

Mainstreaming Biodiversity in Lao PDR's Agricultural and Land Management Policies, Plans and Programmes

Lao PDR

**GEF Agency: United Nations Development Programme
Executing Partners: Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry**

GEF Biodiversity Focal Area

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Mid-term Review Report

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Acronyms

ABP	Agro-biodiversity Project
ABDI	Agro-biodiversity Interventions sub-projects
APR	Annual Project Review
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CDR	Combined Delivery Report
CPAP	Country Strategy and Action Plan
CPD	Country Programme Document
CTA	Chief Technical Adviser
DAFO	District Agriculture and Forestry Office (MAF)
DoP	Department of Planning and Cooperation (MAF)
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FFS	Farmer Field Schools
FSP	Full-sized Project
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GOL	Government of Lao PDR
HA	Hectares
IPM	Integrated Pest Management
IT PGRFA	International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture
IUCN	World Conservation Union
KM	Kilometers
LARReC	Living Aquatic Resources Research Centre (MAF)
LAO	PDR Lao People's Democratic Republic
LoA	Letter of Agreement
M	Meters
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MAF	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MEA	Multilateral Environmental Agreements
MONRE	Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment
MSP	Medium-sized Project
MTR	Mid-term Review
NABP	National Agricultural Biodiversity Programme
NAFRI	National Agriculture and Forestry Research Institute (MAF)
NBSAP	National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan
NIM	National Implementation
NGPES	National Growth and Poverty Eradication Strategy
NTFP	Non-timber forest product
PAFO	Provincial Agriculture and Forestry Office (MAF)
PSAP	Provincial Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan
PIF	Project Information Form
PIMS	Project Information Management System
PIR	Project Implementation Review

PF	Participatory Forest Land Use Planning
PMU	Project Management Unit
PPG	Project Preparation Grant
PSC	Project Steering Committee
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
TABI	The Agro-biodiversity Initiative
TEEB	The economics of ecosystems and biodiversity
TOR	Terms of Reference
UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
USD	United States dollars
WWF	World Wildlife Fund

I. Executive Summary

Table 1 Project Summary Data

Project Title: Mainstreaming Biodiversity in Lao PDR's Agricultural and Land Management Policies, Plans and Programmes				
GEF Project ID:	2416	Financing	<i>at endorsement (US\$)</i>	<i>at completion (US\$)</i>
UNDP Project ID:	2903	GEF:	\$2,265,000	N/A
Country:	Lao PDR	UNDP:	\$534,900	N/A
Region:	Asia	Government:	\$556,200	N/A
Focal Area:	Biodiversity	Other:	\$3,345,772	N/A
Focal Area Objectives:	Project approved under GEF-5 BD ¹ Objective 2: Mainstream Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use into Production Landscapes, Seascapes and Sectors; Outcome 2.2: Outcome 2.2: Measures to conserve and sustainably use biodiversity incorporated in policy and regulatory frameworks.	Total co-financing:	\$4,436,872	N/A
Executing Agency:	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (Department of Planning and Cooperation)	Total Project Cost:	\$6,701,872	N/A
Other Partners involved:	FAO, SDC/TABI, various others involved in project activities	ProDoc Signature (date project began):		April 19, 2011
		(Operational) Closing Date:	April 10, 2016 (planned)	

PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND OVERVIEW

1. The Lao PDR "ABP project" is a Global Environment Facility (GEF) funded full-sized project (FSP) working to conserve biodiversity in agricultural landscapes in Lao PDR through mainstreaming biodiversity focused measures in Lao PDR's agriculture and land management policies. The project expects to address impacts of agriculture on biodiversity both on-site and off-site, with an emphasis on species of global significance, and will consider biodiversity at the wider landscape scale within agro-ecosystems. The project began in April 2011, and is currently planned for completion in June 2016. The project is within the GEF biodiversity focal area. GEF funding is US\$ 2.27 million, and with planned co-financing of US\$4.44 million the total project budget is US\$6.70 million.

2. The project is executed under UNDP's National Implementation (NIM) modality (i.e. national execution), with the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF) Department of Planning and Cooperation as the national executing partner. The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) is the primary partner for technical assistance.

¹ Note that while final GEF clearance, CEO Endorsement, occurred in the GEF-5 period, the project was approved for inclusion in the GEF work program during GEF-4 and is using GEF-4 resources. However, the project may be considered as contributing to the GEF-5 strategic results framework targets.

3. The Lao PDR ABP project's objective is *"to provide farmers with the necessary incentives, capabilities and supporting institutional framework to conserve agricultural biodiversity within farming systems of Lao PDR"* which will be realized through two outcomes:²

- **Outcome 1:** National policy and institutional frameworks for sustainable use and in-situ conservation of biodiversity in agro-ecosystems
- **Outcome 2:** Capacities and incentives to mainstream biodiversity, especially agro-biodiversity, at the Provincial, District and community levels

4. According to GEF and UNDP evaluation policies, mid-term reviews are required practice for GEF funded FSPs, and the mid-term review was a planned activity of the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) plan of the ABP project. As per the review Terms of Reference (TORs) the mid-term review considers the actual performance and progress toward results of the project against the planned project activities and outputs, based on the standard evaluation criteria: relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, results and sustainability. The review assesses progress toward project results based on the expected objective and outcomes, as well as any unanticipated results. The review identifies relevant lessons for other similar projects in the future, and provides recommendations as necessary and appropriate. The review methodology was based on a participatory mixed-methods approach, which included three main elements: a) a desk review of project documentation and other relevant documents; b) interviews with key project participants and stakeholders; c) field visits to Phonxay and Phoukout districts, where the project is working at the field level. The review is based on evaluative evidence from the project development phase through June 2014, when the mid-term review data collection phase was completed. The desk review was begun in May 2014, and the review mission was carried out from June 11 – 17, 2014.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS ON THE MAIN EVALUATION CRITERIA

5. The ABP project is a highly important and valuable project for the potential conservation and sustainable use of agro-biodiversity in Lao. Unfortunately the project has encountered a number of headwinds during the first half of implementation. These relate both to a.) Operational issues associated with project implementation/execution; and b.) Technical issues related to project design and strategic focus. The difficulties faced thus far have slowed project execution and dispersed the project's technical focus, resulting in relatively meager progress in terms of results and efficiency. Recent changes in the project execution structure herald a positive shift for the ABP project, and great expectations remain for concrete and catalytic results before the end of the project. However, UNDP, FAO and MAF, as the main project partners, must be focused and diligent in ensuring the project reaches a successful trajectory in the 2nd half of implementation.

6. With respect to **relevance**, the project objective is considered **relevant / satisfactory**. The objective is clearly important for Lao PDR's national biodiversity conservation strategic goals and objectives. The project supports implementation of national plans and policies (e.g. National Agricultural Biodiversity Programme), and includes activities that are relevant for field

² In the project document a third outcome for "Effective Project Management" is included.

level stakeholders and resource users. The project design and strategy, on the other hand, is deemed to have low relevance to the identified threats to agro-biodiversity in Lao PDR, and the barriers to its conservation. The project document formulates a set of project activities that do not have sufficient strategic focus or results-based orientation, and are not adequately linked or responsive to the identified threats to agro-biodiversity in Lao PDR.

7. ABP project **efficiency** is rated **unsatisfactory**. In addition, project implementation is considered unsatisfactory, while project execution (i.e. project management) is also assessed as unsatisfactory. The majority of mid-term review indicators related to efficiency tell a tale of a troubled 1st half of project implementation. The project financial disbursement for project activities is 21.8%, while the project is more than 52.0% through its planned lifespan. Project management expenditures constitute 38.4% of project expenditures as of June 30, 2014, and have already exceeded total planned expenditures for project management. There were significant delays in project execution, including a seven month gap between Prodoc signature and the project inception workshop, a 14 month gap between Prodoc signature and signing of Letter of Agreement between the main project partners, a 24 month gap between Prodoc signature and formal posting of the project Chief Technical Advisor (CTA), and many project activities are delayed, such as implementation of the portfolio of “sub-projects”. In addition, the annual project audits have identified numerous project management shortcomings. The Project Steering Committee (PSC) has not been formed, and the originally planned project implementation arrangements were not followed – to the significant detriment of the project. On the positive side, project co-financing through June 2014 is documented as \$4.49 million USD, already exceeding the originally planned co-financing amount.

8. Fortunately, recent changes in the project execution structure and increased attention from UNDP, FAO, and MAF to addressing the critical project operational issues portend a significantly more fruitful 2nd half of the project. The responsible party for national project execution was recently changed to MAF's Department of Planning and Cooperation, and UNDP, FAO and MAF are working to address issues identified in the annual project audits. Considering that the new national project coordinator is also the national project coordinator for the TABI project, coordination between the two initiatives is expected to improve going forward.

9. ABP project **effectiveness** is assessed as **moderately unsatisfactory**, while **results** are considered **unsatisfactory**. Under the 1st half trajectory of the project, only 3 of 15 results framework indicator targets are likely to be achieved. Unfortunately the project results framework indicators and targets are not well formulated to support results-based management, and can only partially be used to assess project performance. However, by any measure, the project results thus far are limited. The project has contributed to some mainstreaming of agro-biodiversity conservation measures through inputs to national sectoral plans and policies, such as the National Agricultural Biodiversity Programme (NABP) and National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP). Other highlights include the project's support for provincial biodiversity strategy and action plans (PBSAPs) in the two pilot provinces of Luang Prabang and Xieng Khouang, and a pipeline of well-developed sub-project proposals for implementation constituted through active local stakeholder engagement at the field level.

10. At this stage in the project's implementation it is not possible to meaningfully assess likely **sustainability** of project results, and this criteria is rated **unable to assess**.

RECOMMENDATIONS

11. The recommendations from the mid-term review are indicated below, with the primary target audience for each recommendation indicated in brackets. The recommendations are divided into i.) Implementation and execution issues; and ii.) Technical focus issues. The most critical recommendations are highlighted as “key” recommendations, with lower level recommendations following.

Implementation and Execution Issues

12. **Key Recommendation 1:** The ABP project should activate and utilize the Project Steering Committee, representing a selection of key stakeholders in the agro-biodiversity realm. The PSC should serve its intended monitoring, oversight, information sharing, and stakeholder engagement functions. The PSC should be the main oversight mechanism for the project, with the opportunity to provide inputs to annual project workplanning, and approval of annual workplanning and budgeting. [UNDP, FAO, MAF]

13. **Key Recommendation 2:** This review recommends that UNDP, MAF, and FAO continue to urgently work together to respond to the audit recommendations, furthering the good progress made thus far, and ensure that the same issues are not raised in the audit for 2014. [UNDP, FAO, MAF]

14. **Key Recommendation 3:** This review recommends that the ABP execution and implementation partners ensure prior to the 4th quarter of 2014 that adequate human resources will be available in the 2nd half of implementation to fully support highly dynamic and productive project execution, so that the project may achieve the greatest results possible. This could imply contracting additional qualified national-level Project Management Unit (PMU) staff, but in the interest of time, under current circumstances this may just mean revising the TORs of the current CTA and ensuring the budget is available for the CTA position for the remainder of the project. As such, this review recommends a re-assessment of the budgeting for the CTA position for the 2nd half of the project. [UNDP, FAO, PSC]

15. **Key Recommendation 4:** This review recommends that the main project execution and implementation partners continue to clearly document and justify actual co-financing amounts committed, particularly co-financing from stakeholders at the pilot sites, including partners who will be implementing the ABDI sub-projects. Reaching the total planned co-financing amount is important, but in addition, documenting a broad range of co-financing partners can be a strong indicator of stakeholder ownership and likely sustainability of benefits. [UNDP, FAO, PMU]

16. **Key Recommendation 5:** UNDP, FAO, and MAF should strengthen their monitoring and oversight of the project to ensure that the project is fully on-track, there are no bureaucratic delays, and any project risks are identified well in advance and proactively addressed. All project risks should be reviewed at the monthly technical coordination meetings, with discussion about concrete steps to address risks, and follow-up before the next technical coordination meeting. This review also specifically supports the recommendation from the project audits that decisions made at the monthly technical coordination meetings must be followed-through on in a timely manner. [UNDP, FAO, MAF]

17. **Key Recommendation 6:** ABP project workplanning should be done in a transparent and consultative manner with all key project partners, with final approval by the Project Steering Committee. Workplanning for each year should be done in the 4th quarter of the previous year, for approval by the PSC before the end of the year. It must also be assured through the workplanning process that the project activities remain focused, and contribute directly to project results targets. [PMU]
18. **Key Recommendation 7:** The ABP project should strengthen support and oversight of field-level activities through quarterly monitoring visits, linked with the district planning meetings. This may be necessary for the remainder of the project, but at least should occur until the ABDI sub-projects are in mid-implementation. [PMU]
19. **Recommendation 8:** It is recognized that the ABP project and the Agro-biodiversity Initiative (TABI) will not be carried out through a joint execution structure as originally planned, and any efforts to establish a joint execution approach with TABI should be dropped at this point. However, it is still necessary to improve coordination with TABI. The ABP project could still potentially utilize the same Project Steering Committee structure as TABI, as the national stakeholders are likely to be the same for the two projects, and leveraging the same oversight mechanism would support a programmatic approach. There should be a review of TABI and ABP workplans to ensure harmonization and avoid overlap. If logistically feasible, the ABP project and TABI should share physical office space, which would allow the national project coordinator to play his joint role more effectively as the manager of both projects, and which would strengthen coordination between the two projects. [MAF, PMU, UNDP]
20. **Recommendation 9:** To ensure cost-effectiveness by the end of the project, the project team should focus on delivering project results within the planned timeframe of the end of 2016. [PMU, UNDP, FAO]
21. **Recommendation 10:** The ABP project should use the GEF biodiversity focal area tracking tool (available on the GEF website, and completed previously by this project) as a guide toward results-based management, by drawing focus and attention to outcome level results focused on the implementation, enforcement, and monitoring of agriculture sector policies supporting conservation of agro-biodiversity. The tracking tool provides inputs to one of the portfolio level indicators for the GEF biodiversity focal area results framework, and is a basic but important means of results monitoring. [UNDP, FAO, PMU]

Technical Focus

22. **Key Recommendation 11:** In the 2nd half of implementation the ABP project needs to have a focused and results-oriented approach; this can be guided by a revised project results framework, including a focus on GEF-biodiversity focal area strategic targets, such a progress toward a score of “6” for mainstreaming of agro-biodiversity in agriculture policies and regulatory frameworks (as assessed through the GEF biodiversity tracking tool), and hectares under sustainable management. This review, therefore, recommends that the project results framework be revised immediately with inputs from UNDP, FAO, and the PMU, for approval by the PSC in the 4th quarter of 2014. This review provides suggestions for revised results framework indicators and targets in Annex 9 of this review report. [UNDP, FAO, PMU]

23. **Key Recommendation 12:** The project includes an information-sharing component, but little appears to have been done under this part of the project thus far. In the 2nd half of implementation the ABP project needs to emphasize a strategic focus on knowledge generation and information sharing. This should include a basic online presence, such as a minimal web page positioned on the overall MAF website. This could also include activities such as a brief quarterly electronic newsletter updating targeted stakeholders on project activities. By the 4th quarter of 2014 the ABP project should have a webpage as an information dissemination portal, as a sub-page of a large relevant website, such as the MAF website. [PMU, MAF, FAO]
24. **Key Recommendation 13:** To consolidate results and enhance the likelihood for the sustainability of project results, this review recommends that the project team and key stakeholders focus on documenting and publishing the lessons and experiences of the agro-biodiversity interventions (ABDI) sub-projects, ensure that the NABP II is finalized and adopted, and ensure that a few (i.e. 2-4) key publications documenting agro-biodiversity in Lao PDR are produced before the end of the project. The project could also, for example, provide information on the ABDI project experience to be included in the TABI newsletter. In addition, the project should produce a document highlighting the importance in Lao PDR of agro-biodiversity for resilience and adaptation to climate change at least six months prior to project completion. [PMU, NAFRI, FAO]
25. **Key Recommendation 14:** The project should plan for a specific external independent “sub-evaluation” of the ABDI project portfolio, upon the completion of a majority of the sub-projects. This would not need to be done by an international consultant, and in fact it would likely be much more effective for it to be done by a Lao speaker who understands the rural context. The evaluation should systematically document the results and lessons of the sub-project portfolio, including outcome and impact level results. This “sub-evaluation” would be a critical input to the ABP terminal evaluation, as the terminal evaluation would not have the capacity to conduct an in-depth evaluation of the sub-projects. Similar documentation of sub-project portfolio results have been carried out in UNDP-GEF projects in Bulgaria (GEF ID #2730), Croatia (GEF ID #2105), and Hungary (GEF ID #1527). [PMU, PSC]
26. **Key Recommendation 15:** This review recommends that the project shift the focus of Outputs 2.5 and 2.6 to address improving the understanding of the economic incentives and market forces that threaten various aspects of agro-biodiversity in Lao PDR, with a primary focus on crop and crop-associated biodiversity. Economic incentives and market forces are one of primary drivers of threats to agro-biodiversity as outlined in the project document, but do not appear to be clearly understood or documented. This is a significant gap in the project’s logic chain. [Project Steering Committee, UNDP, FAO]
27. **Recommendation 16:** This review also recommends that UNDP and the ABP project take whatever steps necessary to overcome any bureaucratic issues to the ABP project providing financial support for the organization of the agro-biodiversity sub-sector working group meetings, as this is clearly and specifically indicated in the project document. This would also provide the ABP project with the opportunity to ensure that the working group fulfills its opportunity to be a dynamic strategic guiding body. [UNDP, MAF-DoP, PMU, FAO]
28. **Recommendation 17:** The project results focus must be strengthened, and consequently the project would benefit from an internal discussion to generate a clearly articulated project

logic chain, such as can be generated under the GEF Independent Evaluation Office "Review of Outcome to Impacts" methodology.³ [UNDP, FAO, MAF]

29. **Recommendation 18:** While integrating biodiversity considerations into relevant sector policies, plans, and legislation is a major focus of the project, this review recommends that the project should immediately apply a very focused scope in working on this issue, only taking the opportunity to provide inputs to relevant new policies being developed or revised. The project likely does not have the time or resources to carry out a comprehensive adjustment or revision to all Lao policies and legislation currently on the books that are related to agro-biodiversity. [PSC, MAF, PMU, FAO, UNDP]

30. **Recommendation 19:** National policy priorities in the agriculture sector tend to relate to national production targets, and the conditions and inputs necessary to achieve those targets. This can make it difficult for broader critical agriculture sector goals, such as conservation of Lao PDR's globally significant agro-biodiversity, to be given sufficient attention and priority. This review recommends that the ABP project support the agro-biodiversity sub-sector working group to develop national targets for agro-biodiversity related production, and conservation targets. [PMU]

REQUIRED RATINGS

31. While the ratings given below are generally negative, the mid-term review team would like to emphasize that these ratings reflect the current status of the project, and a variety of issues encountered during the 1st half of implementation, and are not prescriptive for the second half of the project. The mid-term review team strongly believes that the project has the **potential** to achieve **satisfactory** ratings by project completion, if there is a focused and conscientious effort by all involved parties during the 2nd half of implementation. The biodiversity of Lao PDR and the project beneficiaries deserve such an effort.

ABP PROJECT MID-TERM REVIEW SUMMARY RATINGS TABLE

1. Monitoring and Evaluation	Rating	2. Implementation & Execution	Rating
M&E Design at Entry	MU	Quality of UNDP Implementation	U
M&E Plan Implementation	MU	Quality of Execution - Executing Agency	U
Overall Quality of M&E	MU	Overall Quality of Implementation / Execution	U
3. Assessment of Outcomes	Rating	4. Sustainability	Rating
Relevance	R / S	Financial Resources	UA
Effectiveness	MU	Socio-political	UA
Efficiency	U	Institutional Framework and Governance	UA
Overall Project Outcome Rating	U	Environmental	UA
5. Impact	Rating	Overall Likelihood of Sustainability	UA
Environmental Status Improvement	N/A		
Environmental Stress Reduction	N/A		
Progress Toward Stress/Status Change	N/A	Overall Project Results	U

³ See <http://www.thegef.org/gef/ROtI>.

II. Lao ABP Project Mid-term Review Approach

32. The mid-term review is commissioned by the UNDP Lao PDR PDR Country Office, in line with the monitoring and evaluation plan of the project, as UNDP is the GEF Agency for the project. The review is an **independent** exercise conducted by an **external** evaluation consultant, intended to provide an **objective** view of the project, including coverage of UNDP's role as the implementing agency. The review will be carried out as a collaborative and participatory exercise, and will identify key lessons and any relevant recommendations necessary to consolidate and sustain project results. The Terms of Reference for the review are included as Annex 1 to this report.

A. Mid-term Review Purpose and Objectives

33. The **purpose** of the review is to provide an independent external view of the progress of the project at its approximate mid-point, and to provide feedback and recommendations to UNDP and project stakeholders that can help strengthen the project and ensure its success during the second half of implementation.

34. The **objectives** of the mid-term review are:

- Identify potential project design issues;
- Assess progress toward achievement of expected project results;
- Identify and document lessons that can both improve the sustainability of benefits from this project and aid in the overall enhancement of UNDP and GEF programming in the region; and
- Make recommendations regarding specific actions to improve the project.

B. Mid-term Review Scope

35. The **scope** of the review will be as outlined in the TORs for the review, and will include aspects covering:

- Project design, development, risk assessment / management, and preparation
- Progress toward the expected project outcomes and objective
- Project timing and milestones
- Implementation and execution arrangements, including UNDP oversight and support
- Stakeholder participation
- Partnership approach
- Work planning, financial management/planning, co-financing
- Flexibility and adaptive management, and risk management
- Progress toward results
- Key remaining barriers
- Sustainability
- Catalytic role: Replication and up-scaling
- Monitoring and evaluation (project and results levels)
- Impact and Global Environmental Benefits

36. In addition, the UNDP requires that all evaluations assess the **mainstreaming of UNDP programming principles**, which include:

- UNDAF/CPAP/CPD Linkages
- Poverty-Environment Nexus / Sustainable Livelihoods
- Disaster Risk Reduction / Climate Change Mitigation / Climate Change Adaptation
- Crisis Prevention and Recovery
- Gender Equality / Mainstreaming
- Capacity Development
- Rights-based Approach

37. The review will, when possible and relevant, assess the project in the context of the key GEF operational principles such as country-drivenness, and national ownership, as summarized in Annex 2.

38. Evaluative evidence will be assessed against the main UNDP and GEF evaluation criteria, as identified and defined in Table 2 below. Annex 3 of this review report includes the review matrix that was developed to guide the review data collection and analysis. Annex 5 entails an explanation of the rating scale applied in this review.

Table 2. GEF and UNDP Main Evaluation Criteria for GEF Projects

Relevance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The extent to which the activity is suited to local and national development priorities and organizational policies, including changes over time. • The extent to which the project is in line with the GEF Operational Programs or strategic priorities under which the project was funded. • Note: Retrospectively, the question of relevance often becomes a question as to whether the objectives of an intervention or its design are still appropriate given changed circumstances.
Effectiveness
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The extent to which an objective has been achieved or how likely it will be achieved.
Efficiency
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The extent to which results have been delivered with the least costly resources possible; also called cost-effectiveness or efficacy.
Results
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The positive and negative, foreseen and unforeseen changes to and effects produced by a development intervention. • In GEF terms, results include direct project outputs, short to medium-term outcomes, and longer-term impact including global environmental benefits, replication effects and other local effects.
Sustainability
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The likely ability of an intervention to continue to deliver benefits for an extended period of time after completion: financial risks, socio-political risks, institutional framework and governance risks, environmental risks • Projects need to be environmentally, as well as financially and socially sustainable.

C. Principles for Design and Execution of the Review

39. The GEF M&E Policy⁴ includes **principles for evaluation**, which are outlined as follows:

- Credibility
- Utility
- Impartiality
- Transparency
- Disclosure
- Participation

40. The review will also be conducted in line with United Nations Evaluation Group norms and standards.⁵ The review team will work closely with UNDP and other project partners to ensure a collaborative approach and strong communication throughout the review process.

D. Review Approach and Data Collection Methods

41. The review commenced May 21, 2014 with the signing of the review contract, and the review field mission was carried out from June 11th – 17th, 2014. The review field visit itinerary is included as Annex 6 to this report, including the names of the persons interviewed.

42. The review was carried out in accordance with the guidance outlined in the UNDP Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating for Development Results,⁶ and in accordance with the evaluation guidance as outlined in the GEF M&E Policy.

43. The collection of evaluative evidence was based on three primary data collection methodologies:

1. Desk review of relevant documentation
2. Interviews with relevant stakeholders at local, regional, national and international levels
3. Field visit to projects sites

44. The data collection methods have been identified as the most appropriate and cost-effective means to provide answers and necessary information to meet the objectives of the review, and provide the necessary insight on the evaluation criteria.

45. As such, the mid-term review process involved four main steps, some of which overlapped temporally:

1. Desk review of project documentation, and logistical preparation and coordination with the project team for the field visit
2. In-country field visit, including visits to project field sites, and qualitative interviews with key stakeholders at the national and local levels
3. Analysis of data, follow-up to address any data gaps, and drafting of the review report, then circulation to review participants for additional feedback and input

⁴ See <http://www.thegef.org/gef/Evaluation%20Policy%202010>.

⁵ See http://www.uneval.org/normsandstandards/index.jsp?doc_cat_source_id=4.

⁶ See <http://www.undp.org/evaluation/handbook>.

4. Finalization of the review report and follow-up with the project team and stakeholders

46. Annex 4 includes the sample generic interview guide applied in the qualitative data collection process. Individuals targeted for interviews were intended to represent the main project stakeholders, partners and beneficiaries, and those most knowledgeable about various aspects of the project. The review also sought to include a representative sample covering all different types of stakeholders, including national and local government, civil society, local communities, and the private sector.

E. Limitations to the Review

47. All evaluations face limitations in terms of the time and resources available to adequately collect and analyze evaluative evidence. For the ABP project MTR, the review team was not able to visit all field sites, though key stakeholders from each of the two pilot districts were met. Also, as is understandable, some project documents were available only in Lao language, but the composition of the review team, with a national consultant, significantly addressed this issue. In addition, the project team and UNDP worked to ensure that language was not a barrier to the collection of evaluative evidence, and all key documents were available in English. One particular challenge was that the review team did not have the opportunity to meet with and interview the MAF staff member who served as the National Project Coordinator during the first half of implementation, despite multiple attempts at in-person, phone-based, and email inquiries. In addition, the MAF official who served as National Project Director was also not met. The GEF focal point was also not met, as he was on comprehensive government political training out of the country. Altogether the review challenges were not insurmountable, and the review is believed to represent a fair and accurate assessment of the project.

III. Project Overview

A. ABP Project Development Context⁷

48. Environmental and Biodiversity Context: Lao PDR lies at the centre of the Indochinese peninsula surrounded by Thailand, Vietnam, China, Myanmar and Cambodia. The country has an area of 236,800 km², three quarters of which is rugged, mountainous terrain with narrow, steep-sided river valleys. The highest mountains, up to 2,816 m are in the northern uplands, and the Annamites extend south from there along the Vietnamese border. The only extensive flat areas lie along the east bank of the Mekong River at around 100-200 m elevation, to the west of the Annamites. The agricultural zones of Lao PDR can be roughly divided into lowlands and uplands, where the lowlands have historically had the greatest agricultural activity and population. According to available statistics, “permanent” agriculture area covers about 5% of the country, of which about 4% is rice paddy land and 1% is agricultural plantations and other agricultural lands. However, typically, rural communities use a wider area of “agro-ecosystem” encompassing “managed” or “semi managed” communal forests, grasslands and wetlands.

⁷ Significant portions of the development context section of this report have been adapted from or directly copied from the relevant sections of the project document.

49. Lao hosts globally significant tropical ecosystems: such as the evergreen forests of the Annamite Mountains and their foothills, the limestone karst of central Indochina, the wetlands and dipterocarp forests of the Mekong Plain, and the Mekong River itself. Within these ecosystems are diverse agro-ecosystems ranging from the slash and burn swidden agriculture of the uplands, through long-standing agro-forests in the middle lands, to paddy fields, household or community managed wetlands in the lower-lying lands of the Mekong Plain.

50. Lao PDR lies in the heart of the Siam – Malaya – Java Vavilov sub centre of origin and domestication for domestic crops, which falls under the Vavilov Indo-Malayan (“Hindustan Centre”). This sub- region is considered to be centre of domestication for cereals and legumes such as Job's tears, velvet bean, several fruit species including pomelo, banana, breadfruit and mangosteen as well as other plant such as sugarcane, clove, nutmeg, black pepper, and manila hemp. The Indo-Malayan centre is also noted as domestication centre of origin and domestication of rice, chickpea, pigeon pea, eggplant, taro, sugar cane, sesame, oriental cotton, and bamboo (amongst other species) and a high diversity of these crops have been reported from Lao PDR as well. Lao PDR lies within the centre of the domestication of Asian rice (*Oryza sativa* L.). Moreover, the centre of origin of the glutinous rice types is recognised to be within the Lao PDR and northern Thailand. It is thought to have the greatest number of rice cultivars in the Mekong region. Rice is a globally important crop species and Lao PDR probably has the highest number of accessions of any country of a similar size in the world. There are now over 15,000 accessions (specimens) of rice cultivars and wild relatives (ca. 300) in the gene banks of the International Rice Research Institute (Manila) and MAF (Vientiane).

51. Five physically discernable ecosystems are found in the agro-ecosystem in Lao PDR, encompassing both agricultural area as well as natural and semi-natural ecosystems:

- Water ecosystems (including rivers, streams, ditches, ponds and wetlands and rice fields)
- Field borders (including roadsides)
- Trees and forest areas (including small parcels of forests within cultivated areas, individual trees, and groves)
- The homestead
- Cultivated and fallow fields (including annual and perennial crops)

52. They are important habitats for some globally important species of wildlife, and have their own importance in terms of agricultural biodiversity: wild relatives of crops, diverse varieties of crop and domestic animals and other crop associated biodiversity. There is limited knowledge on crop-associated biodiversity in Lao PDR. The diversity of the upland agricultural systems both in terms of the ecosystems and diversity of crops used support crop- associated biodiversity and healthy upland ecosystems.

53. Socio-Economic Context: Lao PDR's population is estimated in 2013 at 6.70 million, equating to a population density of 26.7 persons per square km, which is relatively low compared to most countries in the world, with Lao PDR ranking 177th among all countries. However, about 78% of the population works mainly in agriculture and population density on agricultural land is close to the regional mean. Lao PDR is one of 49 Least Developed Countries, and has a 2013 UN Human Development Index of 0.543, which ranks it 138th of 187 countries.

