Improved Financial Sustainability and Strengthened Resilience of Protected Areas Through Development of Sustainable Recreation and Partnership with Private Sector

Full Size Project
UNDP/GEF PIMS: 6439, Atlas Award: *00128336*, Quantum Award: 00122351.1 Quantum Project Id: *00122351*, GEF ID number: 10344

Midterm Review, September – December

2024

Volume I: MTR Report

GEF 7: BD-2-7: Address direct drivers to protect habitats and species and improve financial sustainability, effective management, and ecosystem coverage of the global protected area estate

Bosnia Herzegovina

GEF Agency: United Nations Development Programme (DIM)

Lead Country Counterpart: FBiH Ministry of Environment and Tourism

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Revision 2 (based on request received on 15/01/25): 16/01/25

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Acronyms, Abbreviations and Glossary

BD	Biodiversity
BAU	Business-as-usual
BiH	Bosnia and Herzegovina
BMZ	Bundesministerium für wirschaftliche Entwicklung und Zusammenarbeit/ Federal Ministry for Economic Development and Cooperation
BPPS	Bureau for Policy and Programme Support
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CESD	Centre for Environmentally Sustainable Development
CC	Climate Change
CISP	International Committee for the Development of Peoples (Comitato Internazionale per lo Sviluppo dei Popoli) , Rome, Italy
CO	Country Office
CPD	Country Project Document (UNDP)
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CTA	Chief Technical Advisor
DIM	Direct Implementation Modality
DOA	Delegation of Authority
DRR	Deputy Resident Representative
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
ESIA	Environmental and Social Impact Assessment
ERC	Evaluation Resource Center
EPF FBIH	Environmental Protection Fund of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina
EP EEF RS	Environmental Protection and Energy Efficiency Fund of Republika Srpska
ESMF	Environmental and Social Management Framework
ESMP	Environmental and Social Management Plan
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
FBiH	Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina
FSP	Full Sized Project
GAP	Gender Action Plan
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GEFSEC	Global Environment Facility Secretariat
GIS	Geographic information system
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH/ German Corporation for International Cooperation
HCVFs	High Conservation Value Forests
ICF	Internal Control Framework
IGO	International Government Organisation
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
JSC	Joint Stock Company
KBA	Key Biodiversity Area
KM	Knowledge Management
LLC	Limited Liability Company
LLP	Limited Liability Partnership
LPAC	Local Project Appraisal Committee
M&E	Monitoring & Evaluation
MEA	Multi-lateral Environmental Agreement
METT	Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool
MET FBIH	Ministry of Environment and Tourism of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina
MOFTER	Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations of Bosnia and Herzegovina
MSPCE RS	Ministry of Spatial Planning Construction and Ecology of Republika Srpska
MTT RS	Ministry of Trade and Tourism of Republika Srpska

MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MSP	Medium-Sized Project
MTR	Mid-Term Review
NFP	National Focal Point
NCE	Nature, Climate and Energy
NIM	National Implementation Modality
NM	Nature Monument
NP	National Park
NTFP	Non-Timber Forest Product
OFP	Operational Focal Point
PA	Protected Area
PCA	Project Cooperation Agreement
PE	Public Enterprise
PH	Protected Habitat
PIF	Project Identification Form
PIMS+	Project Management Information System (UNDP)
PIR	GEF Project Implementation Report
PN	Park of Nature
PL	Protected Landscape
POPP	Programme and Operations Policies and Procedures
PPG	Project Preparation Grant
PTA	Principal Technical Advisor
RR	Resident Representative
RTA	Regional Technical Advisor
RS	Republika Srpska
SBAA	Standard Basic Assistance Agreement
SEE	South-Eastern Europe
SESP	UNDP Social and Environmental Screening Procedure
SIDA	Swedish International Development Agency
SLM	Sustainable Land Management
SME	Small-and-medium Enterprise
SoW	Scope of Work
SWOT	Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities Threats
TE	Terminal Evaluation
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference
STAP	GEF Scientific Technical Advisory Panel
SoER	State of Environment Report
SOW	Climate Threat Assessment
UNSDCF	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
UNCBD	United Nations Convention for Biodiversity
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDP-GEF	UNDP Global Environmental Finance Unit
UNECE	UN Economic Commission for Europe
UNEP	UN Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention for Climate Change
UNSMS	United Nations Security Management System
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WB	The World Bank
WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature

Executive Summary

Project Information Table

Project Details		Project Milestones	
Project Title	Improved Financial Sustainability and Strengthened Resilience of Protected Areas Through Development of Sustainable Recreation and Partnership with Private Sector	PIF Approval Date	June 03, 2020
UNDP Project ID (PIMS#)	6439	CEO Endorsement Date (FSP) / Approval date:	April 07, 2022
GEF Project ID:	10344	ProDoc Signature Date:	June 13,2022
UNDP Atlas Business Unit, Award ID, Project ID:	Atlas Award ID: 00128336 Quantum Award ID: 00122351.1 Quantum Project ID: 00122351	Date Project Manager Hired	September 2022
Country/Countries:	Bosnia Herzegovina	Inception Workshop:	September 27, 2022
Region:	Europe	Expected Mid-Term Review Completion Date:	January 31, 2025
Focal Area:	Biodiversity	Expected Terminal Evaluation Date:	March 31, 2027
GEF Operational Programme or Strategic Priorities/Objectives	BD-2-7	Planned Operational Closure Date:	June 30, 2027
Trust Fund:	GEF Trust fund		
Implementing Partner (GEF Executing Entity):	UNDP CO (DIM Project)		
Development Agency	UNDP		
NGOs/CBOs involvement	As indicated in project document: • Centre for Environment, Banjaluka Ornithological Society "NašePtice", Sarajevo Society for Biological • Research and Protection of Nature "Bio.Log", Sarajevo • Society for Research and Protection of Biodiversity Banjaluka • Culture Center of Pale Municipality		
Private sector involvement	As foreseen in project document: • Tourism Cluster Una-Sana • Tourism Cluster Herzegovina • Visit Sarajevo – Tourism Association of Canton Sarajevo		
Geospatial coordinates of project sites:	Due to many sites will be provided as annex to MTR report.		
Project Financing	*at CEO endorsement (US$)*	*At Midterm Review (US$)*	
(1) GEF Financing:	2,640,000	1,210,223	
(2) UNDP Contribution:	1,250,000	757,382	
(3) Government	15,898,825	6,826,215	
(4) Other partners:	1,365,000	1,365,000	
(5) Total co-financing (2+3+4)	18,513,825	8,948,597	
Project Total Cost (1+5)	**21,153,825**	**10,158,820**	

Project Description

The project objective is to achieve practical improvement in management of protected area estate of BiH, providing for better biodiversity status through strengthened resilience of key biodiversity values to climate change impact and increased revenues to protected areas from sustainable recreation.

The project is called to reduce the gap between the current capacities of protected areas (PAs) with their increasing vulnerability to emerging threats, on the one hand, and the growing needs to preserve and sustainably maintain the biological and ecosystem diversity that is among the top five in Europe, on the other. The project will aim to reduce newly emerging threats to the key biodiversity values and provide for sustainable management options and increased funding for PAs.

The project will make an incremental effort in assisting the protected area management with tools and instruments aimed at diversifying and improving the sustainable, nature-based tourism offering in targeted PAs and neighbouring communities, thus providing for sustainable incremental income and a development option that will valorise the unique nature values without further threatening them.

The project will also link the PAs to the funding opportunities provided by the governmental grant programmes for tourism development. Under Component 1, the project will work to reduce vulnerability of key biodiversity values and strengthen the resilience of target protected areas in BiH to climate change and support climate-neutral and BD-sensitive PA management and business planning. Component 2 will develop and test mechanisms for increased PA revenues from sustainable tourism.

Progress towards outcomes

In regard to Outcome 1, the overall conclusion of the MTR is that this Outcome is on track (with some caveats and suggested adjustments). Of the 4 indicators for this Outcome only 2 have MTR targets
- Indicator 4: on track (METT tracking tool),
- Indicator 5: already reached EoP target (number of Target PAs management planning instruments with due account of climate threats)

Of the other 2 Indicators:
- Indicator 6 which is related to species plans (Bosnian newt, Serbian Spruce, Bosnian pine) - Ontrack as plans are developed and under some level of implementation.
- Indicator 7: related to development of fire action plans for PAs – on track, but part of indictor (7a) needs to be adjusted (see recommendations and annex).

The project has made good progress on the execution of activities under Outcome 1, despite the complications faced related to changes in the situation since project development and some incorrect assumptions or weaknesses in the prodoc. Regarding the wetland's restoration, in the opinion of the MTR this Output was lacking in realism in terms of scope and budget and available project duration– there remains a big question as to how feasible restoration options will be both technically and financially.

In regard to Output 1.5 Replication - The MTR recommendation would be to recalibrate/clarify the ambition under this output and focus mainly on providing the basis for post project replication (i.e. undertake focused evaluations and lessons learned studies with explicit guidance for replication of demo/test activities but not expect project to undertake any actual replication within its time frame / funds). This is linked to findings / recommendation regarding Outcome 3: Knowledge management and communication.

The MTR would like to particularly highlight two additional initiatives from the project that it is felt are of significant value: the first is the introduction into the Management planning support of a financial planning component, and second is the support to establishment of the PA Managers Association.

In regard to Outcome 2 the overall conclusion of the MTR is that this Outcome is on track (with some caveats and suggested adjustments). Out of the 4 indicators for this Outcome three have MTR targets (indicators 9, 10, 11) and indicator 8 has only an EoP target. Unfortunately, except for Indicator 10 (Number of PAs participating in governmental tourism grant mechanisms) all the other indicators have issues regarding relevance, meaningfulness or feasibility. Recommendations are included in the MTR to address these limitations.

In regard to Outcome 3, the MTR conclusion on the "<u>satisfactory</u>" status of this Outcome is based mainly on fact that project is assuredly meeting these targets at MTR based on PIR reports and evidence seen in review documents. However, due to issues regarding lack of clarity on the specific outputs expected under the Outcome, the MTR would recommend that more specific and concrete outputs / products need to be defined for the terminal phase of the project (see more details in Sections 3 and 4).

Based on the ratings applied to the 3 project Outcomes, taken together with other factors (given the weak project Results Framework indicators) the overall rating MTR for project progress towards the objective is <u>Satisfactory</u> (please see summary tables of GEF rating system page xi for clarification).

However, it needs to be noted that the project Results Framework has limitations in regard to meaningful review of progress and recommendations for strengthening this are contained in the report. It should also be highlighted that due to changes between project design / approval and the inception phase a large number of adjustments to specific activities was required during initial implementation. Effective adaptive management by all parties has addressed these initial challenges and at MT it is considered the project is on track to achieve the expected results and impact.

Achievement Summary

Measure	Objective /outcomes[1]	MTR Rating	Achievement Description
Project Strategy		N/A	
Progress towards Results	**Objective:** To achieve practical PA management improvement and better biodiversity status through strengthened resilience of key biodiversity values to climate change impact and increased revenues from sustainable recreation (3 GEF mandatory indicators)	S	Despite significant challenges faced by the project during its initial implementation it is considered by the MTR to have overcome these based on an overall review of the RF indicators and other factors, the MTR considers progress by is on track, and this justifies the overall "Satisfactory" rating. Despite changes to one target PA and a number of specific activities/sites expected in the project document the project overall impact in terms of PA area, etc. and strengthening of capacity, knowledge and practical know how on SFM has not changed. In fact, the MTR would consider that the project is exceeding the original project design in some important respects (the PA managers association, consideration of wider PA financing aspects, etc.).
	Outcome 1: Managerial and technical capacities of targeted PAs in place helping ensure resilience of key biodiversity values to climate change impacts (7 indicators) – 41% budget	S	This outcome has faced numerous challenges and required significant adaption. However, in the opinion of the MTR it is **on track** to achieve its expected results and potentially to exceed the original intent in important aspects (broadening of focus beyond just tourism, addressing some issues not originally envisaged). Significant future challenges and risks undoubtably exist during the process of transitioning from the preparatory phase to testing / demonstration of SFM in practice but the MTR considers the project to be in a strong position (based on intelligent adaption, strong technical guidance, extensive consultation, etc) to successfully achieve the expected impact.
	Outcome 2: Financial sustainability of targeted	S	The overall conclusion of the MTR is that this Outcome is **on track** (with some caveats and suggested adjustments).

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[1] The Outcomes are listed in the rating table as per the Project document rather than as in the PIR (which actually lists component titles)

Measure	Objective /outcomes[1]	MTR Rating	Achievement Description
	PAs improves (4 indicators)- 37% budget		Out of the 4 indicators for this Outcome three have MTR targets (indicators 9, 10, 11) and indicator 8 has only an EoP target. Unfortunately, except for Indicator 10 (Number of PAs participating in governmental tourism grant mechanisms) all the other indicators have issues regarding relevance, meaningfulness or feasibility. Recommendations are included in the MTR to address these limitations. For this reason, the MTR is basing the "Satisfactory" conclusion on results and progress being achieved by the project and its effective adaption to the weaknesses in the project design/changes in on-ground circumstances.
	Outcome 3: Knowledge management (2 indicators) – 4% budget	S	This Outcome is unclear in regard to specifics and the project has reported a number of products from already completed activities under other outcomes under this outcome. In this context the MTR believes there is a need to more clearly define what exact products (and mechanisms for dissemination) will be produced under this outcome and how it brings added value to the overall project and its sustained impact. However, in terms of the original and "in project" defined targets the project is **on track**.
Project Implementation and Adaptive Management		HS	Project implementation appears to have been highly effective and adaptive in addressing challenges derived from design issues or changes that occurred between ProDoc development and implementation. The MTR identifies some minor aspects that could be addressed or enhanced to strengthen overall impact and sustainability and monitoring.
Sustainability		ML	Broadly, the project is supporting a reduction in environmental risks rather than increasing them and so contributing to environmental sustainability of the PA system and thus contributes to this. However, two potential areas of concern do exist – a). the potential (and to some extent already experienced) negative impacts of tourism and b). impacts of climate change and real capacity to adapt. Given the complex socio-political situation and highly decentralized institutional system (that seems vulnerably to political issues) the institutional sustainability is also of some question. Overall, the MTR conclusion of sustainability of project impacts at MT is **Moderately likely** (but will become clearer by TE).

Summary of conclusions

The project has so far made Satisfactory Progress: Based on the review of the individual project Outcomes and the Mandatory GEF Objective indicators, the <u>overall MTR rating of progress towards the Objective is Satisfactory.</u>

The project has made substantial and significant progress despite the challenges faced by a project document with some significant limitations, significant changes in a number of on ground circumstances, and a generally difficult implementation context. In terms of the 3 mandatory GEF Project indicators it is on track to achieve all at MTR (though the methodology for Indicator 1 requires to be clarified it is clear to the MTR that the project is meeting its expected impact in this respect).

The project and main partners / stakeholders have pragmatically and energetically adapted and adjusted implementation to address both design issues and changes that have occurred since project development. The project has in fact enhanced the strategic content and likelihood of impact through a number of adjustments and additions (such as broadening the SFM focus beyond only tourism and supporting the PA Managers Associations as a mechanism to address the PA system governance fragmentation barrier not identified in the ProDoc).

The challenges for remaining period of implementation*: The project has 2 and a half years remaining to complete implementation and must now start to transition from mainly capacity building and preparatory/planning activities to a). more field implementation and practical demonstration / testing activities, including infrastructural works b) capture the experience and lessons learned from these and effectively ensuring the system wide dissemination and knowledge transfer in order to maximise replication and sustained impact. The MTR concludes that the project has created the baseline relationships and technical / scientific basis needed to undertake this transition successfully. Furthermore, the project PMU, UNDP CO and PB/national partners have the capacity and joint experience to apply intelligent adaptive management which will be critical during the second half of the project.

However, one potential issues of concern under Component 1 of the project will be the viability of some Outputs/activities particularly the financial / technical viability of the proposed wetlands restoration activities. In the context of other practical initiatives supported under Component 1 the challenge will be whether meaningful results can be achieved in the short timeframe especially considering the vulnerability of some initiatives to seasonal variations (made more likely by climate change). In this context the importance of looking to the future in terms of ensuring national capacity/ownership and identifying potential donor funded mechanisms for further supporting / replicating project results will be critical in its terminal phase. Under component 2, the project will face challenges in transitioning from the initial identification of SFM options to the practical implementation of them. In this regard ongoing international / regional experience may well be critical to ensuring nuanced practical implementation adapted to the on-ground realities in Bosnia Herzegovina.

A second potential issue of concern is the substantial level of activities and delivery (around 75% remaining) of Component 2 of the project. A substantial part of the delivery will likely be related to infrastructural works and material procurements which have risks in terms of the time and effort required to implement in accordance with all UNDP rules and regulations. The PMU, UNDP CO and PB need to ensure these aspects are pushed ahead in a very timely manner in order to ensure their effective completion in time.

Recommendations and Key Lessons Learned

A number of recommendations and suggestions have been made throughout the MTR report. The most critical recommendations and suggestions are described in the full recommendations section of the report. Likewise, the key "lessons" to be learned regarding future projects design, inception and implementation, are indicated.

A summary of the key recommendations is provided in the table below.

Recommendation Summary Table

Recommendations	Responsibility	Timing
Project Results Framework – Indicators and Targets		
Recommendation 1- Undertake an adjustment to currently weak or nonviable indicators as indicated below (proposed changes and justification in separate table in annex)	Project team UNDP BIH	Within 2 months of MTR finalization
Recommendation 2: **Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT)** – for TE the METT needs to be based on field survey / questionnaire of supported PAs and ideally prepared with them (not just based on project generated reporting etc.).	Project team UNDP BIH	Terminal 6 months of project
Component 1: Managerial and technical capacities of targeted PAs in place helping ensure resilience of key biodiversity values to climate change		
Recommendation 3: **To undertake a review and develop a conceptual plan for the future role of the PA Managers Associations (**and on that basis provide further support and build practical capacity to support this and future project implementation).	Project team UNDP BIH	Within 4 months of MTR finalization
Component 2: Improving financial sustainability of targeted PAs through sustainable tourism development		
Recommendation 4: **Adjustment to Output 2.3 to better reflect / capture the projects realistic result / impact in this context** (provisional proposed text "At least one mutually beneficial outsourcing agreement (including concessions, leases, rentals, PPPs, etc.) designed".	Project team UNDP BIH	Within 2 months of MTR finalization
Recommendation 5: **Review the need and opportunity to retain the advisory support of the IC SFM** during practical implementation and testing of the selected SFM mechanisms and to support the development of a brief PA system financing strategy that recognizes the need for a diverse approach, including ongoing governmental support.	Project team UNDP BIH	Within 2 months of the MTR finalization.
Recommendation 6: **Undertake an Ecosystem Service Valuation exercises for the Tisina Wetlands (including areas RS and FBiH as** basis for justifying and promoting the conservation of the area, as a capacity / experience building exercises, and as a basis for potential future innovative SFM	Project team UNDP BIH	Decision within 3 months of MTR. Completion by 4th year of project.
Component 3: Knowledge Management and Communication		
Recommendation 7: **More Detailed elaboration of Outcome 3 Outputs and activities to ensure systematic capturing of experience and its dissemination / future application** (Linkage with Output 1.5 on replication) – detailed suggestions on this are provided in text of report (Pages 27, 63).	Project team UNDP BIH	Within 3 months of MTR finalization.
Recommendation 9: **Development of a comprehensive Exit strategy and action plan during terminal phase of the project:** this is recommended during last 6 months of implementation to ensure systematic transfer of ownership and responsibility of project initiatives and demo activities in order to maximize sustainability (with a range of stakeholders and partners including governmental, NGO, private sector, UNDP and other development partners).	Project team UNDP BIH	During terminal 6 months of the project.
Recommendation 9: **Ensure the sharing of the information generated by the SPA project with relevant new UNDP initiatives (specifically the BIOFIN project and GEF 8 Multi focal Project BD/LD).** The SPA project	Project team UNDP BIH	During startup of BIFIN and the

has built significant relationships and capacities, plus broken new ground in significant ways. This experience and lessons learned needs to be systematically trsfered and utilized in relevant emerging initiatives. The responsibility for doing so partly rests on the project (in terms of generating and sharing the critical experience and lessons,) but also with the CO and relevant emerging initiative authors who must adequately seek out and incorporate these experiences and lessons.		development / finalization of GEF8 project document

1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the review

The Midterm Review (MTR) of the UNDP-GEF project *"Improved Financial Sustainability and Strengthened Resilience of Protected Areas Through Development of Sustainable Recreation and Partnership with Private Sector"* was carried out according to the UNDP-GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy. Thus, it was carried out with the aim of providing a systematic and comprehensive review and evaluation of the performance of the project to date by assessing its design, processes of implementation, achievement relative to its objectives. More specifically, the MTR aimed to assess progress towards the achievement of the project objectives and outcomes as specified in the Project Document. On this basis, to 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 also reviewed the project's strategy, and risks to sustainability.

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 (if any) 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.

As the project approaches the midpoint of its lifespan, the MTR is timely to identify any potential challenges encountered during project implementation thus far and recommend necessary adjustments to enhance project effectiveness in the latter half of its duration, increasing the likelihood of achieving its intended results by the project's conclusion. In a substantive review of the effectiveness of the project approach, the MTR will attempt to assess cause and effect relations within the project, identifying the extent to which the observed changes can be attributed to project interventions.

The MTR will attempt to offer strategic recommendations for future decision-making across the project sectors, for UNDP, GEF, Project Board institutions (the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations of BiH, FBiH Ministry of Environment and Tourism, RS Ministry of Spatial Planning, Construction and Ecology, RS Ministry of Trade and Tourism, FBiH Environmental Protection Fund and the RS Environmental Protection and Energy Efficiency Fund), and other relevant stakeholders. Through this process, the MTR aims to inform and guide stakeholders towards optimized project outcomes and long-term impact.

The specific objective of the MTR will be aligned with UNDP evaluation policies and guidelines, and will highlight (but not be limited to) the following aspects:

- Assess the overall project progress vis-à-vis the Result Framework based on data, qualitative information and evidence on results and identify critical gaps or delays; assess co-financing disbursed to date and facilitate the updates of the METT scores.
- Assess external environment and risks, such as crisis caused by the pandemic, as well as internal risks, including weaknesses in programme design, management and implementation, human resource skills, and resource (aligned with UNDP evaluation policies)
- Engage all relevant stakeholders in structured conversations to enable collective insights and distilling of key lessons learned in relation to (signals of) transformative change induced by the project, mistakes, as well as important cross-cutting issues, such as innovation, gender equality and leaving no one behind.
- Formulate strategic recommendations for consideration by the project team, Implementing Partner (IP) and Country office staff engaged in the project (oversight and execution) and key partners, towards more effective project implementation in the future, or adjustments, as needed.

1.2 Scope & Methodology

The approach for the MTR was determined by the Terms of Reference (TOR, see Annex I) and by the UNDP-GEF Guidance for conducting Midterm Reviews[2]. Thus, it was carried out with the aim of providing a systematic, evidence-based and comprehensive review of the performance of the project to date by assessing its strategy and design, processes of implementation and achievements relative to its objectives. As such, the MTR determined the progress of the project in relation to its stated objectives (through the assessment of results, effectiveness, relevance, sustainability, impact and efficiency), to promote learning, feedback and knowledge sharing on the results and lessons (both positive and negative) that can be learned from the implementation of the project to date. The MTR examined whether the implementation arrangements – including the relationships and interactions among the project's partners, including the UNDP CO, key federal and entity authorities, and beneficiary PA Administrations - are effective and efficient.

The MTR will assess progress towards the achievement of the project objectives and outcomes at midterm as specified in the 5 year project document (01.07.2022 to June 2027) and assess early signs of project success or failure with the goal of identifying the necessary changes to be made (if any) 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.

As the project approaches the midpoint of its lifespan, the MTR is timely to identify any potential challenges encountered during project implementation thus far and recommend necessary adjustments to enhance project effectiveness in the latter half of its duration, increasing the likelihood of achieving its intended results by the project's conclusion. In a substantive review of the effectiveness of the project approach, the MTR will attempt to assess cause and effect relations within the project, identifying the extent to which the observed changes can be attributed to project interventions.

The MTR will attempt to offer strategic recommendations for future decision-making across the project sectors, for UNDP, GEF, Project Board institutions (the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations of BiH, FBiH Ministry of Environment and Tourism, RS Ministry of Spatial Planning, Construction and Ecology, RS Ministry of Trade and Tourism, FBiH Environmental Protection Fund and the RS Environmental Protection and Energy Efficiency Fund), and other relevant stakeholders. Through this process, the MTR aims to inform and guide stakeholders towards optimized project outcomes and long-term impact.

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- Engage all relevant stakeholders in structured conversations to enable collective insights and distilling of key lessons learned in relation to (signals of) transformative change induced by the project, mistakes, as well as important cross-cutting issues, such as innovation, gender equality and leaving no one behind.
- Formulate strategic recommendations for consideration by the project team, Implementing Partner (IP) and Country office staff engaged in the project (oversight and execution) and key partners, towards more effective project implementation in the future, or adjustments, as needed.

The MTR included a thorough review of the project documents and other outputs, financial plans and audits, monitoring reports, UNDP Project Document and CEO Endorsement document, GEF Sec. Review sheet, Inception Report, Project Implementation Reviews (PIR), monitoring tools (including, for example, PA Management Effectiveness Tracking tool METT), project consultant / contractor reports, relevant correspondence and other project related material produced by the project staff or their partners.

The MTR also included a mission to Bosnia Herzegovina between 20 and 29 October 2024 (see Annex for the itinerary of the MTR mission). The mission followed a collaborative and participatory approach and included a series of structured and unstructured interviews, both individually and in small groups (see also Annex for a list of the people met over the course of the MTR mission). Site visits were also conducted i) to validate the reports and indicators, ii) to consult with personnel in the pilot areas, local authorities or government representatives, project partners and local communities, and

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[2] UNDP-GEF (2014) *Project-level Monitoring: Guidance for conducting midterm reviews of UNDP-supported, GEF-financed projects.*

iv) to assess data that may only be held locally. Particular attention was paid to listening to the stakeholders' views and the confidentiality of all interviews was stressed. Whenever possible, the information was crosschecked among the various sources. This included cross-checking feedback and opinions between different gender groups. In addition, the review examined the achievements of the project within the realistic political, institutional and socio-economic framework of Bosnia Herzegovina.

The strategic framework towards which the project is working formed an important part of the MTR review process.

The review was carried out according to the UNDP/GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy and, therefore, ratings were provided for: i) the progress towards results, by outcome and by the objective, ii) project implementation and adaptive management, and iii) sustainability (and the risks thereto) (see Annex). Overall, there was an emphasis on supportive recommendations aimed at enhancing the ongoing implementation of the project.

The MTR was conducted by one international consultant. The consultant has been independent of the policy-making process, and the delivery and management of the assistance to the project; the consultant has not been involved in the implementation and/or supervision of the project.

Summary of Methodology and approach:

The Midterm Review was conducted in accordance with the guidance, rules and procedures established by UNDP and GEF as reflected in the UNDP "*Guidance for Conducting Mid-Term Reviews of UNDP-supported, GEF- Financed Projects[5]*", and the UNEG Standards and Norms for Evaluation in the UN System. The review was undertaken in-line with GEF principles which are: *independence, impartiality, transparency, disclosure, ethical, partnership, competencies/capacities, credibility* and *utility*. The process attempted to promote accountability for the achievement of project objective and outcomes and promoted learning, feedback and knowledge sharing on results and lessons learned among the project's partners and beyond.

Key aspects of the MTR approach included:
- *Emphasis on constructive analytical dialogue:* with the project partners; providing the project participants with an opportunity to explain the strategies applied to date, the challenges that have been faced and the inevitable nuances that affect a project. In this way the MTR was able to deepen the partner's conceptual understanding of the key issues underlying the project and the driving forces that have shaped, and continue, shaping events.
- *Critical analysis of the project design:* the original design and strategic approach were challenged against best practices and in light of the project's experience to consider whether there were flaws in its logic and approach or whether there were assumptions, known or unknown, that have not proven correct.
- *Critical reflection on the measures of project success:* measuring progress and performance against the indicators provided in the project's SRF with the participation of the project partners and reflecting on their relevance and adequacy.
- *Assessment of the project's performance and impact to date:* analyzing the performance and progress against the indicators and reasonably expected impacts of the project's implementation.
- *An examination of process:* critically examining the project's actions and activities to ensure that there has been sufficient effort in ensuring that elements of capacity building and participation, establishing processes and mechanisms, that will enable the targets to be achieved in the longer term rather than being *expedient*.
- *Synthesizing plausible future impacts:* using analytical methods to identify plausible future outcomes resulting from the impact of the project in the future and how these might affect the project's Theory of Change (ToC).
- *Jointly defining the conclusions and recommendations with the PMU and UNDP:* ensuring that there is a common understanding of any weaknesses or shortcomings in the project's implementation and an understanding of the reasons for, and the appropriate detail of, any recommended actions that might be necessary.

Review Instruments: The review provides evidence-based information that is credible, reliable and useful. Findings have been triangulated through the concept of "*multiple lines of evidence*" using several review tools and gathering information from different types of stakeholders and different levels of management. To conduct the review the following review instruments were used:

Documentation Review: The MTR consultant conducted an initial review of documentation provided by the project during the preparation of the Inception report and some additional documents requested. Further review of documents

and possibly the request for additional occurred throughout the MTR process as deemed necessary (*see Annex for the initially reviewed documents*).

Review Matrix: A review matrix has been drafted at inception phase and based on the review scope presented in the TOR, the project log-frame and the review of key project documents (*see Annex*). This matrix was further refined in run up and during the in-country mission based on emerging clarity and issues. This matrix is structured along the six evaluation criteria and includes all review questions; including the scope presented in the guidance. The matrix provided overall directions for the review and was used as a basis for interviewing people and reviewing project documents.

*Stakeholders to be Interviewed***:** Additional information collection and validation took place through remote and face-to-face consultations with a wide range of stakeholders, using "semi-structured interviews" with a key set of questions in a conversational format.

Principles/criteria for selecting interviewees: A sample of key informants needs to be accessed according to their involvement in the project's implementation, or as project beneficiaries. This includes (but is not limited to): the GEF Agency, government ministries and departments, academics, civil society associations, non-governmental organizations and community members and representatives and representatives from the private sector. A list of Stakeholders to be interviewed was developed during the inception phase of this MTR with the support of the Project Team and incorporated into a mission plan (*see Annex*). This list was reviewed to ensure that it is a representative sample of key project stakeholders, at federal, entity, canton and specific PA site level. Important other parties (such as partner donor projects and others) were also identified and included in the list. On this basis, dates and time slots for interviews were planned for the field mission with the objective of ensuring a representative scan of stakeholders' views during the field mission phase of the MTR. In addition, international individuals relevant to the project, including international technical experts and the regional UNDP office, etc., who were not available to interview in-country, were contracted and provided their input (by remote interview). To this end the contacts of these individuals have been requested and received (see annex).
Interviews: Based on the review matrix, an interview guide / protocol was developed (*see Annex*) to solicit information from stakeholders. Semi-structured interviews were conducted using the interview guide adapted for each interview.

Interviews were conducted in person and/or remotely using ZOOM or other communication platforms with some follow-up emails when needed. Confidentiality was guaranteed to the interviewees. Interviews and the information collected was disaggregated to reflect the different stakeholders (e.g. Implementing Agency – Executing Agency – PMU – implementing partners – beneficiaries as well as gender). Information from the interviews was collated and analysed to provide evidence-based conclusions on the overall performance, progress towards impact and achievements of the project as well as crosscutting issues.

