**Removing Barriers Hindering Protected Area (PA) Management Effectiveness in Viet Nam**

***Viet Nam***

**GEF Agency: United Nations Development Programme**

**Executing Partners: Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development**

**GEF Biodiversity Focal Area**

**GEF Project ID: 3603**

**UNDP PIMS: 3965; UNDP Atlas Project Number: 00074659**

**Mid-term Review Report**

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**Acronyms**

APR Annual Project Review

AWP Annual Work Plan

BCA Biodiversity Conservation Agency

CBD Convention on Biological Diversity

CDR Combined Delivery Report

CIP Co-Implementing Partner

CO Country Office

CPAP Country Strategy and Action Plan

CPD Country Programme Document

CTA Chief Technical Advisor

DARD Department of Agriculture and Rural Development

DOFREP Department of Fisheries Resources Exploitation and Protection

DONRE Department of Natural Resources and Environment

DPC District People’s Committee

FPD Forest Protection Department

FSC Financial Sustainability Scorecard

FSP Full-sized Project

GEF Global Environment Facility

GIZ German Agency for International Cooperation

GoV Government of Vietnam

HA Hectares

HPPMG Harmonized Programme & Project Management Guidelines

IPA Inland Protected Area

IR Inception Report

IUCN International Union for Conservation of Nature

JICA Japan International Cooperation Agency

M&E Monitoring and Evaluation

MARD Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development

MASPAS Management Strategy for a Protected Area System in Viet Nam

METT Management Evaluation Tracking Tool

MOCST Ministry of Culture, Sport and Tourism

MOF Ministry of Forestry

MONRE Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment

MOST Ministry of Science and Technology

MPA Marine Protected Area

MPI Ministry of Planning and Investment

MTR Mid-term Review

NBSAP National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan

NGO Non-Governmental Organization

NIM National Implementation

NIP National Implementing Partner

NP National Park

ODA Overseas Development Assistance

PA Protected Area

PAMB Protected Area Management Board

PEB Project Executive Board

PES Payment for Ecosystem Services

PFES Payment for Forest Ecosystem Services

PIF Project Information Form

PIMS Project Information Management System

PIR Project Implementation Review

PMU Project Management Unit

PPC Provincial People’s Committee

PPG Project Preparation Grant

PSC Project Steering Committee

SFE State Forestry Enterprise

SUF Special Use Forest

TOR Terms of Reference

UNCCD United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification

UNDAF United Nations Development Assistance Framework

UNDP United Nations Development Programme

UNDP-CO UNDP Country Office

USD United States Dollars

VCF Viet Nam Conservation Fund

VEA Viet Nam Environment Administration

VND Viet Nam Dong (US$1 = approx. VND 20,000)

VNFOREST Vietnam Administration of Forestry

WPA Wetland Protected Area

WWF World Wide Fund for Nature

# Executive Summary

Table 1: Project Summary Data

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Project Title: | Removing Barriers Hindering Protected Area Management Effectiveness in Viet Nam | | | | |
| GEF Project ID: | | 3603 | Financing | *at endorsement (US$)* | *at completion (US$)* |
| UNDP Project ID: | | 3965 | GEF: | 3,536,360 | N/A |
| Country: | | Viet Nam | UNDP: | 7,050,000 | N/A |
| Region: | | Asia | Government: | 10,491,043 | N/A |
| Focal Area: | | Biodiversity | Other: | 1,000,000 | N/A |
| Focal Area Objectives: | | Project approved under GEF-5 Focal Area Strategy and Strategic Objective 1 (SO-1), Catalyzing Sustainability of Protected Area Systems at national levels; and specifically under Strategic Programme 1: Sustainable Financing of Protected Area Systems at the National Level | Total co-financing: | 18,541,043 | N/A |
| Executing Agency: | | Ministry of Natural Resources & Environment (MONRE) | Total Project Cost: | 22,077,403 | N/A |
| Other Partners involved: | |  | ProDoc Signature (date project began): | | 22 December, 2010 |
| (Operational) Closing Date: | | 31 December, 2014 (original date; expected to be extended to 31 December 2015) |

### Project Description and Overview of Mid-Term Review

The Viet Nam “PA Financing” project is a Global Environment Facility (GEF) funded full-sized project (FSP) designed to assist in achieving the long-term solution for biodiversity conservation in Viet Nam’s system of protected areas (PAs) through strengthened systemic, institutional and individual capacities, supported by sustainable financing. This project focuses on these thematic areas, with sustainable financing pilots at three national parks. The Government of Viet Nam (GoV) has established a network of protected areas across Viet Nam. The decentralisation process for PA management has resulted in a fragmented system, with little or no coordination or cooperation, resulting in cost inefficiencies and competition for scarce resources. This project is focussed on a system-wide approach in contrast to the earlier projects that were focused on improving management of specific protected areas.[[1]](#footnote-1)

The project began in April 2011, and is currently planned for completion in December 2015. The project is within the GEF biodiversity focal area. GEF funding is US$ 3.54 million, and with planned co-financing of US$18.54 million, the total project budget is US$22.08 million. The project is executed under UNDP’s National Implementation (NIM) modality (i.e. national execution), with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE) acting as the National Implementing Partner (NIP) and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) acting as the Co-Implementing Partner (CIP).

The project objective is to “secure a sustainably financed PA system, to conserve globally significant biodiversity”, which will be realized through four outcomes:

* Outcome 1: A comprehensive and harmonized legal and policy framework supports sustainable PA financing
* Outcome 2: Clear and harmonized institutional mandates and processes support sustainable PA financing mechanisms
* Outcome 3: Knowledge and experience of sustainable financing options developed through demonstrations
* Outcome 4: Information on biodiversity and PA status supports PA management and builds public support for the PA system

According to GEF and UNDP evaluation policies, Mid-Term Reviews (MTRs) 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 this project. As per the review Terms of Reference (TORs), the MTR 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 MTR assesses progress toward project results based on the expected objective and outcomes, as well as any unanticipated results. The MTR 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 approach and 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 the three project demonstration sites (Bidoup – Nui Ba, Xuan Thuy, and Cat Ba National Parks), where the project is working at the field level. The review is based on evaluative evidence from the project development phase through November 2014, when the mid-term review data collection phase was completed. The desk review was begun in October 2014, and the review mission was carried out from 3-12 November, 2014.

### Findings and Conclusions on the Main Evaluation Criteria

The project is a highly important and valuable project for protected areas in Viet Nam. The project has encountered a number of challenges during the first half of implementation, relating both to Operational issues associated with project implementation and execution, and 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 limited progress in terms of results and efficiency. However, the increased activities, results and disbursements in the past two years signal a positive shift for the project, and there is a good chance of concrete and catalytic results before the end of the project. To ensure this outcome, UNDP and MONRE, as the main project partners, must be focused and diligent in ensuring the project reaches its goals in the 2nd half of implementation.

With respect to **relevance**, the project objective is considered ***relevant*** (or “satisfactory” in terms of the relevance criteria), as the project clearly supports priority biodiversity conservation issues in Viet Nam. The project is in line with national laws, regulations and policies, and is relevant to local resource user needs and priorities as well. The project supports agreed UNDP country priorities as well as GEF strategic priorities for the biodiversity focal area. Furthermore, the project supports relevant multilateral environmental agreements, including the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance. The project design and strategy include numerous activities that will help to support biodiversity conservation and effective protected areas management.

The project **efficiency** is rated ***moderately satisfactory***. In addition, project implementation is considered ***moderately satisfactory***, while project execution (i.e. project management) is also assessed as ***moderately satisfactory***. As detailed in Section III F, the project start-up process was marked by delays. The Prodoc was approved by the GEF Secretariat in March 2010, but signing of the Prodoc did not take place until December 2010; the PMU was not established until April 2011, and the Inception Workshop did not take place until December 2011. Furthermore, it was only in November 2012, another 11 months later, that a Project Management Unit was established within MARD. As a result of these delays, the actual implementation of project activities only really began in mid – late 2011, more than a full year after the planned start date in April 2010. Another important delay in project implementation concerned the implementation of activities at the project demonstration sites, which did not start until late 2013.

As of September 30, 2014 the project has reached 66.39% disbursement of the overall project budget; and 79.49% of what was expected to have been spent by this phase of the project. Project implementation arrangements have functioned well, although the level of coordination between MONRE and MARD has been less than should have been expected. Project oversight mechanisms have been in place, but the Project Executive Board has not met sufficiently often (once per year) to provide the level of oversight, guidance, and policy support that the project required.

While the project is behind schedule in its budget delivery, the late start of the project and the significant increase in budget disbursements in the last two years suggest that the project can be expected to disburse the entire budget in a timely manner. Similarly, it can be hoped that the Project Executive Board will provide more hands-on and sustained support for the project in its final year of implementation, as recommended by this Mid Term Review. As for cooperation between MONRE and MARD, this is now a moot point insofar as the project is concerned since MARD will soon end its formal participation in the project, although the PMU and MONRE generally need to address the PA institutional coordination issues outlined in section IV b. Overall, the project has the potential to receive a higher efficiency rating by the end of the project, if performance significantly improves, as expected.

Project **effectiveness** is assessed as ***moderately satisfactory***. As of this review, the combined assessment of progress toward the project in the results framework indicator targets shows that of the total of 38 indicator targets, 11 have been achieved, 17 are on target to be achieved, and 10 are not on target to be achieved. It should be noted here that by including 38 different indicators, including indicators at the Output level, the Results Framework did not follow current GEF practice for prioritized and targeted indicators; Annex 8 provides detailed guidance on potential changes to improve the Results Framework. Furthermore, of the 16 indicator targets that are uncertain, 9 of these are targets related to the Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool, the Financial Scorecard, and the Capacity Scorecard; in all of these cases, the uncertainty lies primarily in problems with the templates and scoring used in these tools at project inception and/or mid-term. In reality, however, the project stands a good chance of meeting most of these 9 targets by the end of the project. As for other project activities and results, the project has made impressive progress in strengthening the potential for PA financing at the project demonstration sites, in terms of new ecosystem valuations, management plans, business plans, and approval for new PA financing mechanisms at these sites. The critically important challenge for the project during its final year will be to successfully implement the new PA financing mechanisms, and to ensure that all of these site level achievements begin to be replicated and up-scaled throughout the PA system in Viet Nam. The other critical challenge for the project in the final year of implementation will be to make progress on strengthening coordination on PA management and financing at the systemic level, and in ensuring that new biodiversity information from the sites is integrated into system-level PA planning.

**Sustainability** is assessed as **moderately likely**. By definition, mid-term reviews are not well positioned to provide ratings on sustainability considering that more activities will be undertaken before project end that may positively or negatively affect the likelihood of sustainability. However, since this project is approximately 75% through its implementation period at the time of this Mid Term Review, the sustainability rating in this case is warranted. Socio-political and environmental risks are rated as moderately likely, whereas financial and institutional risks are rated as moderately unlikely. These ratings reflect the on-going challenge of securing sufficient and sustainable financing for protected areas in Viet Nam, and the challenge of consolidating what is currently a highly diffused system of management responsibilities for protected areas in the country.

### Recommendations

The recommendations from the mid-term review are indicated below, and are divided into: i) Implementation and Execution issues, and ii) Technical issues.

**Implementation and Execution Issues**

**Recommendation 1 – Secure Formal Project Extension from the Government of Viet Nam:** Due to a number of factors at project start-up, implementation of project activities was delayed significantly from the original projected start date. As a result, while the project has made good progress since implementation effectively started in 2012, a number of critical project activities and targeted results are still being implemented as of late 2014, and the original end date of December 2014 was no longer reasonable in terms of allowing the project to fulfil its objectives. For this reason, UNDP and the Government of Vietnam agreed in 2014 to extend the project implementation period until December 2015. However, to date only UNDP has formally approved the project extension. Therefore, it is highly critical that before the end of 2014 the Government of Vietnam has approved the project extension to December 2015.

**Recommendation 2** - **Continue Implementation at Protected Area Demonstration Sites until the end of 2015 (*additional details in Technical Recommendations below):*** It is highly important that the three national parks that are project demonstration sites continue to implement project activities until the end of 2015 (including keeping the project site coordinators in place until the end of 2015). As of late 2014, these sites are only beginning to actually implement the PA financing mechanisms that have been developed and are a key result of the project; during 2015 they need to work closely with the project team to implement the financing mechanism; to report on the progress and lessons learned; and to develop plans and materials for replication and up-scaling of these mechanisms at other PA sites in Vietnam. In addition, other activities, such as performance-based incentives for PA staff; cost efficiencies through cooperation between PAs; the use of biodiversity information to guide PA budget allocations; and public education and awareness campaigns, need to continue to be implemented at the site level during the final year of the project.

**Recommendation 3 - Agree on responsibilities for finalizing project activities under MARD Component:** MARD has declared its intention to end its active participation in implementing project activities at the end of 2014. MARD was responsible for Output 2.2 (PA staff at all levels with necessary skills, including business management, tourism management, monitoring and participatory management) and Output 2.3 (Revised and consistent system-wide incentive measures that promote improved performance). For the most part, activities under these two outputs have been completed. However, the issue of performance-based incentives under Output 2.3 still needs to be addressed. MARD, with support from VCF, did review existing incentives and based on that, it drafted an inter-ministerial circular on staffing codes for PA staff. However, it did not secure passage of this circular, nor did it directly address performance based incentives. For this reason, the MTR recommends that responsibility for finalizing the work on performance-based incentives is clearly designated (with guidance from the Project Steering Committee) in the final year of project implementation.

**Recommendation 4 – Strengthen the role of the Project Executive Board:** Significant changes are proposed in this Mid Term Review to amend the project; these proposed changes should be carefully reviewed and formally approved by the Project Executive Board (PEB) in early 2015. In addition, the PEB members need to be available (as necessary) to take a leading role in: 1) getting the three demonstration site National Parks to agree to extend their participation until December 2015 (recommendation 2 above); 2) supporting the steps required to achieve progress on institutional coordination for PA management (recommendations 11 and 12 below); and 3) ensuring institutional support for up-scaling and replicating PA financing coordination, mechanisms and strategies at the national level (recommendation 13 below). Additional details on how the PEB can better oversee, support and guide the project implementation in its final year are provided in Section V. G. ii. below.

**Recommendation 5 – Streamline and Focus Project Work Planning:** The process required for the approval of Annual Workplans is very slow and has negatively impacted project implementation. Each year, the Annual Workplan and associated procurement plans have been approved between three and six months into the year (even if they are submitted late in the prior year), meaning that the project cannot implement many activities in a timely manner. UNDP and its counterpart ministries for this project should jointly work to streamline the approval process for workplans. The Annual Work Plan and other project planning processes, as well as the project monitoring tools, also should be used to ensure that project activities remain focused, and contribute directly to project results. The project only has one year of implementation remaining, and therefore it is important that project activities are focused on the results listed in the project results framework.

**Recommendation 6 – Streamline Procurement:** The Harmonized Program and Project Management Guidelines (HPPMG) were agreed between UNDP and the Government of Vietnam and came into effect in July 2010. Among other things, the HPPMG requires all procurement (including consultants and equipment) greater than US$1,500 to undergo significant review and approval processes. UNDP should work with the Ministry of Planning and Investment to revise the HPPMG to better suit relatively small ODA projects. In addition, UNDP and the project’s counterpart ministries should jointly work to streamline the approval process for procurement, possibly including more direct procurement by the UNDP Country Office. In addition, the PMU should seek to combine more activities into larger contracts that go to Contract Companies, rather than too many individual consultants.

**Recommendation 7 - Make Maximum Use of Project Monitoring Tools:** The project should use the GEF and UNDP monitoring tools applicable to the project as guides toward results-based management; these tools can help the project to focus attention on the achievement of outcome level results related to PA financing, capacity strengthening, and conservation of globally significant biodiversity. In addition, the Financial Scorecard and METT tools are required inputs to the portfolio level indicators of the GEF biodiversity focal area results framework. Details on the how the relevant tools should be used are provided in the Updated Results Framework.

**Recommendation 8 – Increase Project Staffing:** The project has a great deal of work to complete in its final year; increasing the resources of the project team could greatly increase the likelihood that the activities will be completed as envisioned. In particular, there is a great deal of technical guidance required for activities related to developing performance-based incentives for PA staff; cost efficiencies through cooperation between PAs; the use of biodiversity information to guide PA budget allocations; and public education and awareness campaigns; among other things. Furthermore, MARD is ending its formal participation in the project at the end of 2014, and this will increase the workload on the MONRE PMU in the final year of the project. Currently, the project has a Technical Specialist who works on a half-time basis; however, to date this role has primarily focused on developing Terms of Reference for project contractors and reviewing technical reports. If this person has sufficient technical expertise to guide the technical issues previously listed, then he should be employed on a full-time basis for all of 2015. Otherwise, other options for on-going technical support should be considered, including hiring of another senior technical expert, or increased staff support from BCA.

**Technical Issues**

**Recommendation 9 – Enhance Institutional Responsibility for Policy & Regulatory Changes:** MONRE, as project implementing agency, should take a more active role (for this and future projects) in supporting project efforts to get approval of policy and regulatory changes, such as new decisions, decrees and circulars. The project can only prepare drafts when seeking changes to regulations / decisions / policies; it must depend on authorized agencies to get them approved. The project has had success (e.g. circulars on biodiversity financing and biodiversity reporting and monitoring; and PPC decisions on PA financing mechanisms) by getting the Director and Deputy Director of BCA directly involved in working with the authorized agencies; this approach should continue with remaining regulatory changes.

**Recommendation 10 – Approve a Revised Project Results Framework:** A number of indicators in the Project Results Framework should be revised in order to better reflect on the ground realities in Vietnam and in order to ensure that the project has a results-oriented approach focused on GEF-biodiversity focal area strategic targets. This review, therefore, recommends that the project results framework be revised and submitted for approval to the PSC in the 1st quarter of 2015. This review provides detailed suggestions for the revised results framework indicators and targets in Annex 8. Note: The MTR has identified numerous problems with the Project Results Framework (see Section V. G. i.), but because the project only has one year of implementation remaining, the MTR is recommending specific, high priority changes to the framework, rather than a wholesale revision of the indicators and targets.