54. In 2000, agriculture contributed just over half of GDP. About 85% of the population is dependent upon agriculture, fisheries and other biodiversity for their primary livelihood. The sector is dominated by subsistence production, especially of rice, although there has been some growth in the cultivation of cash crops, especially coffee, over recent years. In most areas of subsistence agriculture, production is insufficient to provide for daily food needs, and the harvesting of wild species is intricately woven into the agricultural lifestyle and is often considered as part of farming. There is a large non-cash, subsistence, element in rural livelihoods, including a high reliance on aquatic and terrestrial biodiversity and wild food sources.

55. Policy and Legislative Context: The Government of Lao PDR has developed a number of policies and laws relating to the conservation of biodiversity, and which are relevant to agrobiodiversity in particular. These are listed and summarized in section 1.4 of the project document (p. 16).

56. Institutional Context: At the national level, main responsibility for the management and conservation of biodiversity in agricultural landscapes are with MAF. However, the responsibility to implement Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) related commitments has been recently transferred to the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE). Within MAF, the Department of Planning and Cooperation (DoP) is responsible for overall elaboration of agriculture and natural resource sector plans and policies, and is currently where the ABP project implementation unit is located.

57. Lao PDR is split administratively into one municipality and 18 provinces, which are further divided into 140 districts, under which there are about 10,300 villages. Villages have been assigned to kumban or village clusters for purposes of land-use planning but kumbans are not part of the legally established administrative structure. At the local level, provinces and districts are the main decision makers on agriculture and natural resources' management. There has been a history of decentralization in Lao, and although provincial governors are centrally appointed, they have significant autonomy; provincial governors also appoint the heads of the District offices.

58. At the provincial and district levels the Provincial Agriculture and Forestry Offices (PAFOs) and District Agriculture and Forestry Offices (DAFOs) provide extension services from the central MAF, and support local agriculture sector stakeholders.

B. ABP Project Concept Background

59. The full history of the project concept goes back more than 10 years, and was not entirely available for this review. The conservation of agro-biodiversity has been an important topic in Lao PDR, in terms of international donor support, going back to the 1990s. The World Conservation Union, IUCN, worked on agro-biodiversity issues in Lao PDR during this time, and there were initiatives from other international donors as well. In the early 2000s, work on agro-biodiversity in Lao PDR culminated in the production of the 2004 National Agricultural Biodiversity Programme (NABP), which was produced in partnership with FAO, with support from the Netherlands, and with the involvement of IUCN and WWF.

60. The NABP states "The need for a coordinated and structured agricultural biodiversity programme resulted from discussions involving the MAF), UNDP, UNDP-Global Environment

Fund [sic] (GEF) and FAO.” The NABP also mentions that “A Global Environment Facility (GEF) Medium Size Project (MSP) proposal is currently being developed and if successful will directly contribute to the implementation of the National Agricultural Biodiversity Programme,” as well as “UNDP-GEF is preparing a Medium Size Project mostly focusing on capacity strengthening, knowledge management and development of pilot of activities.” The current mid-term review also identified a draft document UNDP-GEF MSP proposal, dated December 16th, 2004.

61. Additional information on the overall timeframe and milestone dates of the project development process is indicated in Section III.F below, on project milestones.

C. Problems the Project Seeks to Address

62. The project document identifies and describes a variety of threats to agro-biodiversity in Lao PDR, and barriers to the effective conservation of agro-biodiversity (section 1.6 and 1.7 of the project document). These are listed as:

Threats

- Replacement of traditional varieties by high yielding and commercial varieties
- The intensification of agriculture is also linked to increased inputs and stabilization of swidden agriculture
- Overharvesting of products from natural habitats that are within the wider agro-ecosystem landscapes
- Conversion from natural ecosystems to less diverse agro-ecosystems
- Vulnerability to invasive alien species and climate change impacts

Barriers

- Biodiversity considerations not properly integrated into national policy and institutional frameworks related to agriculture, land management
- Weak capacities and incentives to mainstream biodiversity, especially agro-biodiversity, at the Provincial, District and community levels

63. Additional details are provided in the project document and inception report on all the threats and barriers.

64. While these are the threats and barriers identified, as further discussed in Section IV.B below on the relevance of the project strategy, the project design was not actually sufficiently responsive to these threats and barriers.

D. Project Description and Strategy

65. The Lao PDR ABP project is a GEF-funded FSP working to conserve biodiversity in agricultural landscapes in Lao PDR through mainstreaming biodiversity focused measures in Lao PDR's agriculture and land management policies. The project expects to address impacts of agriculture on biodiversity both on-site and off-site, with an emphasis on species of global significance, and considers biodiversity at the wider landscape scale within agro-ecosystems. The project began in April 2011, and is planned for completion in April 2016. The project is within the GEF biodiversity focal area. The FSP has GEF funding of US\$ 2.27 million, and planned co-financing of US\$4.44 million, for a total budget of US\$6.70 million.

66. The Lao PDR ABP project's objective is "to provide farmers with the necessary incentives, capabilities and supporting institutional framework to conserve agricultural biodiversity within farming systems of Lao PDR" which will be realized through two outcomes with 10 outputs:⁸

- **Outcome 1:** National policy and institutional frameworks for sustainable use and in-situ conservation of biodiversity in agro-ecosystems
 - **Output 1.1:** Biodiversity conservation, including agro-biodiversity, incorporated into Government policies, laws and other legal instruments.
 - **Output 1.2:** Institutional coordination of agro-biodiversity enhanced at national level.
 - **Output 1.3:** Institutional capacity of MAF/GOL to plan for, implement and effectively communicate on agro-biodiversity enhanced at national level.
 - **Output 1.4:** Key stakeholders understanding and capacity to respond to agro-biodiversity conservation and sustainable use enhanced.
- **Outcome 2:** Capacities and incentives to mainstream biodiversity, especially agro-biodiversity, at the Provincial, District and community levels
 - **Output 2.1:** Capacity and accountability of Provincial and District Government to mainstream biodiversity into agriculture increased [for two pilot sites].
 - **Output 2.2:** Participatory land use plans integrating agro-biodiversity developed in [two] pilot sites.
 - **Output 2.3:** *In-situ* conservation for important agro-biodiversity established [over 100,000 ha].
 - **Output 2.4:** Farmers' [in two pilot sites with the] skills, knowledge and incentives necessary to undertake biodiversity-friendly farming enhanced
 - **Output 2.5:** Agro-biodiversity and biodiversity friendly community products promoted [Value-chain research used to identify, process, pack and market agro-biodiversity and biodiversity friendly community products]
 - **Output 2.6:** Private and public sector agreements to mainstream agro-biodiversity into their plans

67. Outcome 1 of the project is focused mainly at the national policy level, while Outcome 2 included multiple activities focused on the two project target areas. These are Phonxay district, in Luang Prabang province (see Figure 1), and Phoukout district, in Xieng Khouang province (see Figure 2). Phonxay district is approximately 1,500 km² in area, with a population of more than 35,000 in 62 villages. Phoukout district has an area of approximately 2,000 km², with 48 villages. According to the project document, "A major consideration in the selection of the pilot sites has been the linkage with relevant activities," namely TABI, and these two districts are within the TABI project target area. Having pilot districts in areas addressed by TABI actually has both benefits and negative aspects for the ABP project, as further discussed in Section IV.B on project design. In addition to the TABI activities the project document lists approximately seven other relevant initiatives linked with the selected pilot districts.

⁸ In the project document a third outcome for "Effective Project Management" is included. Edits to the wording of the project outputs was made at the inception phase. These changes are indicated here through underlined italics.

Figure 1 Demonstration Area 1 - Phonxay District, Luang Prabang Province⁹

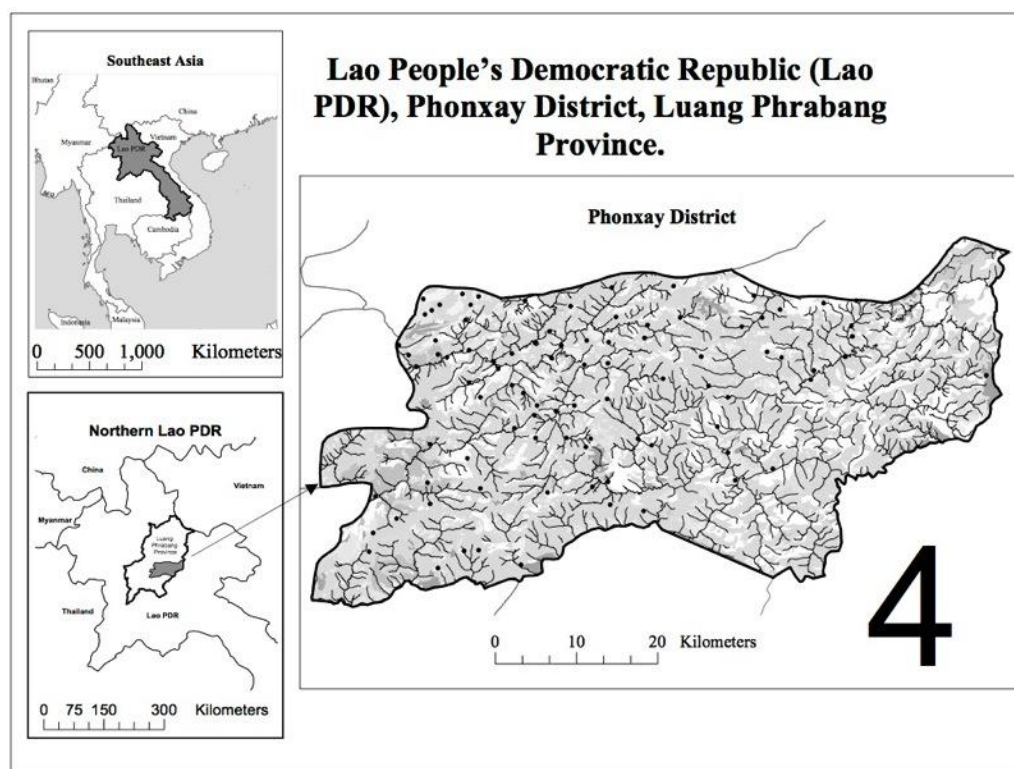
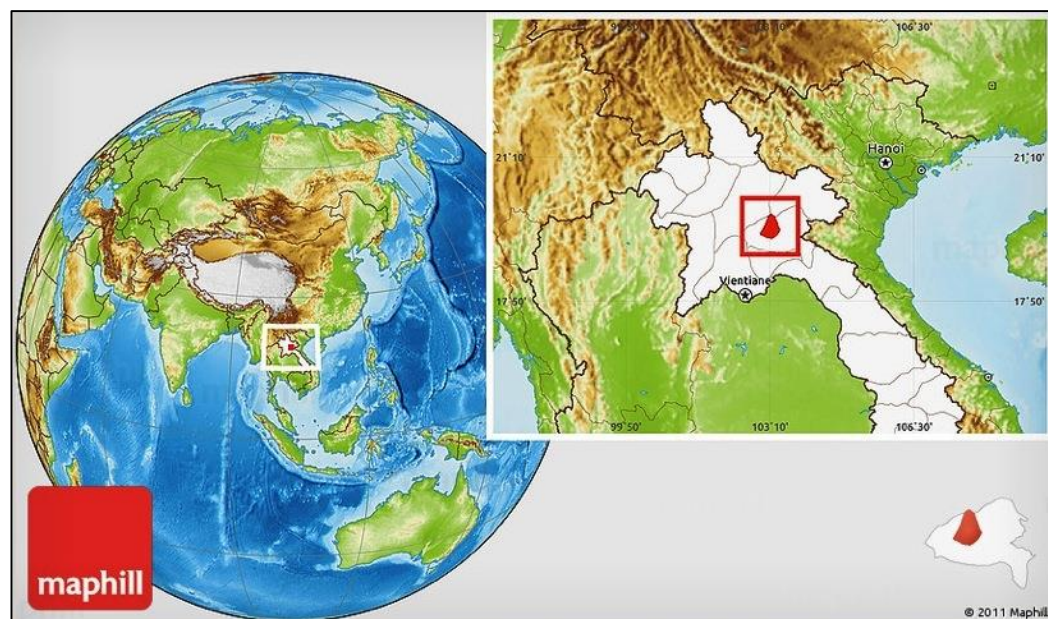


Figure 2 Demonstration Area 2 – Phoukout District, Xieng Khouang Province¹⁰



⁹ Source: Nilsson, E. and Anna-Karin Svensson. 2005. "Agro-ecological assessment of Phonxay district, Louang Phrabang province, Lao PDR : a minor field study," Department of Physical Geography and Ecosystem Science, Lund University.

¹⁰ Source: <http://www.maphill.com/laos/xiangkhouang/phou-kout/location-maps/physical-map/highlighted-country/>

68. The main results expected from the project are highlighted in the project results framework, included as Annex 9 to this review report (with a summary of potential achievement). As later discussed in Section IV.B of this report, the main results expected were not well targeted and defined. The main outcome-level results expected included the following targets:

- Six national policies with conservation of agro-biodiversity mainstreamed
- 100,000 ha of agricultural area under conservation and sustainable use of agro-biodiversity
- 1,000 farmers adopting techniques for conservation of agro-biodiversity
- Six strategic recommendations from agro-biodiversity steering committee

69. The outcome-level targets indicated above are the key expected results. The project results framework also a number of lower level output targets for each of the planned project activities, such as the “Number of national workshops with biodiversity content” and “Number of yearly agro-biodiversity inter-sectoral coordination meetings”.

E. Implementation Approach and Key Stakeholders

i. Implementation Arrangements

70. The actual project implementation arrangements have varied somewhat from the originally planned implementation arrangements, and even from the implementation arrangements foreseen at the inception phase. The organizational charts of project implementation arrangements as foreseen in the project document and at inception are included in Annex 8 to this review report.

71. The project is executed under UNDP's “National Implementation” (NIM) modality, with the MAF as the national executing partner. During the first half of implementation the department of MAF responsible for project execution was the Permanent Secretary's Office. The implementation structure of the project is indicated in Figure 3, below. As of May 2014 the responsible department has been switched to the Department of Planning and Cooperation, as originally envisioned in the project document. The executing department is represented through the National Project Director, a senior level official from the department (i.e. Director General).

72. The PMU is primarily responsible for the day-to-day management and operations of the project. The main PMU office is based in Vientiane, in the project annexes of the MAF. The project coordinator is a government staff member, fully seconded by MAF, i.e. with no salary from the project budget. The PMU includes the project officer, project assistant, and CTA.

73. UNDP is the GEF Agency for the project, and is responsible for oversight and administrative and financial backstopping and support. There has been turnover within the UNDP Lao PDR Country Office; the current environment program director and program officer responsible for the project assumed responsibility in the first quarter of 2014.

74. FAO is the key technical partner for the project, and is responsible for technical support and oversight. As further discussed in Section V.E on project financial management, 39.0% of the project budget is channeled directly through FAO.

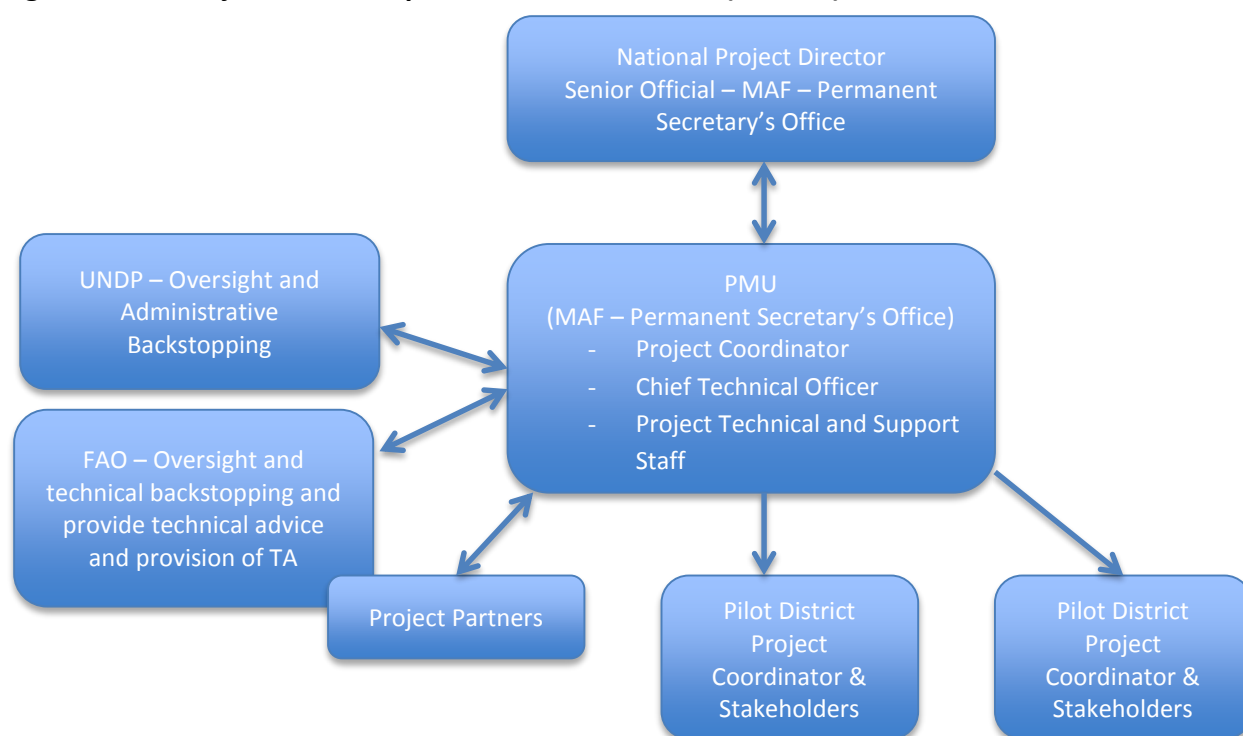
75. The project document stated the required constitution of a PSC (this was also approved at the inception meeting), which would provide oversight and technical guidance for the project. The PSC has not been constituted.

76. The main oversight mechanism in place has been the monthly coordination meetings between the PMU, UNDP, and FAO. UNDP has also conducted an annual “spot check” of execution of activities in the field. In addition, the project has had audits conducted annually.

77. At the pilot district level, the project has contracted a district facilitator and appointed district coordinators, based in the DAFO office of the respective pilot districts of Phonxay and Phoukout. The local project facilitators are responsible for supporting project activities at the district level, including supporting development of the pipeline of sub-projects. Also at the pilot district level there is a coordination committee consisting of the key local stakeholders, such as representatives from the district and provincial governments.

78. Other project partner organizations involved in various project activities are coordinated by the PMU on operational and technical matters. During the first half of the project the PMU contracted and made payments to technical partners, following quarterly financial advances from UNDP.

Figure 3 ABP Project Actual Implementation Structure (1st half)



ii. Key Stakeholders

79. The project document includes a stakeholder analysis (section 1.8, p. 28), with a summary table of the main stakeholders identified. However, in actuality the project has not been significantly engaged with many of the stakeholders identified, particularly in relation to various departments of the national line agencies. A summary list of the stakeholders engaged in the project is included in Table 3 below.

Table 3 Key Project Stakeholders

Organization	Role / Mandate	Project Involvement
Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF)	MAF is responsible for all aspects related to agriculture and forestry. Almost all of its departments are relevant to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in agricultural landscapes.	Overarching national execution partner institution.
MAF – Department of Planning and Cooperation	Has the overall responsibility for the elaboration of ANR sector plans (e.g. in the context of NSEDp's) and policies, based on the contributions from the different technical departments.	Current specific department responsible for executing the project.
MAF Permanent Secretary Office	Coordinate ministerial tasks.	Initial executing body for the ABP project; key partner on legal activities under MAF
Ministry of Public Health, Institute for Traditional Medicine	Provides guidance on policy implementation of public health activities and use of traditional medicinal plants.	Involve in some project activities related to medicinal plant use.
MAF – NAFRI	NAFRI has four main functions including: carrying out adaptive research, developing methods, tools and information packages, providing policy feedback, and coordinating and managing research. They have mainly been responsible to implement the National Agricultural Biodiversity Programme developed in cooperation with FAO.	Partner for some project activities including revision of the National Agro-biodiversity Programme.
MAF - LARReC	Research and management for aquatic biodiversity resources.	Involved with project activities related to aquatic biodiversity, including sub-projects for fish conservation and surveys.
MAF–Provincial Agriculture & Forestry Office and the District Agriculture & Forestry Office (PAFO and DAFO)	Implementation of MAF activities at Provincial and District levels. This includes staff assigned to agriculture, forestry, extension and protected areas.	Direct involvement through training and engagement of staff to conduct agro-biodiversity related activities in the field, including monitoring, extension and planning.
Provincial government agriculture departments	Oversee agriculture sector activities at the provincial level, and responsible for agriculture sector policies at provincial level.	Pilot site level oversight of project activities, with inputs to development of sub-projects.
District governors and agriculture and other line agencies staff	Oversee agriculture sector activities at the district level.	Pilot site level oversight of project activities, with inputs to development of sub-projects.
Sub-national civil society organizations and community-based organizations	Community-based organizations work on all aspects of life at the community level, much of which relates to agro-biodiversity conservation.	Involvement in sub-project proposals.

Farmers	Community-level villagers actively engaged in various forms of agriculture related to agro-biodiversity.	Project beneficiaries and partners, including involvement in sub-projects, surveys, farmer field school and as target audience for training programs.
TABI	Swiss-funded initiative working on agro-biodiversity, with the goal of "To contribute to poverty alleviation and improved livelihoods of upland communities through sustainable management and use of ABD in multi-functional landscapes."	Originally envisioned that ABP project would be align with TABI through a joint implementation mechanism, though this has not been the case. Now the new government ABP project coordinator from MAF is also the TABI project coordinator.
FAO	Involved in various agriculture and agro-biodiversity activities in Lao, including promulgation of the National Agro-biodiversity Program.	Key project partner for technical assistance; also responsible for oversight.
IUCN	Long history of working in Lao on agro-biodiversity issues, including involvement with National Agro-Biodiversity Program.	Key project advocate at the national level, and involvement with National and Provincial Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans.
Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment	Created since project development; includes focal point for CBD.	Little interaction thus far, but greater involvement is anticipated, particularly with respect to NBSAP and PBSAP.
National civil society organizations and institutes (E.g. institute of traditional medicine)	Various mandates related to agro-biodiversity.	Involved with some project activities, and with some sub-project proposals.
UNDP	Supports implementation of country development priorities in Lao PDR, as agreed with government.	GEF Agency, responsible implementation partner.

F. ABP Project Key Milestone Dates

80. Table 4 below indicates the key project milestone dates. The ABP project has an exceptionally long history, even by the standards of some GEF projects, and if the project continues to the planned operational completion in April 2016, the total project lifespan will be 142 months, or nearly 12 years, while the actual project operational period was planned for just five years.

81. The most significant gap in project milestones is from the PDF-A approval in June 2004, to the subsequent PIF approval in January 2009, which is a period of 55.5 months, or more than four and half years. There is no clear explanation of why there was such a significant gap in the project's development period. Individuals involved in the project development period did note that there was some period of discussion about UNDP and FAO both serving as GEF Agencies for the project, but it was then decided that UNDP would be the GEF Agency, and FAO would be the lead technical partner. It should also be noted that around 2006 was the switch from the GEF-4 phase to GEF-5, which coincided with the arrival of a new CEO at the GEF, which was a

period of change in terms of the GEF project cycle steps and procedures. These factors may have contributed to some delays in the project development period, but this is not known.

82. There were however significant additional delays even after the project development process was re-activated in January 2009 with the PIF approval. Nearly every step of the project cycle appears to have taken longer than standard GEF and UNDP procedures typically require. From GEF Council approval to CEO Endorsement Request was 14 months, and CEO Endorsement still required an additional 2.5 months – more than double the GEF standard business processing times. Prodoc signature, marking the formal start of the project implementation phase, required 4.5 more months after CEO Endorsement. It then took another 7 months for the project inception workshop to be held. In the meantime, the Letter of Agreement for project implementation between FAO and MAF, with UNDP as the witness, was not signed until June 2012 – 14 months after the formal project start. Start of recruitment by FAO of the CTA position was relatively quick, just one month after signing the LoA, but then the recruitment process was not completed for another 9 months. During the period when the FAO LoA was being negotiated UNDP contracted a temporary CTA to support the project, the same individual ultimately later selected as official CTA through the FAO recruitment process.

83. It is therefore difficult to state exactly when the project activities truly started, but it would appear to have been in the 1st or 2nd quarter of 2012. Thus, in terms of the project's planned lifespan, as of the mid-term review, the project is 63% complete in terms of time (38 of 60 months), though "unofficially" approximately 52% complete, measuring from the project inception workshop. The official planned project completion date is April 2016. This may need to be adjusted to the end of 2016 if the full 60-month implementation period is to be allowed for project activities. This is further discussed in the later Section V.E of this report, on project management and efficiency.

Table 4 Lao ABP Project Key Milestone Dates¹¹

Milestone	Expected date [A]	Actual date [B]	Months (total)
1. PDF-A Approval	N/A	June 25, 2004	
2. Initial project document draft	N/S	December 16, 2004	6 (6)
3. PIF Approval	N/A	January 31, 2009	49.5 (55.5)
4. PPG Approval	N/A	April 6, 2009	2 (57.5)
5. GEF Council Workplan Inclusion Approval	N/S	April 21, 2009	0.5 (58)

¹¹ Sources: 1.A. Not applicable; 1.B. GEF online PMIS; 2.A. Not specified; 2.B. Date of available draft MSP project document; 3.A. Not specified; 3.B. GEF online PMIS; 4.A. Not specified; 4.B. GEF online PMIS; 5.A. Not specified; 5.B. Date on project document file name; 6.A. Not specified; 6.B. Initial submission date indicated on CEO Endorsement Request; 7.A. Not available; 7.B. Re-submission date indicated on CEO Endorsement Request; 8.A. As per standard GEF business processes; 8.B. GEF online PMIS; 9.A. Prodoc signature should normally take place shortly following CEO Endorsement; 9.B. 2012 PIR; 10.A. Project inception workshops should take place within a few months of Prodoc signature; 10.B. Inception workshop report; 11.A. This LoA would have been expected to have been in place as of Prodoc signature; 11.B. Date of FAO signature on LoA; 12.A. Recruiting for a position such as CTA should begin within a few months of Prodoc signature, at the latest; 12.B. As per recruitment posting date; 13.A. the CTA position should be in place maximum within six months of Prodoc signature; 13.B. 2nd FAO 6-month Progress Report; 14.A. 30 months after inception workshop; 14.B. Date of MTE data collection phase; 15.A. 2013 PIR; 15.B. Not applicable; 16.A. Within three months before project completion, as per UNDP-GEF requirements; 16.B. Not applicable; 17.A. As per standard UNDP operating procedures; 17.B. Not applicable.

6. CEO Endorsement Request		June 30, 2010	14 (72)
7. CEO Endorsement Re-submission	N/S	September 21, 2010	3 (75)
8. CEO Endorsement	October 2010	December 7, 2010	2.5 (77.5)
9. UNDP-Country Prodoc Signature	January 2011	April 19, 2011	4.5 (82)
10. Inception Workshop	July 2011	November 27-29, 2011	7 (89)
11. Date of Letter of Agreement between FAO and MAF, witnessed by UNDP	April 2011	June 6, 2012	6 (95)
12. CTA Recruitment Initiation	July 2011	July 5, 2012	1 (96)
13. CTA Posting	October 2011	April 2, 2013	9 (105)
14. Mid-term Review	May 2014	June 2014	14 (119)
15. Project Operational Completion	April 2016	N/A	23 (142)
16. Terminal Evaluation	April 2016	N/A	(140)
17. Project Financial Closing	December 31, 2016	N/A	7 (149)

REVIEW FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

IV. Relevance

A. Relevance of the Project Objective

84. The Lao ABP project is considered **relevant** (or “satisfactory” in terms of the relevance criteria), as the project clearly supports priority biodiversity conservation issues in Lao PDR. The project is in line with numerous national policies and pieces of legislation, and is relevant to local resource user needs and priorities as well. The project is in-line with the agreed UNDP country priorities, and is in-line with the respective GEF strategic priorities for the biodiversity focal area. Further, the project clearly supports relevant multilateral environmental agreements, including the CBD, and other multilateral conventions such as the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (IT PGRFA), United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

i. Relevance to National and Local Policies and Strategic Priorities

85. The project document includes a list of key Lao national policy documents that the ABP project is supportive of. Relevant national policies include National Agricultural Biodiversity Program (NABP) (2004), National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) (2004), National Growth and Poverty Eradication Strategy, National Sustainable Development Strategy, Strategic Vision for the Agriculture and Forestry Sector, and the Forestry Strategy to the Year 2020. Relevant national legislation includes Fishery and Aquaculture Law (2009), Wildlife and Aquatic Animals Law (2007), Forestry Law (2007), Agriculture Law (1998), and multiple laws and regulations related to land use and land tenure. The list of relevant national policies and legislation is also updated in Annex 2 of the project inception report.

86. The NABP includes a results framework, with specific outputs under four main aspects of agro-biodiversity: crop and crop-associated biodiversity; livestock; non-timber forest products; and aquatic biodiversity. The ABP project is relevant to and supportive of outputs identified under each of these four components, as well as the components of the NABP related to planning. The summarized structure of the NABP results framework is included as Annex 10 to this review report.

87. The ABP project is relevant to multiple aspects of the NBSAP, but in particular supports the objective 10, “Support the conservation of biodiversity through ecologically sustainable agriculture.” The overall ABP project objective is relevant to this objective of the NBSAP, but in particular the planned sub-project activities will be directly demonstrating agricultural practices that are ecologically sustainable, for potential wider replication and up-scaling.

88. In addition to the ABP project’s relevance at the national level, the project is also relevant to and supportive of the needs and priorities of local resource users at the community level. The project is supporting a number of sub-projects that are expected to carry out activities that relate to the conservation of agro-biodiversity and which are supportive of sustainable livelihoods of local farmers and families in the two pilot districts. The interest in the

ABP project and its importance for the pilot district communities was emphasized during the review mission in meetings with district and provincial government authorities, as well as representatives of the farming communities.

ii. Relevance to UNDP Country Priorities

89. The Lao ABP project's relevance to the agreed UNDP priorities for Lao PDR, as outlined in the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), and Country Program Action Plan (CPAP). The Government of Lao PDR and UNDP signed the version of the CPAP supported by this project on March 28th, 2007, covering the 2007-2011 period. The current CPAP is for 2012-2015.

