financial capacity of the project.

Flood and drought risk mitigation is costly and the IWRM-EbA project has predicted significant climate induced increases to flood and drought risks. For example, in the Xe Bang Hieng River Basin the current 50-year flood will return every 10 years by the year 2050. There is therefore considerable risk of government lacking the financial resources to meet the upscaling needs of flood and drought mitigation in Savannakhet Province which has 15 districts and a population of 989,700 (2024), the needs of Luang Prabang City and the many river basins and provinces with similar needs across Lao PDR.

The IWRM-EbA project should therefore emphasize the value of implementing low cost EbA-related mitigation, which when implemented at a landscape level, can reduce the need for costly infrastructure approaches to mitigation.

MTR Recommendation. The PMU team working with DWR should conduct a high level cost benefit analysis of IWRM-EbA flood protection activities. This should include an assessment of the IWRM-EbA project costs to implement flood mitigation measures in select target villages against the estimated cost of flood disasters that will be prevented to highlight the value of investing in flood protection for other villages.

The MTR assessment of financial sustainability of project outcomes being "***moderately unlikely***" is based the large cost of scaling up successful IWRM-EbA mitigation practices (particularly infrastructure works) piloted by the project.

Financial Sustainability - Moderately Unlikely (MU)

4.4.2 Socio-economic to sustainability

The MTR team noted strong ownership by participating government stakeholders, particularly at the local level where PONRE, DONRE and DAFO are implementing project activities in the IWRM-EbA target communities. The capacity development provided by the IWRM-EbA project to these government implementation partners contributes to the likely socio-economic sustainability of their ongoing support to target communities and potential upscaling post-project. As noted in the recommendation provided in **Section 4.4.3**, it is important for the IWRM-EbA project to institutionalize flood and drought risk activities into the workplans of government implementing partners.

The IWRM-EbA target villages are keenly aware of the significant flood and drought risks which impact their livelihoods. In the target villages visited, the MTR team noted community members are highly motivated to participate in IWRM-EbA awareness raising, LUP, CCA, improvement and maintenance of water supply systems, tree planting and climate smart agriculture improvements, etc. With many more villages in the Xe Bang Hieng River Basin facing similar flood and drought risk impacts and the predicted increase of these impacts due to climate change, the sustainable uptake of IWRM-EbA mitigation activities is likely.

The project is taking steps to share best practices and capture lessons learned through an upcoming symposium and the proposed DWR website. The MTR has made a recommendation to update website pages with information specific to the IWRM-EbA project by the end of the first quarter of 2025. The MTR team has noted the MEL specialist engaged in August 2024 will likely make an important contribution to documented and sharing lessons learned by the IWRM-EbA project.

Socio-Economic Sustainability - Likely (L)

4.4.3 Institutional framework and governance risks to sustainability

The IWRM-EbA project's work in Savannakhet Province is, at the District level leading to the collaborative development and approval of Integrated Climate-Resilient Flood Management Strategies (ICFMS) and at the Village level resulting in the development of Land Use Plans (LUP) and for some villages Community Conservation Areas (CCA). ICFMS, LUP and CCA create a legal, policy framework within government that creates accountability for District and Village governments to mitigate flood and drought risks after project closure.

The sustainability of ICFMSs are likely if the IWRM-EbA project supports the institutional capacity of District governments to initiate the implementation of activities outlined in the ICFMS. This should include direct IWRM-EbA project support to implementing ICFMS activities and/or the project providing guidance on the incorporation of ICFMS activities in government's annual or five-year work plans. This will ensure ICFMS are effectively incorporated and mainstreamed into future District government planning.

MTR Recommendation. The PMU should work with DWR and District government implementing partners to ensure the approval and initial implementation of Integrated Climate-Resilient Flood Management Strategies (ICFMS). To demonstrate sustainability of the IWRM-EbA project the PMU working with DWR should support work to achieve:

- Adoption of approved ICFMS by Districts.
- Development of policies and/or guidelines for ICFMS implementation.
- Inclusion of ICFMS actions in annual/five-year plans and budgets.
- Evidence of ICFMS actions being implemented in the districts.

The IWRM-EbA project is working to achieve government and community stakeholder consensus on the best course of action to address flood and drought risks. This includes government supported development of LUP and CCA with communities and other agreed project activities implemented in target villages, such as tree planting for restoration, planting riparian buffers and installing and maintaining improved water supply systems. Stakeholder consensus supported through community awareness raising and collaboration exercises in LUP and CCA, including the placement of bollards clearly demarking CCA boundaries will contribute to the sustainability of these activities. The MTR recommends the LUP exercises conducted with Villages should clearly identify CCA boundaries in relation to the different land uses identified. The project should ensure the CCA are clearly visible on the LUP maps to be created and printed for display in the target villages.

Institutional framework and Governance Sustainability - Likely (L)

4.4.4 Environmental risks to sustainability

The main environmental risks to sustainability are the increasing flood and drought risk predicated to impact communities in Lao PDR because of climate change. The flood risk mapping prepared by the project raises serious concerns as severe foods (50 year storm) are predicted to occur much more frequently (every 10 years). The IWRM-EbA project includes activities to enhance the environmental sustainability of communities, through tree planning, protection of riparian buffers and the demarcation of CCA. There remain, however, moderate risks to sustainability which are difficult to predict and quantify.

Environmental Sustainability - Moderately Likely (ML)

Overall Rating of Sustainability

The MTR has determined the overall rating of sustainability to key outcomes is "***Likely***". The assessment is based on the support demonstrated by key government stakeholders and their enhanced capacity through participation in the IWRM-EbA project, the institutional frameworks of ICFMS and CCA established and the motivated participation of villages in the mitigation of flood and drought risks.

5 Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

The IWRM-EbA project has a logical framework based on a valid theory of change. Flood and drought risks are significant and increasing in Lao PDR due to climate change and therefore the project's focus on building resilience of communities is highly relevant in both urban and rural settings. An important strength of the project lies in its activities that focus on addressing gaps in the knowledge base of flood and drought risk at a local level. This includes data acquisition and technical studies to produce science-based flood and drought risk mapping for a large river basin within the project area.

The project then utilizes the foundational flood and drought risk mapping in optioneering exercises at the village level that are grounded in an understanding of local conditions through field visits and community consultations and brings technical innovation from global best practices to develop sustainable flood and drought mitigation strategies tailored to individual communities. The strategies include conventional flood and drought mitigation strategies such as ring levees and water supply boreholes and EbA-based strategies aimed at long-term sustainable land use solutions that include CCA (forest and wetland protection, aquatic protection zones), riparian buffer planting, forest restoration, and climate smart agriculture.

The IWRM-EbA project is being implemented over a relatively short time period of four years. With time required in the first year to establish a fully functioning PMU and the procurement of international firms required to undertake project work, particularly the detailed technical studies which formed the foundation for the development of locally appropriate mitigation strategies. Implementing mitigation strategies requires engagement of communities, including raising awareness of IWRM-EbA issues and solutions, selecting locally relevant options and then developing capacity in government and communities to implement sustainable solutions. A weakness of the IWRM-EbA project is it currently has limited time (less than two years considering the time required for project closure) to spend working with communities to implement sustainable flood and drought management solutions.

The GEF and UNDP should recognize that the sustainability of project outcomes is dependent on having sufficient time in a project cycle to undertake all activities in a logical sequence that continuously builds sustainability of outcomes, including scaling up needs. Considering the IWRM-EbA project as an example, time is required for (1) project startup (estimate one year), (2) technical studies to inform project activities (estimate one year), (3) capacity development and awareness raising of government and target communities (ongoing with follow-up reinforcement exercises over the entire project cycle), (4) implementation of selected activities in target communities (two to three years to allow time for uptake and ongoing support to innovation), and (5) sustainable project closure (estimate one year).

The IWRM-EbA project is developing capacity in government stakeholders (DWR, PONRE, DONRE and DAFO) who actively participate in all stages of project implementation at the community level. The knowledge and experience developed by government will support the sustainability of project outcomes, but there are questions regarding financing the scaling up of IWRM-EbA to the many remaining villages in Savannakhet Province and to other river basins in Lao PDR facing similar flood and drought risk challenges. Conventional flood and drought risk mitigation solutions based on infrastructure construction, such as borehole water supply, ring levees, and irrigation infrastructure are capital intensive projects. A weakness of the IWRM-EbA project is the GEF grant is proving insufficient to fully support implementation of all infrastructure

needs identified in optioneering exercises. In addition, the limited financial resources of government raises the question of what mechanisms the IWRM-EbA project can put in place to address the scaling up of flood and drought mitigation required?

GEF supported UNDP projects can generally be characterized as “pilot projects”. While government policies and strategies may be developed that apply widely within a country, the implementation of on the ground activities by a GEF/UNDP project are usually geographically restricted to target (pilot) communities largely due to the available time and financial resources of any one project. The work in “pilot communities” undertaken by GEF/UNDP projects should achieve comprehensive implementation of project activities meeting the project objective and fully demonstrating what can sustainably be accomplished. As such, the success of a GEF/UNDP project in pilot communities establishes a benchmark for the scaling up (replication) that is required. In addition, as part of the project exit strategy the PMU should work with the government implementing partners to identify the scaling up needs and develop a long-term plan outlining how scaling up can be achieved (including financing and responsible implementing agencies).