Training Impact Assessment: The project has provided some surveys of training undertaken during initial implementation and these will be reviewed in the run-up to the MTR consultant field mission. During interviews with stakeholders who participated in training these assessments followed up in order to broaden the understanding of effectiveness was made. Additionally an online survey on training was conducted (in confidence) with the support of the project based on questions on this issue developed by the MTR (see Inception report annex and MTR Vol2.).
*Direct observations of project results and activities***:** wherever possible from the project area including consultations with local government and local agencies, local community representatives, project partners, CSOs and participants in field activities. The MTR visited a range of pilot sites as indicated in the ToR with a view to identifying directly project achievements and challenges. The project sites were selected (see annex) in collaboration with the project team based on their representativeness (in regard to ecosystem type, project activity and socio-political balance) and based on logistical feasibility during the period of the field mission.

*Gender***:** Gender equality and women's empowerment was assessed through collecting gender-disaggregated results arising from project activities, inclusion of women participants and relevant women's groups in the evaluation interviews and specific questions regarding the extent to which they were included in project's design and implementation and/or benefiting from the project. Gender and disadvantaged groups was included in all appropriate questions and crosschecked against specific questions related to these issues. Specific attention will be given to analysing examples, the best practices and lessons learned regarding women's empowerment arising through the project's scope of activities.

In addition to the UNDP and GEF guidance for reviewing projects, the MTR consultant applied his expertise in biodiversity conservation, sustainable livelihood, land and forest management and more generally in environmental management issues.

Preliminary findings Presentation and discussion:

The preliminary findings of the MTR were presented at a debriefing meeting at the end of the mission on 28th October 2024. The meeting was held at the UNDP CO in Sarajevo, and was attended Ms. Alisa Grabus, EE Sector Associate and the PMU.

Finally, the MTR was carried out with a number of audiences in mind, including (but not limited to): Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations (MoFTER) of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ministry of Environment and Tourism, Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ministry of Spatial Planning, Construction and Ecology of the Republika Srpska, Ministry of Trade and Tourism of Republika Srpska, Environmental Protection Fund of FBiH, Environmental Protection and Energy Efficiency Fund of Republika Srpska, the numerous concerned cantonal and municipality authorities, UNDP-CO, UNDP-GEF RTA, and the GEF.

Limitations and Constraints for the MTR

The approach for this mid-term review in the TOR was based on an MTR Team (International Team Leader and national team member), with a planned level of effort of 30 working days for the MTR Team Leader plus an unknow number of days for a national MTR team member. However, due to the UNDP CO in Bosnia Herzegovina being unable to identify a suitable national MTR team member, the full scope of the MTR falls on the international MTR consultant. Although this undoubtably is a constraint it is, in the opinion of the MTR international consultant, still feasible to gather sufficient data from the desk review and the 10 day in-country mission to undertake the MTR and provide meaningful and useful results, especially given the high level of project team support provided. The project is committed to providing the translation services (independent of project/other individuals with potential conflict of interests) and logistical support needed during this phase of the MTR process. Thus, it is considered that this constraint is not insurmountable.

The project is supporting and active in 10 or more specific PA / forestry sites and logistically, even in a relatively small country such as Bosnia Herzegovina, it will not be possible to visit all of them. For this reason, a representative sample has been selected in consultation with the project (see section above on-site selection and annex). Due to the highly complex national political and governance structure in Bosnia Herzegovina there is potentially a very large number of interested parties and stakeholders but clearly it is not feasible in a 10 day window of the MTR mission to meet or interview all and for this reason a representative sample of key stakeholders at federal, entity, canton and specific PA's have been selected in collaboration with the project team (see previous section on selection of stakeholders for interview).

1.3   Structure of the MTR report

The report follows the structure of Project Evaluations recommended in the UNDP Evaluation Guidance for GEF-Financed Projects as given in Annex 5 of the TOR. As such, it first deals with the purpose of the review and the methodology used for the review (Section 2), a description of the project and the development context in Bosnia Herzegovina (Section 3), it then deals with the Findings (Section 4) of the evaluation within four sections (Project Strategy, Progress Towards Results, Project Implementation and Adaptive Management, and Sustainability). The report then draws together the Conclusions and Recommendations (Section 5).

2   Project description and background context

2.1   Development context

The development context as described in the project document is as follows: Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) is located in South-Eastern Europe (SEE), in the central part of the Balkan Peninsula, and covers an area of 51,129 km^2. Bosnia and Herzegovina is a multi-ethnic state with a rich yet difficult historical background and a complex political and administrative system. It administratively consists of two entities (the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republika Srpska) and the autonomous Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH) is further administratively made of 10 cantons (regions), which are then made of 79 municipalities. Republika Srpska (RS) is divided administratively into 62 municipalities.[2]

BiH is an upper middle-income country with 3.5 million population with the main population trends of gradual declining and aging. Bosnia and Herzegovina has experienced steady economic growth in the past two decades, yet its population has declined 20 percent. Unemployment remains high, at 15.7 percent in 2019 and 19.1% in the first quarter of 2021. The youth unemployment rate, at 47.3 percent (2019) and 20.3 percent (2021), is one of the highest in the world. BiH is ranking 75th according to the Human Development Index[3] but is still below the average for the Europe and Central Asia region. Poverty is strongly associated with high unemployment, and over 17 percent of the population is estimated to live below the national poverty line[4].Inequality and poverty remain a concern, particularly in rural areas and among

minorities[5]. A more detailed description of the socio-economic context for the country is presented in the Annex to the project document.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is susceptible to natural disasters and environmental shocks. Natural and man-made hazards represent a significant risk with over 20% of the country's territory prone to flooding. Land and ecosystem degradation typical for a transitioning country remain to threaten the sustainability of the country's development efforts. Capacities to effectively address hazards and crisis need to be further strengthened, as confirmed by the unfolding COVID-19 crisis.

The biological diversity of the country is represented by over 450 species of higher plants, several hundred invertebrates (predominantly insects), 12 fish species, 2 species of amphibians, 4 species of reptiles and numerous species of birds and mammals. The country is home to a number of endemic species and habitats as well as a series of relict ecosystems; species diversity has the highest level of endemism in Europe. A more detailed description of the biodiversity context for the country is presented in the Annex 16 of the project document.

In spite of the country's rich biodiversity, international obligations, and growing man-induced pressures, nature conservation efforts remain insufficient. Socioeconomic challenges, such as unemployment and poverty, have resulted in both the government communities focusing on immediate economic priorities rather than environmental issues, including biodiversity. Thus, biodiversity conservation is not seen as a national priority[6]. Although, in the long run, biodiversity used in a sustainable manner can contribute to economic growth and poverty alleviation, it is now being used mostly as a source of resource exploitation.[7] According to the UNECE (2018), the inadequate integration of land, water, and biodiversity concerns into development planning has resulted in the emergence of threats of biodiversity loss.[8]

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

The overall project description of problems the project seeks to address and threats/barriers is somewhat unclearly described. The paragraphs below are extracted or paraphrased from the project document to attempt to summaries the relevant sections of the project document which describe the threats and barriers that needed to be overcome by the project to achieve the stated **project objective** "*to achieve practical improvement in management of protected area estate of BiH, providing for better biodiversity status through strengthened resilience of key biodiversity values to climate change impact and increased revenues to protected areas from sustainable recreation*".

The project's strategic long-term solution is stated as: "the proposed project is called to reduce the gap between the current capacities of protected areas with their increasing vulnerability to emerging threats, on the one hand, and the growing needs to preserve and sustainably maintain the biological and ecosystem diversity that is among the top five in Europe, on the other.

The project will: a). aim to reduce newly emerging threats to the key biodiversity values and provide for sustainable management options and increased funding for PAs, b). will make an incremental effort in assisting the protected area management with tools and instruments aimed at diversifying and improving the sustainable, nature-based tourism offering in targeted PAs and neighbouring communities, thus providing for sustainable incremental income and a development option that will valorise the unique nature values without further threatening them.

The barriers the project needs to address are somewhat unclearly presented but can be summarised as following:

Key barrier 1: A gap between the conservation and CC adaptation needs on the one hand, and the PA system capacity on the other hand (is one of the key barriers to the effective conservation effort and successful climate change adaptation nation-wide). Sub-barriers:

- Missing or inadequate conservation measures as one of the greatest issues in biodiversity conservation in the country,
- The lack of capacity and resources to implement the existing conservation measures
- The absence of effective cooperation between PA management bodies and local communities, limited outreach to stakeholders in general, and an overall low level of awareness of PA values and benefits
- Low capacities of PA management for income diversification is identified as one of the principal PA management weaknesses.

Key barrier 2: a widespread lack of awareness regarding biodiversity issues among the population. In particular, knowledge and awareness about biodiversity values and benefits provided by protected areas, as well as sustainable use of resources, is assessed as being rather limited

The proposed solution to CC capacity limitations (it appears but is not stated) in the PA system is the improvement of management effectiveness through capacity building to fill gaps in systemic, institutional and individual capacity.

The proposed solution to the barriers and constraints related to PA finance would be to address the system-wide funding gap for the management of protected areas through the development of nature-based tourism activities. The proposed intervention is designed to build ecotourism capacity and create a community-based network by developing a product package for pilot PAs as a tool to assist the PA management authorities and PA managers.

The project will (it is stated) "offer a sustainable alternative to the current functional model for the PA system in Bosnia and Herzegovina, aiming to reduce newly emerging threats to the key biodiversity values and providing for sustainable management options and increased funding for protected areas".

The project *Component 1* is directly aimed at addresses the identified **Barrier 1** (PA capacity gap to address emerging CC threats*). Component 2* is targeted to address **a sub-section 1 of Barrier 1** (Low capacities of PA management for income diversification). *Component 3* (knowledge management) is not clearly linked to any threat or barrier but seeks to ensure knowledge and experience of the project is documented and disseminated. Unusually there is a 4th Component related to M&E (this is related to implementation of the project M&E plan rather than technical implementation of activities to address threats and barriers so is discussed under M&E sections of the report). Specifically, the Outcomes under each component are:

Component 1: **Strengthening PA resilience to climate change threats**. This component contains one outcome, specifically "Managerial and technical capacities of targeted PAs in place helping ensure resilience of key biodiversity values to climate change" which would be achieved by 5 outputs. This outcome is intended to address Barrier 1 (as discussed above). The total budget allocated for achieving this outcome was USD 1,134,000 (41% of the project total GEF grant). The overall component has 7 related indicators and targets.

Of the 5 Outputs: Two are aimed at strengthening the basis for managing climate change threats at PA level (10 PAs) (Output 1.1: Comprehensive climate threat assessment conducted for pilot PAs. Output 1.2: PA management framework developed/updated and under implementation with account of climate threats).

Two are aimed at identifying and demonstrating in practice during the project duration innovative restoration approaches (Output 1.3: A portfolio of adaptation and resilience solutions for targeted species and ecosystems developed and set under implementation, Output 1.4: Demonstration of innovative restoration approaches). These are mainly related to a wetland site (Tisina PA).

And one final output relates to replication of these demonstrated approaches in other PAs/sites (Output 1.5: Replication triggered through incorporation of project solutions into forestry, land-use and disaster risk management programmes at other sites).

Component 2: Improving financial sustainability of targeted PAs through sustainable tourism development. This component contains one outcome, specifically "*Financial sustainability of targeted PAs improves*" which would be achieved by 4 outputs. The planned total cost of this Outcome was USD1,042,000 (37% of the total GEF grant). The overall component has 4 related indicators and targets.

Of the Outputs: 3 relate to improving PA financing via tourism related approaches (Outputs 2.1, 2.2, 2.3), one relates to improving financing for PAs via better access to existing national funding mechanisms (governmental grant programmes i.e. Output 2.4), and one relates to strengthening financing via improved awareness of the natural values (but only in a tourism context not wider ecosystem service values) and PA products and services (Output 2.5).

Component 3: Knowledge Management and communication. This component contains one outcome, specifically "*Knowledge management, and communication*" which would be achieved by one output, specifically Output 3.1:" Knowledge products and lessons learned documented and disseminated". The overall Component has 2 indicators. The total budget (GEF grant) for this component was 217,000 (8%).

A detailed review of the Outcomes, outputs and their financial weighting is provided in MTR Vol. 2 (Annexes). The analysis of the actual achievement of outputs and indicators under each of these outcomes, by the MT, is presented below (see Section 4.1).

2.3   Project Implementation Arrangements

The Implementing Partner for this project is UNDP. Based on consultations with the Government and Global Environment Facility at the PIF and PPG stages and as discussed with GEF Secretariat upstream, this project is executed through the **Direct Implementation Modality (DIM).** This project implementation modality, <u>with UNDP as an Implementing Partner</u>, was endorsed at the project concept stage.

The reasons behind the request for DIM implementation modality are associated with the extremely complex administrative and governance structure of the country, and the absence of a single entity or government partner that can take over the responsibility for the overall implementation of the project. The DIM implementation modality is considered as a risk mitigation measure, considering the complexity and specificity of the country's governance structure.

Figure 1: Project implementation Structure
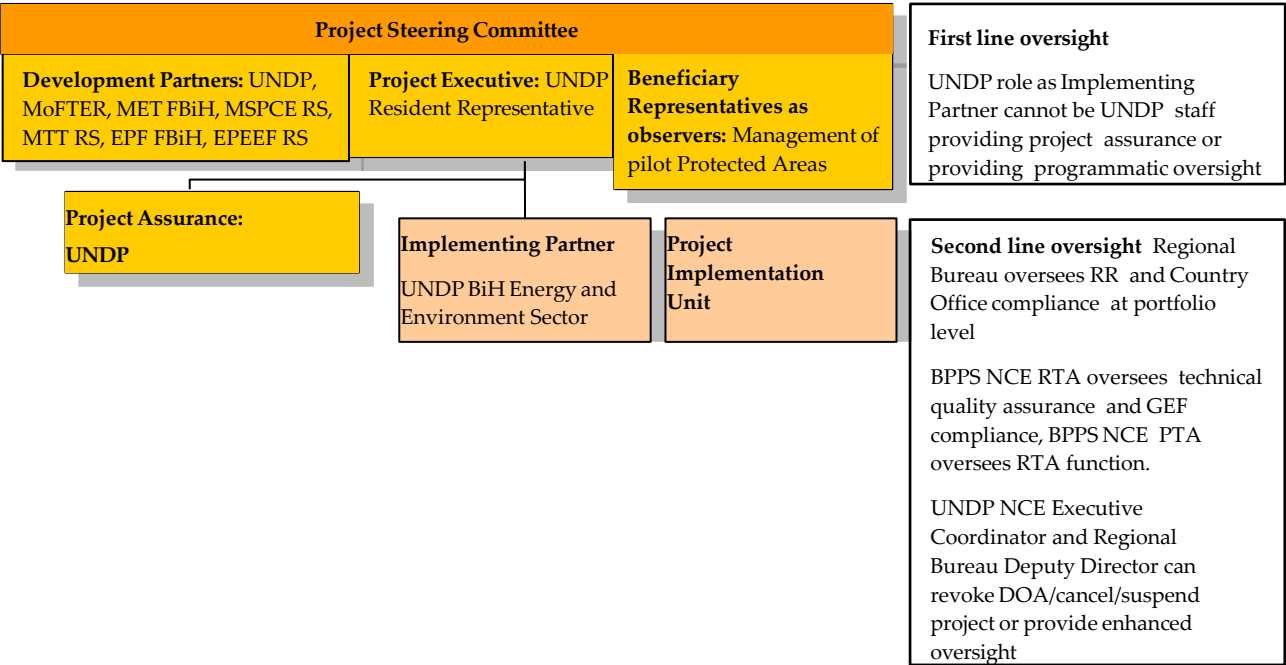
UNDP as the Implementing Partner is responsible for executing this project. Specific tasks include:

- Project planning, coordination, management, monitoring, evaluation and reporting. This includes providing all required information and data necessary for timely, comprehensive and evidence-based project reporting, including results and financial data, as necessary. The Implementing Partner will strive to ensure project-level M&E is undertaken by national institutes and is aligned with national systems so that the data used and generated by the project supports national systems.
- Risk management as outlined in this Project Document.
- Procurement of goods and services, including human resources.
- Financial management, including overseeing financial expenditures against project budgets.
- Approving and signing the multiyear workplan.
- Approving and signing the combined delivery report at the end of the year; and,
- Signing the financial report or the funding authorization and certificate of expenditures.

UNDP is accountable to the GEF for the implementation of this project. This includes overseeing project execution undertaken by the Implementing Partner to ensure that the project is being carried out in accordance with UNDP and GEF policies and procedures and the standards and provisions outlined in the Delegation of Authority (DOA) letter for this

project. The UNDP GEF Executive Coordinator, in consultation with UNDP Bureaus and the Implementing Partner, retains the right to revoke the project DOA, suspend or cancel this GEF project.

UNDP is responsible for the Project Assurance function in the project governance structure and presents to the Project Board and <u>attends Project Board meetings as a non-voting member.</u>

The GEF OFP has requested UNDP to provide full range of execution support services in line with DIM modality. UNDP, therefore, combines the role of a GEF agency in charge of the project implementation with that of an implementing partner for this project.

A strict firewall will be maintained between the delivery of **project oversight** and **quality assurance** performed by UNDP and project execution undertaken by UNDP. "Project management" will be undertaken by personnel on non-staff contracts (i.e. Service Contract holders) specifically hired for the management of this project, forming the so-called **Project Management Unit**. In line with standing ICF, their financial and legal accountability will not involve any actions from the category of "execution support", or "oversight"; it will be limited to preparing TORs, specifications, requests, and arranging for a proper process for all project management activities.

Separation of functions and reporting lines between those at UNDP providing oversight with those at UNDP providing execution support has been planned for in line with relevant POPP.

UNDP will not charge GEF any cost for execution support. The cost of oversight will be recovered solely from the GEF fee.

The execution services provided by UNDP include:
- Procurement of goods, services, and works on a transparent and competitive basis, including preparation of procurement plans, terms of reference, and procurement packages, ensuring procurement processes,
- contracting and contract management, required to implement all technical outputs and manage the project properly
- Identification and/or recruitment of project personnel and consultants according to UNDP norms and requirements, management of consultant activities, other HR-related services, to enable implementation of all technical outputs and proper project management.
- Financial services, including processing of payments for the project under all technical outputs and project management activities, creating vendors, payment reconciliation, and preparation of expenditure reports to partners and donors.
- Logistics support services, including duty travel for project personnel and consultants working under technical outputs, project event management.
- Equipment and Asset Management services, including IT equipment maintenance, licenses and ICT support for the project team and project activities.
- Maintenance of records of all project-related documentation.

Execution <u>support staff</u> reports to relevant Heads of Operations Units who report to CO Operations Manager.

Project Board: The two main (mandatory) roles of the project board are as follows:

High-level oversight of the execution of the project by the Implementing Partner - This is the primary function of the project board and includes annual (and as-needed) assessments of any major risks to the project, and decisions/agreements on any management actions or remedial measures to address them effectively. The Project Board reviews evidence of project performance based on monitoring, evaluation and reporting, including progress reports, evaluations, risk logs and the combined delivery report. The Project Board is responsible for taking corrective action as needed to ensure the project achieves the desired results.

Approval of strategic project execution decisions of the Implementing Partner with a view to assess and manage risks, monitor and ensure the overall achievement of projected results and impacts and ensure long term sustainability of project execution decisions of the Implementing Partner.

Project Board Responsibilities: The resposibilities of the board include – consensus decision making, overseeing project execution, risk management and coordination (for detailed description of requirements and responsibilities see relevant section of the project document). As of March 2024, the PB members included:

- Representative of the BiH Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations
- Representative of the BiH Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations
- Representative of the FBiH Ministry of the Environment and Tourism
- Representative of the RS Ministry for Spatial Planning, Construction and Ecology
- Representative of the RS Ministry of Trade and Tourism
- Representative of the RS Ministry of Trade and Tourism
- Representative of the FBiH Environmental Protection Fund
- Representative of the RS Fund for Environmental Protection and Energy Efficiency
- Representative of the UNDP BiH Energy and Environment Sector Leader
- Representative of the FBiH Ministry of the Environment and Tourism
- Representative of the FBiH Ministry of the Environment and Tourism
- Representative of the RS Ministry for Spatial Planning, Construction and Ecology
- Representative of the RS Fund for Environmental Protection and Energy Efficiency

The PB is Chaired by the Assistant Minister, FBiH Ministry for Environment and Tourism.

There are a large number of other partners involved in project implementation, of which some of the key ones include: the Institute for the Protection of the Cultural, Historical , the Cantonal Public Institution for Natural protected areas of the Sarajevo Canton, Municipality of Novi Grad, Municipality of Fojnica, Municipality of Šamac, the public enterprises for project target protected areas, the USAID project "Tourism".

Project Financing

The total cost of the project is USD 21,153,825. This is financed through a GEF grant of USD 2,640,000, UNDP TRAC resources of USD 150,000, and USD 18,363,825 in parallel co-financing. UNDP, as the GEF Implementing Agency, is responsible for the execution of the GEF resources.

Parallel co-financing: The actual realization of project co-financing will be monitored during both MTR and the Terminal Evaluation process and will be reported to the GEF at that time. The majority of co-financing is from government structures in Bosnia Herzegovina both from public investment and in-kind contributions (mainly national partner agency "time"). However, there is also grant funds of USD 1,365,000 from CISP and USD 1,100,000 from UNDP. More detailed examination of co-financing at MTR is provided later in the report. A detailed co-financing table is provided in the Annex of the report.

Table 1: Project Financing plan

FINANCING PLAN	
GEF Trust Fund grant	USD 2,640,000
UNDP TRAC resources	USD 150,000
(1) Total budget administered by UNDP	**USD 2,790,000**
CONFIRMED CO-FINANCING NOT ADMINISTERED BY UNDP	
FBiH Ministry of Environment and Tourism	USD 6,178,600
Ministry of Spatial Planning, Civil Engineering and Ecology of Republika Srpska	USD 6,560,500
Ministry of Trade and Tourism of Republika Srpska	USD 168,750
Environmental Protection Fund of FBiH	USD 2,500,000
Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations of Bosnia and Herzegovina	USD 116,600
Municipality of Šamac	USD 24,375
Municipality of Ravno	USD 200,000
Sarajevo Canton PE for PAs	USD 150,000
Comitato Internazionale per lo Sviluppo dei Popoli, Rome, Italy (CISP)	USD 1,365,000
UNDP	USD 1,100,000
(2) Total confirmed co-financing not administered by UNDP	**USD 18,363,825**
(3) Grand total project financing (1)+(2)	**USD 21,153,825**

Table 2: Summary of Budget and % distribution by years and Components

Years	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	total	% per component
Total Component 1	71,600	283,600	263,600	305,600	209,600	1,134,000	41
Total Component 2	63,600	198,600	283,600	294,600	201,600	1,042,000	37
Total Component 3	30,000	39,000	42,000	50,000	56,000	217,000	8
Total Component 4 M&E	14,000	12,000	42,000	12,000	42,000	122,000	4
Proj.Man	33,000	23,000	23,000	23,000	23,000	125,000	10
Total budget	242,200	586,200	684,200	715,200	562,200	2790000	
% per year	9	21	25	26	20		

2.4   Project timing and milestones

The project is planned as a five-year project (60 months) – the project PIF was approved in mid-2020 and CEO endorsement received in April 2022 (just under 2 years) with project signature almost exactly 2 years after PIF approval.

The project commenced in June 2022 and became operational September 2022 (first disbursement and key project staff) with the inception workshop/report dated November 2022 (approx. 6 months after project start).

This means that at the time of the MTR mission (late October 2024) the project has been under implementation for 29 months and there are 31 months of project implementation remaining (i.e. just over half total duration). The other project milestones, including the project end date for the project, are indicated in below.

Table 3. The project milestones including the projected end date for the project.

Milestone	Date
PIF Approval	03/06/2020
CEO Endorsement	April 2022
UNDP Project document signed	13/06/22
Project start date	01.07.2022
Date project office operational (first disbursement)	01.09.2022
Inception Workshop	01.11. 2022
MTR mission commences	20.10.2024
Planned Final MTR	31.01.2025
Estimated Terminal Evaluation date	April 2027
Projected EOP	30/06/2027

2.5   Main stakeholders

The Project Document identified the project's key stakeholders[3] and the table in the Project Document also describes their current mandate and their role and responsibility within the project. There is also specific discussion on stakeholders important for different thematic areas such as climate change and restoration, Fire management, sustainable tourism engagement of civil society, and Private Sector engagement and partnership. Annex 12 of the Project document includes

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[3] See the Stakeholder Engagement Plan presented Annex 12 Project Document..

a detailed Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP). For conciseness, below is provided a summarised version of the stakeholder table provided in the project document (pages 27-36).

Table 4: Summarized Stakeholder Description

Stakeholder/ stakeholder group	Stakeholder interests and role for the project
Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations (MoFTER) of Bosnia and Herzegovina	The Ministry defines policies, basic principles, coordinating activities and harmonizing plans of the Entity authorities and institutions at the international level. The Ministry will have the coordination role for the project at the level of the state. The Ministry will be invited to participate in joint decision-making for the project and nominate their representative for the Project Steering Committee.
Ministry of Environment and Tourism, Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina	The Ministry covers recurrent operating expenditures for the existing national parks in FBiH and allocates grants for sustainable tourism development. The Ministry will provide strategic guidance, validate project results and reports, coordinate project activities within its mandate, ensure liaison to federal level project partners. The Ministry will provide technical expertise through its personnel and networks, facilitate access to sites and locations, address logistical issues, e.g., through organization of meetings and provision of relevant facilities, support project management and regular project reporting. The Ministry will be directly involved in project strategic oversight and decision- making as the key development partner, through participation in the work of the Project Steering Committee. The Ministry will provide co-financing for the project and will ensure complementarity between its baseline and parallel activities with the project plans, and cooperate with the project to ensure sustainability, replicability and scale-up of project results.
Public Enterprise "National Park Una"	The Public Enterprise (PE) oversees the management of Una National Park and reports to the Ministry of Environment and Tourism, Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The National Park is one of the project pilot protected areas and the PE is therefore project beneficiary. The PE will work directly with the project implementation team to ensure ownership of relevant project results and capacity building for the utilization of PA management and planning instruments developed within the project.
Ministry of Spatial Planning, Construction and Ecology of the Republika Srpska	The Ministry covers recurrent operating expenditures for the existing national parks in Republika Srpska. The Ministry will provide strategic guidance, validate project results and reports, coordinate project activities within its mandate, ensure liaison to federal level project partners. The Ministry will provide technical expertise through its personnel and networks, facilitate access to sites and locations, address logistical issues, e.g., through organization of meetings and provision of relevant facilities, support project management and regular project reporting. The Ministry will be directly involved in project strategic oversight and decision- making as the key development partner, through participation in the work of the Project Steering Committee. The Ministry will provide co-financing for the project and will ensure complementarity between its baseline and parallel activities with the project plans, and cooperate with the project to ensure sustainability, replicability and scale-up of project results.
Public enterprise "National Park Sutjeska"	The Public Enterprise (PE) is in charge of the management of Sutjeska National Park and reports to the Ministry of Spatial Planning, Construction and Ecology of the Republika Srpska. The National Park is one of the project pilot protected areas and the PE is therefore project beneficiary. The PE will work directly with the project implementation team to ensure ownership of relevant project results and capacity building for the utilization of PA management and planning instruments developed within the project.
Public enterprise "National Park Kozara"	The Public Enterprise (PE) is in charge of the management of Kozara National Park and reports to the Ministry of Spatial Planning, Construction and Ecology of the Republika Srpska. The National Park is one of the project pilot protected areas and the PE is therefore project Beneficiary. The PE will work directly with the project implementation team to ensure ownership of relevant project results and capacity building for the utilization of PA management and planning instruments developed within the project.

Public enterprise "National Park Drina"	The Public Enterprise (PE) is in charge of the management of Drina National Park and reports to the Ministry of Spatial Planning, Construction and Ecology of the Republika Srpska. The National Park is one of the project pilot protected areas and the PE is therefore project beneficiary. The PE will work directly with the project implementation team to ensure ownership of relevant project results and capacity building for the utilization of PA management and planning instruments developed within the project.
Ministry of Trade and Tourism of Republika Srpska	The Ministry allocates grants for sustainable tourism development. The Ministry will be a member of the Project Steering Committee, will ensure coordination of project activities within Outcome 2 dedicated to sustainable tourism development for the PAs, and the policy and regulatory support for the protected area concession model in Republika Srpska.
Environmental Protection Fund of FBiH	The Fund takes care of conservation fundraising, as well as preparation, implementation and development of programs, projects and on-the-ground activities supporting the sustainable use of nature resources and environment protection. The Fund provides PA finance opportunities in the form of annual calls for grants on tourism development, biodiversity conservation, research, promotion, etc. The PAs have no special window or preference criteria for such granting schemes.
Environmental Protection and Energy Efficiency Fund of Republika Srpska	The Fund takes care of conservation fundraising, as well as preparation, implementation and development of programs, projects and on-the-ground activities supporting the sustainable use of nature resources and environment protection.
Concession Commission for Republika Srpska	An independent regulatory body established for concession management in Republika Srpska
Other governmental authorities: • Cantonal ministries and other institutions competent for environmental protection and tourism • Inter-Entity Steering Committee for the Environment	No information provided in prodoc.
Cantonal Public Institution for Natural protected areas of the Sarajevo Canton	The Cantonal Public Institution for Natural protected areas of the Sarajevo Canton is in charge of the management of protected areas of the Canton of Sarajevo. Bijambare Protected Landscape, Skakavac waterfall Nature Monument, Trebević Protected Landscape are project pilot protected areas, and the PE is therefore project beneficiary. The PE will work directly with the project implementation team to ensure ownership of relevant project results and capacity building for the utilization of PA management and planning instruments developed within the project.
Public Enterprise (PE) "Nature Park Blidinje"	The Public Enterprise (PE) is in charge of the management of Blidinje Nature Park which is the project pilot protected area, and the PE is, therefore, project beneficiary. The PE will work directly with the project implementation team to ensure ownership of relevant project results and capacity building for the utilization of tourism development and increased visitation techniques and instruments developed within the project.
Municipality of Novi Grad	The Municipality is in charge of the management of Una Park of Nature which is the project pilot protected area, and the Municipality is, therefore, project beneficiary. The Municipality will work directly with the project implementation team to ensure ownership of relevant project results and capacity building for the utilization of PA management and planning instruments developed within the project.
Municipality of Fojnica	The Municipality is in charge of the management of Prokosko Lake Nature Monument which is the project pilot protected area and the Municipality is, therefore, project beneficiary. The Municipality will work directly with the project implementation team to ensure ownership of relevant project results and capacity building for the utilization of PA management and planning instruments developed within the project.
Municipality of Šamac	The Municipality is in charge of the management of Tišina Protected Landscape which is the project pilot protected area, and the Municipality is, therefore, project beneficiary. The Municipality will work directly with the project implementation team to ensure ownership of relevant project results and capacity building for the implementation of wetland restoration techniques. The Municipality will provide technical expertise for knowledge management related to the restoration pilot, for its replication to other locations within Tišina Protected Landscape.