90. The project document clearly identifies the country program outcomes and CPAP outputs that the project was expected to support:

- **Expected CPAP Outcome(s):** Outcome 1: Improved and equitable access to land, markets and social and economic services, environmentally sustainable utilization of natural resources
- **Expected CPAP Output(s):** Output 1.2: The role of biodiversity, agro-biodiversity, land management and environment in general in the livelihoods improvements and poverty reduction strengthened through enhanced knowledge and management capacity; Output 1.3: Enhanced management capacity of the Government in meeting its international environmental obligations through strengthened implementation of multi-lateral environmental agreements and related national policies and legislation.

91. **Country Programme Outcome Indicators:** Capacities of government at central level and in selected provinces strengthened for conserving and managing sustainably agricultural biodiversity and mainstreaming agro-biodiversity conservation and sustainable use into the attainment of food security and livelihoods improvement.

92. No more specific target is provided for the CPAP outcome indicator.

93. The project is relevant and contributing to the CPAP outcome indicator, considering the project's work to mainstream agro-biodiversity conservation in government policies, support for mechanisms such as the agro-biodiversity sub-sector working group, and raise awareness and understanding among policy makers about agro-biodiversity issues.

iii. Relevance to GEF Strategic Objectives

94. The GEF has limited financial resources so it has identified a set of strategic priorities and objectives designed to support the GEF's catalytic role and leverage resources for maximum impact. Thus, GEF supported projects should be relevant to the GEF's strategic priorities and objectives. GEF strategic priorities are reviewed and revised for each four-year cycle of the GEF.

95. The project was approved and is being implemented under the strategic priorities for GEF-5 (July 2010 – June 2014).¹² The relevant biodiversity focal area strategic objective is

¹² For the focal area strategic priorities for GEF-5, see GEF Council document GEF/R.5/31, "GEF-5 Programming Document," May 3, 2010.

objective 2: "Mainstream Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use into Production Landscapes, Seascapes and Sectors." Under this strategic objective the project supports two outcomes and associated indicators that are relevant to the ABP project:

- Outcome 2.1: Increase in sustainably managed landscapes and seascapes that integrate biodiversity conservation.
 - Indicator 2.1: Landscapes and seascapes certified by internationally or nationally recognized environmental standards that incorporate biodiversity considerations (e.g. FSC, MSC) measured in hectares and recorded by GEF tracking tool (Target: 60 million hectares)
- Outcome 2.2: Measures to conserve and sustainably use biodiversity incorporated in policy and regulatory frameworks.
 - Indicator 1.2: Policies and regulations governing sectoral activities that integrate biodiversity conservation as recorded by the GEF tracking tool as a score (Target: 50% of projects achieve a score of 6)

96. The ABP project is most relevant to GEF-5 biodiversity Outcome 2.2, as the project does not include formal certification for sustainable use of landscapes, which is the target for Outcome 2.1. The project does include some focus on use of organic agriculture, but the level of support for these activities is limited – in the ABP sub-project supporting farmers to pilot organic production of rice, the pilot area is only a 90 hectares – 180 families are participating in the pilot activity, and, for example, the farmer interviewed for this review has approximately one hectare of rice paddy, but only used half for this pilot activity. For Outcome 2.2 relating to mainstreaming, in policies and regulations, the project is supporting activities related to this – for example, the revision of the National Agro-biodiversity Program, the revision of the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, and provincial biodiversity strategies and action plans for the two provinces where the pilot districts are located. The project will need to apply the GEF tracking tool to assess the actual score achieved in relation to mainstreaming, with the goal of reaching a score of 6.

iv. Relevance to Multilateral Environmental Agreements

97. The CBD is a key multilateral environmental agreement for which the GEF is the financial mechanism. Lao PDR is a party to the CBD, having acceded to the agreement on September 20th, 1996. The ABP project supports the CBD's agricultural biodiversity thematic program, and meets CBD objectives by supporting the Convention's Articles 6 (General Measures for Conservation and Sustainable Use), 7 (Identification and Monitoring), 8 (In-situ Conservation), 10 (Sustainable Use of Components of Biological Diversity), 11 (Incentive Measures), 12 (Research and Training), 13 (Education and Awareness), and 17 (Exchange of Information). The project also supports the CBD's Aichi targets for 2020, including:

- *Target 1: By 2020, at the latest, people are aware of the values of biodiversity and the steps they can take to conserve and use it sustainably.*
- *Target 2: By 2020, at the latest, biodiversity values have been integrated into national and local development and poverty reduction strategies and planning processes and are being incorporated into national accounting, as appropriate, and reporting systems.*

- *Target 3: By 2020, at the latest, incentives, including subsidies, harmful to biodiversity are eliminated, phased out or reformed in order to minimize or avoid negative impacts, and positive incentives for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity are developed and applied, consistent and in harmony with the Convention and other relevant international obligations, taking into account national socio economic conditions.*
- *Target 4: By 2020, at the latest, Governments, business and stakeholders at all levels have taken steps to achieve or have implemented plans for sustainable production and consumption and have kept the impacts of use of natural resources well within safe ecological limits.*
- *Target 5: By 2020, the rate of loss of all natural habitats, including forests, is at least halved and where feasible brought close to zero, and degradation and fragmentation is significantly reduced.*
- *Target 6: By 2020 all fish and invertebrate stocks and aquatic plants are managed and harvested sustainably, legally and applying ecosystem based approaches, so that overfishing is avoided, recovery plans and measures are in place for all depleted species, fisheries have no significant adverse impacts on threatened species and vulnerable ecosystems and the impacts of fisheries on stocks, species and ecosystems are within safe ecological limits.*
- *Target 7: By 2020 areas under agriculture, aquaculture and forestry are managed sustainably, ensuring conservation of biodiversity.*
- *Target 12: By 2020 the extinction of known threatened species has been prevented and their conservation status, particularly of those most in decline, has been improved and sustained.*
- *Target 13: By 2020, the genetic diversity of cultivated plants and farmed and domesticated animals and of wild relatives, including other socio-economically as well as culturally valuable species, is maintained, and strategies have been developed and implemented for minimizing genetic erosion and safeguarding their genetic diversity.*
- *Target 14: By 2020, ecosystems that provide essential services, including services related to water, and contribute to health, livelihoods and well-being, are restored and safeguarded, taking into account the needs of women, indigenous and local communities, and the poor and vulnerable.*

98. The project is also clearly relevant to the IT PGRFA, to which Lao PDR is a member. The IT PGRFA includes a specific program on sustainable use of plant genetic resources, which is based on Article 6 of the treaty. The project also has aspects relevant to implementation of the UNCCD, to which Lao PDR is a party, and relates to elements of climate change adaptation, under the UNFCCC; both of these latter treaties are also directly supported by the GEF.

B. Relevance of the Project Approach, Strategy and Design

99. In the first half of implementation the ABP project has faced challenges on two fronts. First, the project implementation and execution has not been carried out in the manner envisioned in the project document. This is further discussed in the following Section V of this report, on efficiency. However, the second issue is that even if project management had been fully satisfactory, **the project does not have a strong technical design or results-chain to serve as the guiding foundation for project activities**. The results focus of the project is much too broad, and the scope of the project is far too large for a project of this size and duration.

100. The focus of the project is the *“conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity resources in agro-ecosystems in Lao PDR for the attainment of food security and sustainable*

economic development and adaptation to climate change impacts", as stated in the project document. Agro-biodiversity is a large and complex thematic area, and there are many different elements to agro-biodiversity.

101. According to the CBD, agricultural biodiversity *"includes all components of biological diversity of relevance to food and agriculture, and all components of biological diversity that constitute the agricultural ecosystems, also named agro-ecosystems: the variety and variability of animals, plants and micro-organisms, at the genetic, species and ecosystem levels, which are necessary to sustain key functions of the agro-ecosystem, its structure and processes."*¹³

102. For example, agro-biodiversity includes:

- Domesticated wild crop relatives for fruits, vegetables, and grains
- Local varieties of livestock, including pigs, chickens, cows, and others
- Non-timber forest products, including plant products and wild animals hunted for food
- Aquatic biodiversity resources, including wild fish gathered for food, as well as farmed fish
- Wild biodiversity that is not used for food, but which relies on agro-ecosystems for existence

103. Figure 4 below provides a schematic representation of the complexity of the eco-agri-food system complex.

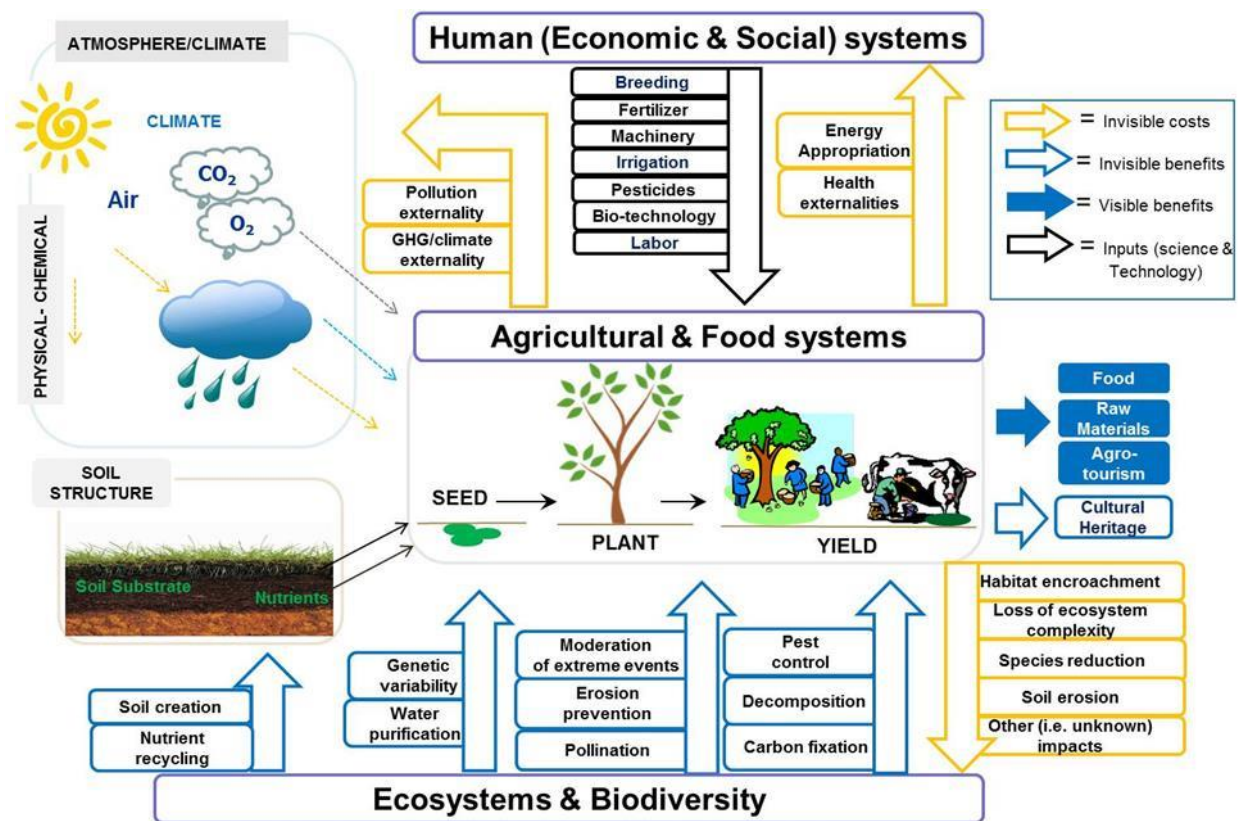
104. As discussed in Section IV.A.i above, the 2004 NABP actually outlines a program of work based on four main thematic areas, related to crop and crop-associated biodiversity, livestock, NTFPs, and aquatic resources.

105. The threats to each of the elements of agro-biodiversity are highly varied, and can be completely unrelated to each other. Key threats were identified in the ABP project document, as summarized in the previous Section III.C. The first three threats identified were "replacement of traditional varieties by high yielding and commercial varieties", "increased inputs" resulting from intensification of agriculture and stabilization of swidden agriculture, and "overharvesting of products from natural habitats". These all appear to be valid and clear threats to agro-biodiversity in Lao PDR. However, the project's explanation of barriers for addressing these threats essentially focuses on capacity weaknesses in relation to agro-biodiversity in general.

106. The problem is that it is not possible to work on agro-biodiversity "in general"; addressing each of these threats would require widely varied approaches and activities. The project design does not specifically respond to any of these threats; the project design answer is essentially to increase capacity of stakeholders at local, sub-national, and national levels – but capacity development activities must focus on something specific that stakeholders need to do in relation to the many different aspects of agro-biodiversity, and in relation to the diverse threats. Complicating the project's strategy and approach is the fact that agro-biodiversity in Lao PDR is actually still not well known and documented.

¹³ COP Decision V/5, appendix.

Figure 4 Schematic of the Eco-Agri-Food System Complex¹⁴



107. On the whole, the project's approach is not sufficiently logically linked with the specific threats and barriers to agro-biodiversity conservation in Lao PDR. The project likely would have been better served by taking on a limited number of the outputs identified in the NABP for example, focusing on a small number of tangible results, rather than taking a shotgun blanket approach in attempting to address many aspects of agro-biodiversity very broadly, relating to a majority of the outputs in the NABP.

108. The lack of strategic focus, and lack of outcome level results focus, is further perpetuated in the project results framework. This is further discussed in Section V.G.i on project monitoring and evaluation, but briefly stated, the results framework indicators and targets are designed without specific thematic focus areas, and focus on general and broad aspects of agro-biodiversity. This was slightly improved in the inception phase results framework revision, but not sufficiently enough to guide the project.

109. Another issue with the project design is the planned integration with the TABI project (see Box 1 for a brief overview of the TABI project). Both initiatives were being designed at the same time, and considering the clear overlap in focus, the GEF project was envisioned to be executed in a fully joint manner with TABI, with integrated execution mechanisms, and aligned workplans and oversight mechanisms, such as a joint steering committee. It is not clear to what

¹⁴ Source: Hussain, Salman and Dustin Miller. 2014. "The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity for Agriculture & Food: Concept Note," February 27, 2014.

extent this arrangement was fully accepted by the TABI planners at the time, and it did not materialize upon start of the ABP project. The TABI project was able to get underway earlier and more quickly than the ABP project, as it was the 2nd phase of a previous initiative. The TABI project is also twice the size of the ABP project, and is targeting a much larger geographic area.

Box 1 The Agro-Biodiversity Initiative (TABI) Phase II Overview

Donor: Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation (SDC)

Timeframe: July 1, 2012 – June 30, 2016

Funding: \$6,358,000 USD

TABI Phase 1 (2009-2011) demonstrated the potential of an agro-biodiversity-based development (ABD) approach as a key to livelihoods improvement through multi-functional landscapes in the uplands of Laos. For the second phase, TABI will capitalize on a number of key experiences. TABI will expand on a methodology, developed and used in phase 1, to focus energy from a broader variety of local actors to create applicable models for improved livelihoods that sustainably use ABD in multi-use environments. Likewise, TABI will leverage the FLUP field experience and model to both improve local level land management and influence land-use policies and practices throughout Laos. Finally, TABI will continue building a convincing evidence base that ABD conservation and sustainable use can be the central component of an effective uplands livelihoods strategy, and applying that evidence base—together with the goodwill and connections established in Phase I—to influence key development policies.

The overall goal for TABI is “To contribute to poverty alleviation and improved livelihoods of upland communities through sustainable management and use of ABD in multi-functional landscapes”.

- Outcome 1: Options and systems for ABD-based livelihoods are designed, demonstrated and applied by upland farming communities and other stakeholders.
- Outcome 2: Participatory forest and land use planning ensures village agricultural land and forest resource tenure and sustainable management
- Outcome 3: Integrated spatial planning and ABD knowledge management and exchange tools support evidence based decision-making.
- Outcome 4: Government policies promote ABD conservation and sustainable use, and land management, for improved food security and livelihoods in upland communities.
- Outcome 5: Partner institutions with enhanced capacity and incorporate and use ABD tools and concepts for uplands livelihoods development

The project will continue to work directly in the existing two target provinces of Luang Prabang and Xieng Khuang, scaling out to additional village clusters and possibly more districts. In addition, the project will use an innovative, collaborative approach to scale out activities to central and southern Upland areas, building partnerships through which to expand TABI's best practices.

Source: Adapted from the TABI Phase II Project Document.

110. The ABP project pilot districts were selected to be part of the ABP project because they were also part of the TABI pilot areas. However, the TABI project has moved forward with some of the activities planned for the ABP project while the ABP project has been delayed, such as inventories of agro-biodiversity related to NTFPs, and development of the pFLUPS for the pilot districts. Not surprisingly, at the district level, stakeholders do not have a clear understanding of

the fact that there are actually two different initiatives underway, and would not be able to articulate the difference between them – because thus far there is little difference. At the field level, both TABI and the ABP project are working on similar issues in similar ways, including inventories, pFLUPS, and sub-projects supporting sustainable use of agro-biodiversity. However, since the ABP project has been slower than the TABI initiative, the sub-project proposals developed for the ABP project could be those already rejected by TABI.

111. It may not have been possible to foresee at the time of project development, but in hindsight the ABP project likely would have been better served by selecting pilot districts that were not including in the TABI focus areas. This way lessons and experiences from pilot areas could have been shared between the ABP project and TABI, and the ABP project would not have to be trying to clarify its identity and purpose with field-level stakeholders. This is a valuable lesson from the ABP project experience thus far.

112. The ABP project does have a slightly different strategic focus than the TABI project, and the ABP project needs to ensure it focuses on its comparative advantage. The ABP project should not be considered a “mini TABI” project, nor should the ABP resources just be injected into the TABI budget and workplans. The ABP project can play a strategic and catalytic role at the policy level, and with regard to knowledge generation and information sharing related to conservation and sustainable use of agro-biodiversity in Lao PDR. Approaches to ensure this is a focus of the 2nd half of the project are discussed below.

V. Project Management and Cost-effectiveness (Efficiency)

113. Overall, project **efficiency** is rated **unsatisfactory**. The project start-up process was marked by delays, with project activities only really getting underway approximately a year after the UNDP-GoL Prodoc signature (not to mention that the project development process took place over seven years). The project's financial delivery was only at 31.3% as of June 30, 2014; however, financial delivery of actual project activities (excluding management costs) is even lower at 21.8% of the planned amount for Outcome 1 and Outcome 2. In addition, reported project management costs are 38.4% of total expenditure thus far, already exceeding the originally planned project management costs by approximately 5%. The current total management costs indicated may be due to misclassification of expenditures between UNDP and FAO, and the project partners are currently working to clarify this situation and provide a more accurate reporting of management costs. It is expected that by the completion of the project the actual management costs will be more closely in-line with the planned budget for management costs. The project implementation arrangements have not functioned well, and the project oversight mechanisms have not been fully in place. Project financial planning and management has also been inadequate on multiple fronts.

114. Fortunately, changes in the implementation approach were made in the 2nd quarter of 2014, and the outlook for the 2nd half of the project is positive. There are some fundamental structural challenges for the project in terms of financial planning which will continue to drag on efficiency (e.g. project management financial requirements, including oversight costs from FAO), but the project certainly has the potential to receive a higher efficiency rating by the end of the project, if performance significantly improves, as expected.

A. Quality of Implementation, Including UNDP Oversight

115. UNDP is the responsible GEF Agency for the project, and carries general backstopping and oversight responsibilities. As the GEF Agency (responsible both for project development and implementation) and as the implementing body, UNDP bears a portion of responsibility for the ABP project's slow progress toward results, and slow response to address many of the problematic areas. Many of the project execution issues discussed below are also a reflection of project oversight, as it is UNDP's responsibility to ensure that such issues are avoided, or are promptly addressed. As of the mid-term review, overall project implementation is rated unsatisfactory.

116. At the same time, it is thanks to UNDP's oversight and persistent efforts that the project is now moving in a positive direction. Between June 2013 and May 2014 UNDP sent multiple formal communications to MAF to address various project issues. This ultimately resulted in the switch of the project executing body to the Department of Planning and Cooperation from the Permanent Secretary's Office.

117. Positive aspects of project implementation include:

- Completion of annual project audits;
- Persistent (if not always timely) communication with MAF to follow-up on issues to be addressed
- Consistent monthly coordination meetings;

118. Shortcomings of project implementation and UNDP oversight include:

- Initial acceptance of execution arrangements with the Permanent Secretary's Office, although it had been planned that the Department of Planning and Cooperation would be the executing partner;
- Inadequate response to the 2012 audit findings, leading to a 2013 audit that found many of the same issues, and noted that the project was still high risk;
- Non-formation of the PSC;
- Poor technical design of the project (responsibility for which is also born by the GEF Secretariat, as well as other project partners, such as MAF and FAO, UNDP).

119. The project has partly suffered from turnover in staff positions within the UNDP Lao PDR Country Office during the project implementation period. The UNDP Resident Representative, Deputy Resident Representative for Technical Matters, and Environmental Program manager, are all new to their positions within the past three months. In addition, the Environment Program officer responsible for the project has only assumed responsibility in the past few months, following the departure of the previously responsible program officer.

B. Quality of Execution and Project Management

120. Note that the project implementation and execution arrangements have been previously described in Section III.E.i of this report. As of the mid-term review, overall quality of project execution is rated unsatisfactory.

121. The project document envisioned an integrated execution structure with the TABI project, with the two projects sharing a steering committee. This joint execution arrangement

has not been the case, for a variety of reasons, but partially related to the fact that at the start of the ABP project the responsibility for execution was switched to the Permanent Secretary's Office of MAF, instead of the Department of Planning and Cooperation, as foreseen in the project document. The TABI project is executed under the Department of Planning and Cooperation. It is not clear why at the beginning of the project the responsible MAF department was switched from the Department of Planning and Cooperation to the Permanent Secretary's Office, though some project stakeholders indicated this may have been due to the Permanent Secretary's Office having more input on policies and legislation which was a significant focus of the project.

122. Following a long-process of dialogue between UNDP and MAF, the responsible body for project execution was switched to the Department of Planning and Cooperation as of March 17th, 2014 (although UNDP was only officially informed of this decision May 28th, 2014). The new national project coordinator (a senior officer in the department) is also the national project coordinator for TABI.

123. Project execution has had both strengths and weaknesses, although it is clear that the weaknesses have on the whole overwhelmed the strengths. A strength of project execution has been comprehensive results reporting, and engagement with a range of partners. Problematic areas of project execution have included:

- No formation of the PSC;
- Inadequately oversight and transparency in project workplanning and execution of project activities;
- Delays in many project activities, including initiation of the planned sub-project portfolio and training-of-trainers on agro-biodiversity, focused on vegetables through integrated pest management approach and farmer field schools;
- Non-compliance with human resource policies (as documented in the project audits);
- Inadequate and untimely follow-up on decision-making (as documented in the project audits);
- Inadequate financial record keeping (as documented in the project audits) and financial management, with overspending on multiple project budget lines;
- Extremely low financial delivery, with 21.8% of project activity resources disbursed by June 30, 2014;
- Reported management costs already exceed planned management costs, constituting 38.4% of total project expenditure as of June 30, 2014 – far above the planned target share of 10%;
- As further discussed in later Section VI on results and effectiveness, the project is not currently on track to meet the planned results targets.

124. These issues have emanated from a variety of sources and circumstances, including inadequate performance by the PMU, but also related to FAO as the main project technical partner. However, the goal of this review is not to portion out blame for the current state of affairs, but simply to state the situation, identify lessons, and provide recommendations for actions that should be taken to improve the situation.

125. As of the time of the ABP project mid-term review the new national project coordinator had already taken multiple concrete steps to support project execution, including conducting a visit to the Phonxay project pilot district in Luang Prabang province during the 1st week of June 2014, and approving the start of implementation of some of the ABDI sub-project proposals. Thus, as of the mid-term review project execution appears to be on a positive trajectory, and there is a solid basis for optimism for the 2nd half of the project – but given the limited project progress to date, there is much work to be urgently done.

126. Considering that the new national project coordinator is also the TABI national project coordinator, there should be improved cooperation and coordination with TABI in the 2nd half of the project. However, the original project document foresaw a full-time national project coordinator, and under the new arrangements the national project coordinator will only be available part-time for the ABP project, which constitutes a notable risk. Additional project execution duties will have to be taken up by other PMU staff, which will most likely be the CTA, unless additional well-qualified PMU staff are hired. Access to and balance of the national project coordinator's time will be an issue of consideration for both the ABP project and TABI. There is also the risk that the ABP project will be subsumed into the larger TABI project. The new national project coordinator will need to ensure that the ABP project retains a separate identity and leverages its own comparative advantages in relation to the TABI project.

127. The CTA has played a critical role in project execution, providing a wide range of inputs related to project workplanning, reporting, execution of activities, and cooperation with other related initiatives. In Section V.E below on financial planning the relatively high cost of the CTA position in the project budget is noted, but there is no question that without the CTA in place the project would have achieved significantly less than it has to this point. The CTA must be recognized for his dedication and persistence in support of the project objectives. The continuity of the CTA position has been and will continue to be one of the project's core assets as it strives to achieve concrete results by completion.

128. As mentioned previously in Section II.E on limitations of the review, the mid-term review team was not able to meet with the individuals who served as the national project coordinator and national project director during the 1st half of implementation, and input was not received from the national project coordinator by phone or email, despite solicitations from the review team. As such, the review has not benefited from their input on issues related to project execution.

C. Partnership Approach and Stakeholder Participation

129. The major shortcoming in the project's partnership approach thus far has been the inability to find a common approach to collaboration and coordination with TABI, as was envisioned in the project document. For various reasons, the ABP project and TABI have remained as entirely separate entities, rather than operating as an integrated and coordinated set of activities.

130. Although the project has not been implemented through a joint mechanism with TABI, as foreseen in the project document, the project team has maintained open communication with the TABI project team. The coordination with TABI should significantly improve in the 2nd

half of the project, as the new national project coordinator for the ABP project is the same person serving as project coordinator for the TABI project.

131. A second shortcoming is the limited cooperation thus far with the relevant departments of MoNRE, which includes the CBD focal point. This is somewhat understandable, as MoNRE is a relatively new institution, created only in the few years before the project began implementation. However, at this stage it is necessary for the ABP project to develop a stronger working relationship with MoNRE as well. This could be achieved in a number of ways, and in particular at least one representative from MoNRE should be included on the project steering committee.

132. At the highest levels of the project is the partnership established between UNDP, FAO and MAF for implementation of the project. This partnership has worked reasonably well, in the sense that there do not appear to have been major issues relating to coordination or cooperation between UNDP and FAO.

133. In relation to other relevant stakeholders the project has found and taken advantage of opportunities to support and work with other organizations, including government and civil society organizations. The project also established cooperation with FAO's Regional Rice Initiative through two fieldwork initiatives and communication with FAO technical staff.

D. Flexibility and Adaptive Management

134. Flexibility is one of the GEF's ten operational principles, and all projects must be implemented in a flexible manner to maximize efficiency and effectiveness, and to ensure results-based, rather than output-based approach. Thus, during project implementation adaptive management must be employed to adjust to changing circumstances.

135. Minor adjustments to the ABP project's approach have been made throughout project implementation. Some initial adjustments were noted in the project inception report. For example, the project's five-year budget was revised, and changes to the results framework indicators and targets were proposed. The inception report also includes a section on "Changes as a result of inception workshop", though this section does not clearly identify specific changes, but highlights areas for the project to focus on and emphasize during implementation, such as "emphasize development of local human resources including upgrading knowledge and skills of extension workers at technical service centers." There have been no changes to the project at the outcome or objective level.

136. This most significant change to the project at present is the change of execution arrangements (as discussed in Section V.B above), from the MAF Permanent Secretary's Office to the MAF Department of Planning and Cooperation as the responsible executing partner. The fruits of this change remain to be seen, but hopefully this will be a highly useful adaptive management measure for the project in the 2nd half of implementation.

E. Financial Management

i. Financial Planning by Component and Delivery

137. The total project budget is \$2,265,000 USD, the PDF-A cost was \$25,000 and the PPG cost was \$89,545. The GEF Agency fee to UNDP for project cycle management services is \$229,000. Thus the total cost of the project to the GEF Trust Fund was \$2,608,545.

138. The project has unusual financial arrangements; 39.0% of the project budget, or \$884,326, is to be transferred from UNDP to FAO, the primary technical support partner. These funds will be further disbursed by FAO. This financial arrangement is further discussed below.

139. The breakdown of project GEF financing is indicated in Table 5 below. Of the total project budget, \$0.91 million (or 40.0% of the total) was planned for Outcome 1, \$1.14 million (50.1%) was planned for Outcome 2, and \$0.22 (9.9%) was planned for project management. However, at the project inception stage the planned project budget was revised, and 1.6% of the GEF resources were transferred from Outcomes 1 (0.9%) and 2 (0.7%) respectively to project management, resulting in a planned project management expenditure of 11.5%. The M&E budget indicated in the M&E plan in the project document was \$0.21 million, or 9.4% of the total budget. However, the original project document appears to indicate that M&E funding would come from UNDP TRAC funding, and not from the project's GEF allocation.

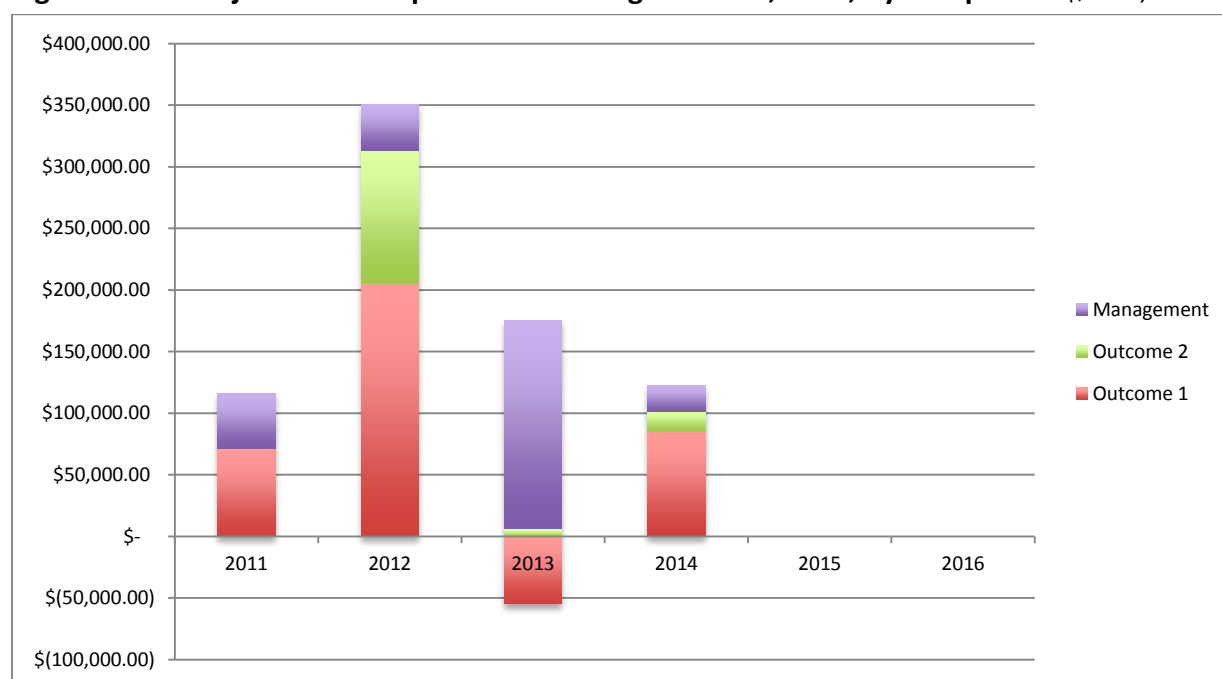
Table 5 Project Planned vs. Actual Financing, Through June 30, 2014 (\$ million USD)

	GEF amount planned	Share of total GEF amount	GEF amount actual	% of GEF amount actual	% of original planned
Outcome 1	\$907,100	40.0%	\$305,487	43.1%	34.4%
Outcome 2	\$1,134,500	50.1%	\$131,507	18.5%	11.8%
Monitoring and Evaluation*	\$213,000	9.4%	N/A	N/A	N/A
Project Coordination and Management	\$223,400	9.9%	\$272,419	38.4%	104.8%
Total[†]	\$2,265,000		\$709,414		31.3%

Sources: Project Document for planned amount; data from Combined Delivery Reports (CDRs) for actual GEF amounts.