**Recommendation 11 - Carry out a Detailed Analysis of Accomplishments to Date and Priority Next Steps with regard to coordination on PA management and financing:** The issue of what has been accomplished with regards to strengthening coordination on PA management and financing, and what remains to be done, has been detailed in Annex 11. However, a comprehensive analysis of these issues is needed in order to guide project activities. The project should create a brief report that clearly outlines 1) the problems / weaknesses in coordination on PA management and financing in Viet Nam (updating the analysis in this document, as well as the Prodoc and Inception Report, and incorporating analysis of changes resulting from the enactment of the Law on Biodiversity in 2009); 2) a summary of what the UNDP-GEF PA financing project has accomplished to date to strengthen coordination on PA management and financing, in particular by improving coordination between MONRE and MARD; and 3) recommendations on key activities / results that the project should strive to accomplish in 2015. The project may want to consider recruiting a consultant (possibly international) through UNDP, so that the work and recommendations of the consultant are general and not linked to any one Ministry.

Among other things, this report should review the following issues / documents:

* As noted above, the functions of MONRE and MARD, as well as the VEA and Dept. of Forestry, have been revised in the last two years through official decrees, but to date there is no analysis of how these decrees have strengthened (or weakened) coordination on PA management and financing
* The project is currently carrying out reviews of existing laws relevant to (the Biodiversity Law, the Forest Protection and Development Law, and the Fisheries Law) and how they may overlap. Since the Forest Protection Law is due to be revised in 2015, this presents a good opportunity to address any overlaps. The project report on this issue are still in draft form, but they should be reviewed for relevant information (in addition, any MOU signed between MONRE and MARD will have to comply with these Laws)
* The report should incorporate the lessons learned from the project’s work at the demonstration sites on PA management and financing, including ecosystem valuations, PA management and business plans, and site-level financing mechanisms, all of which can help to guide systemic (or institutional) PA financing and business planning.
* The end result of this report should be 1) specific ideas to feed into a new draft Agreement between MONRE and MARD to be finalized by the end of the project; and 2) a road map for critical steps needed to consolidate PA management and financing in Viet Nam over the long run

**Recommendation 12 - Revise and Finalize an Agreement between MARD and MONRE on Coordination for PA Management:** The project should continue to work towards getting MONRE and MARD to sign an Agreement on how they will collaborate on integrating PA management and financing functions and strategies. In the view of the MTR team, a new MOU should be drafted, in part because most of the goals in the existing draft MOU have been accomplished, but also because the existing draft MOU does not provide any sort of joint vision or way forward to strengthen PA management and financing in Viet Nam over the long term. The fact remains that the long-term goal for Viet Nam should be the consolidation of management for protected areas in the country. One of the key lessons learned from the report to the National Assembly in November 2014 is that PA systems, biodiversity conservation, and forestry management should be managed centrally, and its review of PA management in 40 other countries found that “36/40 (90%) countries manage protected areas and biodiversity in same ministry”. While consolidation of PA management authority is well beyond the scope of this project, a critical step in that direction will be improved collaboration between Ministries and other institutions responsible for protected areas, and for related areas such as biodiversity conservation and forest management.

The project management unit cannot resolve issues related to institutional agreements on its own. MONRE, as the National Implementing Partner of the project, needs to take the leading role in pushing forward resolution of this issue, and high-level officials within VEA need to become involved in this effort. In addition, the Project Executive Board members should be involved in getting sufficient high-level attention paid to the MOU and/or other approaches to collaboration, possibly including getting the Ministers involved directly, or pushing them to delegate the issue to their relevant Vice Ministers. It should be made clear to the Ministries that a strengthened level of collaboration on protected areas management will better position the Government of Viet Nam, and the participating ministries, to benefit from future GEF funding opportunities.

**Recommendation 13 – Support Up-scaling and Replication of Site-Based PA Financing Mechanisms:** The project team (Project Manager and Site Coordinators), together with the PA Management Boards from the three demonstration sites, should focus significant efforts in 2015 on collating information and documenting lessons learned on the development of the PA financing mechanisms (primarily in 2014) and their implementation (primarily in 2015); this documentation and analysis should also include the work of the project in developing PA Business Plans. This information should be compiled in guidelines, manuals or other forms of detailed documentation (Bidoup – Nui Ba has indicated that it has developed some initial guidance on how to create PES systems) that provide clear guidance for other PA institutions and sites on the steps needed to get regulatory and policy approval for new financing mechanisms, on how to implement such mechanisms, and on developing and implementing PA business plans, with the goal of maximizing the potential for replication of these mechanisms throughout the country. The project should play a leading role in disseminating this information by presenting the manuals and key findings at the annual workshop for all PA Management Boards put on by the Vietnam Forest Administration; and by including information on this topic in the video it is producing on all activities at all three sites. In addition, by documenting lessons learned on how to develop and implement PA financing mechanisms, and providing guidelines on PA business planning, the project can help to ensure that up-scaling of effective PA financing and business planning throughout Vietnam will take place in the short to medium term. In addition, lessons learned can be used to create or revise national policies of PA financing mechanisms; for example, that protected areas can increase entry fees and keep the additional funds generated. These intermediate steps will promote more information sharing and similar financial management strategies among PA units managed by various agencies at the national, provincial and local levels, which will in turn facilitate more effective PA financial coordination at the overall system level in the long term (assuming the political and institutional support for a more integrated PA system develops).

**Recommendation 14 – Communicate Technical Results of Project:** For the most part, the project is a technical project with highly technical outputs. For this reason, communication of the project results should focus less on the general public and more on those stakeholders who will be interested in, and make use of, the outputs of the project, including PA Institutions; PA site Management Boards and staff; policymakers at the national, provincial and local levels; and technical experts in academia and civil society. To communicate the project results to these stakeholders, the project should first collect the various reports/guidelines and policy/legal changes resulting from the project activities and put them onto the VEA or BCA website; this should be done by the end of the 2nd quarter of 2015. Second, the project should identify which stakeholders should be targeted to receive information on which project results, and then it should disseminate the appropriate information to these stakeholders and/or actively reach out to them to visit the website; this should be done during the 3rd quarter of 2015. Finally, the project team and /or its partners in BCA and at the demonstration sites should present some of the key results at public meetings attended by the most relevant stakeholders, for example at the annual workshop of all PA Management Boards organized by the Vietnam Forest Administration; this should be done before the end of the project. An indicative list of relevant outputs for dissemination might include the following:

* + The text of relevant policy and legal changes regarding PA financing and BD conservation (Output 1.1)
  + The report on BD financing institutional coordination and management presented to the National Assembly (Output 1.1)
  + The report on off-site financing mechanisms for PAs (Output 1.2)
  + The strategy on institutional coordination for PA management (Output 2.1)
  + The strategy for utilizing lessons learned on site-level PA financing mechanisms and PA business planning to guide systemic (or institutional) PA financing and business planning
  + The guidelines future staff training (Output 2.2)
  + Any changes instituted for performance-based incentives at the site level (Output 2.3)
  + Any changes instituted to PA staff grades / ranks (Output 2.3)
  + Guidelines / manuals on lessons learned on the development and implementation of PA financing mechanisms and PA Business Plans (Output 3.1)
  + Report on cost efficiencies (cost savings through shared management activities) at PA demonstration sites (Output 3.2)
  + Guidelines / Models for Provincial Biodiversity Plans (Output 3.3)
  + Guidelines on using BD monitoring and reporting information to guide PA budget allocations (Output 4.1)
  + Guidelines / Models for PA site-level biodiversity reports (Output 4.2)
  + Report on public awareness and support at the three demonstration sites (Output 4.3)

**Recommendation 15 – Strengthen Biodiversity Management at the PA System Level:** Under Outcome 4, the project has focused significant effort towards increasing and improving monitoring and reporting on biodiversity at the PA site level, and in establishing a clearing house mechanism / biodiversity database system at the national level to collate information collected at the sites. However, the project does not seem to have put any focus yet on how such information can best be used at the systemic level. Therefore, this review recommends that the project team and partners work with the VEA Data Management Office and JICA to ensure that the clearinghouse mechanism is used to guide PA system management. For example, BD reporting information should be actively used to help guide PA system priority setting and management activities based on the locations of critical ecosystems and species, and it should be used to identify overall system-level gaps in the PA system’s coverage of globally significant biodiversity.

**REQUIRED RATINGS**

While the ratings given below are primarily a mix of moderately unsatisfactory and moderately satisfactory, 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 part of implementation, and are not prescriptive for the remainder of the project. The MTR team would also like to emphasize that the project team has accomplished a great deal, including reaching many of the targets for indicators in the Results Framework, and that shortcomings in project implementation have to a great extent been due to problems in the project design and insufficient support and cooperation from national executing agencies. In any case, the MTR team believes that the project has the potential to achieve improved ratings by the end of the project, if there is a focused and conscientious effort by all involved parties during the remainder of implementation.

**Table 2: 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 | MS |
| M&E Plan Implementation | MU | Quality of Execution - Executing Agency | MS |
| Overall Quality of M&E | MU | Overall Quality of Implementation / Execution | MS |
| **3. Assessment of Outcomes** | **Rating** | **4. Sustainability** | **Rating** |
| Relevance | R / S | Financial Resources | MU |
| Effectiveness | MS | Socio-political | ML |
| Efficiency | MS | Institutional Framework and Governance | MU |
| **5. Progress Towards Results** | **Rating** | Environmental | ML |
| Objective Achievement | MS | Overall Likelihood of Sustainability | ML |
| Outcome 1 Achievement | S |  |  |
| Outcome 2 Achievement | MS |  |  |
| Outcome 3 Achievement | S |  |  |
| Outcome 4 Achievement | S |  |  |

# Project Mid-term Review Approach

## 

The mid-term review was commissioned by the UNDP Viet Nam 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 **external** evaluation consultants, intended to provide an objective view of the project, including coverage of UNDP’s role as the implementing agency. The review was carried out as a collaborative and participatory exercise, and identified 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.

## Mid-term Review Purpose and Objectives

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.

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

* Identify potential project design issues;
* Assess progress toward achievement of expected project results
* Assess the effectiveness, efficiency and timeliness of project implementation
* Highlight issues requiring decisions and actions and identify course correction (if needed)
* Make recommendations regarding specific actions to improve the project.
* Present initial lessons learned about project design, implementation and management

## Mid-term Review Scope

## 

The **scope** of the review will be as outlined in the TOR 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
* Reporting (on adaptive management; GEF reporting requirements; lesson learned)
* Communications (internal project communications with stakeholders; external project communications)

In addition, 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

The review will, when possible and relevant, assess the project in the context of the key GEF operational principles (see Annex 2 below).

Evaluative evidence will be assessed against the main UNDP and GEF evaluation criteria, as identified and defined in table 3 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 3. GEF and UNDP Main Evaluation Criteria for GEF Projects

|  |
| --- |
| **Relevance** |
| * 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** |
| * The extent to which an objective has been achieved or how likely it will be achieved. |
| **Efficiency** |
| * The extent to which results have been delivered with the least costly resources possible; also called cost-effectiveness or efficacy. |
| **Results** |
| * 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** |
| * 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. |

## Principles for Design and Execution of the Review

## 

The GEF M&E Policy[[2]](#footnote-2) includes **principles for evaluation**, which are outlined as follows:

* Credibility
* Utility
* Impartiality
* Transparency
* Disclosure
* Participation

The review will also be conducted in line with United Nations Evaluation Group norms and standards.[[3]](#footnote-3) The review team will work closely with UNDP and other project partners to ensure a collaborative approach and strong communication throughout the review process.

## Review Approach and Data Collection Methods

The review will be carried out in accordance with the guidance outlined in the UNDP Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating for Development Results,[[4]](#footnote-4) and in accordance with the evaluation guidance as outlined in the GEF M&E Policy.

The collection of evaluative evidence will be based on three primary data collection methodologies:

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

The mid-term review process will involve four main steps:

1. Desk review of project documentation, and logistical preparation and coordination with the UNDP Country Office and the project team for the field visit. Desk studies will focus on the key documents developed during the project preparation phase (i.e. GEF CEO Endorsement Request, UNDP Prodoc, UNDP ESSP, etc.) and key documents from the project implementation phase (APRs/PIRs, annual workplans and budgets, etc.). Particular attention will be paid to the Results Framework (which will be used as the benchmark for the evaluation, but also keeping in mind the need for flexibility and possible revisions based on its current relevance) and to the GEF BD1 Tracking Tool (both the version submitted at CEO endorsement and the version updated at project midterm).
2. In-country field visit, including visits to project field sites, and qualitative interviews with key stakeholders at the national and local levels. Consultations with stakeholders will be essential to the Mid Term Review; the consultants will take a collaborative and participatory approach, emphasizing close engagement with those overseeing the project implementation (Project Team, GEF OFP, UNDP Country Office, and UNDP-GEF Regional Technical Advisor) as well as those actively engaged in implementing various elements of the project (key government agencies such as MONRE, MARD, and National Parks; local governments / CSOs / communities; relevant experts and consultants, etc.). The emphasis during these meetings, as well as during the field missions to the main project demonstration sites, will be to collect and assess evidence-based information to aid in the assessment of the project, and to listen to stakeholder concerns and ideas on how to optimize project implementation and produce the maximum national and global benefits. These meetings also will be used to help the project team and counterparts to understand the evaluation as an opportunity for constructive management improvement.
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. In producing the required Mid Term Review report, the consultants will provide details on any corrective actions that may be required; clear summaries of lessons learned; and recommendations that provide guidance for interventions that are specific, relevant, measurable, and achievable.
4. Finalization of the review report and follow-up with the project team and stakeholders

## Limitations to the Review

All evaluations face limitations in terms of the time and resources available to adequately collect and analyse evaluative evidence. For the Viet Nam PA Finance project MTR, some project documents were available only in Vietnamese, 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 staff of the GIZ and JICA projects, despite multiple attempts to do so. Altogether the review challenges were not insurmountable, and the review is believed to represent a fair and accurate assessment of the project.

# Project Overview

## Project Development Context[[5]](#footnote-5)

*Environmental and Biodiversity Context:*

Viet Nam extends more than 1,650 km from north to south, and is approximately 600 km wide at its greatest width, while at its narrowest point it is a little more than 50 km wide. Three quarters of the country is hilly or mountainous. The lowland areas include two major river deltas: the Red River in the north and the Mekong River in the south. A narrow coastal plain runs along much of the country’s coastline. Viet Nam is one of the world’s ten most biologically diverse countries - it contains about ten per cent of the world’s species though covering less than 1% of global land area. The country lies at the crossroads of the following biogeographic realms: Palaearctic realm’s Himalayan and Chinese sub-regions with the Indo-Malayan realm’s Sundaic sub-region. These overlapping biogeographic realms, along with relatively high variations in climate, soils and topography, give Viet Nam its diverse and distinct flora and fauna. Viet Nam hosts six of WWF’s Ecoregion 200 – the Annamite Range Moist Forests; Indochina Dry Forests; Mekong River; Northern Indochina Subtropical Moist Forests; Southeast China-Hainan Moist Forests; Xi Jiang Rivers and Streams.

Viet Nam is home to the fourth largest number of primate species in the world and has five of the world’s 25 most threatened primate species. Viet Nam hosts over 1500 globally threatened species, including 49 Critically Endangered, 82 Endangered and 166 Vulnerable species. Many new species have been described to science in recent decades from Viet Nam. For example, since 1992, four mammal species, previously unknown to science, have been discovered in the country. In 2007, two butterfly species, one snake species, five orchid species and three other plant species were discovered in the Annamite region in central Viet Nam. There are about 12,000 vascular plant species recorded in Viet Nam. Additionally, 800 moss species and 600 mushroom species have also been listed. Over 6,000 species of plants are used for food, medicine, timber, essential oil and construction materials. Endemicity is high: some suggest that up to 40% of all plant species may be endemic. Viet Nam has 275 mammal species, 828 bird species, 180 reptile species, 80 amphibian species, 547 freshwater fish species, 2,033 marine fish species and about 7,500 insect species in forest ecosystems (1995 estimates). The number of endemic species is also high for animals - with 78 species and sub-species of mammals, over 100 species and sub-species of birds, 7 primate species and 11 amphibians and reptiles endemic to Viet Nam.

Viet Nam has a great expanse of wetlands, consisting of rivers (including the Mekong), estuaries along the coast, lagoons and bays, the Đồng Tháp Mười inundated area (“Plain of Reeds”), natural and man-made lakes, inland wetlands, paddy fields and thousands of ponds of various sizes. Estuaries have a variety of specialized species and migratory species and are significant sites for mangroves, salt marshes, sea grasses and algal beds. Estuaries are very important for fisheries and have great potential for ecotourism and recreational activities. Lagoons provide food for fish and seasonal habitats for various species of migrating birds.

Viet Nam’s marine ecosystems harbour at least 537 plankton species, 657 zooplankton species, 600 algae species, 35 mangrove tree species, 650 coelenterate species, 2500 mollusc species, 1600 echinoderm species, 700 bristle-worm species, 350 crustacean species, 150 sponge species and more than 2033 fish species have been recorded in Viet Nam till date. These figures demonstrate that Viet Nam is one of the richest areas in the world in terms of marine biodiversity. Coastal and marine protected areas, from the sub-temperate ecosystem in the north to tropical ecosystems in the centre and the south are of national and international importance. More than 2033 marine fish species that have so far been identified, Viet Nam’s harbours a number of globally significant marine fauna, including five species of marine turtles. Globally endangered species found in Viet Nam include the green turtle (*Chelonia mydas)*, loggerhead turtle (*Caretta caretta)*, Olive Ridley turtle (*Lepidochelys olivacea)*, the critically endangered leatherback turtle (*Dermochelys coriacea)* and hawksbill turtle (*Eretmochelys* imbricate). The endangered dugong (*Dugong dugon)* is another precious asset to Viet Nam’s marine biodiversity. This slow moving mammal lives in and grazes on shallow sea grass meadow habitats, such as found in the sea around Côn Đảo Island. Viet Nam’s offshore areas are also thought to be important habitats and migration routes for several other mammal species such as whales, whale sharks and sharks. Fifteen species of dolphin and porpoise and one species of baleen whale have been recorded.

