

## **Terms of Reference for Mid-Term Evaluation**

**Project title:** Tonle Sap Conservation Project – Cambodia  
**Project nos:** 00038552  
**Duty station:** Phnom Penh, with travel to the Tonle Sap Biosphere Reserve  
**Duration:** Maximum 23 working days during the period 21 July – end August 2008

### **1. Background and Project Overview**

The Tonle Sap Conservation Project (TSCP) is a seven year (2004-2011) UNDP/Global Environment Facility (GEF)-supported project aiming at developing the management capacity for biodiversity conservation in the Tonle Sap Biosphere Reserve (TSBR) in Cambodia through (i) enhancing the capacity for management of biodiversity; (ii) developing systems for monitoring and management of biodiversity; and (iii) promoting awareness, education, and outreach on biodiversity conservation in the TSBR.

The project is a component of a broader program, the "Tonle Sap Environmental Management Project," co-financed by the Asian Development Bank, GEF, Capacity 21, Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), and the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC). The program has three components: (i) strengthening natural resource management in the TSBR; (ii) organizing communities for natural resource management; and (iii) building management capacity for biodiversity conservation. The TSCP is an integral part of the third component and is managed in coordination with the other two components, with common management, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

The Project is nationally executed by the Cambodia National Mekong Committee. Project assurance is provided by the UNDP Cambodia Country Office.

The Project design includes provision for an independent Mid-Term Evaluation to be completed in 2008. The broad aims of the evaluation are to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of implementation of the Project from inception in 2004 to mid 2008 (end June), and to identify and recommend any corrective actions that need to be taken in order to ensure that the Project achieves its goals and objectives by scheduled closure at the end of 2011.

### **2. Objectives of the Mid-Term Evaluation**

The Monitoring and Evaluation policy in UNDP/GEF at the project level has four objectives:

- to monitor and evaluate results and impacts – particularly on global biodiversity values;
- to provide a basis for decision-making on necessary amendments and improvements;
- to promote accountability for resource use, including efficiency and effectiveness of implementation; and
- to provide feedback on lessons learned.

A mid-term evaluation is a monitoring and evaluation process that occurs at the project level at the mid-point of project implementation. Mid-term evaluations are intended to identify potential project design problems, assess progress towards the achievement of objectives, identify and document lessons learned (including lessons that might improve design and implementation of other UNDP/GEF projects), and to make recommendations regarding specific actions that might be taken to improve the project. They are expected to serve as a means of validating or filling the gaps in the initial assessment of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency obtained from monitoring. The mid-term evaluation provides the opportunity to assess early signs of project success or failure

and to make prompt necessary adjustments. Mid-term evaluations also assist transparency and better access to information during implementation.

The TSCP Mid-Term Evaluation is being initiated by UNDP pursuant to the evaluation plan in the Project Document, and donor reporting requirements. The TSCP Mid-Term Evaluation aims to assess the relevance, performance and success of the TSCP at the mid-point of its seven-year implementation period. It will examine current impact and sustainability of results, including the contribution to capacity development and rural livelihood improvement, and the achievement of global and national environmental goals. It will also identify and document lessons learned and make recommendations that will maximize the impact of the TSCP going forward, and/or that might improve design and implementation of similar projects.

The Mid-Term Evaluation is intended to be a systematic learning exercise for project partners. The exercise is therefore structured so as to generate and share experience and practical knowledge. To achieve this, the evaluation will take place in a consultative and participatory rather than advisory manner.

### 3. Principles and Scope of the Evaluation

The TSCP Mid-Term Evaluation will be conducted in such a way to ensure that key principles of evaluation are closely respected. The Mid-Term Evaluation will be independent, impartial, transparent, ethical and credible.