*The project document includes a detailed M&E budget. However, according to the original UNDP ATLAS budgeted workplan for the project, it appears that M&E funding is supposed to come from UNDP TRAC funding, and not from the project's GEF allocation.

Figure 5 ABP Project Actual Expenditure Through June 30, 2014, By Component (\$ USD)

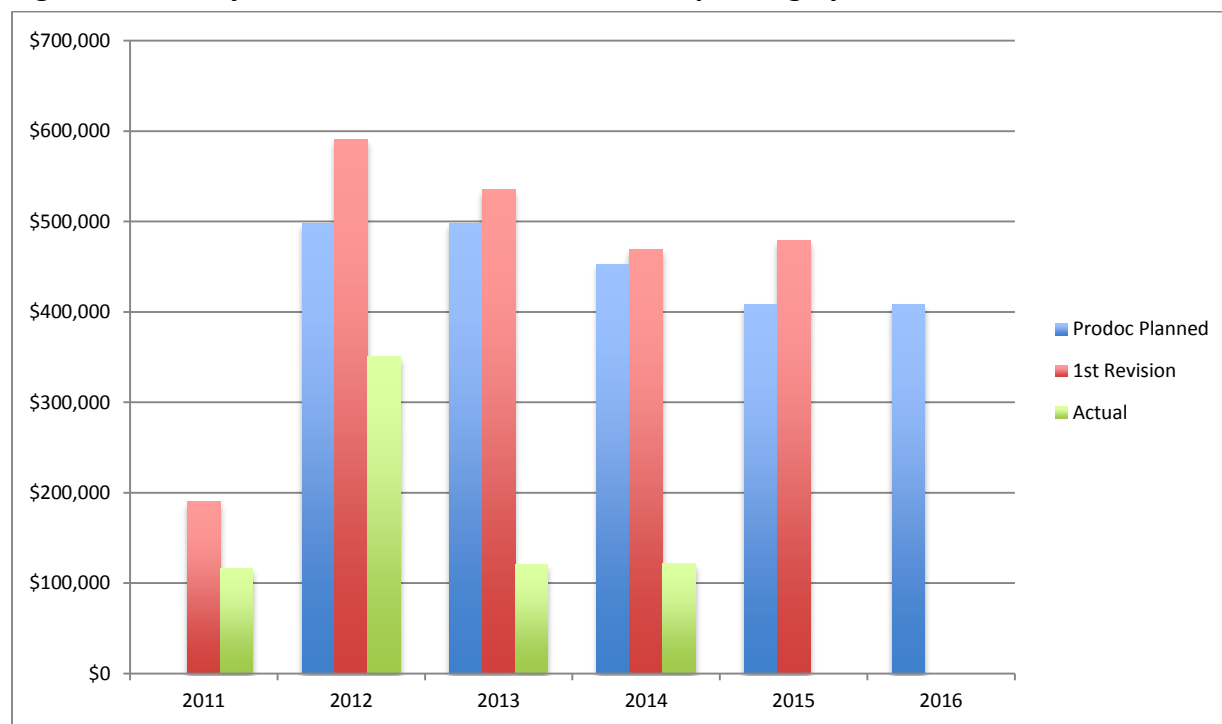


140. Figure 5 above shows the breakdown of planned and actual project spending by outcome. As of June 30, 2014, the project had disbursed \$0.709 million, or 31.3% of the project budget. However, according to the CDRs, this included \$272,419 under the project management budget line. This is 104.8% of the total planned project management costs. Given the large share of management costs in the expenditure so far (38.4% of total expenditure), the actual project activity budget delivery rate is lower than the overall project financial delivery rate. The financial delivery rate for project activities under Outcomes 1 and 2 is only 21.8%.

141. In terms of financial management, the project needs to clarify expenditure of GEF resources by outcome by year. The project also needs to clarify the spending under the project management budget line, whether this actually covered only project management costs, or if other non-project management costs have been somehow accounted under the project management budget line. For example, it may be that the CTA costs are included in the project management budget line, even though the CTA provides mainly technical inputs to the project, and should not be considered as part of management costs. The project partners are working to clarify reported vs. actual project management costs, and it is expected that by project completion project management costs will be approximately in-line with the planned budget.

142. Figure 6 shows the project planned, 1st revision, and actual budget total budget expenditure by year. The figures for the 1st revision are drawn from Table 3 of the project inception report. As can be seen in the figure, actual project expenditure has been much lower than the originally planned amount, as well as lower than the 1st budget revision indicated in the project inception report.

Figure 6 ABP Project Planned, Revised, and Actual Spending by Year to June 30, 2014 (\$ USD)



ii. ABP Project Audit Findings

143. The project had annual audits for 2011, 2012 and 2013, conducted by the international firms Ernst and Young and KPMG. The 2012 and 2013 audits resulted in a qualified opinion from the auditor for a variety of reasons, and the status of the project was assessed as high risk in 2012 and 2013. It is beyond the scope of this review to go into the details of the audit report, but it may be stated that the issues raised in the audit reports with respect to project management and project financial management contribute to the unsatisfactory ratings from this review for project efficiency, project implementation, and project execution.

144. Issues raised in the audit included:

- Inadequate project management procedures, particularly in relation to follow-up on decisions taken and timely project workplanning and record keeping
- Irregular human resource procedures, particularly related to project staff salaries and benefits entitlements
- Inadequate financial expenditure oversight
- Improper asset management

145. The issues identified in the audit reports have been among the primary instigations of the change in execution arrangements that occurred in the 2nd quarter of 2014, as discussed in Section V.A on UNDP oversight.

146. The audit reports also included a set of recommendations to address the issues identified. UNDP is working with MAF and FAO to respond to these recommendations, and correct the issues identified. For example, UNDP sent a letter to MAF on May 21, 2014 following up some of the corrective actions required to respond to the audit. Some progress has been made (particularly with regard to the change in execution arrangements), but additional efforts are required to fully implement the recommendations from the audits. This review recommends that UNDP, MAF, and FAO continue to urgently work together to respond to the audit recommendations, and ensure that the same issues are not raised in the audit for 2014.

iii. Partner Financial Arrangements with FAO

147. The project has an unusual financial arrangement, with FAO as the primary technical partner. The LoA signed between FAO and MAF, with UNDP as witness, outlines the financial arrangement in terms of FAO's contribution. FAO is directly responsible for 39.0% of the project budget (\$884,326), which is transferred from UNDP in four tranches. The first transfer of \$173,593 was transferred in June 2012, upon signing of the LoA. The second tranche of \$329,000 was transferred in September 2013.

148. The breakdown of the FAO direct allocation is given in Table 6 below. It should be noted that these were the amounts originally planned, and may not ultimately be the budget allocation under FAO. The FAO allocation is not specific to either of the two project outcomes, but is used to support project activities under both outcome as well as project management.

Table 6 FAO Allocation Planned Disbursement of ABP Project Budget

Item	Amount	% of Project Budget	Notes
Chief Technical Advisor, including travel and DSA	\$466,205	20.6%	DSA - \$77,820 Travel - \$55,325 Technical Assistance - \$333,060
National Consultants – Technical Assistance	\$165,000	7.3%	
International Consultants – Technical Assistance	\$150,000	6.6%	
Oversight, including travel	\$103,121	4.6%	Oversight - \$78,121 Travel - \$25,000
Total	\$884,326	39.0%	

149. In principle the technical partnership arrangement with FAO has the potential to be an effective means of accessing top-level technical assistance to support this technically complex project. However, the financial planning of the arrangement is not highly cost-effective. The fact that more than 20% of the entire project budget is dedicated solely to the CTA position (which was filled through international-level recruitment) is not ideal. Particularly in a country where the salary for national level staff is so low, the project could have contracted a large team of qualified national staff for the cost of the international CTA position. It must be kept in mind that in some countries, like Lao PDR, there may not be good access to well-qualified national staff, but in such a case the project budget allocation may be more efficiently used to develop national capacity, through mechanisms such as direct support to qualified individuals for masters level education on the relevant subject. Under such an arrangement international technical backstopping could be contracted through a short-term retainer arrangement, with the international CTA providing input on workplans, TORs, etc., while their home country, with occasional (e.g. annual) support missions. Such arrangements have been made in many previous GEF projects.

150. It is important to keep in mind that under the actual project implementation circumstances, the existence of the CTA position is one of the main reasons that the project has managed to produce some valuable results in the first half of implementation. Thus, in reality the CTA position may constitute a necessary investment of project resources, but this would not have been foreseen when the original financial planning arrangements were made. Under the current project execution structure for the second half of the project, the CTA position will be critical, as the national project coordinator position will only be part-time on the ABP project (while also serving as the project coordinator to the TABI project). This review recommends a re-assessment of the budgeting for the CTA position for the 2nd half of the project, with the goal of ensuring that the necessary human resources are available for successful project execution.

151. Under the partnership arrangement, nearly 5% of the project budget is allocated to FAO oversight, which leaves only about 5% for actual project management, to be in compliance with the UNDP-GEF ceiling of 10% of the project budget for management costs. This is partially offset by the fact that there are no project management costs for the position of national project coordinator, who is fully seconded by MAF, but nonetheless for many UNDP-GEF projects it is difficult to fit all management costs within the 10% cap, much less 5%.

152. \$315,000 of the project budget for technical assistance (for national and international consultants) is being contracted through FAO (not including the CTA), although it appears the project will be accessing technical assistance in greater amounts than this.

F. Planned and Actual Co-financing

153. The total originally planned co-financing for the project is \$4,436,872 USD, as indicated in Table 7 below. As of June 30, 2014, the documented co-financing was \$4,487,966 in cash and in-kind contributions from the four main project partners. In addition, in-kind co-financing has likely been contributed by local stakeholders in the pilot districts relating to the project activities that have been carried out, such as development of the ABDI sub-project proposals. This review recommends that the main project execution and implementation partners continue to clearly document and justify actual co-financing amounts committed, particularly co-financing from partners at the pilot sites, including partners who will be implementing the ABDI sub-projects. While reaching the total planned co-financing amount is important, documenting the broad range of co-financing partners can be a strong indicator of stakeholder ownership and likely sustainability of benefits.

Table 7 ABP Project Planned and Actual Co-financing¹⁵

Source	In-kind	Cash	Actual Reported	% of Planned	Notes
Government (MAF)	\$556,200	\$0	\$285,813	51.4%	Staff, office space, vehicle, attendance in meetings, etc.
UNDP	\$321,900	\$213,000	\$341,641	63.9%	In-kind: UNDP staff with direct linkages to implementation; Cash: UNDP TRAC for M&E
FAO	\$345,772	\$0	\$215,199	62.2%	FAO staff with direct linkages to project implementation, i.e. staff at LTU (headquarters) and at regional and country office
SDC/TABI	\$3,000,000	\$0	\$3,645,313	121.5%	Parallel
Total	\$4,223,872	\$213,000	\$4,487,966	101.2%	

G. Monitoring and Evaluation

154. The Lao ABP project **M&E design** generally meets UNDP and GEF minimum standards, but is considered **moderately unsatisfactory**, due to significant shortcomings in the design of the original results framework, and the planning of complex oversight mechanisms. **M&E implementation** is considered **moderately unsatisfactory**, and **overall M&E** is considered **moderately unsatisfactory**.

i. M&E Design

155. The ABP project M&E plan is outlined in the project document under Part 5, p. 69. The project document describes each of the planned M&E activities, including roles, responsibilities, and timeframe. The identified M&E activities include inception workshop and report, annual

¹⁵ Source: Planned: Project document; Actual: 2013 PIR.

progress reporting (APR/PIR), PSC meetings, quarterly status reports, the independent mid-term and terminal evaluations, project terminal report, audit, and monitoring visits from UNDP and FAO. The M&E plan is summarized in a table showing responsible parties, budget, and timeframe for each of the M&E activities, with the total expected budget of \$213,000. This is fully adequate for a project of this size and scope, representing approximately 9.4% of the project budget. It is not clearly indicated in the project document how M&E expenses will be covered, but in the project budget section of the project document it appears that the M&E costs are to be covered by UNDP TRAC resources, and not from GEF funds. The project M&E plan is appropriately designed and well-articulated, and conforms to GEF and UNDP M&E minimum standards, *with the significant exception of the project results framework*.

156. The ABP project results framework indicators and targets do not adequately meet SMART criteria, and the results framework as a whole does not provide a sufficient foundation and guide for results-based project management. Having a focused and well-defined results-based indicators and targets would have been particularly useful for the ABP project, since the project design and technical focus as articulated in the project document was not sufficiently clear, as discussed previously in Section IV.B of this report. Some of the results-framework issues were improved during a revision at the inception phase, but the results framework was still not adequately results-focused to guide project management. Examples of issues with the project results framework include:

- The original project document results framework does not include objective or impact level results indicators; one of the outcome level indicators for Outcome 2 was shifted to objective level at the inception phase (100,000 ha of provincial agro-biodiversity and sustainable use area), but the results framework still did not identify or include any impact level indicators;
- Some indicators and targets are more output focused than outcome focused, e.g. "Number of GOL officers participated in meetings where agro-biodiversity issues are discussed";
- Insufficiently defined targets for indicators, e.g. Indicator - "Number of tools being utilised to support and enhance incorporation of agro-biodiversity into local planning"; Target – "Tools such as training, extension, communication and mapping incorporate biodiversity conservation issues and are being used by pilot site communities (men and women) for conservation friendly land use and livelihood practices"

157. As discussed in Section IV.B previously on the project's technical design and strategic focus, in the 2nd half of implementation the ABP project needs to have a focused and results-oriented approach. This can be guided by a revised project results framework. This review, therefore, recommends that the project results framework be revised immediately with inputs from UNDP, FAO, and the PMU, for approval by the PSC. This review provides suggestions for a revised results framework indicators and targets in Annex 9 of this review report.

ii. M&E Implementation

158. M&E implementation for the ABP project has been moderately unsatisfactory. The most notable shortcoming is that the PSC was never constituted, which is the main project oversight mechanism. This review recommends that the ABP project should immediately constitute and activate the PSC, with members representing a selection of key stakeholders in the agro-

biodiversity realm. The PSC should be the main oversight mechanism for the project, with the opportunity to provide inputs to annual project workplanning, and approval of annual workplanning and budgeting.

159. In addition, while UNDP and FAO may have made efforts at monitoring and oversight, these were not sufficient to keep the project on track during the first half of implementation. It is, however, through the efforts of UNDP in particular (as discussed in Section V.A above) that necessary changes have been made in the project implementation approach, and project performance is expected to significantly improve in the second half of the project.

160. Also on the positive side, monthly meetings have been consistently held between UNDP, FAO and the PMU (although according to participants these have not typically been highly productive), project annual and quarterly progress reporting has been comprehensive, the annual audits have been conducted, and the mid-term review was conducted at an appropriate timeframe.

161. The project has also completed the GEF tracking tool, in November 2013. The ABP project should use the GEF biodiversity tracking tool as a guide toward results-based management, by drawing focus and attention to outcome level results focused on the implementation, enforcement, and monitoring of agriculture sector policies supporting conservation of agro-biodiversity. The tracking tool provides inputs to one of the portfolio level indicators for the GEF biodiversity focal area results framework, and is a basic but important means of results monitoring.

H. Implementation and Execution Areas of Focus for 2nd Half of Implementation

162. As discussed in the above sections of this report, there have been a number of issues and challenges with respect to project implementation and execution during the first half of the project. While there have been some recent positive developments with the switch to the Department of Planning and Cooperation, there are still a number of aspects that should be strengthened during the 2nd half of ABP project implementation to ensure that operational aspects are not challenges for the project, which will allow the greatest chance for achieving satisfactory results by the end of the project. To strengthen implementation and execution this review makes the following recommendations:

163. The PSC should be constituted, and should be used effectively to serve its intended monitoring, oversight, information sharing, and stakeholder engagement functions.

164. UNDP, FAO, and MAF should strengthen their monitoring and oversight of the project with intensive attention, frequent communication with each other, and timely follow-up on decisions and any required actions to ensure that the project gets fully on-track, there are no bureaucratic delays, and that any project risks are identified well in advance and proactively addressed. All project risks should be reviewed at the monthly technical coordination meetings, with discussion about concrete steps to address risks, and follow-up before the next technical coordination meeting. This review also specifically supports the recommendation from the project audits that decisions made at the monthly technical coordination meetings must be followed-through on in a timely manner.

165. This review recommends that the ABP execution and implementation partners ensure that adequate human resources are available in the 2nd half of implementation to fully support highly dynamic and productive project execution, so that the project may achieve the greatest results possible during its 2nd half. This could imply contracting additional qualified national-level PMU staff, but in the interest of time, under current circumstances this may just mean revising the TORs of the current CTA and ensuring the budget is available for the CTA position for the remainder of the project. To ensure cost-effectiveness by the end of the project, the project team should focus on delivering project results within the planned timeframe of the end of 2016.

166. ABP project workplanning should be done in a transparent and consultative manner with all key project partners, with final approval by the PSC. Workplanning for each year should be done in the 4th quarter of the previous year, for approval by the PSC before the end of the year. It must also be assured through the workplanning process that the project activities remain focused, and contribute directly to project results targets.

167. The project results focus must be strengthened, including revising the project results framework to emphasize outcome-level indicators and targets, including a focus on GEF-biodiversity focal area strategic targets. The project would also benefit from an internal discussion to generate a clearly articulated project logic chain, such as can be generated under the GEF Independent Evaluation Office "Review of Outcome to Impacts" methodology.¹⁶

168. It is recognized that the ABP project and TABI will not be co-implemented as originally planned, and any efforts to force this issue should be dropped at this point. However, it is still necessary to improve coordination with TABI. The ABP project could still potentially utilize the same PSC structure as TABI. There should be a review of TABI and ABP workplans to ensure harmonization and avoid overlap. If logistically feasible, the ABP project and TABI should share physical office space, which would allow the national project coordinator to play his joint role more effectively as the manager of both projects, and which would strengthen coordination between the two projects.

169. The ABP project should strengthen support and oversight of field-level activities through quarterly monitoring visits, linked with the district planning meetings. This may be necessary for the remainder of the project, but at least should occur until the ABDI sub-projects are in mid-implementation.

170. The project includes an information sharing component, but little appears to have been done under this part of the project thus far. In the 2nd half of implementation the ABP project needs to emphasize a strategic focus on knowledge generation and information sharing. This should include an online presence, such as a minimal web page positioned on the website of entities such as NAFRI and the overall MAF website. This could also include activities such as a quarterly electronic newsletter updating targeted stakeholders on project activities.

¹⁶ See <http://www.thegef.org/gef/ROtI>.

VI. Effectiveness and Results: Progress Toward the Objective and Outcomes

171. The project results framework is included as Annex 9 to this review report, with an assessment of achievement for each of the indicator targets. The project has a total of 15 indicators (one at the objective level). As previously discussed in Section V.G.i of this report on project M&E design, the project results framework indicators do not meet SMART criteria, do not provide a well-justified or results-based focus to guide project execution, and can only partially be used to assess the results and progress toward outcomes for the ABP project. Nonetheless, the assessment of progress toward the project results framework indicator targets is assessed as:

- Achievement *likely*: 3 indicator targets
- Achievement *uncertain*: 6 indicator targets
- Achievement *unlikely*: 5 indicator targets
- Unable to assess: 1 indicator target

172. As indicated by the progress toward targets, at the current trajectory of execution and results seen in the first half of the project, the project is not likely to achieve the planned outcomes and objective. As previously discussed, as of June 30, 2014 the project has reached 21.8% disbursement for the planned project activity budget; financial delivery is primarily an indicator related to project efficiency, but financial delivery also correlates to execution of project activities, and thereby production of results. Without progress in the execution of the workplan, results and effectiveness cannot be achieved. Fortunately, as of the mid-term review, the project trajectory appears to be turning toward a more successful track, and it is possible that the project could achieve the planned outcomes and make a significant contribution to the overall objective.

173. Given the overall status of execution of the project workplan, as of the mid-term review ABP project **results** are rated **unsatisfactory**, and **effectiveness** is rated **moderately unsatisfactory**. The few results achieved thus far have been valuable in some measure, and are expected to contribute to the conservation of agro-biodiversity.

174. Key results achieved with project support thus far include:

- ABP project inputs to the revisions of the NABP and NBSAP, with significant contribution to and support for the NABP
- Input to the formulation of the Lao PDR Upland Development Strategy to ensure the incorporation of biodiversity issues
- Significant contributions to development and adoption of the provincial biodiversity strategy and action plan in Xieng Khouang province
- Development of a pipeline of sub-project proposals, with two sub-projects initiated
- Constitution of the sub-sector working group on agro-biodiversity, with two meetings held during the first year of existence
- Completion of some farmer training activities, with others initiated and starting up, relating to Farmer Field Schools and Integrated Pest Management for vegetables, rice, and other aspects of agro-biodiversity

- Field inventory of rice paddy ecosystem agro-biodiversity, and 1st survey of fungal biodiversity

175. Key technical issues and areas for attention for the Lao ABP project in the 2nd half of implementation include:

- Conduct strategic assessment of key thematic areas for focus
- Work with sub-sector working group to drive strategic input at national level
- Increase focus on market/economic aspects, including linkages with TEEB
- Increase cooperation with MoNRE, particularly in relation to the NBSAP
- Continued and increased cooperation with provincial office of natural resources and environment in relation to the PBSAPs
- Initial work on emerging issues – chemical inputs
- Strengthen communication and awareness component - the project needs to increase its public profile and improve understanding and awareness about the project and its objectives
- Emphasize replication aspects, lesson documentation and knowledge sharing

176. As previously discussed in Section V.C on partnerships, the project has not yet been able to find synergies with the TABI project, for a variety of reasons. The mechanism for coordination should be significantly improved in the 2nd half of the project, as the national project coordinator from MAF will be the project coordinator for both projects. The challenge remains though, from a substantive perspective, how the project should synergize with TABI's efforts. This review sees a number of opportunities for the 2nd half of the ABP project.

- Foundational steps for further work on emerging issue of the threat of pesticide/herbicide use to agro-biodiversity, organic certification, linked with World Trade Organization focus of national government (e.g. a preliminary national meeting for discussion, basic strategy paper identifying specific issues and approaches)
- Monitoring of implementation of pFLUPs in Phonxay and Phoukout pilot districts
- Information sharing on TABI work with promoting use of indigenous varieties, improving forest health for NTFPs
- Work on market aspects – economic valuation of ecosystem services, market forces analysis (also linked with TEEB study)

177. The challenge for the ABP project is to avoid just being a “mini-TABI”, and to recognize that the ABP project does not have the time or resources to generate the same types of broad on-the-ground results as the TABI project, even with the ABP's project's portfolio of “ABDI” sub-projects. Instead the ABP project should position itself as a strategic and catalytic influence, focusing on activities that provide systemic foundational elements for the future of agro-biodiversity conservation in Lao PDR. This could include leveraging TABI's field activities into knowledge products.

178. It should be highlighted that the GEF-6 biodiversity focal area strategic results framework continues and even increases the attention on agro-biodiversity components in

overall biodiversity conservation. The GEF-6 biodiversity strategy includes a specific program on agro-biodiversity, *“Program 7: Securing Agriculture’s Future: Sustainable Use of Plant and Animal Genetic Resources”*, with a corresponding planned outcome of *“Increased genetic diversity of globally significant cultivated plants and domesticated animals that are sustainably used within production systems”* and an indicator of *“diversity status of target species.”* This program has an indicative resource envelope of \$75 million USD. The programming document includes a map from FAO’s “Second State of the World’s Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture” which identifies the greater Mekong region as one of the eight global priority genetic reserve areas. Considering the GEF’s anticipated ongoing support for conservation of agro-biodiversity, a successful ABP project that provides a solid foundation for additional critical work could potentially be leveraged into another GEF investment in Lao PDR that would support the sustainability of results from the ABP project, and generate additional significant benefits for conservation of agro-biodiversity in Lao PDR.

A. Outcome 1: National policy and institutional frameworks for sustainable use and in-situ conservation of biodiversity in agro-ecosystems

179. Outcome 1 was originally budgeted for \$907,100, though there were subsequent revisions. As indicated in previous Section V.E on financial management, as of June 30, 2014 the project had disbursed 34.4% of the budget planned for Outcome 1. As indicated in its title, Outcome 1 focuses on policy mainstreaming and capacity development aspects at the national level, and includes four outputs:

- **Output 1.1:** Biodiversity conservation, including agro-biodiversity, incorporated into Government policies, laws and other legal instruments.
- **Output 1.2:** Institutional coordination of agro-biodiversity enhanced at national level.
- **Output 1.3:** Institutional capacity of MAF to plan for, implement and effectively communicate on agro-biodiversity enhanced at national level.
- **Output 1.4:** Key stakeholders understanding and capacity to respond to agro-biodiversity conservation and sustainable use enhanced.

180. The results indicators for Outcome 1 as per the results framework in the 2013 PIR are:

- Number of new national plans, policies, laws, and guidelines with agro-biodiversity (Target: 6)
- Number of national workshops with biodiversity content (Target: 10)
- Number of yearly agro-biodiversity inter-sectoral coordination meetings (Target: 2 annually)
- Number of GOL officers participated in meetings where agro-biodiversity issues are discussed (Target: 500 officers)
- Number of tools developed to support and enhanced incorporation of agro-biodiversity into national and institutional frameworks (Target: 6 tools)

181. Keeping in mind the limited progress of the project execution so far overall, and the caveats on results indicators, there have been some positive results produced so far under Outcome 1 of the project.

182. The project made contributions to the process of developing a new NBSAP for the 2011-2020 period. The revised NBSAP was evidently finalized in 2013, but is still in final stages. The revision of the NBSAP was supported financially by TABI, as well as UNEP. Technical support was provided by IUCN. The new NBSAP includes a section on agro-biodiversity, and targets related to the conservation of agro-biodiversity, such as *"The protection and sustainable use of BD rich agricultural landscapes demonstrated in at least 1 site per province."* The NBSAP as a whole is not a result of just the ABP project, but the strengthening of the agro-biodiversity aspects of the NBSAP can be considered a contribution from the project. The ABP project provided funding for a consultation workshop in June 2014, the fourth NBSAP workshop supported by the project. The project also provided key technical inputs to drafts of the NBSAP.

183. With the creation of MoNRE in 2011, the responsibility for the Convention on Biological Diversity was shifted to MoNRE, and this is where the CBD focal point is located. As such, MoNRE is also the primary stakeholder for the NBSAP, and a key partner for all aspects of agro-biodiversity conservation in Lao PDR. The level of communication and coordination between the ABP project and MoNRE has thus far not been high, and this is a priority area of emphasis for the 2nd half of the project.

184. The original NABP was produced in 2004, and contributed to the genesis of the ABP project, as discussed previously in Section III.B. By the time the ABP project started there was an initiative from NAFRI to update and revise the original NABP, to incorporate new and emerging issues, and, for example, to reflect changes emanating from the CBD. The ABP project has provided support to NAFRI for the development of the "NABP II", which is expected to be finalized in 2014. The ABP project has contracted an international consultant to provide the technical lead in drafting the NABP II, and the first draft of the NABP II document was submitted in April 2014.

185. The NABP is not a national policy document per se, but is a concrete planning document that can serve as a catalyst and foundation for future investment and action in support of agro-biodiversity in Lao PDR. A finalized revised NABP II is therefore seen as a valuable and useful output of the ABP project, which can contribute to sustainability of many of the project's other results. However, the NABP II cannot be considered as the type of policy document that would specifically be counted as contributing to the global GEF biodiversity mainstreaming goals for integrating agro-biodiversity considerations in national agriculture sector policies, but it can be considered as contributing to the ABP project indicator on the number of national plans, policies, and guidelines addressing agro-biodiversity.

186. Substantive comments to Upland Development Strategy were provided in April 2013 and resulted in an additional objective: *"Sustainable natural resources management, including conservation and sustainable use of agro-biodiversity"* in addition to a number of other issues including medicinal plants, more focus on agro-biodiversity issues and FFS/IPM.

187. The project has organized dissemination workshops on five laws under MAF related to agro-biodiversity, and printing of 18 sets of linked posters.

188. While integrating biodiversity considerations into relevant sector policies, plans, and legislation is a major focus of the project, this review recommends that the project apply a very focused scope in working on this issue, only taking the opportunity to provide inputs to relevant new policies being developed or revised. The project likely does not have the time or resources to carry out a comprehensive adjustment or revision to all Lao policies and legislation currently on the books that are related to agro-biodiversity. With the work already completed in this area, and with the few additional opportunities expected to be forthcoming in the 2nd half of the project, the ABP project should meet its target of six policies mainstreamed in relation to agro-biodiversity.

189. The project also has an excellent opportunity to contribute to the National Agriculture Development Strategy to 2020, currently being developed by MAF with FAO support. According to project documentation the 2007 Forestry law is also being revised, and the Forest Sector Strategy to 2020 is being developed, both of which provide opportunities for project mainstreaming of agro-biodiversity aspects.