*Socio-Economic Context:*

Rapid economic growth over the past two decades in Viet Nam has resulted in a dramatic decrease in recorded poverty, with a decline from 58 per cent to 20 per cent between 1993 and 2004, according to the international poverty line. However, many households have risen barely above the poverty line and growth has also been associated with an increase in inequality, particularly a widening rural-urban income gap. Three regions account for more than two-thirds of Viet Nam’s poor: the Northern Uplands, Mekong Delta, and North Central Coast. Ethnic minorities, which comprise 14 per cent of the population and live mainly in the remote upland areas, are disproportionately affected by poverty, representing almost 30 per cent of the poor. About 90 per cent of the poor live in the rural areas. <http://www.undp.org.vn/digitalAssets/12/12856_ban_do.jpg>. Although GDP per capita is officially just over US$638, the country’s performance in terms of human development is favourable. This is reflected in the gradual increase of the human development index over the last decade, and summarizes the progress made in education, health and standard of living.

*Policy and Legislative Context:*

A key policy document governing administration of the protected area system in Viet Nam is the Decision of the Prime Minister No. 192/2003/QD-TTg entitled *“The Management Strategy for a Protected Area System in Viet Nam to 2010*”. The primary objective of the Management Strategy (MASPAS) is to establish, organize and manage effectively an integrated protected area system covering terrestrial, wetland and marine ecosystems. However, to date the division of responsibilities for the three protected area or ecosystem types, which was elaborated through several instruments, including Decree 43 on the functions of MOFI and the Fisheries Law (2003), Decree 109/2003/ND-CP on Wetlands, and the Law on Forest Protection and Development (2004), still remains in force and PA management is therefore divided between MARD and MONRE at the national levels and between their respective provincial / departmental offices as well as the Provincial People’s Committees.

By addressing sustainable conservation financing, the project is consistent with priorities established in the MASPAS (i.e. “the need to reform the PA management mechanism, particularly investment and financial management in PAs"), as well as the draft National Forest Strategy for 2005-2010 and Viet Nam’s National Action Plan on Biodiversity up to 2010.

*Institutional Context:*

With a total area of over 2.2 million hectares, protected areas account for nearly 7% of the terrestrial area of Viet Nam. Almost every major ecosystem is represented in the PA system, although marine protected areas have only recently been developed. Most of the protected areas in Viet Nam are designated as Special Use Forests (SUFs). The SUF system was intended to represent the full range of biogeographic, latitudinal and climatic variation in Viet Nam, but the vast majority of SUFs are terrestrial forest sites, although they also include a small number of wetland sites and marine areas. As of 2007, there were 126 SUF’s, including 27 National Parks, 60 Nature Reserves, 39 landscape and historic sites. Since 2007, three more National Parks were established through upgrading existing Nature reserves. Among 30 existing National Parks, six are directly under the management of Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) acting through the Forest Protection Department. The rest are under decentralized management.

Institutional responsibility for the administration of PAs in Viet Nam is based on ecosystem type. PAs within terrestrial, inland water surfaces and marine ecosystems fall within the remit of MARD and, in the case of inland water surfaces and marine systems, its Department of Fisheries Resources Exploitation and Protection (DOFREP); and PAs within wetland ecosystems, including wetlands listed under the Ramsar Convention, are the responsibility of MONRE. This division of PA responsibilities is one of the most fundamental challenges facing government in defining integrated and consistent arrangements for the development and management of a single national system of protected areas. In addition to MARD and MONRE, several other government institutions play important roles in PA management. The Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI), through the annual budgeting process, is responsible for setting funding levels and negotiating budget allocations with sectoral ministries and the provinces, including budget for protected areas. The Ministry of Culture, Sport and Tourism (MOCST) together with MARD, has the responsibility for managing “cultural-historic-environmental sites”, one of Viet Nam’s categories of Special-use Forests. The Viet Nam National Administration of Tourism (VNAT) within MOCST is responsible for developing the country’s tourism strategy and promoting tourism in national parks and cultural-historic-environmental sites.

Of more direct importance for the management of protected areas focused on nature conservation, the actual management and funding of many PA units is undertaken at the provincial and local levels. One of the principles of Viet Nam’s national reform process (*Đổi mới*), which emphasizes developing a socialist-oriented market economy, is the decentralization of authority to the lowest appropriate level (provincial and district people’s committees). According to this, Provincial People’s Committeesare responsible for managing a number of national parks and all other forms of protected areas, including nature reserves, wildlife reserves, etc. An exception is the 6 national parks that encompass more than a single province, for which management responsibility remains entirely within MARD. Management responsibility for individual PAs lies with Protected Area Management Boards (PAMBs), which are formally identified as the on-site managers of protected areas, whether SUFs, MPAs or wetlands.

## Project Concept Background

The history of the development of this project goes back to 2007, when MONRE approached UNDP with a proposal to develop a project on protected areas financing and management. As the project concept developed, MONRE realized that it needed to partner with MARD in order to maximize the potential for successfully addressing PA financing and management challenges, and so MARD became a partner in the development of the concept and eventually the PIF document submitted to the GEF.

The issue of PA financing and management has been an important topic in Viet Nam in the past decade, as evidenced by changes to the policy and regulatory frameworks for protected areas (described in the Institutional and Policy Contexts above) to try to consolidate PA management and increase the funding available for PA units. In addition, several other projects have focused on related issues, one of which is the MARD/GIZ project “Preservation of Biodiversity in Forest Ecosystems in Vietnam”, which is also focused on the development of sustainable financing mechanisms for PAs (specifically for SUFs), as well as the institutionalization of biodiversity conservation policies, building capacity within government, and raising awareness and support for PAs more widely within government and the public; and the Viet Nam Conservation Fund (VCF), which offers small grants to selected SUFs to improve management.

Additional information on the overall timeframe and milestone dates of the project development process is provided in Section III.F.

## Problems the Project Seeks to Address

The project document identifies and describes a variety of threats to biodiversity in Viet Nam, as well as the barriers to strengthened systemic, institutional and individual capacities, supported by sustainable financing, for the national system of protected areas (sections 1.2 and 1.3 of the project document). These are listed as:

***Threats***

Threats to biodiversity in Viet Nam were ascribed to two basic processes: loss of natural ecosystems; and degradation of natural ecosystems; in addition, underlying causes for these direct threats were identified.

Loss of natural ecosystems: The major causes of loss of natural ecosystems are:

* Land Clearing for Agriculture and Aquaculture
* Infrastructure Construction

Degradation of natural ecosystems: The major causes of degradation in natural ecosystems are:

* Logging
* Firewood Needs
* Use of Non-timber Forest Products (including wildlife)
* Fishing
* Introduced Faunal and Floral Species
* Forest Fires
* Pollution

Underlying Causes of Biodiversity Loss

* Population Growth and Migration
* Poverty
* Economic Policy
* Legislation Enforcement

***Barriers***

Barriers to the implementation of the identified long-term solution are:

* The lack of a comprehensive and harmonized legal and policy framework for PA financing
* The lack of clear and harmonized institutional mandates and processes for PA financing mechanisms
* Little knowledge or experience of sustainable financing options
* Lack of information and information sharing on biodiversity and PA status

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

## Project Description and Strategy

The Viet Nam “PA Financing” project is a Global Environment Facility (GEF) funded full-sized project (FSP) designed to assist in achieving the long-term solution for biodiversity conservation in Viet Nam’s system of protected areas (PAs) through strengthened systemic, institutional and individual capacities, supported by sustainable financing. The project focuses on these thematic areas, with sustainable financing pilots at three national parks (Bidoup – Nui Ba; Cat Ba; and Xuan Thuy). The project began in April 2011, and is currently planned for completion in December 2015. The project is within the GEF biodiversity focal area. GEF funding is US$ 3.54 million, and with planned co-financing of US$18.54 million, the total project budget is US$22.08 million.

The project objective is to “secure a sustainably financed PA system, to conserve globally significant biodiversity”. The project has four outcomes and eleven outputs. The table below shows the alignment of the results expected against the outcomes.

| **Outcome** | **Outputs** |
| --- | --- |
| **Outcome 1: A comprehensive and harmonized legal and policy framework supports sustainable PA financing** | Output 1.1: Regulations under the Law on Biodiversity that ensure consistency in protected area administration in the context of national BD planning.  Output 1.2: Emerging policy on PA financing that allows revenue generation and effective management of revenues for individual PAs and the system as a whole. |
| **Outcome 2: Clear and harmonized institutional mandates and processes support sustainable PA financing mechanisms** | Output 2.1: Clarified and coordinated institutional management of a unified PA system.  Output 2.2: PA staff at all levels with necessary skills, including business management, tourism management, monitoring and participatory management.  Output 2.3: Revised and consistent system-wide incentive measures that promote improved performance. |
| **Outcome 3: Knowledge and experience of sustainable financing options developed through demonstrations** | Output 3.1: Models of effective collection and sharing of revenues to support sustainable PA financing.  Output 3.2: Models of operational cooperation and resource sharing among neighbouring PAs.  Output 3.3: Models of local and provincial BD planning. |
| **Outcome 4: Information on biodiversity and PA status supports PA management and builds public support for the PA system** | Output 4.1: A system-wide approach to monitoring to support PA management decisions and budgeting in line with international standards.  Output 4.2: A system-wide approach to reporting on biodiversity status and trends in line with international standards  Output 4.3: Increased public awareness of the importance of, and threats to, the protected area system |

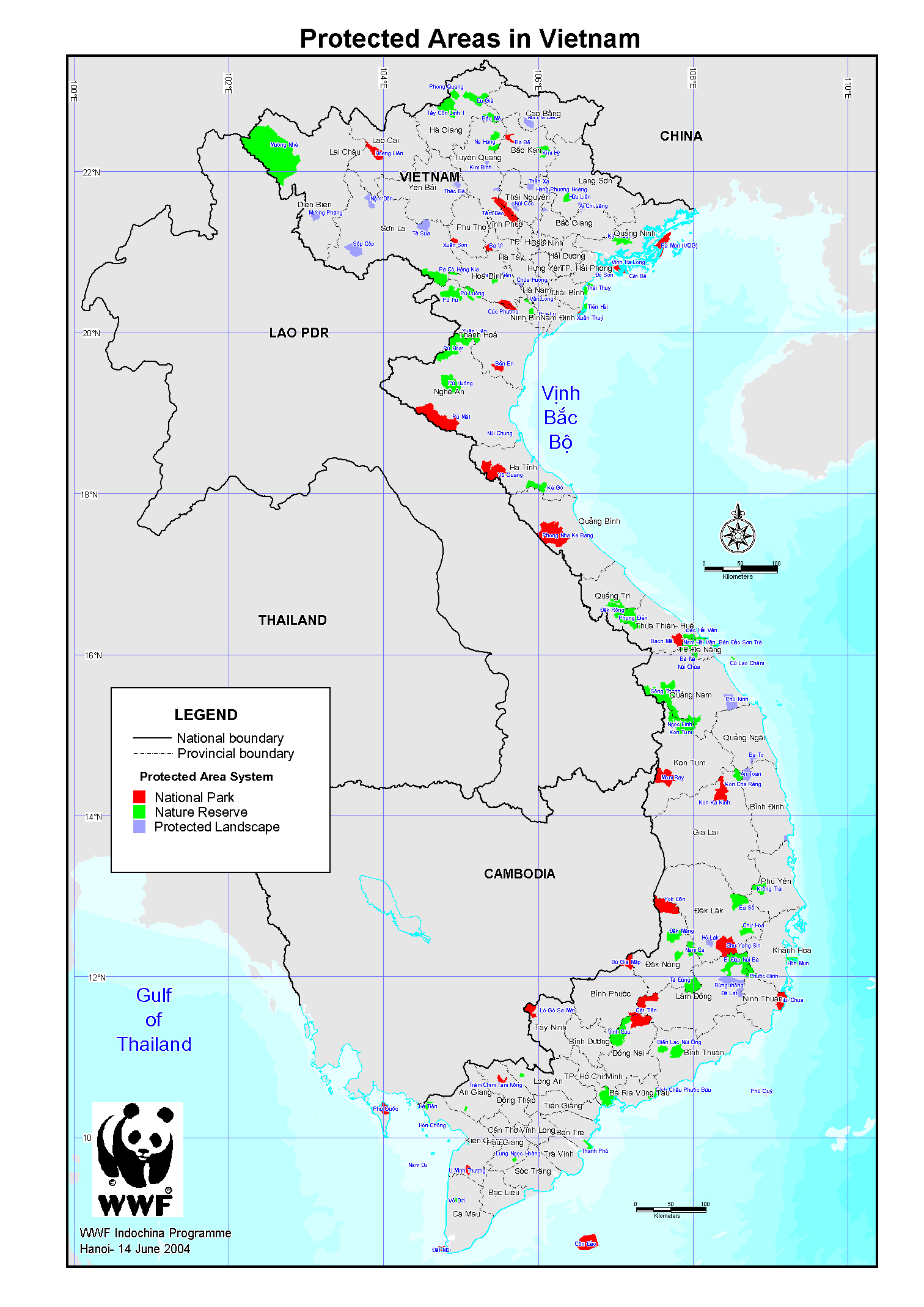
Outcomes 1, 2 and 4 include activities and interventions at both the national and site levels, while Outcome 3 is primarily oriented towards the site level. Project site level activities are focused on the following three clusters of protected areas: Cat Ba and Bai Tu Long National Parks in the coastal / marine area of northern Viet Nam; Xuan Thuy and Tien Hai National Parks in the coastal (Red River Delta) area of northern Viet Nam; and Bidoup - Nui Ba and Chu Yang Sin National Parks in the southern highlands of Viet Nam. Of these six national parks, Cat Ba, Xuan Thuy and Bidoup – Nui Ba were selected as primary areas for project interventions, oriented primarily towards the development of new PA financing mechanisms at the site level.

The rationale and process for the selection of these sites were briefly explained in the approved project documents. The rationale for site based approaches was based on review of the financial and capacity scorecards prepared during the project design phase; in these tools, a lack of practical experience on a number of issues related to financial management of protected areas, such as collection and distribution of tourism fees, operation of commercial concessions, payment for ecosystem processes, etc., were identified as an important weakness in Viet Nam’s ability to finance protected areas. Without the benefit of effective on-the-ground experiences, the development of improved policies and procedures was not considered feasible. Having identified the need for on-the-ground demonstrations, efforts were made to ensure that the sites selected for demonstrations are best able to generate results that will benefit future policy development. In order to select sites for demonstration, a consultative meeting of an “ad hoc” working group was organized involving MONRE, MARD (FPD), and several research and educational institutions working on nature and biodiversity conservation. During this meeting, site selection criteria were discussed and agreed by consensus. These were:

1. Collectively, sites should represent the different types of protected areas (terrestrial, wetland, coastal/marine)
2. Each site should be suited to demonstration activities on more than one issue
3. Each site should contain globally significant biodiversity
4. Each site should be easily accessible from Hanoi

With these criteria in mind, a “long-list” of twelve sites was proposed by individual members of the working group. The merits of each site was then assessed collectively, by scoring each criterion for each site on a scale of 1 (does not meet criterion) to 5 (very strongly meets criterion), with the final selection based on total scores, bearing in mind the need to meet the first criterion. Note: Unfortunately, the approved project documents did not provide any details on the scoring results.

The map in Figure 1 below shows the location of the three PA clusters selected as project demonstration sites.

**Figure 1:** Map showing location of 6 project demonstration sites (Xuan Thuy NP/Tien Hai NR, Cat Ba NP/Bai Tu Long NP and Bi Dup Nui Ba NP/Chu Yang Sai NP) in 3 clusters

The main results expected from the project are highlighted in the project results framework, included as Annex 8 to this review report (with a summary of potential achievement). The main outcome-level results expected included the following targets:

| Objective / Outcomes | Indicator: | Target |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Objective: To secure an effectively constituted and financed PA system, to realize its function as an effective storehouse for threatened biodiversity** | Overall Financial scorecard scores | By the end of the project the score is at least 85 |
| Overall Capacity scorecard scores | By the end of the project the score is at least 52 |
| Average METT scores | By the end of the project the score has increased by at least 30% |
| **Outcome 1: A comprehensive and harmonized legal and policy framework supports sustainable PA financing** | “Legal, regulatory and institutional frameworks” component of the UNDP Financial Scorecard | At the end of the project the score has increased to at least 50 |
| “Capacity to conceptualize and formulate policies, legislations, strategies and programmes” component of the UNDP Capacity Scorecard | At the end of the project the score has increased to at least 7.5 |
| **Outcome 2: Clear and harmonized institutional mandates and processes support sustainable PA financing mechanisms** | Score for the “Business planning and tools for cost-effective management” component of the UNDP Financial Scorecard | At the end of the project the score has increased to at least 45 |
| Score for the “Capacity to implement policies, legislation, strategies and programmes” component of the UNDP Capacity Scorecard | At the end of the project the score has increased to at least 32 |
| **Outcome 3: Knowledge and experience of sustainable financing options developed through demonstrations** | Score for the “Tools for revenue generation” component of the UNDP Financial Scorecard | At the end of the project the score has increased to at least 35 |
| **Outcome 4: Information on biodiversity and PA status supports PA management and builds public support for the PA system** | Score for components 3-5 of the UNDP Capacity Scorecard (“Build consensus”, “Mobilize information”, and “Monitor, report and learn”) | At the end of the project the score has increased to at least 24 |

Somewhat unusually, the project indicators at the Objective and Outcome levels were limited to scores on three project monitoring tools: the UNDP Capacity Scorecard, and two elements of the GEF BD1 Tracking Tool (the Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool and the Financial Scorecard). While these tools are valuable for understanding general improvements in PA financing, capacities, management, and biodiversity conservation, a review of the indicators at the Output level is necessary in order to understand the specific results of the project. At the Output level, some of the most important indicators / results included (but were not limited to):

* Policies/regulations on financing mechanisms for PAs
* Establishment of a mechanism to promote coordination between MONRE and MARD with respect to classifying and managing PAs
* Several indicators on site-level PA financing mechanisms (including measures to increase tourism revenues; to generate Payments for Environmental Services; and to generate revenues from sustainable harvesting) as well as capture of lessons from these mechanisms to improve the legal environment
* Pilot provincial biodiversity plans
* A system-wide approach to BD monitoring that meets international standards
* A system-wide approach to BD reporting and an associated Clearing House Mechanism

## Implementation Approach and Key Stakeholders

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### Implementation Arrangements

In general terms, the actual project implementation arrangements did not vary significantly from the originally planned implementation arrangements.