The IWRM-EbA project includes a rural focus in Savannakhet Province and an urban focus in Luang Prabang City. In the urbanizing landscape of Luang Prabang City there is an increasing need to manage surface water runoff during the more frequent and intense high rainfall events associated with climate change. The scale of the IWRM-EbA project does not include working with city-wide management of (1) natural wetlands that provide water storage during high rainfall events and which are being filled in to create high value developable land which is exacerbating flooding and (2) natural drainageways that convey stormwater runoff, which are being encroached upon by development, used for gray-water waste disposal and blocked by debris which is thrown into waterways which also exacerbates flooding during high rainfall events.

While the UNDP/GEF project may not be able to address the city-wide management issues of flooding it should be working with relevant government stakeholders responsible for the planning and management of key land use impacts linked to the problem of flooding. In addition, the IWRM-EbA project has an opportunity to demonstrate what can be achieved by utilizing EbA to protect water storage wetlands and enhance the management of natural drainageways in the villages targeted.

The IWRM-EbA project work in communities has an opportunity to implement more robust strategies that will ensure the inclusion of women in project activities fostering leadership opportunities, promoting women’s involvement in decision-making processes, and providing tailored livelihood support that addresses their unique challenges and aspirations. The IWRM-EbA project could adopt an intentional approach to social inclusion, by collecting disaggregated data on the participation of youth, Persons with Disability (PWD) and ethnic groups.

UNDP/GEF project working in communities can develop targeted activities that work directly with women ensuring their participation in decision making, building leadership skills and greater economic empowerment. Community work can also ensure social inclusion, by seeking out the youth, PWD, and ethnic groups present and developing appropriate inclusive activities.

Long-term sustainability of the IWRM-EbA project can be achieved by awareness raising about the risks of intensifying climate events and lessons learned to identify and implement locally appropriate sustainable mitigation options. The IWRM-EbA project has an opportunity to highlight the large financial investment invested in flood and drought mitigation efforts can provide significant cost savings when future disasters are avoided.

5.2 Key Findings Supporting Recommendations

As a GEN2 project the IWRM-EbA activities working in communities can encourage women's participation and collecting gender disaggregated data and develop women-only targeted activities to boost women's participation. (Recommendation 1)

The Stakeholder Engagement and Gender Specialist has a critical role in the IWRM-EbA project supporting stakeholder engagement activities and promoting gender equality as a significant objective of a GEN2 marker project The part-time status of the Stakeholder Engagement and Gender Specialist may not provide sufficient time to complete the tasks required. (Recommendation 2)

District governments are providing a significant, undocumented in-kind and direct co-financing to the IWRM-EbA project. DONRE and DAFO staff are actively participating in community awareness raising activities and activities related to land use planning, tree planting, and climate smart agriculture (Recommendation 3).

The IWRM-EbA Project Board provides quality assurance and accountability through regular project monitoring and evaluation. With many activities planned for the remaining two years of the project, the Project Board could meet twice each year to ensure the project remains on track (Recommendation 4).

The PPR prepared by the PMU provided a general assessment of project activity progress. PRF indicators could also be assessed as "on-track" or "off-track" with corrective actions clearly identified where required. (Recommendation 5).

The M&E budget defined in the ProDoc is not being tracked by the PMU to allow an assessment of the validity of the original budget defined for M&E (Recommendation 6).

In the IWRM-EbA target villages visited by the MTR team, the community members had a weak understanding of the upcoming project activities planned to be implemented to address flood and drought risks (Recommendation 7).

Borehole water stations result in excess water run off that may pool to form muddy, stagnant water areas in the village that can be avoided through the inclusion of a water drainage catchment feature such as a "French drain" (Recommendation 8).

The project website (link: https://laoiwrm-eba.com/en), which is currently under development, is an important knowledge sharing and communication tool supporting upscaling of IWRM-EbA flood and drought risk management. The project website currently contains much information irrelevant which may be misleading for people visiting the website (Recommendation 9).

The successful piloting of flood and drought mitigation strategies will demonstrate IWRM-EbA activities in the target villages. The value of these activities is the future protection of communities when flood or drought occurs. The IWRM-EbA project has an opportunity to communicate the low cost EbA mitigation, which when implemented at a landscape level, can reduce the need for costly infrastructure approaches to mitigation (Recommendation 10).

The ICFMSs prepared with District governments can make an important contribution to the sustainability of project results if they are effectively incorporated and mainstreamed into future District government's annual and five-year plans and budgets (Recommendation 11).

5.3 Recommendations

Recommendation	Key Entity Responsible	Priority Timing	Justification
Actions to correct the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the project			
1. MTR Recommendation The PMU in consultation with implementation partners should develop IWRM-EbA activities that are "women-only" targeted to improve the achievement of women's equality and to support women's empowerment and leadership skills. These activities may include: • leadership training; • women only tree planting teams; and • women targeted income generating activities	PMU DWR	High February 2025	***Section 4.2.2***
2. MTR Recommendation PMU together with UNDP are recommended to review the contract for the Engagement and Gender Specialist to ensure sufficient time is allocated to complete the tasks required.	PMU UNDP	Medium February 2025	***Section 4.3.1***
3. MTR Recommendation The PMU M&E Specialist working with the PMU Finance and Administration Officer should document the co-financing support by all levels of government providing in-kind and direct support.	PMU UNDP	Low Ongoing	***Section 4.3.3***
4. MTR Recommendation UNDP and MONRE should request the IWRM-EbA Project Board hold meetings twice each year in 2025 and 2026 to provide regular monitoring and evaluation of project progress and guidance to ensure the timely completion of all project activities.	DWR Project Board	Medium Ongoing	***Section 4.3.4***
5. MTR Recommendation The IWRM-EbA Project Progress Reports (PPR) prepared by the PMU should provide an assessment of tasks/activities that includes both (1) identification of their status in terms of "on-track" or "off-track" and (2) clear, implementable recommendations identifying the responsible stakeholder and timing for corrective actions that will ensure the completion of activities before project closure.	PMU	Low Ongoing	***Section 4.3.4***

Recommendation	Key Entity Responsible	Priority Timing	Justification
6. MTR Recommendation To ensure effective and efficient use of the IWRM-EbA Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) budget, it is recommended the PMU M&E Specialist work with the PMU Finance and Administration Officer to track, assess and report on M&E activity budgets as defined in the ProDoc. Variation from the original budget should be noted and justified.	PMU	Low Ongoing	***Section 4.3.4***
7. MTR Recommendation The PMU working with the implementing partners should provide effective, timely communication with all project villages in Luang Prabang and Savannakhet regarding: • project next steps, activities to be implemented, clearly identifying what, when, how, and who; and • further discussion of community priorities in the context of IWRM-EbA and why some of the priorities directly related to the project cannot be funded.	PMU	High January 2025	***Section 4.3.7***
Actions to reinforce the sustainable benefits for the IWRM-EbA project.			
8. MTR Recommendation The PMU, working with implementing contractors, must ensure borehole water stations include appropriate water drainage catchment for excess water. This includes retrofitting boreholes that have already been installed and ensuring all new boreholes include water runoff catchment as part of the construction design.	PMU DWR	Medium February 2025	***Section 4.3.1***
9. MTR Recommendation The PMU working with the contract staff managing the project website should remove all irrelevant information from the project website (link: https://laoiwrm-eba.com/en) and populate website pages with information specific to the IWRM-EbA project. As new information becomes available the project website should be continuously updated.	PMU	Medium March 2025	***Section 4.3.7***

Recommendation	Key Entity Responsible	Priority Timing	Justification
10. MTR Recommendation The PMU team working with DWR should conduct a high level cost benefit analysis of IWRM-EbA flood protection activities. This should include an assessment of the IWRM-EbA project costs to implement flood mitigation measures in select target villages against the estimated cost of flood disasters that will be prevented to highlight the value of investing in flood protection for other villages.	PMU	Medium December 2025	***Section 4.4.1***
11. MTR Recommendation The PMU should work with DWR and District government implementing partners to ensure the approval and initial implementation of Integrated Climate-Resilient Flood Management Strategies (ICFMS). To demonstrate sustainability of the IWRM-EbA project the PMU working with DWR should support work to achieve: • Adoption of approved ICFMS by Districts. • Development of policies and/or guidelines for ICFMS implementation. • Inclusion of ICFMS actions in annual/five-year plans and budgets. • Evidence of ICFMS actions being implemented in the districts.	PMU	High Ongoing	***Section 4.4.3***

Annex 1. MTR Terms of Reference

Terms of Reference for ICs and RLAs through /GPN ExpRes

RPS_147_2024

Services/Work Description: Project Evaluation
Project/Programme Title: Integrated Water Resource Management and Ecosystem-based Adaptation (EbA) in Xe Bang Hieng River Basin and Luang Prabang City (PIMS 6547)
Consultancy Title: International Consultant to conduct project mid-term review
Duty Station: Homes-based, including field missions to Vientiane Capital, and project sites in Luang Prabang and Savannakhet Province
Duration: 29 days (including 7-day field missions to Vientiane, Luang Prabang and Savannakhet Province) (between August - November 2024)

Expected start date: 19 August 2024

1. BACKGROUND

A. INTRODUCTION

This is the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the Midterm Review (MTR) of the full-sized UNDP-supported GEF-financed project titled Integrated Water Resource Management and Ecosystem-based Adaptation (EbA) in the Xe Bang Hieng River Basin and Luang Prabang City (PIMS 6547) implemented through the Department of Water Resources, Ministry of Natural Resources, which is to be undertaken in 2024. The project started on the 23 November 2022 and is in its second year of implementation. This ToR sets out the expectations for this MTR. The MTR process must follow the guidance outlined in the document Guidance For Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects (link).