190. One of the key results has been the ABP project's support for the development of Provincial Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans (PBSAP) in the provinces where the two pilot districts are located. Through IUCN and MoNRE and with strong involvement and ownership of local agencies (PoNRE, PAFO, and others), a PBSAP for Xieng Khouang Province was finalized and approved by the Governor in April 2014. This process included 197 participants in four workshops in Xieng Khouang province. A similar planned PBSAP for Luang Prabang was delayed to early 2014. It will be important for the ABP project to help the provincial government take all necessary steps to move toward implementation of the PBSAP, and one way to do this may be to explicitly articulate linkages between the planned ABDI sub-projects and the PBSAP, and adjusting ABDI sub-projects as necessary to more clearly support implementation of the PBSAP.

191. The project has been instrumental to the establishment of a national agriculture multi-stakeholder sub-sector working group on agro-biodiversity. This is one of the highlights of the project contributions thus far, although the sub-sector working group would not have been established without the contributions of other partners as well, particularly the TABI project and their donor the SDC. This was one of the results specifically planned in the project document, under Output 1.2, which stated *"a specific agro-biodiversity technical working group will be established and support will be provided to its functioning."* The working group was established July 11, 2013, and two meetings have been held since then, the most recent in early June 2014.

192. While the establishment of the sub-sector working group is a highly positive development, there is currently a risk of the working group failing to fulfill its full potential to provide strategic guidance and inputs for agro-biodiversity at the national level. According to participants, meetings have not been prepared and planned sufficiently in advance, and have served mainly as an information exchange forum for various stakeholders working on agro-biodiversity issues in Lao PDR. According to participants there have also been some bureaucratic hurdles to the ABP project taking the lead in providing minor financial support for organizing the working group meetings, which has led SDC, through TABI, to reluctantly take up this role. The vision for the working group is that it would bring together technical experts from key institutions and organizations to discuss critical issues related to agro-biodiversity, and

provide strategic guidance and policy advice for conserving agro-biodiversity. The working group could be leveraged, for example, to provide inputs to key strategic documents and sector policies, such as the NABP. In addition the working group could provide guidance on strategic items such as national targets related to agro-biodiversity.

193. National policy priorities in the agriculture sector tend to relate to national production targets, and the conditions and inputs necessary to achieve those targets. This can make it difficult for broader critical agriculture sector goals, such as conservation of Lao PDR's globally significant agro-biodiversity, to be given sufficient attention and priority. This review recommends that the ABP project support the agro-biodiversity sub-sector working group to develop national targets for agro-biodiversity related production and conservation targets. This could include, for example, minimum targets for production of native varieties of rice, at levels considered sufficient to ensure their continued existence. Another example could be sustainable use production targets for various NTFPs.

194. This review also recommends that UNDP and the ABP project take whatever steps necessary to overcome any bureaucratic issues to the ABP project providing financial support for the organization of the working group meetings, as this is clearly and specifically indicated in the project document. This would also provide the ABP project with the opportunity to ensure that the working group fulfills its opportunity to be a dynamic strategic guiding body.

195. The ABP project has also carried out some other small activities supporting agro-biodiversity in Lao PDR, including organizing a national workshop with 40 participants on agro-biodiversity related laws in the agriculture and rural development sector. Also a pocketbook of agro-biodiversity related laws in Lao language was developed to support and enhance incorporation of agro-biodiversity into national and institutional frameworks and local administrations

B. Outcome 2: Capacities and incentives to mainstream biodiversity, especially agro-biodiversity, at the provincial, district and community levels

196. Outcome 2 was budgeted for \$1,134,500 USD, and only 11.8% of the budget had been disbursed as of June 30, 2014. Outcome 2 includes the project's field-level activities, including some capacity development and land-use planning. Under this outcome is the "ABDI" sub-project portion of the project activities. There are six outputs planned for Outcome 2:¹⁷

- Output 2.1: Capacity and accountability of Provincial and District Government to mainstream biodiversity into agriculture increased
- Output 2.2: Participatory land use plans integrating agro-biodiversity developed in pilot sites.
- Output 2.3: In-situ conservation for important agro-biodiversity established
- Output 2.4: Farmers' skills, knowledge and incentives necessary to undertake biodiversity-friendly farming enhanced

¹⁷ As noted previously in this report, the wording of the outputs was edited from what is indicated in the Prodoc at the inception phase of the project, as documented in the project inception report.

- Output 2.5: Agro-biodiversity and biodiversity friendly community products promoted
- Output 2.6: Private and public sector agreements to mainstream agro-biodiversity into their plans

197. The results indicators for Outcome 2 as per the results framework in the 2013 PIR are:

- Number of farmers adopting skills and techniques promoted through FFS and farmer field days (Target: 1,000)
- Number of Technical Service Centers in cluster villages with agro-biodiversity conservation and sustainable use activities (Target: 4)
- Number of cluster villages with pFLUP plans (Target: 8)
- Number of districts with in-situ agro-biodiversity conservation plans (Target: 8)
- Number of male and female farmers graduated from FFS (Target: 1,000, 50% women)
- Number of improved agro-biodiversity products marketed for local or international markets (Target: 8 products)
- Number of private-public sector agro-biodiversity agreements (Target: 3)

198. The project has taken some initial planning steps regarding farmer field schools, and one series of trainings was conducted on organic vegetable home gardening for items such as lettuce, potatoes, beans and tomatoes. This was a two-month training, from February to April 2014, with two households from each of the target villages in the pilot districts participating. International experts from Thailand conducted the training, which was held at the Phonxay district DAFO service center. This was a “training of trainers” approach, with the idea that the participating individuals could share the information more widely in their home villages. The training consisted of both theoretical and practical training aspects. The few individuals interviewed for the mid-term review who participated in the training felt it was valuable, but some portions could have been clearer, such as home production of organic pesticides, around which there were evidently many questions. In addition, the farmers participating felt that to really effectively provide the same training more widely for people in their villages they would need additional support, particularly on the theoretical aspects. However, some of the practical aspects will naturally be transferred to other farmers through basic observation and communal discussion. Significant additional farmer field school activities are planned, including work on integrated pest management. This evaluation has recommended that the strategic and catalytic value of all capacity development activities under the ABP project be carefully analyzed and clearly justified; there are simply too many capacity needs across too great an area and for too large of a population for the ABP project to be able to contribute any significant sustained results. In addition, the natural point of leverage for such activities would be the agriculture extension officers in the pilot districts (and potentially provinces) where the project is working, rather than trying to significantly develop the capacity of individual farmers.

199. With regard to the pFLUPs in the ABP project target pilot districts, TABI has already supported the development of pFLUPs in four village clusters, and thus there is less scope for the ABP project to carry out these activities. The four village clusters are Nambor and Donekham village clusters in Luang Prabang Province, and Kheung-Longhang, and Kheung

village clusters in Xieng Khouang Province. According to project documentation, “By the end of 2013 TABI has carried out pFLUP in five clusters in more than 30 villages in Phoukhout and Phonexay districts and is now mainly focusing its pFLUP work in other districts.”

200. However, it was highlighted that while TABI has helped develop the plans, there is currently no mechanism for follow-up on implementation, to monitor and assess application of the plans in the village clusters where they have been developed. This was suggested as a key opportunity for the ABP project to make a substantive contribution to this line of work. Implementation In addition, this evaluation encourages the ABP project to work on sharing the pFLUP experience more widely, in any areas of the pilot districts not covered by the pFLUPs that have been developed, but also in neighboring districts within the two target provinces.

201. Under Output 2.3 there has been the designation of some 150 ha allocated for district conservation of medicinal plants in Xieng Khouang. In the Xieng Khouang PBSAP there are plans to add more provincial and district conservation areas. During 2013, the district Governor approved an allocation of some 300 ha for the Dong Long–Dong-South Medicinal Plant Conservation Area. A baseline, conservation and awareness activities was planned to start-up early 2014 with technical support from Institute of Traditional Medicine and the District Health Office of Phoukhout.

202. The project target for coverage of in-situ conservation areas is 100,000 ha, which seems highly unlikely to be achieved at present. However, this figure should be considered as the target for area under improved management and increased sustainability of use for agro-biodiversity. In this case, if in the 2nd half the ABP project can make substantive progress on implementation of the PBSAPs and pFLUPs developed, the target could potentially be met. The two pilot districts alone cover approximately 350,000 ha, and the provinces are much larger.

203. Outcome 2 of the project also includes the planned “ABDI” pipeline of sub-projects to be implemented in the field, with different projects potentially being under different outputs depending on their focus, though with the majority contributing to Output 2.3. Through outreach, training and preparation work conducted by the ABP project with the local district project coordinators, a pipeline of approximately 20 concepts was developed. As of early 2014 however, only approximately two projects had been approved for initiation. This has been one of the major shortcomings of the ABP project in terms of results, as there is an urgent need to begin field-level activities through the sub-projects. The urgency of this activity is twofold – partly because this is where a good portion of the project resources needs to be disbursed, but also because there are seasonality considerations to some of the expected sub-projects, and delays of a month or two could mean missing an entire growing season. This would delay the results of the sub-projects, which will constitute the critical base of experience and knowledge gained under the project for the conservation and sustainable use of agro-biodiversity. Once the new project coordinator was in position, in late May 2014, rapid steps were taken to move the sub-projects ahead, and as of the time of this mid-term review (June 2014) a few more sub-project proposals had been approved. Those approved thus far include work on traditional medicinal plants in the previously mentioned Dong Long–Dong-South Medicinal Plant Conservation Area, work on in-situ conservation of native bananas in four villages in Phonxay district, and work on cultivated production of wild mushrooms.

204. In the second half of the project the ABDI sub-projects should be further developed and implemented in a way that supports and is linked with other aspects of the project, such as supporting implementation of the PBSAPs, and/or pFLUPs. This is further emphasized in following Section VI.D of this report.

205. The project has not made significant progress yet in relation to Outputs 2.5 related to value chain analysis, and Output 2.6 related to public-private partnerships on mainstreaming agro-biodiversity. This review recommends that the project shift the focus of these two outputs to address improving the understanding of the economic incentives and market forces that threaten various aspects of agro-biodiversity in Lao PDR, with a primary focus on crop and crop-associated biodiversity. Economic incentives and market forces are one of primary drivers of threats to agro-biodiversity as outlined in the project document, but do not appear to be clearly understood or documented. This is a significant gap in the project's logic chain. This activity could be linked with other ongoing initiatives such as the The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB) study on agriculture and food-related biodiversity, which is ongoing.¹⁸

C. Impacts and Global Environmental Benefits

206. For the GEF biodiversity focal area, project impacts are defined as documented changes in environmental status of species, ecosystems or genetic biodiversity resources. Global Environmental Benefits have not been explicitly defined, but are generally considered to involve sustained impact level results of a certain scale or significance.

207. The project document identifies the specific Global Environmental Benefits expected for the biodiversity focal area in section 2.7 (p. 48). These include *"Globally significant biodiversity at the at least two demonstration sites over 10,000 [sic] ha impacted directly and the whole nation indirectly. The principal global benefits would be derived from in-situ conservation of globally important crop genetic diversity in the centre of origin and domestication such as rice, mangos, banana, bread fruit and legumes."*

208. Additional benefits are *"the conservation of threatened species that rely on diverse agro ecosystems for their survival. Amongst the globally important species, of the 18 critically endangered species found in Lao PDR, 5 are found in agro-ecosystems and 7 species are threatened by agriculture related activities. Of 26 endangered species found in Lao, 1 is found in agro-ecosystems and 6 are threatened by agriculture related activities; and of 54 vulnerable species found, 8 occur in agro-ecosystems and 26 are threatened by agriculture related activities."*

209. The project results framework in the project document and in the inception report does not provide any impact level indicators. Only outcome level indicators are included, in particular the top-level indicator "Area of provincial agro-biodiversity conservation and sustainable use (Target: 100,000 ha)."¹⁹

¹⁸ See <http://www.teebweb.org/publication/the-economics-of-ecosystems-and-biodiversity-teeb-for-agriculture-food-concept-note/>.

¹⁹ Note: The target of 100,000 ha is an order of magnitude different than the 10,000 ha figure stated in this section of the project document; however, under Output 2.3 in the project document (para. 102), the 100,000 ha figure is given.

210. Since it is only the mid-point of the project and the project has had slow progress to date, it is early to expect there to be any notable impact level results, and certainly not Global Environmental Benefits. Global Environmental Benefits, and even site-level impacts, are often not likely to be achieved in the lifetime of a single project with a five-year implementation period. Considering that the planned project activities do include sub-projects with field-level activities, there may be some site-level impacts by the end of the project. These will need to be identified and documented for the project's terminal evaluation.

D. Strategic and Technical Focus for the 2nd Half of Implementation

211. This review includes a set of recommendations (recommendations 11-19 of this report) related to technical and strategic aspects of the project. The overall focus of these recommendations can be summarized and emphasized as such:

- The project strategy must be more targeted
- The scope of the project needs to be more limited and focused
- The project must emphasize a results-focused approach, prioritizing concrete outputs and outcomes with clear and direct benefits for agro-biodiversity
- In the 2nd half of the project there must be significant attention on sustainable results, and the project's role for catalyzing additional potential future work on agro-biodiversity conservation in Lao PDR

212. Building on the key results produced so far; the ABP project needs focus and streamline project activities toward a limited number of thematic areas to generate concrete results. This review suggests the following areas as potential key areas for the ABP project to focus on, though a more strategic analysis from the PMU, FAO, UNDP, TABI, and other partners would help provide greater justification for the potential areas of focus:

- Indigenous varieties of crops (TABI working more on NTFPs, indigenous livestock lower priority)
- Aquatic biodiversity in agroecosystems (inventory, fish conservation areas)
- Taxonomic documentation – key taxonomic groups (strategic justification required for groups of focus) -
 - Mushrooms
 - Bananas
 - Medicinal plants
 - Aquatic biodiversity in agroecosystems

213. To help conceptualize this streamlined and focused thematic approach for the project, this review proposes the following Table 8 as a means to assess planned project activities, determine whether they should be a priority for the use of project funding and time, and whether they should be implemented.

Table 8 ABP Project Proposed Key Areas to Streamline and Focus Project Implementation

	Indigenous crop varieties	Aquatic biodiversity in agro-ecosystems	Market Forces	Knowledge and Learning
Outcome 1: Policy Mainstreaming	Example: Project activity X - aligned			
Linkages ⇔				
Outcome 2: Field Level				

214. This is only a suggested framework, and could be modified or adjusted by the project team, but some framework such as this is required to A.) Ensure that planned project activities are contributing to the key results targeted by the project; and B.) Potential revise and adjust planned activities to support the project's key areas of focus.

215. On a related note, the ABP project should move to implement the ABDI sub-projects as urgently as possible, but in implementation the sub-projects should be angled to ensure their strategic value, and their potential contribution to results in one of the key project focus areas. One potential means of doing this could be to slightly modify proposed or approved sub-projects to strengthen their linkage to implementation of PBSAPs. In addition, the ABP project must ensure that the experiences of the ABDI sub-projects are well documented and disseminated, as a significant portion of the value of these projects in the broad context of agro-biodiversity conservation in Laos PDR is in the knowledge generated, which needs to be replicated and scaled-up where relevant.

216. In terms of capacity building, the ABP project could also leverage the sub-projects as opportunities for practical field training, and as a learning-by-doing tool for DAFO.

217. Under Outcome 1, the ABP project should try to leverage the agro-biodiversity sub-sector working group as a mechanism for strategic guidance and inputs to agro-biodiversity related policies. It would also be important to coordinate with the NAFRI policy research center. This could include inputs to the NABP II. The sub-sector working group could also propose national production targets for agro-biodiversity, linked with or with inputs from the project's expected work on economic aspects and ecosystem services of agro-biodiversity.

218. For results in the mainstreaming/policy aspect of the project under Outcome 1, the project should aim for the NABP to be completed and agreed by key stakeholders. The PBSAPs in the two provinces should be adopted and there should be some indication of implementation. The NBSAP and national agriculture vision to 2020 are other important potential mainstreaming results of the project. There is also an opportunity for input to the development of a national policy on fish conservation areas.

219. In terms of the ABP project's strategic integration with TABI, the following areas have been identified as potential opportunities:

- Monitoring of implementation of pFLUPs in pilot districts
- Information sharing on TABI work with promoting use of indigenous varieties, improving forest health for NTFPs
- Work on market aspects – value chains, economic valuation of ecosystem services, market forces analysis (also linked with TEEB study)
- Foundational steps for further work on emerging issue of pesticide/herbicide use, organic certification, linked with World Trade Organization issue – a preliminary national meeting for discussion, basic strategy paper identifying specific issues and approaches
- Build on TABI's work by clearly documenting experiences and lessons, and generating knowledge products
- In addition, the ABP project could leverage its role in the field through sharing experiences related to pFLUPS to districts neighboring the pilot districts that are not otherwise included in TABI activities

220. To consolidate and sustain project results, the ABP project must also strongly emphasize knowledge documentation and sharing. This could include:

- Replication approach for successful sub-project activities
- A limited number of targeted key publications documenting agro-biodiversity in Lao PDR with English summaries (one example is the publication from the UNDP-GEF COAST project in Croatia); examples of important “foundational” documents the project could focus on include user-friendly farmer manuals, and agro-biodiversity inventories.
- Some basic education and awareness raising at field and national level to give project visibility, identity
- Documented progress on policy/mainstreaming results, moving toward implementation

221. The review also encourages the ABP project to reduce its emphasis on capacity development activities unclear there is a strategic and clear point of intervention. Capacity building activities should prioritize government stakeholders at the district level in the two pilot districts, particularly the DAFO service centers.

VII. Key GEF Performance Parameters

222. Sustainability is one of the five main evaluation criteria, as well as being considered one of the GEF operational principles. Other GEF operational principles not otherwise addressed are discussed below, including the project's catalytic role and stakeholder participation.

223. UNDP-GEF project evaluations are also required to discuss the mainstreaming of UNDP program principles. This is covered in Annex 11 of this review report.

A. Sustainability

224. While a sustainability rating is provided here as required, sustainability is a temporal and dynamic state that is influenced by a broad range of constantly shifting factors. It should be kept in mind that the important aspect of sustainability of GEF projects is the sustainability of results, not necessarily the sustainability of activities that produced results. In the context of

GEF projects there is no clearly defined timeframe for which results should be sustained, although it is implied that they should be sustained indefinitely. When evaluating sustainability, the greater the time horizon, the lower the degree of certainty possible.

225. In addition, by definition, mid-term reviews are not well-positioned to provide ratings on sustainability considering that many more activities will be undertaken before project end that may positively or negatively affect the likelihood of sustainability. This is particularly true for the Lao ABP project, considering that less than 20% of the project activity budget has been dispersed, indicating that the project is only about 1/5th of the way into implementation. Considering the status of project execution, a meaningful assessment of the likelihood of the sustainability of project results cannot clearly be made. For the ABP mid-term review a **sustainability** rating of **unable to assess** is given. Nonetheless, the four components of sustainability are briefly discussed below.

226. At the broad objective level, one of the goals of the project must be to help set the stage and build the foundation for additional further investment on behalf of agro-biodiversity in Lao PDR. This one, relatively small, project will not be able to make a significant dent in the overall conservation needs for agro-biodiversity. Therefore it will be necessary to provide well-formed opportunities for additional external donors to further these efforts. This can be achieved through activities such as finalizing the revised NABP, ensuring the lessons and experiences from the ABP project are well documented and publicized, and helping fill knowledge gaps about agro-biodiversity in Lao PDR. It will also be important to clearly identify and describe the ways in which agro-biodiversity supports resilience to climate change in Lao PDR.

227. This review recommends that these four items be the focus of the project's efforts to consolidate results and enhance the likelihood of sustainability of the ABP project results.

i. Financial Risks

228. It is not clear from the present perspective what the results of the project will be, and as such it is difficult to assess what the financial requirements to sustain results might be. One of the main upcoming activities of the project will be the "ABDI" sub-projects, which are intended to demonstrate a variety of agricultural techniques and approaches that are supportive of agro-biodiversity conservation. The skills and experience gained by the participants in these projects should be sustained without further investment, but the true value of these projects will be if the lessons and experiences demonstrated can be documented, shared, and scaled-up through additional initiatives – which would require some financial support.

229. Some of the policy and mainstreaming aspects of the project would also require some further investment to be sustained. For example, the provincial biodiversity strategy and action plans would need some support for implementation. The provincial governments and other stakeholders should also be able to support implementation of various aspects of the PBSAPs, but external financial support is expected to be required as well. Similarly, implementation of the pFLUPs at the district level will require support for monitoring and oversight of implementation.

ii. Socio-political Risks

230. For the time being the project stakeholders at the demonstration site level are engaged, and interested for project activities to continue at the field level. If there are further significant delays in implementation, however, there is a serious risk that the project will lose the faith of the farmers and local government representatives in Phonxay and Phoukout districts.

iii. Institutional and Governance Risks

231. There is some risk to the overall project implementation in terms of how quickly the Department of Planning and Cooperation in MAF will be able to get up to speed on the project, and take responsibility for moving execution of project activities rapidly forward. Responsibility for project execution was transferred from the Permanent Secretary's Office to the Department of Planning and Cooperation just prior to the MTR, and MAF representatives were not able to attend the MTR's initial briefing on findings and conclusions at the UNDP offices at the end of the review field mission.

232. In addition there are always some institutional and governance risks for environmentally-focused projects working in the agriculture sector, as national priorities in the agriculture sector tend to focus on national production targets, and all of the conditions and inputs necessary to achieve those targets. As indicated in Section VI.A on results for Outcome 1, this review recommends that the project support the agro-biodiversity sub-sector working group to develop national production or conservation targets for the components of agro-biodiversity.

iv. Environmental Risks

233. The main environmental threats identified in the project document remain relevant. The project must also take care that the sub-project results are not threatened by other environmental risks. For example, farmers participating in the pilot project on organic rice noted that not all farmers in their paddy fields are participating in the organic pilot production, and that some of the "organic" pilot areas are downstream from rice paddies that are not organic. Therefore there is uncertainty about whether they will be able to receive the organic certification, which provides the main economic justification for growing rice organically, since organic rice has a higher price but lower yield per hectare.

B. Catalytic Role: Replication and Up-scaling

234. It is too early in the project execution process for the project to have had any significant catalytic influence as yet. The project does have potential to have catalytic influence, through multiple project activities. The policy mainstreaming work could contribute to up-scaling agro-biodiversity efforts in Lao PDR, if the relevant policies are adopted and implemented. The ABDI sub-project portfolio could also provide a strong body of evidence on field-level agro-biodiversity conservation measures, for potential future replication by other actors. The agro-biodiversity sub-sector working group also has the potential to catalyze further additional attention to and donor investment in agro-biodiversity conservation in Lao PDR. These are all areas that the project must focus on in the second half of implementation, as well as ensuring that the project lessons and experiences are well-documented and disseminated.

VIII. Main Lessons Learned and Recommendations

A. Lessons from the Experience of the Lao PDR ABP Project

235. The mid-term review is early for there to be significant lessons from the project, but a few lessons that have been identified are included below. In addition, lessons identified by the project in the 2013 PIR are included in Box 2 below.

236. **Lesson:** When projects expect to utilize a CTA position, if the position is to be full-time (or close to), then it is much more cost-effective to recruit this position at the national level, which can also contribute to national capacity development. If international support is required in the CTA position, experience from other UNDP-GEF projects has shown it is most cost-effective for this to be through a “retainer” type arrangement, where small inputs are provided through review of workplans, TORs, etc. It is not cost-effective for an international CTA to be deeply engaged in execution of project activities, project workplanning, reporting, and other day-to-day project management activities. For the Lao ABP project the international CTA position was actually budgeted for more than 20% of the entire project budget; in addition, unfortunately due to shortcomings in the execution arrangements, the international CTA has had to take up the role as the person primarily responsible for project execution.

237. **Lesson:** Project designs and strategies should be responsive to the threats and barriers identified. The ABP project strategy and design outlined in the project document did not sufficiently correspond to the threats to agro-biodiversity and barriers to its sustainable management that were identified. Project documents should include as an annex either a “threats matrix” that shows how each project output or component responds to a threat identified, or a results chain that outlines how the project activities logically contribute to the desired results.

238. **Lesson:** When selecting pilot areas for project activities, in situations where there are other similar initiatives operating in the country, it is better to select pilot areas that do not overlap with the other initiatives, rather than trying to work in the same area. Even if there are clear comparative advantages between initiatives (which there are not, between TABI and the ABP project at the field level), differences in implementation rates and approaches can limit the potential for synergies when focusing in the same geographic area. A more advantageous approach is for similar initiatives to work in different areas, but to share lessons and experiences. In the case of the ABP project, while there were some good intentions behind selecting pilot districts in the same area as the TABI project, ultimately this has left the ABP project in the wake of the TABI project, and also unable to clearly define and identify itself in the eyes of field level stakeholders.

239. **Lesson:** Agricultural-biodiversity indicators and targets used to assess results of project activities, (e.g. farmer field schools) need to be much more outcome/impact oriented, and the project activities themselves need to be clearly and logically linked and justified in terms of the results-chain leading to actual agro-biodiversity conservation impact-level results. In the ABP project results framework there are a number of output-based indicators or indicators without sufficient definition of terms to be meaningfully applied for the assessment of outcome and impact level results.

Box 2 ABP Project Lessons from the 2013 PIR

Field intervention preparation:

- Interventions should be based on village priorities
- Important to discuss design and get acceptance with target groups (incl. agrobiodiversity aspects, native species, etc),
- Baseline data (e.g. on markets, village structures, etc.) important during project preparation for measuring impact, etc.
- Villagers and village clusters should take active part in management/become project owner/ implementing partner of the project e.g. through village groups, TOT, recording, etc.
- Important to have clear targets and goals and to constantly discuss sustainability aspects

B. Mid-term Recommendations for the Lao PDR ABP Project

240. The recommendations from this mid-term review are outlined below. The “key” recommendations – those deemed most critical – are listed first, with lower-level recommendations following. The target audience for each recommendation is indicated in brackets.

i. Implementation and Execution Issues

241. **Key Recommendation 1:** The ABP project should activate and utilize the PSC, representing a selection of key stakeholders in the agro-biodiversity realm. The PSC should serve its intended monitoring, oversight, information sharing, and stakeholder engagement functions. The PSC should be the main oversight mechanism for the project, with the opportunity to provide inputs to annual project workplanning, and approval of annual workplanning and budgeting. [UNDP, FAO, MAF]

242. **Key Recommendation 2:** This review recommends that UNDP, MAF, and FAO continue to urgently work together to respond to the audit recommendations, furthering the good progress made thus far, and ensure that the same issues are not raised in the audit for 2014. [UNDP, FAO, MAF]

243. **Key Recommendation 3:** This review recommends that the ABP execution and implementation partners ensure prior to the 4th quarter of 2014 that adequate human resources will be available in the 2nd half of implementation to fully support highly dynamic and productive project execution, so that the project may achieve the greatest results possible. This could imply contracting additional qualified national-level PMU staff, but in the interest of time, under current circumstances this may just mean revising the TORs of the current CTA and ensuring the budget is available for the CTA position for the remainder of the project. As such, this review recommends a re-assessment of the budgeting for the CTA position for the 2nd half of the project. [UNDP, FAO, PSC]

244. **Key Recommendation 4:** This review recommends that the main project execution and implementation partners continue to clearly document and justify actual co-financing amounts committed, particularly co-financing from stakeholders at the pilot sites, including partners who

will be implementing the ABDI sub-projects. Reaching the total planned co-financing amount is important, but in addition, documenting a broad range of co-financing partners can be a strong indicator of stakeholder ownership and likely sustainability of benefits. [UNDP, FAO, PMU]

245. **Key Recommendation 5:** UNDP, FAO, and MAF should strengthen their monitoring and oversight of the project to ensure that the project is fully on-track, there are no bureaucratic delays, and any project risks are identified well in advance and proactively addressed. All project risks should be reviewed at the monthly technical coordination meetings, with discussion about concrete steps to address risks, and follow-up before the next technical coordination meeting. This review also specifically supports the recommendation from the project audits that decisions made at the monthly technical coordination meetings must be followed-through on in a timely manner. [UNDP, FAO, MAF]

246. **Key Recommendation 6:** ABP project workplanning should be done in a transparent and consultative manner with all key project partners, with final approval by the PSC. Workplanning for each year should be done in the 4th quarter of the previous year, for approval by the PSC before the end of the year. It must also be assured through the workplanning process that the project activities remain focused, and contribute directly to project results targets. [PMU]

247. **Key Recommendation 7:** The ABP project should strengthen support and oversight of field-level activities through quarterly monitoring visits, linked with the district planning meetings. This may be necessary for the remainder of the project, but at least should occur until the ABDI sub-projects are in mid-implementation. [PMU]

248. **Recommendation 8:** It is recognized that the ABP project and TABI will not be carried out through a joint execution structure as originally planned, and any efforts to establish a joint execution approach with TABI should be dropped at this point. However, it is still necessary to improve coordination with TABI. The ABP project could still potentially utilize the same PSC structure as TABI, as the national stakeholders are likely to be the same for the two projects, and leveraging the same oversight mechanism would support a programmatic approach. There should be a review of TABI and ABP workplans to ensure harmonization and avoid overlap. If logistically feasible, the ABP project and TABI should share physical office space, which would allow the national project coordinator to play his joint role more effectively as the manager of both projects, and which would strengthen coordination between the two projects. [MAF, PMU, UNDP]

249. **Recommendation 9:** To ensure cost-effectiveness by the end of the project, the project team should focus on delivering project results within the planned timeframe of the end of 2016. [PMU, UNDP, FAO]

250. **Recommendation 10:** The ABP project should use the GEF biodiversity focal area tracking tool (available on the GEF website, and completed previously by this project) as a guide toward results-based management, by drawing focus and attention to outcome level results focused on the implementation, enforcement, and monitoring of agriculture sector policies supporting conservation of agro-biodiversity. The tracking tool provides inputs to one of the portfolio level indicators for the GEF biodiversity focal area results framework, and is a basic but important means of results monitoring. [UNDP, FAO, PMU]

ii. **Technical Focus**

251. **Key Recommendation 11:** In the 2nd half of implementation the ABP project needs to have a focused and results-oriented approach; this can be guided by a revised project results framework, including a focus on GEF-biodiversity focal area strategic targets, such a progress toward a score of “6” for mainstreaming of agro-biodiversity in agriculture policies and regulatory frameworks (as assessed through the GEF biodiversity tracking tool), and hectares under sustainable management. This review, therefore, recommends that the project results framework be revised immediately with inputs from UNDP, FAO, and the PMU, for approval by the PSC in the 4th quarter of 2014. This review provides suggestions for revised results framework indicators and targets in Annex 9 of this review report. [UNDP, FAO, PMU]

252. **Key Recommendation 12:** The project includes an information-sharing component, but little appears to have been done under this part of the project thus far. In the 2nd half of implementation the ABP project needs to emphasize a strategic focus on knowledge generation and information sharing. This should include a basic online presence, such as a minimal web page positioned on the overall MAF website. This could also include activities such as a brief quarterly electronic newsletter updating targeted stakeholders on project activities. By the 4th quarter of 2014 the ABP project should have a webpage as an information dissemination portal, as a sub-page of a large relevant website, such as the MAF website. [PMU, MAF, FAO]

253. **Key Recommendation 13:** To consolidate results and enhance the likelihood for the sustainability of project results, this review recommends that the project team and key stakeholders focus on documenting and publishing the lessons and experiences of the ABDI projects, ensure that the NABP II is finalized and adopted, and ensure that a few (i.e. 2-4) key publications documenting agro-biodiversity in Lao PDR are produced before the end of the project. The project could also, for example, provide information on the ABDI project experience to be included in the TABI newsletter. In addition, the project should produce a document highlighting the importance in Lao PDR of agro-biodiversity for resilience and adaptation to climate change at least six months prior to project completion. [PMU, NAFRI, FAO]

254. **Key Recommendation 14:** The project should plan for a specific external independent “sub-evaluation” of the ABDI project portfolio, upon the completion of a majority of the sub-projects. This would not need to be done by an international consultant, and in fact it would likely be much more effective for it to be done by a Lao speaker who understands the rural context. The evaluation should systematically document the results and lessons of the sub-project portfolio, including outcome and impact level results. This “sub-evaluation” would be a critical input to the ABP terminal evaluation, as the terminal evaluation would not have the capacity to conduct an in-depth evaluation of the sub-projects. Similar documentation of sub-project portfolio results have been carried out in UNDP-GEF projects in Bulgaria (GEF ID #2730), Croatia (GEF ID #2105), and Hungary (GEF ID #1527). [PMU, PSC]

255. **Key Recommendation 15:** This review recommends that the project shift the focus of Outputs 2.5 and 2.6 to address improving the understanding of the economic incentives and market forces that threaten various aspects of agro-biodiversity in Lao PDR, with a primary focus on crop and crop-associated biodiversity. Economic incentives and market forces are one of primary drivers of threats to agro-biodiversity as outlined in the project document, but do

not appear to be clearly understood or documented. This is a significant gap in the project's logic chain. [PSC, UNDP, FAO]

256. **Recommendation 16:** This review also recommends that UNDP and the ABP project take whatever steps necessary to overcome any bureaucratic issues to the ABP project providing financial support for the organization of the agro-biodiversity sub-sector working group meetings, as this is clearly and specifically indicated in the project document. This would also provide the ABP project with the opportunity to ensure that the working group fulfills its opportunity to be a dynamic strategic guiding body. [UNDP, MAF-DoP, PMU, FAO]

257. **Recommendation 17:** The project results focus must be strengthened, and consequently the project would benefit from an internal discussion to generate a clearly articulated project logic chain, such as can be generated under the GEF Independent Evaluation Office "Review of Outcome to Impacts" methodology.²⁰ [UNDP, FAO, MAF]

258. **Recommendation 18:** While integrating biodiversity considerations into relevant sector policies, plans, and legislation is a major focus of the project, this review recommends that the project should immediately apply a very focused scope in working on this issue, only taking the opportunity to provide inputs to relevant new policies being developed or revised. The project likely does not have the time or resources to carry out a comprehensive adjustment or revision to all Lao policies and legislation currently on the books that are related to agro-biodiversity. [PSC, MAF, PMU, FAO, UNDP]

259. **Recommendation 19:** National policy priorities in the agriculture sector tend to relate to national production targets, and the conditions and inputs necessary to achieve those targets. This can make it difficult for broader critical agriculture sector goals, such as conservation of Lao PDR's globally significant agro-biodiversity, to be given sufficient attention and priority. This review recommends that the ABP project support the agro-biodiversity sub-sector working group to develop national targets for agro-biodiversity related production, and conservation targets. [PMU]

²⁰ See <http://www.thegef.org/gef/ROtI>.