The following broad areas will be covered by the Evaluation:

- **relevance** of the project concept, design and implementation arrangements in today's context. This includes overall relevance of the Project in the broader global and national context, *i.e.* whether the Project outcomes are consistent with the GEF Biodiversity Focal Area Strategy and country priorities;
- Project **ownership** at the national and local levels;
- stakeholder **participation**, including gender balances in participation and influence;
- Project **effectiveness**, *i.e.*, progress achieved to date against planned outputs and sub-outputs, and likelihood of achieving planned objectives in time;
- **partnership** and **complementarity** with other relevant on-going or past activities, including synergy with the two other broader programme components (components (i) and (ii)) of "Tonle Sap Environmental Management Project";
- likely **sustainability** of the Project achievements and impacts, including **financial, sociopolitical, institutional framework and governance, and environmental sustainability**, as well as an assessment of the feasibility of planned replication and exit strategies;
- any **catalytic role** played by the project;
- **financial aspect**: planning, execution and sustainability, including the timely delivery and use of co-financing;
- Project **efficiency**: cost effectiveness including impacts of delays in Project start up;
- effectiveness of the application of **adaptive management** principles through monitoring and evaluation (including effective use of log frame, UNDP risk management system, the Annual Project Implementation Reviews, and other monitoring tools and mechanisms as appropriate); and
- any other unplanned achievements.

It is proposed that the assessment be grouped into the following four components. Drawing lessons from the analyses of these components, the Evaluation Team will make recommendations on any necessary adjustments to the Project design, and to Project activities, procedures and implementation for the remainder of the implementation period. The Evaluation will also highlight lessons learned to-date and best (and worst, if applicable) practices in addressing issues relating to relevance, performance and success. Finally, the evaluation will recommend activities, including possible donor-funded interventions, to consolidate and build on Project achievements going forward.

### **3.1 Project design assessment**

In light of experience with activities implementation to date, the Mid-Term Evaluation will assess the extent to which the overall Project design remains relevant in the national and global contexts. The Evaluation Team will review the Project's concept, strategy and approach within the context of effective capacity development of the government and sustainable protected areas management. Specifically, the Evaluation Team will:

- assess the extent to which the underlying assumptions remain valid;
- assess the approach used in design, and whether the selected intervention strategy addressed the root causes and principal threats in the Project area;
- assess the plans for replicating or scaling up the experiences of the Project.

The Evaluation Team will also ascertain the current level of comprehension of the Project concept, focusing on three specific sets of actors: (i) Project management; (ii) Project staff; and (iii) field operations.

### **3.2 Project implementation assessment**

The Mid-Term Evaluation will assess the extent to which Project management and implementation has been effective, efficient and responsive. Specifically, it will:

- assess overall institutional arrangements for the execution, implementation, management, monitoring and review of the Project. This covers a number of issues, including: the appropriateness of joint implementation and coordination; whether there has been adequate periodic oversight of activities; the effectiveness of government counterparts and Project coordinators; the effectiveness of relationships among key stakeholders such as Tonle Sap Biosphere Reserve Secretariat (TSBRS), Ministry of Environment (MoE), Fisheries Administration (FIA) and WCS; and set up of the Project team and technical support services provided by the team;
- assess the use of the logical framework as a management tool during implementation;
- assess effectiveness of adaptive management;
- assess the quality, objectivity, frequency and relevance of Project reporting;
- assess the mechanisms for information dissemination in Project implementation and the extent of stakeholder participation in management;
- assess quality of risk logs identified;
- describe and assess efforts of UNDP and the Executing Agency to support implementation activities;
- analyze the Project financing model, specifically how the Project has materialized/leveraged co-financing for various components (preferably to be presented in a matrix form); and

- assess the Project's complementarity and partnership (including communication and information sharing) with other on-going activities and projects for biodiversity conservation in the Tonle Sap.

### **3.3 Results assessment**

The Mid-Term Evaluation will examine the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability of operational activities and tangible results achieved within the Project to-date, by assessing how the Project's processes and outputs so far have contributed to the achievement of expected outcomes and results of the Project, as well as the national and GEF's global biodiversity conservation goals. The Mid-Term Evaluation will:

- assess, quantitatively and qualitatively, Project achievements and impact in terms of outputs and outcomes as defined in the Project Document;
- assess the extent to which the Project has leveraged other partners to promote biodiversity conservation, sustainable livelihoods and environmental education and awareness in the Biosphere Reserve. This includes synergy with the other broader programme components (components (i) and (ii)) of "Tonle Sap Environmental Management Project"; and,
- assess the sustainability of Project results.