B. PROJECT BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The project was designed to support the government of Lao PDR to promote the integrated management of land and water resources at target sites in the Xe Bang Hieng River Basin and Luang Prabang city. This will increase the climate resilience of communities to the impacts of floods and droughts — both of which are projected to become more intense and frequent under future climate scenarios.

The project aims to strengthen the climate resilience of communities in two particularly vulnerable areas of Lao PDR – namely Savannakhet Province and Luang Prabang city – particularly focusing on the impacts of floods and droughts. This improved resilience will be achieved through three complementary project components, specifically:

Component 1: Developing national and provincial capacities for Integrated Catchment Management (ICM) and integrated urban Ecosystem-based Adaptation (EbA) for climate risk reduction;
Component 2: Ecosystem-based Adaptation (EbA) interventions, with supporting protective infrastructure and livelihood enhancement; and
Component 3: Knowledge management and Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E).

The project period is four years (Nov 2022 – 2026). The Implementing Agency (or GEF Agency) for the project is UNDP. The Implementing Partner (or Lead Executing Agency) is the Department of Water Resources (DWR) under the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MoNRE). The project is executed under a National Implementation Modality (NIM) with project execution support provided by UNDP Lao PDR Country Office. The total project budget is USD 5,329,452 over 4 years and total confirmed co-financing of USD 27,212,585.

2. SCOPE OF WORK, RESPONSIBILITIES AND DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED WORK

A. MTR PURPOSE

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

The review findings and results will be disseminated to and shared with relevant stakeholders, including government and other development partners, and communicated to project beneficiaries. The report will also be made public through UNDP evaluation resource center.

B. MTR APPROACH & METHODOLOGY

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

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

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

Engagement of stakeholders is vital to a successful MTR. Stakeholder involvement should include interviews with stakeholders who have project responsibilities, including but not limited to DWR, PONRE Savannakhet, PONRE Luang Prabang; executing agencies, senior officials and task team/ component leaders, key experts and consultants in the subject area, Project Board, project stakeholders, academia, local government and CSOs, etc. Additionally, the MTR team is expected to conduct field missions to Luang Prabang and Savannakhet Province, including one or more project sites in each of the five target districts in Savannakhet Province.

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

The suggested methodology section shall entail the specific proposal in the following areas:

- Desk review
  The project team will provide all relevant documents for the review purpose. The MTR team is expected to review the relevant documents, and if necessary, ask for clarifications and more documents. The project manager stands ready to provide the documents that are useful for the evaluation.

Please refer to Annex A for the list of documents and materials to be reviewed.

- Semi-structured Interview
  The review team is expected to conduct interviews with relevant stakeholders, including key government partners, UNDP personnel, CSOs, beneficiary groups, and other partners if necessary.
- -Other methods such as surveys and questionnaires, observational visits, focused-group discussions if needed.

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

The final methodological approach including interview schedule, field visits and data to be used in the MTR must be clearly outlined in the Inception Report and be fully discussed and agreed between UNDP, stakeholders and the MTR team.
The final MTR report must describe the full MTR approach taken and the rationale for the approach making explicit the underlying assumptions, challenges, strengths and weaknesses about the methods and approach of the review.

C. DETAILED SCOPE OF THE MTR

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

i. Project Strategy

Project design:

- Review the problem addressed by the project and the underlying assumptions. Review the effect of any incorrect assumptions or changes to the context to achieving the project results as outlined in the Project Document.
- Review the relevance of the project strategy and assess whether it provides the most effective route towards expected/intended results. Were lessons from other relevant projects properly incorporated into the project design?
- Review how the project addresses country priorities. Review country ownership. Was the project concept in line with the national sector development priorities and plans of the country (or of participating countries in the case of multi-country projects)?
- Review decision-making processes: were perspectives of those who would be affected by project decisions, those who could affect the outcomes, and those who could contribute information or other resources to the process, taken into account during project design processes?
- Review the extent to which relevant gender issues were raised in the project design. See Annex 9 of *Guidance For Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects* for further guidelines.
    - Were relevant gender issues (e.g. the impact of the project on gender equality in the programme country, involvement of women's groups, engaging women in project activities) raised in the Project Document?
- If there are major areas of concern, recommend areas for improvement.

Results Framework/Logframe:

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

ii. Progress Towards Results

Progress Towards Outcomes Analysis:

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

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

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

Indicator Assessment Key

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

In addition to the progress towards outcomes analysis:

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

iii. Project Implementation and Adaptive Management

Management Arrangements:

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

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

Work Planning:

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

Finance and co-finance:

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

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

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

Project-level Monitoring and Evaluation Systems:

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

Stakeholder Engagement:

- Project management: Has the project developed and leveraged the necessary and appropriate partnerships with direct and tangential stakeholders?
- Participation and country-driven processes: Do local and national government stakeholders support the objectives of the project? Do they continue to have an active role in project decision-making that supports efficient and effective project implementation?
- Participation and public awareness: To what extent has stakeholder involvement and public awareness contributed to the progress towards achievement of project objectives?
- How does the project engage women and girls? Is the project likely to have the same positive and/or

negative effects on women and men, girls and boys? Identify, if possible, legal, cultural, or religious constraints on women's participation in the project. What can the project do to enhance its gender benefits?

Social and Environmental Standards (Safeguards)

- Validate the risks identified in the project's most current SESP, and those risks' ratings; are any revisions needed?
- Summarize and assess the revisions made since CEO Endorsement/Approval (if any) to:
    - The project's overall safeguards risk categorization.
    - The identified types of risks[7] (in the SESP).
    - The individual risk ratings (in the SESP) .
- Describe and assess progress made in the implementation of the project's social and environmental management measures as outlined in the SESP submitted at CEO Endorsement/Approval (and prepared during implementation, if any), including any revisions to those measures. Such management measures might include Environmental and Social Management Plans (ESMPs) or other management plans, though can also include aspects of a project's design; refer to Question 6 in the SESP template for a summary of the identified management measures.

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

Reporting:

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

Communications & Knowledge Management:

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

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

iv. Sustainability

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

Financial risks to sustainability:

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

Socio-economic risks to sustainability:

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

Institutional Framework and Governance risks to sustainability:

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

Environmental risks to sustainability:

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

Conclusions & Recommendations

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

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

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

Ratings

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

Table. MTR Ratings & Achievement Summary Table for Integrated Water Resource Management and Ecosystem-based Adaptation (EbA) in Xe Bang Hieng River Basin and Luang Prabang City

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

D. TIMEFRAME

The total duration of the MTR will be approximately 29 working days over a time period of 12 weeks, and shall not exceed five months from when the consultant(s) are hired. The tentative MTR timeframe is as follows:

ACTIVITY	**NUMBER OF WORKING DAYS**	**COMPLETION DATE**
Document review and preparing MTR Inception Report (MTR Inception Report due no later than 2 weeks before the MTR mission)	*5 days*	*2 September 202*
MTR mission: stakeholder meetings, interviews, field visits	*10 days*	*4 October 2024*
Presentation of initial findings- last day of the MTR mission	*1 day*	*4 October 2024*
Preparing draft report (due within 3 weeks of the MTR mission)	*10 days*	*25 October 2024*
Finalization of MTR report/ Incorporating audit trail from feedback on draft report (due within 1 week of receiving UNDP comments on the draft)	*3 days*	*15 November 202*

3. Expected Outputs and deliverables

#	Deliverable	Description	Timing	Responsibilities
1	**MTR Inception Report**	MTR team clarifies objectives and methods of Midterm Review	No later than 2 weeks before the MTR mission, **due date: 02 September 2024**	MTR team submits to the Commissioning Unit and project management
2	**Presentation**	Initial Findings	End of MTR mission, **due date: 04 October 2024**	MTR Team presents to project management and the Commissioning Unit
3	**Draft MTR Report**	Full draft report (using guidelines on content outlined in Annex B) with annexes	Within 3 weeks of the MTR mission, **due date: 25 October 2024**	Sent to the Commissioning Unit, reviewed by RTA, Project Coordinating Unit, GEF OFP
4	**Final Report***	Revised report with audit trail detailing how all received comments have (and have not) been addressed in the final MTR report	Within 1 week of receiving UNDP comments on draft, **due date: 15 November 2024**	Sent to the Commissioning Unit

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

4. Institutional arrangements/reporting lines

The principal responsibility for managing this MTR resides with the Commissioning Unit. The Commissioning Unit for this project's MTR is UNDP Lao PDR

The Commissioning Unit will contract the consultants and will provide an updated stakeholder list with contact details (phone and email). The Project Team will be responsible for liaising with the MTR team to provide all relevant documents, set up stakeholder

5. Experience and qualifications

A team of two independent consultants will conduct the MTR - one international team leader with experience and exposure to projects and evaluations in the Mekong Region and one national consultant as a support team member (contracted separately). The team leader will be responsible for the overall evaluation approach and the writing of the report. The supporting team member will facilitate local language and provide contextual support during the field visits and interviews.