IX. Annexes

Annex 1: Terms of Reference

Annex 2: GEF Operational Principles

Annex 3: Lao ABP Project Mid-term Review Matrix

Annex 4: Interview Guide

Annex 5: Rating Scales

Annex 6: Lao ABP Project Mid-term Review Mission Itinerary and Persons Interviewed

Annex 7: Documents Reviewed

Annex 8: Planned Implementation Arrangements

Annex 9: ABP Project Results Framework and Assessed Level of Indicator Target Achievement

Annex 10: National Agricultural Biodiversity Program (2004) Results Framework Outputs

Annex 11: Lao ABP Project Mainstreaming of UNDP Programme Principles

Annex 12: Completed GEF Biodiversity Focal Area SP-2 Tracking Tool

A. Annex 1: Terms of Reference

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR MIDTERM EVALUATION (International Consultant)

"Mainstreaming Biodiversity in Lao PDR's Agricultural and Land Management Policies, Plans and Programmes (ABP)"

1. INTRODUCTION

In accordance with the UNDP and AF M&E policies and procedures, a mid-term evaluation of the full-size project "Mainstreaming Biodiversity in Lao PDR's Agricultural and Land Management Policies, Plans and Programmes (ABP)" implemented through the Ministry of Agriculture (MAF) / Permanence Secretary Office (PSO) is to be undertaken in February 2014. The project started on the 1st of April 2011 (signing of project documents) and is coming into its 3rd year of implementation. This Terms of Reference (TOR) sets out the expectations for this mid-term evaluation.

The essentials of the project to be evaluated are as follows:

Project Title:	Mainstreaming Biodiversity in Lao PDR's Agricultural and Land Management Policies, Plans and Programmes (ABP)	
UNDP Project ID:	00075435	Project financing At endorsement (US\$)
		At MTE (US\$)
ATLAS Project ID:	00060069	GEF financing: 2,265,000 cash
Country:	Lao PDR	Government: 556,200 in-kind
Region:	South East Asia	UNDP: 321,900 in-kind
Focal Area:	Biodiversity	UNDP: 213,000 cash
		FAO: 345,772 in-kind
Executing Agency:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ministry of Agriculture (MAF) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Permanence Secretary Office (PSO)	SDC/TABI: 3,000,000 parallel
Other Partners involved:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FAO through Letter of Agreement <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Department of Planning (DoP/MAF) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Department of Forestry <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> National Agriculture and Forestry Research Institute (NAFRI) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ministry of Justice (MoJ) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Department of Agriculture and Cooperative	Total resources- in 2,478,000 cash: Total resources- in 1,223,872 kind Planned closing date: July 2016

2. PROJECT BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND OBJECTIVES

Project background

Lao Peoples' Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) lies in the center of the Indochinese peninsula surrounded by Thailand, Vietnam, China, Myanmar and Cambodia. Lao PDR has a population of 6.67 million people, and the overall population density is low at 24 people per Km². As a result of its relatively wide ranges of latitude and altitude, its rich water resources and tropical climate, Lao hosts globally significant tropical ecosystems. Within these ecosystems are diverse agro-ecosystems ranging from the slash and burn agriculture of the uplands, through long standing agro-forests in the middle lands, to paddy fields, household or community managed wetlands in the lower-lying lands of the Mekong Plain. These ecosystems contain a huge number of globally and locally significant species of plants, animals, fungi and other organisms.

The richness and as such global significance of Lao PDR's agro-biodiversity is attributable to several factors: location between two major bio-geographical zones –the temperate north and the tropical south –high ethnic diversity, and different climatic and altitudinal zones. Lao PDR is thought to be at the center of domestication for Asian rice and the center of origin for job's tears. Other potentially globally significant agro-biodiversity include cultivated local and indigenous varieties of maize, sugar cane varieties such as oy hok and oy pa used in confectionaries; bushy peas including indigenous varieties currently being studied at NAFRI; Livestock; and crop associated biodiversity such as wild crop relatives and pollinators and other insects.

The Government of Lao PDR has developed and implemented a wide-range of policies that directly or indirectly

impact the use, development and conservation of biodiversity. The main overall development goals reflect international commitments and focus on poverty reduction, economic growth and social development, advancement of infrastructure and investment in hydropower and mining, but also protecting the environment. They also acknowledge that future economic growth continues to rely on the sustainable use of the natural resource base and the conservation of forests and biodiversity. At the national level, main responsibility for the management and conservation of biodiversity in agricultural landscapes rests with The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF), although responsibility to implement CBD related commitments has been recently transferred to the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE).

The project aims to contribute to a long term solution whereby “Lao PDR’s biodiversity, including agro-biodiversity, is maintained, protected and sustainably used as a key to poverty alleviation and adaptation to climate change impact”. With this solution the overall goal is conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity resources in agro-ecosystems in Lao PDR for the attainment of food security sustainable economic development, however several barriers exist. To achieve productivity and food security at the household level, the multiple values of conserving Lao PDR’s biodiversity endowment has to be mainstreamed into government policies. There are inadequate incentives and capacities to mainstream biodiversity, especially agro-biodiversity, at community, district, province and national level.

Loss of crop and domestic animal diversity, crop-associated biodiversity and other biodiversity within agro-ecosystems and degradation of ecosystems are being caused through a number of direct and indirect threats. Land use practices are placing greater pressures on biodiversity and agro-biodiversity, and significant impacts: reduced resilience, a loss of ecosystem services and reduced adaptive capacity for agriculture.

Project Objective

The objective of the project is to provide farmers with the necessary incentives, capacities and supporting institutional framework to conserve agricultural biodiversity within farming systems of the Lao PDR.

Three outcomes will contribute to this objective. The progress toward the objective and outcomes is measured through the following indicators:

Objective / Outcomes	Indicators	Target by end of project
Objective: To provide farmers with the necessary incentives, capacities and supporting institutional framework to conserve agricultural biodiversity within farming systems of Lao PDR	Area of provincial agro-biodiversity conservation and sustainable use total 100,000 ha	100,000 ha
Outcome 1: National policy and institutional frameworks for sustainable use, and in-situ conservation of biodiversity in agro-ecosystems	Number of new national plans, policies, laws, strategies, and guidelines with agro-biodiversity concerns	.8.
Outcome 2: Capacities and incentives to mainstream biodiversity, especially agro-biodiversity, at the provincial, district and community levels	Number of farmers adopting skills and techniques promoted through Farmer Field School and farmer field days	1,000 farmers..
Outcome 3: Effective Project management	Number of strategic recommendations from the Agro-biodiversity steering committee.	6

3. OBJECTIVES OF THIS MID-TERM EVALUATION (MTE)

The objective of the MTE is to provide an independent analysis of the progress of the project so far. The MTE will identify potential project design problems, evaluate progress towards the achievement of the project objective, identify and document lessons learned (including lessons that might improve design and implementation of other UNDP-GEF supported projects), and make recommendations regarding specific actions that should be taken to improve the project. The MTE will evaluate early signs of project success or failure and identify the necessary changes to be made. It will also include recommendations for ensuring sustainability of the outcomes beyond the project end-date. The project performance will be measured based on the indicators of the project’s logical framework (see Annex 1).

The MTE must provide evidence based information that is credible, reliable and useful. The evaluation team is expected to follow a participatory and consultative approach ensuring close engagement with government counterparts, UNDP Country Office, project team, UNDP-GEF Technical Adviser based in the region and key stakeholders. The evaluation team is expected to conduct field missions to different government agencies in Vientiane capital, Luangparbang and Xiengkoung provinces, sites in Phonexay and Phoukout districts including the project. Interviews will be held with the following organizations and individuals at a minimum:

1. UNDP staff who have project responsibilities;
2. Implementing Partner – National
3. The Chair of Project Board
4. The National Project Director (NPD) and Project Manager (PM)
5. Project stakeholders, to be determined at the inception meeting; including academia, local government and CBOs

The team will evaluate all relevant sources of information, such as the project document, project reports – including Annual PIRs, GEF BD SO2 tracking tools, project budget revisions, progress reports, project files, national strategic and legal documents, and any other materials that the team considers useful for this evidence-based evaluation. A list of documents that the project team and UNDP Country Office will provide to the team for review is included in Annex 2 of this Terms of Reference.

4. SCOPE OF THE MTE

The evaluation consultant will evaluate the following three categories of project progress. For each category, the evaluation consultant is required to rate overall progress using a six-point rating scale outlined in Annex 3.

4. 1 Progress towards Results

Project design:

- ☐ Evaluate the problem addressed by the project and the underlying assumptions. Evaluate the effect of any incorrect assumptions made by the project. Identify new assumptions.
- ☐ Evaluate the relevance of the project strategy (and theory of change) and whether it provides the most effective route towards expected/intended results.
- ☐ Evaluate how the project addresses country priorities.
- ☐ Evaluate the baseline data included in the project results framework and suggest revisions as necessary.
- ☐ Evaluate the outputs and progress toward outcomes achieved so far and the contribution to attaining the overall objective of the project.
- ☐ 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. Suggest measures to improve the project's development impact, including gender equality and women's empowerment.
- ☐ Examine whether progress so far has led to, or could in the future lead to, potentially adverse environmental and/or social impacts/risks that could threaten the sustainability of the project outcomes. Are these risks being managed, mitigated, minimized or offset? Suggest mitigation measures as needed.
- ☐ Evaluate the extent to which the implementation of the project has been inclusive of relevant stakeholders and to which it has been able to create collaboration between different partners, and how the different needs of male and female stakeholders has been considered. Identify opportunities for stronger substantive partnerships.

4. 2 Adaptive management

Work Planning

- a) Are works planning processes result-based? If not, suggest ways to re-orientate work planning to focus on results.
- b) Examine the use of the project document logical/results framework as a management tool and evaluate any changes made to it since project start. Ensure any revisions meet UNDP-GEF requirements and evaluate the impact of the revised approach on project management.

Finance and co-finance:

- a) Consider the financial management of the project, with specific reference to the cost-effectiveness of interventions.
- b) Complete the co-financing monitoring table (see Annex 4).
- c) Evaluate the changes to fund allocations as a result of budget revisions and the appropriateness and relevance of such revisions.

Monitoring Systems

- a) Evaluate the monitoring tools currently being used: Do they provide the necessary information? Do they involve key partners? Do they use existing information? Are they efficient? Are they cost-effective? Are additional tools

- required?
- b) Ensure that the monitoring system, including performance indicators meet UNDP-GEF minimum requirements. Develop SMART indicators as necessary.
 - c) Ensure broader development and gender aspects of the project are being monitored effectively. Develop and recommend SMART indicators, including sex-disaggregated indicators as necessary.
 - d) Review the mid-term GEF Tracking Tool (s) as appropriate and comment on progress made, quality of the submission, and overall value of the GEF Tracking Tool.
 - e) Examine the financial management of the project monitoring and evaluation budget. Are sufficient resources being allocated to M&E? Are these resources being allocated effectively?

Risk Management

- a) Validate whether the risks identified in the project document, PPRs and the ATLAS Risk Management Module are the most important and whether the risk ratings applied are appropriate and up to date. If not, explain why. Give particular attention to critical risks.
- b) Describe any additional risks identified and suggest risk ratings and possible risk management strategies to be adopted.

4.3 Reporting

- a) Evaluate how adaptive management changes have been reported by the project management, and shared with the Project Board. Evaluate how lessons derived from the adaptive management process have been documented, shared with key partners and internalized by partners.

Management arrangements

Evaluate 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. Evaluate the quality of execution of the project Implementing Partners and recommend areas for improvement.

- b) Evaluate the quality of support provided by UNDP and recommend areas for improvement.

4.4 Sustainability

- a) Evaluate clarity of project design sustainability expectations and project exit strategy development and determined effectiveness of these strategies.
- b) Evaluate financial viability of mainstreaming measures that may support ongoing sustainability.
- c) Outline policy development measures that may support sustainability.
- d) Outline institutional capacity development measures that may support sustainability.

5. MID TERM EVALUATION DELIVERABLES

Deliverable	Content	Timing	Responsibilities
Inception Report	Evaluation team clarifies timing and method of evaluation	No later than 2 weeks before the evaluation mission	Evaluation team submits to UNDP Country Office
Presentation	Initial Findings	End of evaluation mission	To project management and UNDP Country Office (CO)
Draft Final Report	Full report (as template in annex 5) with annexes	Within 3 weeks of the evaluation mission	Sent to UNDP CO, reviewed by UNDP Regional Technical Advisor (RTA), Program Support Unit (PSU), and Implementing Partner (IP)
Final Report	Revised report with audit trail detailing how all received comment have (and have not) been addressed in the final evaluation report).	Within 1 week of receiving UNDP comments on draft	Sent to UNDP CO

6. IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

The principal responsibility for managing this evaluation resides with the UNDP Country Office (UNDP CO) in Vientiane, Lao PDR. The UNDP CO will contract the consultants and ensure the timely provision of per diems and travel arrangements within the country for the evaluation team. The project team will be responsible for liaising with the evaluation team to set up stakeholder interviews, arrange field visits with missions within Vientiane capital and to Luangparbang and Xiengkhouang provinces (Phonexay and Phoukot districts)

7. TIMEFRAME

The total duration of the evaluation will be 3 weeks starting March 2014 according to the following plan:

Activity	
Timeframe	
Preparation	
March 11-13, 2014	
(3 days)	
Evaluation mission and debriefing	
March 14- 24, 2014 (11 days)	
Draft evaluation report	
March 25-28, 2014	
(3 days)	
Finalisation of final report	
March 29-31, 2014	
(3 days)	

8. TEAM COMPOSITION/ International

An international independent individual evaluator will conduct the evaluation as team leader together with a national consultant who is going to be recruited by the ABP project. The recruitment for the international consultant will be led by UNDP Country Office while a national consultant will be led by ABP project. The both of international and national consultants will not have participated in the project preparation and/or implementation and should not have conflict of interest with project related activities. The both consultants should have prior experience in reviewing or evaluating similar projects. Experience with GEF financed projects is an advantage.

The overall responsibility for methodology, work plan and organization of the mission, and production of a high quality final report in English lies with the International Consultant. The qualification requirement for the international consultant are included:

- ☐ Recognized degree (at least MSc level) in biodiversity conservation and sustainable use, Agro-biodiversity conservation policy, social sciences, agriculture and rural development, other biodiversity related sciences
- ☐ 15 years of relevant experience in development work, with a focus on socio-economic analysis, 10 years technical experience with agro-biodiversity policy development and analysis, the socio-economic impact assessment related to agro-biodiversity and rural development, and institutional development towards agro-biodiversity into the national strategy plans.
- ☐ Capability to lead and guide the works of the national consultant into joint working results and evaluation reports
- ☐ The consultant should have prior experience in reviewing or evaluating similar projects. Experience with GEF financed projects is an advantage
- ☐ Recent experience with UNDP's result-based management evaluation methodologies;
- ☐ Experience applying SMART indicators and reconstructing or validating baseline scenarios;
- ☐ Working experience in mainstreaming the agro-biodiversity conservation and sustainable use into national policies.
- ☐ Recognized expertise in the management and sustainable use of biodiversity
- ☐ Demonstrable analytical skills;
- ☐ Excellent English communication skills;
- ☐ Project evaluation/review experiences within United Nations system will be considered an asset;
- ☐ Experience working in the Mekong region (South East Asia).

9. PAYMENT MODALITIES AND SPECIFICATIONS

%	Milestone
50	Upon approval of 1 st draft mid-term evaluation report
50	Upon approval of final mid-term evaluation report
Signature of Environment Unit Manager, UNDP Lao PDR _____, Date: _____	

Annex1: Project logframe

Annex 2: List of Documents

1. Project Document
2. Inception Report
3. Project Implementation Review (PIR) and BD SO2 tracking tool
4. Annual reports
5. Quarterly progress reports and work plans of the various implementation task teams
6. Monthly minute meeting

7. Spot check report
8. Audit reports
9. Administrative and Financial Tracking tools
10. The Mission Reports and Lessons learnt study
11. M & E Operational Guidelines, all monitoring reports prepared by the project; and
12. Financial and Administration guidelines.
13. Strategy IMP/FFS

The following documents will also be available:

14. Project operational guidelines, manuals and systems
15. The GEF Completion Report guidelines; and
16. UNDP Monitoring and Evaluation Frameworks.
17. Letter of Agreement (LoA) between Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and FAO

Annex 3: Mid-term Evaluation Rating Scale Progress towards results: use the following rating scale

Highly Satisfactory (HS)	Project is expected to achieve or exceed all its major global environmental objectives, and yield substantial global environmental benefits, without major shortcomings. The project can be presented as "good practice".
Satisfactory (S)	Project is expected to achieve most of its major global environmental objectives, and yield satisfactory global environmental benefits, with only minor shortcomings.
Moderately Satisfactory (MS)	Project is expected to achieve most of its major relevant objectives but with either significant shortcomings or modest overall relevance. Project is expected not to achieve some of its major global environmental objectives or yield some of the expected global environment benefits.
Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)	Project is expected to achieve its major global environmental objectives with major shortcomings or is expected to achieve only some of its major global environmental objectives.
Unsatisfactory (U)	Project is expected not to achieve most of its major global environment objectives or to yield any satisfactory global environmental benefits.
Highly Unsatisfactory (HU)	Project is expected not to achieve most of its major global environment objectives or to yield any satisfactory global environmental benefits. The project has failed to achieve, and is not expected to achieve, any of its major global environment objectives with no worthwhile benefits.

Adaptive management AND Management Arrangements: use the following rating scale

Highly Satisfactory (HS)

The project has no shortcomings and can be presented as "good practice".

Satisfactory (S)

The project has minor shortcomings.

Moderately Satisfactory (MS)

The project has moderate shortcomings.

Moderately

Unsatisfactory (MU)

The project has significant shortcomings.

Unsatisfactory (U)

The project has major shortcomings.

Highly Unsatisfactory (HU)

The project has severe shortcomings.

Annex 4: Co-financing table

Sources of Co- financing¹

Name of Co- financer

Type of Co- financing²

Amount Confirmed at CEO endorsement / approval

Actual Amount Materialized at Midterm

Actual Amount Materialized at Closing

TOTAL

Explain "Other Sources of Co-financing":

¹ Sources of Co-financing may include: Bilateral Aid Agency (ies), Foundation, GEF Agency, Local Government, National Government, Civil Society Organization, Other Multi-lateral Agency (ies), Private Sector, Other

² Type of Co-financing may include: Grant, Soft Loan, Hard Loan, Guarantee, In-Kind, Other

Annex 5: Table of Contents for the Mid-term Evaluation Report

i. Opening page:

- ☐ Name of UNDP/GEF project
- ☐ UNDP and FEF project ID#s.
- ☐ Evaluation time frame and date of evaluation report
- ☐ Region and countries included in the project
- ☐ GEF operational Program/Strategic program
- ☐ Implementing Partner and other project partners
- ☐ Evaluation team members
- ☐ Acknowledgements

ii. Executive Summary ☐

- ☐ Project Summary Table
- ☐ Project Description (brief)
- ☐ Review Rating Table
- ☐ Summary of conclusions, recommendations and lessons

iii. Acronyms and Abbreviations

1. Introduction

- ☐ Purpose of the evaluation
- ☐ Key issues addressed
- ☐ Methodology of evaluation
- ☐ Structure of the evaluation
- ☐ Evaluation Team
- ☐ Ethics

2. Project description and development context

- ☐ Project start and duration
- ☐ Problems that the project seeks to address
- ☐ Immediate and development objectives of the project
- ☐ Baseline Indicators established
- ☐ Main stakeholders
- ☐ Results expected

3. Findings

3.1 Progress towards Results:

- ☐ Project Design
- ☐ Progress

3.2 Adaptive Management

- ☐ Work Planning
- ☐ Finance and co-finance
- ☐ Monitoring systems
- ☐ Risk management
- ☐ Reporting Management Arrangements
- ☐ Overall project management
- ☐ Quality of executive og Implementing Partners
- ☐ Quality of support provided by UNDP

4. Conclusions, Recommendations & Lessons

- ☐ 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
- ☐ Best and worst practices in addressing issues relating to relevance, performance and success

5. Lesson learned Annexes

- ☐ ToR
- ☐ Itinerary
- ☐ List of persons met or interviewed
- ☐ Summary of field visits

- ☐ List of documents reviewed
- ☐ Questionnaire used and summary of results
- ☐ Relevant mid-term tracking tools (METT, FSC, Capacity scorecard)
- ☐ Co-financing table

Annex 6: Financial Proposal Template (International Consultant)

Please use the template below for your financial proposal. Please assume a total of 11 days in Lao PDR, including 5 days in Vientiane and 6 days in field visits. Flights and local transport for the provincial field visit will be covered separately.

Cost Components	Unit Cost	Quantity (Estimate 11 days in country)	Total Rate for the Contract Duration (USD)
Professional Fees	\$____/day	20 days	
Round Trip Airfares to and from mission			
Living Allowance in Vientiane	\$____/day	5 days	
Living Allowance – provincial field visit *	\$____/day	6 days	
Others - please specify			
Others - please specify			
Others - please specify			
TOTAL			

* Note that flights and transport for the provincial field visit will be covered separately.

B. Annex 2: GEF Operational Principles

<http://www.gefweb.org/public/opstrat/ch1.htm>

TEN OPERATIONAL PRINCIPLES FOR DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GEF'S WORK PROGRAM

1. For purposes of the financial mechanisms for the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the GEF will **function under the guidance of, and be accountable to, the Conference of the Parties (COPs)**. For purposes of financing activities in the focal area of ozone layer depletion, GEF operational policies will be consistent with those of the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer and its amendments.
2. The GEF will provide new, and additional, grant and concessional funding to meet the agreed **incremental costs** of measures to achieve agreed global environmental benefits.
3. The GEF will ensure the **cost-effectiveness** of its activities to maximize global environmental benefits.
4. The GEF will fund projects that are **country-driven** and based on national priorities designed to support sustainable development, as identified within the context of national programs.
5. The GEF will maintain sufficient **flexibility** to respond to changing circumstances, including evolving guidance of the Conference of the Parties and experience gained from monitoring and evaluation activities.
6. GEF projects will provide for **full disclosure** of all non-confidential information.
7. GEF projects will provide for consultation with, and **participation** as appropriate of, the beneficiaries and affected groups of people.
8. GEF projects will conform to the **eligibility** requirements set forth in paragraph 9 of the GEF Instrument.
9. In seeking to maximize global environmental benefits, the GEF will emphasize its **catalytic role** and leverage additional financing from other sources.
10. The GEF will ensure that its programs and projects are **monitored and evaluated** on a regular basis.

C. Annex 3: Lao ABP Project Mid-term Review Matrix

Review Questions	Indicators	Sources	Data Collection Method
Review Criteria: Relevance			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the project's objective align with the priorities of the local government and local communities? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level of coherence between project objective and stated priorities of local stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local stakeholders Document review of local development strategies, environmental policies, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local level field visit interviews Desk review
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the project's objective fit within the national environment and development priorities? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level of coherence between project objective and national policy priorities and strategies, as stated in official documents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National policy documents, such as National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, National Capacity Self-Assessment, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desk review National level interviews
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did the project concept originate from local or national stakeholders, and/or were relevant stakeholders sufficiently involved in project development? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level of involvement of local and national stakeholders in project origination and development (number of meetings held, project development processes incorporating stakeholder input, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project staff Local and national stakeholders Project documents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Field visit interviews Desk review
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the project objective fit GEF strategic priorities? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level of coherence between project objective and GEF strategic priorities (including alignment of relevant focal area indicators) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GEF strategic priority documents for period when project was approved Current GEF strategic priority documents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desk review
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Was the project linked with and in-line with UNDP priorities and strategies for the country? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level of coherence between project objective and design with UNDAF, CPAP, CPD 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UNDP strategic priority documents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desk review
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the project's objective support implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity? Other relevant MEAs? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Linkages between project objective and elements of the CBD, such as key articles and programs of work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CBD website National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desk review

Review Questions	Indicators	Sources	Data Collection Method
Review Criteria: Efficiency			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the project cost-effective? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality and adequacy of financial management procedures (in line with UNDP and national policies, legislation, and procedures) Financial delivery rate vs. expected rate Management costs as a percentage of total costs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents Project staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desk review Interviews with project staff
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are expenditures in line with international standards and norms? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cost of project inputs and outputs relative to norms and standards for donor projects in the country or region 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents Project staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desk review Interviews with project staff
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the project implementation approach efficient for delivering the planned project results? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adequacy of implementation structure and mechanisms for coordination and communication Planned and actual level of human resources available Extent and quality of engagement with relevant partners / partnerships Quality and adequacy of project monitoring mechanisms (oversight bodies' input, quality and timeliness of reporting, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents National and local stakeholders Project staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desk review Interviews with project staff Interviews with national and local stakeholders
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the project implementation delayed? If so, has that affected cost-effectiveness? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project milestones in time Planned results affected by delays Required project adaptive management measures related to delays 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents Project staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desk review Interviews with project staff
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the contribution of cash and in-kind co-financing to project implementation? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level of cash and in-kind co-financing relative to expected level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents Project staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desk review Interviews with project staff

Review Questions	Indicators	Sources	Data Collection Method
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent is the project leveraging additional resources? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amount of resources leveraged relative to project budget 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents Project staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desk review Interviews with project staff
Review Criteria: Effectiveness			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are the project objectives likely to be met? To what extent are they likely to be met? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level of progress toward project indicator targets relative to expected level at current point of implementation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents Project staff Project stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Field visit interviews Desk review
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the key factors contributing to project success or underachievement? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level of documentation of and preparation for project risks, assumptions and impact drivers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents Project staff Project stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Field visit interviews Desk review
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the key risks and barriers that remain to achieve the project objective and generate Global Environmental Benefits? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presence, assessment of, and preparation for expected risks, assumptions and impact drivers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents Project staff Project stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Field visit interviews Desk review
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are the key assumptions and impact drivers relevant to the achievement of Global Environmental Benefits likely to be met? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Actions undertaken to address key assumptions and target impact drivers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents Project staff Project stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Field visit interviews Desk review
Review Criteria: Results			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have the planned outputs been produced? Have they contributed to the project outcomes and objectives? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level of project implementation progress relative to expected level at current stage of implementation Existence of logical linkages between project outputs and outcomes/impacts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents Project staff Project stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Field visit interviews Desk review
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are the anticipated outcomes likely to be achieved? Are the outcomes likely to contribute to the achievement of the project objective? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existence of logical linkages between project outcomes and impacts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents Project staff Project stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Field visit interviews Desk review

Review Questions	Indicators	Sources	Data Collection Method
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are impact level results likely to be achieved? Are the likely to be at the scale sufficient to be considered Global Environmental Benefits? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Environmental indicators Level of progress through the project's Theory of Change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents Project staff Project stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Field visit interviews Desk review
Review Criteria: Sustainability			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent are project results likely to be dependent on continued financial support? What is the likelihood that any required financial resources will be available to sustain the project results once the GEF assistance ends? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial requirements for maintenance of project benefits Level of expected financial resources available to support maintenance of project benefits Potential for additional financial resources to support maintenance of project benefits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents Project staff Project stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Field visit interviews Desk review
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do relevant stakeholders have or are likely to achieve an adequate level of "ownership" of results, to have the interest in ensuring that project benefits are maintained? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level of initiative and engagement of relevant stakeholders in project activities and results 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents Project staff Project stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Field visit interviews Desk review
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do relevant stakeholders have the necessary technical capacity to ensure that project benefits are maintained? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level of technical capacity of relevant stakeholders relative to level required to sustain project benefits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents Project staff Project stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Field visit interviews Desk review
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent are the project results dependent on socio-political factors? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existence of socio-political risks to project benefits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents Project staff Project stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Field visit interviews Desk review
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent are the project results dependent on issues relating to institutional frameworks and governance? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existence of institutional and governance risks to project benefits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents Project staff Project stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Field visit interviews Desk review
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are there any environmental risks that can undermine the future flow of project impacts and Global Environmental Benefits? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existence of environmental risks to project benefits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents Project staff Project stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Field visit interviews Desk review

Review Questions	Indicators	Sources	Data Collection Method
<i>Cross-cutting and UNDP Mainstreaming Issues</i>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did the project take incorporate gender mainstreaming or equality, as relevant? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level of appropriate engagement and attention to gender-relevant aspects of the project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents Project staff Project stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Field visit interviews Desk review

D. Annex 4: Interview Guide

***Overview:** The questions under each topic area are intended to assist in focusing discussion to ensure consistent topic coverage and to structure data collection, and are not intended as verbatim questions to be posed to interviewees. When using the interview guide, the interviewer should be sure to target questions at a level appropriate to the interviewee. The interview guide is one of multiple tools for gathering evaluative evidence, to complement evidence collected through document reviews and other data collection methods; in other words, the interview guide does not cover all evaluative questions relevant to the review.*

Key

Bold = GEF Evaluation Criteria

Italic = GEF Operational Principles

I. PLANNING / PRE-IMPLEMENTATION

A. **Relevance**

- i. Did the project's objectives fit within the priorities of the local government and local communities?
- ii. Did the project's objectives fit within national priorities?
- iii. Did the project's objectives fit GEF strategic priorities?
- iv. Did the project's objectives support implementation of the relevant multi-lateral environmental agreement?

