# “Enhancing Coverage and Management Effectiveness of the Subsystem of Forest Protected Areas in Turkey’s National System of Protected Areas”

**PIMS Number: 1988**

**Mid Term Evaluation**

*Aide Memoire*

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*"Remember the two benefits of failure. First, if you do fail, you learn what doesn't work; and second, the failure gives you the opportunity to try a new approach.”*

*Roger Von Oech*



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# INTRODUCTION

The first phase of the Mid Term Evaluation (MTE) of the Enhancing Coverage and Management Effectiveness of the Subsystem of Forest Protected Areas in Turkey’s National System of Protected Areas, herein after referred to as the Kure Mountains Project or *the Project* that is being executed by the Ministry of Environment and Forestry (MoEF), took place from the 30th November to the 8th November 2010. This *Aide Memoire* provides the preliminary findings of the evaluation that were presented at the Feedback Workshop on the 8th November 2010. It is important to stress that the *Aide Memoire* represents the MTE’s understanding of the project at the end of the field visits and that evaluation is an iterative process which will constantly update this understanding in light of further information and analysis. This *Aide Memoire* is not a contractual obligation of the MTE and it is only intended to stimulate thought during the analysis and reporting period.

Evaluation is an integral part of the UNDP-GEF project cycle management. The MTE is guided by the MTE Terms of Reference (ToR)[[1]](#footnote-1) and UNDP-GEF Project Monitoring and Evaluation Policies and Procedures[[2]](#footnote-2). The evaluation process is independent of both UNDP and GEF and the opinions and recommendations in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the position of the GEF, UNDP, or the Project Management Unit (PMU), however, once accepted the MTE becomes a recognised component of the project’s documentation.

This Mid Term Evaluation is initiated by the UNDP Turkey as the Implementation Agency for this project and it aims to provide managers (at the MoEF, PMU, UNDP Turkey Country Office and GEF levels) with strategy and policy options for more effectively and efficiently achieving the project’s expected results and for replicating the results. It also provides the basis for learning and accountability for managers and stakeholders.

Lastly it is important to state that the opinion and the arguments of the Evaluator can be challenged. They are just that; opinions and reasoned arguments. They need not be followed slavishly and should the PMU, UNDP or GEF disagree with the findings then providing there is a robust justification the project or partners can raise objections and ignore recommendations (or use alternative mechanisms) should there be any disagreement. From an adaptive management perspective, in the field of conservation, it is important to understand that when we are most certain about the outcome of something….we may be most vulnerable.

# The GEF Project Monitoring and Evaluation Process

The GEF places considerable emphasis on project monitoring and evaluation as a means to strengthen **adaptive management**. In order to achieve this, the MTE will examine the Project documentation; carry out interviews with Project partners, participants and other stakeholders. The MTE will validate the findings in the field and following a feedback meeting with the key Project partners, report on their findings and make recommendations in order to strengthen the Project.

Adaptive management is important because “any belief that sustainability can be precisely defined is flawed. It is a contested concept, and so represents neither a fixed set of practices or technologies, nor a model to describe or impose on the world. Defining what we are trying to achieve is part of the problem, as each individual has different values. For us to prescribe a concrete set of technologies, practices or policies would be to exclude future options, undermining the notion of sustainability itself. *Sustainable protected area management* is, therefore, not so much a specific strategy as it is an approach to understanding complex ecological and social relationships in rural areas[[3]](#footnote-3)”.

From a management perspective it is important to recognise that conservation, especially as it relates to the buffer zone (which is essentially a *de facto* protected area), is taking place where three principle drivers collide – the economic, socio-political and the ecological. Therefore, the planning is taking place in multiple fields such as ecology, economics, natural resource management, politics, business and the social sciences. In these fields there are a large and unquantifiable number of known and potential variables, all subject to continual change, all interacting with each other in ways that may be predictable or non-predictable. Applying science to the problems will make no difference to our inability to predict precisely or accurately given the complexity of multivariate, non-linear, cause and effect relationships[[4]](#footnote-4).