The project follows the National Implementation Modality (NIM) modality with procedures set out in the by the Harmonized Programme & Project Management Guidelines (HPPMG) 2010. These guidelines are intended to improve the effectiveness of aid by aligning and simplifying working practices. Key participants in project implementation included:

* **Implementing partner / National Implementing Partner (NIP):** Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE)
* **Executing agency:** Viet Nam Environment Administration (VEA) through the Biodiversity Conservation Agency (BCA)

**Co-Implementing Partner (CIP):** Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD): Vietnam Administration of Forestry – Department of Nature Conservation (DoNC)

* **Project Focal Point/ Responsible Party:** Viet Nam Environmental Administration (VEA)

As the National Implementing Partner, MONRE is the agency responsible for implementing and managing the project including the procurement and delivery of the activities. MONRE is also accountable for the project to the Government and UNDP.[[6]](#footnote-6) As the Co-Implementing Partner, MARD was selected by the NIP and the UNDP-CO and has responsibility and accountability for implementing activities as agreed with the NIP. The implementation approach required that MONRE and MARD, as NIP and CIP, reach agreement on how to work together in implementing activities and budgets. The relevant agencies within these Ministries, VEA and VNFOREST, signed a Letter of Agreement in late 2012 to enable implementation of activities to commence, in which it was agreed that the CIP would report directly to UNDP, which then forwards the report to the NIP. Although this compromise enabled the project to move forward, the fact that it took well over a year to reach this agreement delayed implementation of some project activities and negatively impacted the level of coordination and collaboration within the project. In addition, although informal communication between the NIP and the CIP occurs at the working project officer level, at the institutional level relationships remain weak and institutional collaboration is not formalised. The weakness in the collaboration between the key agencies involved in the project was evident in the training curriculum development, with MARD undertaking development of eight topics and BCA seven topics based on each ministry’s functions, rather than being well integrated across both agencies in line with best practice. Even more importantly, the failure to date of MONRE and MARD to sign an agreement regarding PA management functions (see Output 2.1) is another instance of the continued weak institutional collaboration between these two ministries.

The project implementation structure is set up as follows:

**Project Executive Board (PEB):** The PEB makes all necessary decisions and provides guidance for implementation of project activities, including approval of the overall project work-plan, and budget revisions. The PEB consists of members representing the MONRE, MARD, the National Assembly, MOF and MPI; the Vice Minister from MONRE is the chairperson of the PEB. In line with the HPPMG, UNDP is not a member of the PEB, although it is invited to attend all meetings.

**Project Management Unit (PMU) and Other Key Staff:** The PMU is the organisational model in place to manage and implement the activities of the project; however, in this project there is a PMU within MONRE for overall implementation of the project, and a separate PMU within MARD to implement the MARD outputs of the project. The MONRE PMU has a full-time Project Manager, Accountant and Secretary, as well as a half-time Technical Specialist. The Project Manager is responsible for both technical and administrative activities, but in practice she spends the majority of her time on administrative issues (in part because there is a Technical Specialist). The Technical Specialist is primarily involved in developing Terms of Reference for project contractors and in reviewing technical reports. However, because the Technical Specialist was only hired in late 2012, only works on a half time basis, and mostly focuses on TORs and technical reports, the project has not benefitted from on-going and strategic technical guidance. The MONRE PMU staff is supported by a Project Director and two Deputy Directors within BCA who provide part-time support to the project (in-kind contribution). BCA also provides some staff for specific activities, like public outreach. The MARD PMU consists of a part-time Project Director, and full-time Project Manager, Accountant and Training Coordinator.

For Site Level activities, each site has one full-time Site Coordinator, who is supported by the Director and Deputy Director of each Management Board; the participation of the Site Coordinators, Directors and Deputy Directors constitutes a part of the project co-financing. The Site Coordinators (members of PA staff who are seconded to the project) report to the MONRE Project Coordinator, and they meet with the Project Coordinator and their respective PA Management Board members on a quarterly basis to review progress and make plans for the upcoming quarter. The project has been fortunate in that there has been no staff turnover within the PMUs or among the project site coordinators.

Other project partner organizations involved in various project activities are coordinated by the PMU on operational and technical matters. In addition, the project has contracted and made payments to technical partners, following quarterly financial advances from UNDP. The project has contracted international and national technical experts and Service Companies (for example, to carry out a capacity building assessment; ecosystem services valuation; management and business plans; and the project inception report).

### Key Stakeholders

**Stakeholder Coordination and Cooperation**

The project document includes a stakeholder analysis (section 1.4), with a summary table of the main stakeholders and their expected roles and responsibilities in project implementation. This table was updated and revised during the project inception period (primarily to reflect changes in several Ministries between project design and inception). For the most part, the proposed roles and responsibilities of stakeholders were fulfilled during project implementation, as detailed in the table below.

Table 4. Key stakeholders and roles and responsibilities vis-à-vis the project

| Stakeholder | Proposed Responsibilities in the Project (updated text from Project Inception Report) | Actual Involvement in Project |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Viet Nam Environmental Administration (VEA) / MONRE | VEA will be responsible for the overall coordination of the project on behalf of MONRE. Its role in project implementation is described in the Project Document under Management Arrangements. VEA’s Biodiversity Conservation Agency (BCA) is assigned as the project implementing agency, with responsibility for daily coordination, management and implementation of project activities as indicated in the work plan (Annex E). BCA is also responsible for collaborating and liaising with other partners such as MARD and its agencies, PPCs and PA management boards, INGOs and VNGOs as well as other related projects in order to maximise the project’s achievements. | VEA was the lead agency for most of the project outputs and activities, and fulfilled the activities described |
| Viet Nam Directorate of Forestry (VNFOREST) / MARD | VINFOREST will be the lead agency on behalf of MARD. It will lead on some of the project outputs as indicated in the work plan (Annex E). Its role in project management is described in the Project Document under Management Arrangements. | VNFOREST fulfilled the activities described, including playing a leading role in training of PA managers / staff at the national level (Output 2.2); in developing system-wide incentive measures (Output 2.3); and in implementing public awareness programs related to the protected area system (Output 4.3) |
| Dept. of Fisheries Resources Exploitation and Protection / MARD | DOFREP will work in close cooperation with BCA. It will contribute to the project through administration and management of MPAs and IPAs. | DOFREP had limited direct participation in the project implementation, although representatives did attend some project meetings. |
| Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI) | MPI will support the project through its work on an evolving investment allocation mechanism for SUFs (and potentially other forms of PAs). The project will generate information to support MPI in its work. | MPI played an important role in developing and getting approval of Decision 24 on PA Financing |
| Ministry of Finance (MoF) | The MoF is a key partner in reviewing and approving budgets; it will assist the project in reviewing and, where necessary, revising financial regulations and procedures to support improved and diversified financial management of PAs. | MoF played an important role in the development and approval of inter-ministerial circular 16 on PA financing; they also reviewed and approved project budgets |
| The Viet Nam National Administration of Tourism (VNAT) | VNAT will cooperate with the project in developing tourism plans for pilot sites and reviewing policy on generation and allocation of tourism revenues. | VNAT led the development of the National Tourism Strategy; and their provincial offices were involved in site level activities |
| Provincial People’s Committees (PPCs) | As a major administrator of PAs throughout the country, PPCs will be critical to implementing project activities in the pilot sites. New PA financing and management mechanisms and policies developed by this project will need full support from PPCs in order to institutionalise them nationwide. | PPCs in the three targeted areas provided support for the approval of PA financing mechanisms and policies |
| Provincial Departments of Natural Resources and Environment (DONREs) | In line with MONRE, DONREs are the main technical agency at the provincial level. DONREs report to PPCs, but take policy guidance from MONRE. As such, they will be important in implementing project activities at pilot sites, especially in building capacities of local stakeholders. | DONREs have participated by contributing comments on the draft proposals on financing mechanisms at the three project demonstration sites; the PPCs only approved these proposals after receiving agreement from DONRE (as well as from DARD and DOF) |
| Provincial Departments of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARDs) | DARDs are the main technical agency at the local level. DARDs report to PPCs, but take policy guidance from MARD. As such, they will be important in implementing project activities at pilot sites, especially in building capacities of local stakeholders. | DARDs fulfilled their role as envisioned |
| District and Commune People’s Committees | District and Commune PCs are important in supporting local socio-economic development. While many are supportive of PA management, they may also be ambivalent since PA land may be viewed as having valuable alternative uses. District and Commune PCs will therefore be targets for awareness raising activities. | The District and Commune PCs participated in getting local support and consensus for PA financing mechanisms; they are also expected to be targeted for awareness raising in 2015 |
| Viet Nam Conservation Fund (VCF) | As a component of the Forest Sector Development Programme, the VCF offers small grants to selected SUFs to improve management. As such, this project can establish close cooperation with the VCF to help capture lessons from the VCF for up scaling; the VCF can help extend field-testing of diversified revenue generation. | The VCF closed in early 2014; prior to this, VCF provided information and guidance to the GEF project, particularly on developing training and on the incentive schemes |
| International donors (e.g. World Bank, Asian Development Bank) | Several projects being funded and/or implemented by World Bank and ADB in Viet Nam can provide the project with potential opportunities for cooperation and demonstration. World Bank is also a funding partner of VCF. | A World Bank-funded project on wildlife consumption cooperated with the project in organizing public awareness events in 2013; an ADB-funded project on biodiversity corridors (the BCC project) collaborated with the project in organizing a workshop for National Assembly members in 2014; and a GIZ-funded initiative cooperated with the MARD component of this project to organize training in the SMART system for rangers |
| Vietnam Forest Protection and Department Fund (VFF) and Vietnam Environmental Protection Fund (VEPF) | The operations of VFF of MARD and VEPF of MONRE also contribute to sustainable forest management and biodiversity conservation. As such, this project can establish close cooperation with both VFF and VEPF in order to share experience and extend new financing mechanism and fund-raising for PA management in Vietnam. | The project will seek to work with VFF and VEPF in developing ideas for off-site financing mechanisms during 2015; in addition, as financial institutions for environmental protection and natural conservation, both VFF and VEPF will be beneficiaries of the project. |
| Universities | Universities having conservation-related departments will contribute through scientific surveys and educational activities. | The University of Science is developing the training of trainers course for the project |
| Research Institutes | Relevant research institutes will contribute to the project through scientific surveys and educational activities. | The Institute of Forestry supported the project’s work on ecosystem valuation |
| International and Vietnamese non-governmental organisations (INGOs, VNGOs) | Many INGOs are working in Vietnam for biodiversity conservation and PA management such as IUCN, WWF, FFI, Birdlife International, Winrock International, Forest Trends, WCS, GIZ, SNV, CIFOR and RECOFT. VNGOs include PanNature, ENV, WAR, MCD, ForWet and ITB. They are potential project partners in respect of co-financing, sharing experience, and providing technical support and consultants. Policy development by the project will benefit from their technical inputs. | The project cooperated with the Netherlands Development Organization (SNV) and Forest Trends to organize public awareness events in 2013 (including a forum on new financing mechanisms); in addition, the Centre for Marine Life Conservation and Community Development (MCD) supported Xuan Thuy National Park in developing technical guidance on sustainable mollusk raising. |
| National press and media | The project will collaborate with national press and media on public awareness issues. | National press and media attended many of the public awareness events organized by the project in 2013; in addition, in 2015 the project will ask media (Vietnam Television) to help with development of a video |
| Local press and media | The project will cooperate with local press and media in selected pilot areas on public awareness issues. | Local press and media attended many of the public awareness events organized by the project in 2013 |
| Representatives of local communities (villages) | Inhabitants of villages within the selected pilot project areas will be made aware of the issues and invited to take part in decision-making processes. Their cooperation will be sought in implementing project activities including protection and alternative income development (ecotourism, sustainable harvesting of natural resources), awareness raising, etc. | Local communities were consulted in the development of the PA management plans and the design of the PA financing mechanisms (especially in the case of the clam harvesting plans at Xuan Thuy National Park) |
| UNDP-Viet Nam | The roles and responsibilities of UNDP-Viet Nam will include:   * Ensuring professional and timely implementation of activities and delivery of reports and other outputs identified in the Project Document. * Coordination and supervision of the activities, including ensuring alignment of the programme with the UN’s One-Plan for Viet Nam. * Assisting and supporting VEA for organizing coordinating and where necessary hosting all project meetings. * Responsibility for all financial administration to realize the targets envisioned in consultation with VEA. * Establishing an effective networking between project stakeholders, specialized international organizations and the donor community. | The UNDP Country Office in Viet Nam fulfilled the activities described, including significant guidance and input on the implementation of activities and delivery of reports; financial administration of the project; and networking among project stakeholders (particularly with the GIZ-MARD project) |

## Project Key Milestone Dates

The project “*Removing barriers hindering protected area management effectiveness in Viet Nam”* was first identified and approved in concept by the GEF Secretariat in March 2008, following which a project preparatory grant of US$ 100,000 was approved in June 2008 to undertake 8 months of preparatory activities. A full proposal was subsequently developed for the period 2010-2014, was finally approved by the GEF Secretariat in March 2010. The GOV VN designated MONRE as the National Implementing Partner (NIP) in September 2010. MONRE assigned the Viet Nam Environment Administration (VEA) as its Project Focal Point in December 2010. VEA is responsible for coordinating implementation through its Biodiversity Conservation Agency (BCA) and its Co-Implementing Partner (CIP), the Vietnam Administration of Forestry (VNFOREST) within the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD). The CIP is accountable to the NIP for implementing a series of activities identified in the Inception Report. The working relationship and responsibilities were to be defined in a Letter of Agreement on co-implementation arrangements concluded between the two parties.[[7]](#footnote-7)

The Inception Report changed little in the project outcomes and outputs, and articulated a series of activities under the outputs, details of deliverables, timeframes and preliminary budget estimates. The inclusion of a sound management plan for each demonstration site was noted as a base requirement for the pilots. Revision to the work plan and budget focused on reductions to the international and national consultants. Particular emphasis was given to maintaining the budget for Outcome 3 at US$1.45m given the importance of focusing on the demonstration of sustainable financing mechanisms.[[8]](#footnote-8)

Meanwhile discussions with MARD continued about the activities and budget of MARD’s component. Finally in November 2012 VEA and VNFOREST signed a Letter of Agreement. Following this, the MARD component completed staff recruitment and its office started operating. Some activities were underway by the NIP by December 2012, including discussion with the Park Management Boards on pilot activities. Overall, this created a delay within the project of about one year (September 2011 - November 2012) because of the prolonged period of discussion between VEA and VNFOREST about the latter's activities and budget.

In general, the project design phase proceeded smoothly and in compliance with GEF guidelines for the timing of project development. The most significant lag in the project milestones was the long time between the CEO Endorsement in March 2010, and the start of the actual implementation of the project. The signing of the UNDP Prodoc, marking the formal start of the project implementation phase, did not take place until December 2010, a 9 full months after CEO Endorsement. From this point, it took another 4 months until April 2011 to establish a Project Management Unit within MONRE, and then another 7 months for the Inception Workshop to finally take place in December 2011. Furthermore, it was only in November 2012, another 11 months later, that a Project Management Unit was established within MARD. As a result of these delays, the actual implementation of project activities only really began in mid – late 2011, more than a full year after the planned start date in April 2010.

The delays in launching the project implementation were due to several factors. One of the first delays was due to the long time it took the Government of Vietnam to approve the project (in Vietnam the Govt. only approves the project documents after the GEF has done so), which greatly contributed to the 9-month delay in signing of the UNDP Prodoc. This sort of delay is unfortunately common to Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) projects in Viet Nam, and was beyond the ability of MONRE or MARD to change. However, the long time from Prodoc Signature in December 2010 to the start of actual project activities in late 2011 should have been more effectively managed by both MONRE and MARD. Moreover, the additional full year beyond that before MARD started implementation of its project activities was primarily due to disagreements between MARD and MONRE about the allocation of responsibilities for project outputs and activities; these two institutions spent most of a year sorting this out. In this instance, both MARD and MONRE should have sorted out these differences before the Prodoc was ever finalized and submitted; and if necessary, they should have requested more detailed information on their respective responsibilities in the Prodoc, and possibly even an agreement or MoU as an annex to the document. Furthermore, the project inception process (which was much longer than usual) provided another opportunity to sort out any issues, and yet the issue was not fully addressed at the Inception Workshop or in the subsequent Inception Report.

Another important delay in project implementation concerned the implementation of activities at the project demonstration sites, which did not start until late 2013. In this case, the project partners decided that they wanted to carry out a validation process to select which of six potential sites would be selected as the three actual demonstration sites. The selection of the three sites was actually done during project preparation and included in the Prodoc, but because of the delay in starting project implementation, the partners decided to revisit and revalidate the selection. However, no detailed justification for this decision to re-validate the site selection appears to have been made, and given that this re-validation process greatly delayed project site activities without actually making any changes in the sites, it seems doubtful that this was an advisable strategy. The MTR team would advise that future GEF-funded projects carefully consider revisiting project site selection after the project has started, and if they do so, that they clearly communicate and document the reasons for doing so. In addition, following this delay, the project partners then also decided that ecosystem valuation studies had to be carried out at the three demonstration sites, and approval needed to be received from the relevant Provincial People’s Committees, prior to commencing any work on PA financing mechanisms at the sites. While these steps were certainly important in laying the groundwork for the PA financing mechanisms, there is no clear reason why the project could not have done all of this work simultaneously, and thereby avoided delaying getting approval for the PA financing mechanisms until well into the third year of the project, and limiting implementation of the mechanisms to the final year of the project.

The other important lag in the project milestones is the timing of the Mid Term Review. With the project management unit starting activities in April 2011, and the expectation that the project implementation period would be extended until the end of 2015, the mid-term date for this project became late 2013. Accordingly, the Government of Viet Nam and UNDP organized a Mid Term Review in late 2013. However, the final report produced for this Mid Term Review was considered unacceptable by UNDP and the Government of Viet Nam, and it was agreed that a new MTR would be commissioned. Unfortunately, UNDP did not recruit a new MTR team until late 2014, and therefore the new MTR only commenced in November 2014 (with expected finalization in January 2015). This delay is quite unfortunate, as it means the Mid Term Review will only be finalized at the beginning of the final year of the 5-year project, thus allowing the project team and partners very little time to make use of any recommendations provided in the MTR.

