



UNDP/GEF Project: “Developing the Protected Area System of Armenia” (PIMS 3986)

Management Response to Terminal Evaluation (TE) Recommendations

TE Recommendations	Response/Action Taken	Responsible	Timing
General			
<p>1. The project document was very well prepared: it clearly describes and analyses the general problem (threat to biodiversity), the causes (overexploitation, unregulated tourism, habitat loss, climate change), as well as the solutions, (alleviating habitat fragmentation, improvement of management), together with the barriers: inadequate policy instruments, limited institutional capacities.</p>	<p>Noted. The UNDP Armenia Country Office (UNDP CO) and the Ministry of Nature Protection (MNP) will continue joint efforts in development of high standard project documents.</p>	<p>UNDP CO MNP</p>	<p>2014/10 and then after</p>
<p>2. While the above cited barriers the project is expected to address are described in a few words, the tasks that are required, and the time needed, should not be underestimated. In the view of the Mission, achieving the proposed solutions cited above is realistic when starting off with institutions that are well developed, and that are effective and functional at all levels. In the case of the project, this was very unlikely.</p>	<p>Already during the first year of project implementation it has become clear that required “rationalization of the protected areas system” needs improvements on the level of laws and not only by-laws. Although the package of draft laws operationalizing new type of protected areas was approved by the cabinet and submitted to the National Assembly in May 2013, the approval by the parliament is still pending. Therefore in the future projects time bounding should take into account real capacities of institutions involved and, what is important, the experience gained during implementation of this project.</p>	<p>UNDP CO MNP</p>	<p>2014/10 and then after</p>

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<p>3. The start-up of the project went somewhat slowly (re: MTE Report), and the decision was taken to bring in an additional executing/implementing Partner, WWF. In order to clearly define the responsibilities and tasks of each of the two partners (EPIU and WWF), a new inception workshop should have taken place. This would have avoided discussions and small problems referred to in the MTE.</p>	<p>Noted. In the future projects in case of importance of substantial changes in the project management modality extra-ordinary Project Board Meeting will be requested who has full rights and responsibilities to approve such type of changes.</p>	<p>UNDP CO MNP</p>	<p>2014/10 and then after</p>
<p>4. There is no doubt that the Project has brought about very important developments, changes, innovations and improvements to the sector of protected area management, and to a slightly lesser extend to the development of the protected area based tourism development. The preparation of maps, management and business development plans, the installation of protected area interpretation infrastructure and the setting up of visitors' centres are all very necessary and useful achievements. The negotiations with the various communities to either manage themselves a PA, participate in the management or surrender some of their traditional land use rights and land to be annexed to existing government managed protected areas are important achievements. The setting up of additional PAs and the introduction of new management modalities and by-laws are very innovative steps and the results will require further monitoring and possibly adjustments.</p>	<p>Noted. The MNP should “keep an eye” on the entire protected area system of Armenia, on each protected area and ‘project’ protected areas in particular. Special attention should be devoted to Gnishik Protected Landscape. Enactment of new RA Law on Specially Protected Areas will open new perspectives for more effective and efficient management of protected areas and may need adjustments to management plans, implementation activities and existing monitoring system.</p>	<p>MNP</p>	<p>2014/10 and then after</p>

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<p>5. A more delicate, difficult, sensitive but extremely important field is the overall institutional domain, its coherence, functionality, effectiveness, efficiency, at every level: central, regional, local, PA. In the project document these aspects fall under component 1: "Institutional links reconfigured to clarify roles and responsibilities for governance and management of sanctuaries; eliminate sources of institutional inefficiencies"...., under component 2.: "development of management and business plans, and under 2.3. the implementation of these plans.</p> <p>Given the importance of the topic, it may have been more helpful for the Project Implementers had institutional capacity building been a specific component or at least output.</p> <p>Unlike the improvement of infrastructure, the setting up of visitors' centres, PA demarcation, the organisation of training programmes, etc.all very practical and visible, the institutional organization, efficiency and effectiveness are far less visible, accessible, assessable and adjustable.</p>	<p>The project has 2 components: 1. Rationalization of the protected areas system, and 2. Institutional capacity building of the protected areas system (a specific component with 4 outputs). Obviously, Terminal Evaluator has mind that institutional issues are distributed between two components rather than concentrated in one. Suggestion has its logic and will be taken into account in similar cases for future projects.</p> <p>Technically, both Implementing Partners, EPIU SA and WWF Armenia, responsible for Component 1, and Component 2, respectively, had enough cooperation and coordination to express common approach, and in this case negative influence, if any, was minimal.</p>	<p>UNDP CO MNP</p>	<p>2014/10 and then after</p>
<p>6. This project has already created a good ground for the further adjustment and enhancement of the institutional capabilities, and it is hoped that additional efforts can be pursued soon.</p>	<p>Further adjustment and enhancement of the institutional capabilities is taken into account in a new [draft] Strategy and Action Plan 2014-2020 on Specially Protected Nature Areas that open doors for more stakeholder involvement in the management of protected areas. The MNP should be proactive in soon adoption and implementation of this Strategy and Action Plan with assistance of the WWF Armenian Branch.</p>	<p>MNP WWF Armenia</p>	<p>2014/10 and then after</p>