The consultants cannot have participated in the project preparation, formulation, and/or implementation (including the writing of the Project Document) and should not have a conflict of interest with project's related activities.

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

<u>Education (scoring 20/100)</u>

- A Master's degree in water resource management, rural development, natural resource management, or other closely related field

Experience (scoring 70/100)

- Relevant experience with result-based management evaluation methodologies (10pts);
- Experience applying SMART indicators and reconstructing or validating baseline scenarios (5pts);
- Competence in adaptive management, as applied to climate change adaptation (5pts);
- Experience in evaluating projects, preferably in the area of environment, climate change, and natural resources management and GEF-funded projects (10 pts);
- Experience working in the region, preferably in Lao PDR (5pts);
- Experience in relevant technical areas for at least 10 years (10pts);
- Demonstrated understanding of issues related to gender and capacity development; experience in gender sensitive evaluation and analysis (5pts).
- Excellent communication skills (5pts);
- Demonstrable analytical skills (5pts);
- Project evaluation/review experiences within United Nations system will be preferred (10pts).

Language (scoring 10/100)

- Fluency in written and spoken English.

6. Payment Modality

Payment to the individual contractor will be made based on the deliverables accepted and upon certification of satisfactory completion by the manager. The payment will be made as per the following:

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

Criteria for issuing the final payment of 40%8:

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

7. TOR ANNEXES

ToR ANNEX A: List of Documents to be reviewed by the MTR Team

ToR ANNEX B: Guidelines on Contents for the Midterm Review Report9

ToR ANNEX C: Midterm Review Evaluative Matrix Template

ToR ANNEX D: UNEG Code of Conduct for Evaluators/Midterm Review Consultants

ToR ANNEX E: MTR Ratings

ToR ANNEX F: MTR Report Clearance Form

ToR ANNEX G: Audit Trail Template

Annex 2. MTR Evaluation Matrix

Table 2.1. below provides a MTR evaluative matrix, specifying the main review criteria, and the indicators against which the criteria will be assessed.

Table 2.1. MTR Evaluation Question Matrix

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?			
Is the project aligned with other donor and Government programmes and projects, priorities and plans?	Degree of coherence between the project and national priorities, policies and strategies	Project documents, national policies and strategies, government partners	Review government documents, policies and strategies, and project partner interviews
Does the project take into account national realities, both in terms of institutional and policy frameworks in its design and implementation?	Logic of project design	Project documents, national policies and strategies, government partners	Document review and government stakeholders interviews
Progress Towards Results: To what extent have the expected outcomes and objectives of the project been achieved thus far?			
Are the project's objectives, outcomes and components clear, practical and feasible within defined timeframes?	Logic of project design	Document review, project staff, IP and local partners	Review of Project documents and project partner interviews
Review the logframe indicators against progress made towards MTR and end-of-project targets	Comparisons between annual workplans vs actual implemented activities	Document review, project staff, IP	Results framework and interviews
How well has the project performed against expected objectives and outcomes, and its indicators and targets	Extent to which milestones and targets are achieved at mid-term	Project progress reports, mission reports, IP and project staff	Review project reports, stakeholder interviews
How has the project contributed to raising capacity of local stakeholders to address aims of the project for Government ?	Extent of support from local stakeholders, outcomes of capacity assessments and surveys.	Project reports, mission reports, project stakeholder participation	Review of capacity development scorecard and surveys, interviews with project staff and stakeholders
What are the views of stakeholders on the implementation and activities of the project? Are there activities missing from the implementation?	Extent to which stakeholders are actively participating in the implementation and monitoring of the project	Participant lists in activity reports, project stakeholders	Review activity reports, interviews with stakeholders

Evaluative Questions	Indicators	Sources	Methodology
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? To what extent has progress been made in the implementation of social and environmental management measures? Have there been changes to the overall project risk rating and/or the identified types of risks as outlined at the CEO Endorsement stage?			
Review overall effectiveness of project management arrangements as outlined in the Project Document. Are responsibilities and reporting lines clear? Is decision-making transparent and undertaken in a timely manner?	Comparisons between Project Document, work plans vs actual implementation practice.	Project Document and work plans.	Review documents and interviews with project team and IP
Review the quality of execution of the Implementing Partner and review the quality of support provided by the GEF Agency (UNDP).	Comparison of work plans vs actual implementation practice. Efficiency of work plan and activity implementation.	Project Document and work plans.	Review project documents and interviews with project team and IP
Are project activities being implemented and monitored as planned?	Comparison of annual work plans and M&E plan vs implementation	Annual work plans and M&E plan	Review project documents
What learning processes have been put in place and who has benefitted, and how has this influenced project outcomes ?	Training opportunities, and extent to which stakeholders are actively participating in the implementation	Annual work plans, activity participant lists, training and capacity building activities	Review project documents and interviews with project partners, beneficiaries and IP
Did the project experience any capacity gaps (eg. difficulties in recruitment of project staff and contractors)?	Timely recruitment of project staff, review of project technical capacity needs vs available resources (including UNDP backstopping & IP support)	Project Document and staffing arrangements and resources	Review project documents and interviews with project staff and IP
Were progress reports produced accurately and timely, and did they respond to reporting requirements?	Quality of progress reporting and timing	Project progress reports	Review progress reports
Has project implementation been responsive to issues arising? and from interactions with stakeholders?	Comparison of project document activities vs implementation of activities	Project document, activity concept notes, minutes of stakeholder meetings	Review project documents and interviews with project staff, IP and other project stakeholders

Evaluative Questions	Indicators	Sources	Methodology
How are women and girls benefiting from the project?	Extent of gender participation in project activities and feedback from women and girls	Activity participant lists, female project stakeholders and beneficiaries	Review project documents and interviews with female project stakeholders and communities
How does the project capture gender results and are these results built into project monitoring?	Reporting of gender disaggregated data	Gender Action Plan, project progress reports	Review project documents
What systems are in place for managing social and environmental risks? and what progress has been made toward implementing safeguards?	Existence of ESMF plans, actions and ESS assessments	Project ESMF, ESS assessments, ESMPs	Review project documents and interviews with project staff (Safeguards Specialist)
Sustainability: To what extent are there financial, institutional, socio-economic, and/or environmental risks to sustaining long-term project results?			
What is the likelihood of financial and economic resources not being available once GEF assistance ends?	Government fund allocation	Project partners	Discussions with project staff and stakeholders
Is there sufficient public/ stakeholder awareness in support of the long-term objectives of the project?	Clear stakeholder ownership	Media reports, events	Document review and interviews with stakeholders
Are lessons learnt being documented on a continual basis and shared to appropriate parties who could learn from the project and potentially replicate and/or scale it in the future?	Dissemination of knowledge products, clear stakeholder engagement and ownership	Project knowledge hub, social media, project stakeholders	Review project knowledge products, interviews with project stakeholders
Do the legal frameworks, policies, governance structures and processes pose risks that may jeopardize sustenance of project benefits?	Local systems supports the sustainability of project outcomes/ investments	National policies/ legal frameworks	Review documents and interviews with IP and project staff
Are there early signs of activities being taken up by project partners, and plans being developed to sustain them?	Extent to which partners are considering post-project actions	Policy documents, project partners	Review documents and interviews with project partners

Annex 3. Progress Towards Results Matrix

Table 3.1. MTR assessment of progress towards achievement of Project Results Framework Indicator targets. (Project strategy, Indicators, Baseline Level, Midterm Target, and End-of-project Target are taken from the Project Document. The Level in 1st PIR, was taken from the PIR dated 2024. **MLA** = Midterm level and Assessment to conclude whether the end-of-project target: a) has already been achieved (green); b) is partially achieved or on target to be achieved by the end of the project (yellow); or c) is at high risk of not being achieved by the end of the project and needs attention (red). **AR** = Achievement rating of progress towards results with rating scales: Highly satisfactory (HS); Satisfactory (S); Moderately satisfactory (MS); Moderately unsatisfactory (MU) Unsatisfactory (U); Highly unsatisfactory (HU)

MLA = Midterm level assessment	**Green = Achieved**	**Yellow = On target to be achieved**	**Red = Not on target to be achieved**