The Evaluation Team will develop and use a set of time-bound, quantifiable and bench-marked indicators to determine the overall contribution of the Project outcomes to the development and global environmental goals. These indicators will preferably be presented in a matrix and be based on the Project's logical framework, as well as higher-level development and environmental goals. These may include, for example, targets/indicators set out in the Cambodia Millennium Development Goals, the National Strategic Development Plan 2006-2010, UNDP Country Programme Action Plan 2006-2010, and GEF biodiversity objectives.

In addition to identifying possible areas where the Project may be falling short in achieving its intended objectives and goals, the Evaluation Team will distil the key achievements of the Project as concisely as possible, with a focus on identifying the Project's positive contributions to issues such as protected areas governance, conservation and rural livelihoods, with particular emphasis on those changes that would not have occurred but for the Project activities. The Evaluation Team is also invited to highlight any contributions that may have been brought by the Project, or catalytic roles played by the Project, while not necessarily envisaged within the original Project scope.

### **3.4 Capacity-building assessment**

The Evaluation Team will assess how and to what extent the Project has built management, planning and operational capacity among the Project's government partners, particularly at the national and provincial levels. This should include an overview of capacity-building techniques employed by the Project (e.g., training, mentoring, learning by doing, coaching), and an assessment as to:

- how national and provincial staff have contributed to the achievement of Project objectives; and
- how the skills, knowledge and attitudes of government staff involved in the Project have improved against baseline levels as a result of the Project's capacity-building activities.

## **4. Evaluation Approach and Methodology**

### **4.1 Involvement of stakeholders in the evaluation process**

This evaluation exercise is intended to be inclusive and participatory, engaging multiple actors, within as well as outside the Project, in its execution as well as learning process. The Evaluation

Team will meet and engage in discussions with key stakeholders of the Project at different stages during the evaluation period. The preliminary results of the evaluation will be shared with all key stakeholders, from donors to community partners and beneficiaries. For example, Project partners, having been presented with the preliminary results, will assist the Evaluation Team to identify key questions and issues, conduct further research where necessary, analyze findings and make recommendations. The Evaluation Team plays the role of facilitator or mentor in this participatory process, conducting workshops, guiding the process at critical junctures and consolidating the final report. Experience has shown that establishing a cooperative relationship between Project partners and the Evaluation Team increases the likelihood of the Project partners adopting and achieving the intended objectives.

#### **4.2 Establishment of a Core Learning Team**

To improve stakeholder engagement in the evaluation process, a “Core Learning Team” will be established to help guide the process. The Core Learning Team (10-15 members) will comprise:

- key executing and implementing agency staff;
- the managers and key staff of the Project; and
- the UNDP task manager of the Project.

The Core Learning Team will serve as the direct focal point for the Evaluation Team. Cooperation between the Core Learning Team and the Evaluation Team is expected not only to increase the quality and relevance of the evaluation, but also to increase ownership of and commitment to the evaluation exercise by the Project partners. This is expected to lead to greater acceptance and adoption of the evaluation outputs. The Core Learning Team’s main purposes, in addition to the above-mentioned role as the direct focal point to help facilitate effective and efficient evaluation process, are threefold:

- to discuss the draft evaluation report and preliminary findings, and to develop the related follow-up plan to implement recommendations;
- to lead the process of negotiation and approval of the agreement/understanding among the partners regarding results of the evaluation; and
- to ensure that recommendations of the evaluation are, to the extent possible, adopted and implemented over the remainder of the Project.

A suggested list of the Core Learning Team members will be provided by the Project, for finalization and confirmation upon the arrival of the Evaluation Team.

#### **4.3 Evaluation methodologies**

The Evaluation Team will follow internationally recognized standard, norms and ethics of evaluation. Methodologies for conducting the evaluation will include but not necessarily be limited to the following:

- desk review of key documentation, including: 1) Project materials such as the Project Document, consultant reports, Annual and Quarterly Work Plans, field reports, monitoring reports (including GEF annual Project Implementation Reviews (PIRs)), financial reports and correspondence; 2) relevant policy documents and laws; and 3) reports of other relevant projects, researchers and conservation organizations;
- briefings with UNDP, TSBRS, MoE, FiA, WCS and other stakeholders;
- interviews, questionnaires and other approaches for collecting and analyzing data;
- consultations with major donors and national institutions involved in natural resources management activities;
- field visits to selected Project sites, to meet with local Project staff, government counterparts, residents and resource users, to assess the extent to which the Project

is addressing their needs effectively and how it could address their needs better; and

- workshops to discuss and agree upon findings and recommendations.