Public Enterprise "Vjetrenica"	The Public Enterprise (PE) is in charge of the management of Vjeternica PL which is the project pilot protected area and the PE is, therefore, project beneficiary. The Municipality will work directly with the project implementation team to ensure ownership of relevant project results and capacity building for the utilization of PA management and planning instruments developed within the project.
Association for the Protection of Flora and Fauna Gromiželj	The Association is in charge of the management of Gromiželj Protected Habitat which is the project pilot protected area, and the Municipality is, therefore, project beneficiary. The Association will work directly with the project implementation team to ensure ownership of relevant project results and capacity building for the implementation of wetland restoration techniques. The Municipality will provide technical expertise for knowledge management related to the restoration pilot, for its replication to other locations within Tišina Protected Landscape.
Cultural centre Pale Municipality of Ribnik Municipality of Šipovo Municipality of Gacko Municipality of Trebinje Municipality of Foča Municipality of Bileća Municipality of Sokolac	Tourist organisations of the Municipalities organize and promote tours to the cave nature monuments
Institute for the Protection of the Cultural, Historical and Natural Heritage of Republika Srpska	The Institute is an administrative organization within the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republika Srpska. The Institute participated in many projects related to environmental conservation and restoration, analyses and studies for the proclamation of protected areas of natural and cultural heritage.
National and local environmental CSOs and NGOs: Center for Environment, Banjaluka Ornithological Society "NašePtice", Sarajevo Society for Biological Research and Protection of Nature "Bio.Log", Sarajevo Society for Research and Protection of Biodiversity Banjaluka	The Center for the Environment is a non- profit association established to advocate changes in society by influencing relevant policies and public awareness of the environment in Bosnia and Herzegovina and internationally. The Ornithological Society "Našeptice" is involved in protection and monitoring of birds and birds' habitats, relevant awareness-raising, conservation programs, research and educational programs. The Ornithological Society "Našeptice" has experience in productive restoration of pastures and meadows, and promotion of bird watching in BiH. Bio.Log is a non-governmental, non-profit, organisation of young experts in the field and volunteers with aims to environmental protection, habitats conservation, research in the field, education and raising public awareness on biodiversity values and protection. Bio.Log has extensive experience in research and in situ conservation of species in high mountain ecosystems and karst freshwater ecosystems. Society for Research and Protection of Biodiversity Banjaluka biological has carried out research, protection, inventory of species, biodiversity monitoring for selected areas, estimation of vulnerability of species for Red List.
Community based organisations (CBOs): Culture Center of Pale Municipality Tourist organisation of Foča Municipality	Culture Center of Pale Municipality manages Orlovača cave as an administrative unit of the Municipality. The cave is located on land in private ownership, so the Center will help the project team outreach the land managers. Tourist organisation of Foča municipality cooperates with National Park Sutjeska offering tours in rafting, mountain climbing, hiking, cycling, canoeing etc.
Private sector stakeholders: Tourism Cluster Una-Sana Tourism Cluster Herzegovina Visit Sarajevo – Tourism Association of Canton Sarajevo	The Tourism Cluster Una-Sana undertakes activities aimed to advocate for better business conditions for the development of sustainable tourism sector. The Tourism Cluster Herzegovina plays an important role in incorporating protected areas of Herzegovina region in the tourism offer. Visit Sarajevo – Tourism Association of Canton Sarajevo works to respond to the needs of development, preservation and protection of tourist and cultural values in the Sarajevo Canton
Communities/people who may be directly affected by the project	Local communities will be informed of the project's plans and results through official communication handled by the project team/Implementing Partner and channelled through municipal resources as well as project-based communication means such as regular project newsletters, and coverage in social media, website, national, municipal press and TV. As part of SES risk mitigation, the project will ensure early disclosure of information and engagement on all activities that may affect local communities. A Grievance Redress Mechanism (see below) will be developed as a mechanism for addressing possible grievances and complaints associated with the direct project impact or co-financing activities. Local community representatives and institutions will be informed and asked for inputs where their livelihoods are concerned, such as enhanced compliance with the PA regime, local nature-based tourism development, support to sustainable use of NTFPs.

3   Findings

3.1   Project Strategy

Project development process and challenges: The project PIF STAP Review is dated 20 May 2020, and it was approved in mid-2020. CEO endorsement was received on 07 April 2022 (just under 2 years PPG phase from PIF Approval to CEO Endorsement) with project signature almost exactly 2 years after PIF approval. It should be noted that due to the ongoing COVID pandemic during this period the process faced significant challenges. The project is funded from the biodiversity GEF Country allocation.

The product development process was undertaken with the support of an international consultant, but due to COVID travel restrictions the UNDP CO Energy and Environment Sector Unit had play a very significant role. After the initial PIF stage STAP review, which did highlight the strategic issue related to the exclusive sustainable finance focus on tourism, later review processes seemed to focus mainly on clarifying budgetary and implementation issues (DIM), although the need to strengthen the component on knowledge management did receive attention. The quite lengthy gestation of the project form PIF to signature is likely due to the challenges of the COVID pandemic and need to clear the DIM modality with GEF.

The MTR team noted the addition of a component on M&E (Component 4) that seems rather unnecessary given the standard Section V in the project document on this (in fact the text under this component just refers to Section V) but this is apparently a new requirement of the GEF.

3.1.1   Project Design

The overall MTR conclusion of project Strategy and design was that it **was adequate** in terms of identifying the most important and relevant key issues to address (i.e., the 2 key Outcomes) and outputs for achieving the outcomes – activities (as defined in the text and multi-year workplan more of a problem for reasons discussed below).

The project addresses country priorities (as defined in various policy documents including NBSAP) and was country-driven both in its development and implementation (evidenced from extent of key stakeholder participation in both processes). Due to the unusual political situation of Bosnia and Herzegovina there are unusual externalities and challenges in terms of the governance of PAs, but the design has factored this aspect to some extent and intelligent implementation has further addressed. Perhaps the biggest and most uncertain externality relates to climate change and the rate at which changes are occurring – this is a significant potential threat to the sustainability but is one that is shared internationally, and the project design contains relevant and reasonable activities to address CC within the scope of current forecasted changes.

The project development included the development of an environmental and social screening process that should have benefited reduction of risks in these regards, and this is further ensured by the project implementation team. The MTR would suggest that there is a need in future to increase the resources (financial and technical) to this aspect of project development and implementation if the full benefits are to be accrued. Adequate consideration of decision making processes and potential repercussions was included into the design. Gender considerations were well addressed in the project design and the basis for ensuring this aspect was effectively addressed during implementation put in place.

However, the MTR would suggest there were both strategic weakness in the design and some practical weaknesses also – these are discussed below.

The Project Document appears to provide a somewhat confusing analysis of the problems to address (threats, root causes and barriers) that then do not very clearly lead to the 2 main components selected. The "Theory of Change approach and diagram" does not seem to derive very directly from that analysis.

However, the strategy is relatively simple, and though the basis for reaching them is not that clear, the two main components – one addressing the capacity of PA system to effectively manage PAs, including responding to climate change threats, and the second focusing on the financial sustainability (mainly in the context of tourism) are relevant and address critical threats and barriers to the effectiveness and sustainability of the PA in the country.

The MTR has a few points to raise regarding the project analysis that are then considered as having impacted effectiveness of the design.

Strategic weakness (issues not well identified problem to address analysis and then included into design):

1. capacity support on CC adaption management issues:

The first relates to the focus in Component 1 of capacity support on CC adaption management issues, despite an identification in the background analysis of <u>overall</u> management effectiveness being weak (i.e. it is one of the barriers highlighted). If this is the case, then introducing new and additional management tasks to a system struggling to meet basic management issues will be not be addressing the underlying barrier. Closely related to this is another aspect not identified clearly i.e. the fact that very different levels of baseline capacity exist within the country PA system – for example some of the long-established NPs have very considerable capacity already while other more recently established and "lower category" PAs have extremely limited capacity. In the context of the above the project document would ideally have nuanced the capacity support PAs and focused more directly on general capacity development in the second category of areas while focusing more specifically on introducing CC adaption to those areas best able to apply it.

2. extremely fragmented and decentralized nature of the systems management:
Another issue of importance and a significant barrier to the systematic development of the PA system in Bosnia and Herzegovina which was not identified in the analysis is the **extremely fragmented and decentralized nature of the systems management**. Unlike most countries where there is usually at least one national level institution that has overall responsibility for PAs and often only a few at most that have direct responsibility for managing large parts of the system (NPs and strict reserves typically), the situation in Bosnia Herzegovina is far more complex including entity level PAs, Canton level (in FBH), municipality level, etc. This situation brings significant challenges in many was (including to systematic development of PA effective management across the system) and project interventions to address / mitigate these challenges would have been relevant.

In the context of Component 2 (PA sustainable financing) the MTR would highlight the exclusive focus on tourism only as the solution to the financial sustainability issues facing the PAs as an issue – as the COVID pandemic demonstrated, such an exclusive focus brings significant risks, and a more diversified approach would be better. This was an issue raised briefly by the STAP review but then does not seem to have been followed up on during the further project development.

The MTR accepted that in practice tourism was the "low hanging" fruit and most viable means to quickly close PA funding gaps – however, in the long term it is a high-risk funding strategy to focus on it exclusively (as Covid demonstrated). Thus, it would have been arguably better in the project document to have a). discussed and clarified the wider vision and key principles for long term PA sustainable financing and b) to have included some support to also define a more diversified longer term strategic context and to embed the principle that public financing for PAs (as a public good) should be an essential component of PA financing (except in exceptional cases) as well as other approaches (tourism being just one). This would have been a potentially important building of long-term strategic thinking and capacity development in national / entity level structures. Additionally, some activities to at least lay the basis for other SFM approaches could have been included (such as initial work to better define ecosystem service benefits of PAs etc.).

Fortunately, the MTR review (including document review, interviews with consultants and project stakeholders) has shown that in practice the project has been effective in identifying <u>itself</u> during implementation these issues and taking steps to address them.

Design Issues impacting practical implementation of the project.

<u>Over specific definition in project of project financing mechanisms (SFM)</u> – in an ideal would it is of course preferable to have as many specifics detailed in the project document as is possible the mechanisms or methodologies to be applied (for example, types of sustainable financing mechanisms, etc). However, this comes also with its risks if these specifics are not based on sufficiently solid groundings (SFM knowledge of analysis) or considerable time passes between their identification and project approval. In this project there are a large number of SFM activities at specific sites specified – however, the basis for many seems to be not based on a full review of the options or perhaps not a full knowledge and experience of the options. As a result, the project, with the support of an international SFM expert, has had to make significant adjustments. In such situations it would have been better to leave the specifics of which SFMs would be applied until the project implementation (project document could have listed potential options but left the selection of them until implementation when a more in-depth assessment, review and consultation had taken place).

<u>Lack of implementation realism in terms of some Outputs</u>, 2 examples being a). the case of wetlands restoration (underestimated complexity, time required and funding that would be required), b) output 1.5 replication (again unrealistic in timeframe and budget).

3.1.2   Results Framework / Logframe

The Results Framework (RF) is overall in accordance with standard format.

 Indicators for measuring progress towards Outcomes and Objective: The UNDP-GEF monitoring and evaluation system is based heavily on the use of Objective and Outcome indicators to assess project progress. Furthermore, the indicators provide a clear basis for project implementers to understand what concretely they need to be trying to achieve -i.e. a means to help guide implementation and ensure activities planned and executed are really heading towards the objective (or falling short and need to be reviewed/adapted – i.e. adaptive management). Thus, the choice of good indicators is a crucial one for both implementation monitoring / adaption and the MTR and TE processes.

 UNDP GEF indicators use the "SMART" approach i.e. Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound[4]). Review of the project indicators in the RF suggest that some fall short of the above in two main ways i.e. relevant and measurable. Numerous other substantial weaknesses in the indicator system were noted. A summary of the main issues noted by the MTR related to the project indicators and targets is provided below in the following paragraphs and table (and further analysis with suggested changes is provided in the annexes – some recommendations on this issue are also provided in the relevant recommendations section).

Table 5: Indicators and Targets identified at MTR with issues.

Indicators MTR report highlights	*The baseline*	*MT and EoP targets*	*Comments*
Objective: To achieve practical PA management improvement and better biodiversity status through strengthened resilience of key biodiversity values to climate change impact and increased revenues from sustainable recreation			
Mandatory Indicator 1 (GEF Core Indicator 11): # direct project beneficiaries disaggregated by gender (individual people)	0	MT- 100,000 (incl. 50,000 women) EoP: 314,900 (incl. 157,260 women)	Direct beneficiaries are not defined in the project document and methodology used to calculate targets or to monitor impact during implementation not defined either. Nore was it specified that this was a task to be undertaken at inception. As a result no clear basis for monitoring progress towards the MT and EoP targets. Current methodology adopted by the project includes visitors which MTR would suggest is not appropriate. Recommendations on suggested revised methodology to be applied post MTR are provided (see report text and annex).
Outcome 1: Managerial and technical capacities of targeted PAs in place helping ensure resilience of key biodiversity values to climate change			
Indicator 4: At least 15% increase in METT score for the targeted national PAs	*0 (see baseline METT scores*	MT: *10% increase (on average) from the baseline METT scores* EoP: 15%	MT METT review and score was based on project implementation document review only – for TE METT should be based on independent review with PAs.
Indicator 7a: % reduction in extent (ha/annum) of forests detrimentally impacted by fires: Orjen PN, Sutjeska NP, Kozara NP, Drina NP,	*7a: baseline data and viable end-of-project target (%reduction) to be*	MT – NA EoP 7a: 15% *from baseline*	This indicator is considered by the MTR as impractical and lacking in meaningfulness. The frequency and severity of fires depend largely on factors beyond the Project and PAs control and fires are not an event in nature that is predictable – their occurrence and severity will depend on many factors and in particular variations in climate between years. *Therefore, attempting to measure project impact in a % decline of detrimental impact of fires to PA territory is not a viable or meaningful approach.*

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[4] The first criterion, **Specific**, means that the indicator needs to be narrow and accurately describe what needs to be measured. **Measurable** means that regardless of who uses the indicator it would be measured in the same way. **Achievable** (or attainable) means that collecting the data should be straightforward and cost-effective. **Relevant** requires that the indicator be closely linked to the relevant outcome. Finally, **Time-bound** means that there should be a timeframe linked to the indicator (such as the frequency with which it is collected or measured

Skakavac PL, Blidinje PN	*obtained in the Year 1* *Orjen PN: 10 ha. Sutjeska NP: 0 ha. Kozara NP: 0 ha. Drina NP: 20 ha* *Skakavac NM: 0 ha*		Given the above issues MTR proposes it would be more useful to use a presence or absence indicator (plans in place and officially adopted by stakeholders) – though only a "process" indicator this at least is a feasible option and measure of whether the project achieved the activity, and it was sufficiently useful to the stakeholders that they adopted it. Devising a meaningful impact indicator is possible but unlikely to be feasible within project timeframe and budget (given level of effort that would be required to substantiate it).
Outcome 2: Financial sustainability of targeted PAs improves			
Indicator 8: At least 20% reduction of the funding gap for targeted PAs	0	MT – NA EoP 20% from baseline	This indicator has a number of issues / unclarities:: firstly, it assumes that adequate information on the Target PAs financing status (and gap between required financing and current financing) existed at the project start (as basis for then measuring if that gap is being reduced) – in reality such information did not apparently exist; secondly, the baseline is indicated as 0 – but zero what? 0% reduction in gap?; thirdly, it's not clear why the figure of 20% reduction in the "gap" was selected. And is this 20% reduction in gap on average? (average change for 10 PAs), or for each PA? etc. Due to these issues the indicator is considered unhelpful as a measure of project impact on sustainable financing for target PAs. The international SFM consultant recommended in her initial report "that a simplified FSS exercise is carried out, covering the project's 10 target PAs, and updated on an annual basis over the course of the project". It is suggested that this would be a more meaningful mechanism for measuring the sustainable financing impact in the target PAs.
Indicator 9: At least 1 mutually beneficial public-private agreement (including concessions, leases, rentals) formalised and operational	0	MT: 0: All prerequisites for concession operationalization ensured EoP: 1	*MTR concurs with International SFM consultant Recommendation (Report D4 page 11):* the relevant indicator for component 2 should be reworded so as to not specifically mention PPPs. This could be accomplished with little or no change in meaning or ambition, for example by modifying the output to "at least 1 mutually beneficial outsourcing agreement (including concessions, leases, rentals) formalised and operational". This also allows for the possibility for the management of PA facilities, services or infrastructure to be outsourced to a non-commercial or not-for-profit organisation, as well as to the private sector. It would of course not preclude entering into a PPP arrangement, where this is appropriate and legally enabled.
Indicator 11: At least 20% increase in the annual number of visitors and service users in targeted PAs (data disaggregated by gender)	0	MT: 5% EoP: 20%	Not all of targeted PAs are tracking this key indicator or have established entry points and predefined entry fees (see PIR24). Thus to simplify this indicator would make sense to limit monitoring to those PAs with such data (but to add activity on strengthening capacity of others to begin tracking visitor numbers).

 The objective level indicators (mandatory GEF indicators) are the most critical for gaining a measure of whether the project is moving towards its final expected impact (i.e. PA effective management and CC adaption in place, and Sustainable financing secured). One out of the 3 indicators (i.e. indicator 1) for the objective suffered a significant limitation at the project start due to lack of clear definition (i.e. what should count as "direct beneficiaries). Annex 8 of the ProDoc is titled "GEF Indicators at Baseline" but does not provide an explanation of how the target figures were calculated (and thus provide a methodology for the project to follow during implementation) – likewise no other clear explanation seems to be provided elsewhere. At inception the project has devised its own methodology, but this includes counting of visitors to PAs which the MTR would suggest is not appropriate.

It is recommended that the project should now review and elaborate clearly the methodology to be used to calculate the "direct beneficiaries" and ensure this is agreed both with RTA and Project Board (essentially a list of different categories with definition of "who counts" and justification for their inclusion.). This will then provide a clear basis for the project to monitor in final half of implementation and for the TE to base their conclusion of impact.

Outcome 1 indicators (4): There are a total of four indicators under this outcome, however 2 contain multiple parts (indicators 6 and 7). Indicator 4 is a standard GEF PA project measure related to the expected change in "management effectiveness" measured using the METT tracking tool. Review and analysis of the METT at baseline and MT showed an increase in overall score for all target PAs close or exceeding the MT target – more in-depth review with the consultant who supported the preparation and updating of the METT, together with a review of training and other activities (management planning, etc.) and meetings with PA staff, were persuasive in term of the meaningfulness of the changes indicated .

The only MTR comment regarding this indicator and the METT is that the MT verification was done based on document review only (review of management effectiveness activities undertaken at target PAs) and METT scores adjusted on this basis – for TE the MTR recommends that METT review must be undertaken through review at PAs with PA staff/stakeholders by an independent accessor. Indicator 5 (area of terrestrial PA impacted) is straightforward – the only issue here is that due to adjustments of sites (see text under Section 3.2.1) the area is likely to change but not reduce.

Indicator 7a, which relates to measuring project impacts on capacity to address increased fire threats from climate change is less satisfactory. This indicator is considered impractical and lacking in meaningfulness. The project is helping PAs to develop Action plans for firefighting in collaboration with / better coordinated with other stakeholders (Forestry enterprises, Civil Protection, municipalities, etc.) and some equipment for PAs (procurement to be completed in 2024). This should improve the effective response of PAs and other stakeholders to fires if they occur in the future.

However, the frequency and severity of fires depend largely on factors beyond the PAs control and fires are not an event in nature that is predictable – their occurrence and severity will depend on many factors and in particular variations in climate between years – climate change will cause a change in <u>trend</u> over multiple years <u>but</u> between years there will be large variation. Therefore, attempting to measure project impact in as % decline of detrimental impact of fires to PA territory during the project 2nd half (2.5 years after the fire Aps were approved) does not seem to be a viable or meaningful approach. Additionally, it's not clear how the figure of 15% reduction in "detrimental impact "from fires come from. Why 15% not 20 % for example? If climate change is making fires worse maybe achieving 0% change could be considered an adequate impact? In summary, this is a complex situation that is not well reflected by the indicator.

Given the above issues the MTR proposes it would be more useful to use a presence or absence indicator (plans in place and officially adopted by stakeholders) – though only a "process" indicator this at least is a feasible option and measure of whether the project achieved the activity, and it was sufficiently useful to the stakeholders that they adopted it. Devising a meaningful "impact" indicator (in terms of impact to number, extent or severity of fires) maybe possible but unlikely to be feasible within project timeframe and budget (given level of effort that would be required to substantiate it). Possibly a subjective indicator based on feedback / perception of the PA staff and other stakeholders could be useful but would add to the existing monitoring effort required (survey at EoP).

Outcome 2 indicators and Targets (4): Indicators and targets under outcome 2 are related to measuring project impact on financial sustainability of target PAs in some way or another (either directly as in case of indicators 8,9 and 10 and indirectly in case of indicator 11 (visitor numbers). Unfortunately, 3 out of 4 of these indicators (i.e. 8, 9 and 11) have significant limitations. In the case of indicator 9 (At least 1 mutually beneficial public- private agreement, including concessions, leases, rentals, formalised and operational) it was directly linked to Output 2.3 (which is itself directly linked to one site) which in practice has had to be changed. Additionally, as pointed out by the international SFM consultant, it refers specifically to PPPs which in pre-project evaluations were considered high risk. Due to these issues the MTR is recommending a change in indicator and targets based on the recommendation provided by the IC SFM (see annex and recommendations for details).

In regard to Indicator 9 and 11 there are feasibility issues that make them difficult to meaningfully apply. In the case of Indicator 8 (At least 20% reduction of the funding gap for targeted PAs) the problem faced by the project is that at inception few of the target PAs had meaningful baseline data on their financing and certainly no basis to calculate the gap between financing and needs for effective management (the latter is not a simple or straightforward calculation as it requires to know accurately the management needs and then their costs over multiple years). The IC SFM consultant provides a more detailed review of this situation in her report (D1) and also proposed the substitution of this indictor with use of a simplified version of the UNDP PA Sustainable Financing Scorecard tracking mechanism. The MTR would agree with that suggestion and relevant recommendations and suggestions in this regard are provided in the annex and under recommendations.

Indicator 11 under Outcome 2 relates to an increase in visitors to target PAs (At least 20% increase in the annual number of visitors and service users in targeted PAs -data disaggregated by gender). However, not all of targeted PAs are tracking

this indicator or have established entry points and predefined entry fees that would allow them to do so simply (see PIR24). Thus the data being reported currently is only for those that do have the possibility to provide data. The MTR would recommend simplifying this indicator by limiting it to those PAs with such data (but to add activity on strengthening capacity of others to begin tracking visitor numbers in some manner at least).

A recommendation is made in Section 4 of the report regarding the above suggested indicators that need adjustment, and a table is provided in the annex that provides both review and suggested changes to the indicators. However, the suggested changes are provisional and will need finalization through consultation with project consultants, the PB and the RTA.

3.2   Progress Towards Results

3.2.1   Progress towards outcomes analysis

The project CEO document was approved 07 April 2022 and project document signed mid-June 2022 (2-month latter). The Project Manager was hired in September 2022, Project Analyst (based in Banja Luka) in December 2022 and Project Associate in January 2023. The project became operationally active (1st disbursement of funds) in September 2022.

 The Inception Workshop occurred on 27th September 2022 (approx. 2.5 months after project signing) and report finalized in October 2022. In addition to the Inception workshop 12 stakeholder meetings took place. (a reflection of the complicated stakeholder context and need for discussion/clarification of project content). The 1st Project Board Meeting (PB) took place on 10th October. The PB initial meeting clarified roles and approved inception report. The only debated Project indicator was the one related to Bosnian Alpine Newt (thought to be extinct at the Prokosko lake NM).

The situation analysis in the inception report highlighted a number of changes in situation compared to the project document but exclusively in the context of Component 1 (Outcome 1). Intelligent adaptions in this context were identified. The inception Report also contained a draft Annual Work Plan and Budget for Year 1 (with targets up to June 2023) which was subsequently approved by the RTA.

In short, the project start-up and operational establishment were carried out efficiently. An opportunity to address some of the indicator and target issues discussed above were perhaps missed and likewise some of the issues latter faced under component 2 were not identified in the situational analysis. However, this is looking in hindsight and at the time some of the issues regarding Component 2 may have still not been apparent. The MTR would however suggest a more critical review of the indicators would have been helpful and this is a lessoned learned for future projects.

 Project full implementation can therefore be considered as commencing in October 2022 after completion of the Inception Phase, 1st PB and approval of the AWP. Each of the 3 project components (not counting Component 4 M&E) contains 1 related outcome, achieved through a number of expected outputs (5 outputs for Outcome 1, 5 for Outcome 2, and 1 output only under Outcome 3 (Knowledge management and communication).

Component 1: Strengthening PA resilience to climate change threats

 The Outcome 1 under this component is described as "**:** Managerial and technical capacities of targeted PAs in place helping ensure resilience of key biodiversity values to climate change" and is to be achieved through 5 outputs. This outcome is intended to address threats/Barrier related to insufficient PA management capacity, and limited CC adaption in existing PA management planning.

 This outcome has about 41% of total budget (43% GEF grant funds allocated). The project budget planned approx. 42.5% of expenditure by MT, and 56.5% during second half of the project (i.e. most of the budget allocated to second half). This is mainly related to the fact that the second half of the project will see progression from soft assistance (planning and capacity building) to greater field level "hard" support (for example wetland restoration).

 Outcome 1 has 5 outputs which can be grouped into two main categories: Outputs 1.1 and 1.2 are mainly related to building target PA management planning capacity, with the addition also of climate change adaption overlays; while Outputs 1.3 and 1.4 are related to development and practical implementation of new approaches to address threats (build resilience) to biodiversity in PAs that are (at least in part) derived from changes in climate (Output 1.3 – 5 interventions

including 3 species plans, one multi area fire response initiative, and one multi area disease response initiative, Output 1.4 – wetlands restoration in 2 sites). There is a final Output 1.5 that aims to replicate "good practices" or experience elsewhere in the country.

Summary of Some Key achievements at MTR include:

Under outputs 1.1 and 1.2 (*Target PA Management Plans and CC adaption / resilience building*)**:** In practice the project has taken a pragmatic combined approach to implementing these two linked Outputs. It has successfully supported the development or updating of 10 management plans with inclusion of concrete measures/activities designed to minimize the negative impacts of CC in the following target PAs:
  a. 5 PAs in Republika Srpska: NP Sutjeska, NP Kozara, NP Drina, PN Una, PN Orjen
  b. 5 PAs in Federation of BiH: NP Una, NM Prokosko lake, PN Blidinje, PL Vjetrenica – Popovo polje, and NM Vrelo Bosne (*PN Blidinje excluded from the Project (minutes from the 4th Project Board meeting)

The MTR would note that the target PAs had very different levels of capacities and situations in regard to management plans (and capacities to develop and implement them) which was an aspect not well identified in the project analysis / design. The project has been adaptive in addressing this by applying a flexible approach (more focus on CC adaption and financial planning in those PAs with existing MPs and capacity, more basic capacity support and full MP development in areas with no existing plans, more targeted efforts to MP implementation issues, etc.). For some newer areas the project support has been very significant in building capacity of PA staff, and recognition of biodiversity aspects by parent authorities/local communities (an example being Lake Prokosko NM).

The MTR would highlight that the project also intelligently integrated into the PA management planning process support to PA financial planning – this substitutes an activity under Component 2, Outcome 2.1 related to "updating of PA Business plans". In reality, no PAs had "business plans" to update and thus the project undertook to address the lack of PA level financial planning by introducing at least the basics of financial planning for the first time (budgeting actions identified in Management plans and provisional identification of funding sources for these actions, etc.). This is a very significant advance on the pre-project situation when little or no such financial planning was done (an important incremental result).

As noted above, activities at one of the target areas (Blidinje PN) has had to be abandoned at the request of the PA administration and local authority due to reasons beyond the projects control. Thus, unfortunately efforts initially invested here in regard to MP development were not able to achieve an end result. It is expected that all of the target PA MPs will be approved and adopted by the relevant authorities by the end of 2024 (the MTR has confidence in this occurring based on the extensive review and consultation already undergone and feedback received from relevant authorities during the field mission). Thus, in conclusion the project will have successfully achieved 9 PA MPs with subsequent increase in their management effectiveness, particularly in regard to CC adaption aspects and to financial planning.

PA Managers Association: One important aspect not clearly identified in the project document is the limitations / barriers created in Bosnia Herzegovina by the extremely decentralized and thus fragmented management "authority" for protected areas. This is a significant barrier to the building of the overall system capacity and opportunity for cross PA fertilization of good practices, lessons learned and communication. A cross-system mechanism is briefly touched on within Output 2.1 (justification for clustering of PAS) but this is purely in the context of PA tourism promotion and marketing. The Project and stakeholders have correctly identified that there is a need for some mechanism to unite PA managers and has, as a result, initiated support for establishing "PA Managers Associations" (entity level but with interlinkages). The MTR would highlight this initiative as potentially extremely valuable in the further development of the PA system (from all points of view – management, financing, etc.).

Under Output 1.3 (*adaptation and resilience solutions for targeted species and ecosystems*): The project faced some challenges under this Output both in terms of feasibility / relevance of some activities indicated in the project document and also with one target area (Blidinje) pulling out. Some of the key results achieved are:
  • Developed Forest fire action plans for prevention, preparedness, and response for finalized for 5 PAs i.e. _ PN Orjen, NP Sutjeska, NP Kozara, NP Drina, Sarajevo Canton PAs (NM Skakavac). These plans should be approved and adopted by all PAs/responsible authorities by end of 2024. Ongoing activities include procurement of equipment for the 5 PAs and next year planned to design and execution of trainings and awareness raising campaigns and establish community-based fire-fighting units. This is considered by the MTR one of the most important CC adaption measures supported by the project and with implications / potential impact beyond the PAs (and important lessons / experience for future related support).

- Bosnian Alpine Newt (Prokosko Lake Natural Monument) - in situ and ex situ measures implemented, species management plan developed; ToR for fish eradication process developed. The situation regarding Prokosko Lake and the newt was significantly different from that assumed in the project document and the project has been very pro-active in finding new approaches towards addressing the real situation in order to conserve this charismatic endemic species.
- Serbian Spruce adaption/ conservation plan: Adaptation measures for Serbian spruce populations including identifying 4 locations for establishment of Serbian spruce plantations enabling the in-situ and ex-situ population regeneration. Plantations will be established in autumn 2024.
- Adaptation plan for Bosnian pine: Unfortunately, the original site selected in the project document for these activities has exited from the project (Blidinje) – the project, PB and key relevant stakeholders have addressed this issue through shifting the activity focus to planned PA Prenj where the Bosnian Pine is also present.
- Support related to Bark Beetle control: This activity in the project document also proved to be not well aligned with actual needs as the proposed support was perceived by stakeholders as bringing nothing new. As a result, at the proposal of PB and RS stakeholders the project has instead used related resources to supported establishment of improved monitoring of Lynx populations in the RS. The MTR would note that this activity is rather different from the intended (not directly addressing climate change adaption as per the focus of the Output – however, improving data on lynx populations and range/migration may become important in the future to plan adaption for their conservation in the future, plus it was the direct request of stakeholders, so the MTR would support the decision.

Under Output 1.4 (*Demonstration of innovative restoration approaches)***:** This output is actually only related to demonstration of wetlands and in the project document identified 2 sites i.e. Tisina and Gromizelj. However, the actual resources provided in the project for these demonstration wetland restorations is rather limited (USD 400,000 for all activities in 2 sites from initial studies/restoration plans, through to actual restoration activities and then evaluation/lesson learned and replication analysis).

The MTR would suggest this demonstrated some lack for realism and appreciation of the difficulties and complexity of wetland systems in such a highly modified environment and the likely very high cost of works needed to achieve restoration (mostly related to water management issues – i.e. physical works and infrastructure). In the MTR understanding this was a significant factor in the project and PB scaling back plans somewhat by limiting reducing scope at Gomizeli wetlands to only feasibility/restoration proposal work, and focusing more on trying to achieve the full scope (studies/restoration plans, restoration activities, evaluation/lessons learned) at Tisina. Even under this approach the project should be able to meet or exheed the Objective mandatory target of 120 ha. restored. The MTR would therefore support this pragmatic approach. In addition, the project / stakeholders have identified an additional restoration opportunity related to important peatland ecosystems (specifically in Bijambare PL – restoration of impacts from machinery post sanitary cleaning of bark beetle infested spruce). A summary of achievements to date include:

- development of restoration plan for Tishina PH – final restoration proposal to be submitted/presented in November 2024 (involved development of assessment / restoration planning TOR, contracting mixed international/national contractor for preparation of restoration proposals/plans)
- ToR for development of restoration plan of Gromizelj PH prepared (no plan beyond this based on PB decision).
- TOR for Peatland restoration in Bijambare PL – an added activity in response to need

Output 1.5 (*Replication triggered through incorporation of project solutions into forestry, land-use and disaster risk management programmes at other sites)*** implementation of activities under this Output are not scheduled to begin until about MTR stage. However, the MTR would highlight that the budget allocated for this Output is extremely limited (USD 15,000) and exactly what is intended to be done is not very clear – this is discussed further below.