Time (in years)

Process

Oscillation

Project

Oscillation

Evaluation Median

Median

Success Values

0

20

**Fig 1** Hypothetical table to show the relationship between *project* and *process.* The red line is, for the sake of argument, the process of land use and the blue lines are projects. The Evaluation Median might be ecosystem functions, goods and services within the buffer zone and national park. The purpose of a project is to interact with that process and drive it above the agreed median (in GEF terminology we might call the median the *baseline* or equally we might even choose some state in the past). This shows that it is possible for a poor project to be lifted by the trend of the overall land use processes in the first instance, in the second instance the project is brought down by the direction of the land use trend and the third instance both process and project are aligned.

One of the challenges in reviewing a project such as the Kure Mountains National Park Project and particularly the buffer zone establishment is in understanding the dynamics that are driving not only the process but also the communities and agencies that they are interacting with. The land use process is being driven by ecological, socio-administrative and economic *drivers.* These driving forces are operating in different time scales for example; driving forces that effect change in community perceptions and values operate over a much longer time frame than the time frames expected by project cycles. This inconsistency sets up a tension between “*project*” *versus* “*process*”. In natural resource management we are further influenced by even greater ecological time scales, which because they are so long we tend to try to fix them in time or cast them aside as unmanageable (Adapted from Murphree 2005).

# The GEF Objective (GEF Operational Programme #3)

The Project is framed within the GEF Operational Programme #3 which to a large extent will be the median against which the Projects performance will be judged. GEF OP#3 defines the:

**Programme Outcomes -** a successful outcome is one where globally important biodiversity has been conserved or sustainably used in a specific forest ecosystem;

And the programme **objectives**:

**Conservation** or in-situ protection, will be sought through protection of primary/old growth and ecologically mature secondary forest ecosystems, by establishing and strengthening systems of conservation areas, focusing primarily on tropical and temperate ecosystems in areas at risk; and

**Sustainable use** forest management will be sought by combining production, socio-economic, and biodiversity goals. The Operational Strategy calls for a range of uses from strict protection on reserves through various forms of multiple uses with conservation easements, to full scale use.

# Description of the Project

The Project is a medium size Project focused on the Küre Mountains National Park (KMNP) and the surrounding areas where it is the intention to create a buffer zone to support the conservation of the National Park.

The Project started in May 2008 and the Implementing Agency is the UNDP Country Office Turkey. The Executing Agency is the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF). With a total Budget of US$2.650.000,oo which is disaggregated to GEF $972.000,oo and GOT, Cash US$160.000,oo plus an in kind contribution of US$1.435,oo and WWF Turkey in kind contribution of US$83.000,oo

The Project’s objectives as stated in the Project document are:

**Objective:** Enhance coverage and management effectiveness of the Forest Protected Areas with a focus on KMNP and establishing a Buffer Zone and replicating the experiences in 9 other Forest Hot Spots in Turkey.

In order to achieve this; the Project aims to achieve the following outcomes:

**Outcome 1:** Cost-effective conservation management approaches for forest protected areas are implemented at KMNP

**Outcome 2:** Sustainable natural resource management is demonstrated in buffer area of KMNP; and

**Outcome 3:** Lessons learned from demonstration work at KMNP are disseminated to the other forest hot spots in Turkey, contributing to the maturation of the national protected areas system.

# Project Document and Strategy

Between the PDFA was developed in around 1998 (MTE does not have the original PDFA). The PDFA is essentially the project conceptualisation stage in the GEF project cycle. However, it was not until 2007 that the Project document was finalised and signed by all the project partners. How much this delay has affected the Project is not immediately clear and in particular whether the concept of a buffer zone would still be used if the Project were being designed today.

The MTE considers that there are a number of weaknesses in the intervention strategy as it is described in the Project Document and overall it is sometimes a confusing document. However this must be weighed against its success in getting the multiplicity of agencies to work together in a collective action.

The Project’s strategy is broadly set out as developing the management capacity of KMNP and in particular developing a Management Plan for the Park at the same time as the ecosystem resources and functions are being assessed. To support this, a range of new management tools would be introduced and utilised. The focus was specifically aimed at including greater representation of forest ecosystems within Turkey’s protected areas system and developing the conservation management capacity of agencies for forest ecosystems.