B. *Incremental cost*

- i. Did the project create environmental benefits that would not have otherwise taken place?
- ii. Does the project area represent an example of a globally significant environmental resource?

C. *Country-drivenness / Participation*

- i. How did the project concept originate?
- ii. How did the project stakeholders contribute to the project development?
- iii. Do local and national government stakeholders support the objectives of the project?
- iv. Do the local communities support the objectives of the project?
- v. Are the project objectives in conflict with any national level policies?

D. Monitoring and Evaluation Plan / Design (*M&E*)

- i. Were monitoring and reporting roles clearly defined?
- ii. Was there either an environmental or socio-economic baseline of data collected before the project began?

II. MANAGEMENT / OVERSIGHT

A. Project management

- i. What were the implementation arrangements?
- ii. Was the management effective?

- iii. Were workplans prepared as required to achieve the anticipated outputs on the required timeframes?
- iv. Did the project develop and leverage the necessary and appropriate partnerships with direct and tangential stakeholders?
- v. Were there any particular challenges with the management process?
- vi. If there was a steering or oversight body, did it meet as planned and provide the anticipated input and support to project management?
- vii. Were risks adequately assessed during implementation?
- viii. Did assumptions made during project design hold true?
- ix. Were assessed risks adequately dealt with?
- x. Was the level of communication and support from the implementing agency adequate and appropriate?

B. Flexibility

- i. Did the project have to undertake any adaptive management measures based on feedback received from the M&E process?
- ii. Were there other ways in which the project demonstrated flexibility?
- iii. Were there any challenges faced in this area?

C. Efficiency (cost-effectiveness)

- i. Was the project cost-effective?
- ii. Were expenditures in line with international standards and norms?
- iii. Was the project implementation delayed?
- iv. If so, did that affect cost-effectiveness?
- v. What was the contribution of cash and in-kind co-financing to project implementation?
- vi. To what extent did the project leverage additional resources?

D. Financial Management

- i. Was the project financing (from the GEF and other partners) at the level foreseen in the project document?
- ii. Were there any problems with disbursements between implementing and executing agencies?
- iii. Were financial audits conducted with the regularity and rigor required by the implementing agency?
- iv. Was financial reporting regularly completed at the required standards and level of detail?
- v. Did the project face any particular financial challenges such as unforeseen tax liabilities, management costs, or currency devaluation?

E. Co-financing (catalytic role)

- i. Was the in-kind co-financing received at the level anticipated in the project document?
- ii. Was the cash co-financing received at the level anticipated in the project document?
- iii. Did the project receive any additional unanticipated cash support after approval?

- iv. Did the project receive any additional unanticipated in-kind support after approval?

F. Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)

- i. Project implementation M&E
 - a. Was the M&E plan adequate and implemented sufficiently to allow the project to recognize and address challenges?
 - b. Were any unplanned M&E measures undertaken to meet unforeseen shortcomings?
 - c. Was there a mid-term evaluation?
 - d. How were project reporting and monitoring tools used to support adaptive management?
- ii. Environmental and socio-economic monitoring
 - a. Did the project implement a monitoring system, or leverage a system already in place, for environmental monitoring?
 - b. What are the environmental or socio-economic monitoring mechanisms?
 - c. Have any community-based monitoring mechanisms been used?
 - d. Is there a long-term M&E component to track environmental changes?
 - e. If so, what provisions have been made to ensure this is carried out?

E. Full disclosure

- i. Did the project meet this requirement?
- ii. Did the project face any challenges in this area?

III. ACTIVITIES / IMPLEMENTATION

A. Effectiveness

- i. How have the stated project objectives been met?
- ii. To what extent have the project objectives been met?
- iii. What were the key factors that contributed to project success or underachievement?
- iv. Can positive key factors be replicated in other situations, and could negative key factors have been anticipated?

B. Stakeholder involvement and public awareness (*participation*)

- i. What were the achievements in this area?
- ii. What were the challenges in this area?
- iii. How did stakeholder involvement and public awareness contribute to the achievement of project objectives?

IV. RESULTS

A. Outputs

- i. Did the project achieve the planned outputs?
- ii. Did the outputs contribute to the project outcomes and objectives?

B. Outcomes

- i. Were the anticipated outcomes achieved?

- ii. Were the outcomes relevant to the planned project impacts?

C. Impacts

- i. Was there a logical flow of inputs and activities to outputs, from outputs to outcomes, and then to impacts?
- ii. Did the project achieve its anticipated/planned impacts?
- iii. Why or why not?
- iv. If impacts were achieved, were they at a scale sufficient to be considered Global Environmental Benefits?
- v. If impacts or Global Environmental Benefits have not yet been achieved, are the conditions (enabling environment) in place so that they are likely to eventually be achieved?

D. Replication strategy, and documented replication or scaling-up (*catalytic role*)

- i. Did the project have a replication plan?
- ii. Was the replication plan “passive” or “active”?
- iii. Is there evidence that replication or scaling-up occurred within the country?
- iv. Did replication or scaling-up occur in other countries?

V. LESSONS LEARNED

- A. What were the key lessons learned in each project stage?
- B. In retrospect, would the project participants have done anything differently?

VI. SUSTAINABILITY

A. Financial

- i. To what extent are the project results dependent on continued financial support?
- ii. What is the likelihood that any required financial resources will be available to sustain the project results once the GEF assistance ends?
- iii. Was the project successful in identifying and leveraging co-financing?
- iv. What are the key financial risks to sustainability?

B. Socio-Political

- i. To what extent are the project results dependent on socio-political factors?
- ii. What is the likelihood that the level of stakeholder ownership will allow for the project results to be sustained?
- iii. Is there sufficient public/stakeholder awareness in support of the long-term objectives of the project?
- iv. What are the key socio-political risks to sustainability?

C. Institutions and Governance

- i. To what extent are the project results dependent on issues relating to institutional frameworks and governance?
- ii. What is the likelihood that institutional and technical achievements, legal frameworks, policies and governance structures and processes will allow for the project results to be sustained?
- iii. Are the required systems for accountability and transparency and the required technical know-how in place?

- iv. What are the key institutional and governance risks to sustainability?
- D. Ecological
 - i. Are there any environmental risks that can undermine the future flow of project impacts and Global Environmental Benefits?

E. Annex 5: Rating Scales

Progress towards results: use the following rating scale	
Highly Satisfactory (HS)	Project is expected to achieve or exceed all its major global environmental objectives, and yield substantial global environmental benefits, without major shortcomings. The project can be presented as "good practice".
Satisfactory (S)	Project is expected to achieve most of its major global environmental objectives, and yield satisfactory global environmental benefits, with only minor shortcomings.
Moderately Satisfactory (S)	Project is expected to achieve most of its major relevant objectives but with either significant shortcomings or modest overall relevance. Project is expected not to achieve some of its major global environmental objectives or yield some of the expected global environment benefits.
Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)	Project is expected to achieve its major global environmental objectives with major shortcomings or is expected to achieve only some of its major global environmental objectives.
Unsatisfactory (U)	Project is expected not to achieve most of its major global environment objectives or to yield any satisfactory global environmental benefits.
Highly Unsatisfactory (HU)	The project has failed to achieve, and is not expected to achieve, any of its major global environment objectives with no worthwhile benefits.
Adaptive management AND Management Arrangements: use the following rating scale	
Highly Satisfactory (HS)	The project has no shortcomings and can be presented as "good practice".
Satisfactory (S)	The project has minor shortcomings.
Moderately Satisfactory (S)	The project has moderate shortcomings.
Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)	The project has significant shortcomings.
Unsatisfactory (U)	The project has major shortcomings.
Highly Unsatisfactory (HU)	The project has severe shortcomings.
Sustainability: use the following rating scale	
Likely (L)	There are no or negligible risks that affect this dimension of sustainability/linkages
Moderately Likely (ML)	There are moderate risks that affect this dimension of sustainability/linkages
Moderately Unlikely (MU)	There are significant risks that affect this dimension of sustainability/linkages
Unlikely (U)	There are severe risks that affect this dimension of sustainability

F. Annex 6: Lao ABP Project Mid-term Review Mission Itinerary and Persons Interviewed

Date	Time	Description	Venue/Remark
12 May 2014		Starting contract with UNDP	
29 May 2014		Submission of inception report to UNDP. The Inception report should include methodology, approach, set of questions to be asked different key informants (central, provincial/district, and communities), preliminary literature review, detailed Mission plan, list of stakeholders for meeting.	Consultant
04 Jun 2014	10:00-12:00	Skype meeting on the draft Inception Report	UNDP team and consultant
Tuesday 10 Jun 2014		Fly to Vientiane, Lao PDR	
Wednesday 11 Jun 2014	08:00-08:30	Travel from Khamvongsa Hotel to UNDP office	ABP Project car
	08:30-09:30	Meeting UNDP Environment Unit Team <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ms. Margaret Jones Williams, Environment Unit Chief - Ms. Chitlatda Keomuongchanh, Programme Analyst, UNDP - Mr. Ole Pedersen, CTA - Mr. Josh Brann, International Consultant - Mr. Munelith Athsaphangthong, National Consultant 	UNDP office, Margaret's room
	09:30-10:00	Briefing on mission with UNDP DRR <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mr. Tzvetan, Acting DRRP - Ms. Chitlatda, Programme Analyst - Mr. Josh Brann, International Consultant - Mr. Munelith Athsaphangthong, National Consultant 	UNDP office, Tzvetan's room
	10:00-10:10	Travel from UNDP to ABP Project	UNDP Car
	10:10-12:00	Meeting with ABP Project team <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mr. Pheng Souvanthong, National Project Coordinator - Mr. Ole Pedersen, CTA - Ms. Koulap, Assistant Project coordinator - Ms. Viengthong, Project Accountant - Ms. Chitlatda Keomuongchanh, Programme Analyst - Mr. Josh Brann, International Consultant - Mr. Munelith Athsaphangthong, National Consultant 	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, ABP Project Office
	13:00-13:15	Travel from lunch place to TABI Office	Project car
	13:00-14:30	Meeting with TABI Project team <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mr. Chris Flint, CTA - Mr. Pheng Souvanthong, National Project Coordinator - Mr. Josh Brann, International Consultant - Mr. Munelith Athsaphangthong, National Consultant 	TABI Office
	14:30-15:00	Travel from TABI Office to NAFRI	ABP Project car
	15:00-16:00	Meeting with counterpart at National Forestry and Agriculture Research Institute (NAFRI) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dr. Bounthong, Director General - Mr. Josh Brann, International Consultant - Mr. Munelith Athsaphangthong, National Consultant 	NAFRI

Date	Time	Description	Venue/Remark
	16:00-16:30	Travel from NAFRI to Khamvongsa hotel	ABP Project car
Thursday 12 Jun 2014	07:10-07:30	Travel from hotel to Wattay airport	ABP Project car
	09:15-10:10	Flying from Vientiane to Luang Prabang province	QV111
	10'30-12:00	Travel from Luang Prabang to Phonexay district	
	13:00-15:00	Meeting with ABP related staff and officers, in Phonexay District <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mr Sichanh, APB Director cum Vice District Governor - Ms Chantamaly ABP PAFO Coordinator - Mr Khamphut, DAFO Coordinator, - Mr. Luesa, ABP District Facilitator cum head of DAFO - Mr Thongvan (Head to TSC) - Mr. Josh Brann, International Consultant - Mr. Munelith Athsaphangthong, National Consultant 	DAFO Office Project car
	15:00-14:00	Meeting with community representative <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Village chief (for one village only) - Villager 2 person - Mr. Luesa, ABP District Facilitator cum head of DAFO - Mr. Josh Brann, International Consultant - Mr. Munelith Athsaphangthong, National Consultant 	DAFO Office
	14:00-18:00	Travel from Phonexay to Luangprabang	Project car
	18:00	Check in at hotel	
Friday 13 Jun 2014	06:00-12:00	Travel from Luang Prabang to Xieng Khoung Province-Phoukhot	Project car
	13:00-15:00	Meeting with ABP Project and PAFO staff, Phoukhout District <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mr. Phetsamay, PAFO Coordinator - Mr. Amphone, DAFO Coordinator - Mr. Fuevue, ABP District Facilitator - Mr. Viengkham, Head of DAFO - Mr. Other, DAFO Staff, - Dr Thong Heu, District Health Office (or at visit site) - Mr. Josh Brann, International Consultant - Mr. Munelith Athsaphangthong, National Consultant 	DAFO Office
	15:00-16:00	Meeting with district authorities and representative from community <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mr. Khampone, Vice Governor - 2 villagers - Mr. Josh Brann, International Consultant - Mr. Munelith Athsaphangthong, National Consultant 	DAFO office
	16:00-18:00	Travel back to Phonsavan, Xiengkoung	Project car
	14:40-15:10 Weekend	Flying from Xieng Khoung to Vientiane	QV402
Sunday 15 Jun 2014	Weekend	Prepare initial findings and recommendations for consultation meeting or debriefing	At hotel
Monday 16 Jun 2014	8:00-08:30	Travel from Khamvongsa hotel to FAO	ABP Project car
	08:30-09:30	Meeting with FAO <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mr. Stephen Rudgaard, FAO Representative - Ms. Dalaphone, Programme Officer - Ms Nadine Azzu, Technical officer, FAO HQ - Mr Yuji Niino, Technical lead, FAO RAP - Mr. Josh Brann, International Consultant - Mr. Munelith Athsaphangthong, National Consultant 	FAO Office

Date	Time	Description	Venue/Remark
		- Mr. Ole Pedersen, CTA	
	09:30-09:45	Travel from FAO to LARReC	Project car
	09:45-10:45	Meeting with LARReC team - Dr. Sinthavong Vilavong, Deputy Director - Mr. Josh Brann, International Consultant - Mr. Munelith Athsaphangthong, National Consultant	LARRLEC Office
	10:45-11:00	Travel from LARREC to IUCN	Project car
	11:00-12:00	Meeting with IUCN - Mr. Banthom, Programme Officer, IUCN - Mr. Adam Starr, IUCN Country Program Manager - Mr. Josh Brann, International Consultant - Mr. Munelith Athsaphangthong, National Consultant	IUCN Office
	13:30-14:30	Travel from IUCN to Institute for Traditional Medicine	Project car
	14:30-15:30	Meeting with Medical Plant Protection Department team - Dr. Kongmany Sydara, Director - Mr. Josh Brann, International Consultant - Mr. Munelith Athsaphangthong, National Consultant	Medical Plant Protection Department
	15:30-16:00	Travel from Medical Plant Protection Department to MONRE	Project car
	16:00-17:00	Meeting with GEF Focal Point - Mr. Khamphadith, DDG, or Mr. Lonkham, DDG of Dept. of Environmental Promotion - Mr. Josh Brann, International Consultant - Mr. Munelith Athsaphangthong, National Consultant	Dept. Environment Promotion
	17:00	Travel from MONRE to Khamvongsa hotel	
Tuesday 17 Jun 2014	08:00-08:30	Travel from Khamvongsa Hotel to Plants Protection Center	Project car
	08:30-09:30	Meeting with Plants Protection Center (PPC) team - Mr. Syriphone Phitaksoon, the head of PPC - Ms. Viengkham Sendsoulivong, Deputy of PPC - Mr. Josh, International Consultant - Mr. Munelith Athsaphangthong, National Consultant	PPC office
	09:30-10:00	Travel from PPC office to UNDP	Project care
	10:30-12:00	Debriefing with UDNP team - Ms. Margaret Jones Williams, Environment Unit Chief - Ms. Chitlatda, Programme Analyst, UNDP - Mr. Josh, International Consultant - Mr. Munelith Athsaphangthong, National Consultant	Margaret's office
	13:00-16:00	Present initial finding to ABP Project team and UNDP and stakeholder based in Vientiane. - Ms. Margaret Jones Williams, Environment Unit Chief - Ms. Chitlatda Keomuengchanh, Programme Analyst, UNDP - Mr. Pheng, National Project Coordinator - Mr. Bounkong, Legal Focal Point - Mr. Ole Pedersen, CTA - Ms. Koulap, Assistant Project coordinator - Ms. Viengthong, Project Accountant - Dr. Bounthong, Director General - Mr. Stephen Rudgaard, FAO Representative	UNDP office

Date	Time	Description	Venue/Remark
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ms. Dalaphone, Programme Officer - Mr. Banthom, Programme Officer, IUCN - Dr. Kongmany Sydara, Director - Mr. Khamphadith, DDG, or Mr. Lonkham, DDG of Dept of Environmental Promotion - Mr. Syriphone Phitaksoon, the head of PPC - Ms. Viengkham Sendsoulivong, Deputy of PPC - Mr. Josh Brann, International Consultant - Mr. Munelith Athsaphangthong, National Consultant - Mr. Morakot Vongxay, Head of UN System Diversion, DIC of MPI 	
	16:15-17:00	Debriefing with UNDP DRRP <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mr. Tzvetan, Acting DRRP - Ms. Margaret Jones Williams, Environment Unit Chief - Ms. Chitlatda Keomuongchanh, Programme Analyst - Mr. Josh Brann, International Consultant - Mr. Munelith Athsaphangthong, National Consultant 	UNDP office, Tzvetan's office
	17:00	Travel from UNDP to Khamvongsa Hotel	UNDP car
Wednesday 18 Jun 2014		Leaving Vientiane, Lao PDR	
11 Jul 2014		Submission the 1 st draft review report to UNDP and ABP team for comments and feedbacks	Consultants
25 Jul 2014		Consolidate comments from ABP project team and UNDP and send back to consultants	ABP team and UNDP
1 Aug 2014		Submission of 2 nd draft review report to UNDP and ABP team for comments and feedbacks	Consultants
8 Aug 2014		Consolidate any additional comments from ABP project team and UNDP and send back to consultants for finalization	ABP team and UNDP
13 Aug 2014		Submission of a final version of the review report and invoice to UNDP and ABP team	Consultants
1-1.5 week		UNDP prepare the performance review form and proceed payment	UNDP team
22 Aug 2014		Contract end	

G. Annex 7: Documents Reviewed

ABP Project Documentation

Project Document (2011)

Project Inception Report (2011)

Project Quarterly and Annual Progress Reports, 2011-2013

FAO 6-month reports on implementation of ABP project activities (2012, 2013)

Annual Project Implementation Report (PIR) 2012, 2013

FAO-MAF Letter of Agreement

ABP Project Annual and Quarterly Workplans

ABP Project Documentation, Guidelines, Templates, etc. for the ABDI portion of the project

ABDI project proposals

ABDI Project Screening Meeting Minutes for January 9th, 2014

UNDP Completed and Signed Combined Delivery Report (CDR) for 2011, 2012, 2013, and January-June 2014

ABP Project Audit Report for 2011, 2012, and 2013

Communication (letters) between UNDP, MAF, and FAO regarding project implementation

1st draft revised and updated NABP (2014)

Draft Provincial Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan for Xieng Khouang Province (2013)

Consultant draft plans and presentations on Farmer Field School activities

GEF Tracking Tool for SP-2 completed for ABP project (baseline, mid-term)

Other Documents

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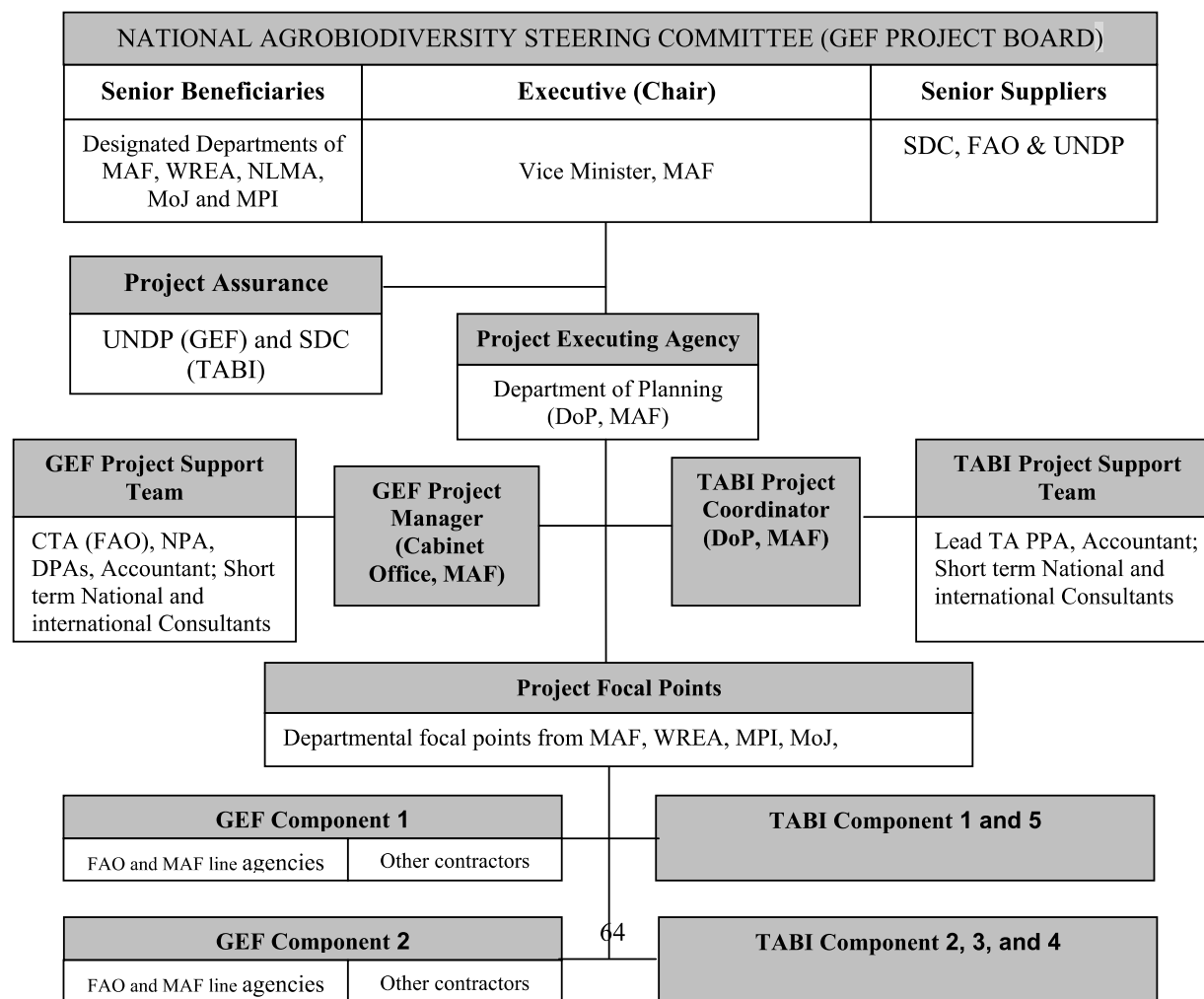
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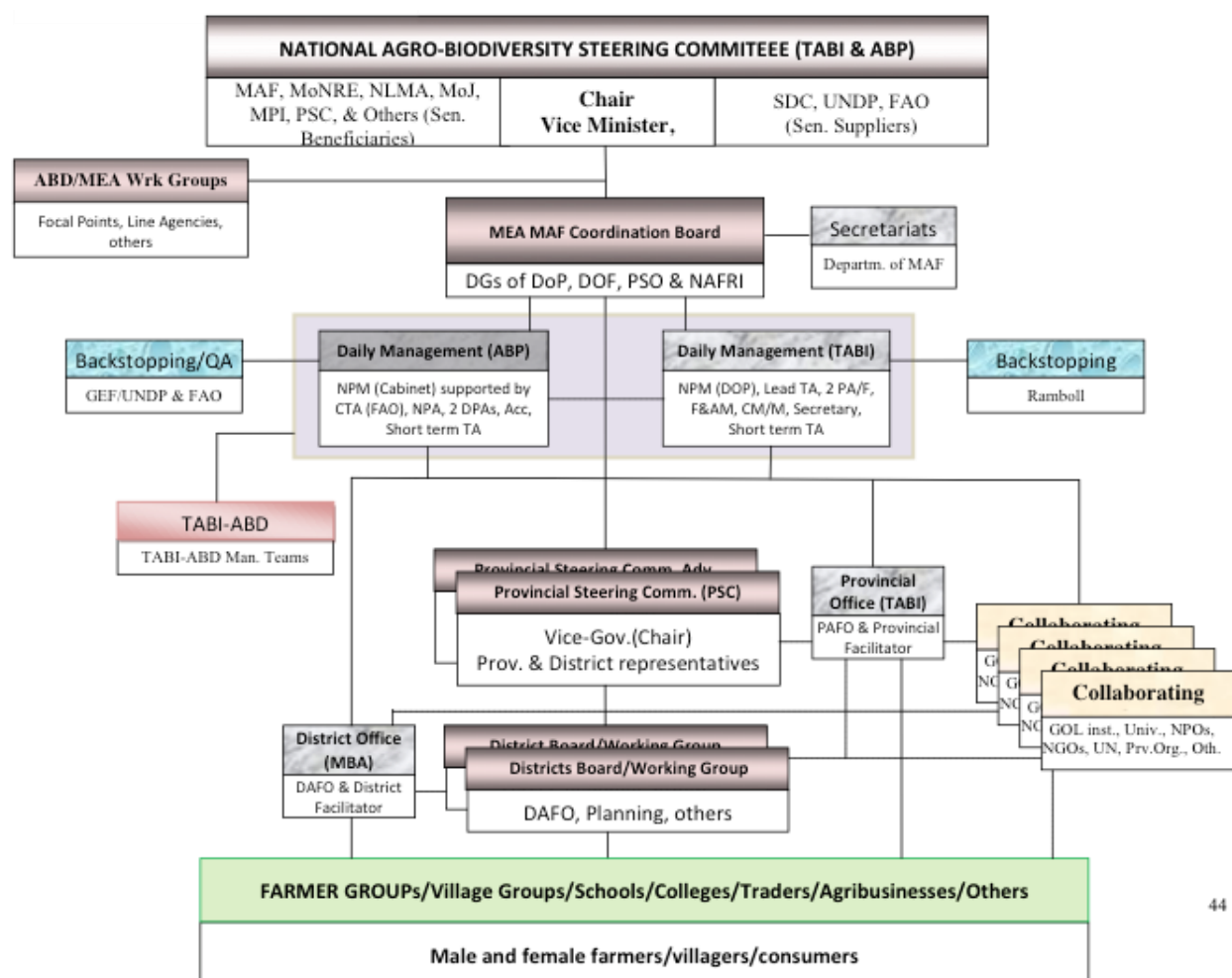
H. Annex 8: Planned Implementation Arrangements

Figure 7 Implementation Arrangements, as Planned in Project Document



Source: ABP Project Document

Figure 8 Implementation Arrangements, as Foreseen at Inception



Source: ABP Project Inception Report

I. Annex 9: ABP Project Results Framework and Assessed Level of Indicator Target Achievement

Results Framework Assessment Key

<i>Green = On-track</i>	<i>Yellow = Achievement Uncertain</i>	<i>Red = Achievement Unlikely</i>	<i>Gray = Not applicable</i>
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Component	Indicator	Baseline	Target	Level at 30 June 2013	Mid-term Review Assessment
To provide farmers with the necessary incentives, capabilities and supporting institutional framework to conserve agro-biodiversity within the farming systems of Lao PDR	Area of provincial agro-biodiversity conservation and sustainable use allocation	0	100,000 ha	300 ha As a result of the support to the formulation PBSAP the Provincial Government has allocated conservation areas at provincial and district levels (area to be specified during implementation of PBSAP). In addition, some 300 ha forest area for conservation of medicinal plants has been allocated in Xieng Khouang.	Achievement unlikely, considering the limited number of hectares incorporated thus far, and the lack of cohesive project strategy and focused activities to specifically increase the areas under conservation. The rationale for the target value is not clear, but nonetheless this is an indicator that could be considered to contribute to the overall GEF biodiversity focal area results framework. However, if the PBSAPs and/or pLUPS could be considered under implementation, at least in some specific areas of the target provinces, the target could potentially be met.
National policy and institutional frameworks for sustainable use, and in-situ conservation of biodiversity in agro-ecosystems	Number of new national plans, policies, laws, and guidelines with agro-biodiversity	Land use policies and legal instruments do not include focus on biodiversity (especially agro biodiversity). Agriculture Law does not incorporate emphasis on biodiversity, including agro-biodiversity. Integration of biodiversity related criteria into ESIA guidelines are poor.	6	3 The ABP project has provided significant inputs to NBSAP, PBSAP, and the Upland Development Strategy. Inputs have also been provided to the Agriculture Law, the Forestry Law, and the Land Policy. An updated legal framework assessment (gaps and recommendations) is being carried out and will form the basis for ABP priority settings and action plan.	Achievement uncertain. With some focused effort it is likely that the project will provide inputs related to agro-biodiversity conservation to 6 or more policies, sector plans, or legislation by the end of the project. However, a specific analysis would be required to assess the extent to which agro-biodiversity considerations have actually been incorporated in the targeted plans and policies, and the extent to which these are or are likely to be implemented. This may be partially addressed through completion of the GEF tracking tool, although this is a fairly blunt instrument for such analysis. In addition, the rationale for the target value is not clear. The target should be