Conclusions and Rating of Progress for Outcome 1:

 The overall conclusion of the MTR is that this Outcome is on track (with some caveats and suggested adjustments)

Of the 4 indicators for this Outcome only 2 have MTR targets
- Indicator 4: is on track (METT tracking tool),
- Indicator 5: is already reached EoP target (number of Target PAs PA management planning instruments with due account of climate threats)

Of the other 2 Indicators:
- Indicator 6 which is related to species plans (Bosnian newt, Serbian Spruce, Bosnian pine) - Ontrack as plans are developed and under some level of implementation.
- Indicator 7: related to development of fire action plans for PAs – on track, but part of indictor (7a) needs to be adjusted (see recommendations and annex).

The project has made good progress on the execution of activities under Outcome 1, despite the complications faced related to changes in the situation since project development and some incorrect assumptions or weaknesses in the prodoc.

There are a number of case specific adjustments that have had to be made by the project team and PB during implementation – examples include the cancelling of activities in PN Blidinje in FBiH and transfer of Bosnian pine species planning to new PA of Prenj, cancelling of bark beetle measures (not new and not considered of value to beneficiaries) and adjustment to meet other requests (lynx monitoring etc), addition of support for peatlands restoration (TOR development) in Bijambare PL.

Regarding the wetland's restoration, in the opinion of the MTR this Output was lacking in realism in terms of scope and budget and available project duration. The Project (with PB agreement) has mainly focused on Tisina with in-depth assessment and hopefully restoration proposals soon to be submitted – there remains a big question as to how feasible restoration options will be both technically and financially. Recommendations/ suggestions on this are provided by MTR.

In regard to Output 1.5 (*Replication*) - In the MTR opinion what was proposed in the prodoc under this output was not entirely realistic within the timeframe of the project or budget I.e. there was the expectation that innovative solutions could be planned, tested, evaluated/lessons learned and then replicated all within the project time frame. The MTR recommendation would be to recalibrate/clarify the ambition under this output and focus mainly on providing the basis for post project replication (i.e. undertake focused evaluations and lessons learned studies with explicit guidance for replication of demo/test activities but not expect project to undertake any actual replication within its time frame / funds). This is linked to findings / recommendation regarding Outcome 3: Knowledge management and communication.

The MTR would like to particularly highlight two additional initiatives from the project that it is felt are of significant value: the first is the introduction into the Management planning support of a financial planning component, and second is the support to establishment of the PA Managers Association. The MTR below both are of great potential benefit and utility. The project support for establishing entity level PA Managers associations is, amongst other things, aimed at strengthening their positions within decision-making systems. Meetings to further this initiative took place in July 2024, with legal expert support to define the associations' structure and responsibilities. A recommendation regarding further support to the PA Managers Association is provided in Section 4 of the report.

Component 2: Improving financial sustainability of targeted PAs through sustainable tourism development

The Outcome under this component is described as "Financial sustainability of targeted PAs improves" and is to be achieved through 5 outputs. This outcome is intended to address barriers related to insufficient sustainable financing for PAs in Bosnia Herzegovina through support to sustainable tourism at target PAs.

This outcome has the 39% of the overall GEF grant funds allocated. The planned budget for the first half of the project was approx.38.5% leaving 61.5% for final 2 and a half years of the project

This Outcome has 5 separate Outputs – the MTR finds it difficult to quite understand the logical basis for some of these different outputs and how they differ from each other (for example 2.1 and 2.5 could have been combined as they both address PA tourism development and promotion, and activities listed under 2.5 would seem to fit under 2.1). Likewise, Outputs 2.2 and 2.3 both contain one activity each related to PPP that logically could have been incorporated under one output. The remaining Output (2.4) is more clearly separate as it addresses PA capacity to apply for governmental (and other) grant opportunities more effectively.

As touched on during discussion on project design, the way this outcome is constructed, plus the significant time that passed between project preparation and implementation, has created challenges and a need for significant adjustments and adaptions during the initial half of project implementation.

Output 2.1 (*Sustainable tourism products developed for pilot PAs*) contains a long list (8) activity with very specific SFM mechanisms and sites. Likewise, Outputs 2.2 and 2.3 (*Functional partnerships with the private sector stakeholders are in place to provide community engagement and increased income streams from legal nature resource use activities (incl. recreation) occurring in the targeted PAs, Eco-tourism concession model developed and piloted in Sutjeska National Park*)

Significant changes in circumstances have essentially made Output 2.2 and 2.3 unviable (cooperation with private sector for co-financing of mill restoration on Popovo Polje, and Eco-tourism concession model developed and piloted in Sutjeska National Park) and a number of the activities listed under 2.1 have also proved unviable - for example support in Blindinje PN unviable due to request to be removed from project (funds shifted to support Prenj PA) and visit centre at Drina NP (support shifted to Orjen PN, etc).

The project team, PB and individual entity/canton and municipality stakeholders have demonstrated highly effective communication and adaption in order to "forge a path" through these complications and ensure the most pragmatic and viable options for action have been pursued.

Of great importance has been the recruitment of a very experience protected areas Sustainable Financing international expert who has supported a process to systematically review the SFM options and opportunities, undertake awareness building/training with PA managers and other stakeholders, collaborative shortlisting of SFM options and relevant sites (4 sets of SFM selected see report D4) and a roadmap for their further development and implementation. The IC SFM has allowed correction of some of the false assumptions and SFM options included in the original project document and also addressed one of the limitations in the original prodoc highlighted earlier in the report regarding exclusive focus on tourism related SFM. Based on this work, the MTR is confident the project is on track to effectively introduce and test new/innovative SFM options.

 Output 2.4 *(PA participation in the governmental grant programmes is ensured in a sustainable manner*) has been successfully implemented and met its EoP target by MT. However, a 2023 assessment revealed a significant funding disparity between PAs in the Federation of BiH (2.24 million EUR) and Republika Srpska (29,600 EUR) due to the absence of a public call for the tourism grant program in 2023 in the latter. This situation highlights the ongoing need for capacity building in project preparation and implementation among PA managers, as most grants are directly allocated without competitive processes. This identified need is being addressed in project plans (e.g. peer-to-peer training and knowledge-sharing initiatives, thematic training sessions).

Output 2.5 (*Promotion of natural values, products and services in the targeted PAs is improved):* aspects of this are included into the selected SFMs identified under the SFM expert agreed shortlist, however the project has already implement the development of a database of natural, cultural and historical values of target PAs (though not yet complete for FBiH for regrettable reasons) – in cooperation with the USAID Tourism project these materials will be utilized by them in creation of marketing and promotion activities (as confirm in meeting wit USAID Tourism project representative).

Issues, adaptions and limitations Noted by MTR under Outcome 1*:* Clearly Outcome 2 of the project has faced a lot of challenges due to the Project document limitations (both from design and changes in circumstances since it was prepared). Ideally these (or at least some of them) could have been addressed at Inception phase – however, the project (PMU, Project Board and other partners) has demonstrated praiseworthy adaptive capacity in making the necessary adjustments and planning in order to still effectively pursue the overall outcome (i.e. Financial sustainability of targeted PAs improves).

The international SFM consultant has highlighted in her initial report the wider context and needs **to diversify SFM beyond only tourism**. Thus, during her support to the process of identifying viable SFM options has ensured that a possibility outside of just tourism have been presented and considered (for example the initially shortlisted option to build a business case for nature-themed insurance and/or payment for ecosystem services at Tisina Wetlands).

The MTR understands that this option (re. Tisina business case) was, or is likely, to be dropped – the MTR agrees that in the project context and timeframe the full development of such an innovative SFM (PES or insurance etc) would be over ambitious. However, the MTR believes that significant value could still be gained from undertaking the initial steps i.e. the evaluation and identification of the specific ecosystem service values of the Tinina (and potentially neighbouring wetlands in FBiH). The benefit of doing this could be threefold: a). it would provide scientifically based evidence to promote the importance of maintaining the wetlands at both local and higher levels not just for its biodiversity but for all the other services it provides. This would hopefully increase the support and commitment to the PA of local parties (landowners, local land users, fisherman, etc) as well as the municipality "owners". b). it would help the municipality and other parties to justify and potentially improve the financial resources devoted to the wetlands management / restoration, c). and effort provides the basis for potentially going further steps in future. For this reason, a recommendation is included on this issue.

Conclusion and Rating of Progress for Outcome 2:

 The overall conclusion of the MTR is that this Outcome is on track (with some caveats and suggested adjustments).

Out of the 4 indicators for this Outcome three have MTR targets (indicators 9, 10, 11) and indicator 8 has only an EoP target. Unfortunately, except for Indicator 10 (Number of PAs participating in governmental tourism grant mechanisms) all the other indicators have issues regarding relevance, meaningfulness or feasibility. Recommendations are included in the MTR to address these limitations.

For this reason, the MTR is basing the "on track" conclusion on results and progress being achieved by the project and its effective adaption to the weaknesses in the project design/changes in on-ground circumstances. However, it needs to be emphasized that at this midpoint the majority of the SFM planned are still at planning stage and the next critical step of practically transitioning these in the field remains to be undertaken – in this context there will inevitably be challenges and likely some failures but it is felt that the project team and stakeholders have the capacity to maximize and adapt to achieve useful outcomes. In that context it should also be emphasized that failures, as ong as useful lessons and experience are gained from them, can be as valuable as success, and are an inevitable part of the process when attempting innovative approaches.

Component 3: Knowledge management

The Outcome 3 under this component is described as "**Knowledge management and communication**. This outcome is not indicated as addressing any specific barrier but is included (its assumed) as a fairly standard final component of such projects. The outcome has only one Output- *Output 3.1: Knowledge management and communication ensured throughout project.* This outcome has only 8% of the total GEF grant funds allocation (USD217,000) of which 41.5% is for 1st half of the project and 58.5% for the last 2.5 years of the project.

The MTR would suggest that the Outcome is rather poorly thought out and defined and has the impression of being a rather "cut and paste" exercise. It has only 1 output (Output 3.1: Knowledge management and communication ensured throughout project implementation) and essentially). Essentially all the activities are those that are undertaken under other Outcomes and outputs and there seems to be little added value or clear activities to be done under this one. The one clear product is "Information System for Nature Conservation in both entities of BiH, managed by FBiH Environmental Fund and Republic Institute for Protection of cultural, historical and natural heritage of RS" but what form this would take is not defined.

The MTR would suggest that this needs to be addressed in more clear set of Outputs and activities that adds clarity and a clear basis for ensuring effective capturing and dissemination of the projects knowledge products are put in place to support sustainability of project impacts, facilitate replication of good practices and lessons learned in the future by both national stakeholders and future doner supported activities (such as the upcoming GEF8 project).

Conclusion and Rating of Progress Outcome 3:

The overall conclusion of the MTR is that this Outcome is on track (with some caveats and suggested adjustments). This Outcome has 2 indicators, one related to "knowledge products" and one related to number of people getting access to knowledge through project-supported capacity building, training, and knowledge building. The MTR conclusion on the "satisfactory" status of this Outcome is based mainly on fact that project is assuredly meeting these targets at MTR based on PIR reports and evidence seen in review documents.

However, due to issues raised in text above regarding lack of clarity on the specific outputs expected the MTR would recommend that more specific and concrete outputs / products need to be defined for the terminal phase of the project, including a). clarification of what was envisaged in regard to the "Information System for Nature Conservation in both entities of BiH, managed by FBiH Environmental Fund and Republic Institute for Protection of cultural, historical and natural heritage of RS" and inclusion of an "exit Strategy/Action Plan" for the final year of the project in which the project clearly identifies how individual initiatives are to be "owned" and supported pot project (by national stakeholders and UNDP / other donors and development partners).

Overall Rating of progress towards objective: Based on the ratings applied to the 3 project Outcomes, taken together with other factors (given the mixed value of the RF indicators) the MTR overall rating for project progress towards the objective is <u>Satisfactory</u>.

The MTR recognizes the significant implementation challenges faced by the project team but, on the evidence seen, is confident these challenges are being effectively meet and the project has already achieved significant impact and is on track to achieve the overall project objective. In fact, through the widening of scope regarding sustainable financing mechanisms (beyond purely tourism) it is exceeding its objective to an extent. Despite this, the MTR has some minor concerns / issues which are indicated in the previous text and for which a number of recommendations will be made (see section 4).

3.2.2 Remaining barriers to achieving project objective

The MTR identifies some potential remaining barriers to the achievement of the project objective, which are discussed briefly below.

One potential barrier, the highly decentralized / fragmented nature of the B&H PA system is being addressed by the project via support to the PA Managers Associations (entity level) and the MTR suggests that increased support to these individually (plus support to cross entity interaction / synergies of approach) will be important to further reduce this barrier.

Additionally, a potential significant issue under Component 1 of the project could be the financial / technical viability of the proposed wetlands restoration activities. At the time of the MTR the detail proposal for restoration activities in Tisina wetlands had not been submitted but, in the experience of the MTR consultant, wetlands restoration usually relate to addressing fairly complex/costly hydrological issues. The project will have to make a balanced decision, once the detailed proposals are known, on what it considers is viable to support and what has the greatest potential benefit at this point in time. For example, supporting more cost-effective short-term solutions (i.e. by supporting the existing pumping regime with renewable energy options) rather than partial support to potentially longer term but high-cost channel construction/clearance maybe the most pragmatic option.

In the context of other practical initiatives supported under Component 1 the challenge will be whether meaningful results can be achieved in the short timeframe especially considering the vulnerability of some initiatives to seasonal variations (made more likely by climate change). In this context the importance of looking to the future in terms of ensuring national capacity/ownership and identifying potential donor funded mechanisms for further supporting / replicating project results will be critical in its terminal phase.

Under component 2, the project will face challenges in transitioning from the initial identification of SFM options to the practical implementation of them. In this regard ongoing international / regional experience may well be critical to ensuring nuanced practical implementation adapted to the on-ground realities in Bosnia Herzegovina.

A final potential issue of concern is the substantial level of activities and delivery (around 75% remaining) of Component 2 of the project. A substantial part of the delivery will likely be related to infrastructural works and material procurements which have risks in terms of the time and effort required to implement in accordance with all UNDP rules and regulations. The PMU, UNDP CO and PB need to ensure these aspects are pushed ahead in a very timely manner in order to ensure their effective completion in time.

Table 6. The Project Results Framework showing the MTR status and the MTR comments and ratings (as per required format in TOR)

Project Strategy	Indicator[5]	Baseline Level[6]	Level in 1st PIR (self-reported)	Midterm Target[7]	End-of-project Target	Midterm Level & Assessment[8]	Achievement Rating[9]	Justification for Rating
Objective: To achieve practical PA management improvement and better biodiversity status through strengthened resilience of key biodiversity values to climate change impact and increased revenues from sustainable recreation	**Mandatory Indicator 1 (GEF Core Indicator 11):** # direct project beneficiaries disaggregated by gender (individual people)	0	An update of the Stakeholders Engagement Plan was conducted in the project inception phase, prior to the commencement of activities.

Update of SESP and ESMF was finalized by mid-February 2023. The assessment of local-level stakeholders (with a focus on NGOs and vulnerable groups, including women) was improved and assessed against the effects of planned activities. These findings were inserted in the Process Frameworks per each output. | *100,000 (incl. 50,000 women)* | *314,900 (incl. 157,260 women)* | Results achieved so far relate largely to the organization of meetings and workshops.

In total, 238 participants (incl. 143 women or 60%) attended the meetings These meetings were attended by the representatives of the following key direct beneficiary groups:
i) pilot PA staff and management authorities: 112 (incl. 52 women, 46%)
iv) PA managers, planners, and practitioners: 116 (incl. 86 women, 74%)
v) tourism sector businesses and individual partners:10 (incl. 5 women, 50%)

Representatives of the following groups were not yet involved in the project activities in this reporting period: tourism private operators; users of PA tourism services; users of ecosystem services and community representatives in and around PAs; tourism and related service providers-nearby community representatives; PA visitors. | **S** | Despite significant challenges faced by the project during its initial implementation it is considered by the MTR to have overcome these and to broadly be on track to meet (or even exceed) the project objective.

Strangely for a project that has a significant fucus on sustainable financing of the PA system (improving PA management through increased revenues from sustainable recreation), there are no specific PA SFM related indicators at Objective level.

However, based on an overall review of the RF indicators the MTR considers progress by MT in regard to both the PA management effectiveness and SFM aspects is on track, and this justifies the overall "satisfactory" rating.

It is notable that the project has gone beyond the original expectation in 2 important ways:
a). to address the decentralization / fragmentation aspect of the PA system in the entities via support to the PA managers association, |

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[5] Populate with data from the Logframe and scorecards

[6] Populate with data from the Project Document

[7] If available

[8] Colour code this column only

[9] Use the 6 point Progress Towards Results Rating Scale: HS, S, MS, MU, U, HU

	Mandatory Indicator 2 (GEF Core Indicator 1.2): Terrestrial protected areas under improved management effectiveness (Hectares).	*0 (as project impact is zero)*	During the first year of project implementation, the Project initiated activities in the pilot PAs covering 113,082 ha. The project is considered on track to achieve the midterm and EoP targets	*113,451 ha*	*113,451 ha*	The Project initiated activities in the pilot PAs covering 113,082 ha, including development of management plans (with CC adaption and financial components), plus species/ecosystem and fire action plans. Additionally, support to establishment of PA managers Association for each entity.	and b). the broadening of SFM options analysis and selection beyond only tourism. Despite changes to one target PA and a number of specific activities/sites expected in the project document the project overall impact in terms of PA area, etc. and strengthening of capacity, knowledge and practical know how on SFM has not changed.
	Mandatory Indicator 3 (GEF Core Indicator 3.4): Area of wetlands restored	0	During the first year of project implementation, the Project initiated activities at the Protected habitat Tisina in the area of approx. 50 ha. The Project is considered on track to attain the set EoP target	*0*	*120 ha.*	The project will complete by mid term (November 2024) Tisina wetlands restoration feasibility/proposals covering greater that 120 ha.	In fact the MTR would consider that in some aspects the project is exceeding the original project design in some important aspects (the PA managers association, consideration of wider PA financing aspects, etc.). Project implementation appears to have been highly effective and adaptive in addressing challenges derived from design issues or changes that occurred between prodoc development and implementation. The MTR identifies some minor aspects that could be addressed or enhanced to strengthen overall impact and sustainability and monitoring.

Outcome 1: Managerial and technical capacities of targeted PAs in place helping ensure resilience of key biodiversity values to climate change impacts	*Indicator 4:* At least 15% increase in METT score for the targeted national PAs	*0 (see baseline METT scores*	the Project is on track to achieve a 10% increase in METT scores for pilot PAs target by the midterm (December 2024)	*10% increase (on average) from the baseline METT scores*	*15% increase (on average) from the baseline METT scores*	The project is on track to achieve or exceed a 10% increase in METT of 10 target PAs by MT as a result of support to MP development (including CC adaption and financing planning), resilience plans for species and ecosystems, fire AP, etc, The thi METT update at MT was based on an idenpendent desk review the MTR is persuaded in the veracity of the reporting based on interview with national stakeholders (including PA authorities) and other evidence seen in desk review.	**S**	As discussed in the text, this outcome has faced numerous challenges and required significant adaption. However, in the opinion of the MTR it is on track to achieve its expected rusults and potentially to exheed the original intent in important aspects (broadening of fucus betond just tourism, addressing some issues not originally envisaged). Significant future challenges and risks undoubtably exist during the process of transitioning frm the preparatory phase to testing / demonstration of SFM in practice but the MTR considers the project to be in a strong position (based on intelligent adption, strong technical guidance, extensive consultation, etc) to successfully achieve the expected impact. The only caveat the MTR would raise is the need for project and UNDP to support strategic thinking and planning regarding long term PA sustainable
	Indicator 5: At least 5 PA management planning instruments with due account of climate threats developed and set under implementation	0	Based on the current progress, the Project is on track to have 5 management planning instruments with due account of climate threats by midterm (December 2024):	5	9	On track – 9 PA MPs developed, and MTR is confident will be approved by end of 2024. In fact project has achieved TE target by MT and ongoing capacity support to actualize the MPs and strengthen target PA capacity / legal and authority status (plus sustainable financing) should further ensure improvement impact on PA management effectiveness and strengthen CC resilience.		

Indicator 6a: Non deterioration of population of Serbian spruce (*Picea omorika*) population within Drina NP *Indicator 6b:* Non-deterioration of Alpine newt (*Triturus alpestris*) population in Prokosko Lake NM stable or increasing *Indicator 6c:* Non-deterioration of Bosnian pine (*Pinus heldreichii*) within Blidinje PN	*2020 available data on population distribution of the indicator species*	Project has initiated development of management plans with due account of climate change threats for National Park Drina (relevant for indicator 6a), Nature Monument Prokosko Lake (relevant for indicator 6b) and Nature Park Blidinje (relevant for indicator 6c).	NA	*Non-deterioration as compared to 2020 data.*	On track. This indicator has 3 parts covering 3 different species, all of which have different issues that the project needed to adapt to For example, the need to re=introduce the Bosnian Alpine Newt to Lake Prokosko and undertake in situ conservation recovery measures/address fundamental issues regarding the lake condition,		financing in order to ensure adequate recognition of the importance of PAs as a public good and their wider values for maintenance of ecosystem services, etc, in order to ensure commitment of long term state support as well as diversification of other sources of financing. This will become increasingly important if B&H is to meet the new GBF targets in terms of PAs and OECM establishment in future. A recommendation on this aspect is provided in Section 4 of the report.
Indicator 7a: % reduction in extent (ha/annum) of forests detrimentally impacted by fires: Orjen PN, Sutjeska NP, Kozara NP, Drina NP, Skakavac PL, Blidinje PN *Indicator 7b:* At least two functional community-based fire-fighting units established and functional	*7a: baseline data and viable end- of-project target (%reduction) to be obtained in Year 1* *7b=0*	Indicator 7a: Baseline data will be defined by mid-October 2023 as part of ongoing development of Action plans for prevention, preparedness, and response for 6 targeted PAs. On Indicator 7b: a ToR for an expert to develop forest fire management plans for 6 pilots PAs has been drafted and the contract signature is expected by the end of August 2023.	NA NA	*7a: 15% from baseline* *7b: 2*	MTR considers this indicator is on track based on the progress made by the project in terms of developing the relevant fire Action Plans for the target PAs. No specific targets were set by MT, but the MTR has highlighted elsewhere in the text the issues regarding sub-indicator &a and proposals for its change are provided. Sub-indicator 7b. is considered likely to be achieved well before TE.		

| Outcome 2: Financial sustainability of targeted PAs improves | *Indicator 8:* At least 20% reduction of the funding gap for targeted PAs | 0 | Project is considered on track to achieve the final target of at least 20% reduction of the funding gap for targeted PAs | NA | 20% | This indicator is considered non-viable by the MTR based on project and ICSFM feedback due to insufficient data being available at baseline to identify gaps between existing financing and required financing. A recommendation is provide regarding a different measure of improvement in sustainable financing of the target PAs using the UNDP PA SF Scorecard. However, based on progress to date the MTR considers the project to be on track in terms of improving both the basis to plan financial needs and to improve generation of sSF in future (which is what the indicator was trying to measure). | | |
| | *Indicator 9:* At least 1 mutually beneficial public-private agreement (including concessions, leases, rentals) formalised and operational | 0 | An international consultant on innovative finance mechanisms for PAs will be engaged by end of August who will lead technical support on assessing available alternatives and making final recommendations. A final decision will be made in early 2024 and development of a financial model will commence.

Considering the above, the project is on track to have all prerequisites for concession operationalization and thus attain the mid-term target. | *0: All prerequisites for concession operationalization ensured* | *1: Concession formalized and operational* | The indicator was non-viable and too specific to a site/SFM which in reality was non-viable. A recommendation for the indicators change, based on the advise of the IC SFM, is provided in this report

The project is adapting its approach and is considered by MTR to be on track to pilot / demonstrate more viable "outsourcing agreement" as er the IC SFM quidence and is therefore considered "on track". | | |

	Indicator 10: At least 4 PAs participate in governmental tourism grant programmes	1	Project is on track to reach the defined targets. 3 PAs from the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina had successfully prepared project proposals for governmental programs for PA managers and received grant funding. A public call for the grant program in Republika Srpska will be announced in September 23. Based on the interests of PA managers **in training sessions,** it is expected that at least 3 PAs will participate in the call.	2	4	On track (reached TE target by MT). The project has reached the targe already but has identified the need and opportunity to support further the access of PAs to governmental gants (as well as other donor opportunities), The MTR expectation is that the project will therefore very likely exceed the TE target.		

| | *Indicator 11:* At least 20% increase in the annual number of visitors and service users in targeted PAs (data disaggregated by gender) | 0 | Considering the above, the Project is well on track.

Available data on the number of visitors have been collected, and the quality of data collection assessed during inception visits to tarted PAs. In close cooperation with the USAIDTourism project, the project-initiated development of a tailored course of actions to reach the defined targets. Activities shall be initiated in Autumn 2023 and will consist of the: i) assessment of the potentials for promotion of PAs (natural, cultural, historical), ii) collaborative design of branding and PAs promotion, ii) design of a platform for joint promotion of PAs, iii) improving the monitoring and data collection on numbers of visitors and revision of entering fees. | 5% | 20% | Again the indicator and target have proved non-viable due to the impossibility of most PAs to monitor visitors. The project is supporting the building of capacity to improve such monitoring but overall, it is not going to be a meaningful measure of progress.

Out of all the Target PAs there is such data however for 3. It ids the MTR recommendation that monitoring and reporting on this indicator in subsequent PIRs should focus on only these 3 PAs (with supporting reporting on activities aimed at increasing visitor numbers in other PAS and and emerging data that starts to be collected on visitor numbers in the other PAs). | | |
| **Outcome 3:** Knowledge management | *Indicator 12:* At least 3 knowledge products related to PA climate threats assessment and climate impact monitoring, PA integration into sustainable tourism, and tourism concessions developed and disseminated | 0 | Project is on track to reach the defined targets for this Indicator.

this reporting period the project was promoted at 1 national conference, 1 international scientific conference and 1 international tourism summit. | **0** | **30** | No target is set by MT of this indicator (presumably because it was assumed knowledge products would be generated only in 2nd half of the project once test/demo activities had been undertaken and evaluation/lessons learned could be generated).

The project has reported a number of products from already completed activities under other outcomes under this outcome. In this context the MTR is able to describe it as on track, | S | As discussed in the text, this Outcome is unclear in regard to specifics and the project has reported a number of products from already completed activities under other outcomes under this outcome.

In this context the MTR believes there is a need to more clearly define what exact products (and mechanisms for dissemination) will be produced under this outcome and how it brings added |

	Indicator 13: Number of women and men getting access to innovations, best available knowledge and practice, through project-supported capacity building, training, and knowledge building	0	The Midterm and EoP targets will be defined by the end of October 2023 as a larger group of stakeholders will be engaged in project activities (this mostly refers to the start of a set of activities on forest fire mitigation).	**Original**: tbd **At MT**: 500 (30% female and 70% male participants);	Original: tbd **At MT**: 1500 (40% female and 60% male participants).	The original Prodoc did not define the targets for this indicator. Prior to MTR the project PB approved defined targets proposed by the project ? How were figures 500 and 1500 reached ? Based on PIR 2024 and the now defined target for MT, this indicator is considered on track (actually has exceeded target i.e. 807 people (361 female and 446 male participants)		value to the overall project and its sustained impact. However, in terms of the original and "in project" defined targets the project is on track.
Outcome 4: Monitoring and Evaluation	*Indicator 14:* Project M&E requirements and plans implemented in a timely and comprehensive manner	*M&E has not started*	The Midterm and EoP targets will be defined by the end of October 2023 as a larger group of stakeholders will be engaged in project activities (this mostly refers to the start of a set of activities on forest fire mitigation).	NA	*Project M&E aspects receive positive assessment and satisfactory range rating by the Terminal Evaluation*	**There is no specific target for MT.** **This outcome is considered on track / satisfactory based on evidence seen by MTR.**		The MTR notes that project has made significant efforts to update and utilize ESMF and SESP etc. and was timely in undertaking inception phase and organization of the MTR. In particular the project / UNDP CO has gone to significant efforts to utilize the SESP and this experience is valuable for the future and should be documented. The MTR also notes that the limitations of a number of the indicators/targets have been a challenge to meaningful monitoring but that with recommended adjustments should be stronger for the TE.

Indicator Assessment Key

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

3.3   Project Implementation & Adaptive Management

3.3.1   Governance and Management arrangements

The governance and implementation arrangements, as per the project document, were briefly described in Section 2.3. of this report. The project implementation modality is that of Direct Implementation (DIM) which is relatively uncommon in the UNDP system and extremely uncommon for a UNDP / GEF project as GEF highly prioritized country ownership and accountability for GEF financed projects. However, as described in Section 2.3 and in the project document in more detail, this approach was discussed in at length with GEF prior to the project approval and based on the request of government and clear justification provided, the DIM modality was approved.

The GEF OFP has requested UNDP to provide full range of execution support services in line with DIM modality. UNDP, therefore, **combines the role** of a GEF agency in charge of the project implementation with that of an implementing partner for this project.

The project document provides very specific description of the various functions of UNDP and the PB and the means and approaches to ensuring a "firewall" between the delivery of **project oversight** and **quality assurance** performed by UNDP and project execution undertaken by UNDP i.e. "Project management" has be undertaken by personnel on non-staff contracts (i.e. Service Contract holders) specifically hired for the management of this project, forming the **Project Management Unit**. Their financial and legal accountability has not involved any actions from the category of "execution support", or "oversight"; and has been limited to preparing TORs, specifications, requests, and arranging for a proper process for all project management activities. From the evidence seen (documents reviewed and interviews held etc.) this modality has functioned very effectively.

UNDP is responsible for the Project Assurance function in the project governance structure and presents to the Project Board and attends Project Board meetings as a non-voting member.

The national Project Board (PB) has met four times over the life of the project so far. The PB appears to have worked effectively within the constraints of its establishment i.e. DIM modality. It is clear from PM minutes and interviews with PM members that the PB has been kept fully informed and consulted with (both formally in PB meetings but also on a more informal basis between such meetings). The PB members attending the board meetings have participated very actively and constructively. However, it should be noted that some invited members have either not attended or attended very little – these cases are closely linked to some of the more challenging sites that have, via the PB, UNDP CO and project, been addressed (see previous section).

The project implementation unit is composed of Project Manager, Project Associate (based in Sarajevo) and a Project Analyst (based in Banja Luka).

The PM and PB are both to be congratulated on being able to manage what must have been a very challenging project inception and initial operational phase, and transition to a reasonably effective implementation after a period of learning and adjustment. Despite these start up challenges, and ongoing challenges regarding adaption of non-viable outputs or activities (as discussed in previous and subsequent sections) project progress and momentum has been maintained and risks well documented and addressed.

Table 7. The members of the Project Implementation Unit, including position and period within the position.

Name	Position	Employment dates – From	Employment dates – To
Paid by Project			
Senka Mutabdzija Becirovic	Project Manager	September 2022	NA
Adna Backovic	Project Associate	January 2023	October 2024
	Project Analyst	October 2024	NA
Jovanka Cetkovic	Project Analyst	December 2022	NA
Haris Djapo	Project Associate	October 2024	NA

The UNDP-CO's senior management, and in particular the Energy & Environment Sector Team, has maintained strong interest and support to the project, evidenced by the high level of inputs during the early stages of implementation (regarding "teething issues faced in implementation) and participation in PBs and various events held by the project.

The gender balance within the project, including leadership roles, is noteworthy. For example, the Project Board is approx. 50% female and the majority of both PMU and UNDP Energy and Environment Sector team (and M&E) are women.

As discussed in more detail elsewhere in the report, this project was the first in Bosnia Herzegovina to fully apply the now required Social and Environmental Safeguard screening procedures and frameworks and the extent of efforts by the project and CO to maximise the effectiveness of these new requirements is duly noted by the MTR.