Project Strategy	Indicator	Baseline Level	Level in 1st PIR (self- reported)	Midterm Target	End-of-project Target	MLA	AR	Justification for Rating
Objective: Promote integrated management of sites in the Mekong River Basin for increased climate resilience of Savannakhet Province and Luang Prabang communities vulnerable to floods and droughts, which are expected to worsen under future scenarios	Indicator 1 (#)Number of direct project beneficiaries disaggregated by gender (individual people)	0	**PIR: On track** The project completed 16 community-use groundwater wells with solar pumps and water storage facilities across seven villages, directly benefiting 9,632 people (5,007 women and 4,625 men), representing 54% of the total population in the target villages. A total of 200 government staff (134 men and 66 women) at the national, provincial, and city levels received training in key areas such as IWRM, GIS, finance, and land use management. The project's interventions are aligned with GEF guidelines, targeting the resilience of approximately 27,000 people across 15 villages in five districts of Savannakhet Province and Luang Prabang City. While direct beneficiaries total 9,832, including 9,632 from water infrastructure and 200 from training, the broader project goals aim to positively impact a larger population within the districts.	164,152) (1/3 of the target beneficiaries)	492,462(75% of the population of the target districts in Savanakhet & target communities in Luang Prabang city		**U**	The target is misaligned with the total population of the 18 project villages who are "direct beneficiaries". The methodology for estimating project direct beneficiaries lacks a robust evidence-based approach, undermining the ability to ensure realistic and meaningful impact measurement. This gap may lead to overestimated or imprecise reporting of project outcomes. There is currently no systematic follow-up mechanism to document how local authorities are utilizing the project's outputs—such as the ICFMS for policy development. This shortfall limits the project's capacity to demonstrate its broader influence on population-wide benefits and sustainable policy impact.
	Indicator 2:Area of landscapes under climate-resilient management (ha)	0 ha under sustainable land management in production systems	**PIR: On track** • The project has initiated ICFMS and land use planning processes, targeting sustainable management of approximately 775,300 hectares by December 2024, contributing to the goal of 200,000 hectares under climate-resilient practices. • Surveys to establish Water and Water Resources Conservation Zones have begun in six villages across Sephon and Nong districts in Savannakhet Province. These efforts aim to protect critical water resources, maintain ecosystem health, and support sustainable agriculture	65,000 ha (~1/3 of the land area of the five target districts)	~200,000 ha (based on the area of protected Areas and irrigated agricultural land in the target districts) under sustainable land management in under		**MS**	The project lays the groundwork for sustainable land management, ensuring resilience to climate variability while supporting community livelihoods.

Project Strategy	Indicator	Baseline Level	Level in 1st PIR (self- reported)	Midterm Target	End-of-project Target	MLA	AR	Justification for Rating
					sustainable land management in production systems			
Outcome 1: Developing national and provincial capacities for Integrated Catchment Management (ICM) and integrated urban Ecosystem-based Adaptation (EbA) for climate risk reduction	Indicator 3: Increased score on UNDP-GEF Capacity Development Scorecard for government officials who attended trainings	0	**PIR: On track** • A total of 157 officials (106 male, 51 female) participated in training programs focusing on WRM, IWRM, and GIS, with 71 completing capacity development surveys assessing their knowledge and understanding. • Specialized training sessions on flood and drought risk mapping were conducted for 43 government officials (27 male, 16 female), equipping them to manage and mitigate risks associated with extreme weather events • Trainings emphasized GIS applications, covering map creation, spatial analysis, and water resource project planning, enabling officials to make data-driven decisions and enhance the accuracy of water resource management. • Additional sessions on ICM, CCA, land use planning, and flood/drought strategies are set for completion by the end of 2024, reinforcing sustainable resource management skills among participants.	At least 50% of officials score better on UNDP-GEF Capacity Development Scorecard	80% of government officials score better on UNDP-GEF Capacity Development"		**MU**	Progress has been made, with a total of 157 officials receiving training on WRM, IWRM, and GIS, and 71 completing knowledge surveys. Additionally, 43 officials (27 men, 16 women) participated in specialized sessions on flood and drought risk mapping. However, training on ICM, CCA, land use planning, and climate strategies remains ongoing.
	Indicator 4: Level of use of fine-scale climate-resilient development and land use plans in target intervention sites	0	**PIR: On tract** • The project has made progress in integrating climate-resilient development and land use plans across five target districts and Luang Prabang city, with comprehensive stakeholder consultations ongoing to tailor strategies to local needs. • A total of 30 provincial and district officials (4 female, 26 male) have completed training on land use planning, equipping them with the skills to develop and implement climate-resilient land use plans at the district and village levels.	At least 1 target district and Luang Prabang city integrating fine-scale climate-resilience development and land use plans	All 5 target districts and Luang Prabang city integrating fine-scale climate-resilience development and land use plans		**MU**	Given the completion of detailed topographic surveys have been completed for both the target villages and Luang Prabang city, providing essential data to inform climate-resilient planning and decision-making in both rural and urban areas and the preparation in place, the project plan to develop intergrating fine-scale climate-resilience and land use plans at the same time.
Outcome 2: Reduced flood risk through headwater conservation, restoration and protective infrastructure, supported by climate-resilient and alternative livelihoods.	Indicator 5:Area (ha) of land restored and conserved through Ecosystem-based Adaptation interventions	0 ha restored/conserved	**PIR: On track** • The project has contributed to the restoration and conservation of land through Ecosystem-based Adaptation (EbA) interventions, including tree-planting activities on National Tree Planting Day, resulting in the planting of 5,100 trees to restore 62 hectares of degraded ecosystems. • Surveys have begun in 6 villages across Savannakhet province to identify potential Water and Water Conservation Zones for restoration, supporting the project's goal to enhance conservation efforts and sustainable land management.	3,000 ha conserved in protected areas and ~200 ha of degraded ecosystems restored	~10,000 ha conserved in protected areas and ~500 ha of degraded ecosystems restored		**S**	Work plans were developed for all five target districts include specific survey tasks to identify degraded areas for assisted natural regeneration, covering over 10,000 hectares, emphasizing the project's collaborative approach to land restoration and conservation.

Project Strategy	Indicator	Baseline Level	Level in 1st PIR (self- reported)	Midterm Target	End-of-project Target	MLA	AR	Justification for Rating
	Indicator 6: CCAs under implementation supporting alternative climate-resilient livelihoods	0 CCAs implemented in target communities	**PIR: On track** • Initial steps towards implementing CCAs were made, with consultations conducted in 5 key villages: Kenghuapa and Thamae in Sephon district, Saveu and Thunglai in Nong district, and Muanghong in Xonaboully district in Savannakhet province. • These consultations, part of a market analysis, identified the specific needs and opportunities within the target communities, ensuring that the CCAs are tailored to local conditions and aimed at enhancing climate resilience.	At least 2 CCAs under implementation in target communities	5 CCAs under implementation in target communities		**MS**	The project successfully drafted all 5 CCAs and conducted consultation meetings. The CCAs are now in the final stages of the signature process, marking a significant step toward formalizing these collaborative efforts. However, MTR noted that many project villages do not know which of the priority needs identified will be implemented. SES have not been completed for boreholes that have been constructed • MTR noted drainage from water station poorly managed and in need of remedial action.
Outcome 3 Effective knowledge management and M&E through awareness/advocacy and monitoring of climate change impacts and adaptation opportunities in target rural and urban communities.	Indicator 7:Level of knowledge and awareness on integrated catchment management and extreme climate events of men and women living in the project intervention sites	A baseline survey will be conducted shortly after project inception. This survey will use a scorecard to assess the current level of knowledge amongst local communities in the Xe Bang Hieng River Basin and Luang Prabang city	**PIR: On track** • 15 villages across 5 districts in Savanakhet province were engaged through consultations ensuring tailored communication materials aligned with local needs. • A centralized platform was created to house educational materials, best practices, and updates on integrated catchment management and extreme climate events, promoting accessibility, knowledge sharing, and ongoing learning. • The project supported World Water Day and World Environmental Day celebrations in the target districts, raising awareness about water conservation, environmental protection, and climate change impacts.	At least a 25% improvement in knowledge score of men and women.	At least a 50% improvement in knowledge score of men and women		**S**	Surveys involving 50 participants per village (May–August 2024) established baseline knowledge levels, crucial for designing educational interventions and tracking the target of a 50% improvement in knowledge scores. The MTR noted the establishment of monitoring system to track gender balanced target from each training activity "GAP Detailed Activity Implementation Plan"
	Indicator 8: Number of communities operating and maintaining water resource and ecological monitoring systems.	0 communities trained	**PIR: On track** • The TOR was completed, and procurement began for a consultancy to design and implement water and ecological monitoring systems. • The consultancy will develop the systems and train 15 communities in Savannakhet Province to operate and maintain them, supporting sustainable resource management.	8 communities from target villages in Savannakhet Province trained	15 communities from target villages in Savannakhet Province trained		**MS**	The MTR noted the procurement process is finalized to hire a consultancy firm to develop a community-based monitoring system and conduct trainings for 15 target villages to enable communities to operate and maintain water and ecological monitoring systems.