Component	Indicator	Baseline	Target	Level at 30 June 2013	Mid-term Review Assessment
					based on an analysis of the actual gaps in the policy and legislative framework relevant to agro-biodiversity.
	Number of national workshops with biodiversity content	Emphasis on agro-biodiversity in BD strategy and action plan is weak	10 workshops	4 Including one workshop on agrobiodiversity related laws organized in the PIR period	Achievement likely. With a concerted effort the project could achieve the target for this indicator. However, the results-based rationale for the target is highly unclear, as the indicator is output rather than outcome focused – how will agro-biodiversity actually benefit from 10 workshops being held instead of 5, or in comparison to 15?
	Number of yearly agro-biodiversity inter-sectoral coordination meetings	Currently, there is no formal coordination mechanism for agro-biodiversity conservation	2 yearly meetings	0 A subsector working group on Agrobiodiversity will be established on 11 July 2013 and will meet at least twice a year.	Achievement likely. Two meeting have been held in the year since the sub-sector working group was constituted. This is one of the specific areas where there may be some significant outcome level and results-focused benefits from the ABP project, but the opportunity must be taken to enhance the sub-sector working group meetings, and ensure that they serve as a dynamic and catalytic influence for the benefit of agro-biodiversity conservation in Lao PDR.
	Number of GOL officers participated in meetings where agro-biodiversity issues are discussed	Institutional and staff capacities of MAF/GOL to mainstream biodiversity into agriculture and land use policies are low.	500 officers	175 Including 40 GOL agriculture law officers attended workshop on agro-biodiversity related laws in the Agriculture and Rural Development Sector	Achievement uncertain. The target value could potentially be achieved by the end of the project, but this represents another output rather than outcome focused indicator. The rationale for the target value is not clear. What will actually be achieved by this number of government employees participating in meetings where agro-biodiversity issues are discussed?
	Number of tools developed to support and enhanced incorporation of agro-biodiversity into national and institutional frameworks	Existing tools such as training, extension, communication and mapping are not adequately used for wider stakeholder awareness or mainstream biodiversity into their work	6 tools	2 In the PIR period, a pocket book of AB related laws (key content and in Lao language) has been developed to support and enhance incorporation of agro-biodiversity into national and institutional frameworks and targeted local administrations	Unable to assess. The term “tools” is not sufficiently defined to allow assessment of this indicator. In addition, the target rationale for this indicator is highly unclear as this is a “supply driven” indicator, solely reflecting planned project activities, rather than a “demand driven” indicator, responding to identified and defined needs or gaps in support of agro-biodiversity conservation.
Capacities and incentives to mainstream biodiversity, especially	Number of farmers adopting skills and techniques promoted	Existing strategies and capacity building for 2 target provinces agriculture land use do not	1,000 farmers	0 Farmer Field Schools (FFS)/Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Strategy and implementation plan consultancy	Achievement uncertain. The ABP project may succeed in reaching the target, but even if it does, the results-based rationale

Component	Indicator	Baseline	Target	Level at 30 June 2013	Mid-term Review Assessment
agro-biodiversity, at the Provincial, District and community levels	through FFS and farmer field days	incorporate biodiversity conservation. Existing training and extension do not incorporate agro-biodiversity conservation issues.		started to formulate a Farmer Field School/Integrated Pest Management project strategy and implementation plan. FFS and IPM currently being carried out by the consultant, a report and proposal will be available in August.	for the target value is highly unclear. The population of the two pilot districts is approximately 60,000 persons, and the potential future application and likely replication of the specific skills from the FFS would have to be carefully assessed to determine the potential value of this activity in terms of conservation of agro-biodiversity. This would require detailed analysis of the specific agricultural practices and species or landraces targeted.
	Number of Technical Service Centers in cluster villages with agro-biodiversity conservation and sustainable use activities	Existing strategies and capacity building for 2 target provinces; agriculture land use do not incorporate biodiversity.	4 TSCs	0 Land use planning in 3 cluster villages have been agreed with TABI and considered with agro-biodiversity conservation. Further, IPM/FFS and technical training need assessment and follow-up training is planned for the TSCs.	Achievement likely. The project is specifically supporting two technical service centers, one in each of the target pilot districts. Expansion or replication of activities would then only be required in two additional districts. While the logical rationale for the target is not entirely clear, there is at least a clear logic chain relating to capacity development for the agriculture extension services in each district, and a known normative status – that ALL districts in Lao PDR are undertaking agro-biodiversity conservation and sustainable use activities. At the same time, the indicator would benefit greatly from clearer definition of what level and type of activity qualifies TSCs as counting toward the target value.
	Number of cluster villages with pFLUP plans	Existing area with participatory land use plans and participatory are low and do not include agro-biodiversity conservation.	8 cluster villages	0 So far, three cluster villages with pFLUP have been identified and cost sharing agreed in principle with TABI to develop these plans. The pFLUP is scheduled to start during the second half of 2013.	Achievement unlikely under current project plans and activities. The project will need to catalyze wide replication of the pLUP experiences from the TABI funded activities to ensure achievement of the target. The results-based logical rationale for the target is unclear, as it is not evident what achieving this indicator target will actually contribute to the status of agro-biodiversity. At a minimum the indicator should focus on implementation of the pLUPs, not just their existence.
	Number of districts with	Currently there is no formal	8 districts	1 Medicinal plants and other	Achievement uncertain. The project will

Component	Indicator	Baseline	Target	Level at 30 June 2013	Mid-term Review Assessment
	in-situ agro-biodiversity conservation plans	allocation of land for in-situ conservation of agro-biodiversity.		conservation areas have been or being allocated by Provincial and District authorities. So far, one district has allocated one areas as result of project interventions.	need to make a concerted effort on this activity to meet the target. However, the indicator is insufficiently defined to be useful in assessing project results. Re: "Districts with..." Does this mean that the district has formally adopted this plan at the local governance level? Or just that a plan has been drafted? What is the level of implementation required to count towards the indicator? Etc.
	Number of male and female farmers graduated from FFS	Existing training and extension do not incorporate agro-biodiversity conservation issues	1,000 persons 50% of women targeted	0 In planning phase	Achievement uncertain. This target may be achieved, depending on the ultimate level of execution of the FFS programs, and the actual attendance at the training sessions. This indicator would benefit from being phrased in a more meaningful sense, rather than just the percentage of women graduating from FFS. Considering the cultural context of Lao PDR, what percentage of women participating in the FFS would be considering beneficial or meaningful? Applying a logic-chain approach, how are these women then going to translate what they learn into benefits for agro-biodiversity? Why is it actually important, in the context of the ABP pilot districts in Lao PDR, to have women participating in the FFS program? Most likely the answers to these questions are well known, but they need to be articulated and documented in order to support results-based management.
	Number of improved agro-biodiversity products marketed for local or international markets	Existing market for agro-biodiversity and biodiversity friendly products are ineffective.	8 products	0 Still in the planning stage.	Achievement unlikely. There are not substantive project activities in progress or planned in relation to these activities - other than potentially through the ABDI sub-projects. Regardless, the results-based rationale for this indicator is highly unclear, as the normative status and logic chain are not sufficiently defined.
	Number of private-public sector agro-biodiversity agreements	Private and public sectors involvement and incentives for biodiversity conservation are extremely limited.	3	0	Achievement unlikely. However, this is not a meaningful indicator to assess project results. It would actually not be difficult for the project to meet this target, but the

Component	Indicator	Baseline	Target	Level at 30 June 2013	Mid-term Review Assessment
					value of reaching it is unclear. As with the previous indicator, the normative status and logic chain for this activity are highly unclear. As recommended in the main body of the review report, the project would be better served by helping to document and define the economic landscape in relation to agro-biodiversity, with some scoping of the potential normative status. This is a particularly challenging area of work, because it is a highly dynamic area related to the overall economic situation in Lao, and in relation to Lao PDR's international trade flows.
Effective project management	Number of strategic recommendations from the Agro-biodiversity Steering committee	Lack of programme management capacity in general and integrated programmatic approach in particular	6	0 Common steering with TABI, yet to be established.	Achievement uncertain. On the current trajectory the sub-sector working group is not likely to contribute such "strategic recommendations". However, the ABP project has the potential to support and stimulate the sub-sector working group to be a dynamic and strategic body in the context of agro-biodiversity conservation in Lao PDR. The results-based rationale for the target is uncertain, but the potential value of the sub-sector working group contributing strategic recommendations to relevant policy discussions is clear. On a side note, this is a results-based, rather than process-oriented, indicator, and should be considered under Outcome 1 of the project.
	Number of meetings with TABI Number of MAF organized cross project meetings	programmatic approach not fully operational.	40 meetings with TABI 10 MAF organized cross project meetings 15 Provincial Steering Committee meeting	12 Sector working group meetings on Agriculture and Rural Development and Sub sector Working Groups on Uplands, Forest, and Agri-business have been organized by the MoNRE and MAF. Agrobiodiversity issues have been flagged during these meetings and added to the new upland strategy paper.	Achievement unlikely. The target values for this indicator appear to be optimistic considering the current level of activity. This indicator is likely to be rendered meaningless in the 2 nd half of the project, as the project coordinator for TABI will also be the project coordinator for the ABP project.

Suggested Results Framework Revisions

Component	Current Indicator	Current Target	Proposed Indicator Revision	Proposed Target	Explanation and Justification
Objective: To provide farmers with the necessary incentives, capabilities and supporting institutional framework to conserve agro-biodiversity within the farming systems of Lao PDR	Area of provincial agro-biodiversity conservation and sustainable use allocation	100,000 ha	Area under improved management for conservation of agro-biodiversity directly and indirectly influenced by the ABP project.	No change, however it should be clarified what % area of the agricultural land in the Luang Prabang province and Xieng Khouang province this represents (or % of total area of the provinces, as non-agricultural area, such as forests and water bodies can also be relevant for agro-biodiversity conservation). It should also be stated how and why this figure was chosen as a relevant target.	It should be clarified that this target is to be met through positive steps toward implementation of the PBSAPs and pLUPs completed in the pilot provinces/districts. The project should focus its efforts on demonstrating examples and actions where land-use and land-use planning decisions have been influenced to be aligned with the PBSAPs and pLUPs that have been completed in the first half of the project (in addition to ensuring that the PBSAPs and pLUPS have gone through all necessary formal approval and adoption procedures).
			New objective level indicator: GEF SP-2 Tracking Tool Score for policy and regulatory frameworks: The following conditions can be confirmed: a.) Biodiversity considerations are mentioned in sector policy; b.) Biodiversity conservation and sustainable use is mentioned in sector policy through specific legislation; c.) Regulations are in place to implement the legislation; d.) Regulations are under implementation; e.) Implementation of regulations is enforced, e.) Enforcement of regulations is monitored	6 out of 6 for the agriculture, fisheries, and forestry sectors	The GEF-5 results framework target is for 50% of projects to achieve scores of 6 for the respective sectors in which they are working. Note: It is not clear if a baseline tracking tool was completed prior to project start, but the tracking tool completed at mid-term gives a score of 2 for each of the sectors. A score of 6 may be overambitious for the scope and resources of the ABP project, but it is in-line with the GEF biodiversity results framework target, although it may be the case that the project falls into the 50% of projects that do not achieve a score of 6. In addition, paying attention to meeting this indicator should help the project strengthen its results-focus, by focusing on the practical steps and measures required to move toward actual implementation and enforcement of relevant policies, legislation and regulations that support the conservation of agro-biodiversity.
			New objective level impact indicator: Number of agro-biodiversity taxonomic groups with improved status in the two pilot districts	Four	The project would benefit from including impact-level indicators, to support a results-based approach, and to potentially demonstrate contribution to actual impact level results by the end of the project, through the ABDI projects or

Component	Current Indicator	Current Target	Proposed Indicator Revision	Proposed Target	Explanation and Justification
					<p>other project activities.</p> <p>A target would ideally be identified based on the number of taxonomic groups identified in the pilot districts, and an analysis of the potential for the project to influence the status of these groups based on the time and resources available, and the project strategy.</p> <p>However, barring in-lieu of this complex analysis, this review suggests a target of four, representing the major overall groups of agro-biodiversity, such as NTFPs, crop and crop-associated biodiversity, aquatic agro-biodiversity, and livestock. The target may potentially be met through the ABDI project activities.</p> <p>"Improved conservation status" can be defined as agro-biodiversity species with increased populations, improved habitats, improved situation with respect to on-the-ground threats to agro-biodiversity species or ecosystems, or any other measure deemed scientifically valid relating to the status of agro-biodiversity.</p>
Outcome 1: National policy and institutional frameworks for sustainable use, and in-situ conservation of biodiversity in agro-ecosystems	Number of new national plans, policies, laws, and guidelines with agro-biodiversity	6	No revision proposed, though the project should clarify the rationale for the target number.		It should be clarified what policy or legislative gaps the proposed revisions, plans, policies, guidelines, etc. would be filling with respect to agro-biodiversity conservation. The key result is not the number of documents produced, but the shortcomings or gaps that are being addressed.
	Number of national workshops with biodiversity content	10 workshops	Suggest to DELETE indicator.		This is a highly output-based indicator, without any clear logical linkage to potential outcome or impact level results. Focusing on meeting this indicator target may needlessly draw project focus and resources away from the core project activities, which should be focused at the outcome level.
	Number of yearly agro-biodiversity inter-sectoral coordination meetings	2 yearly meetings	Number of strategic inputs to the policy and legislative process produced by the inter-sectoral working group, as demonstrated through policy papers or other forms	Two per year.	The number of meetings held by the group is not highly relevant, but the activities and outputs of the group can be. The group should be focused on providing strategic input and guidance, regarding of the number of annual meetings held.

Component	Current Indicator	Current Target	Proposed Indicator Revision	Proposed Target	Explanation and Justification
			of strategic inputs to the development of policies such as the NABP.		The proposed target value is based on the estimated time that it may take the group to confer on strategic inputs and produce an output.
	Number of GOL officers participated in meetings where agro-biodiversity issues are discussed	500 officers	Suggest to DELETE indicator.		The number of people participating in meetings where biodiversity is discussed is not highly relevant as an actual measure of outcome level results for conserving agro-biodiversity. An improved indicator would be something like an increase in awareness and understanding of agro-biodiversity among key staff, but it would not be possible to reconstruct the baseline for such an indicator at this point in the project's life.
	Number of tools developed to support and enhanced incorporation of agro-biodiversity into national and institutional frameworks	6 tools	No revision suggested, though the project would benefit from clearer definition of "tools", and with an explanation for the rationale behind the target value.		See comment under proposed revision.
Outcome 2: Capacities and incentives to mainstream biodiversity, especially agro-biodiversity, at the Provincial, District and community levels	Number of farmers adopting skills and techniques promoted through FFS and farmer field days	1,000 farmers	No revision suggested, though see comments under explanation at right. In addition, the rationale for the target value should be clarified.		The mid-term review does not find the indicator to be strongly in-line with SMART criteria, as there is not a clear indication of the relevance of the target, or of the indicator in terms of the actual benefit for the conservation of agro-biodiversity. Within the two pilot districts there are likely 60-80,000 people, the majority of which make their livelihoods from agriculture. Thus the number of farmers adopting skills promoted through FFS does not provide a sufficiently strong logical linkage to actual agro-biodiversity conservation benefits or reduction of threats. It is not clear what components of agro-biodiversity would potentially be benefiting, the area to be covered under improved techniques and skills, the number of people to actually benefit from improved skills, etc. In addition, there is insufficiently clear definition of "adopting" and "skills": how will this be measured? What activity by farmers after FFS training would be considered to qualify as having adopted the skills and techniques promoted? What if a farmer applies the

Component	Current Indicator	Current Target	Proposed Indicator Revision	Proposed Target	Explanation and Justification
					skills and techniques learned to his or her 10 square meter subsistence garden, but not to his 4-5 hectares of commercial rice production? Over what period? What if a farmer applies the skills during the first year after training, but then decides not to apply the skills in subsequent years? Indicators and targets used to assess results of farmer field schools need to be much more outcome/impact oriented, and the actual activity of farmer field schools itself needs to be more clearly and logically linked and justified in terms of the results-chain leading to actual agro-biodiversity conservation impact-level results.
			Proposed new indicator: Representation of farmers participating in FFS activities to increase understanding and knowledge of farming practices that are supportive of agro-biodiversity	At least two farmers from at least 50% of villages in pilot districts	Indicator attempts to capture the logical linkage of the catalytic action expected by training a limited number of farmers in FFS activities, relating to the fact that farmers are expected to return to their villages and share their experiences and knowledge with their communities.
	Number of Technical Service Centers in cluster villages with agro-biodiversity conservation and sustainable use activities	4 TSCs	No revision suggested, though the rationale for the target figure could be made clearer, and the benchmark for assessing the presence of conservation and sustainable use activities could be clarified or better defined. In addition, the indicator would benefit from much greater specificity about which specific elements of agro-biodiversity are being targeted, the potential threats being addressed, and the nature of conservation and sustainable use activities promoted.		It would be helpful if the indicator, or an attached explanatory note, confirmed the logical linkage between agro-biodiversity conservation and sustainable use activities at the TSCs and subsequent expected beneficial outcomes and impacts. For example, evidently there is the (reasonable) assumption that once there are TSCs with agro-biodiversity conservation and sustainable use activities these will then somehow be effectively and broadly transferred to the surrounding communities, who will then apply such activities in their own agricultural practices.
	Number of cluster villages with pFLUP plans	8 cluster villages	Suggested revision: Number of cluster villages with pFLUP plans adopted and beginning implementation.	Suggested revision: 8 cluster villages with at least two demonstrated actions or activities representing implementation of pFLUPS, or with actions covering at	To improve the results-focus of the indicator it should be clarified that the pFLUPs will have reached final approval stage from the cluster villages, and then are actually being applied in some way or another – and not just that

Component	Current Indicator	Current Target	Proposed Indicator Revision	Proposed Target	Explanation and Justification
				least 10% of the area under their pFLUP.	development of the pFLUPs was an output without follow-up or implementation. In addition, it appears that the TABI project has actually led the development of the pFLUP plans in the pilot districts, and that this is not a result that the ABP project has significantly contributed to. Where the contribution of the ABP project can be highly useful is in supporting the actual implementation, monitoring and enforcement of the pFLUPs.
			Proposed new indicator: Number of districts initiating pFLUP process based on experience shared from pFLUP process in the two ABP project pilot districts.	Suggested target: Two – at least one example of replication initiated in a neighboring district for each pilot district.	This indicator attempts to emphasize the necessary catalytic nature of the pFLUP activity, to start replication beyond just the ABP project pilot districts. In addition, considering that the TABI project was primarily responsible for completing the pFLUP process in the ABP project pilot districts, the ABP project's role could then be to support the initiation of replication of this process to other neighboring districts.
	Number of districts with in-situ agro-biodiversity conservation plans	8 districts	No change suggested, or potentially delete as repetitive.		Unclear if this indicator is referring to pFLUPs, other types of "in-situ agro-biodiversity conservation plans" or replication of pFLUP experiences from pilot districts to other neighboring districts.
	Number of male and female farmers graduated from FFS	1,000 persons 50% of women targeted	No change suggested.		See previous comment for first Outcome 2 indicator, regarding "Number of farmers adopting...." In addition, it appears that this is virtually a duplicate indicator of the above, with the exception of the extension relating to 50% of women – thus the indicators could be consolidated into one.
	Number of improved agro-biodiversity products marketed for local or international markets	8 products	Suggest to DELETE indicator.		It does not appear that project activities to meet this indicator would make any significant contribution to outcome-level results that could be sustained, at least not without more specific information about the volume of trade to be achieved, the area of the products under cultivation as a share of total agricultural area in the pilot districts, or potential influence on the status of species targeted for improved marketing.
			Proposed new indicator: Level of knowledge and understanding of economic	At least one publication disseminated at national level analyzing economic forces and	To adequately respond to threats and challenges affecting agro-biodiversity there is a need for increased understanding and awareness of the

Component	Current Indicator	Current Target	Proposed Indicator Revision	Proposed Target	Explanation and Justification
			forces and incentives affecting agro-biodiversity in Lao PDR, and particularly in the ABP project pilot districts.	incentives influencing the status of at least one of the four main components (as outlined in the NABP) of agro-biodiversity based on data and experience from the ABP pilot districts, and other locations as relevant. Inclusion of policy options for responding to economic forces and incentives in support of agro-biodiversity would also be beneficial.	influence of economic forces and incentives. The ABP project's original approach of improving marketing for agro-biodiversity projects and establishing private-public agreements is not sufficiently grounded, specific, or contextualized to provide a results-oriented approach for improving the status of agro-biodiversity in a meaningful way. Note: This could potentially be carried out in partnership with the TEEB for agro-biodiversity initiative, which would provide a framework for the analysis, and a potential means or mechanism for broader dissemination of the Lao PDR situation and experience.
	Number of private-public sector agro-biodiversity agreements	3	Suggest to DELETE indicator.		It is not clear that achieving this indicator would generate any would make any significant contribution to outcome-level results that could be sustained, at least not without more specific information about the size or nature of the private sector partners to be engaged, or the nature of the private-public agreements to be negotiated. This review report has previously recommended that this activity of the project be refocused on increasing understanding of economic forces and incentives influencing agricultural practices that impact components of agro-biodiversity.
Effective project management	Number of strategic recommendations from the Agro-biodiversity Steering committee	6	Suggest to DELETE or move to Outcome 1, with clearer reference to the ABSSWG, not the steering committee.		Project management indicators should not normally be part of the project results framework, though it can be appropriate to keep a separate reference document tracking project management progress. However, typical project management indicators should include items such as timeliness and comprehensiveness of reporting, timeliness and accuracy of project workplanning and financial record keeping, follow-up on decision-making, overall project financial performance, level of communication with key project stakeholders, number of project steering committee meetings held, etc.
	Number of meetings with TABI Number of MAF organized cross project	40 meetings with TABI 10 MAF organized cross project meetings 15 Provincial Steering	Suggest to DELETE indicator.		Project management indicators should not normally be part of the project results framework, though it can be appropriate to keep a separate reference document tracking project management

Component	Current Indicator	Current Target	Proposed Indicator Revision	Proposed Target	Explanation and Justification
	meetings	Committee meeting			progress. However, typical project management indicators should include items such as timeliness and comprehensiveness of reporting, timeliness and accuracy of project workplanning and financial record keeping, follow-up on decision-making, overall project financial performance, level of communication with key project stakeholders, number of project steering committee meetings held, etc.

Example Draft Results Chain for Conservation and Sustainable Use of Agro-biodiversity in Lao PDR

Activities/Outputs	Drivers	Outcomes	Intermediate State	Impact
Determined based on subsequent elements of the results chain	Techniques and approaches supportive of agro-biodiversity successfully demonstrated	Farmers have knowledge and understanding of practices supportive of agro-biodiversity	Farmers are applying farming practices and making land-management decisions (e.g. crop selection, organic production, etc.) that are supportive of agro-biodiversity	Improved status of agro-biodiversity species and habitats
	Knowledge and experience about techniques and approaches supportive of agro-biodiversity disseminated			AND
	Validated experiences of beneficial and successful demonstration activities from colleagues	Farmers have incentives to apply practices and knowledge		Reduced threats to agro-biodiversity
	Markets for agricultural products that enhance conservation and sustainable use of agro-biodiversity exist, are accessible, and offer greater cost-benefit ratio than markets that don't support conservation of agro-			

	biodiversity			
	Knowledge and data about status of agro-biodiversity, and threats and barriers to conservation and sustainable use	Local decision makers have information and decision-making tools to support conservation and sustainable use of agro-biodiversity	Local decision-makers are making decisions and supporting approaches that support conservation and sustainable use of agro-biodiversity	

J. Annex 10: National Agricultural Biodiversity Program (2004) Results Framework Outputs

Component 1: Crop and crop associated biodiversity (C-CAB)
Output 1.1: Improved understanding of crop and crop associated biodiversity (C-CAB) as well as production systems and agro-ecosystems in Lao PDR for their sustainable management
Output 1.2: Establishment of a comprehensive Information and Monitoring Systems
Output 1.3: Documented and disseminated successful management practices
Output 1.4: Improved <i>in situ</i> conservation of PGRFA and C-CAB
Output 1.5: Improved management and understanding of national <i>ex situ</i> collections of PGRFA
Output 1.6: Increased production and diversification through: sustainable utilization of PGRFA and C-CAB, use of high quality planting material and enhancing the availability of quality seeds and other planting materials
Output 1.7: Enhanced post harvest technologies and facilities
Output 1.8: Improved infrastructure for crop and crop associated biodiversity management
Output 1.9: Strengthened capacities of stakeholders in the crop sector
Output 1.10: Increased awareness of the value of PGRFA and C-CAB conservation and utilization for food security, nutrition and sustainable livelihoods
Output 1.11: Enhanced enabling policy environment for the promotion of sustainable production and diversification of subsistence and industrial crops
Output 1.12: Available soil information: biological, chemical and physical structure for sustainable use
Output 1.13: Enhanced legal framework to support the development of an action plan related to C-CAB
Component 2: Livestock Development and Management
Output 2.1: Improved understanding of animal genetic resources diversity in Lao PDR, including potential utilization of wild species
Output 2.2: Improved husbandry of indigenous livestock and poultry populations
Output 2.3: Genetic improvement of indigenous livestock species
Output 2.4: Expanded small animal husbandry
Output 2.5: Enhanced capacity building in the livestock sector
Output 2.6: Enhanced legal frameworks to support development and action plans in the livestock sector
Component 3: Non-Timber Forest Products (including medicinal plants) and other Terrestrial Biodiversity residing outside forests
Output 3.1: Improved understanding of existing NTFPs relevant to food security and sustainable livelihoods
Output 3.2: Improved understanding of human management of and economic markets for NTFPs contributing to food security and sustainable livelihoods
Output 3.3: Demonstrate sustainable and profitable participatory management (harvesting, processing, marketing, domestication and cultivation) of NTFPs at pilot project field sites (both sedentary and rotational cultivation)
Output 3.4: Develop and test mechanisms for regulation of consumption and trade in NTFP resources with a view to strengthen legal and policy frameworks
Output 3.5: Strengthen institutional and human capacity at the community and national levels to promote the sustainable use of NTFPs
Output 3.6: Establish a national level information exchange system (clearing house mechanism) on NTFPs
Output 3.7: Collect endangered NTFPs species for conservation and development
Component 4: Sustainable use and conservation of aquatic biodiversity
Output 4.1: Improved understanding of the status of aquatic resources for food security and sustainable livelihoods
Output 4.2: Strengthened institutional and human capacity at the community level to promote the sustainable use of aquatic resources for food security and sustainable livelihoods
Output 4.3: Strengthened management capacity at the national, provincial and regional levels to support sustainable aquatic resource development for food security and sustainable livelihood
Output 4.4: Increased understanding of importance of aquatic resources among policy makers, rural inhabitants, and other stakeholders

Component 5: Household-based integrated agriculture production systems and nutrition development
Output 5.1: An assessment of the impact of household-based integrated agriculture production systems (home gardens) on the sustainable livelihood of people
Output 5.2: Expansion and improved household-based integrated agriculture production systems in target households to increase the amount and variety of nutritious food including fruits, vegetables, small animals, and fish and other aquatic resources
Output 5.3: Improved understanding of nutrition
Component 6: Management Arrangements
Output 6.1: A National Agricultural Biodiversity Programme Coordinating Committee to provide overall policy guidance to ensure effective implementation of activities under Programme
Output 6.2: A National Agricultural Biodiversity Programme Management Unit
Output 6.3: A National Agricultural Biodiversity Advisory Board
Component 7: Integrated Participatory Planning Approaches
Output 7.1 Improved land use planning
Output 7.2 Enhanced application of Environmental Impact Assessment
Output 7.3 Waste Management
Output 7.4 Alien Species Prevention and Control

K. Annex 11: Lao ABP Project Mainstreaming of UNDP Programme Principles

UNDAF / CPAP / CPD	The ABP project is aligned with the UNDP-Lao PDR Country Program Action Plan Country Program Document, and the UN Development Assistance Framework for Lao PDR.
Poverty-Environment Nexus / Sustainable Livelihoods	As a project focused on biodiversity and agriculture, with specific field-level activities, the ABP project is closely and inherently addressing the Poverty-Environment Nexus and Sustainable Livelihoods. In particular, the ABDI sub-projects will be directly focused on demonstrating sustainable livelihood activities related to agro-biodiversity.
Disaster Risk Reduction, Climate Change Mitigation/Adaptation	This is not directly relevant for the scope of the ABP project, although the project's work to improve the conservation of agro-biodiversity is taking potential climate change impacts into consideration.
Crisis Prevention and Recovery	This is not relevant in the context of the ABP project.
Gender Equality / Mainstreaming	The ABP project does have elements that are relevant in the context of gender equality and mainstreaming, in particular the project's work with farmers in the local communities in the Phonxay and Phoukout pilot districts. Within the ABDI project proposals there is consideration of and support for the role of women. For example, in the proposal for the activity on mushroom cultivation, the proposal document states, "After November upland rice harvest especially the women has little to do – thus the most obvious target group for mushroom cultivation. Women will take responsibility for cultivation and sales, whereas the men will be responsible for transport of materials and construction of simple growing houses. The project results framework also includes some gender disaggregated indicators, such as the following: Indicator: "Number of male and female farmers graduated from FFS" Target: "1,000 persons 50% of women targeted".
Capacity Development	The ABP project includes specific activities and elements directly focusing on strengthening capacity for the conservation of agro-biodiversity. This includes the inputs to the country's policy and legislative framework related to agro-biodiversity, and the various field level activities including training of DAFO and PAFO staff, farmer field schools, and implementation of the ABDI projects. It should also be noted that working with local stakeholders through the process of developing qualifying ABDI proposals has in itself been a capacity development exercise.
Rights	This is not directly relevant in the context of the ABP project, although farmer land use and land tenure rights are an important element in the overall strategy and approach for conserving agro-biodiversity in Lao PDR.

L. Annex 12: Completed GEF Biodiversity Focal Area SP-2 Tracking Tool

See accompanying document.