3.3.2   Work planning

Work planning has been carried out based on an overall multi-year workplan and budget, developed during the inception phase. Full and well elaborated Annual Work plans (AWPs) have been developed and implemented for 2022-2023 (project commenced mid 2022), and 2024. A draft AWP for 2025 had already been prepared by the time of the MTR.

There was some delay in start-up with the Inception workshop occurring later than envisaged in the project document (i.e. 2.5 months after project start rather than 2 months as planned) and project became operationally active in September 2022 (hire of PM and 1st disbursement) about 3 months after project start – initial work planning had to adapt significantly to the change in situation found in terms of specific situations in project sites and events since project preparation. However, after this initial slight delay in project planning the MTR concludes that it has been efficient and effective, with pragmatic focus on achieving results and adaption to change in circumstances. Some minor issues and delays were experienced during the transition from the ATLAS to Quantum systems.

As discussed in other sections, the results framework indicators were in a number of cases impractical or sub-optimal but despite this limitation the MTR feels the project team has intelligently adapted and refined planning in order to reach the project overall objective (without slavishly following results framework).

3.3.3   Project Finance and Co-finance

At the time of the 2nd PIR MTR (September 2021), the project had spent a total of USD 920,144 out of a total budget of USD 1,826,484 of the GEF grant funds – in other words almost exactly half of the total GEF grant.

Table 8: Total project expenditure to date relative to the budget in the Project Document.

Outcome	TOTAL by MTR			Project overall budget (Project document)	
	Budgeted for 1st half of project (Dates – Start July 2022 to December 20224[1] MT)	Actual (Dates – start July 2022 to MT December 2024)	% spent	Total budget	% spent at MT
1	487,000	730,024.85	149.90%	1,134,000	64.38%
2	545,800	289,844.54	53.10%	1,042,000	25.97%
3	90,000	72,183.69	80.20%	217,000	33.26%
4	47,000	60,465.38	128.65%	122,000	49.56%
Proj Mgt	67,500	57,704.13	85.49%	125,000	46.16%
Total, GEF	1,239,500	1,210,222.59	97.63%	2,640,000.00	45.84%
TRAC Funds	75,000	96,562.99	128.75%	150,000	64.37%
Total	1,314,500	1,306,785.58	99.41%	2,790,000	46.83%

The project Budget is divided based on the Components and has a total of 4 components: 2 implementation components, a M&E Component (a new aspect of such projects) and a Project Management section. During inception phase and implementation no re-allocations between Components was undertaken.

Financial delivery (actual compared to budgeted) is overall just over 99% at MT (97.6% of GEF allocation and 127.7% of TRAC resources) and is thus considered on track in this regard.

Just over half the total budget for Outcome 1 (64%) is already spent which reflects the extent of support already provided to the target PAs and CC adaptation efforts. However, only 25.9% of Outcome 2 has so far been disbursed – this reflects the fact that to date most activities under Outcome 2 have been preparatory in nature and that the project has faced significant challenges in terms of needing to adapt the originally defined activities related to tourism development support (particularly infrastructure aspects). The MTR is confident that at MT the planning required to implement the tourism / SFM activities is now in place and funds can be delivered. However, the PMU, UNDP CO and PB need to be proactive in ensuring these plans are pushed ahead given the time infrastructure and other procurement tasks can take and the risk of delated delivery.

It was clear the rigorous financial controls were in place that ensure funds are spent correctly – some issues have occurred in terms of timeliness of procurement processes but not in terms of payments. One issue that was reported as sometimes effecting planning is the time lag between expenditures and feedback on those expenditures in the Quantum system.

Co-financing: The project co-financing at CEO totalled USD 18,363,825 of which the majority (15,898,825 or about 87%) was national government, entity, canton and municipality public investment or in kind parallel financing (PA system budgets and related). The remaining 23% of co-financing included 1,365,000 parallel grants from an international NGO (Comitato Internazionale per lo Sviluppo dei Popoli, Rome, Italy -CISP) and 1,100,000 grants from UNDP.

Actual overall delivery of the co-financing committed at project signature by MT (actually by June 2024, 5 months prior to the MT) equals just under half (48%) which is therefore on track. However, this figure is skewed by the high delivery of international co-financers (CISP 100% and UNDP approx. 62%).

National co-financing has been less inline to date (averaging about 35% by MT) and in some specific examples has had to be cancelled due to the unviability of related activity (mill restoration) or cancellation (grant for tourism in RS). In some other cases data has not been reported. It is likely in the 2nd half of the project when there is an increase in field implementation that these figures will improve. However, the project and UNDP CO will need to carefully monitor the situation and follow up on collection of data before the TE. Additionally, it is suggested that the project update figures reported in the terminal PIR immediately prior to the TE.

Table 9. The planned value and actual provision, to date, of co-finance (all figures in USD)

Name of Co-financier	Type of Co-financing	Co-financing amount confirmed at CEO Endorsement / Approval	Materialized cofinancing as of June 30, 2024	% spent at MT
FBiH Ministry of Environment and Tourism	Public Investment	5,946,600	2,684,211.44	45.13%
	In Kind	232,000	/	/ (not reported)
Ministry of Spatial Planning, Civil Engineering and Ecology of Republika Srpska	Public Investment	6,408,000	2,695,117.89	42.05%
	In Kind	152,500	55,505.14	36.39%
Ministry of Trade and Tourism of Republika Srpska	Public Investment	93,750	/	(grant for tourism suspended by the decision of Government of RS)
	In Kind	75,000	/	(not reported)

Environmental Protection Fund FBiH	Public Investment	2,500,000	1,290,138.37	51.60%
Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations of Bosnia and Herzegovina (MOFTER)	In Kind	116,600	46,640.00	40%
Municipality of Šamac	In Kind	24,375	7,706.00	31.61%
Municipality of Ravno	In Kind	200,000	/	(activities on mill restoration as per PPP contracting modality suspended)
Sarajevo Canton PE for PAs	In Kind	150,000	46,896.07	31.26%
Average % National co-financing reported at MT				35%
International Committee for the Development of Peoples (Comitato Internazionale per lo Sviluppo dei Popoli) , Rome, Italy (CISP)	Grants	1,365,000	1,365,000	100.00%
UNDP TRAC	Grants	150,000	96,562.99	64.37%
UNDP	Grants	1,100,000	660,819.48	60.07%
Total, co-financing		**18,513,825**	**8,948,597.38**	**48.33%**

3.3.4   Project-level Monitoring & Evaluation Systems

The project's M&E framework is similar to the majority of UNDP-GEF projects (Section V of ProDoc) but has a substantially higher budget than the MTR has seen before for a project of this size (USD 122,000 i.e. approx. 5% of the total GEF grant allocated for project monitoring). In accordance with new GEF requirements M&E is indicated as a separate project Component (with related budgeting in Section VIII of the ProDoc). The majority of funds are allocated to cover MTR and TE phases (independent evaluation costs and project results framework indicator data collection).

In addition to the monitoring of Results framework indicators (core GEF Objective level indicators and component level indicators) the project has a range of risk monitoring and safeguard mechanisms including risk log, UNDP Social and Environmental Screening Procedure (SESP) report with related Social and Environmental Management Framework requirements, project grievance mechanisms, gender strategy. A draft SESP was prepared at project development stage (annex 5) and this was updated at the inception phase through employment of a dedicated national consultant who additionally (with the PM) then revised the SES and ESMF to ensure it could be meaningfully applied to screen and review all relevant project activities. The project has a well elaborated Gender Action plan (annex 13) which has been applied by the project.

The risk log in the project document (Section 3.4 – Risks to project success and environmental/social safeguards) lists 6 risks of which 5 are considered Moderate and 1 low. Risk 6 related to COVID (ranked moderate) has in practice not transpired to be significant. Risk 1 (related to complex institutional context and circumstances) has been indeed a challenge but the project PMU, PB and UNDP CO have worked very effectively to mitigate and manage issues that arose. Likewise with Risk 5 (risk that the planned partnerships with the private sector partners will fail to yield the expected benefits).

The main limitation for the project effective M&E has been the weakness of the RF indicators which has proved a challenge to preparation of the PIR's and to accurately /meaningfully represent project progress and eventual impact. Discussion on the issues with some of the indicators was already initiated prior to the MTR (see PIRs and IC SFM reports)

and the MTR Section 4 and annexes contain recommendations / suggestions on the strengthening of these. This includes the addition of a simplified version of the UNDP PA Sustainable Financing Scorecard tracking tool – it is curious that this tracking tool was not a requirement in the original M&E system given the focus of the project on PA sustainable financing.

A common issue in a large number of vertical fund projects that the MTR author has experience of in recent years (both as a reviewer/evaluator and as a technical support consultant) relates to the unclarity surrounding core indicators for "beneficiaries" impacted by projects. In most cases there is no clear criteria of "direct" or "indirect" beneficiaries and no explanation how target figures for MT and TE were defined. This significantly undermines their value as "core" indicators and leads to unnecessary confusions and issues for project monitoring. The MTR would recommend that this needs to be better addressed at ProDoc development / approval stages.

One minor additional comment on the application of the tracking tools is regarding the METT i.e. that for TE this should be done more rigorously including PA site visits and assessments (not purely a desk review).

The MTR noted the SESP and related steps to apply via ESMP etc. are at this stage still quite new for UNDP COs and project PMUs and are quite burdensome to develop and apply. The PMU and UNDP CO have clearly devoted significant time (to understand and meaningful try to apply) and funds (national consultant support to updating, etc.) to ensure this however despite the somewhat limited system training support on this aspect. These safeguards are of course extremely important – however, it is important that GEF and UNDP recognize that they do impose increasing complications and burdens on PMUs (and COs) and ensure that adequate guidance / training is available and adequate resources allocated in projects to manage these increased tasks.

In summary, it is considered that the M&E processes have been executed with vigour and effectiveness by the project, particularly the safeguards aspect, but it has been somewhat hamstrung from the start by the weakness discussed with the SF (the ultimate basis for meaningful monitoring). Thus, the M&E System is considered marginally satisfactory, and recommendations are included for addressing issues identified

3.3.5   Stakeholder engagement

The stakeholder context for this project is very complex due to the highly decentralised nature of the Bosnia Herzegovina political and governance system. Successful engagement requires therefore not only careful planning and active implementation but a certain degree of diplomacy.

A comprehensive stakeholder engagement plan was developed during project development stage and attached to the ProDoc (Annex 12). However, a summary was provided in the ProDoc text where stakeholders are identified, with a broad description of their mandate, as well as their identified role and responsibilities within the project. There is a detailed additional section on private sector engagement plus shorter sections on civil society and some niche groups (firefighting stakeholders, climate change related scientific community, etc).

An update of the Stakeholders Engagement Plan was conducted in the project inception phase, prior to the commencement of activities. A local consultant was engaged in December 2022 and the work related to the update of SESP and ESMF was finalized by mid-February 2023.

The assessment of local-level stakeholders (with a focus on NGOs and vulnerable groups, including women) was improved and assessed against the effects of planned activities. These findings were inserted in the Process Frameworks per each output. This information was disseminated to engaged expert teams for the development of management plans for 10 protected areas (PAs) with an aim to outline mechanisms that will ensure their meaningful participation, and that will highlight iterative consultations and consent over the course of the social and environmental assessment process, development of mitigation and management plans, monitoring of project implementation and evaluation. Such an approach is planned during realization of all project activities.

The feedback received by the MTR during interviews with almost all national stakeholders[10] in both entities (and national level institutions) was highly positive of the efforts made by the PMU/ UNDP to ensure full stakeholder engagement (from senior ministry level down to municipal PA level). Project Board members in particular were very supportive on this point and in highlighted the PMs contribution in this regard.

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[10] Less positive feedback was only received from one stakeholder met by the MTR but the reasons for this were clearly related to the peripheral nature of the institution represented and was mild in its criticism.

Overall, the MTR finds that stakeholder engagement has been highly effective, and this has contributed very significantly to addressing the challenges faced and the impact the project is having on the PAs system effectiveness. Stakeholder involvement and public awareness by the project has contributed significantly to the progress towards achievement of project objectives, particularly in regard to increasing stakeholder awareness of SFM options and opportunities, climate change adaptation and resilience issues and to the greater capacity and inclusion / profile of a number of the new and previously poorly recognized protected areas. No noticeable limitations to stakeholder awareness of project outcomes or to stakeholder participation in project activities was noted by the MTR and there was a significant level of national stakeholder invested interest in the project's long-term success and sustainability.

3.3.6   Reporting

The project reporting requirements are covered under Section VII (M&E Plan). As with most such projects the key project reporting requirements and responsibilities are:
- An Inception Report within 60 day of Inception Workshop – UNDP CO / Project manager (if employed).
- The UNDP/GEF Project Implementation Report – PIR (annual) – Project Manager, UNDP CO and RTA.
- Two periodic independent review reports (midterm and terminal) – independent consultants
- Periodic reports to project board (when it meets) – project manager, chair of committee, UNDP E&E representative.

In addition to the above there are a range of internal project reporting mechanisms within the multiple national/entity stakeholder institutions (not reviewed as part of MTR process).

The Inception Report was not prepared within the framework of the Project M&E plan (6 months post CEO Endorsement rather than 2 months as specified). However, this was a result of a delay of 4 moths between CEO endorsement and project start – the Inception report was prepared within 2 months of the project start and was adequate basis for initiating implementation. Though some significant issues remained regarding the RF indicators, many were not obvious/easily addressable at that time. The MTR would suggest that in subsequent projects a more critical review is made of RF indicators, particularly the clarification of Objective (GEF mandatory indicators) to ensure clarity of methodology to be applied to collect data (this is frequently a need in regard to having a clear basis for "beneficiary" counting.

PIRs have been prepared and submitted for the 2 reporting periods covered in the initial half of the project and have provided a full description of the progress made and issues faced. This has included description of issues faced with reporting on indicators with noteworthy frankness and transparency. Likewise, the challenges and necessary adaptive management steps. These have been shared and reviewed by the project board and other stakeholders and represent a detailed description of project progress and results. As a general point, the MTR would suggest, that in the PIR Development Objective table, efforts should be focused on more concise reporting of progress with more details provided as annexes. In addition, it is important that progress is reported not purely in the context of progress towards the indictors but also in terms of each output (that contribute to indicator achievement). Though not a big issue in this specific project, the MTR has noted in many projects that an overfocus purely on indicators (that sometimes are not very meaningful for measuring development objective progress) can lead to lose of technical direction in implementation. For this reason (as well as to facilitate reviewer understanding of project implementation and challenges generally) the brief review of progress of each output towards outcomes (and thence targets) is beneficial.

Lessons and the need for changes/adaptions have been well reported in the PIRs and shared with all parties leading to incrementally applied strengthening of project implementation.

The MTR would note that in the case of PIRs and some financial data it is becoming less easy for independent reviewers to access all the data sometimes as reports are increasingly "online" within the UNDP system which they do not have access to, and print to PDF or hard copies do not always contain all the same information as hard copies. Though not a major issue at this point it is perhaps an aspect that needs to be borne in mind in future during the further development of the reporting and monitoring systems for such projects. Reporting on financial data, has following the introduction of Quantum, also appeared to have become increasingly slow and less simple to disaggregated by Outputs (i.e. it is less easy to have a real sense of real time disbursement and a sense of where disbursement within out puts have occurred). However, the project has made a significant effort to collect and provide this data and to overcome these issues for the MTR.

The minutes of the PBs held have fully and understandably recorded the key points of discussion. Given the needs to adapt and adjust numerous aspects during implementation, and the complexity/sensitivity of governance, both the holding but also the clear recording of these meetings is important.

In conclusion, the main finding of the MTR is that the project reporting system is robust and effective. The only caveat is regarding the meaningfulness/ viability of some of original RF indicators as measures of progress, and these need at MT to be refined/resolved in order to clarify subsequent reporting.

3.3.7 Communications & Knowledge Management

Internal communication within the project PMU, UNDP CO appears to have been very effective, perhaps simplified by this being a DIM modality project and housed under the same roof. Communication between the PMU/UNDP CO and PB members, both in the context of formal meetings but also on a general step by step implementation level, appears to be exemplary (based on feedback from the majority of PB members meet by the MPR during the in-country mission).

Communication outside of the project (with PA level staff and entity, Canton, municipality, stakeholders, etc.) likewise appears to have been very effective and feedback received by the MTR during visits to project sites universally positive. It was clear to the MTR that project staff were well known to stakeholders and good relations existed.

Knowledge Management: The project is undoubtably generating knowledge products via its various activities as reported in the PIR. However, as discuss in previous sections, the MTR would suggest that the project document Component 3 is not specific on methods/mechanisms for knowledge management per se. The only specific mechanism mentioned under Outcome 3 is the "Information System for Nature Conservation" but it is not clear if this is something the project needs to set up or is an existing system the project should contribute to (it is only mentioned once in the whole ProDoc).

Within the PIR2024 (page 66- UNDP BPPS Technical Advisor review) it is stated "The project's knowledge management plan is integrated within Component 3. During this reporting period, the Project team has effectively maintained a comprehensive knowledge management system, which includes data collection, dissemination of project outputs to stakeholders, and aggregation of information from other projects, partners, and research institutions. The system also supports organizing trainings, workshops, and presenting project activities to relevant audiences. Going forward, the focus should shift towards communicating lessons learned, success stories, and other key insights". However, the MTR did not see any clear evidence of such a systematically designed "system" being in existence during review of the documents provided or during the in-country mission.

Given the highly decentralized governance system in the country (in all regards, but for PA management as well) having a). an effective and carefully planned system for capturing of new research/methods, and knowledge and experiences generated by the project and b). effective mechanism/s for the dissemination of this knowledge and experience to all the difference stakeholders is, in the MTR opinion, a critically important task if the project is to have sustained impact.

Thus, as previously discussed during review of progress under Component 3, the MTR would recommend that there is a need to develop a clearer plan for knowledge management that includes:

a). identification of mechanism/s and approaches for capturing and disseminating knowledge products generated by the project (unified database, web-based mechanism for access and dissemination, issues of national or at least entity ownership clarified to ensure maintenance/sustainability post project, etc)

b). clear plans and actions for systematic review and evaluation of new initiatives undertaken/tested by the project that generate usable guidelines to support replication (i.e. clear activities under Component 3 to systematically undertake review and lessons learned exercises of practical experiences gained – what worked, what didn't, how to most effectively implement based on real experience, etc).

The MTR would suggest that in this context the newly established PA managers Associations could play a significant role (cross system dissemination and collaboration/coordination) as well as key entity and national institutions. This could also be looked at in the context of the Convention on Biodiversity Information Clearing House Mechanism (as a future component of it for example) or an initial step to build capacity in this direction.

 In conclusion, the MTR recognizes that the project is indeed generating important knowledge products but believes that to make full added value from these products additional planning and activities are required.

3.3.8 Gender Aspects and project response

The project document contains the required section 3.3 on Gender Equality and Women empowerment and Annex 13 contains a Gender Action Plan. This was updated during the inception phase and has been (based on reporting) systematically applied with MT targets on gender balance for relevant project indicators meeting or exceeding expectations.

The nine PA management plans supported by the project incorporate tourism and socio-economic components that address gender concerns. While the implementation of these plans has yet to begin, the project has laid a solid foundation for integrating gender perspectives into PA management planning.

The project ensured equal representation of beneficiaries and stakeholders in capacity-building workshops, training sessions, project events, study tours, consultations, and more. Additionally, the project team-maintained gender balance in the Project Board (60% female) and relevant working groups, in compliance with the BiH Gender Equality Law, which requires at least 40% representation of the less represented sex. The PMU itself is actually dominated by women, and it was noted during the in-country mission that women seemed to be well represented in the PA system generally (at least compared to the MTR experience in other countries). In collaboration with the ViaDinarica Project, the Project develop a photo story titled "Investing in Women to Move Mountains", celebrating the contributions of women in management of natural resources in BiH.

Notable gender related achievements and initiatives of the project to date include;

- During trainings supported by the project (capacity building, training, knowledge building, various meetings, workshops, events, study tour, consultation meetings etc.) equal access to innovations, best practices, and approaches has been ensured for both men and women (out of the estimated 807 people receiving such training 361 or 45 % were women).
- Representation of women and men in project decision-making boards and working groups is in compliance with the BiH Gender Equality Law (40 % of representation of less represented sex) - Of the 12 members of the Project Board, 7 are women, which accounts for 60% of the representation.
- Project organized a panel discussion, first of this kind in BiH, that has a goal to point out the importance of gender equality in the natural resources management, but also to jointly reflect on the challenges and ways to achieve these goals in BiH society and opportunities for gender equality in the natural resources management sectors in Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- In a collaboration with the ViaDinarica Project, the Project develop a photo story "Investing in Women to Move Mountains" celebrating the contributions of women in management of natural resources in BiH. The story was published through global UNDP's channels (UNDP Nature, UNDP's Monthly bulletin celebrating March 8th, etc.). In the section 'KM & Communications,' web links to the materials are provided.

The overall conclusion is that the project is making systematic and effective efforts to ensure gender equality and empower the role of women in its implementation and is meeting or exceeding its targets in this respect.

Rating for Project Implementation and Adaptive management.

Based on the ratings applied to the 3 project Outcomes, taken together with other factors (given the weak project Results Framework indicators) the overall rating MTR for project progress towards the objective is Satisfactory (please see summary tables of GEF rating system in the annex for clarification).

However, it needs to be noted that the project Results Framework has limitations in regard to meaningful review of progress and recommendations for strengthening this are contained in the report. It should also be highlighted that due to changes between project design / approval and the inception phase a large number of adjustments to specific activities was required during initial implementation. Effective adaptive management by all parties has addressed these initial challenges and at MT it is considered the project is on track to achieve the expected results and impact.

3.4 Sustainability

The main objective and intent of the project is to have sustainable impacts and benefits for the Bosnia Herzegovina PA system through a). increased financial sustainability, b). increased management effectiveness that addresses threats effectively (including climate change related threats and socio-economic threats and pressures). Thus, if the project is meeting its outputs and outcomes, it should be increasing the sustainability of the PA system overall. Certainly, the project

has been making significant efforts to integrate into PA management climate change considerations, strengthen generally the management capacity and effectiveness and increase the capacity to develop sustainable financing options and opportunities.

Prospects and risks to the sustainability of the projects interventions at the midterm point are assessed in that context. It should be emphasised that the assessment is at MT only and that with the assessment maybe very different by TE stage.

3.4.1   Financial Risks to Sustainability

The overall sustainability of the project is largely linked to the impact in the long term on financial sustainability of the PA system. In terms of support to tourism related revenue generation the MTR considers the sustainability is likely, although there are significant risks related to a). the stability / predictability of the tourism sector generally, b). the over development of tourism in PAs to the detriment of biodiversity objectives.

However, as discussed previously, tourism revenue alone will be unlikely to suffice to make the PA system sustainably and adequately financed. Thus, though the initiatives identified in the original project document are likely to significantly strengthen the PA tourism related sustainable financing in the target PAs (and provided experience/lessons that will be applicable widely in the PA system) they did not address the need for diversified SFM.

The project has mitigated this overall narrow focus to some extent during implementation during the identification of SMF options under the guidance of the international SFM expert. However, the MTR feels there is a need to perhaps further address, at least a strategic thinking level, the overall PA system financing concept in future with adequate recognition of the fact that governmental funding will need (and can be justified) to adequately secure the PA system effectiveness.

Overall, the MTR considers the financial sustainability of the project support to the target PAs and wider PA system as Likely based on the above.

3.4.2   Socio-economic risks to sustainability

Socio-economic risks for the PA system are closely linked the wider economic and political situation of the country, and in particular socio-economic development in rural areas (typified at present by rural emigration and low incomes). The value of PAs as one basis for development of sustainable economic activity via eco-tourism provides a potentially important benefit that will hopefully increase their socio-economic sustainability. Likewise greater awareness and understanding within local communities of other benefits of PAs in terms of NTFP, NDR reduction and CCC mitigation, etc. may support greater social support. The project will be contributing towards all of these and thus increasing the likelihood of socio-economic sustainability.

As discussed in other sections of the report the PA governance is highly fragmented due to the highly decentralized governance system of BiH generally, and thus the majority of the newly created PAs (an example being Tisina wetlands PL) are highly dependent on local level "ownership" (local communities and municipalities) – in order for them to be valued and supported their full values to local stakeholders (from tourism but also through ecosystem services and local recreational, historical/cultural values, etc) have to be sufficiently tangible and understood/appreciated.

There is a risk that if these values are not sufficiently understood or developed these new PAs will fail to be sustained in the long run. The socio-economic trends of rural BiH (typified by declining and aging populations and declining economic opportunities) provide both positive and negative opportunities for establishing sustainable PAs – on the one hand less intensive use makes PA creation more viable and the potential economic opportunities they potentially can bring is an incentive for local communities and municipal/canton authorities to support – however, on the other hand the declining populations and poverty can lead to collapse of socio-economic capacity to maintain the areas. The aging of the population and te subsequent loss of traditional historical/cultural ties to landscapes may also be a factor (an example is again Tisina wetlands where one important local land user who has played a significant role is becoming less active due to age).

Undoubtably the project activities and the outputs and outcomes it is generating are impacting positively on the target PAs and providing both the increased awareness and capacity to strengthen the likelyood of their future appreciation and importances to local actors and thus to their sustained support. However, much will depend on whether current trends in the socio-economic development in BiH, and particularly in rural areas, will improve, stabilize or deepen.

Thus, in light of the overall uncertain status of the national socio-economic situation, particularly general trends in rural areas, and the high vulnerability / susceptibility to outside economic shocks, all of which are beyond the project to control, the overall socio-economic sustainability of the project is perhaps realistically Moderately likely.

3.4.3   Institutional Framework and Governance Risks to Sustainability

The institutional framework and governance structures in Bosnia Herzegovina are uniquely complex and decentralized which brings its own issues for the project in terms of institutional / governance sustainability.

Overall, despite the complexity discussed above, the relevant institutions in Bosnia Herzegovina appear function relatively effectively and project outputs are contributing to both their internal capacity and the capacity of the PA system across institutions (as well as within PAs themselves).

The project has, in the opinion of the MTR, made a significant step towards strengthening the overall institutional framework with its support to establishing the PA Managers Associations at entity level. Furthermore, the project, through all activities such as PA management planning, the species and ecosystem plans/actions, tourism SFM development, wetlands restoration, etc, built capacity at PA and municipality/canton level that increases their capacity to operate effectively and addresses governance with other stakeholders, most importantly local communities.

Some clear risks will remain and be beyond the possibility for the project to fully mitigate i.e. wider financial risks for key institutions (particularly municipalities), political impacts on PA staffing engagement with the wider PA system (as seen in own of the originally target PAs). Other risks given the highly decentralized governance of the PA system is the extent to which local authorities and PA administrations can regulate and counter local vested interests and interest groups with other conservation negative priorities (an issue exemplified in Proskovo Lake NM).

However, overall, the MTR considers the institutional and governance sustainability of the project impacts to be Likely.

3.4.4   Environmental Risks to Sustainability

Broadly, the project is supporting a reduction in environmental risks rather than increasing them and so contributing to environmental sustainability of the PA system.

However, two potential areas of concern do exist – a). the potential (and to some extent already experienced) negative impacts of tourism and b). impacts of climate change and real capacity to adapt.

In terms of the former, the main concern is i.) the level of dominance the pursuing of tourism development in PAs has in the conceptual vision of many institutions for the PA system and management effort of some PAs, ii.) the potential for this dominance to translate into inappropriate tourism or simply inadequately controlled levels of tourism, which then negatively impact the biodiversity and ecosystem service values of PAs. This is a very real risk and has already been experience at some sites (Prokosko Lake NM for example) but the project is and will have positive impacts in this regard. Together with partners (such as the USAID Tourism project) both strategic thinking in terms of the kind of tourism and the future need to better regulate/control tourism activities/numbers is being introduced.

In terms of the latter risk (capacity to adapt to CC impacts) – this is an enormous and very complex challenge faced by all countries whatever their capacities. In many cases adaption to CC impacts requires both very different approaches to existing methods or procedures and sometimes quite drastic measure. The project is certainly contributing to introduce the need to think about such issues and supporting/testing some practical actions to mitigate impacts (the species plans, fire action planning, etc.). However, in a project of this duration there is only so much that can be done, and these are really only initial steps. Possibly the most important capacity being built is the better understanding and broadening of awareness of what is potentially possible to do under these circumstances. Clearly these are issues and capacities that need to be followed up and widened to encompass the wider natural resources practices and adaptive capacity, particularly in the commercial forestry sector where the vast majority of Bosnia Herzegovina's biodiversity and ecosystem service values lie.

In conclusion the MTR would rate the project impact on the PA system environmental sustainability as likely, but only in the context of its immediate focus.

Overall conclusion on sustainability: Based on the above cumulative assessment the MTR would rate the project likely sustainability of impacts at the MT stage, as **Likely.**

4   Conclusions and Recommendations

4.1   Conclusions

Project Strategy:

Strategy Relevant and responsive to national priorities and needs. The MTR conclusion is that the project strategy was extremely relevant to the needs of Bosnia Herzegovina at this time and addresses key root causes of threats to the existing and emerging protected areas within the country, specifically: overall management effectiveness and capacity, but particularly capacity to respond to increasingly evident climate change impacts to high value biodiversity; and the limited and insecure sources of financing for Protected areas system.

Although the project document does not cite the NBSAP (2016)[11] the project is in line with Target 11 regarding increased protection of high value biodiversity through increased area of protected areas and national target 1 (measure 1.2 on securing financing). Feedback received during the MTR mission from national stakeholders at all levels confirmed the relevance and national level support for the project objective and outcomes. The project builds on past GEF supported financing for PA system development (UNEP/GEF) and is well linked to existing tourism related initiatives of the national/entity governments and donors.

 The only caveat to the above is the projects strategical narrow focus on tourism only related sustainable financing mechanisms – this is discussed previously in the text.

Project Design was adequate: The overall MTR conclusion is that the project design was adequate as a basis to achieve the objective but would have benefited from a more systematic analysis of the root causes and barriers and a clearer Theory of Change. Limitations in the design include the overly narrow focus on tourism related sustainable financing mechanisms, limited recognition of the barrier that the highly decentralized/fragmented governance system has in terms of the overall PA system development has, and overly deterministic SFM solutions in activities within Component 2. In terms of measuring progress towards impact the RF indicators had some limitations in meaningfulness and / or viability, and clarity of measure. The 3rd component (Knowledge management and communications) gives rather the impression of being "added on" and lacks clear outputs and activities.

However, despite these limitations the project design does address the key strategic issues and provide a adequate framework for achieving outcomes that can lead to the project objective if implemented effectively and adaptively (which fortunately has been the case).

Progress towards results:

The project has so far made Satisfactory Progress: Based on the review of the individual project Outcomes and the Mandatory GEF Objective indicators, the <u>overall MTR rating of progress towards the Objective is Satisfactory.</u>

The project has made substantial and significant progress despite the challenges faced by a project document with some significant limitations, significant changes in a number of on ground circumstances, and a generally difficult implementation context. In terms of the 3 mandatory GEF Project indicators it is on track to achieve all at MTR (though the methodology for Indicator 1 requires to be clarified it is clear to the MTR that the project is meeting its expected impact in this respect).

The project and main partners / stakeholders have pragmatically and energetically adapted and adjusted implementation to address both design issues and changes that have occurred since project development. The project has in fact enhanced the strategic content and likelihood of impact through a number of adjustments and additions (such as broadening the SFM focus beyond only tourism and supporting the PA Managers Associations as a mechanism to address the PA system governance fragmentation barrier not identified in the ProDoc).

The MTR would highlight the effective use of international technical consultant support including:
 a). the use of an experienced international consultant to help frame the technical TORs for wetlands assessment and identification of restoration activities – a frequent issue seen by the MTR consultant is that projects seek to quickly initiate significant procurement tasks for technical issues but without the adequate technical knowledge to define the tasks

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[11] https://www.cbd.int/doc/world/ba/ba-nbsap-v2-en.pdf

adequately or appropriately, leading to project technical direction becoming lost or failure to achieve good results. The use of the project of international technical support at the start is therefore a good practice to be highlighted.

b). early employment of a very experienced SFM international consultant which helped lead to both a widening of focus and a pragmatic and systematic revisiting of the SFM options and opportunities and a consultative process to select those most viable and appropriate for the project to support practical application of.