Table 5. Project Key Milestone Dates[[9]](#footnote-9)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Milestone** | **Expected date [A]** | **Actual date [B]** | **Months (total)** |
| 1. PIF Approval | N/A | 19 February, 2008 | 0 (0) |
| 2. PPG Approval | N/A | 30 June, 2008 | 4 (4) |
| 3. GEF Council Workplan Inclusion Approval | N/A | 28 July, 2008 | 1 (5) |
| 4. CEO Endorsement Request | N/A | 29 May, 2009 | 10 (15) |
| 5. CEO Endorsement Re-submission | N/A | 8 December, 2009 | 7 (22) |
| 6. CEO Endorsement | 28 January, 2010 | 24 March, 2010 | 4 (26) |
| 7. UNDP-Country Prodoc Signature | April 2010 | 22 December, 2010 | 9 (35) |
| 8. Establishment of Project Management Board | July 2010 | February, 2011 | 2 (37) |
| 9. Establishment of Project Management Unit (PMU) within MONRE | July 2010 | April, 2011 | 2 (39) |
| 10. Inception Workshop | July 2010 | 8-9 December, 2011 | 8 (47) |
| 11. Establishment of Project Management Unit (PMU) within MARD | July 2010 | November, 2012 | 11 (58) |
| 12. Mid-term Review | December 2012 | November 2014 | 25 (83) |
| 13. Terminal Evaluation | 31 September, 2015 | N/A | 9 (92) |
| 14. Project Operational Completion | 31 December, 2015 | N/A | 3 (95) |
| 15. Project Financial Closing | 31 December, 2015 | N/A | (95) |

***REVIEW FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS***

# Relevance

## Relevance of the Project Objective

The project is considered ***relevant*** (or “satisfactory” in terms of the relevance criteria), as the project clearly supports priority biodiversity conservation issues in Viet Nam. The project is in line with national laws, regulations and policies, and is relevant to local resource user needs and priorities as well. The project supports agreed UNDP country priorities as well as GEF strategic priorities for the biodiversity focal area. Furthermore, the project supports relevant multilateral environmental agreements, including the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance.

### Relevance to National and Local Policies and Strategic Priorities

The approved GEF CEO Endorsement Request document includes a list of key national policy and programmes that the project supports. The project is consistent with the Management Strategy for a Protected Area System in Viet Nam to 2010, that identifies the need "to reform the PA management mechanism, particularly investment and financial management in PAs" as a strategic priority. Sustainable conservation financing also has been identified as a key issue in the draft National Forest Strategy for 2005-2010. The project is also consistent with Viet Nam’s National Action Plan on Biodiversity up to 2010, which has identified a number of “major solutions” to the problems affecting biodiversity in Viet Nam, including: 1) To consolidate and strengthen the capacity of the system of state management agencies; 2) Review, compile, amend and complete the systems of mechanisms, policies and legal documents; 3) To apply financial instruments to biodiversity management such as taxes and fees on the exploitation and use of natural resources, environmental service fees and conservation funds; 4) To decentralize and assist localities in biodiversity management; 5) To diversify models of community-based management; and 6) To establish interregional mechanisms to coordinate localities’ activities in biodiversity management. Finally, the project supports the objective of the Management Strategy for a Protected Area System in Viet Nam to 2010 (MASPAS) to establish, organize and manage effectively an integrated protected area system covering terrestrial, wetland and marine ecosystems.

In addition to its relevance to national level policies and programmes, the project is also relevant to and supportive of the needs and priorities of local stakeholders. In terms of protected areas management, the project has targeted national parks that are managed at the provincial level; these parks have the most limited resources and capacities in the overall PA system. Local communities in and around these parks also will benefit from the project activities, including residents in and around Bidoup – Nui Ba National Park who receive payments for their forest protection activities, and residents within Xuan Thuy National Park who will benefit from a legally defined and managed system of clam farming where payments for environmental services help to protect the coastal ecosystems that are vital to the on-going operations of clam farmers.

### Relevance to UNDP Country Priorities

The approved project documents did not address the relevance of the project to UNDP country priorities. However, a review of the ONE PLAN 2012 – 2016, agreed between the Government of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam and the United Nations in Viet Nam on 27 March 2012, clearly shows that the project is relevant to and supportive of the agreed UNDP priorities for Viet Nam. Within the ONE PLAN document, Focus Area One: Inclusive, Equitable and Sustainable Growth includes theOutcome 1.4 “Key national and sub-national agencies, in partnership with the private sector and communities, implement and monitor laws, policies and programmes for more efficient use of natural resources and environmental management, and to implement commitments under international conventions”, which clearly identifies priorities and objectives that are supported by this project.

For example, the “Outcome Rationale” for Outcome 1.4 states that “the UN will assist Viet Nam to… formulate and enhance implementation policies, including green growth, policy advice on and support for developing enhanced mechanisms to promote biodiversity and greener production… and it will aim in particular for strengthening capacities in MPI, MONRE, MARD and MOIT, as well as other ministries in the use of market prices to provide incentives for environmentally sustainable investment and growth, sustainable management of ecosystems, establishing a sustainable financing mechanism for protected areas, and to raise the profile of sustainable development in national policies and sector strategies and plans.” In addition, Output 1.4.2 of the ONE PLAN is “A set of coherent policies and plans are prepared or updated to strengthen (1) management of protected areas and biodiversity conservation, and (2) environment management at national and community levels”; and within Output 1.4.2, the first indicator is “A comprehensive financing mechanism to provide finance for national protected areas systems and biodiversity conservation”.

### Relevance to GEF Strategic Objectives

The GEF has identified a set of strategic priorities and objectives designed to support the GEF's catalytic role and to leverage resources for maximum impact, and GEF supported projects should be relevant to these strategic priorities and objectives. The project was approved and is being implemented under the strategic priorities for GEF-5 (July 2010 – June 2014).[[10]](#footnote-10) The relevant biodiversity focal area strategic objective is Objective 1: “Improve Sustainability of Protected Area Systems”. Under this strategic objective, the project supports two outcomes and associated indicators:

Outcome 1.1: Improved management effectiveness of existing and new protected areas.

* *Indicator 1.1: Protected area management effectiveness score as recorded by Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool.*

Outcome 1.2: Increased revenue for protected area systems to meet total expenditures required for management.

* *Indicator1.2: Funding gap for management of protected area systems as recorded by protected area financing scorecards.*

As noted in the approved project documents, the project will contribute significantly to meeting the targets noted above. The project will contribute to the sustainability of Viet Nam’s protected area system by supporting national policy development and institutional strengthening and through pilot site demonstrations to ensure that the national PA system has plans and actions for long term financial sustainability. The project will ensure development of business plans that include diversified funding sources and cost effective use of resources. The project will also strengthen the partnerships between PA authorities and local communities, local government, NGOs and the private sector to achieve the long-term sustainability of PA financing.

### Relevance to Multilateral Environmental Agreements

Viet Nam is signatory to a number of major multilateral environmental agreements, including several that are highly relevant to the project, such as the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, called the Ramsar Convention. Viet Nam ratified the Convention on Biological Diversity on 16th November 1994, and the Ramsar Convention in 1989. Although the approved project documents did not identify specific elements of these conventions to which the project is relevant, the following elements of the CBD are clearly supported by the project: Article 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). In addition, the project supports a number of 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 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 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 7: By 2020 areas under agriculture, aquaculture and forestry are managed sustainably, ensuring conservation of biodiversity.
* Target 11: By 2020, at least 17 per cent of terrestrial and inland water, and 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services, are conserved through effectively and equitably managed, ecologically representative and well connected systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, and integrated into the wider landscapes and seascapes.
* 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 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.
* Target 19: By 2020, knowledge, the science base and technologies relating to biodiversity, its values, functioning, status and trends, and the consequences of its loss, are improved, widely shared and transferred, and applied.

## Relevance of the Project Approach, Strategy and Design

The most important problem faced in the project design and implementation has been an uncertain and so far minimally successful approach to strengthening coordination on protected areas management and financing in Viet Nam. Annex 11 has a very detailed analysis of this issue, and references other documents with additional information (well beyond the scope of this Mid Term Review). A review of those documents leaves no doubt that there is a need for improved coordination on PA management and financing in Viet Nam. However, the analysis and findings in these documents also make it clear that this is a very complicated issue with many important national and provincial stakeholders involved. In the view of the MTR team, this issue is not something that can be easily addressed by an externally-funded, short term project, particularly one that is also addressing many other goals and objectives.

As detailed in Annex 11, the goals and targets of this project with regard to PA management and financing were unclear and in fact inconsistent in the project document. In particular, the text of the project outputs described a vision and proposed activities that were much more ambitious than any indicator targets in the project’s Results Framework. In the view of the MTR team, the vision and activities in the text of the project outputs were unrealistic, as detailed below, and between this unrealistic approach and disparity between the Outputs text and the Results Framework, it is understandable that the project team and partners chose to focus on the more realistic targets in the Results Framework.

Having said that, during project implementation, little progress has been made even towards the relevant indicators in the Results Framework, and in general, the project should have done much more to strengthen PA coordination on management and financing. The primary accomplishment of the project to date has been the drafting of an MOU between MONRE and MARD, but in the view of the MTR team, more could be done by this project. For this reason, recommendations 11-13 of the Mid Term Review provide detailed guidance on activities that the project should undertake in 2015 in order to try to meet its objectives regarding coordinated PA financing and management.

Apart from the issue of PA coordination, other problems in terms of the relevance of the project design and approach are outlined in various places in this document, especially in the analysis of the project’s Monitoring and Evaluation (Section V. G. i.) and its Results Framework (Annex 8, Section A).

# Project Management and Cost-effectiveness (Efficiency)

Overall, project **efficiency** is rated ***moderately satisfactory***. As detailed in Section III F, the project start-up process was marked by delays. The GEF Secretariat approved the Prodoc in March 2010, but signing of the Prodoc did not take place until December 2010; the PMU was not established until April 2011, and the Inception Workshop did not take place until December 2011. Furthermore, it was only in November 2012, another 11 months later, that a Project Management Unit was established within MARD. As a result of these delays, the actual implementation of project activities only really began in mid – late 2011, more than a full year after the planned start date in April 2010. Another important delay in project implementation concerned the implementation of activities at the project demonstration sites, which did not start until late 2013.

As of September 30, 2014 the project has reached 66.39% disbursement of the overall project budget; and 79.49% of what was expected to have been spent by this phase of the project. Project implementation arrangements have functioned well, although the level of coordination between MONRE and MARD has been less than should have been expected. Project oversight mechanisms have been in place, but the Project Executive Board has not met sufficiently often (once per year) to provide the level of oversight, guidance, and policy support that the project required.

While the project is behind schedule in its budget delivery, the late start of the project and the significant increase in budget disbursements in the last two years suggest that the project can be expected to disburse the entire budget in a timely manner. Similarly, it can be hoped that the Project Executive Board will provide more hands-on and sustained support for the project in its final year of implementation, as recommended by this Mid Term Review. As for cooperation between MONRE and MARD, this is now a moot point insofar as the project is concerned since MARD will soon end its formal participation in the project, although the PMU and MONRE generally need to address the PA institutional coordination issues outlined in section IV b. Overall, the project has the potential to receive a higher efficiency rating by the end of the project, if performance significantly improves, as expected.

## Quality of Implementation, Including UNDP Oversight

As of the mid-term review, overall project implementation is rated ***moderately satisfactory***.

UNDP is the responsible GEF Agency for the project, and carries general backstopping and oversight responsibilities. Technical supervision is undertaken by the UNDP‐GEF Regional Technical Advisor (based at the UNDP Asia‐Pacific Regional Centre in Bangkok) and the UNDP Viet Nam Country Office (UNDP CO); the UNDP CO is also responsible for financial supervision of the project. As the GEF Agency (responsible both for project development and implementation) and as the implementing body, UNDP bears a portion of responsibility for the project’s slow start-up and progress toward results. Many of the project execution issues discussed below are also a reflection of project oversight, and it is UNDP’s responsibility to ensure that such issues are avoided, or are promptly addressed. Positive aspects of UNDP’s role in project implementation include the completion of annual project audits, and timely responses to audit findings; consistent support and responsiveness to the PMUs on project financial and administrative matters; and support in updating the project monitoring tools (e.g. METTs, financial scorecard and capacity scorecard).

However, there have also been a number of shortcomings in UNDP’s oversight of the project implementation, including[[11]](#footnote-11):

* Failure to convince MONRE and MARD to adopt a unified project management structure, or to resolve their differences over project responsibilities in a timely manner
* Failure to ensure that the Project Executive Board meets at least twice per year (as agreed to in the Inception Report);
* Problems in the technical design of the project, in particular with the indicators in the Results Framework, and in the overly ambitious design as written in the text on project outputs (responsibility for which is also born by the GEF Secretariat, as well as MONRE and MARD).
* Failure to ensure that the Mid Term Review was completed in a timely manner
* Failure to streamline the project procurement process: The Harmonized Program and Project Management Guidelines (HPPMG) agreed between UNDP and Government of Viet Nam in 2010 are a cumbersome mechanism for relatively small projects like this one. For example, the HPPMG requires approval of any procurement above US$1,500 (UNDP guidelines have a floor of US$25,000); this requirement has greatly slowed the process of hiring consultants and contract companies to carry out project technical activities. Clearly the responsibility for the problems with HPPMG do not rest solely with UNDP, since the Govt. of Viet Nam is the counterparty to the HPPMG. Furthermore, UNDP has been working with two other UN Agencies (UNFPA, UNICEF) and the Govt. of Viet Nam to revise the HHPMG, and although this has not been completed, UNDP should be commended for addressing this issue, and hopefully it will be resolved by the end of the project.

## Quality of Execution and Project Management

As of the mid-term review, overall quality of project execution is rated ***moderately satisfactory***.

As identified in the UNDP Prodoc, MONRE is the project’s national implementing partner (NIP), and VEA is the responsible party. PMU staff and the part time consultant (who has reporting and quality control functions) provide the project’s main supervision. In addition, MARD is a co-implementing partner (CIP) for the project. Additional details on the project implementation and execution arrangements are described in Section III e. i. of this report.

Analysis of the performance of MONRE, MARD and their respective Project Management Units shows a number of strengths in project execution / management, including:

* Effective and responsible day to day management of the project, including comprehensive reporting on project activities and results; efficient financial and administrative management; detailed and timely work planning; frequent and careful oversight of PMU staff and related demonstration site staff; and effective engagement with a range of partners.
* Timely identification and assessment of problems
* The project has enjoyed staff continuity, with the appropriate skills for the functions of coordination and quality control.
* Strong participation / coordination at technical and local levels, including technical cooperation between MONRE and MARD, and cooperation with local PA management boards / staff and political leaders. The Project Manager visits the field sites on a regular basis and effectively carries out oversight and guidance functions for field staff and local partners.[[12]](#footnote-12)
* Technical skills to support the project have been made available to date by short-term contractors and consultants.

Analysis of the performance of MONRE, MARD and their respective Project Management Units shows a number of weaknesses in project execution / management, including:

* As further discussed in later Section VI on results and effectiveness, the project is not currently on track to meet the planned results targets
* High level cooperation between MONRE and MARD has been weak, resulting in delays in project implementation and a failure to effectively address protected area coordination issues at the systemic level
* Delays in many project activities, including initiation of the project and of the development of PA financing mechanisms at the demonstration sites
* Failure to ensure that the Project Executive Board meets at least twice per year (as agreed to in the Inception Report)
* Low financial delivery, with 66.39% disbursement of the overall project budget; and 79.49% of what was expected to have been spent by this phase of the project, as of September 30, 2014

## Partnership Approach and Stakeholder Participation

The major shortcoming in the project’s partnership approach thus far has been weaknesses in collaboration and coordination between MONRE and MARD, both in terms of the project management and in terms of achieving the project results. With regard to the former, while the Project Management Units within each ministry have cooperated well on some technical issues, they have remained as entirely separate entities that are managing distinct activities within the project rather than undertaking an integrated and coordinated set of activities. Furthermore, the inability of the two Ministries to work collaboratively resulted in significant delays to the start up of those project activities that MARD was ultimately responsible for implementing. Even attempts by other partners, such as the UNDP Country Office, but also representatives from GIZ, IUCN and JICA, all of whom are implementing complementary programs in the country, were unsuccessful in quickly resolving the differences between MONRE and MARD or in securing their agreement for a more integrated approach to the implementation of the project. It should be noted that responsibility for these problems does not lie with the technical staff, but rather with higher-level decision makers who have resisted fully integrating their participation in the project.

Problems in the management of the project mirror the more general problem that MONRE and MARD have been unable to make effective progress in moving towards a protected areas system where decision-making, financing, reporting and monitoring, and training are coordinated between institutions. These problems are described in detail in section IV b.

In relation to other relevant stakeholders, the project appears to have been effective in collaborating with key stakeholders at the project demonstration sites, especially the PA Management Boards and the relevant Provincial People’s Committees.

## Flexibility and Adaptive Management

Flexibility is one of the GEF’s ten operational principles (see Annex 2), and all projects must be implemented in a flexible manner to maximize efficiency and effectiveness, and to ensure a results-based, rather than output-based, approach. Thus, during project implementation adaptive management must be employed to adjust to changing circumstances.

The project inception report provided a useful update on changes to the policy, legal and institutional frameworks for protected areas in Viet Nam between the period of project development (2008-2010) and the inception phase (late 2011). However, the inception report did not propose any specific revisions in project design / implementation based on these changes in the overall setting for the environment. The inception report did however provide more details on the project outputs and activities, and made revisions to the project budget to accommodate these changes; this was an effective application of adaptive management. On the other hand, the Inception Report also proposed numerous changes to the project’s Results Framework, although none of the proposed changes was highly significant and all were at the output level rather than the objective or outcome level (details on the proposed changes are provided in Annex xxx). As detailed in section G. ii. on Monitoring and Evaluation, the proposed changes in the Inception Report were approved by the Project Executive Board, but for some reason were never adopted by the project team or partners, and the original Results Framework has been used in all subsequent project reporting (i.e. annual PIRs). This represents a shortcoming in the adaptive management approach of the project.