Integral to this strategy would be the development of a buffer zone established around the National Park to affect the land use there by placing the emphasis on managing for the ecosystem. Fundamental to this process would be a shift in the focus of the General Directorate of Forestry’s (GDF) management through the Forest Management Plan (FMP) from one geared towards production forestry to a more holistic approach designed to conserve a greater range of ecosystem goods and services.

To support this process a number of livelihood developments would take place, mostly, in the buffer zone and mostly related to ecotourism as a means to offset the opportunity costs and provide alternative livelihoods for forest villagers. Furthermore, both the national park and buffer zone planning were to be carried out with broad stakeholder participation. To support this, the Project would seek *Pan Parks* status for the National Park.

The MTE considers that this was a reasonable approach but there were a number of weaknesses that will be elaborated in the MTE Report and are briefly mentioned here. These are:

* The Project’s strategy did not sufficiently define a buffer zone conceptually and as a result the buffer zone was defined through the somewhat narrow focus of the ecosystem rather than a socio-ecosystem requiring a collective action by all the interested parties. Thus any strategic vision might not be common to all the affected parties.
* The Project Strategy did not place sufficient emphasis on issues of governance. Governance is the means for achieving direction, control, and coordination that determines the effectiveness of management (Eagles 2008). In a strict nature reserve (such as the National Park) governance can be relatively simple as the state is the sole executive (decision-making body), authority and is directly responsible for the implementation of management and enforcement of rules. It should also be noted that under this regime the state also bears all of the direct management costs although local communities are often expected to bear the opportunity costs.

However, this becomes more complicated when there are contested resources and areas and/or included private lands and insufficient financial, material and human resources available to the state to carry out its management role; a description that more accurately fits the situation within the buffer zone.

The arguments for more inclusive approaches to managing the buffer zone are also made stronger when we consider ecosystem resilience. Ecosystem “resilience can be defined as the capacity of a system to undergo disturbance while maintaining both its existing functions and controls and its capacity for future change” (Gunderson 2000).

However, in complex socio-ecological systems, such as the buffer zone, it might also be argued that “resilience is determined not only by a systems ability to buffer or absorb shocks, but also by its capacity for learning and self-organisation to adapt to change” (Gunderson and Holling 2002). Therefore a governance system that allows for a broader participation in planning and management of the protected area might arguably be more resilient than one which has a narrow scientific focus.

The importance of this is clear when we consider that the buffer zone (and by association the National Park) is not facing a technical challenge but rather an adaptive challenge. That is; no one technology or the introduction of a technology (*e.g.* alternative livelihoods or ecosystem-based management) will reverse any current damaging effects of unsustainable or illegal activity. Neither is the enforcement of prohibitive measures, sometimes being ignored, practicable from a financial, social and in some cases ecological perspective. What is required is a broad behavioural change within the stakeholders towards a common objective (*i.e.* the conservation or sustainable management of biodiversity resources and ecosystem functions within the buffer zone).

* There was an over-reliance upon an alternative livelihoods approach within the buffer zone in order to reduce dependency upon the forest resources. The buffer zone local rural communities’ needs are very closely linked with the sustainability and well-being of the natural resource base. Any premise that the local communities have little interest in natural resource management and must therefore be offered external incentives to encourage them to participate or to exclude them in its management are baseless. In fact their very future wellbeing depends upon their participation and the sound conservation management of these resources. The buffer zone communities regard biodiversity and other natural values as an important part of their *livelihood* and its sustainable use is of real concern to them. What is at stake is the nature of their participation. Passive participation will incur significant time costs, and alternative livelihoods could expose them to significant economic risks (*e.g.* unproven markets or market failure) which they may be unwilling to incur.
* There should have been a clearer statement in the Project’s intervention strategy recognising that the Project’s intervention would need to place greater emphasis on *process* and that given the issues that the Project was addressing a three year implementation period was unrealistic.

# Project Performance

As has been discussed earlier, the Project is dealing with a complexity of issues over a very large area and the resources available in the field could be strengthened.