The challenges for remaining period of implementation: The project has 2 and a half years remaining to complete implementation and must now start to transition from mainly capacity building and preparatory/planning activities to a). to more field implementation and practical demonstration / testing activities, including infrastructural works b) capturing the experience and lessons learned from these and effectively ensuring the system wide dissemination and knowledge transfer in order to maximise replication and sustained impact. The MTR concludes that the project has created the baseline relationships and technical / scientific basis needed to undertake this transition successfully. Furthermore, the project PMU, UNDP CO and PB/national partners have the capacity and joint experience to apply intelligent adaptive management which will be critical during the second half of the project.

However, one potential issues of concern under Component 1 of the project will be the viability of some Outputs/activities particularly the financial / technical viability of the proposed wetlands restoration activities. In the context of other practical initiatives supported under Component 1 the challenge will be whether meaningful results can be achieved in the short timeframe especially considering the vulnerability of some initiatives to seasonal variations (made more likely by climate change). In this context the importance of looking to the future in terms of ensuring national capacity/ownership and identifying potential donor funded mechanisms for further supporting / replicating project results will be critical in its terminal phase. Under component 2, the project will face challenges in transitioning from the initial identification of SFM options to the practical implementation of them. In this regard ongoing international / regional experience may well be critical to ensuring nuanced practical implementation adapted to the on-ground realities in Bosnia Herzegovina.

A second potential issue of concern is the substantial level of activities and delivery (around 75% remaining) of Component 2 of the project. A substantial part of the delivery will likely be related to infrastructural works and material procurements which have risks in terms of the time and effort required to implement in accordance with all UNDP rules and regulations. The PMU, UNDP CO and PB need to ensure these aspects are pushed ahead in a very timely manner in order to ensure their effective completion in time.

Project implementation and Adaptive Management:

The management arrangements are conducive for a good implementation of the project; including an excellent implementation team: The project is DIM modality which under the circumstances of Bosnia Herzegovina is appropriate and was agreed after consultation with GEF. This means that the UNDP CO has a greater level of responsibility for implementation than is typical but has been effective in establishing an effective PMU and relevant support services. The PMU recruited for the project, particularly the PM, had suitable experience both in regard to the technical aspects and UNDP procedures which has enhanced the effectiveness of implementation.

The Project Board has worked effectively with the PMU and UNDP CO to address the many initial challenges and adaptions required with the result that project implementation thus far is on track.

Stakeholders and beneficiaries are well engaged in the implementation of the project, particularly at the Canton, municipality and target PA level; Key stakeholders are well engaged in implementing the project. The participative and collaborative approach used by the project implementation team is conducive for this good engagement and will certainly be contributing to the sustainability of project achievements over the long term. The project has started to have "tangible" results and will be increasingly focused on implementing practical actions and approaches during the next 2 years – in this context it will be important to build mechanisms for cross PA system knowledge sharing among stakeholders and to learn from each other. This requires additional efforts to develop effective mechanisms for knowledge sharing and strengthen initial efforts to build the overall entity/national PA system capacity, coordination and uniformity of approach.

The disbursements of the GEF grant is well on track with the overall plan: despite an initially slow start, and the challenges from the ATLS to Quantum systems during the initial period of implementation, the project delivery is on track at MT.

There are remaining weaknesses in the monitoring framework – however, the project monitoring is sufficient to evaluate progress at MT but will require adjustment and strengthening to provide a clearer basis for evaluating impact by TE: one of of the 3 Objective indicators requires clearer definition of the methodology for data collection (definition of beneficiaries) and a number of other indicators at outcome level are either not viable or in need of adjustment. In one case (METT) improved data collection will be needed by TE. However, the project has worked hard to try and fulfil the RF indicator monitoring and proactively discussed the need for changes with the MTR. From the RF monitoring information available, PIR textual explanations, and discussions with stakeholders/field visits the MRT had a clear basis to evaluate progress.

Sustainability

The overall sustainability of the project outcomes is considered likely largely due to the very effective adaption of project Outputs and activities to practical realities and needs of the key stakeholders (particularly the PA managers and relevant authorities), a technically well qualified PMU that consults effectively with stakeholders, an in-process approach to capacity building that is responsive to real needs of beneficiaries, and effective use of international expertise.

One barrier to sustainability that was weakly identified at project development stage regarding fragmentation of the PA system (and challenges this brough in terms of system wide support and sustainable impact) is being addressed but it is considered by the MTR important to further address.

The systematic reappraisal undertaken by the project during initial implementation, of PA sustainable financing options and opportunities, and process to reach consensus on the best options to test/pilot under the project, has greatly improves the potential sustainability in this regard. However, given the innovative nature of the SFMs, ongoing international expertise is advisable in order to adapt and troubleshoot challenges likely to be faced.

The MTR has some concerns over the viability and thus sustainability of the wetlands restoration that is scheduled to commence in the future stages of the project, but is confident, based on demonstrated effectiveness to date, the project and partners will find realistic and pragmatic options to maximize the possible impacts in this regard. However, given the financial and technical implications a specific recommendation is included regarding this aspect.

For greater likelihood of sustainability of project initiatives to aspects will be important: a). strengthening and clarifying the knowledge management aspects, b). ensuring a systematic and carefully planned "exit" in the latter stages of the project, and active promotion of experience, lessons learned into other entity, UNDP and other donor ongoing programs and projects (such as the UNDP / GEF8 project currently under development).
The MTR recommendations, together with some explanatory text and suggested steps for application, are detailed below (see also summary tables).

4.2   Recommendations

A number of suggestions and recommendations have been made throughout the MTR report. In this section, the most critical recommendations and suggestions are summarised and highlighted but the project team should consider all the additional suggestions made in the sections above.

Formal recommendations have been summarized in tables below and are divided into those mainly relevant to UNDP GEF/UNDP CO, and those mainly relevant to the project (for action by the project regarding implementation during the 2nd half of the project). Additional to the formal recommendations, several "suggestions" of less formal nature have been made (i.e. not mandatory).

The MTR recommendations, together with some explanatory text and suggested steps for application, are detailed below (see also summary table).

Project Results Framework and Indicators:

Recommendation 1- Undertake an adjustment to currently weak or nonviable indicators as indicated below (proposed changes and justification in separate table in annex). The relevant indicators and targets have been highlighted in the previous text and are itemized in the summary recommendations table below. The Annex of this MTR report contains a table providing summaries review of each, together with suggested revisions. The final variants of proposed revised indicators/targets will need to be cleared by the RTA and by the PB. It is recommended that this process is completed soon after the MTR in order to ensure subsequent monitoring and reporting reflects the changes.

Recommendation 2: **Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT)** – As discussed in the previous sections of the report, the METT at TE has been based on a national consultant review of project activities completed that should have contributed to increasing the management effectiveness of the target PAs. This does provide some basis for review but is not a direct review of actual impact in the PAs. Thus, for TE the METT needs to be based on field survey / questionnaire of relevant authorities/ PAs staff,and ideally prepared with them (not just based on project generated reporting etc.). The collaborative preparation is important in terms of capacity building and providing the basis for ongoing entity/national monitoring of PA management effectiveness post project. As a suggestion, the PA Managers Association could play a role in this process both as a means for building sustainability and "cross system" capacity.

Component 1 implementation:

*Recommendation 3***: PA Managers Association:** Further support and broadening of conceptual role (addresses a key barrier not well highlighted in ProDoc regarding fragmentation of PA system and difficulties to apply systematic approaches/learning across the system). The potential value and importance of this added initiative by the project is highlighted in previous sections of the report. Due to the fact it was not originally an output or activity envisaged in the ProDoc there is no developed concept of what full potential role the PA Managers Associations could play in the future development of the PA system and what support therefore this project (and future projects) should provide to help build the effectiveness and sustainability of the roles/s. The PMR would recommend therefore that the project should attempt to review this issue and to develop a longer-term concept/proposal of the role the PA Managers Associations could play at both entity and inter-entity levels, and on that basis seek to formalize this with the PB and relevant stakeholders. This would provide a more effective basis for both this project and other ongoing/future projects to incrementally support the process towards the PA Manager associations strengthening.

Recommendation 4: **Undertake a systematic viability review of proposed ecosystem restoration proposals (particularly those for Tisina wetlands) and ensure timely and proactive followup to any procurement needs based on decisions resulting from such a review:** As discussed previously in the text of the report, the project design has probably under estimated the likely financial costs involved with ecosystem restoration activities, particularly those related to the wetlands restoration. In this context a pragmatic review of the proposals will be advisable and a selection of options that balance impact with financial viability and practical sustainability will be necessary. This needs to be done in a clear, systematic and transparent manner and endorsed by the PB. An additional aspect connected to this is that, based on experience already gained regarding the time required with such processes, to proactively ensure the timely implementation of procurement processes to implement the selected restoration actions.

Component 2 Implementation:

Recommendation 5: **Adjustment to Output 2.3 to better reflect / capture the projects realistic result / impact in this context** (provisional proposed text "At least one mutually beneficial outsourcing agreement (including concessions, leases, rentals, PPPs, etc.) designed". This recommendation is based on the advice provided in the IC SFM report D4 "It is recommended that the SNP concession model should no longer be the main focus of output 2.3. It should be noted that the relevant component 2 indicator is not specific to a particular site or outsourcing model, or to tourism-related operations, but rather states that "at least 1 mutually beneficial public-private agreement (including concessions, leases, rentals) formalised and operational". This leaves considerable leeway for reformulating the Output 2.3. A number of other pilot PAs have clear potential for developing concessions or other outsourcing arrangements in partnership with the private sector (or, potentially, other external actors), and – importantly – have (or will soon have) approved spatial plans in place. It is recommended that Output 2.3 should therefore focus on supporting one or more of these other outsourcing possibilities in other pilot PAs. The MTR understands that this is already in line with the projects current planning and thus this change in Output text will bring the RF into line with the viable reality at this time.

Recommendation 6: Review the need and opportunity to retain the advisory support of the IC SFM during practical implementation and testing of the selected SFM mechanisms and to support the development of a brief PA system financing strategy that recognizes the need for a diverse approach, including ongoing governmental support: In the MTR experience implementing innovative activities inevitable throws up unexpected issues and problems and in that context having the inputs and wider experience of an international specialist can be crucial to successful adaption. In the MTRs understanding the current IC SFMs contract is reaching its end with the terminal mission occurring in November 2024. Though it will clearly have financial implications to continue her involvement (and may of course not be viable for her) it would be the MTRs recommendation that, given her wide experience and existing knowledge gained in Bosnia Herzegovina, it would make sense to attempt to retain her inputs even if only on a limited "advisory" basis.

Recommendation 7: **Undertake an Ecosystem Service Valuation exercises for the Tisina Wetlands (including areas RS and FBiH as** basis for justifying and promoting the conservation of the area, as a capacity / experience building exercises, and as a basis for potential future innovative SFM. The reasoning behind this recommendation is covered

previously in the report. Though the MTR accepts that attempting to fully implement the identified SFM| option in Tisina (see ICSFM report D3- "PH Tišina as a model example from which to build a business case for nature-themed insurance and/or payment for ecosystem services") was correctly not selected as being overly ambitious at this stage, there are still good reasons to undertake the initial steps ("ecosystem valuation, a topic which had been presented in the opening session and had generated a lot of interest among participants". This the MTR believes would be viable within the project timeframe and circumstances and could have multiple benefits (building awareness and capacity to undertake such valuation, systematic identification of actual values that help justify the PAs and build local support, a basis for potential future efforts to introduce PES/insurance SFMs etc.). It is also recommended to undertake the study for the whole wetlands (i.e. both the part in RS and FBiH) as the full values can only be understood on that scale.

Component 3 Implementation:

Recommendation 8: **More Detailed elaboration of Outcome 3 Outputs and activities to ensure systematic capturing of experience and its dissemination / future application (Linkage with Output 1.5 on replication).** As previously discussed in the text, Outcome 3 lacks clarity and value added. The MTR would recommend that there is a need to develop a clearer plan for knowledge management that includes:

a). identification of mechanism/s and approaches for capturing and disseminating knowledge products generated by the project (unified database, web-based mechanism for access and dissemination, issues of national or at least entity ownership clarified to ensure maintenance/sustainability post project, etc)

b). clear plans and actions for systematic review and evaluation of new initiatives undertaken/tested by the project that generate usable guidelines to support replication (i.e. clear activities under Component 3 to systematically undertake review and lessons learned exercises of practical experiences gained – what worked, what didn't, how to most effectively implement based on real experience, etc).

The MTR would suggest that this is another context that the newly established PA managers Associations could play a significant role (cross system dissemination and collaboration/coordination) as well as key entity and national institutions. This could also be looked at in the context of the Convention on Biodiversity Information Clearing House Mechanism (as a future component of it for example) or an initial step to build capacity in this direction.

Recommendation 9: **Development of a comprehensive Exit strategy and action plan during terminal phase of the project:** A technical assistance project is a blip on the continuum of development – it can incrementally move the situation forward but without follow on ownership and further support such advances can easily wither. Though projects can initiate new and innovative approaches/methods etc. successfully it is impossible within their limited timeframe to fully build the sustainability of such achievements – thus it is critically important for successful projects to identifying and organize during their terminal phases how the achievements can be best nurtured and sustained post implementation.

Therefore the MTR recommends the development of an Exit strategy in the terminal phase of the project which is then operationalized via a plan of action in the last 6 months of implementation to ensure systematic transfer of ownership and responsibility of project initiatives and demo activities in order to maximize sustainability (with a range of stakeholders and partners including governmental, NGO, private sector, UNDP and other development partners).

Recommendation 10: Ensure the sharing of the information generated by the SPA project with relevant new UNDP initiatives (specifically the BIOFIN project and GEF 8 Multi focal Project BD/LD). The SPA project has built significant relationships and capacities, plus broken new ground in significant ways. This experience and lessons learned needs to be systematically trsfered and utilized in relevant emerging initiatives. The responsibility for doing so partly rests on the project (in terms of generating and sharing the critical experience and lessons,) but also with the CO and relevant emerging initiative authors who must adequately seek out and incorporate these experiences and lessons. Wherever possible the CO must encourage BIOFIN to further extend and replicate the finance solutions the project is developing, and to integrate these into broader biodiversity finance frameworks and policies (based on IC SFM recommendation – see Report D1, page 6, bullet 2). Secondly, the experiences and lessons learned from SPA project (including those related to project strategy and design) must be adequately recognised and incorporated into the new multi focal GEF project proposal currently under development and that opportunities for synergizing and replication are captured.

Table 10: MTR Project Recommendations:

Recommendations	Responsibility	Timing
Project Results Framework – Indicators and Targets		
Recommendation 1- Undertake an adjustment to currently weak or nonviable indicators as indicated below (proposed changes and justification in separate table in annex)	Project team UNDP BIH	Within 2 months of MTR finalization
Recommendation 2: **Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT)** – for TE the METT needs to be based on field survey / questionnaire of supported PAs and ideally prepared with them (not just based on project generated reporting etc.).	Project team UNDP BIH	Terminal 6 months of project
Component 1: Managerial and technical capacities of targeted PAs in place helping ensure resilience of key biodiversity values to climate change		
Recommendation 3: **To undertake a review and develop a conceptual plan for the future role of the PA Managers Associations (**and on that basis provide further support and build practical capacity to support this and future project implementation).	Project team UNDP BIH	Within 4 months of MTR finalization
Component 2: Improving financial sustainability of targeted PAs through sustainable tourism development		
Recommendation 4: **Adjustment to Output 2.3 to better reflect / capture the projects realistic result / impact in this context** (provisional proposed text "At least one mutually beneficial outsourcing agreement (including concessions, leases, rentals, PPPs, etc.) designed".	Project team UNDP BIH	Within 2 months of MTR finalization
Recommendation 5: **Review the need and opportunity to retain the advisory support of the IC SFM** during practical implementation and testing of the selected SFM mechanisms and to support the development of a brief PA system financing strategy that recognizes the need for a diverse approach, including ongoing governmental support.	Project team UNDP BIH	Within 2 months of the MTR finalization.
Recommendation 6: **Undertake an Ecosystem Service Valuation exercises for the Tisina Wetlands (including areas RS and FBiH as** basis for justifying and promoting the conservation of the area, as a capacity / experience building exercises, and as a basis for potential future innovative SFM	Project team UNDP BIH	Decision within 3 months of MTR. Completion by 4th year of project.
Component 3: Knowledge Management and Communication		
Recommendation 7: **More Detailed elaboration of Outcome 3 Outputs and activities to ensure systematic capturing of experience and its dissemination / future application** (Linkage with Output 1.5 on replication) – detailed suggestions on this are provided in text of report (Pages 27, 63).	Project team UNDP BIH	Within 3 months of MTR finalization.
Recommendation 9: **Development of a comprehensive Exit strategy and action plan during terminal phase of the project:** this is recommended during last 6 months of implementation to ensure systematic transfer of ownership and responsibility of project initiatives and demo activities in order to maximize sustainability (with a range of stakeholders and partners including governmental, NGO, private sector, UNDP and other development partners).	Project team UNDP BIH	During terminal 6 months of the project.
Recommendation 9: **Ensure the sharing of the information generated by the SPA project with relevant new UNDP initiatives (specifically the BIOFIN project and GEF 8 Multi focal Project BD/LD).** The SPA project has built significant relationships and capacities, plus broken new ground in	Project team UNDP BIH	During startup of BIFIN and the development /

significant ways. This experience and lessons learned needs to be systematically transferred and utilized in relevant emerging initiatives. The responsibility for doing so partly rests on the project (in terms of generating and sharing the critical experience and lessons,) but also with the CO and relevant emerging initiative authors who must adequately seek out and incorporate these experiences and lessons.		finalization of GEF8 project document

Supplementary suggestions:

The supplementary suggestions indicated below are 2nd level issues that the MTR has mentioned or identified during the review, and though not of highest priority to the achievement of the project objective, are still felt important to highlight. Some are self-explanatory or covered in previous text, but some are perhaps less clear and are provided with additional clarification in paragraphs post table.

Table 11: Supplementary Suggestions

Suggestion	Responsibility	Timing
Support the preparation of a national / entity PA financing concept paper: The benefit of this would be to clarify the overall conception thinking in regard to PA system financing including justification for continued core governmental support in combination with other mechanisms and approaches.	Project team	2025
Facilitate the resolution of the management situation at Proskovo Lake NM in order to strengthen authority to implement the MP and control inappropriate activities.	Project team	2025
Be prepared to recalibrate/adjust ambition following the finalization and presentation of report on Tisina wetlands and recommendations regarding proposed restoration solutions	Project team	2025
Tisina water pumping issue – If not already done so project should support review and provision of the most cost effective / sustainable water pumping options for Tisina PH (to address most critical threat in short term)	Project team	2025
Additional support to Tisina PH and newly proclaimed wetlands PA in neighbouring FBiH municipality to promote whole wetland approach and inter-entity cooperation / build synergies/mutual benefits for management, promotion/profile etc.	Project team	2025
For TE – might also be preferably / useful to have evaluation of effectiveness / value of SESP and ESMF in the project as this was first project to have to include / apply – lessons learned for future application in GEF 8 projects etc	Project team	Within 3 months of MTR
Lynx monitoring – only for RS side at present – project to support similar for FBH so country data can be generated	Project team	2025

Suggestion 1: **Support the preparation of a national / entity PA financing concept paper:** The benefit of this would be to clarify the overall conception thinking in regard to PA system financing including justification for continued core governmental support in combination with other mechanisms and approaches. In this context the ICSFM may have useful guidance and potential role if further engaged in the project.

Suggestion 2: **Facilitate the resolution of the management situation at Proskovo Lake NM** in order to strengthen authority to implement the MP and control inappropriate activities. The benefits of this suggestion are self-evident in terms of effectively managing what is one ecosystem/hydrological system. In fact, to manage it effective will very likely

require a certain level of coordinated action. There are the added benefits in terms of facilitating inter entity/inter community cooperation.

Suggestion 3: Be prepared to recalibrate/adjust ambition following the finalization and presentation of report on Tisina wetlands and recommendations regarding proposed restoration solutions. The MTR feels confident that the PMU and PB will apply the already demonstrated adaptive capacity to this question but would like to provide them with the "moral" support to encourage addressing the situation pragmatically. It may well be that many or all the restoration options proposed are not within the financial or time frame scope of the project – in this context the best course of action will be pragmatic reduction in ambition or re-focus of effort. If based on sound reasoning and consultation this will be understood at TE stage.

Suggestion 4: **Tisina water pumping issue** – for any wetlands system the single most critical issues if of course the water supply (quantity, quality, timing). No doubt the recommended restoration options will address this critical aspect, but it will probably remain the case (in short term certainly and possibly even in the longer term) that "emergency" water pumping will be a requirement in particularly difficult years. Such pumping is costly using conventional equipment such as available to the Tisina PA management – thus, if not already done so, the project should support a technical review of the most cost effective and sustainable pumping options available and potentially the provision of such equipment (a decision to be made within the context of the longer-term restoration proposals). This will at least address the most critical short-term threat.

Suggestion 5: **Additional support to Tisina PH and newly proclaimed wetlands PA in neighbouring FBiH municipality** to promote a "whole wetland" approach, inter-entity cooperation and build synergies/mutual benefits for management, promotion/profile etc. This is discussed in various places in the report and does not need further elaboration. The MTR believes there are various opportunities to approach this added task, and actual efforts will be dependent on project opportunities and financing.

Suggestion 6: **Lynx monitoring** – Currently the support to the lynx monitoring is restricted to RS only. Clearly having country wide data would be a major increase in value and then allow transboundary integration of data. It is therefore suggested that the project could build the added value of this support by facilitating the identification of FBiH partners to replicate the support given in RS.

Suggestion 7: For TE – might also be preferably / useful to have evaluation of effectiveness / value of SESP and ESMF in the project as this was first project to have to include / apply – lessons learned for future application in GEF 8 projects etc. These projects was one of the first in Bosnia Herzegovina to be required to fully apply these safeguard mechanisms. The experience (including the barriers and issues faced) are therefore potentially very valuable both for future UNDP / GEF projects in Bosnia Herzegovina (such as the GEF8 project under development) and other projects within the RBEC region. It might also be interesting to evaluate the benefits and costs of these new requirements – they do undoubtably bring an additional administrative and financial burden to projects, so it is worth asking the question of where they are worth it – do they enhance implementation and increase environmental and social aspects in a meaningful way? What might be ways to reduces costs imposed and increase benefits/impacts? At this stage in the role out of these mechanisms this might be a useful initiative to apply.

4.3   Key Lessons Learned for Future Projects

Be critical at inception phase, including basic project design and M&E: There is a tendency at project inception phases to accept too readily the approved project document for various reasons. However, despite all the efforts it is inevitable that any ProDoc is going to have its faults and limits and it is easier and more efficient to try to address these at inception phase that at a later point in implementation such as at MT. Insufficiently critical review / analysis of project document strategy and impact monitoring system at inception can lead to wasted effort and funds and imperil project success. The MTR would suggest based on both this project and numerous others reviewed in recent years, that this is a useful lesson learned that should be applied with more vigour in future.

Value of early international technical inputs: In two examples in the project the use of experienced international technical experience at the outset has demonstrated its value in "getting off on the right foot" (i.e. in case of wetland / peat contractor TORs and systematic/more adapted SFM option selection. As the saying goes "a good PMU knows its limitations" and it is counterproductive to attempt to define tasks or select future key project directions based on inadequate / partial in house technical capacity. Unfortunately, in the MTRs experience (both as a reviewer and a technical consultant" it is all too common to see technically weak or unviable TORs for very critical / substantial tasks expected from consultants or contractors because the project / UNDP CO did not seek at the start the technical knowledge needed to understand what

actually needed to be done, etc. The project has avoided this pitfall, and this is felt by the MTR to be a good practice that needs to be replicated in similar such projects.

<u>Value of PM and PMU having sound technical capacity as well as UNDP system managerial capacity:</u> Apart from other strengths (effective communication with stakeholders etc.) a significant strength of this project is the technical capacity of the PM and PMU staff which has greatly facilitated the effectiveness of adaptive management and the credibility of the project with the key stakeholders. In the experience of the MTR this is a relatively rare situation as PMs are often selected primarily based on management experience / qualifications rather than technical. The UNDP CO has had the foresight to seek and recruit a team with capacity to deal effectively and directly wit the technical aspects of the project and this has very greatly contributed to its effective implementation to date and is a good practice that every effort to repeat should be made.

Table 12 - Key Lessons Learned	
Lesson learned	*Relevant to.*
<u>Be critical at inception phase, including basic project design and M&E:</u> Insufficiently critical review / analysis of project document strategy and impact monitoring system at inception can lead to wasted effort and funds and imperil project success.	UNDP CO
<u>Value of early international technical inputs</u>: in two examples in the project the use of experienced international technical experience at the outset has demonstrated its value in "getting off on the right foot" (i.e. in case of wetland / peat contractor TORs and systematic/more adapted SFM option selection. This is a good practice that needs to be replicated in similar such projects.	UNDP CO, RTA
<u>Importance of PM having sound technical capacity as well as UNDP system managerial capacity:</u> Apart from other strengths (effective communication with stakeholders etc) a significant strength of this project is the technical capacity of the PM and PMU staff which has greatly facilitated the effectiveness of adaptive management and the credibility of the project with the key stakeholders.	UNDP CO, RTA

Signed:

M. Anstey   Date: 16/01/25

ANNEX DIRECTLY RELATED TO MTR RECOMMENDATIONS

Annex 1: Indicator and Targets Review/Recommendations
Annex 2: MTR ToR (excluding ToR annexes)
Annex 3: MTR Matrix
Annex 4: Interview protocol / guides
Annex 5: Ratings Scales
Annex 6: MTR mission itinerary
Annex 7: List of persons interviewed
Annex 8: List of documents reviewed
Annex 9: Training Questionnaire Feedback table
Annex 10: Signed UNEG Code of Conduct form
Annex 11: MTR final report clearance form

ADDITIONAL ANNEX OF MTR RELEVANT DOCUMENTS IN SEPARATE FILES.

Annex 12. Audit trail from received comments on draft MTR report
Annex 13. GEF Core Indicators and Tracking Tools - METT

Annex 1: **Indicator and Targets Review/Recommendations:**

Indicator	*Baseline*	*MT target*	*TE Target*
Indicator 1: # direct project beneficiaries disaggregated by gender (individual people).	100,000 (incl. 50,000 women)	314,900 (incl. 157,260 women)	
Comment and Recommendation on indicator: Due to the issues facing the methodology for evaluating this indicator it is difficult to reach a precise understanding of "direct beneficiaries" impacted (see discussion in text). Current methodology (decided by project PMU) includes PA visitors as beneficiaries for example which the MTR does not support. The recommendation is to redefine those who count as beneficiaries to remove this anomaly and to provide clarity for future monitoring / reporting and TE review.			
Indicator 7a: % reduction in extent (ha/annum) of forests detrimentally impacted by fires: Orjen PN, Sutjeska NP, Kozara NP, Drina NP, Skakavac PL, Blidinje PN	*7a: baseline data and viable end-of-project target (%reduction) to be obtained in the Year 1* *Orjen PN: 10 ha* *Sutjeska NP: 0 ha* *Kozara NP: 0 ha* *Drina NP: 20 ha* *Skakavac NM: 0 ha*	-	*7a: 15% from baseline*
Comment on indicator: This indicator is considered impractical and lacking in meaningfulness. The project is helping PAs to develop Action plans for firefighting (and some equipment) – This should improve the effective response of PAs and other stakeholders to fires if they occur in the future. However, the frequency and severity of fires depend largely on factors beyond the PAs control and fires are not an event in nature that is predictable – their occurrence and severity will depend on many factors and in particular variations in climate between years – climate change will cause a change in <u>trend</u> over multiple years <u>but</u> between years there will be large variation. *Attempting to measure project impact in a % decline in detrimental impact of fires to PA territory therefore doesn't make sense. In any case, w*here did the figure of 15% reduction in "detrimental impact "from fires come from? Why 15 not 20 %. If climate change is making fires worse maybe achieving) % change could be considered a win? *Given the above issues MTR proposes more useful to use a presence or absence indicator (plans in place and officially adopted by stakeholders) – this at least is a reasonable measure of whether the project achieved the activity, and it was sufficiently interesting to the stakeholders that they adopted it.* *Below is a recommended revision:*			
Indicator 7a: Firefighting Action plans For PAS developed and approved for Orjen PN, Sutjeska NP, Kozara NP, Drina NP, Skakavac PL, Alternative Fire Action Plan Impact evaluation conclude an improvement in effectiveness	Baseline: No or weak firefighting plans in place and poor coordination exists between PAs and other stakeholders / land managers in surrounding territory. No or limited Firefighting Action plans (limited coordination).	-	Target PAs have approved fire action plans that include effective coordination/integration with other stakeholders and land mangers (Orjen PN, Sutjeska NP, Kozara

of response to fire events/management.			NP, Drina NP, Skakavac PL) FAP impact evaluation study (based on actual fire events if any) indicates improved capacity to prevent/mitigate fires compared to prior the FAP.
Indicator 8: At least 20% reduction of the funding gap for targeted PAs	*0*	*-*	*20%*

Comment on indicator:

This indicator has a number of issues / unclarities:

- firstly, it assumes that adequate information on the Target PAs financing status (and gap between required financing and current financing) existed at the project start (as basis for then measuring if that gap is being reduced) – in reality such information did not apparently exist.

- secondly the baseline is indicated as 0 – but zero what? 0% reduction in gap?

- Thirdly, it's not clear why the figure of 20% reduction in the "gap" was selected. And is this 20% reduction in gap on average? (average change for 10 PAs), or for each PA? etc.

Due to these issues the indicator is considered unhelpful as a measure of project impact on sustainable financing for target PAs.

The international SFM consultant recommended in her initial report "that a simplified FSS exercise is carried out, covering the project's 10 target PAs, and updated on an annual basis over the course of the project".

It is suggested that this would be a more meaningful mechanism for measuring the sustainable financing impact in the target PAs. Thus, the following change to the indicator 8 for Outcome 2 is suggested.

Indicator 8 (suggested) **LE Revised Indicator** *8: additional sustainable finance mechanisms in place in at least 3 target PAs as measured by the Financial Sustainability Scorecard*	Baseline: There is no consolidated information on PA financing in BiH (including target10 PAs).	*Baseline: FSS established for 10 target PAs*	*EOP* *FSS indicates improvement over baseline in selected target PAs FSS by EoP.*
Indicator 9: At least 1 mutually beneficial public-private agreement (including concessions, leases, rentals) formalised and operational At least 1 mutually beneficial public-private innovative financing mechanism designed	*0*	*0: All prerequisites for concession operationalizati on ensured* *All prerequisites for innovative financing mechanism defined.*	*1:* 1; At least 1 mutually beneficial public-private innovative financing mechanism operational

Comment / Recommendation on indicator:

IC SFM Recommendation (Report D4 page 11): **the relevant indicator for component 2 should be reworded so as to not specifically mention PPPs**. This could be accomplished with little or no change in meaning or ambition, for example by modifying the output to "at least 1 mutually beneficial outsourcing agreement (including concessions, leases, rentals) formalised and operational". This also allows for the possibility for the management of PA facilities, services or infrastructure to be outsourced to a non-commercial or not-for-profit organisation, as well as to the private sector. It would of course not preclude entering into a PPP arrangement, where this is appropriate and legally enabled.

Proposed revised Indicator 9: One or more mutually beneficial outsourcing agreement (including concessions, leases, rentals) formalised and operational".	0	All prerequisites for mutually beneficial outsourcing agreement (including concessions, leases, rentals) are defined	At least 1 mutually beneficial outsourcing agreement (including concessions, leases, rentals) operational.
Indicator 11: At least 20% increase in the annual number of visitors and service users in targeted PAs – non-viable for all target PAs due to no baseline/practicality issues	0%	5%	20%

Comment / Recommendation:

Not all of targeted PAs are tracking this key indicator or have established entry points and predefined entry fees (see PIR24). Thus, to simplify this indicator would make sense to **limit monitoring to those PAs with such data** (but to add activity on strengthening capacity of others to begin tracking visitor numbers).