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<p>7. <u>In conclusion, the Project brought about remarkable changes in the field of protected area management in the Country: in the capability of the staff concerned, in the legislative domain as well as in the management environment at PA level.</u></p>	<p>The MNP should do its best to ensure the sustainability of mentioned project achievements. In particular, the MNP through its Biodiversity Management Agency should permanently monitor management sustainability of protected areas and when appropriate provide advice on necessary steps to improve the situation.</p>	<p>MNP</p>	<p>2014/10 and then after</p>
<p><u>Corrective actions for the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the project</u></p>			
<p>8. On the <u>project management</u> side, the Project has a PMU with a Project Manager. This PMU is expected to manage the project "with the support of the Ministry". In addition, the National Project Execution Agency has an EPIU (Environmental Programmes Implementing Unit), an additional body dealing with the actual implementation of the Project.</p> <p>Such twin structures make management complex, hinder the necessary integration and ownership of the project into the host agency and lower the efficiency rate of the Project due to the increased management costs.</p>	<p>The management modality of this project (split into 2 subprojects with Government and NGO Implementing Partners coordinated by the PMU) has never been implemented by the UNDP CO Armenia previously. This is the first experience, therefore the lessons learned should be carefully collected, studied and take into account during the development of future projects in order to avoid possible negative consequences and to increase management effectiveness.</p>	<p>UNDP CO MNP</p>	<p>2014/12</p>
<p><u>Actions to follow up</u></p>			
<p>9. The newly created legislation pertaining to the new management modalities of PA's is expected to be promulgated by the end of 2014. As this is an important aspect of the Project, it is suggested that the matter be followed up.</p>	<p>This issue is in the priority list of the MNP and appropriate lobbying is undertaken for initiation of hearings and further approval of the package of draft laws by the National Assembly.</p>	<p>MNP</p>	<p>2014/12</p>

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<p>10. In the view of the Mission, additional attention and work will be required to better streamline the relevant institutions, and this at the various levels of the administration: central, regional, municipal, community, down to the protected area itself.</p> <p>11. It is hoped that these aspects can be part of a follow up activity that not only necessarily deals with these aspects, but where it is a focus activity.</p>	<p>The MNP will initiate and lead discussions of protected areas with regional administrations, local self-governance administrations of stakeholder communities to better streamline interrelations in the frames of public hearings of the new [draft] Strategy and Action Plan 2014-2020 on Specially Protected Nature Areas that open doors for more stakeholder involvement in the management of protected areas.</p>	<p>MNP</p>	<p>2014/10 and then after</p>
<p>12. In order to keep up the achieved momentum at the level of the newly created PA's and more importantly among the communities involved, the Mission suggests that little initiatives towards the creation of conservation based small businesses (cultural and PA's), towards local agricultural production as well as towards education and awareness building are identified and supported. The GEF's Small Grants Programme is an excellent tool to such end.</p>	<p>Such activities already are ongoing by the WWF Armenian Branch in frames of co-financing of this project and plans are to continue similar activities at least in the upcoming 3 years.</p> <p>The UNDP CO through its GEF SGP supported establishment of conservation based small businesses, such as <i>Build-up of local capacities to ensure implementation of the management plan of Khosrov Forest State Reserve, Development of beekeeping in 19 communities located in buffer zone of "Arpi Lich" National Park, Utilization of recreation potential of "Sevan" National Park through establishment of public beach, Development of beekeeping in the communities adjacent to "Juniper Open Woodlands of Sevan" State Sanctuary</i> (see http://www.sgp.am/en/Projects).</p> <p>Meanwhile, lack of capacities and experience of local NGOs seriously hindering submission of creative and innovative project ideas. Therefore special trainings will be organized to increase capacities of local NGOs</p>	<p>UNDP CO GEF SGP WWF Armenia Local NGO's</p>	<p>2015/01-2017/12</p>

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<u>Proposals for future directions underlining main objectives</u>			
<p>13. As stated above, future attention in the sector should be geared towards the enhancement of the overall institutional capacity of the institutions concerned at all levels. Since the Syunik Region has a high percentage of its territory under some form of protection, special attention should go to that region.</p>	<p>The MNP in cooperation with the Syunik regional administration will implement Zangezur Biosphere Reserve project from late 2014 / beginning of 2015. Initial project start postponed due to some technical problem in announcement of the managing company. The project is designed for 3 years and is supported by the German Government and the German Development Bank KfW. The total cost is 8.25 million euro.</p> <p>A new Zangezur Biosphere Complex State Non-commercial Organization is created by the Government Decision 1465-N of 19 December 2014, responsible for management of all 7 protected areas in Syunik Region managed by the MNP: Shikahigh State Reserve, Arevik National Park, Plane Grove, Boghaqar, Sev Lich, Zangezur and Khustup state sanctuaries. in Armenia's south.</p> <p>The project envisages wide participation of local communities and NGOs.</p>	<p>MNP Syunik regional administration</p>	<p>2015/01- 2017/12</p>
<p>14. There is a considerable need to encourage education and research institutions to undertake field activities in the PAs. Such research can generate valuable information on habitat and animal populations and trends, as well as on management impacts. This would also widely contribute towards the building of a highly needed new generation of academics (scientists and teachers) and field workers that are better aware of the ecological situation and trends in the PAs, and in the Country as a whole.</p>	<p>The MNP in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Science (ME&S) will encourage education and research institutions to undertake field activities in the PAs through development and implementation of new state funded mid-term project, grants and other financial sources.</p> <p>The MNP should encourage international organizations and local partners to provide more active financial and expert input on these activities.</p>	<p>MNP ME&S</p>	<p>2015/01 and then after</p>

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