Annex 4. MTR Ratings Scales

Table 4.1 MTR Rating Scales used for assessment of the Project Strategy and Progress Towards Results

Rating Scale	Guidance on application of rating scale
1. Highly Satisfactory (HS)	The objective/outcome is expected to achieve or exceed all its end-of-project targets, without major shortcomings. The progress towards the objective/outcome can be presented as “good practice”.
2. Satisfactory (S)	The objective/outcome is expected to achieve most of its end-of-project targets, with only minor shortcomings.
3. Moderately Satisfactory (MS)	The objective/outcome is expected to achieve most of its end-of-project targets but with significant shortcomings.
4. Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)	The objective/outcome is expected to achieve its end-of-project targets with major shortcomings.
5. Unsatisfactory (U)	The objective/outcome is expected not to achieve most of its end-of-project targets.
6. Highly Unsatisfactory (HU)	The objective/outcome has failed to achieve its midterm targets and is not expected to achieve any of its end-of-project targets.

Table 4.2 MTR Rating Scales used for an assessment of Project Implementation & Adaptive Management Rating Scale

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

Table 4.3 MTR Rating Scales used for an assessment of sustainability

Rating Scale	Guidance on application of rating scale
1. Likely (L)	Negligible risks to sustainability, with key outcomes on track to be achieved by the project's closure and expected to continue into the foreseeable future
2. Moderately Likely (ML)	Moderate risks, but expectations that at least some outcomes will be sustained due to the progress towards results on outcomes at the Midterm Review
3. Moderately Unlikely (MU)	Significant risk that key outcomes will not carry on after project closure, although some outputs and activities should carry on
4. Unlikely (U)	Severe risks that project outcomes as well as key outputs will not be sustained

Annex 5. MTR Field Mission Itinerary

Time	Description	Participants	Contact details	Venue	Confirmation
1st Day Wednesday, 13 November 2024					
9:00-10:00	Meeting with PMU on Project management	Team Leader/ Programme Manager -CC and DRR Unit		UNDP	
		PMU			
10:30:12:00	Dept. of Water Resources (DWR)	Project Team and Finance and Administration Officer		DWR, MONRE	
13:30-14:30	Stakeholder Engagement and Gender Specialist	Dr. Sengamphone Chithtalath	2055035191	IWRM-EbA Project	Confirmed
	Social and Environmental Safeguards Consultant	Sengdavanh Phongpaseuth	sengdavanh@live.com +856 20 54 292 891		Confirmed
15.00-16.00	Department of Planning and Finance (DPF)	Mr. Bounpakone Phongphichit		DPF, MONRE	
2nd Day Thursday, 14 November 2024					
09.00-10.00	CTA (Former)	Peter Hanington, Former Technica	pihanington@gmail.com; peter.hanington@gggi.org or 02099799247	Metisse Restaurant & Café	Confirmed
13.30-15.30	Travel to LPB	MTR Team			Phummalin Hotel (booked)
17.00-18.00	Antea	De Ruijter Alexander	alexander.deruijter@anteagroup.be	on-line	Confirmed and link was sent
3rd Day Friday, 15 November 2024					
07.00-08.00	Alluvium - Project Consultant	Mr. Simon Tilleard		on-line	Confirmed and link was sent
09.00-10:00	Meeting with PONRE and DONRE in Luangprabang City	- Phiengkham Thammavong, Deputy Director		PONRE, Luangprabang	
		- Soubundith SaNgaphone, Provincial Coordinator			
	Meeting with DONRE in Luangprabang City	DONRE		DONRE, Luangprabang town	
13:30-14:30	Community in Luangprabang City	Representative from Naluang Village		Luangprabang town	
13:30-14:30	Community in Luangprabang City	Representative from Na Sang Wuei Village		Luangprabang town	
4th Day Saturday, 16 November 2024					
10:31-12:38	Travel from LPB to VTE	MTR Team		Train	
5th Day Sunday, 17 November 2024					
12:52-14:56	Travel from VTE to Savannakhet Province	MTR Team		Airplane	Seansabai Hotel (booked)
13.30-14.30	DML	Chounnaphon Sybounheuang	khamphoudml@yahoo.com 020 29495148 or schounnaphon@yahoo.com	Savannakhet town - TBC	Confirmed
6th Day Monday, 18 November 2024					
9:00-10:00	Meeting with PONRE	Boulika Inthilath, Deputy Director		PONRE, Savannakhet Province	
		Inpasit Sihalath, provincial coordinator			
10:30-11:30	Meeting with PAFO	PAFO		PAFO, Savannakhet Province	
	Lunch				
13.30-16.30	Travel to Sepone District				
7th Day Tuesday, 19 November 2024					
10:00-11:00	Meeting with DONRE and DAFO	DONRE and DAFO		DONRE, Sepon District	
13:00-14:00	Meeting with community Kenghuapa Village	Representatives from community		Kenghuapa Village Office	
14:30-15:30	Meeting with community at Thamae village	Representatives from community		Thamae Village Office	
12:00-13:30	Lunch				
13:30-16:30	Travel to Champhone District				
8th Day Wednesday, 20 November 2024					
08:30-09:00	Meeting with DONRE and DAFO	DONRE and DAFO		DONRE, Champhone District	
09:30-10:30	Meeting with community Sivilay Village	Representatives from community		Sivilay Village Office	
10:30-11:30	Meeting with community at Paika village	Representatives from community		Paika Village Office	
11:30-12:30	Lunch				
12:30-13:30	Travel to Songkhone District				
13:30-14:00	Meeting with DONRE and DAFO	DONRE and DAFO		DONRE, Songkhone District	
14:30-15:30	Meeting with community Songkhone Village	Representatives from community		Songkhone Village Office	
16:00-17.00	Meeting with community at Kengdone village	Representatives from community		Kengdone Village Office	
17:00-18:30	Travel to Kaisone town				
9th Day Thursday, 21 November 2024					
9.40-10.40	Departure from Savannakhet Province to VTE	MTR Team		Airplane	
13.30-14.30	FAO	Phonexay Soukkaseum		FAO CO	Confirmed
15.00-16.30	Meeting with PMU team	PMU	Ms. Vipapone Aphayvanh (vipapone.aphayvanh@undp.org)	PMU	Confirmed
10th Day Friday, 22 November 2024					
08.30-09.30	LCG/GRET	Phong An Huynh	huynh@gret.org	On-line	Confirmed and link was sent
10.30-12.20	De-briefing with UNDP Teams	PSU, PMU		UNDP	Confirmed

Annex 6. List of Persons Interviewed

No.	Name & Surname	F/M	Title/Position	Contact Address	Date & venue of meeting
I. UNDP					
1	Lai DAO	M	DRR	Dao.xuan.lai@undp.org	22 November 2024, UNDP CO
2	Vipapone Aphayvanh	F	M&E Officer	vipapone.aphayvanh@undp.org	
3	Thome Suisongkham	M	PO/OIC	020 22231136 thome.xaisongkham@undp.org	13 & 22 November 2024, UNDP CO
II. Project Management Unit, DWR					
1	Manas Moche	M	CTA - PMU	020 58939581	
2	Phingsaliao Sithiengtham	M	Project Coordinator - PMU	020 955574444 phingsaliao.sithiengtham@undp.org	
3	Bernard Bett	M	MEL - PMU	020 91566938 bernard.kipngetich.bett@undp.org	
4	Sengamphone Chittalath	F	Stakeholder Engagement and Gender Specialist	020 55035191 seng.chithtalath@gmail.com	13 November 2024, DWR, MONRE
5	Sengdavanh Phongpaseuth	F	Social and Environmental Safeguards Specialist	020 54292891 sengdavanh@live.com	
6	Monthana Tinthongsai	F	Finance Officer	020 78789979 Mounthala.tinthongsai@undp.org	13 November 2024, DWR, MONRE
7	Peter Hanington	M	Former CTA	020 99799247 peter.hanington@gggi.org	14 November 2024, Metisse Café, Vientiane Capital
III. Department of Water Resources (DWR), MONRE					
1	Phonexay Simmalavong	M	DDG	020 55621498	13 November 2024, DWR, MONRE
2	Singthong Phanthamala	M	Project Manager and Head of Basin Development and Planning Division, DWR	020 28970796 stptml@yahoo.com	
3	Pingpong Boualapha	F	Accountant	020 22566662	
IV. Department of Planning and Finance (DPF), MONRE					
1	Bounpakone Phongphichit	M	Director of Division	020 55928951	13 November 2024, City Café, Vientiane Capital
2	Khampaserth Khammounheuang	M	Technical Staff	020 56507888	
V. International Consultant/Service Provider					
5.1 Alluvium					
1	Simon Hammer	M	Alluvium	Simon.Hammer@alluvium.com.au	14 November 2024, Online
2	Harry Virahsawmy	M	Alluvium	Harry.Virahsawmy@alluvium.com.au	
3	Simon Tillerd	M	Alluvium	Harry.Virahsawmy@alluvium.com.au	
5.2 Antea Group					
1	Alexander DeRuijter	M	Antea Group	Alexander.DeRuijter@anteagroup.be	14 November 2024, Online
5.3 GRET					
1	Phong A. Huynh	M	Team Leader	huynh@gret.org	22 November 2024, Online
VI. National Consultant/Service Provider					
6.1 HTC					
1	Bounhome Kimmany	M	HTC	kimmany.b@gmail.com	17 November 2024, Online