On the whole the Project has been performing very well and the speed and efficiency with which activities have been implemented is acknowledged by the MTE, as is the obvious commitment of all the Team members.

Reporting is very good, concise and to the point but the MTE is concerned that some of the “sticking points” in the process (*e.g.* the degree to which non-agency participants are participating) could be better reflected and specific strategies designed and put in place and reported as the Project’s response. This is critical to the adaptive management of the Project and providing feedback into the Policy formulation and enabling environment.

The relationship between the different Project Partners appears to be very effective.

# Findings of MTE

* Project is on track without any significant delay.
* Project has achieved a number of important successes.
  + Establishing multi agencies approach to Project implementation.
  + Participation of a national NGO as a significant partner.
  + Broadening the objectives of Forest Management Planning.
  + Project has begun to increase local stakeholder participation.
  + Implementation in accordance with rules and regulations,
  + Activities are progressing well,
  + There is considerable good will among Project Partners and Participants.

# MTE Concerns:

However the MTE has identified number of risks and assumptions that make these successes vulnerable and therefore challenges the **sustainability** of the Project Outcomes given there is just over a year remaining. These concerns are related to;

* + Level of local participation in the planning process,
  + The degree to which this participation will continue to the implementation to these plans,
  + The need for a strategic vision and plan to guide the various planning agencies (State Hydraulic Works, Municipalities, General Directorates of Highways etc.) as well as forest villages within the buffer zone area,
  + Strengthening natural resource governance within the buffer zone area (cost and benefit of conservation management, authority and responsibility for resource management, pricing and tenure of natural resources),
  + The capacity of local team (Local Branch Managers are very capable but overstretched),
  + The Project is not sufficiently challenging inequalities and inefficiencies in the enabling the environment (policies, legal framework, etc.),
  + The time available for achieving the Objectives (initial Project time frame is unrealistic)
  + Overreliance on an alternative livelihoods trade off strategy.

# Recommendations:

Following the PMU response to the MTE the Project “pauses” and takes time to re-visit the Project Strategy to strengthen the Adaptive Management in consideration of the recommendations given below and including revising the Log-frame Targets and Indicators. This Adaptive Management process should include a broad cross-section of local stakeholders.

## MTE Concern and recommended response

* + **Level of local participation in the planning process,**
  + **The degree to which this participation will continue to the implementation to these plans,**

*Project engages an external facilitator to drive local community (further beyond muhtars) and civic institutional participation in the planning process.*

* + **The need for a strategic vision and plan to guide the various planning agencies (State Hydraulic Works, Municipalities, General Directorates of Highways etc.) as well as forest villages within the buffer zone area,**

*Current Forest Management Plans have a limited strategic vision due to the sequencing in the Project Work Plan. A Strategic Planning structure is necessary to include the multiplicity of interest involved in land use in the Buffer Zone. The first task would be to develop the strategic vision of the Buffer Zone.*

*This planning structure would also need to regularly monitor and evaluate the implementation and effectiveness of land use planning and management within the Buffer Zone to ensure that management is adaptive in light of experience and changing circumstances.*

* + **Strengthening natural resource governance within the buffer zone area (cost and benefit of conservation management, authority and responsibility for resource management, pricing and tenure of natural resources),**

*The Project should identify the small number of forest villagers and focus its attention on activities on developing pilot (experimental) village level resource management plans within the framework of the Forest Management Plan.*

* + **The capacity of local team (Local Branch Managers are very capable but overstretched),**

*Additional human resources are made available at the level of National Park. The required skills and experience should be decided during the revision of the Project Strategy.*

* + **The Project is not sufficiently challenging inequalities and inefficiencies in the enabling the environment (policies, legal framework etc.)**

*Project could challenge inequalities and inefficiencies in the enabling the environment more (policies, legal framework etc.)*

*(Ex: Article 12 of the MoU signed between the Project Partners),*

*“Article 12 – The parties initiate the necessary actions to suggest changes in the present legislations to provide the implementation of experiences and outcomes which are to be obtained during or in the project.”*

* + **The time available for achieving the Objectives (initial Project time frame is unrealistic)**