Following the GEF evaluation guidelines, the Evaluation Team is expected to assess project effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability, and any other relevant key aspects against a set of criteria and rating system (e.g. highly satisfactory etc.). The evaluation methodology, including such criteria, will be developed by the Evaluation Team and finalized upon the Team's arrival and before commencement of the evaluation exercise.

## **5. Planned Process and Output**

### **5.1 Process**

The steps below outline the major phases and activities in the Mid-term Evaluation process. This is intended only to be a guide to the Evaluation Team in formulating their approach, methodology and timetable. The consultants engaged to undertake the Mid-term Evaluation will be given reasonable flexibility to modify the processes and approaches as they see fit, within the bounds of the specified Terms of Reference and outputs required.

1. Desk review of Project progress to date. Preliminary assessment, on the basis of information available, of key issues to be addressed (refer to Section 3 above).
2. Briefing for the Evaluation Team, as well as the Executing Agencies and the TSCP Management Team, in order to contextualize the activities and scope, and finalize the methodologies of the Mid-term Evaluation.
3. Preliminary review process. Stock-taking of existing knowledge (identification of key stakeholders, the roles of partners, key sources of information and reports; identification and understanding of key challenges, opportunities, risks and expected outcomes).
4. Field work and further investigations. Field visits and investigations aimed at deriving preliminary findings about the effectiveness and relevance of Project interventions/activities.
5. Presentation of preliminary findings of the Mid-Term Evaluation to the Core Learning Team and wider stakeholders.
6. Preparation of a draft report with recommendations. This process includes:
  - agreement on conclusions, recommendations and follow-up actions (to be determined jointly between the Evaluation Team and key stakeholders through a consultative process facilitated by the Core Learning Team);
  - articulation of lessons learned; and
  - sharing of the draft Mid-Term Evaluation Report with stakeholder groups for review and validation.
7. Generation and dissemination of Mid-Term Evaluation Report, through the following process:
  - finalization of the report incorporating inputs from stakeholder groups (by the Evaluation Team working through the UNDP Country Office);
  - debriefing with the Executing Agency, implementing agencies, other Project partners, and the Core Learning Team. This debriefing will provide a consolidated picture of the findings, recommendations and lessons learned from the evaluation process;
  - submission of the Mid-Term Evaluation Report to the UNDP/GEF unit in Bangkok, to UNDP-GEF Headquarters, and to the United Nations Fund for International Partnerships (UNFIP) Office, and subsequent posting on the GEF website;
  - sharing of the Mid-Term Evaluation Report with the GEF independent Monitoring and Evaluation Unit and UNFIP as a public document; and

- dissemination of the final report to national stakeholder groups by the Executing Agency.
- The Evaluation Team will also be requested to present the key findings at a UNDP Staff Learning Session.

8. Follow up activities which include:

- submission of a management response, compiled by UNDP in consultation with key stakeholders, within one month after the finalization of the evaluation report; and
- implementation of recommendations by the Project Management Team.

## **5.2 Outputs**

The Mid-Term Evaluation will produce the following outputs:

- a detailed Mid-Term Evaluation Report in concise English, including lessons learned and recommendations, using on the specified UNDP/GEF format (no more than 50 pages, excluding Executive Summary and Annexes); and
- record of key outputs from the evaluation process, including workshop outputs, and minutes of meetings with stakeholders..

Although the Evaluation Team will have certain flexibility in structuring the report, a suggested format is provided in Annex A.

## **6. Implementation Arrangements**

Roles and responsibilities of different partners for the execution of the Mid-Term Evaluation are as follows:

### **UNDP Country Office:**

- helps to initiate and finalize the Terms of Reference, recruits consultants in consultation with UNFIP and UNDP/GEF, and finalizes the agenda for the Evaluation Mission;
- is responsible for all logistical and administrative arrangements;
- communicates with the National Project Manager to facilitate the Mission;
- circulates the final report to national stakeholders as well as relevant offices of the UN and GEF;
- based on discussions with key stakeholders, compile a management response in accordance with UNDP's internal requirement and format, within one month after the completion of the evaluation report.

