

Executive Summary

Introduction

This mid-term evaluation was requested by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in accordance with the monitoring and evaluation plan put forth in the project document for the Saint Lucia's Capacity Building & Mainstreaming of Sustainable Land Management (SLM). The evaluation is also a requirement of the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) the agency that provided the donor contribution to the project. Matching funds were provided by the Government of Saint Lucia who therefore has a vested interest in the progress, effectiveness and efficiency of the project execution. Based on UNDP's record, the mission to St. Lucia is being carried out some two years after the official start of the project. The evaluator has been informed that the project must be operationally closed by June of 2012. This means that the project has gone past its mid-term leaving only 15 months to operational closure. In that context, this review sought evidence that the project actions have been directly focused on contributing to the specific project objectives and outcomes and whether or not the project can deliver on its targets set out in the logical framework.

Scope of the Review

The mid-term evaluation in Saint Lucia consisted essentially of a review of the project documents, interviews with some stakeholders and a group discussion with the project team. Information collected from the interviews, the literature search and the group discussion was analyzed for consistency, accuracy and relevance. The resulting data was then used to inform the report. The report examines the project design and relevance, efficiency of implementation, effectiveness to date, partners' perception of change brought about by the project and potential sustainability of any such change. It further assesses the achievements of the project with respect to the stated objectives and the attainability of its outcomes. The evaluation also assesses the extent to which the assumptions and risks outlined in the logical framework are valid and identifies external factors beyond the control of the project that affected it negatively or positively. Special emphasis is placed on the degree to which the project has succeeded in carrying out the activities outlined in the logical framework.

Long Term SLM Goal

The stated long term goal of the Sustainable Land Management Project at the country level 'is to ensure sustainable management of the land resources of Saint Lucia in order to enhance ecosystem health, integrity, stability, functions and services, while contributing directly to the environmental, economic and social well-being of the people of Saint Lucia.' It should be noted that poor management of land issues in St. Lucia has resulted in many floods, landslides and pollution of water courses. Arresting these trends is the ultimate goal of land management in St. Lucia to which this project is expected to contribute.

Specific Project Outcomes

This project intervention was designed to “strengthen capacity at the individual and institutional level and to mainstream SLM concepts into national development strategies and policies.” It was expected that capacities for SLM would be strengthened through 5 major outcomes. These are

- 1.0 Mainstreaming sustainable land management into national development policies, plans and regulatory frameworks,
- 2.0 Developing individual and institutional capacities for SLM,
- 3.0 Increasing awareness on SLM issues and enhancing capacities for knowledge management,
- 4.0 Elaboration of investment planning and resource mobilization for SLM and
- 5.0 The completion of a National Action Plan.

Saint Lucia faces severe land degradation challenges ranging from deforestation to hillside farming. Hurricane Tomas (29-30 October 2010) exploited many of these challenges resulting in several serious landslides. At the time of this evaluation mission (9th March 2011) the town of Soufriere south of the island was still cut off from the remainder of the island by landslides and silts deposits from flood waters. The design of the GEF funded SLM project executed by the Ministry of Physical Development and the Environment of Saint Lucia and implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) took cognizance of the issues that became a reality during hurricane Tomas. While defining the institutional context in the project document the designers pointed to the fragmentation of the state institutions resulted in “failure to foster integrated development planning process” which they saw as an impediment to programme implementation. This also resulted in areas being neglected because they seemingly are not the domain of any Ministry.

The project design is still applicable but adaptive project management on “a fast track” coupled with strategic financial support will have to be applied if the project outcomes are to be met in time for project closure.

Progress towards Results

This project is moving very slowly and there is little evidence of real progress towards achieving the stated outcomes. The project team seems to have a low morale and lacks momentum putting at risk the success and sustainability of the few activities undertaken to date. Two critical aspects of the project have yet to be initiated. These are the “mainstreaming of SLM into national development plans and policies and the strengthening of individual capacities of key stakeholders in the key sections of the relevant Ministries as well as key stakeholders in construction land development, and tourism”. These, it should be noted, are the main elements of the project.

Some hardware in the form of a ‘large format plotters’ for use in the Physical Planning department were supplied by the SLM Project. The project also assisted in the acquisition of licenses for two important pieces of software for the Nation’s Land Registry to make digital images and legally digitize documents.

At the time of the evaluation mission there was no evidence that the NGO community was involved in the implementation of this project. There was no visible link between the livelihood of the Saint Lucian people and this SLM intervention. Further there is no evidence of the project capitalizing on the 'fallout' from hurricane Tomas to underscore the need for a national purposeful response to the realities on the ground regarding land degradation.