Annex 2: MTR ToR (excluding ToR annexes)

Mid-Term Review Terms of Reference

1. INTRODUCTION

This is the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the Midterm Review (MTR) of the full-sized UNDP-supported GEF-financed project titled "Improved Financial Sustainability and Strengthened Resilience of Protected Areas Through Development of Sustainable Recreation and Partnership With Private Sector"; shortened title: "Sustainability of Protected Areas (SPA)"; (PIMS6439) implemented through the UNDP in Bosnia and Herzegovina under the Direct Implementation modality (DIM), which is to be undertaken in 2024. The project started on the 1 July 2022 and is in its third year of implementation. This ToR sets out the expectations for this MTR. The MTR process must follow the guidance outlined in the document Guidance For Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects.

2. PROJECT BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Project Background

Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) is located in South-Eastern Europe (SEE), in the central part of the Balkan Peninsula, and covers an area of 51,129 km^2. BiH is a multi-ethnic state with a complex political and administrative system. It administratively consists of two entities (the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republika Srpska) and the autonomous Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH) is further administratively made of 10 cantons (regions), which are then made of 79 municipalities. Republika Srpska (RS) is divided administratively into 62 municipalities.

BiH is an upper middle-income country with 3.5 million population with the main population trends of gradual declining and aging. BiH has experienced steady economic growth in the past two decades, yet its population has declined 20 percent. BiH is an upper middle-income country with 3.5 million population with the main population trends of gradual declining and aging. BiH has experienced steady economic growth in the past two decades, yet its population has declined 20 percent. The country has a high level of human development but is still below the average for the Europe and Central Asia region. After a strong post-COVID recovery in 2022, the economy slowed down in 2023, reflecting lack of reforms and subdued private consumption amid high, albeit decelerating inflation. The annual inflation rate in BiH accelerated to 2.2% in December 2023, up from a nearly two-and-a-half year low of 1.7% in November, mainly due to smaller cost reductions in transportation, clothing, footwear, housing and utilities. The real GDP growth in the third quarter of 2023, compared to the same quarter of the previous year, mounted to 1,9% while unemployment rate of 13,6% decreased (compared to 15.5% in 2022) but remains high, particularly among women (18.5%).

BiH is susceptible to natural disasters and environmental shocks. Natural and man-made hazards represent a significant risk with over 20% of the country's territory prone to flooding. Land and ecosystem degradation typical for a transitioning country remain to threaten the sustainability of the country's development efforts. Capacities to effectively address hazards and crisis need to be further strengthened, as confirmed by the unfolding COVID-19 crisis.

The biological diversity of the country is represented by over 450 species of higher plants, several hundred invertebrates (predominantly insects), 12 fish species, 2 species of amphibians, 4 species of reptiles and numerous species of birds and mammals. The country is home to a number of endemic species and habitats as well as a series of relict ecosystems; species diversity has the highest level of endemism in Europe.

In spite of the country's rich biodiversity, international obligations, and growing man-induced pressures, nature conservation efforts remain insufficient. Socioeconomic challenges, such as unemployment and poverty, have

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resulted in both the government communities focusing on immediate economic priorities rather than environmental issues, including biodiversity. Thus, biodiversity conservation is not seen as a national priority.

The main threats to biodiversity in BiH include habitat conversion, overexploitation of precious biological resources, forest degradation, as well as impacts and threats caused by climate change for valuable or threatened forests, freshwater ecosystems and wetlands, karst fields and caves. Four national reports of BiH to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (2009, 2013, 2016, 2020) identify a significant impact of climate change on plants whose habitats are in the mountainous areas of BiH. In the long run, one can expect the migration of some woody plants in the direction of the Dinarides to the northwest and a decrease in the number of herbaceous plants of narrow ecological valence of the highest mountain areas. Possible causes are increases in average temperatures and stronger temperature extremes. In addition, the high sensitivity of fir forests was determined due to the narrow ecological valence in relation to temperature. It is important to highlight that, for species that constitute most mountain forest ecosystems, such as fir, Norway spruce and Scots pine, BiH is situated at their areal southern limit. The increase in average temperatures could have a negative impact primarily on the size of the population of these species, which, in combination with other (anthropogenic) factors lead to their vulnerability and, ultimately, complete loss in the region. Negative effects of climate change on forest ecosystems have already been significant. The negative impact is manifested through increased droughts, forest fires, drying of certain species and declining groundwater levels.

About the Project

The **overall objective** of the project "Sustainability of Protected Areas (hereinafter SPA)" is to achieve practical improvement in management of protected areas of BiH, providing for better biodiversity status through strengthened resilience of key biodiversity values to climate change impact and increased revenues to protected areas from sustainable recreation. Project is contributing to the Biodiversity GEF Focal Area and directly addresses the provisions of the **Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)**.

This project contributes to BiH programme priorities as outlined in the UNDP Country Programme Document for BiH 2021-2025 (*Contributing Outcome (UNSDCF/CPD, RPD, GPD)*): Outcome 1. By 2025, people benefit from resilient, inclusive and sustainable growth ensured by the convergence of economic development, and management of environment and cultural resources and Outcome 2: Accelerate structural transformations for sustainable development), which is supporting sustainable and inclusive growth, with benefits that are more widely and fairly shared, leveraging and integrating the environment and economic development sectors towards a low carbon economy, environment protection and resilience. The project's components are linked and will facilitate targeted measures for ecosystems and livelihoods resilience in the targeted PAs and surrounding geographies.

The project's work is designed by the following **five** components:

Under the **Component 1. Strengthening protected area resilience to climate change threats**, the project works to reduce the vulnerability of key biodiversity values and strengthen the resilience of target protected areas in BiH to climate change. The interventions within this component are designed over the following outcome and outputs:

Outcome 1: Managerial and technical capacities of targeted protected areas in place helping ensure resilience of key biodiversity values to climate change

Output 1.1: Comprehensive climate threat assessment conducted for pilot protected areas;

Output 1.2: Protected areas management framework developed/updated and under implementation with due account of climate threats;

Output 1.3: A portfolio of adaptation and resilience solutions for targeted species and ecosystems developed and set under implementation;

Output 1.4: Demonstration of innovative restoration approaches;

Output 1.5: Replication and adaptation of pilot protected areas solutions and demos to other sites.

Under the **Component 2. Improving financial sustainability of targeted protected areas through sustainable tourism development,** the project develops and tests mechanisms for increased protected area revenues from sustainable tourism. The interventions within this component are designed over the following outcome and outputs:

Outcome 2: Financial sustainability of targeted protected areas improves

Output 2.1: Sustainable tourism products developed for pilot protected areas;

Output 2.2: Functional partnerships with the private sector stakeholders are in place to provide community engagement and increased income streams from legal nature resource use activities (incl. recreation) occurring in the targeted protected areas;

Output 2.3: Eco-tourism concession model developed and piloted in Sutjeska National Park;

Output 2.4: Protected areas participation in the governmental grant programs is ensured in a sustainable manner;

Output 2.5: Promotion of natural values, products and services in the targeted protected areas is improved.

Project Component 3. Knowledge management and communication is aimed at the dissemination and management of the generated knowledge products and lessons learned. This is to be achieved through following outcome and output:

Outcome 3: Knowledge management and communication

Output 3.1: Knowledge management and communication ensured throughout project implementation.

Component 4. is aimed at **Monitoring and Evaluation** to make sure that project results are properly monitored and evaluated **(Outcome 4)** while **Component 5.** is dedicated for **Project management costs.**

This is a five-year project (July 1st 2022 – June 30th 2027) with the overall budget of USD 2.79 million, out of which the GEF grant is USD 2.64 million and the UNDP TRAC is USD 150.000. The parallel co-financing in the amount of USD 18.36 million is provided by the: BiH Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations, FBiH Ministry of Environment and Tourism, RS Ministry of Spatial Planning, Civil Engineering and Ecology, RS Ministry of Trade and Tourism, CISP –International Committee for People's Development, FBiH and RS Environmental Funds, Municipality Šamac, Municipality Ravno, Sarajevo Canton Public Enterprise for Protected Areas and UNDP.

In total, the project has been providing technical assistance to 26 protected areas throughout the country which will have some type of benefit from the SPA project (mostly referring to the joint promotion activities). However, the focus of project activities is around the following protected areas:

> *in Republika Srpska:* Nature Park Orjen, National Park Sutjeska, National Park Drina, National Park Kozara and Nature Park Una; PH Tišina and PH Gromiželj;

> *in Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina:* National Park Una, Nature Monument Prokoško jezero, Nature Monument Vrelo Bosne, Nature Monument Skakavac, Protected Landscape Bijambare, Protected Landscape Vjetrenica-Popovo polje).

The project is implemented in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations of BiH, FBiH Ministry of Environment and Tourism, RS Ministry of Spatial Planning, Construction and Ecology, RS Ministry of Trade and Tourism, FBiH Environmental Protection Fund and the RS Environmental Protection and Energy Efficiency Fund. Apart from these institutions, project is implemented in cooperation with the managers of protected areas and partner local governments throughout BiH.

The Project addresses the two most pressing needs in the area of nature conservation in BiH. One is associated with the climate- induced threats that, according to the latest country communication to the UN CBD, pose a key

external risk. Failure to incorporate resilience solutions for protected area functioning would in the long run render the protected area system unable to support the biodiversity it hosts and attract people to it. While addressing the climate resilience issue, the next important area of focus is the administrative and financial capacity of nature conservation and specifically protected area management, which requires innovative solutions including private-public partnerships and other measures in this GEF project. Implementing just the climate resilience without strengthening the financial viability of the protected areas would deprive the conservation sector of long-term resources to sustain itself. Ignoring the climate risks and focusing solely on the financial and administrative capacities of protected areas in a small country such as BiH would pose the ecosystems at risk of losing their ecological qualities/functions/services and ultimately disabling the conservation industry from attracting people to it. Therefore, these two components of the project have been working in synergy to address the most imminent needs and gaps of protected areas management in the country.

3. 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.

As the project approaches the midpoint of its lifespan, the MTR is timely to identify any potential challenges encountered during project implementation thus far and recommend necessary adjustments to enhance project effectiveness in the latter half of its duration, increasing the likelihood of achieving its intended results by the project's conclusion. In a substantive review of the effectiveness of the project approach, the MTR should assess cause and effect relations within the project, identifying the extent to which the observed changes can be attributed to project interventions.

The MTR is expected to offer strategic recommendations for future decision-making across the project sectors, for UNDP, GEF, Project Board institutions (the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations of BiH, FBiH Ministry of Environment and Tourism, RS Ministry of Spatial Planning, Construction and Ecology, RS Ministry of Trade and Tourism, FBiH Environmental Protection Fund and the RS Environmental Protection and Energy Efficiency Fund), and other relevant stakeholders. Through this process, the MTR aims to inform and guide stakeholders towards optimized project outcomes and long-term impact.

The specific objective of the MTR will be aligned with UNDP evaluation policies and guidelines, and will highlight (but not be limited to) the following aspects:

- Assess the overall project progress vis-à-vis the Result Framework based on data, qualitative information and evidence on results and identify critical gaps or delays; assess co-financing disbursed to date and facilitate the updates of the METT scores;
- Assess external environment and risks, such as crisis caused by the pandemic, as well as internal risks, including weaknesses in programme design, management and implementation, human resource skills, and resource (aligned with UNDP evaluation policies)
- Engage all relevant stakeholders in structured conversations to enable collective insights and distilling of key lessons learned in relation to (signals of) transformative change induced by the project, mistakes, as well as important cross-cutting issues, such as innovation, gender equality and leaving no one behind;
- Formulate strategic recommendations for consideration by the project team, Implementing Partner (IP) and Country office staff engaged in the project (oversight and execution) and key partners, towards more effective project implementation in the future, or adjustments, as needed.

4. MTR APPROACH & METHODOLOGY

The MTR will be implemented in line with the "Guidance For Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects." and the "United Nations Guidelines on Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluations". The MTR report must provide evidence-based information that is credible, reliable and useful.

The MTR will be conducted by the MTR team composed of an International Evaluation Consultant (MTR Team Leader) and National Evaluation Consultant. The MTR Team Leader will lead the MTR process and decide on planning and distribution of the MTR workload and tasks. She/he will closely collaborate with the National Evaluation Consultant who will provide support throughout the MTR process.

The Evaluation Team Leader will bear responsibility for conducting the Evaluation process. This entails designing the evaluation process according to this Terms of Reference; preparing the Evaluation Inception Report; undertaking a rigorous desk review; gathering data from different sources of information; analysing, organizing and triangulating the collected information; responding to comments and factual corrections from stakeholders and incorporating them, as appropriate, in subsequent versions; and making briefs and presentations ensuring the evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations are communicated in a coherent, clear and understandable manner.

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[12] 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 the:

a. **Project Board members** from the following institutions: the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations of BiH, FBiH Ministry of Environment and Tourism, RS Ministry of Spatial Planning, Construction and Ecology, RS Ministry of Trade and Tourism, FBiH Environmental Protection Fund and the RS Environmental Protection and Energy Efficiency Fund;

b. **other project partnering institutions**: Institute for the Protection of Cultural-Historical and Natural Heritage of Republika Srpska; managers of protected areas, executing agencies, senior officials and task team/ component leaders, key experts and consultants in the subject area, project stakeholders, academia, local government and CSOs, etc. Additionally, the MTR team is expected to conduct field missions to: Protected Habitat Tišina *(municipality Šamac);* Nature Monument Prokoško jezero (*municipality Fojnica*); Protected Landscape Vjetrenica-Popovo polje (*municipality Ravno*); Serbian spruce (*Picea omorika)* afforestation plots (*locations tbc; most probably in municipality Rogatica*).

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 MTR methodology should employ both, standard and innovative evaluation approaches, relevant quantitative, qualitative or combined methods, and data triangulation based on diverse ecosystem of evidence. For example, qualitative insights will be generated through interactive workshops and conversations with all relevant stakeholders, to generate insights, feedback and recommendations around the key questions suggested to drive the MTR. The MTR team is expected to leverage interactive tools (such as "the most significant change", visual tools / cards/ creative canvases to capture insights, progress and suggestions, etc.) to unleash creativity and generate valuable insights from stakeholders. The MTR methodology is expected to employ feedback loops and insights into signals of transformational change generated by the project. The MTR recommendations will be forward looking and focused on adaptation of the project in the complex changing system.

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.

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[12] 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 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.

5. DETAILED SCOPE OF THE MTR

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

i.   Project Strategy

Project design:

- Review the problem addressed by the project and the underlying assumptions. Review the effect of any incorrect assumptions or changes to the context to achieving the project results as outlined in the project document.
- Review the relevance of the project strategy and assess whether it provides the most effective route towards expected/intended results. Were lessons from other relevant projects properly incorporated into the project design?
- Review how the project addresses country priorities. Review country ownership. Was the project concept in line with the national sector development priorities and plans of the country (or of participating countries in the case of multi-country projects)?
- Review decision-making processes: were perspectives of those who would be affected by project decisions, those who could affect the outcomes, and those who could contribute information or other resources to the process, taken into account during project design processes?
- Review the extent to which relevant gender issues were raised in the project design. See Annex 9 of *Guidance For Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects* for further guidelines.
  - Were relevant gender issues (e.g. the impact of the project on gender equality in the programme country, involvement of women's groups, engaging women in project activities) raised in the project document?
- 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[13]	Baseline Level[14]	Level in 1st PIR (self-reported)	Midterm Target[15]	End-of-project Target	Midterm Level & Assessment [16]	Achievement Rating[17]	Justification for Rating
Objective:	Indicator (if applicable):							
Outcome 1:	Indicator 1:							
	Indicator 2:							
Outcome 2:	Indicator 3:							
	Indicator 4:							
	Etc.							
Etc.								

Indicator Assessment Key

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

In addition to the progress towards outcomes analysis:

- 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?

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[13] Populate with data from the Logframe and scorecards

[14] Populate with data from the Project Document

[15] If available

[16] Colour code this column only

[17] 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[18] (in the SESP).
  - The individual risk ratings (in the SESP) .
- Describe and assess progress made in the implementation of the project's social and environmental management measures as outlined in the SESP submitted at CEO Endorsement/Approval (and prepared during implementation, if any), including any revisions to those measures. Such management measures might include Environmental and Social Management Plans (ESMPs) or other management plans, though can also include aspects of a project's design; refer to Question 6 in the SESP template for a summary of the identified management measures.

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

Reporting:

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

Communications & Knowledge Management:

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

iv. Sustainability

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[18] 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.

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

Financial risks to sustainability:

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

Socio-economic risks to sustainability:

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

Institutional Framework and Governance risks to sustainability:

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

Environmental risks to sustainability:

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

Conclusions & Recommendations

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 a *MTR Ratings & Achievement Summary Table* in the Executive Summary of the MTR report. See Annex E for ratings scales. No rating on Project Strategy and no overall project rating is required.

Table. MTR Ratings & Achievement Summary Table for the Project "Improved Financial Sustainability and Strengthened Resilience of Protected Areas Through Development of Sustainable Recreation and Partnership With Private Sector (SPA)"

Measure	MTR Rating	Achievement Description
Project Strategy	N/A	

Progress Towards Results	Objective Achievement Rating: (rate 6 pt. scale)	
	Outcome 1 Achievement Rating: (rate 6 pt. scale)	
	Outcome 2 Achievement Rating: (rate 6 pt. scale)	
	Outcome 3 Achievement Rating: (rate 6 pt. scale)	
	Etc.	
Project Implementation & Adaptive Management	(rate 6 pt. scale)	
Sustainability	(rate 4 pt. scale)	

6. TIMEFRAME

The total duration of the MTR will be approximately 30 working days over a time period of 16 of 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)	4 days	July 31st 2024
MTR mission: stakeholder meetings, interviews, field visits	10 days	October 11th, 2024
Presentation of initial findings- last day of the MTR mission	1 day	October 11th, 2024
Preparing draft report (due within 3 weeks of the MTR mission)	10 days	November 04th, 2024
Finalization of MTR report/ Incorporating audit trail from feedback on draft report (due within 1 week of receiving UNDP comments on the draft)	5 days	December 09th, 2024

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

7. MIDTERM REVIEW DELIVERABLES

#	Deliverable	Description	Timing	Responsibilities
1	**MTR Inception Report**	MTR team clarifies objectives and methods of Midterm Review	July 31st 2024	MTR team submits to the Commissioning Unit and project management
2	**Presentation**	Initial Findings	October 11th, 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	November 04th, 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	December 09th, 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.

8. MTR ARRANGEMENTS

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

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

The MTR Team Leader will report to the Evaluation Manager appointed by UNDP, who will oversee and support the overall MTR process. In addition, a MTR reference group will be formed to provide critical and objective inputs throughout the MTR process to strengthen the quality of the MTR. The Country Office Senior Management will approve the MTR report. UNDP will provide logistical support and to implementation of meetings. An updated stakeholder list with contact details (phone and email) will be provided by the Country Office to the MTR team. The Country Office M&E focal point will support the Evaluation Manager throughout the MTR process. This support will include preparation of the MTR ToR, review of all MTR deliverables including the inception report, draft and final MTR report, ensuring that all MTR deliverables and the entire MTR process meet UNDP requirements, including gender equality, LNOB aspects and other cross-cutting issues.

9. TEAM COMPOSITION

The MTR will be conducted by the MTR Team composed of an International Evaluation Consultant/Evaluation Team Leader (with experience and exposure to project and programme evaluations in relevant and other regions and globally) and National Evaluation Consultant, to provide overall support and bridge the language barriers during the MTR. The MTR team will assess emerging trends with respect to regulatory frameworks, budget allocations, capacity in developing the MTR detailed plan and itinerary and implementing the evaluation process in line with these Terms of References.

The Evaluation Team Leader will lead the evaluation process and decide on planning and distribution of the evaluation workload and tasks. She/he will design and implement the evaluation process and will closely collaborate with the National Evaluation Consultant who will provide support throughout the evaluation process.

Specifically, the Evaluator Team Leader will be responsible for the following tasks:

- Plan the evaluation mission; Collect data and information and prepare relevant sections in the report;
- Design the detailed evaluation scope and methodology (including the methods for data collection and analysis);
- Conduct an analysis of the outcome, outputs and partnership strategy (as per the scope of the evaluation described above);
- Draft the evaluation report;
- Address comments on the report, using Audit Trial Form;
- Finalize the evaluation report.

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:

Education

- A Master's degree in natural sciences, biotechnical sciences, economics, climate change, international relations, or other closely related field

Experience

- Relevant experience with result-based management evaluation methodologies;
- Experience applying SMART indicators and reconstructing or validating baseline scenarios;
- Competence in adaptive management, as applied to Biodiversity GEF focal area;
- Experience in evaluating projects;
- Experience working in RBEC region;
- Experience in relevant technical areas for at least 10 years;
- Demonstrated understanding of issues related to gender and Biodiversity; experience in gender sensitive evaluation and analysis.
- Excellent communication skills;
- System thinking capability and strategic advice in development context;

Language

- Fluency in written and spoken English.

10. ETHICS

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

11. PAYMENT SCHEDULE

- 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%[19]:

- 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.

12. APPLICATION PROCESS[20]

Recommended Presentation of Proposal:

a) **Letter of Confirmation of Interest and Availability** using the template[21] provided by UNDP;
b) **CV** and a **Personal History Form** (P11 form[22]);
c) **Brief description of approach to work/technical proposal** of why the individual considers him/herself as the most suitable for the assignment, and a proposed methodology on how they will approach and complete the assignment; (max 1 page)
d) **Financial Proposal** that indicates the all-inclusive fixed total contract price and all other travel related costs (such as flight ticket, per diem, etc), supported by a breakdown of costs, as per template attached to the Letter of Confirmation of Interest template. If an applicant is employed by an organization/company/institution, and he/she expects his/her employer to charge a management fee in the process of releasing him/her to UNDP under Reimbursable Loan Agreement (RLA), the applicant must indicate at this point, and ensure that all such costs are duly incorporated in the financial proposal submitted to UNDP.

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

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[19] The Commissioning Unit is obligated to issue payments to the MTR team as soon as the terms under the ToR are fulfilled. If there is an ongoing discussion regarding the quality and completeness of the final deliverables that cannot be resolved between the Commissioning Unit and the MTR team, the Regional M&E Advisor and Vertical Fund Directorate will be consulted. If needed, the Commissioning Unit's senior management, Procurement Services Unit and Legal Support Office will be notified as well so that a decision can be made about whether or not to withhold payment of any amounts that may be due to the evaluator(s), suspend or terminate the contract and/or remove the individual contractor from any applicable rosters. See the UNDP Individual Contract Policy for further details:
https://popp.undp.org/_layouts/15/WopiFrame.aspx?sourcedoc=/UNDP_POPP_DOCUMENT_LIBRARY/Public/PSU_Individual%20Contract_Individual%20Contract%20Policy.docx&action=default

[20] Engagement of the consultants should be done in line with guidelines for hiring consultants in the POPP:
https://popp.undp.org/SitePages/POPPRoot.aspx

[21]
https://intranet.undp.org/unit/bom/pso/Support%20documents%20on%20IC%20Guidelines/Template%20for%20Confirmation%20of%20Interest%20and%20Submission%20of%20Financial%20Proposal.docx

[22] http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/corporate/Careers/P11_Personal_history_form.doc

Annex 3: MTR Matrix and Interview guide.

Evaluative Questions	Indicators	Sources	Methodology
Project Strategy: To what extent is the project strategy relevant to Bosnia Herzegovina priorities, ownership, and the best route towards expected results?			
To what extent are the project's objectives consistent with beneficiaries' requirements, country needs, national priorities and policies, global priorities and partners' and GEF policies and priorities?	Adequacy of activities in relation to policies and stakeholders' needs. Alignment of project objective and outcomes with policy objectives. Alignment of projects strategy and theory of change with country situation and national priorities.	Project Document, UNDP Bosnia Herzegovina Programme, sector policies and regulatory frameworks, regional agreements and programmes	Interviews of stakeholders / beneficiaries Interviews steering committee members Review of documents
To what extent were decision-making processes during the project's design phase reflecting national priorities and needs? 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, considered during project design processes?	Effectiveness of partnerships arrangements since inception, co-financing budget execution. Who was involved in project conception and drafting ?	PIF, early review documents, Project Document, Inception Report, PIRs, minutes of PSC meetings, TOC.	Document review, interviews with government agency stakeholders and project partners, analysis.
How relevant is the project strategy to the situation in Bosnia Herzegovina, the project area/ national context and circumstances? Does it provide the most effective route towards expected/intended results? Were lessons from other relevant projects properly incorporated into the project design?	Coherence between project design and implementation – what changes have had to be made. Should changes have been made? Level of project resources assigned to tasks.	Project Document, Inception Report, Consultant's studies and reports, minutes of PSC	Document review, interviews with government agency stakeholders and project partners, analysis.
Progress Towards Results: To what extent have the expected outcomes and objectives of the project been achieved thus far?			
To what extent have the expected outcomes and objectives of the project been achieved or are on track to be achieved?	SRF indicators & MT targets.	Project Document, SRF, PIRs, results, GEF-7 BD Core Indicators.	Document review, analysis, interviews with stakeholders and beneficiaries

	Extent and success of activities under each Output.		
To what extent did the project contribute to the Bosnia Herzegovina Programme outcomes and outputs, the SDGs, the UNDP Strategic Plan and Country Programme, GEF strategic priorities, and national development priorities?	Alignment and synergies of outcomes with UNDAF and UNDP CPAP, GEF7 priorities, etc.	Project Document, CPAP, SDGs, GEF strategic priorities, GEF-7 BD Core Indicators	Document review, high-level stakeholder interviews, analysis
What factors have contributed to achieving or not achieving intended outcomes and outputs? Could the project include alternative strategies?	Progress towards results, efficiency of project strategy, adjustments to strategy Number of key priorities that have been met through the project Assumptions not met / unpredictable effects	SRF, Project Document, PIR, risk log.	Document review, interviews, analysis
Has the project produced unintended results - positive or negative? If there are negative results, what mitigation activities are in place?	Progress towards results, efficiency of project strategy, adjustments to strategy Number of key priorities that have been met through the project Assumptions not met / unpredictable effects	SRF, Project Document, PIR, risk log.	Document review, interviews, analysis
What evidence is there to suggest that the project will achieve the outcomes and objective by the close of the GEF-fund?	Budget execution, realism of work plans, results to date	SRF indicator MT & EOP targets, PMU, project documentation	Document review, interviews, field visits
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?			
To what extent has the project completed the planned activities and met/ is meeting or exceeded the expected outcomes in terms of achievement of global environmental and development objectives according to schedule, and as cost-effective as initially planned?	Activity modifications (removal / adding) Budget revisions Functionality of M&E system Compliance with UNDP-GEF rules	UNDP finance & project staff Project Director interview Annual reports, CDR, co-financing reports	Interviews, analysis, field visits
To what extent were project funds and activities delivered in a timely manner?	As above	As above	As above

Are there variances between planned and actual expenditures? What are the main reasons? To what extend did financial controls allow the project management to make informed decisions regarding the budget? What extra resources has the project leveraged? How have they contributed to the project's ultimate objective?	Disbursement trends Follow-up and adjustments of procurement plan Co-financing complementarities / substitution M&E system updates and annual/intra-year budgetary adjustments	UNDP finance & project staff Project Director interview Annual reports, CDR, co-financing reports.	Interviews, analysis
To what extent has UNDP delivered effectively on activities related to project identification, concept preparation, appraisal, preparation of detailed proposal, approval and start-up, oversight, supervision, completion and evaluation? To what extent has the Implementing Partner effectively managed and administered the project's day-to-day activities? How was UNDP's overall oversight and supervision?	Changes in UNDP staff Periodicity of technical meetings with project team & relevant support / timeliness of recruitments Changes in project team staff Activity / staff / service payment delays… Role of UNDP-GEF Regional Office.	Annual reports, PIR UNDP, BEPO, PSC interviews CDR.	Interviews, document review, analysis
How are risks monitored and managed?	Project risk log in QUANTUM and management responses, communication with partners and stakeholders, change over from ATLAS to QUANTUM.	Project Document, Annual Project Review/PIRs and the QUANTUM Risk Register, project communications strategy, MTR & Management Response	Review, interviews, analysis
In the project's Results Framework, to what extent the project's objectives and components are clear, practicable and feasible within its time frame? Was there a clearly defined and robust Theory of Change?	Number of activities that were amended / terminated and reasons Follow-up of Capacity Score Card indicators Changes of indicators during implementation, number of indicators not assessed Usability of baseline studies Cost-effectiveness of indicators	Interviews project team Interviews of ministry Interviews PSC members, SRF/ log frame Project strategy.	Documentation review, interviews, field visits, analysis

Were the indicators in the Results Framework SMART?			
To what extent did the Monitoring systems allow the collection, analysis and use of information to track the project's progress, risks and opportunities toward reaching its objectives and to guide management decisions? Were the budget and responsibilities clearly identified and distributed?	Level of functionality of M&E system; updating and effective integration into decision-making (planning + adjustments) Cost effectiveness of indicators	Interviews PMU, RTA, UNDP CO	Documentation review, interviews, field visits, analysis
Sustainability: To what extent are there financial, institutional, socio-economic, and/or environmental risks to sustaining long-term project results?			
How are risks monitored and managed?	Project risk log in QUANTUM and management responses, communication with partners and stakeholders, change over from ATLAS to QUANTUM.	Project Document, Annual Project Review/PIRs and the QUANTUM Risk Register, project communications strategy	Review, interviews, analysis
What is the likelihood of financial and economic resources not being available once the GEF assistance ends?	Public and private sectors, income generating activities, and other (donor) funding that will be adequate financial resources for sustaining project's outcomes)	National policies and plans, local policies and plans, NGO feedback, private sector feedback, project exit arrangements. Consultants and service providers reports	Review, interviews, analysis
What are the long-term socio-political risks to the outcomes of the project?	Partner and stakeholder ownership, public / stakeholder awareness in support of the long-term objectives, sharing of information on risks, adjustments to interventions to address specific risks	National policies and plans, local policies and plans, NGO feedback, private sector feedback, project exit arrangements. Consultants and service providers reports	Review, interviews, analysis
What are the environmental risks to the sustainability of the project's outcomes? How are these managed and mitigated?	Climate data and forecasts. National disaster risk reduction strategies and plans	National data, policies and plans	Review and analysis, field visits

Integrating gender equality and social inclusion (GESI): How can the project further broaden its contribution to enhancing diversity and inclusion? To what extend have local communities, women, youth, people with disabilities and other disadvantaged groups benefited from the project. To what extent have gender equality and empowerment of women been addressed in the design, implementation and monitoring of the project?			
Where all key stakeholders identified, were they categorised correctly? To what extent do project stakeholders share a common understanding and are involved in the decision-making process of the project? To what extent did stakeholder's participation mechanisms in place lead to empowerment and joint ownership of the project? What should be done better to increase their participation and engagement?	Degree of active participation in project activities / capacity building training Project responsiveness re. final beneficiary/community needs Degree of participation of stakeholders in project (annual) planning	PMU & BEDO interviews Interviews of community representatives and local government	Documentation review, interviews, field visits, analysis
How have the project activities contributed to poverty reduction and sustaining livelihoods? To what extend has the project contributed to better preparations to cope with disasters or mitigate risk, and/or addressed climate change mitigation and adaptation? To what extend has the project incorporated capacity development activities? Were results achieved?	Conversion incentives success rate Increased resources through improved technology (& capacity building) / diversification Pilot-project appropriation and empowerment, number of beneficiaries, gender differences in beneficiaries.	Interviews project staff Interviews final beneficiaries Interviews community members / representatives	Documentation review, interviews, field visits, analysis
How have the project activities contributed to poverty reduction and sustaining livelihoods? To what extend has the project contributed to better preparations to cope with disasters or mitigate risk, and/or addressed climate change mitigation and adaptation? To what extend has the project incorporated capacity development activities? Were results achieved?	Conversion incentives success rate Increased resources through improved technology (& capacity building) / diversification Pilot-project appropriation and empowerment, number of beneficiaries, gender differences in beneficiaries.	Interviews project staff Interviews final beneficiaries Interviews community members / representatives	Documentation review, interviews, field visits, analysis

LNOB: Were persons with disabilities, ethnic minorities, women and youth consulted and meaningful involved in programme planning and implementation? Were proportion of the beneficiaries of a programme were persons with disability, ethnic minorities, women and youth?			
How were gender and human rights considerations integrated in the project's design, including analysis, implementation plan, indicators, targets, budget, timeframe and responsible party? To what extent has the project contributed to gender equality, the empowerment of women and human rights of disadvantaged or marginalized groups? To what extent did women, poor, indigenous, persons with disabilities, and other disadvantaged or marginalized groups participate and benefit from the project? Was the UNDP Gender Marker rating assigned to the project document realistic and backed by the findings of the gender analysis? Is there any potential negative impact on gender equality, women's empowerment, disadvantaged or marginalized groups? If so, what can be done to mitigate this? To what extent was the SESP realistic, followed and monitored. Were gender related/ affecting activities, gender-blind, -negative, -targeted, -responsive, -transformational?	M&E system covering gender Activity adaptability as per gender and target beneficiaries' types Degree of project targeting of vulnerable people Number of women & vulnerable people that were direct beneficiaries from project's results Level of participation of vulnerable groups & women in activities' operationalization Safeguarding actions and activities FPIC	Gender-specific & marginalized group interviews (focus groups) Project team interview Local Council interviews Annual reports SESP	Documentation review, interviews, field visits, analysis

Annex 4: Interview Protocol / guides used for data collection

Note: This is a guide for the MTR Consultant (a simplified version of the review matrix). **Not all questions will be asked to each interviewee***; it is a reminder for the interviewers about* **the type of information required to complete the review exercise and a guide to conducting the semi-structured interviews***. In the case of each and every interview the questions asked will be adapted to conform to the type of role played by the interviewee in the project and the specific issues for which they have knowledge or interest or impact. Confidentiality will be guaranteed to the interviewees and the findings once "triangulated" were incorporated in the report.*

I. RELEVANCE - *How does the project relate to the main objectives of the GEF, UNDP and of Bosnia Herzegovina to improve the effectiveness of PA management (in particular to respond to CC issues) and increase adequacy and sustainability of financing for PA management?*

I.1.   How is the Project relevant to the GEF objectives?
I.2.   How is the Project relevant to UNDP objectives?
I.3.   How is the Project relevant to Bosnia Herzegovina in improving the effectiveness of its Protected Area system (particularly in response to CC threats and issues) and the adequacy and sustainability of financing for PA management*?*
I.4.   Does the Project address the needs of target beneficiaries? Target PAs, related communities, Federal, Entity, Canton And PA "parent" authorities?