### **National Project Director of the Executing Agency:**

- assists in coordinating the Evaluation Mission;
- helps to review and provides inputs and insights on the findings of the Evaluation Team; and
- chairs meetings/workshops during the evaluation process.

### **Executing Agency:**

- reviews and endorses the recommendations of the Mid-Term Evaluation; and
- assists in coordinating the Mission, and facilitates consultation between the Evaluation Team and relevant stakeholders.

**MoE:**

- facilitates field visits and local meetings at the Project sites.

**Project Team:**

- facilitates all aspects of the Evaluation Mission including provision of relevant documentation.

**7. Composition of the Evaluation Team**

Two Consultants, one International and one National, will be responsible for conducting and reporting on the evaluation, under the guidance of and reporting to UNDP's Environment and Energy Cluster. The International Consultant will be designated as Team Leader and will carry overall responsibility for organizing and completing the evaluation and delivering the final report. The National Consultant will assist with technical analysis and with translation/interpretation, and coordination of logistical arrangements.

The Evaluation Team will draw lessons learned and make recommendations that will maximize the impact of the TSCP in moving forward, and that may improve design and implementation of other UNDP/GEF/UNF projects. The International Consultant will have overall responsibility for the coordination, drafting, completion and delivery of the Mid-Term Evaluation Report, including methods, findings / lessons learned, recommendations and follow-up actions to be taken. The National Consultant will, under the overall direction of the International Consultant, have responsibility for the day to day coordination and implementation of evaluation activities, and will assist with reporting of the evaluation findings. The National Consultant will provide particular support with methodologies and with Khmer language interpretation and translation.

**Qualifications - International Consultant**

1. Minimum of a master's degree or equivalent in natural resource management, environment, development or related field demonstrably relevant to the position.
2. Strong technical background and proven competency in biodiversity conservation, protected areas management, or related areas of natural resource management, including demonstrable expertise in project formulation, implementation and evaluation. A minimum of 15 years of relevant experience is required.
3. Experience with UNDP's current project formulation, implementation and evaluation procedures. Familiarity with GEF programming and procedures, as well as its evaluation policies and guidelines, will be an important asset.
4. Excellent English writing and communication skills. Demonstrated analytical skills, ability to assess complex situations, to succinctly and clearly distill critical issues, and to draw practical conclusions.
5. Demonstrated ability to work with developing country government agencies and NGOs. Previous work experience in Southeast Asia, and ideally in Cambodia.
6. Previous work experience with United Nations and other multilateral/bilateral development assistance agencies.
7. Experience leading multi-disciplinary, multi-national teams in high stress. Ability to meet short deadlines.



8. Excellent interpersonal, coordination and planning skills. Sense of diplomacy and tact.
9. Ability and willingness to travel to provincial areas.
10. Computer literate (MS Office package).

#### **Qualifications - National Consultant**

1. Master's degree or equivalent in natural resource management, environment, development or related field demonstrably relevant to the position.
2. Strong technical background in biodiversity conservation, protected areas management, or related areas of natural resource management in Cambodia. A minimum of 5 years of relevant experience is required.
3. Good understanding of RGC and local/international NGO programming and implementation procedures. Familiarity with GEF programming and procedures will be an asset.
4. Good writing and communication skills in English.
5. Experience working with local communities.
6. Previous relevant work experience with United Nations and other multilateral/bilateral development assistance agencies.
7. Excellent organizational skills with attention to details. Experience of technical translation / interpretation (Khmer-English) is an asset.
8. Excellent interpersonal, coordination and planning skills, and ability to work in a team.
9. Ability and willingness to travel to provincial areas.
10. Computer literate (MS Office package).

#### **8. Budget and Finance**

The budget required for this exercise is estimated to be US\$25,000. This will cover the Evaluation Team's fees and expenses over a period of 23 working days each, together with the costs of organizing workshops/meetings to conduct stakeholder consultation, travel and report publication..