No.	Name & Surname	F/M	Title/Position	Contact Address	Date & venue of meeting
6.2 DML					
1	Khamphou Savanh	M	Company owner of DML	020 22457831	18 November 2024, Savannakhet Province
2	Lumkeo Keomany	M	Technical Officer	02055641614	
6.3 LCG					
1	Bounthanh Keoboualapha	M	Deputy Team Leader	bthanh.kbp@gmail.com	22 November 2024, On-line
VII. Luang Prabang City					
7.1 Provincial Office of Natural Resources and Environment (PONRE)					
1	Khattiya Vanphasack	M	Deputy Head of PONRE	020 22131319	15 November 2024, PONRE, Luang Prabang
2	Soubandith SaNgaphone	M	Project Focal Point	020 763632232	
3	Phonepaserth Chittavong	M	Head of Hydrologist Unit	020 22350062	
7.2 District Office of Natural Resources and Environment and City/District Authority					
1	Vilaythong Manivone	M	Deputy Head of Luang Prabang City	020 28808870	15 November 2024,@ PONRE, Luang Prabang
2	Souvanthong Soukphasay	M	Deputy Head of DONRE	020 5629378	
3	Southep Saysomkhit	M	Deputy Head of Natural Resource Unit	020 98082345	
7.3 Naluang Village, Luang Prabang City					
1	Bee Inthavong	F	Deputy Head of Village & Head of Village LWU	020 52126344	15 November 2024, @ Village Office
2	Bounthavy Phongsanith	M	Deputy Head of Village	020 56448383	
7.4 Na Sang Wuei Village, Luang Prabang City					
1	Chanpheng	M	Village Advisory Member	020 59850325	15 November 2024, @ Village Office
2	Peng Soumontha	M	Village Advisory Member	020 55770204	
3	Thatsaphone	F	LWU member	020 55171040	
4	Kittsa	F	LWU member	020 59225221	
5	Nalee	F	Head of Household Unit	020 99269442	
6	Vannalee	F	Head of Household Unit	020 59122801	
7	Bounthiem	F	LWU member	020 58645255	
8	Keo	F	LWU member	020 55476931	
9	Buapha Thattavong	F	Deputy Head of Village	020 59168429	
10	Bounthan	M	Village Advisory Member		
VIII Savannakhet Province					
8.1 Provincial Office of Natural Resources and Environment (PONRE)					
1	Panthip Laschack	F	Head of Natural Resources Division	020 54372950	18 November 2024, @ PONRE Office
2	Inpasith Sihalath	M	Deputy Head of Natural Resources/ Provincial Coor.	020 55959329	
3	Kedthavone Seanphimmachack	M	Technical Staff	020 97665554	
8.2 Provincial Agriculture and Forestry Office (PAFO)					

No.	Name & Surname	F/M	Title/Position	Contact Address	Date & venue of meeting
1	Vannalith Sengsavang	M	Division of Forestry	020 99842090	18 November 2024, Online meeting
8.3 District Office of Natural Resources and Environment (DONRE), Sepon District					
1	Souphakone Chanthavong	M	Deputy Head of DONRE/District Coor.	020 96290586	19 November 2024, @ DONRE Office
8.4 District Agriculture and Forestry Office (DAFO), Sepon District					
1	Sinuance Saythany	M	Deputy Head of DAFO	020 99384555	19 November 2024, @ DONRE Office
8.5 Keang Tha Me Village, Sepon District					
1	Tear Vongsikeo	M	Head of Village	020 99121151	19 November 2024, @ Primary School Room @Keang Tha Me
2	Khamyong Pearchanthavong	M	Deputy Head of Village	030 4677883	
8.6 Keang Hua Pa Village, Sepon District					
1	Khamphay	M	Head of Village	030 9727096	19 November 2024, @ Primary School Room @Keang Tha Me
2	Tahuem Keobounheung	M	Deputy Head of Village	030 9640765	
3	Bounlieng Xienglay	M	Village Guard	030 9640765	
4	Keovilay	M	Elderly Advisory Committee	030 9867233	
5	Suan	F	LWU		
6	Lai	M	Head of Unit		
7	Seng	M	Villager		
8	Davone Saykhamphou	M	Village Guard		
9	Sanya	M	Head of Unit		
10	Bounlay	M	Head of Unit		
8.7 District Office of Natural Resources and Environment (DONRE), Champhone District					
1	Keoudone	F	Deputy Head of DONRE	020 22311921	20 November 2024, @ DONRE
8.8 District Agriculture and Forestry Office (DAFO), Champhone District					
1	Khonesavanh Duangmalar	M	Head of DAFO	020 55099442	
2	Bountar Sengkeomahavong	M	Forestry Officer	020 98988855	
8.9	Piarka Village, Champhone District				
1	Settha Vongkosy	M	Head of Village	030 4834046	20 November 2024@Village Temple
2	Oudom Souvannam	M	Deputy Head of Village	020 59508105	
3	Bounthanh	M	Elderly Advisory Committee	99731586	
4	Khampasert	F	LWU		
5	Phonh	F	Villager		
6	Nok	F	Villager		
7	Bounnam	M	Villager		
8	Sumlee	M	Villager		
9	Simouang	M	Villager		
10	Air	M	Villager		
11	Vinthong	M	Villager		
12	Lear Phou	M	Villager		
13	Niphone	F	Villager		
14	Phothaley	M	Villager		
8.10 Sivilay Village, Champhone District					
1	Sunh Phonevisay	M	Head of Village	020 96431259	20 November 2024@Village Office
2	Khamfeuay Sipasert	M	Deputy Head of Village	030 9032119	

No.	Name & Surname	F/M	Title/Position	Contact Address	Date & venue of meeting
3	Kikeo Hainapha	M	Elderly Advisory Committee		
4	Keophet Kongseang	F	LWU	0304879946	
5	Hiew Phongsack	M	Deputy Head of Village	0309347086	
6	Keay	F	Villager		
7	Lar	F		020 96478815	
8	Monmany	M	Elderly Advisory Committee		
9	Khammanh	M	Village guard	030 9888632	
10	Bountheung Chanthasy	M	Elderly Advisory Committee	030 4772744	
11	Kinoy	M	Village guard	020 91150355	
12	Somphone	M	LFND		
8.11 District Office of Natural Resources and Environment (DONRE), Songkhone District					
1	Sisaath Phanthavong	M	Head of DONRE	020 22314138	18 November 2024, @ PONRE Office
2	Khanthong Voraboutnamavong	M	Deputy Head of DONRE	020 98909516	
3	Sengdala Khammongkhoun	M	Officer	020 97995769	
8.12 District Agriculture and Forestry Office (DAFO), Songkhone District					
1	Kanya Sanuvong	M	Head of DAFO	020 99577111	20 November 2024, @ Songkhone Village Office
2	Bounhong Saysombath	M	Agriculture Officer	020 98673838	
8.13 Songkhone Village, Songkhone District					
1	Vanny Chompany	M	Head of Village	030 4417735	20 November 2024, @ Village Office
2	Laongdao Luangphachamlearn	F	Deputy Head of Village	030 9476641	
3	Oudomxay Souliya	F	LWU	020 99140219	
4	Loblakhone	F	LWU		
5	Phone	F	Head of Unit		
6	Serth Sayachack	M	Deputy Head of Village	030 9313578	
7	Airnoy Buapha	M	Deputy Head of Village		
8	Viengxay Thaisuphanh	M	Elderly Advisory Committee		
9	Louay	M	Elderly Advisory Committee		
10	Lamphone Sayalath	M	LFND		
11	Sounthone	M	Elderly Advisory Committee		
12	Lai	M	Elderly Advisory Committee		
13	Khone	M	Villager		
14	Liar	M	Villager		
15	Yadong	F	Villager		
16	Chome	F	Villager		
17	Thongpone	F	Villager		
18	Kao	F	Villager		
19	Khit	F	Villager		
20	Yong	F	Villager		

No.	Name & Surname	F/M	Title/Position	Contact Address	Date & venue of meeting
21	Vanh Chalernsouk	M	Villager		
22	Sangvane	M	Villager		
23	Khambang	M	Villager		
8.14 KeandoneVillage, Songkhone District					
1	Kungnang Thipvongsa	F	Deputy Head of Village	020 92861112	20 November 2024, @ Village Temple
2	Lumphanh Thongsany	F	LWU		
3	Kaiamphone	F	LWU		
4	Chantha Keovongkot	F	Deputy Head of Village	020 57506682	
5	Chanphen Xaypanya	F	Deputy Head of Village	020 96596647	
6	Sapsaphone Tiyavong	F	Villager		
7	Somsanouk	M	Head of unit		
8	Sathaphone	M	Head of unit		
9	Phouthone	M	Village guard		
10	Somsy	M	Head of youth		
11	Oiy	M	Head of unit		
IX. FAO					
1	Phonexay Soukkasum	M	Programme Specialist	Phonexay.Soukkaseum@fao.org	22 November 2024, @ FAO CO
2	Khambane Inthipunya	M	Agro-Meteorology and GIS Expert	Khambane.Inthipunya@fao.org	