The Inception Report also provided a detailed “Comparison between MONRE/BCA/GEF and MARD/DNC/GIZ projects to identify potential collaboration opportunities”, given that the MARD/DNC/GIZ project for the “Preservation of Biodiversity in the Forest Eco-systems in Vietnam” had many similar goals and approaches to the MONRE/BCA/GEF project. However, based on a review of the PIRs and other project reporting documents, it does not appear that there was significant, on-going collaboration between the two projects, as recommended in the Inception Report. The MARD/DNC/GIZ project came to a close before the country visit for this Mid Term Review, and attempts to meet with staff who were associated with that project were not successful, so a full analysis is not possible, but it does appear that this was another case where guidance from the Inception Report was not fully utilized.

## Financial Management

Note: All figures Section E are in USD

The Project Inception Report made note of the significant devaluation of the Vietnamese dong with respect to the US dollar between the preparation of the Project Document in May-September 2009, when the budget was based on an exchange rate of US$ 1 = VND 17,000, and the exchange rate when the project inception report was written in May 2011 of approximately US$ 1 = VND 20,500, and the potential risk that this posed to the project budget. Fortunately, the exchange rate stabilized and is roughly the same in late 2014 as it was in May 2011.

### Financial Planning by Component and Delivery

GEF funds for the total project budget are $3,536,360; GEF funding for the project preparation phase was $100,000. The GEF Agency fee paid to UNDP for project cycle management services is $363,636. Thus the total cost of the project to the GEF Trust Fund was $3,999,996. The breakdown of GEF funding for the project is given in table 6 below. Of the total project budget, $0.37 million (10.4% of the total) was planned for Outcome 1, $1.03 million (29.0%) was planned for Outcome 2, $1.45 million (41.0%) was planned for Outcome 3, 0.34 million (9.6%) was planned for Outcome 4, and $0.35 (10.0%) was planned for project management.

Table 6: Original Planned Timing of Project GEF Financing (USD million)

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Year 1** | **Year 2** | **Year 3** | **Year 4** | **Year 5** | **Total** |
| Outcome 1 | 172,000 | 156,000 | 21,360 | 11,000 | 8,000 | **368,360** |
| Outcome 2 | 200,000 | 320,000 | 260,000 | 155,000 | 90,000 | **1,025,000** |
| Outcome 3 | 326,000 | 316,000 | 293,000 | 264,000 | 251,000 | **1,450,000** |
| Outcome 4 | 142,000 | 115,000 | 46,000 | 19,000 | 18,000 | **340,000** |
| Project Management | 65,000 | 55,000 | 88,000 | 55,000 | 90,000 | **353,000** |
| **Total** | **905,000** | **962,000** | **708,360** | **504,000** | **457,000** | **3,536,360** |

**Table 7: Planned vs. Actual / Projected Spending per year**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Year 1 | Year 2 | Year 3 | Year 4: Q1-3 | Year 4: Q4 | Year 5 | **Total** |
| **Planned\*** | 905,000 | 962,000 | 708,360 | 378,000 | 126,000 | 457,000 | **3,536,360** |
| **Actual / Projected\*\*** | 74,208 | 490,201 | 878,866 | 904,463 | 519,970 | 668,652 | **3,536,360** |
| **% achieved / projected** | 8.2% | 51.0% | 124.1% | 239.3% | 412.7% | 146.3% | **100%** |

\* The total planned amount for Year 4 was 504,000; this table assumes that the total was split evenly among the four quarters

\*\*Figures for Years 1-3 and Year 4 Q1-3 come from Combined Delivery Reports; figures for Year 4 Q4 and Year 5 come from Annual Workplans

Analysis of tables 7-9 shows that the project was very slow in spending its available funds, particularly in year 1 where only 8.2% of projected spending was delivered, but also in year 2 where only 51.0% of projected spending was delivered. However, in the past two years the project has greatly increased its delivery rate.

Table 8: Project Overall Planned vs. Actual Financing, Through 30 September 2014 (USD million)

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **GEF amount planned** | **Share of total GEF amount** | **GEF amount actual** | **% of GEF amount actual** | **% of original planned** |
| Outcome 1 | $368,360 | 10.42% | 169,757 | 7.23% | 46.08% |
| Outcome 2 | $1,025,000 | 28.98% | 841,122 | 35.83% | 82.06% |
| Outcome 3 | $1,450,000 | 41.00% | 917,812 | 39.09% | 63.30% |
| Outcome 4 | $340,000 | 9.61% | 231,034 | 9.84% | 67.95% |
| Project Management | $353,000 | 9.98% | 188,013 | 8.01% | 53.26% |
| **Total** | **$3,536,360** | **100.00%** | **2,347,738** | **100.00%** | **66.39%** |

Sources: Project Document for planned amount; data from Combined Delivery Reports (CDRs) for actual amounts as of 30 September 2014.

The date of 30 September 2014 is approximately 75% of the way through the project implementation period (assuming that the project started roughly at the beginning of 2011 and will be extended through the end of 2015; September 2014 is 15 quarters into the 20 total quarters of the project). Table 7 shows that by the end of year 3 of the project, total targeted spending of GEF funds was $2,575,360; adding to this ¾ of the project spending for 2014, which equals $378,000, the total targeted spending by this point in the project implementation was $2,953,360. As indicated in table 8, as of 30 September 2014, the project actually had disbursed $2,347,738. Thus, the actual project activity budget delivery rate is lower than the expected at this stage of the project’s implementation.

Table 9: Original Targeted GEF Financing vs. Actual GEF Financing (USD million)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Years 1-3 + first 3 quarters of Year 4** | **Actual Spending as of 30 September 2014** | **% of Targeted Spending Achieved** |
| Outcome 1 | 357,610 | 169,757 | 47.47% |
| Outcome 2 | 896,250 | 841,122 | 93.85% |
| Outcome 3 | 1,133,000 | 917,812 | 81.01% |
| Outcome 4 | 317,250 | 231,034 | 72.82% |
| Project Management | 249,250 | 188,013 | 75.43% |
| **Total** | **2,953,360** | **2,347,738** | **79.49%** |

Analysis of table 9 shows that the overall delivery rate is 79.49% of the target. Furthermore, delivery rates for most of the outcomes are clustered around the overall delivery rate, with the exception of Outcome 1, which has a much lower delivery rate of 47.47%.

Given that budget allocations in the approved UNDP Prodoc are by nature broad estimates and actual delivery is subject to change during project implementation, and given that most of failure to deliver the projected spending is due to the very slow start up of the project, the variations shown in table 9 should not be considered highly problematic. Nevertheless, the project team must carefully consider both the overall delivery rate, and the delivery rate for Outcome 1 in particular, and develop a clear strategy for ensuring that the GEF funding will be spent in a timely but still effective manner during the last year of project implementation. Similarly, the UNDP Country Office and the Government of Vietnam should endeavour to streamline the HPPMG process as much as possible to enable more timely disbursement of project funds during the final year of the project.

### Project Audit Findings

The project had annual audits for 2011, 2012 and 2013, conducted by the international firm KPMG. The audit for 2013 (completed in April 2014) “did not note any matters involving internal control and other operational matters of the project” and stated that “the overall risk assessment of the internal control system of the Project in relation to its activities implemented during the year ended 31 December 2013 is **Low**”. Furthermore, Part 6 of the 2013 audit reported on the “status of prior year audit recommendations” and noted that each of those recommendations, including “withhold and pay compulsory social and health insurance”; “improve control over supporting documents of purchases of goods and services”; and “insure assets adequately” had all been satisfactorily implemented in 2013.

### Partner Financial Arrangements

The majority of the GEF project financing has been administered by the Project Management Unit within the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE). However, as noted in table 10 below, approximately 20% of the overall budget ($710,000) was administered by the Project Management unit with the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD). MARD administered these funds in support of the implementation of Output 2.2 (PA staff at all levels with necessary skills, including business management, tourism management, monitoring and participatory management) and Output 2.3 (Revised and consistent system-wide incentive measures that promote improved performance).

**Table 10: Budget for MARD Component of Project**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **2013** | **2014 Actual (Q1-Q3)** | **2014 Projected (Q4)** | **Total** |
| MARD Project Activities | 314,431 | 259,367 | 136,202 | 710,000 |

In general the administration of funds by MARD did not present any problems for project implementation. However, as noted in the analysis of implementation arrangements (Section E. i. above), the separation of tasks, staff and budgeting between MONRE and MARD was not an ideal approach as it did nothing to facilitate increased collaboration between these two ministries.

It is also worth noting that the project made payments to the UNDP Country Office in Viet Nam for services provided by that office; although a breakdown of the services was not made available, it is believed that they were primarily in the form of assistance with procurement of persons, equipment and materials. The breakdown of payments for direct project services to the UNDP is provided in table 11.

**Table 11: Payments to UNDP for Direct Project Costs**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Year** | **Amount** |
| 2011 | $266.92 |
| 2012 | $1,731.89 |
| 2013 | $940.29 |
| 2014 | $2,399.72 |
| **Total (as of 30 September 2014)** | **$5,338.82** |

## Planned and Actual Co-financing

Note: All figures Section F are in USD

The total originally planned co-financing for the project is $18,541,043, as indicated in table 12 below. As of December 31, 2013, the documented co-financing was $19,125,622 in cash and in-kind contributions from the main project partners. Thus, as further detailed in tables 12 and 13 below, the project is not only on target to meet the levels of co-financing committed to at CEO Endorsement, but in fact the amount of co-financing that has been disbursed by the project mid-term already exceeds the originally committed amount. This is a very positive development in the project, although it should be noted that the vast majority of project co-financing (over 90%) was characterized as “in-kind” rather than “grant” co-financing. The main project execution and implementation partners should continue to clearly document and justify actual co-financing amounts committed. 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 12: Committed, Actual and Planned Co-financing**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Co-Financing Partners** | **Type** | **Funds Committed (at CEO Endorse)** | **2011 (actual)** | **2012 (actual)** | **2013 (actual)** | **2014 (planned)** | **2015 (planned)** | **Total** |
| UNDP | In-Kind | $7,050,000 | $2,000,000 | $2,500,000 | $3,850,000 | $0 | $0 | **$8,350,000** |
| Vietnam Environment Agency\* | In-Kind | $3,725,000 | $500,000 | $1,200,000 | $1,142,000 | $800,000 | $800,000 | **$4,442,000** |
| Govt. of Vietnam - PA Authorities\*\* | In-Kind | $6,766,043 |  |  |  |  |  | **$0** |
| - Xuan Thuy National Park |  |  | $1,000,000 | $1,200,000 | $1,220,000 | $500,000 | $0 | **$3,920,000** |
| - Bidoup - Nui Ba National Park |  |  | $580,000 | $620,000 | $536,622 | $415,621 | $0 | **$2,152,243** |
| - Cat Ba National Park |  |  | $600,000 | $600,000 | $577,000 | $157,000 | $0 | **$1,934,000** |
| IUCN\*\*\* | Grant & In-Kind | $1,000,000 | $500,000 | $500,000 |  |  |  | **$1,000,000** |
| **Total** |  | **$18,541,043** | **$5,180,000** | **$6,620,000** | **$7,325,622** | **$1,872,621** | **$800,000** | **$21,798,243** |

\*Including salary and/or allowance of Project Director board, steering committee, office

\*\*Including permanent budget and related projects

\*\*\*Including related projects

Table 13: Project Actual and Planned Co-financing as a % of Committed Co-financing

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Co-Financing Partners** | **Type** | **Funds Committed (at CEO Endorse)** | **Actual Co-financing at Mid-Term** | **% of Actual to Committed** | **Planned Co-financing for remainder of project** | **% of Actual + Planned to Committed** |
| UNDP | In-Kind | 7,050,000 | $8,350,000 | 118.4% | $0 | 118.4% |
| Vietnam Environment Agency | In-Kind | 2,842,000 | $4,442,000 | 156.3% | $1,600,000 | 212.6% |
| Govt. of Vietnam - PA Authorities\* | In-Kind | $6,766,043 | $6,933,622 | 102.5% | $1,072,621 | 118.3% |
| IUCN | Grant & In-Kind | $1,000,000 | $1,000,000 | 100.0% | $0 | 100.0% |
| **Total** |  | **$18,541,043** | **$19,125,622** | **103.2%** | **$2,672,621** | **117.6%** |

\* Combined total for Xuan Thuy, Bidoup - Nui Ba, and Cat Ba National Parks

## Monitoring and Evaluation

The 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***.

### M&E Design

The project M&E plan is outlined in Part IV of the approved project document. 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 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. 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 $103,500, which is adequate for a project of this size and scope, representing approximately 2.9% of the project budget. The project M&E plan is appropriately designed and well articulated, and conforms to GEF and UNDP M&E minimum standards.

With regard to tools for monitoring project progress, the design phase of the project produced a Results Framework as well as initial and target scores for the GEF BD-1 Tracking Tool (including both the Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool, or METT, and the Financial Scorecard) and the UNDP Capacity Scorecard. The Results Framework had a significant problem in that it included 38 indicators, many more than are needed or recommended. In addition, the indicators were provided at the Objective, Outcome and Output levels; only the first two of these levels are appropriate for project indicators. Furthermore, the Results Framework does not include any impact, pressure reduction or state indicators for biodiversity; instead the framework is made up of process indicators, which does not follow GEF guidance for biodiversity project. In terms of the content / focus of the indicators and their targets, in general these were strong, but the results framework did include some indicators and targets that were found to need improvement during the project inception phase (see next section for details). The METT and Capacity Scorecards were completed in a satisfactory manner, although the overall target scores for both of these tools were incorrectly reported in the Results Framework (see next section for details). The Financial Scorecard was not completed in a satisfactory manner, as it used an out of date version of the scorecard and did not include information on how the scorecard was completed (i.e. who filled in the data; what was the sample set of protected areas; etc.).

### M&E Implementation

The implementation of the project monitoring and evaluation system has been ***moderately unsatisfactory***.

The Project Coordinator is responsible for most monitoring and reporting functions, although the part-time technical advisor plays an important role in reviewing all technical reports. The information provided by the M&E system is used to improve project performance and to adapt to changes. All reports are reviewed and managed by PMU before submitting to higher agencies, except the CIP's reports. Based on the monitoring system, the PMU considers any problems and solutions to improve project performance. For challenges that need consensus from relevant stakeholders, the PMU may call for meetings to discuss possible solutions; for example, the PMUs of the NIP and the CIP organized a series of meetings to revise the incentive measures for MARD component.

PMU staff report weekly to the Project Director on the activities implemented from the previous week, and to seek approval for the following week’s activities. Monthly, PMU staffers prepare activity reports for the Project Director, and financial reports are prepared for submission to the Project Director and VEA. Quarterly, PMU staffers prepare both activity and financial reports to submit to Project Director, VEA and UNDP. PMU staffers also conduct regular visits to the project demonstration sites to check and evaluate the performance of project activities, and they attend relevant meetings and workshops in Hanoi and at the demonstration sites for information gathering and sharing. Every year, the Project Executive Board meets to review activities implemented in the previous year and to review and approve the following year’s activities. Details on these and other monitoring and evaluation activities are provided in table 14.

**Table 14: Project Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanisms**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Mechanisms** | **Prepared by** | **For** |
| Weekly work plan | PMU staff | Project Director |
| Monthly reports | PMU staff | Project Director, VEA |
| Quarterly reports | PMU, demonstration sites | Project Director, VEA, UNDP |
| Annual reports (PIR and ARR) | PMU staff | Project Director, VEA, Project Executive t Board, UNDP |
| GEF BD1 Tracking Tool (METT and Financial Scorecard): Prepared at Inception, Mid Term and End of project | PMU staff | Project Director, VEA, MONRE UNDP and GEF |
| Inception report (IR) | External consultants for: PMU (NIP and CIP), UNDP | UNDP  Project counterparts (MONRE, MARD, MPI…) |
| Strategic Results Framework | External consultants for: PMU | Project Director, UNDP |
| Periodic thematic reports | PMU, demonstration sites (as requested) | Project Director, UNDP |
| Program activity report | PMU, demonstration sites (as requested) | Project Director, UNDP |
| Evaluate Program activity and reports | External consultants for: PMU | PMU, UNDP, and Project Executive Board |
| Bidding procedure reports | External consultants | PMU |
| Midterm evaluation | External consultants | UNDP, Project Executive Board |
| Terminal evaluation | External consultants | UNDP, PMU |
| Audit-spot checks | PMU, UNDP | UNDP, PMU, Project Executive Board |
| Independent financial audit (annual) | External contractor | UNDP, PMU, Project Executive Board |

The quality of reporting and monitoring is generally strong, and most of the required mechanisms and tools, such as PIRs, quarterly progress reports, etc. have been completed in a timely manner and with sufficient detail. In addition, the project has fulfilled its requirement to conduct annual external audits. However, despite these positive steps, the monitoring and evaluation system in use by the project has some distinct limitations that need to be solved during the remaining time of project implementation:

* Use of out-dated Results Framework: The project went through a longer than usual inception phase, and unlike most projects, external consultants were contracted to produce the Project Inception Report. Among other things, this report proposed quite a few changes to indicators and targets in the project’s Results Framework (see Annex 8 for details); and the Project Executive Board meeting minutes from 27 March 2012 show that “11 of 12 members of the Project steering board approved the report”.  Despite this, these changes were never recognized in project reporting; in other words, when the reporting on indicators was done in the annual PIRs, it was done on the original Results Framework from the Prodoc, not the revised Results Framework from the Inception Report. In some cases, some of the changes proposed in the Inception Report cover the same issues that project stakeholders identified during the Mid Term Review mission as issues that needed to be addressed. In other words, the project Inception Report identified problem areas and changed them in the Results Framework, and yet because the revised Results Framework was never used in subsequent project monitoring and reporting, these problem areas remained unaddressed. This indicates a failure of the project team, project executing agencies, and UNDP to carefully monitor the project reporting processes. Annex 8 includes a table with proposed changes to the Results Framework, including some of those proposed in the Inception Report.
* Problems with Tracking Tool Targets: Also with regard to the project Results Framework, problems in the indicator targets for the UNDP Capacity Scorecard and the GEF BD1 Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (see Annex 8 for details) were not identified until this Mid Term Review. As a result, project progress in achieving the targets for both of these monitoring tools was over-estimated, thereby preventing the project stakeholders from taking adaptive management steps to meet these targets. Again, this indicates a failure of the project team, project executing agencies, and UNDP to carefully monitor the project reporting processes. Corrections to the tracking tool targets have been proposed in Annex 8.
* Frequency of project oversight meetings: The Project Executive Board (PEB), which is the main project oversight mechanism, has only met once per year during the project implementation period. However, given the challenges of this complex project, and the need for high level policy support to successfully address the policy, legal, regulatory and financing objectives of the project, more frequent meetings of the PEB would likely have been helpful not only in ensuring that the project was on track, but also in getting PEB member institutions to actively involve themselves at a high level in promoting project objectives. The need for more frequent meetings was identified in the project Inception Report, which stated “the Project Executive Board (PEB) will meet every six-months, or more often on an *ad-hoc* basis, as necessary. Given the late start to the project, it is recommended that meetings be held more frequently (6-monthly) in at least 2011-2012 in order to ensure that implementation is precipitated”. In addition, at the 1 February 2013 meeting of the PEB, one committee member proposed that “the project needs to be more frequently updated to project steering board for timely solutions supporting for effective implementation of the project”; while it is unknown if the project did provide more frequent updates to the PEB members in response to this suggestion, it is known that the PEB did not increase the frequency of its meetings. This review recommends that the PEB should meet at least twice in the final year of project implementation in order to provide more detailed and sustained guidance and support to the project team and project partner institutions, particularly given the high number of activities that remain to be completed in the final year of implementation.
* Separate Reporting by two Project Management Units: The issue of two project management units is discussed in the implementation arrangements section of this document. However, with regard to project monitoring and reporting, it should be noted that the system where the PMU (NIP) and PMU (CIP) both reported directly to UNDP did not foster the collaboration between agencies envisaged by the project. At this time, with the activities of the PMU (CIP) about to come to an end, there is little point in creating a unified system to manage all reports and monitoring, but this has been another weakness in the project’s M&E system.
* Timing of Mid Term Review: As explained in section III. F. (Project Key Milestone Dates) above, the project’s mid-term review was not conducted at an appropriate timeframe, with the Mid Term Review likely to be finalized at the beginning of the final year of the five-year project. This delay is unfortunate, as it will give the project team and partners very little time to make use of any recommendations provided in the MTR.
* Number of Reporting Processes and Requirements: The project team has been burdened with a very high number of reporting processes and requirements that have distracted them from focusing on the actual implementation of project activities. Part of the problem is one shared by many GEF projects, which is simply the number of reporting requirements of the GEF and its implementing agencies. In addition, however, this project has been subject to a high number of national reporting requirements. As a result, the project team has had to produce the following reports (among others): weekly reports to the National Project Directors; Quarterly reports to UNDP, MPI, VEA, and MONRE (with different formats for each report); Annual reports to UNDP-GEF, MONRE, MPI the PEB (also in different formats); and two separate Mid Term Review processes. In addition, the project team has had to devote time and attention to numerous monitoring visits, including formal financial audits and oversight visits from the UNDP Spot Check Team, UNDP-GEF, MPI, MOF, VEA, MONRE, and the Government Aid Coordinating Authority (GACA). Finally, it is important to note that the Financial Scorecard used as part of the GEF BD1 Tracking Tool places a significant burden on the project in cases such as this where the relevant protected areas system is very large (over 100 PA units); highly diverse (PA units are managed by various national and provincial agencies); and has limited management capacity (many PA units have no management boards or staff). In cases like this, collecting financial data from the entire protected areas system is virtually impossible, and even collecting such data from a substantial percentage of sites requires a major allocation of time and resources.

## Implementation and Execution Areas of Focus for 2nd Half of Implementation

This review includes a set of recommendations (recommendations 1-8 of this report) related to implementation and execution aspects of the project that should guide project activities during the 2nd half of project implementation.

**Recommendation 1 – Secure Formal Project Extension from the Government of Viet Nam:** Due to a number of factors at project start-up, implementation of project activities was delayed significantly from the original projected start date. As a result, while the project has made good progress since implementation effectively started in 2012, a number of critical project activities and targeted results are still being implemented as of late 2014, and the original end date of December 2014 was no longer reasonable in terms of allowing the project to fulfil its objectives. For this reason, UNDP and the Government of Vietnam agreed in 2014 to extend the project implementation period until December 2015. However, to date only UNDP has formally approved the project extension. Therefore, it is highly critical that before the end of 2014 the Government of Vietnam has approved the project extension to December 2015.

**Recommendation 2** - **Continue Implementation at Protected Area Demonstration Sites until the end of 2015 (*additional details in Technical Recommendations below):*** It is highly important that the three national parks that are project demonstration sites continue to implement project activities until the end of 2015 (including keeping the project site coordinators in place until the end of 2015). As of late 2014, these sites are only beginning to actually implement the PA financing mechanisms that have been developed and are a key result of the project; during 2015 they need to work closely with the project team to implement the financing mechanism; to report on the progress and lessons learned; and to develop plans and materials for replication and up-scaling of these mechanisms at other PA sites in Vietnam. In addition, other activities, such as performance-based incentives for PA staff; cost efficiencies through cooperation between PAs; the use of biodiversity information to guide PA budget allocations; and public education and awareness campaigns, need to continue to be implemented at the site level during the final year of the project.

**Recommendation 3 - Agree on responsibilities for finalizing project activities under MARD Component:** MARD has declared its intention to end its active participation in implementing project activities at the end of 2014. MARD was responsible for Output 2.2 (PA staff at all levels with necessary skills, including business management, tourism management, monitoring and participatory management) and Output 2.3 (Revised and consistent system-wide incentive measures that promote improved performance). For the most part, activities under these two outputs have been completed. However, the issue of performance-based incentives under Output 2.3 still needs to be addressed, and it is important that responsibility for this work is clearly designated (possibly with guidance from the Project Steering Committee).

**Recommendation 4 – Strengthen the role of the Project Executive Board:** Significant changes are proposed in this Mid Term Review to amend the project; these proposed changes should be carefully reviewed and formally approved by the Project Executive Board (PEB) in early 2015. In addition, the PEB members need to be available (as necessary) to take a leading role in: 1) 3) getting the three demonstration site National Parks to agree to extend their participation until December 2015 (recommendation 2 above); 2) supporting the steps required to achieve progress on institutional coordination for PA management (recommendations 11 and 12 below); and 3) ensuring institutional support for up-scaling and replicating PA financing coordination, mechanisms and strategies at the national level (recommendation 13 below). Additional details on how the PEB can better oversee, support and guide the project implementation in its final year are provided in Section V. G. ii. below.

**Recommendation 5 – Streamline and Focus Project Work Planning:** The process required for the approval of Annual Workplans is very slow and has negatively impacted project implementation. Each year, the Annual Workplan and associated procurement plans have been approved between three and six months into the year (even if they are submitted late in the prior year), meaning that the project cannot implement many activities in a timely manner. UNDP and its counterpart ministries for this project should jointly work to streamline the approval process for workplans. The Annual Work Plan and other project planning processes, as well as the project monitoring tools, also should be used to ensure that project activities remain focused, and contribute directly to project results. The project only has one year of implementation remaining, and therefore it is important that project activities are focused on the results listed in the project results framework.

**Recommendation 6 – Streamline Procurement:** The Harmonized Program and Project Management Guidelines (HPPMG) were agreed between UNDP and the Government of Vietnam and came into effect in July 2010. Among other things, the HPPMG requires all procurement (including consultants and equipment) greater than US$1,500 to undergo significant review and approval processes. UNDP should work with the Ministry of Planning and Investment to revise the HPPMG to better suit relatively small ODA projects. In addition, UNDP and the project’s counterpart ministries should jointly work to streamline the approval process for procurement, possibly including more direct procurement by the UNDP Country Office. In addition, the PMU should seek to combine more activities into larger contracts that go to Contract Companies, rather than to many individual consultants.

**Recommendation 7 - Make Maximum Use of Project Monitoring Tools:** The project should use the GEF and UNDP monitoring tools applicable to the project as guides toward results-based management; these tools can help the project to focus attention on the achievement of outcome level results related to PA financing, capacity strengthening, and conservation of globally significant biodiversity. In addition, the Financial Scorecard and METT tools are required inputs to the portfolio level indicators of the GEF biodiversity focal area results framework. Details on the how the relevant tools should be used are provided in the Updated Results Framework.

**Recommendation 8 – Increase Project Staffing:** The project has a great deal of work to complete in its final year; increasing the resources of the project team could greatly increase the likelihood that the activities will be completed as envisioned. In particular, there is a great deal of technical guidance required for activities related to developing performance-based incentives for PA staff; cost efficiencies through cooperation between PAs; the use of biodiversity information to guide PA budget allocations; and public education and awareness campaigns; among other things. Furthermore, MARD is ending its formal participation in the project at the end of 2014, and this will increase the workload on the MONRE PMU in the final year of the project. Currently, the project has a Technical Specialist who works on a half-time basis; however, to date this role has primarily focused on developing Terms of Reference for project contractors and reviewing technical reports. If this person has sufficient technical expertise to guide the technical issues previously listed, then he should be employed on a full-time basis for all of 2015. Otherwise, other options for on-going technical support should be considered, including hiring of another senior technical expert, or increased staff support from BCA.

# Effectiveness and Results: Progress Toward the Objective and Outcomes

The project results framework is included as Annex 8 to this review report, with an assessment of achievement for each of the indicator targets. The combined assessment of progress toward the project in the results framework indicator targets is:

* Achievement *likely*: 15 indicator targets
* Achievement *uncertain*: 16 indicator targets
* Achievement *unlikely*: 7 indicator targets

As indicated by the progress toward targets in the Results Framework, the project is likely to achieve most of the planned outcomes and the objective. As previously discussed, as of September 30, 2014 the project has reached 66.39% disbursement of the overall project budget; and 79.49% of what was expected to have been spent by this phase of the project. Given the late start of the project and the significant increase in budget disbursements in the last two years, the project is expected to disburse the entire budget in a timely manner.

Key results achieved with project support thus far include:

* Approval of policies / regulations supporting the implementation of the National Strategy on Biodiversity
* Approval of regulations supporting the development and use of PA financing mechanisms, especially Decision No 24 of Prime Minister on investment on special use forests; and the Decision of the Lam Dong Provincial Peoples’ Committee to allow Bidoup - Nui Ba NP to implement PFES system.
* Training of staff from 97 of the 107 PAs with Management Boards (90.6%), with a total of 757 PA staff participating in at least one of the training workshops, covering numerous technical issues related to effective BD conservation and PA management and financing
* Legal approval of new PA financing mechanisms, including a tourism fee system at Cat BA National Park and a mechanisms for Payments for Forest Ecosystem Services (PFES) at Bidoup - Nui Ba National Park; as well as the design (and pending approval) of a tourism concession fee system at Cat Ba National Park and a payment mechanism based on sustainable harvesting of clams at Xuan Thuy National Park
* An agreement on cooperative efforts on tourism development and biodiversity conservation signed between the Cat Ba and Bai Tu Long management boards
* A proposal and guidelines for a PA system-wide program of BD monitoring and reporting
* Inter-Ministerial Circular 160 was allowing PAs to use funds for BD monitoring and reporting
* Completion of the design for a Clearing House Mechanism / Biodiversity Database System for all protected areas in Viet Nam
* Comprehensive BD reports for two demonstration PAs (Cat Ba and Xuan Thuy NPs)

To build on these results, key technical issues and areas for attention for the project in the final year of implementation are listed below (these are also described in the guidance comments in Annex 8).

* Ensure approval of the final PA financing “regulation”, the decision of the Nam Dinh Provincial People Committee on sustainable mollusk harvesting.
* Ensure that the draft report on BD financing institutional coordination and management presented to the National Assembly in November 2014 is duly acted upon
* Commission a report on the potential for various off-site financing mechanisms for protected areas in Vietnam, and follow this with workshops and consultative meetings to determine the best options for implementing such mechanisms in the future (after the project ends).
* Investigate if it may be possible to integrate increased PA financing into provincial or district level tourism and/or socio-economic development plans (as demonstrations), focusing on Hai Phong, Quang Ninh and Lam Dong provinces
* Recommend to both MONRE and MARD to develop additional strategies for future staff training, including 1) adding training strategies that do not rely only on off-site workshops, for example on-the-job training at PA sites, which would help to ensure actual changes on the ground, or distance learning / degree programs for PA staff; and 2) establishing capacity assessment and monitoring activities to gauge effectiveness of various trainings and to identify priority areas for future training.
* Carry out work on performance-based incentives at the site level. If financial payments as incentives are not feasible, then other options such as strengthening / reorienting awards systems (specifically related to BD conservation and/or PA financing) should be considered.
* Determine whether anything can be done before the project ends to make changes to PA staff grades / ranks
* Ensure that the Cat Ba NP managers monitor the effect of the new entry fee system (i.e. are increased fees offset by decreased # of visitors?)
* Investigate how to revise the PPC Decision on tourism revenues so that revenues from financing schemes provide additional funding to the NP, rather than replacement funding (even if a formal proposal cannot be made to the PPC before the end of the project, a draft proposal should be developed)
* Ensure that the Cat Ba NP managers work with the PPC to meet their concerns so that the proposal for the concession revenue system is approved early in 2015
* The project team should provide technical support (as needed) to the Bidoup – Nui Ba management board and other stakeholders in implementing the new PFES system; the project team should also ensure that the management board shares information on the implementation of the system in 2015, and based on that information, the project team should document and draw lessons learned of the effectiveness of the PFES system
* The project team needs to work to secure passage of the proposal for payments from sustainable harvesting of clams at Xuan Thuy NP, and then to support and monitor implementation of the system in 2015, for example by ensuring that clam farming is carried out sustainably and efficiently through 1) awareness raising among harvesters of sustainable practices; 2) engagement with harvesters and other stakeholders in developing a participatory management approach to clam harvesting; and 3) assessments of the on-going environmental impact of the clam farming
* The project team (Project Manager and Site Coordinators), together with the PA Management Boards from the three demonstration sites, should focus significant efforts in 2015 on collating information and documenting lessons learned on the development of the PA financing mechanisms (primarily in 2014) and their implementation (primarily in 2015); this documentation and analysis should also include the work of the project in developing PA Business Plans. This information should be compiled in guidelines, manuals or other forms of detailed documentation (Bidoup – Nui Ba has indicated that it has developed some initial guidance on how to create PES systems) that provide clear guidance for other PA institutions and sites on the steps needed to get regulatory and policy approval for new financing mechanisms, on how to implement such mechanisms, and on developing and implementing PA business plans, with the goal of maximizing the potential for replication of these mechanisms throughout the country. The project should play a leading role in disseminating this information by presenting the manuals and key findings at the annual workshop for all PA Management Boards put on by the Vietnam Forest Administration; and by including information on this topic in the video it is producing on all activities at all three sites
* Produce a report on potential cost efficiencies (cost savings through shared management activities) at the Cat Ba and Bai Tu Long demonstration sites
* Ensure the final approval of the Cao Bang biodiversity plan, and should help to disseminate this “model” plan to other provinces, with guidance on how the plans can support improved PA management
* Ensure that the draft Circular on BD monitoring and reporting is approved and that monitoring programme is “operational” before the end of the project
* Work with the three project demonstration sites to determine how they can use BD monitoring and reporting information to guide their budget allocations
* Work to ensure that the CHM guides PA system management (in other words, that BD reporting information is actively used to help guide PA system priority setting and management activities)
* Ensure that Bidoup – Nui Ba completes its BD report
* Ensure that the site-level education and awareness program strategy is finalized by end of 2014 and implemented in 2015
* Commission a baseline survey of public awareness and support at the three demonstration sites in early 2015, and again at the end of 2015, in order to determine levels of public support and awareness, and also to measure the impact of project activities

Given the overall status of execution of the project workplan, in terms of indicator targets, budget disbursement, and activity results, as of the mid-term review the **objective achievement is** rated ***moderately satisfactory***, and **effectiveness** is rated ***moderately satisfactory***.

It should be highlighted that the GEF-6 biodiversity focal area strategic results framework will continue to allocate GEF resources to protected areas financing. Within the GEF-6 biodiversity strategy, Objective 1: Improve sustainability of protected area systems includes Outcome 1.1 for “Increased revenue for protected area systems and globally significant protected areas to meet total expenditures required for management”. Considering the GEF’s on-going support for financing strategies for protected areas, the success of this project could provide a strong foundation for Viet Nam to leverage another GEF investment that would support the sustainability of results from this project, and generate additional significant benefits for biodiversity conservation and protected areas management in the country.

## Outcome 1: A comprehensive and harmonized legal and policy framework supports sustainable PA financing

Outcome 1 was originally budgeted for $368,360. As indicated in previous Section V.E on financial management, as of September 30, 2014 the project had disbursed $169,757 or 46.08% of the budget planned for Outcome 1. There are two outputs planned for Outcome 1:

* Output 1.1: Regulations under the Law on Biodiversity that ensure consistency in protected area administration in the context of national biodiversity planning
* Output 1.2: Emerging policy on PA financing that allows revenue generation and effective management of revenues for individual PAs and the system as a whole

The results indicators for Outcome 1 are provided in the results framework in Annex 8. This results framework also provides guidance on actions that should be carried out during the remainder of the project to finalize each of the outputs and meet the indicator targets.

The project has achieved positive results under both of the outputs under Outcome 1 as described below. As of the mid-term review, the **achievement under Outcome 1** is rated ***satisfactory***.

**Output 1.1: Regulations under the Law on Biodiversity that ensure consistency in protected area administration in the context of national biodiversity planning**

The project has supported directly and indirectly the development of a number of important policies and regulations[[13]](#footnote-13) that support the implementation of the Law on Biodiversity, including:

* Master plan for biodiversity conservation in the country to 2010 and orientations to 2030 was approved in 2014;
* A circular on criteria to identify natural ecosystems that are of global, national, local importance, unique or representative ecosystems for ecological and ecosystem represents for local nature is under development;
* A Joint Circular stipulating criteria for invasive alien species and a list of invasive alien species was promulgated in 2013;
* A clearing house mechanism on sharing and exchanging information on biodiversity has been developed (with support from JICA)

In addition, the project supported MONRE in taking the lead role in the design of a Govt. Decree 179/2013/ND-Cp on administrative fines and penalties for violations in the field of environmental protection, which was issued on 14 November 2013 by the Govt. of Viet Nam. Violations in the field of biodiversity conservation were identified in Article 1, clause 1 (g) of the decree.