Future directions for similar projects

I.5.   What lessons have been learnt and what changes could have been made to the project in order to strengthen the alignment between the project and the Partners' priorities and areas of focus?
I.6.   How could the project better target and address priorities of targeted beneficiaries?

II. COHERENCE - *How well does the project fit with other interventions to improve the conservation status and management of key forest and associated grassland, riparian and arid ecosystems in Kazakhstan?*

II.1.   How is the coherence between the project and other interventions carried out by same project's Partners?
II.2.   Is the Project internally coherent in its design?
II.3.   How is the coherence between the project and other relevant interventions?

Future directions for similar projects

II.4.   What lessons have been learnt and what changes could have been made to the project in order to strengthen the alignment, and coherence between the project and other relevant interventions?

III. EFFECTIVENESS – *To what extent have the components and objective of the project been achieved?*

II.1.   How is the Project effective in achieving its expected outcomes?

- o Strengthening PA management effectiveness (general)
- o Capacity to respond to Climate Change threats to PAs (specific)
- o Capacity to restore ecosystem functions and biodiversity values
- o Increasing amount and sustainability of financing for Protected areas (specifically from tourism but also from more diversified sources)
- o Interlinkages between PA objectives/management, Climate change and other environmental issues, socio-economic aspects for local communities
- o Awareness and appreciation of biodiversity benefits (ecosystem service values)

II.2.   Does the project mainstream gender considerations into its implementation?
II.3.   How is risk and risk mitigation being managed?

Future directions for similar projects

II.4.   What changes could have been made (if any) to the formulation of the project in order to improve the achievement of project's expected results?
II.5.   How could the project be more effective in achieving its results?

IV. EFFICIENCY - *Has the project been implemented efficiently, cost-effectively and in-line with international and national norms and standards?*

IV.1.   Is adaptive management used or needed to ensure efficient resource use?
IV.2.   Do the *Project Results Framework* and work plans and any changes made to them used as management tools during implementation?

IV.3.   Are accounting and financial systems in place adequate for project management and producing accurate and timely financial information?
IV.4.   How adequate is the M&E framework (indicators & targets)?
IV.5.   Are progress reports produced accurately, timely and respond to reporting requirements including adaptive management changes?
IV.6.   Is project implementation as cost effective as originally proposed (planned vs. actual)
IV.7.   Is the leveraging of funds (co-financing) happening as planned?
IV.8.   Are financial resources utilized efficiently? Could financial resources have been used more efficiently?
IV.9.   How is RBM used during project implementation?
IV.10. Are there an institutionalized or informal feedback to ensure that findings, lessons learned and recommendations pertaining to project formulation and implementation effectiveness were shared among project stakeholders, UNDP Staff and other relevant organizations for ongoing project adjustment?
IV.11. Is the government engaged? How are issues or constraints related to DIM being addressed. Does DIM have an impact on national ownership?
IV.12. To what extent are partnerships/ linkages between institutions/ organizations encouraged and supported?
IV.13. Which partnerships/linkages are facilitated? Which one can be considered sustainable?
IV.14. What is the level of efficiency of cooperation and collaboration arrangements? (between local actors, UNDP, and relevant government entities)
IV.15. Is an appropriate balance struck between utilization of international expertise as well as local capacity?
IV.16. Did the project take into account local capacity in design and implementation of the project?

Future directions for the project

IV.17. What lessons can be learnt from the project on efficiency?
IV.18. How could the project have more efficiently addressed its key priorities (in terms of management structures and procedures, partnerships arrangements, etc.)?

V. IMPACTS - *Are there indications that the project has contributed to improve capacity (at any level but specifically at target PA site levels and PA "parent" authority levels) to effectively manage Protected areas and respond to threats and issues effectively (including climate change threats). Has the project impacted the basis to ensure adequate and sustainable financing for the target PAs (and national PA system generally).*

IV.1. Will the project achieve its objective that is to *"To achieve practical PA management improvement and better biodiversity status through strengthened resilience of key biodiversity values to climate change impact and increased revenues from sustainable recreation"*?

IV.2. What are the impacts of the project on the local environment; poverty; and, other socio-economic issues?

Future directions for the project

IV.3. How could the project build on its successes and learn from its weaknesses in order to enhance the potential for impact of ongoing and future initiatives?

VI. SUSTAINABILITY - *To what extent are there financial, institutional, social-economic, and/or environmental risks to sustaining long-term project results?*

V.1. Were sustainability issues adequately integrated in project formulation?

V.2. Does the project adequately address financial and economic sustainability issues?

V.3. Is there evidence that project partners will continue their activities beyond project support?

V.4. Are laws, policies and frameworks being addressed through the project?

V.5. Is the capacity in place adequate to ensure sustainability of results achieved to date?

V.6. Are there any environmental risks linked to the implementation of the project?

V.7. Does the project contribute to key building blocks for social and political sustainability?

V.8. Are project activities and results being replicated elsewhere and/or scaled up?

V.9. What are the main challenges that may hinder sustainability of efforts?

Future directions for the project

V.10. Which areas/arrangements under the project show the strongest potential for lasting long-term results? What are the key challenges and obstacles to the sustainability of results of project initiatives that must be directly and quickly addressed?

Key issues to cover in "Semi-Structured" Interviews with key stakeholders At Central Level (Project Board members, Federal and Entity Level, etc).

Below are some questions to provide guidance to conducting "semi-structured" interviews with different central / higher authority level interviewees (project board members, federal and entity levels, etc.). .

They intended to provide guidance on core issues to cover but provide flexibility to steer / adjust interviews as required for specific interviewees, and to follow up further on any issues that arise of clear importance/relevance to evaluating the project.

Some will be the cause of duplication of response, but this is useful for triangulation / cross checking.

Background of Interviewee:
- Who are they? (name and position)   - What exactly does the institution they work for do and their job within it?   - What is relationship / role in the project (or in project supported activities).   - What, in their brief opinion are the key development issues facing the country and/or their region/ location?   - What in their opinion (if they have one) are the main land use and natural resources issues? Are forests and wildlife of value in their opinion? Why? (Environmental benefits, economic / livelihood benefits, etc) ?   - What, if any, are links of biodiversity and PAs specifically with other development issues facing the country?
Project and UNDP feedback
- What do they know / understand about the purpose of the project?   - Is this purpose important and relevant to country– if so, why?   - What activities were undertaken by the project that the interviewee knows about?   - Which of these activities was the interviewee directly involved in?   - Was the project effective in undertaking activities cited above?   - Does UNDP effectively support the implementation? What positives or negatives can the interviewee highlight (if any).   - What is the opinion of the interviewee about the openness and communication of the project and UNDP – do many people understand what they try to do? or most people don't understand?   - Did the project / UNDP try to consult with the relevant authorities at federal and entity level and involve their participation? At wat stage (project development, initial implementation, throughout?)   - Did the project / UNDP recognize and try to ensure gender issues and aspects were recognized and addressed?   - Does the interviewee believe that the project activities have made positive changes to the situation in their area of work / expertise - if so what changes? Who benefits? (environment, people, economy, state system?).

- Does the interviewee think there were any unexpected results of project activities (positive or negative – i.e. unintended consequences)?
- If project made positive changes – how sustainable does interviewee believe these changes to be ? i.e. will these changes exist or evolve or be replicated after the project finishes ? if not, why ?
- If they had possibility – what would the interviewee want the project or UNDP to do differently? (regarding general activities/interventions).
- Who benefits most? State institutions? local authorities, PA managers, rural communities, women, youth, poorest, etc. ?

- If they had possibility – what different would they want the project or UNDP to do (in regard to project development or implementation?)
- What other comments, suggestions or feedback the interviewee would like to make (if any).

Key issues to cover in "Semi-Structured" Interviews with key stakeholders in the field.

Below are some questions to provide guidance to conducting "semi-structured" interviews with different regional / local level interviewees in the field sites.

They are intended to provide guidance on core issues to cover but provide flexibility to steer / adjust interviews as required for specific interviewees, and to follow up further on any issues that arise of clear importance/relevance to evaluating the project.

Some will be the cause of duplication of response, but this is useful for triangulation / cross checking.

Background of Interviewee:
- Who are they? (name if prepared to give, occupation, place of origin, age, gender etc)   - What is position /job source of income? – state, local authority, private, NGO, farmer, etc.   - What is relationship / role in the project (or in project supported activities).   - What, in their brief opinion are key development issues facing the country and/or their region/ location?   - What in their opinion (if they have one) the main land use and natural resources issues ? Are forests and wildlife of value in their opinion? why? (Environmental benefits, economic / livelihood benefits, etc)?
Project feedback
<u>General</u>   - What do they know / understand about the purpose of the project?   - Is this purpose important and relevant to country or to local area of the interviewee – if so, why?   - What activities were undertaken by the project that the interviewee knows about?   - Which of these activities was the interviewee directly involved in?   - Was the project effective in undertaking activities in the location of the interviewee?   - What is the opinion of the interviewee about the openness and communication of the project – do many people understand what they try to do? or most people don't understand?   - Did the project try to consult with local people and involve their participation?   - Did the project recognize and try to ensure gender issues and aspects were recognized and addressed?   - Does the interviewee believe that the project activities have made positive changes to the situation in his/her location? if so what changes? Who benefits? (environment, people, economy, state system?).   - Does the interviewee think there were any unexpected results of project activities (positive or negative – i.e. unintended consequences)?   - If project made positive changes – how sustainable does interviewee believe these changes to be? i.e. will these changes exist or evolve or be replicated after the project finishes ? if not, why ?

- If they had possibility – what would the interviewee want the project to do differently? (regarding general activities/interventions).
- Who benefits most? State institutions? local authorities, rural communities, pastoralists, women, youth, poorest, etc.?

Specific to Project activity interviewees were involved in (see question 4 above):

- What exactly was the activity / task / initiative that interviewee was involved in?
- What exact role did the interviewee have (as implementer, participant/beneficiary, consultant, ??).
- What was the activity/task/initiative expected to achieve during the project?
- What impact / benefit was expected after project?
- What is the opinion of the interviewee on:
  - ✓ The effectiveness of how project organized the activity/task/initiative
  - ✓ The results achieved (compared with expected ones)
  - ✓ Likelihood that results will survive after the project or even be further worked on and increased?
  - ✓ If it had any unintended consequences? (either good or bad).

- If they had possibility – what different would they want the project to do (in regard to specific activity / task interviewee involved in) ?

Key issues to cover in "Semi-Structured" Interviews with Project technical consultants.

Below are some questions to provide guidance to conducting "semi-structured" interviews with different technical consultants employed by the project.

They are intended to provide guidance on core issues to cover but provide flexibility to steer / adjust interviews as required for specific interviewees, and to follow up further on any issues that arise of clear importance/relevance to evaluating the project.

Some will be the cause of duplication of response, but this is useful for triangulation / cross checking.

Background of Interviewee:

- Who are they? (name if prepared to give, occupation, place of origin, age, gender etc)
- What is main position /job source of income? – state, local authority, private, NGO, farmer, etc. free lance consultant, etc.

- What is relationship / role in the project (technical consultant, contractor, etc.).
- When was the contract?

General Project feedback

- What do they know / understand about the purpose of the project?
- Is this purpose important and relevant to country or to local area of the interviewee – if so, why?
- What activities were undertaken by the project that the interviewee knows about?
- Which of these activities was the interviewee directly involved in?
- Was the project effective in undertaking its activities (in the knowledge of the interviewee)?
- What is the opinion of the interviewee about the openness and communication of the project – do many people understand what they try to do? or most people don't understand?
- Did the project try to consult with different stakeholders and involve their participation?
- Did the project recognize and try to ensure gender issues and aspects were recognized and addressed?
- Does the interviewee believe that the project activities have made positive changes to the situation in the country or specific location of direct interest/knowledge? if so what changes? Who benefits? (environment, people, economy, state system?).
- Does the interviewee think there were any unexpected results of project activities (positive or negative – i.e. unintended consequences)?
- If project made positive changes – how sustainable does interviewee believe these changes to be? i.e. will these changes exist or evolve or be replicated after the project finishes? if not, why?
- If they had possibility – what would the interviewee want the project to do differently? (regarding general activities/interventions).
- Who benefits most? State institutions? local authorities, rural communities, pastoralists, women, youth, poorest, etc.?

Specific technical task and implementation

- What was / is the specific technical task or tasks the project contracted the consultant for?
- Was it a part-time or full-time position?
- Was the Terms of reference clear?
- The project was responsive to feedback on the TOR and to any necessary adjustments to tasks or outputs.
- What were the main outputs or achievements of the contract?
- In what way (in the opinion of the interviewee) did these outputs or achievements contribute to the wider project progress towards its objectives?
- Did the project monitor the implementation of the contract and respond / involve themselves at technical level in its implementation
- Did the project respond in a timely way to reports and outputs prepared (feedback and constructive discussion)?
- Are there remaining outstanding issues or activities related to their work that the interviewee thinks need addressing and if so do they think they will be addressed by the project
- Did the consultant have a chance / opportunity to interact and share results/experience with other project consultants?

- Did the project / UNDP make payment in a timely manner?
- What were the biggest barriers or difficulties experienced in undertaking the contract?
- What would the consultant recommend doing differently in terms of the contracting and implementation (by themselves, by project, by UNDP).

Annex 5: Ratings Scales

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

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

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

Annex 6: MTR Mission Itinerary

MTR Mission schedule / plan

(Provisional for finalization on day 1 of mission)

20 October – 29 October 2024

TIME	ACTIVITY Events	LOCATION Location	Person in charge
October 20, Sunday			
Geneva-Sarajevo			
19:50-23:00	Flight Geneva -Sarajevo	travel	
	Overnight in Sarajevo	Hotel TBD	
Sarajevo			
October 21, Monday			
08.30 - 11.00	Review of mission schedule and plan with PM Review of project implementation to date with Project Team (Presentation on overall activities, results, issues faced, etc) and follow up discussion.	Project office / UNDP	PM
11:00-12:00	Meeting with UNDP CO Ms. Raduška Cupać, Energy and Environment Sector Leader Ms. Alisa Grabus, Energy and Environment Sector Associate Ms. Amra Zorlak, UNDP CO M&E Specialist	UNDP CO	PM
12:00-13:00	Lunch		
Meetings with key national consultants / contractors in Sarajevo			PM
Between 13:00 and 16:00 (exact times to be finalized with consultants).	Mersudin Avdibegovic Full time Professor at the Faculty of Forestry, University in Sarajevo. Consultant for the development of participatory-based action plans in the management of natural resources mavdibegovic@gmail.com	Project office	PM
	Mustafa Copelj - Financial Sustainability Expert Consultant, based in the premises of the Federal Ministry of Environment and Tourism mustafa.copelj@gmail.com	Project office	PM
	Ehlimana Alibegovic-Goro Consultant Safeguard expert for an update of SESP and ESMF of the SPA project ehliba@gmail.com	Project office	PM
	Mirjana Radovic: Consultant for PAs promotion and branding-Republika Srpska mira_radovic@yahoo.com	Project office	PM
16:00-18:00	Interview review/notes		

October 22, Tuesday – Meetings in Sarajevo			
09.00 - 10.00	Meeting with the USAIDTourism Project team Ms. Azra Dzigal, Destination Competitiveness Team Leader adzigal@turizambih.ba	USAID project office	PM
10.00 - 11.30	Meeting with the representatives of the Federal Ministry of Environment and Tourism (UN CBD focal point institutions for BiH) Ms. Zineta Mujaković, head of Department for nature protection Ms. Bisera Hotic, head of Department for tourism Zineta.Mujakovic@fmoit.gov.ba Bisera.Hotic@fmoit.gov.ba	Ministry office or Project	PM
12:00-13:00	Lunch		
13.00 - 14.00	Meeting with the Project Board member from the FBiH Environmental Protection Fund Mr. Adi Habul, senior advisor for biodiversity and PA management Adi.Habul@fzofbih.org.ba	Env. Protection Fund office or Project	PM
14.30 - 15.30	Meeting with the Project Board member from the BiH Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations Mr. Senad Oprašić, Head of environment protection department Ms. Jelica Grujić, Head of tourism department senad.oprasic@mvteo.gov.ba jelica.grujic@mvteo.gov.ba	Ministry office or Project	PM
16:00-18:00	Interview review/notes		
October 23, Wednesday – Selected site visits (as per logistically viable from Sarajevo)			
08.30 - 10.30	FBIH (Canton Sarajevo)* all three PAs managed by Cantonal Public Institution for PAs of Sarajevo Canton, hereinafter CPI NM Vrelo Bosne CPI: NM Skakavac PL Bijambare Ms. Harita Colakovic, assistant director of the Cantonal Public Institution for PAs of Sarajevo Canton Ms. Denisa Leventa, Expert for biodiversity and sustainable development	Canton Sarajevo PI for PAs office	Pm
10.30 - 17.00	NM Prokosko lake (app. 2 hours drive from Sarajevo). FBIH (Canton Central Bosnia) Mr. Abas Nisic, director of the utility company Scona Ltd (manager of the NM Prokosko lake) Mr. Bakir Vehabovic, Manager of NM Prokosko lake	PA site	PM

17:00-20:30	Travel to Banja Luka – overnight Banja Luka		
	Banja Luka / RS		
October 24, Thursday			
09.00 - 09.30	Goran Trbic Full time Professor, Faculty of natural sciences in Banja Luka Climate change adaptation expert for protected areas in Republika Srpska goran.trbic@pmf.unibl.org	Faculty Office	PM
09.30 - 10.30	Meeting with the Project Board member from the RS Ministry of Spatial Planning, Civil Engineering and Ecology Ms. Svjetlana Radusin, assistant minister Ms. Zeljka Stojičić, senior advisor for nature protection S.Radusin@mgr.vladars.net Z.Stojicic@mgr.vladars.rs	Ministry office.	PM
10.30 - 11.30	Meeting with the Project Board member from the RS Ministry of Trade and Tourism Mr. Bojan Rašković, senior advisor for tourism Ms. Irena Kisic-Plavsic, senior advisor for legal affairs B.Raskovic@mtt.vladars.net i.kisic@mtt.vladars.net	Ministry office	PM
11.30 - 12.30	Meeting with the Project Board member from the RS Env and EE Protection Fund Mr. Zoran Lukač, assistant director for the international cooperation zoran.lukac@ekofondrs.org	Protection Fund office	PM
12:30-13:00	Lunch		
13.30 - 14.30	Meeting with the representative of the Institute for Protection of Cultural, Historical and Natural Heritage of Republika Srpska Mr. Dragan Kovačević, head of the Department for nature protectionD.Kovacevic@kipn.vladars.rs	Institute office	PM
	Overnight Banja Luka		
October 25, Friday - Selected site visits (as per logistically viable from Banja Luka)			
8:00-15:00	PH Tisina (managed by Shamac municipality) **Work initiated:** development of Restoration plan for PH Tisina (by the end of 2024) **Pending:** Realization of restoration measures Discuss the issue of ecosystem restoration with PA manager (which is a municipality). Assess the current state of the art and challenging conditions of the wetland.	PH Tisina site	PM
15:00-17:00	departure to Sarajevo (app 4 hours' drive)		
	Sarajevo		
October 26. Saturday			
All day	Initial deskwork and review of mission findings	Hotel	

October 27, Sunday			
All day	Deskwork – preparation of initial findings, conclusions and recommendations	Hotel	
October 28, Monday			
Morning	Follow up with project team to clarify any remaining unclarities (in order to finalize initial findings/conclusions and recommendations)	Project office	
	MTR debriefing (presentation of initial findings etc.) and discussion.	Project office	
October 29, Tuesday			
10:00-11:30	Depart to Geneva.		

Annex 7: List of persons interviewed

Remote interview

Location	Name/position	Institution/organization (if any)	Role/relationship to the project	Contact information
Istanbul	Monica Moldovan, RTA	UNDP Regional	Relevant RTA	monica.moldovan@undp.org
Sri Lanka	Lucy Emerton	Freelance consultant	PA innovative financing expert	lucy@environment-group.org
Calabria, Italy	Nicola Pacini	Full time professor at the University of Calabria (UNICAL	QAQC expert for ecosystem restoration under the Project	nicola.pacini@unical.it
Sarajevo	Adla Kahrić	Consultant, based in the premises of the Federal Ministry of Environment and Tourism	Capacity Building Expert for Protected Areas Management in BiH	adla.k@hotmail.com
14.10. - 18.10.	**Online session with the Project team**			_

List of People interviewed Directly

Name	position	Institution/organization (if any)	Role/relationship to the project	Location
Project Core Staff and UNDP CO.				
Senka Mutabdzija Becirovic	PM	UNDP project staff	PMU	Sarajevo
Adna Backovic	Project Associate	UNDP project staff	PMU	
Jovanka Cetkovic	Project Analyst	UNDP project staff	PMU	
Ms. Raduška Cupać	Energy and Environment Sector Leader	UNDP CO	Support / Oversight	
Ms. Alisa Grabus,	Energy and Environment Sector Associate	UNDP CO	Support / Oversight	
Ms. Amra Zorlak,	UNDP CO M&E Specialist	UNDP CO	M&E	
Project national Consultants				
Mersudin Avdibegovic	Full time Professor at the Faculty of Forestry, University in Sarajevo	Consultant for the development of participatory-based action plans in the management of natural resources	Consultant	Sarajevo

Mustafa Copelj	Consultant, based in the premises of the Federal Ministry of Environment and Tourism	Financial Sustainability Expert	Consultant	
Ehlimana Alibegovic-Goro	Consultant	Safeguard expert for an update of SESP and ESMF of the SPA project	Consultant	
Mirjana Radovic	Consultant	Consultant for PAs promotion and branding-Republika Srpska	Consultant	
Goran Trbic	Full time Professor, Faculty of natural sciences in Banja Luka	Climate change adaptation expert for protected areas in Republika Srpska	Consultant	Banja Luka
National Stakeholders				
Ms. Zineta Mujaković Ms. Bisera Hotic,	• head of Department for nature protection, • head of Department for tourism	Federal Ministry of Environment and Tourism (UN CBD focal point institutions for BiH)	Project Board member	Sarajevo
Mr. Adi Habul,	• senior advisor for biodiversity and PA management	FBiH Environmental Protection Fund	Project Board member	
Mr. Senad Oprašić, Ms. Jelica Grujić,	• Head of environment protection department • Head of tourism department	BiH Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations	Project Board member	
Ms. Svjetlana Radusin, Ms. Zeljka Stojičić,	• assistant minister • senior advisor for nature protection	RS Ministry of Spatial Planning, Civil Engineering and Ecology	Project Board member	Banj Luka
Mr. Bojan Rašković, Ms. Irena Kisic-Plavsic,	• senior advisor for tourism • senior advisor for legal affairs	RS Ministry of Trade and Tourism	Project Board member	
Mr. Srđan Todorović,	• director of the Fund • assistant director for	RS Env and EE Protection Fund	Project Board member	

Mr. Zoran Lukač, cooperation	the international		107		
Other Partners					
Ms. Azra Dzigal,	Destination Competitiveness Team Leader	USAID Tourism Project	Project partner	Sarajevo	
Ms. Olja Latinovic,	Destination Sustainability Manager				
Mr. Ahmed Muratovic,	Destination Competitiveness Technical Assistant				
Mr. Dragan Kovačević	Head of the Department for nature protection	Institute for Protection of Cultural, Historical and Natural Heritage of Republika Srpska		Banj Luka	

Annex 8: List of documents reviewed

Documents Provided by Project:

- PPG document
- UNDP Project Document
- UNDP Social and Environmental Screening Procedure (SESP)
- Project Inception Report
- All Project Implementation Reports (PIR's)
- Annual work plans (2022-23, 24)
- Minutes of Project board meetings
- Oversight mission / Field Visit Reports and other meetings (i.e. Project Appraisal Committee meetings)
- GEF focal area Tracking Tools/Core Indicators at CEO endorsement and midterm
- CPD - https://www.undp.org/bosnia-herzegovina/publications/country-programme-document-bosnia-and-herzegovina-2021-2025.
- ICSFM Consulting reports (x4).
- TORs for Tisina Wetlands (study and restoration contractor TOR).
- Reports of Tisina Wetlands \contractor (x2).
- Lynx monitoring reports
- PIF
- UNDP Initiation Plan
- Quarterly progress reports and work plans of the various implementation task teams
- Audit reports
- Finalized GEF focal area Tracking
- All monitoring reports prepared by the project
- Financial and Administration guidelines used by Project Team
- Project operational guidelines, manuals and systems
- UNDP country/countries programme document(s)
- Project site location maps
-

Other documents / information reviewed

- CEO Endorsement/Approval Review Sheet Document
- PIF Review Sheet Document
- FSP CEO endorsement document

From https://www.thegef.org/projects-operations/projects/10344

Annex 9: Training Questionnaire Feedback

No.	Pitanje (Question)	Summary Responses (13 total)
Pitanje 1:	Naziv obuke na kojoj ste učestvovali: Name of training you participated in:	Total of 4 trainings/study tour listed – 13 respondents. Training and capacity building of managers of protected areas in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina for participation in public and international grant programs (Federal Ministry of the Environment and Tourism of the EU) SPA project-strategic approaches and practical tools for sustainable financing of protected areas April 22-25 Sunce Neum hotel "Strengthening the capacity of competent institutions, managers of protected areas and the private sector to design and effectively implement innovative financial mechanisms in nature protection.". Study trip UNDP SPA Project "Sustainability of Protected Areas" Slovenia and Austria (Triglav) National Park Slovenia September 12 - September 16, 2023.
	Kratak opis svrhe i glavnih tema obuke: Brief description of its purpose and main themes:	All 13 respondents had clear idea of purpose of training / study tour.
Pitanje 2:	Da li je obuka bila direktno, indirektno ili nikako povezana sa vašim radom / profesionalnim aktivnostima? Was the training directly, indirectly or not at all, related to your work / professional activities?	Directly: 10 Indirectly: 3
Pitanje 3:	Da li je obuka bila dobro organizovana? Was the training effectively organized?	Yes: 13
Pitanje 4:	Da li je bilo zanimljivo učestvovati u obuci? Was the training interesting to participate in?	Yes: 13
Pitanje 5:	Smatram da je obuka bila: a) prekratka b) preduga c) trajala je odgovarajuće vrijeme	• too short • too long • right length of time:13

	Was the training too short, too long or the right length of time?	
Pitanje 6:	Da li ste tokom obuke naučili nove vještine ili stekli nova znanja? Did the training teach you any new knowledge or skills?	
Pitanje 7:	Da li ste primijenili znanje ili vještine naučene na obuci u svom profesionalnom ili privatnom životu? Da; Ne Ako jeste, navedite o kojim znanjima/vještinama je riječ: Have you applied the knowledge or skills learned in the training in your professional or private life? If so, please specify what knowledge or skills.	Yes: 13 No: 0 All respondents cited examples: two examples included during grant application or proposal preparation, ideas about possible SFM, experience seen in Slovenia and Austria.
Pitanje 8:	Smatrate li da nešto nije dobro realizovano tokom obuke? Da; Ne Ako jeste, navedite o čemu je riječ: What (if anything) did you think was not well done in the training?	Nothing: 13 Something: 0
Pitanje 9:	Šta biste preporučili da se promijeni u načinu na koji je obuka sprovedena? What would you recommend to change about the way the training was carried out?	Most common suggestion was to increase number of people receiving training or opportunity to undertake study tours. To ensure individuals from all areas of BIH can participate in such training.
Pitanje 10:	Da li biste preporučili svojim kolegama da učestvuju u sličnim obukama organizovanim od strane projekta? Da; Ne Would you recommend any of your colleagues to participate in any similar trainings organized by the project.	Yes: 13 No: 0

Brief Summary and Conclusion of Results of Training Questionnaire: Though a relatively small sample size (13 out of several hundred reported as receiving training/participating in study tour etc.) the overwhelming feedback is positive. The main conclusions are that training was well organized, relevant and applicable for participants. The main recommendation was for more such training.

Annex 10: Signed UNEG Code of Conduct form[23]

Evaluators/Consultants:

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

MTR Consultant Agreement Form

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

Name of Consultant: __Mark Anstey_____

Name of Consultancy Organization (where relevant): _____

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

Signed at __Gex_____ *(Place)* on 17/11/24 _____ *(Date)*

Signature: _____ _____

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[23] www.undp.org/unegcodeofconduct

Annex 11: MTR final report clearance form

MTR Report Clearance Form

MTR Report for *Improved Financial Sustainability and Strengthened Resilience of Protected Areas Through Development of Sustainable Recreation and Partnership with Private Sector Project & UNDP PIMS ID 6439* **Reviewed and Cleared By:**
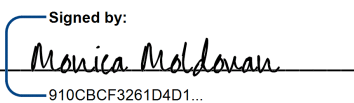
Commissioning Unit (Energy and Environment Sector Leader)

Name: Raduska Cupac

Signature: _____*Raduska Cupac*_____ Date: _____31-Jan-2025_____

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Regional Technical Advisor (Nature, Climate and Energy)

Name: Monica MOLDOVAN

Signature: _____*Monica Moldovan*_____ Date: _____30-Jan-2025_____

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