Annex 7. List of documents reviewed

#	Document Name
1	PIF
2	UNDP Initiation Plan
3	Final UNDP Project Document and final GEF approval documents (Request for CEO Endorsement, etc.)
4	UNDP Environmental and Social Screening results
5	Progress reports (quarterly, semi-annual, or annual) with associated project work plans and financial reports
6	Project Inception Report
7	All Project Implementation Reports (PIRs)
8	Quarterly progress reports and work plans of the various implementation task teams
9	Audit reports, electronic copies if available
10	Electronic copies of finalized relevant GEF tracking tools from CEO endorsement and midterm (fill in specific TTs for this project's focal area)
11	Oversight mission reports
12	Minutes of the (Project Title) Project Board meetings or other meetings (i.e. Project Appraisal Committee meetings)
13	Maps of location sites, as necessary
14	Other management related documents: adaptive management reports, management memos
15	Electronic copies of project outputs – newsletters, booklets, manuals, technical reports, articles, etc.
16	Summary list of formal meetings, workshops, etc. held, with date, location, topic, and number of participants
17	Any available information on relevant environmental monitoring data (species indicators, etc.), beyond what is available on indicators in logframe in PIRs
18	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
19	Actual expenditures by project outcome, including management costs, and including documentation of any significant budget revisions
20	List of contracts and procurement items over ~$5,000 USD (i.e. organizations or companies contracted for project outputs, etc., except in cases of confidential information)
21	Co-financing table with expected and actual totals broken out by cash and in-kind, and by source, if available
22	List of related projects/initiatives contributing to project objectives approved/started after GEF project approval
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
24	Confirmation on list of names and titles of stakeholders actually met on MTR field mission (include after the MTR field mission)
25	UNDP country/countries programme document(s)
26	Progress report 1 - Project start to 30 June 2023
27	Progress report 2 - 1 July to 31 December 2023
28	Progress report 3 - 1 January to 30 June 2024
29	Project Implementation Report (PIR)
30	Report on risk mapping methodology
31	Monitoring &Evaluation plan
32	Technical Support for modelling and development of risk maps in Lao PDR – Lao Flood and Drought Mapping (Final report)
33	Optioneering Report for flood and drought risk reduction in Xe Bang Hieng River Basin
34	Stakeholder Engagement Plan
35	Gender Analysis and Gender Action Plan
36	Market Analysis (Session/Task 1) integrating Session/Task 0 findings Value chains and Opportunities for Target CCA villages in Xe Bang Hieng River Basin, Savannakhet Province
37	Geophysical Investigation Report - Geophysical Investigation for Groundwater in Champhone, Xonbuly, Songkhone, Sepone and Nong Districts Savannakhet Province

#	Document Name
38	Design Drawings IWRM-EbA Project
39	Audit Report IWRM Project
40	GAP Detailed Activity Implementation Plan

Annex 8. Signed UNEG Code of Conduct form

Pledge of Ethical Conduct in Evaluation

Evaluators/Consultants:

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

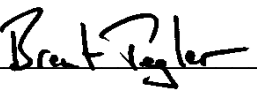
Evaluation Consultant Agreement Form
Agreement to abide by the Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN System:

Name of Consultant: **Brent Tegler**

Name of Consultancy Organization (where relevant): ***Mid-Term Review of Integrated Water Resource Management and Ecosystem-based Adaptation (EbA) in the Xe Bang Hieng river basin and Luang Prabang city***

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

Signed at **Fergus, Canada** (Place) on **14th September, 2024** (Date)

Signature: 

Evaluators/Consultants:

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9. Must confirm that they have not been involved in designing, executing or advising on the project being evaluated.

Evaluation Consultant Agreement Form

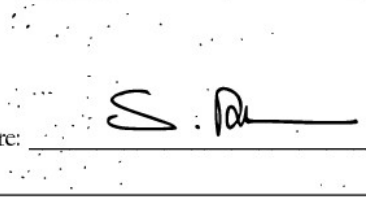
Agreement to abide by the Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN System:

Name of Consultant: **Sengphachanh Sonethavixay**

Name of Consultancy Organization (where relevant): ***Integrated Water Resource Management and Ecosystem-based Adaptation (EbA) in the Xe Bang Hieng river basin and Luang Prabang city***

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

Signed at **Vientiane, Lao PDR** *(Place) on* ***14 November 2024***

Signature: 

Annex 9. Questions to Assess Progress Towards Results

The aim is to gather insights from a variety of stakeholders and beneficiaries to provide a comprehensive understanding of the project's progress, challenges, and areas for improvement.

Here are suggested interview questions for the Mid-Term Review (MTR) of the Integrated Water Resource Management and Ecosystem-based Adaptation (EbA) project:

Project Strategy and Design

1. **Relevance**
    - How well do you think the project's design addresses the key challenges related to floods and droughts in the Xe Bang Hieng River Basin and Luang Prabang City?
    - How aligned is the project with national policies on climate resilience and water resource management?
    - Have the assumptions made during the project design phase held true so far, or have any major changes in context impacted implementation?
2. **Decision-Making and Stakeholder Involvement**
    - How inclusive was the project design process in terms of engaging key stakeholders, such as local governments, communities, and civil society organizations (CSOs)?
    - What role have local communities played in shaping the project's priorities and approaches, particularly regarding Ecosystem-based Adaptation (EbA)?
3. **Gender Considerations**
    - To what extent were gender issues considered in the project's design? How has the project addressed gender-specific vulnerabilities related to water resource management and climate adaptation?
4. **Social Inclusion**
    - Have disadvantaged groups, distinct cultural groups and persons with disability been considered in project design and implementation?

Progress Towards Expected Results

5. **Achievements and Outcomes:**
    - What specific progress has been made in the development of national and provincial capacities for Integrated Catchment Management (ICM) and EbA under Component 1 of the project?
    - Can you describe any tangible outcomes or improvements resulting from the EbA interventions, such as protective infrastructure or livelihood enhancement activities in Savannakhet or Luang Prabang?
    - Have local communities been receptive to the establishment of Community Conservation Areas (CCA) and have any CCA been identified?
6. **Challenges and Adaptation:**
    - What challenges have you encountered in implementing the EbA amd CCA interventions and building climate resilience? How have these challenges been addressed or adapted to?
    - Have there been any lessons learned from the first two years of project implementation that could inform adjustments to improve future outcomes?

Project Implementation and Adaptive Management

7. **Coordination and Management:**

- How effective has coordination been between UNDP, the Department of Water Resources (DWR), and other implementing partners? What improvements, if any, could be made?
- Does the project have sufficient capacity (staff, technical ability, resources) for effective implantation?
- How well has the project adapted its implementation strategy in response to emerging challenges or external factors, such as changes in climate patterns or community needs?

8. **Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E):**
   - Are the current monitoring and evaluation mechanisms sufficient for tracking the project's progress and outcomes? How could they be improved to better measure impacts, particularly in areas like gender, social inclusion, livelihoods, and climate resilience?
   - Are there any gaps in data collection or reporting that hinder an accurate assessment of the project's progress?

Sustainability and Long-Term Impact

9. **Sustainability of Interventions:**
   - How likely are the project interventions to be sustained after the project's completion? Are there sufficient plans in place for local ownership and long-term management of the water resource and EbA initiatives?
   - What steps are being taken to ensure that the capacities built through this project (e.g., in ICM and EbA) are institutionalized and integrated into local and national development planning?
10. **Impact on Beneficiaries:**
    - How have the communities in Savannakhet Province and Luang Prabang City benefited from the project so far? Can you provide any examples of improved resilience to floods and droughts?
    - Are there examples where the project has addressed gender equality and social inclusion?
    - What has been the feedback from beneficiaries regarding the effectiveness of the interventions and the project's ability to address their needs?
11. **Scaling and Replication:**
    - Are there any aspects of the project that can be scaled or replicated in other regions of Lao PDR or neighboring countries? What factors would need to be in place to ensure successful replication?

Annex 10. Signed MTR final report clearance form

MTR Report Clearance Form

Mid-Term Review Report for:

Integrated Water Resource Management and Ecosystem-based Adaptation (EbA) in the Xe Bang Hieng river basin and Luang Prabang city – UNDP GEF PIMS # 6547

Reviewed and Cleared By:

Commissioning Unit (M&E Focal Point)

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Regional Technical Advisor (Nature, Climate and Energy)

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Annex 11. Audit Trail for Comments Received on Draft MTR Report

Annexed in a separate file