Each activity of the project has been assessed to determine to what extent the work has progressed towards the related outcome(s), objectives and goal. Of particular focus during the evaluation was the extent to which the project has succeeded or failed to implement planned activities using the available resources. The findings show that activities completed to date are focused on purely preparatory actions addressing issues like Cabinet approval of the 'National Land Policy May 2007', the 'Final Report of the National Action Plan and Strategic Action Plan to Combat Desertification and Drought in Saint Lucia, December 2008,' and the 'Knowledge, Attitude and Practice Survey, August 2010.'

It would be fair to say that this SLM Project has made some strides in garnering political and legal support for further work on the project. However, as important as this may be, it cannot replace or substitute for the outcomes listed in the project document and so far nothing has been done regarding Outcomes 3 and 4 and the work on Outcome 1 and 2 are very minimal.

The project document does not speak to the issues of socio-economic or gender, elements that are critical to sustainable land management in St. Lucia. The latest poverty survey (2005) indicated that 25% of the population was classified as working poor most of whom are rural dwellers within the agricultural sector.

Project Management and Monitoring

The implementation of the project has been reviewed with respect to project management, the delivery of inputs, assumptions made, the achievement of outputs, project timing, and budget and expenditures. The members of the PMU are struggling with lack of office space, access to communication technology, technical support from strategic players, and commitment on the part of some PSC members. These elements have to some extent contributed to the poor performance of this project.

The PMU consists of two female and one male. The females are the Project Manager with responsible for all technical aspects of the project and the general day to day running of the project while the other female handles the administrative issues. The lone male is the Deputy Permanent Secretary who is responsible to general oversight of the project in addition to his full range of duties. The PMU is unclear as to how much project implementation is in concurrence with project design and expectations.

Based on the minutes of the Project Steering Committee (PSC), representation at PSC meetings comes mainly from the Ministries of Physical Development & the Environment, and Agriculture. Even with a quorum of four, some PSC meetings had to be postponed and when they are held

there is a lack of consistency in participation at these meetings. The PSC is supposed to meet every quarter but there was evidence of only four PSC meetings and one consultation during the two years life of the project.

In addition to the work of the PSC and the official supervision of the Deputy P.S. Physical Development & Environment, monitoring activities are carried out by the Permanent Secretary and the UNDP programme manager. Both of these have expressed a measure of dissatisfaction/frustration at the very slow rate of project implementation.

In addition to providing financial and technical guidance to this project, UNDP has participated in one of the committee's meetings. Other UNDP monitoring activities include participation in the inception workshop, annual review and announced visits to the project office. UNDP maintains its financial vigilance through the quarterly financial reports, review of TORs and payments to service providers.

Budget Management

Based on discussions with both the PMU and UNDP, and examination of the Combined Delivery Report (CDR), the project expenditure is well within the allocated budget. Infact, there is very little disbursement for a project that has had a project manager for more than two years; the project manager was hired sometime before the official start of the project. There is constant dialogue between the PMU and UNDP's Programme and Finance Departments to verify contract sums, permitted activities and ensure general budget agreements but there is very little to show for all this.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This project was initially given recognition by the Government of Saint Lucia as evident by the endorsement of 24th January, 2005 by the P.S. Ministry of Physical Development, Environment & Housing. The project continues to have top leadership support illustrated by Cabinet approval of the various strategic documents. However, partnership with non-governmental organizations and local communities is lacking. Links with non-traditional but influential stakeholders such as developers, tourism and construction industry also need to be made to assure the effectiveness and sustainability of this project intervention.

At the national level, there is a potential risk that public understanding and application of SLM principles will not occur within the project period. Some immediate decisive action has to be taken regarding the implementation of a dynamic and comprehensive public awareness strategy to raise understanding and effect practical application of core SLM principles in Saint Lucian's everyday lives and activities.

Stronger partnerships should be developed with farmers, contractors, and all relevant Government Ministries and Departments, NGOs and other non-traditional stakeholders which can assure the effectiveness and the sustainability of this project intervention. It is the view of the PMU that greater efforts need to be made to ensure more timely comment and approval of terms of reference, and items placed before the Cabinet. The PMU also complains that the Government tender procedures are onerous but the real problem seems to be a lack of management skills by the PMU.

There is an urgent need to ramp up the project implementation probably through enlisting the assistance of strategic technical personnel that can be responsible for key activity of the project. Further, an exit strategy need to be put in place to ensure completion of the proposed activities since it seem unlikely that all activities would be undertaken by project closure date. There is need for a project champion in government to lobby for the project and ensure that all activities are undertaken and that project gains are sustained.

On the basis of the findings delineated in the foregoing narrative the project elements can be rated as follows:

Project Formulation – Satisfactory (S)

Project Implementation – Highly Unsatisfactory (HS)

Results – Unsatisfactory (U)

Sustainability of outputs -