#### **9. Mission Schedule**

The Mission comprises three components: 1) start-up, a period of 1-3 days during which the International and National Consultants, working from their home base, will familiarize themselves with background materials; 2) stakeholder consultations and field visits, report drafting and in-country presentation, currently planned for the period 21 July-8 August 2008; and 3) receipt of stakeholder comments on the draft final report, currently planned for latest 22 August, and incorporation into a final report to be submitted by the International Consultant (working from his/her home base) to UNDP by 31st August 2008.

## **Annex A: Suggested structure of the Final Evaluation Report**

### **Executive summary**

Brief description of project

Context and purpose of the evaluation

Main conclusions, recommendations and lessons learned

### **Introduction**

Purpose of the evaluation

Key issues addressed

Methodology of the evaluation

Structure of the evaluation

### **The Project and its Development Context**

Project start and its duration

Problems that the project seek to address

Immediate and development objectives of the project

Main stakeholders

Expected results

### **Findings and Conclusions**

Project formulation

- implementation approach
- country ownership/driven-ness
- stakeholder participation
- replication approach
- cost-effectiveness
- UNDP comparative advantage
- linkages between project and other interventions within the sector
- indicators
- management arrangements

Project implementation

- financial planning
- monitoring and evaluation
- execution and implementation modalities
- management by the UNDP Country Office
- coordination and operational issues

## Project Results

- attainment of objectives
- sustainability of project results
- contribution to upgrading skills of the national staff

## Recommendations

- corrective actions for the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Project
- actions to follow up or reinforce initial benefits from the Project
- proposals for future directions underlining main objectives, particularly on project effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability
- lessons learned
- desirable and undesirable practices in addressing issues relating to relevance, performance and success

## Annexes

Terms of Reference

Itinerary

List of Persons Interviewed

Summary of Field Visits

List of Documents Reviewed

Set of Evaluation Questions Asked (if any) and Summary of Results

## Annex B: Consultants' Task Schedule

Dates	Task	Time Suggested
During the week Mon 14- Fri 18 Jul	Consultants prepare for evaluation including desk review of documents provided in advance at home office and develop preliminary evaluation methodology	1 day
Mon 21 Jul	International consultant arrives in country. Consultants attend briefing session with UNDP (AM) and key project staff (PM)	1 day
Tue 22- Thurs 23 Jul	Further desk review of relevant documents and reports, preparation and presentation of evaluation methodology and report outline Design review and discussion	3 days
Fri 25 Jul	Meetings with project stakeholders, refinement of methodology and development of proposed report outline based on stakeholder comments, and further desk review	1 day
Mon 28 Jul	Meetings with key stakeholders in Phnom Penh	2 days
Tue 29- Weds 30 Jul	Travel and meeting with key stakeholders at Prek Toal, GECKO, Kompong Thom Provincial Office of Environment (travel to Phnom Penh-Siem Reap by air evening of 28 Jul, to Prek Toal/return by boat on 29 Jul, and Siem Reap to Kompong Thom by car on 30 Jul and return to Phnom Penh on the same day)	2 days
Thu 31 Jul- Fri 1 Aug	Travel and meeting with key stakeholders at Stung Sen and Kompong Chhnang PoE	2 days
Sat 2- Weds 6 Aug	Preparation of first draft report in Phnom Penh, including meetings to validate/clarify findings	4 days
Thu 7 Aug	Presentation of findings to Core Learning Team (10-15 core persons) and follow up discussion Presentation at the UNDP Staff Learning Session.	1 day
Fri 8 Aug & Mon 11 Aug	Incorporation of comments in report	2 days
Tue 12 Aug	Submission of first draft report to UNDP for further circulation and clarification. International consultant departs	1 day
Thu 14 Aug	Stakeholders provide comments on first draft (this is outside the consultants' brief)	N/A
Thu 28- Sat 31 Aug	Home-based work to finalize report based on comments from stakeholders, followed by submission of the second draft report to UNDP for further circulation	3 days
Mon 01 Sept	Board meeting review to adopt the final report as well as a management response	N/A
By end Sept	Compilation and submission of a management response	N/A
Oct	Publication of the final report	N/A

Note: Total consultancy time comprises 23 working days (21 days per above schedule plus 2 days as required)