*On condition that there is consensus following the exercise of revising the Project Strategy the Project requests a budget neutral extension of not less than 12 months (1-2 years depending on the available funds)*

*It is unrealistic to disseminate the Project Methodology to 9 additional hot spots therefore the Project should consider the following;*

1. *Abandoning the idea of disseminating the Project to other hot spots,*
2. *Scaling down the number of hot spots by selecting 2 or 3 and concentrating on those* 
   * **Overreliance on an alternative livelihoods trade off strategy.**

*The opportunity costs of conservation management are impact most heavily on forest villagers and contribute significantly to rural de-population. A more balanced mix of sustainable use as well as alternative livelihoods will not only reduce vulnerability of the forest villagers but also provide incentives for the wise management of forest resources.*

# Next Steps

The MTE will now continue to analyse the information gathered during the field visit and from the various documents and reports.

A Draft MTE Report with main annexes will be delivered by 24th November (or earlier).

The Draft Report will be circulated amongst the Project Partners for comment and an agreed *return of comments* date will be decided between the PMU and MTE Team. The MTE will then finalise the Report and submit it by a date mutually agreed by the PMU and MTE.

# Conclusion

Overall the Project Partners can be satisfied that they have a good project which is developing the skills of protected areas managers and engaging with a reform process that will strengthen the management agencies and to a degree it will also strengthen the non-agency players.

On this basis the MTE feels that the ratings of the project will be **satisfactory** however, there are a number of areas that have given rise to concern. Despite this the MTE feels that if the recommendations outlined in this *Aide Memoire,* which will be further elaborated in the MTE Report are implemented then the Project can be confident that it can receive a good Final Evaluation. However, if the Project chooses to ignore the recommendations then there is a high risk that the progress made so far might not be sustainable.

The MTE feels that there is considerable intellectual capital in the PMU and the Team and as such feels that it is safe to allow the PMU to develop specific responses to meet the recommendations as part of the Project’ adaptive management.

Where practicable, a number of resources will be provided as Annexes to the MTE Report to assist in the developing the Project’s response to the MTE.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| NAME & SURNAME | COMPANY | TITLE | PLACE |
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| Başak Avcıoğlu Çokçalışkan | WWF Turkey |  | Ankara |
| Katalin Zaim | UNDP CO. | ESD Programme Manager | Ankara |
| Mustafa Yurdaer | General Directorate of Forestry (MoEF) | Head of Administration and Planning Dep. | Ankara |
| Yusuf Ziya Ergene | General Directorate of Afforestration (MoEF) | Survey and Project Branch Manager | Ankara |
| Nurşen Gencer | General Directorate of Forest Villagers Affairs | Study and Foreign Affairs Branch Manager | Ankara |
| İsmail Menteş | Provincial Directorate of MoEF | Local Branch Manager – Kastamonu | Kastamonu |
| Mustafa Çelik | Family Pension | Operator of Pension | Kastamonu |
| Muhammer Kalaycı | Administrator | Uzla Muhtar | Kastamonu |
| Şenol Kürkçü | Administrator | Boğazyaka Muhtar | Kastamonu |
| Cengiz Poyraz | Agricultural Development Cooperative | Deputy of Head and Member of Coop. | Bartin |
| Ercan Yeni | Provincial Directorate of MoEF | Local Branch Manager – Kastamonu | Bartin |
| Ramazan | Regional Directorate of GDF |  | Bartin |
| Şahidi Kuşçu | Arıt Municipality | Major | Bartin |
| Galip Arslan | Aşağıçerçi Village Beautification Association | Head of Association | Bartin |

**List of persons interviewed**

1. The ToR for the MTE are a matter for public record and can be obtained by contacting UNDP Turkey [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <http://thegef.org/MonitoringandEvaluation/MEPoliciesProcedures/mepoliciesprocedures.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Parks, People and Professionals: Putting ‘Participation’ into Protected Areas Management, Michel . Pimbert and Jules N. Pretty. *In*: Social Change and Conservation, *Eds. Khrishna B Ghimire and Michel P Pimbert, Earthscan Publications Ltd. UK, 1997* [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Adapted from a discussion by Dr. Graham Webb [↑](#footnote-ref-4)