The project also undertook activities to develop technical guidelines for biodiversity conservation planning at the provincial level (to provide guidance for such work at the project demonstration sites under Output 3.3). The guidelines, which are in accordance with Law on Biodiversity, Section 2, Articles 12-15, were approved and sent to 63 provinces for implementation.

The project also decided to try to develop a set of criteria for identifying important ecosystems. A draft report was completed in 2011 that included a review of the existing classification system for primary ecosystem types undertaken by national experts from the Centre of Plant Diversity, IUCN, and other agencies and an identification approach for important and specific ecosystems was proposed. This was followed in 2012 by the development of a set of 14 criteria identifying important and specific ecosystems and the preparation of a draft inter-ministerial circular between MONRE and MARD on this issue, intended to provide support for a protected area re-classification activity to be carried out by MONRE in cooperation with MARD. However, consent between MONRE and MARD on the draft inter-ministerial circular has not been achieved, and accordingly the reclassification of the PAs has not occurred.

**Output 1.2: Emerging policy on PA financing that allows revenue generation and effective management of revenues for individual PAs and the system as a whole**

Prior to the start of the project, the Government of Viet Nam issued Decree No. 99/2010/ND-CP, which provides a legal basis for PAs to receive revenues from Payments for Ecosystem Services (PES). This provided the general legal authority for the project to support demonstration site activities, including sustainable clam harvesting at Xuan Thuy National Park; ecotourism revenues (visitor and concession fees) at Cat Ba National Park; and payments for forest ecosystem services protection at Bidoup - Nui Ba National Park.

The project has supported the development of a number of important policies and regulations to support strengthened financing / revenue generation for protected areas, including:

* Decision No 24 of Prime Minister on investment on special use forest, which came into effect on 20 July, 2012. The decision states that the government supports 40,000,000 vnd (2,000 USD) per hamlet in buffer zone per year to co-manage forests. Among other things, this decision allows for payments to communities to “co-manage” or protect SUFs, and also new guidelines for PAs on how to develop and implement Master Plans and infrastructure investment.
* Inter-ministerial circular No. 16 between MONRE and MOF on biodiversity financing, which states that state budget funds can be allocated to develop BD sustainable/wise use models in PAs, biodiversity monitoring in PAs and reporting to competent agencies on biodiversity status and trend. Prior to this circular, PAs did not have “guidelines” on BD monitoring or wise use of natural resources, and without such “guidelines”, PAs never prioritized this kind of work. For example, under BD Law, each SUF has to provide a BD Status Report to MONRE, but until this circular, they did not do this because they didn’t have the “guidelines” or authority to use budget funds for this. In addition, this circular creates the opportunity for local people to work with PA management boards, and allows the boards to receive government funds to set up these kinds of models.
* The Lam Dong Provincial People’s Committee (PPC) issued a decision in Nov. 2014 to allow Bidoup - Nui Ba NP to implement a system of Payments for Forest Ecosystem Services (PFES). According to the decision, a local hydropower company has to pay the BD-NB management board for forest protection each year, and part of this amount will be used to train local people technique on forest protection and afforestation. In addition, Decree No 99 on payment for forest ecosystem services (PFES) policies (issued in Sept. 2010) states that local people involved in forest protection in PAs can receive payments for forest ecosystem services, and this decision guides how to calculate and receive the payment.
* A draft decision on sustainable mollusk harvesting in Xuan Thuy NP was submitted to the Nam Dinh PPC in September 2014. The decision will require local persons to pay a fee each year to the Xuan Thuy management board to carry out clam farming within the PA boundaries, and it will obligate the management board to guide farmers on techniques for sustainable mollusk raising. This draft decision is one aspect of supporting the design and implementation of Decree 126 at the national level, as Xuan Thuy National Park is one of two parks designated in the decree as demonstration sites for benefit sharing based on sustainable use of resources.

One important challenge remaining to be addressed under Output 1.2 is to go beyond simply authorizing protected areas to collect revenues by also working to allow them to spend those revenues. For example, in the past some provincial and local authorities have collected fines for pollution, but were unable to spend the monies collected because there were no legal mechanisms allowing them to do so. In this regard, the project has supported the drafting of a report on BD financing (as well as institutional coordination and management) that was presented to the National Assembly on Nov. 21, 2014; its status is currently pending.

The project also was supposed to develop and implement mechanisms for off-site financing of protected areas. The results framework proposed integrating such mechanisms into the Vietnam Tourism Development Strategy to 2020, Vision to 2030, but given the late start of project activities, this was no longer feasible. Discussion with stakeholders revealed general agreement that there is little chance of working with the tourism sector to make progress on this issue; in fact, the best approach would be to work directly with the Ministry of Finance, although stakeholders had few ideas on specific mechanisms that might be viable. The MTR recommends that the project team should commission a report on the potential for various off-site financing mechanisms for protected areas in Vietnam, and follow this with workshops and consultative meetings to determine the best options for implementing such mechanisms in the future (after the project ends). The project team also should investigate if it may be possible to integrate increased PA financing into provincial or district level tourism and/or socio-economic development plans (as demonstrations), focusing on Hai Phong, Quang Ninh and Lam Dong provinces.

## Outcome 2: Clear and harmonized institutional mandates and processes support sustainable PA financing mechanisms

Outcome 2 was originally budgeted for $1,205,000. As indicated in previous Section V.E on financial management, as of September 30, 2014 the project had disbursed $841,122 or 82.06% of the budget planned for Outcome 2. There are three outputs planned for Outcome 2:

* Output 2.1: Clarified and coordinated institutional management of a unified PA system
* Output 2.2: PA staff at all levels with necessary skills, including business management, tourism management, monitoring and participatory management
* Output 2.3: Revised and consistent system-wide incentive measures that promote improved performance

The results indicators for Outcome 2 are provided in the results framework in Annex 8. This results framework also provides guidance on actions that should be carried out during the remainder of the project to finalize each of the outputs and meet the indicator targets.

The project has achieved positive results under both of the outputs under Outcome 2 as described below. As of the mid-term review, the **achievement under Outcome 2** is rated ***moderately satisfactory***.

**Output 2.1: Clarified and coordinated institutional management of a unified PA system**

The project supported various activities to promote management and business planning for protected areas. Because of the lack of policy guidance and limited practical experience for PA management and business planning in Viet Nam, the project supported the preparation of two overview reports on the status of management and business plan development and implementation in the country’s PA system. Based on the report findings, draft guidelines were prepared for management plans and for business/sustainable financing plans, and these were approved in 2012. Since then, management plans were developed for all three of the National Parks at the project demonstration sites, and business plans were developed for two of the parks (Bidoup Nui Ba and Cat Ba).

In addition, the project supported the drafting of an MOU between MONRE and MARD. After an internal review process, MONRE sent the draft MOU to MARD in 2013 for its review and approval, but to date MARD has given no reply or update on the draft MOU. However, even in the absence of a signed MOU, activities by the project and other stakeholders have led to some specific improvements in coordination on protected areas management, including:

* The functions of the two ministries (MONRE and MARD) are in fact more clear thanks to the new decrees for MONRE and MARD that were issued in 2013 (see Annex 11, Table 4 below for details), as well as a decree issued in March 2014 on the VEA’s responsibilities, and another decree issued in October 2014 on the Dept. of Forestry’s responsibilities.
* A study was carried out of the experiences of 40 other countries in PA management and biodiversity conservation management. A report was drafted for the National Assembly on the current status, issues / problems of biodiversity management mechanisms in Vietnam, including proposed recommendations on restructuring the institutional mechanism for biodiversity conservation; and a conference was organized for the National Assembly in November 2014 to discuss the issues / problems of biodiversity management mechanisms in Vietnam, and to present the international experiences in biodiversity conservation mechanisms and lessons learned for Vietnam (this report is summarized in Annex 11, Appendix 1).

A major factor impacting project implementation of Output 2.1 is the discrepancy between the text describing the output and the related indicators in Results Framework. A review of the text describing Output 2.1 (paragraph 140 in the UNDP Prodoc) reveals that the project design called for a substantial change to protected areas management in Vietnam, including text stating that “while it is not feasible to envisage a single PA authority having management responsibility for all PAs, it is nevertheless necessary to ensure that an agency has the authority and mandate to ensure that PAs are managed consistently across the system”. However, the Prodoc does not explain how an agency can “ensure consistent PA management” if PAs remain under the authority of various ministries and institutions at the national, provincial and local levels. In addition, the text of Output 2.1 then goes on to state that the project will undertake activities that will in fact seek to create a new PA management authority, including “analysis of options for possible mandates for a PA management authority” and “drafting of proposal for a PA management authority”, which would seem to contradict the idea that “it is not feasible to envisage a single PA authority having management responsibility for all PAs”. Finally, the Results Framework in the Prodoc makes no mention of a PA management authority; the only relevant indicator simply seeks to establish “a mechanism to promote coordination between MONRE and MARD” (see Annex 11, Table 1).

Similarly, the text in Output 2.1 regarding PA financing is inconsistent with the Results Framework. In Output 2.1, the design called for a substantial change to protected areas financing in Vietnam, including text stating that the project will ensure that “PA financing and budgeting is consistently applied across the system”, that “a system is required to permit transfer of surplus revenues to protected areas that are under-funded”, and that the project would formulate “a proposal for mandate of a new or modified legal entity to coordinate PA financing” as well as “support to the process of establishing a modified or new PA financing entity” and “capacity building for the new or modified entity”. However, the Results Framework in the Prodoc makes no mention of these new national or systemic level changes. Instead, the indicators in the Results Framework are focused on more modest targets (see Annex 11, Table 2).

In sum, the stated goals of the project regarding PA management and PA financing are unclear. The project team and partners appear to have focused their energies on meeting the results of the Results Framework, and have not paid as much attention to the other text. Interviews with stakeholders and a review of relevant documents leave no doubt that there is a need for improved coordination on PA management and financing in Viet Nam. In addition though, the analysis and findings in these documents also make it clear that this is a very complicated issue with many important national and provincial stakeholders involved. In the view of the MTR team, this issue is not something that can be easily addressed by an externally-funded, short term project, particularly one that is also addressing many other goals and objectives. The goals and targets of this project with regard to PA management and financing were unclear and in fact inconsistent in the project document. In particular, the text of the project outputs described a vision and proposed activities that were much more ambitious than any indicator targets in the project’s Results Framework.

**Output 2.2: PA staff at all levels with necessary skills, including business management, tourism management, monitoring and participatory management**

The project has successfully undertaken a significant amount of capacity building, primarily for the staff of individual protected area units, but also for protected areas experts within national level ministries.To develop the training programmes, a capacity needs assessment was conducted to evaluate gaps, and a capacity building strategy was developed that included design of a training manual and a training programme.  **S**taff from 97 of the 107 PAs with Management Boards (90.6%) participated in at least one of the training courses, and in total, 757 PA staff participated in at least one of the training workshops. Details on the training provided are in the Results Framework in Annex 8. Additional training remains to be delivered: MONRE will carry out training of trainers on 7 topics in collaboration with the Centre on Natural Resources and Environment Studies, while MARD will carry out training on 3 additional topics. MONRE is also waiting for VEA to approve the training manuals that it developed; once these are approved, they will be disseminated to PAs and other stakeholders. Furthermore, MARD has set aside funds for future training in Decision 2585/QD-BNN-TCCB dated 31/10/2013, which will use 5 of the training materials developed by the project. MARD is also preparing to develop a capacity assessment tool to measure future trainings before and after (such assessments were not done for the trainings delivered so far through the project)**.** It is important to note that the development and implementation of the training was not well integrated between MONRE and MARD. When questioned about this, the Ministries argued that the training was done separately because each Ministry has different functions for PA management, and because they were developing training programs / manuals intended to become “official training materials” for their respective ministries. However, these are not convincing arguments and in fact one important goal of the project was to demonstrate and support the harmonization of processes for PA management and financing, rather than to further define and strengthen separate approaches.

**Output 2.3: Revised and consistent system-wide incentive measures that promote improved performance**

The project has made little progress in developing incentive measures. The project was supposed to focus on performance-based incentives, such as “linking the performance of rangers to changes in levels of threats to biodiversity, or the performance of managers to both the reduction of threats and to meeting targets with regard to revenue generation and financial sustainability”. The UNDP RTA recommended in the 2014 PIR that “a system of incentive-based patrolling should also be considered and tested” and that “the project should further explore performance incentives based on different indicators e.g. number of kilometres patrolled per month, number of arrests, number of confiscated arms, etc.”. The RTA further advised that GIZ is working on the MIST system, which will track data on PA management (including for example the percentage of a PA that is patrolled each month) and that this could be used to support a performance based incentive system. National stakeholders advised the MTR team that a similar effort was made five years ago (possibly through the Vietnam Conservation Fund), but it failed to make any progress, and this should have been taken into account in the design of this project. Stakeholders also advised that direct financial payments to staff for performance are not possible (they are contrary to the law), although “awards” systems for government employees are common in the country and might provide an alternative mechanism to reward performance. In any case, the project has not addressed performance-based incentives.

Instead, the project supported a Review and Evaluation Study of Current Situation of Incentive Mechanisms in PA, which found that current state regulations regarding conservation officials produce an inequity between forest rangers and PA staff -- although these two categories of workers operate in the same locality and do the same job, because PA staff have no clear standard grades and ranks, they are not eligible to enjoy the professional seniority allowance or to received subsidies for working in remote areas. As a result, PA staffers are paid less than traditional forest rangers, and therefore PAs frequently have trouble attracting a high quality labour force. Establishing grades and ranks for PA staffers will not only help to attract and keep qualified persons, it will also prompt universities to re-orient their training programs to support such positions. Based on this analysis, MARD is working on a draft inter-ministerial circular between MARD and Ministry of Internal Affairs to issue professional standards for PA staff. However, MARD advised the MTR team that the draft Circular can only be approved after the 2015 revision of the Forest Protection & Development Law (MARD had previously been advised by the Ministry of Home Affairs that the Circular could be approved without legal changes, but this is no longer the case).

## Outcome 3: Knowledge and experience of sustainable financing options developed through demonstrations

Outcome 3 was originally budgeted for $1,450,000. As indicated in previous Section V.E on financial management, as of September 30, 2014 the project had disbursed $917,821 or 63.30% of the budget planned for Outcome 3. There are three outputs planned for Outcome 3:

* Output 3.1: Models of effective collection and sharing of revenues to support sustainable PA financing
* Output 3.2: Models of operational cooperation and resource sharing among neighbouring PAs
* Output 3.3: Models of provincial biodiversity conservation planning

The results indicators for Outcome 3 are provided in the results framework in Annex 8. This results framework also provides guidance on actions that should be carried out during the remainder of the project to finalize each of the outputs and meet the indicator targets.

The project has achieved positive results under both of the outputs under Outcome 3 as described below. As of the mid-term review, the **achievement under Outcome 3** is rated ***satisfactory***.

The project appears to have adopted the strategy outlined in the Inception Report for the development of sustainable financing strategies, insofar as activities have been designed under Outcome 3 to take account of the fact that sustainable financing mechanisms can only be developed at the demonstration sites if they are based on sound management plans. Thus, an integrated approach was used, based on a suite of activities that have been undertaken in order as follows:

1. At the outset, ecosystem services assessments were conducted to provide the management authority and its stakeholders with an overview of the values (biodiversity, socio-economic etc.) of the site, information that was used to inform the management and business planning process;
2. Existing management plans were reviewed and revised through a participatory process to ensure that management objectives are sound and supported by stakeholders;
3. Business plans for the demonstration sites (protected areas) were developed based on the objectives of the management plan;
4. Based on the business plan, appropriate sustainable financing mechanism for demonstration at each site were identified; keeping in mind the overall goal of demonstrating a range of different approaches and mechanisms for sustainable financing;
5. Implementation of the sustainable financing mechanisms with partners and stakeholders through appropriate activities (pending);
6. Development of a communication plan, as part of the revised management plans, to highlight the value of natural (and cultural) resources within each site and how these will be conserved and sustainably used through partnerships involving the management authority, local communities and other stakeholders (pending).

On the one hand, this appears to have been a useful strategy, as it ensured that the sustainable financing mechanisms implemented at each site were appropriate and supported by local stakeholders. On the other hand, the need to carry out ecosystem services assessments, and to revisit the selection of specific sustainable financing mechanisms for each site, slowed down the implementation of activities under Outcome 3, and is partly responsible for the fact that the sustainable financing mechanisms have only been formally approved (or about to be approved) in the 4th year of the project, and the communication plans and public awareness and outreach have barely been initiated.

**Output 3.1: Models of effective collection and sharing of revenues to support sustainable PA financing**

Evaluate ecosystem services at main demonstration sites: The project carried out ecosystem services valuation studies at 4 sites: Xuan Thuy, Cat Ba, Bidoup - Nui Ba and Bai Tu Long, in order to provide management authorities and other stakeholders with an overview of the values within each PA site.

Development and implementation of management plans and business plans at the primary demonstration sites: Management plans were developed for all three of the National Parks at the project demonstration sites, and business plans were developed for two of the parks (Bidoup Nui Ba and Cat Ba). The project helped to integrate IUCN guidelines into the PA management plans, including new strategies on how to reduce pressures and threats to BD. As for the PA business plans, the project helped to create scenarios on the potential revenue options for each site, as well as proposing guidelines for the use of funds for BD conservation and local livelihoods. In addition, these plans addressed issues including governance arrangements, capacities of key staff, and options for financial mechanisms designed to benefit both biodiversity and local people. Details on how the PA financing mechanisms will be implemented and revenue collected and shared will be integrated into the management plans as they are implemented (and revised if necessary).

Measures to increase tourism revenues: A tourism fee system has been approved and is now beginning implementation at Cat Ba National Park. The project supported Cat Ba NP in testing a new entry fee system (including stakeholder consultations and surveys of visitors), which doubled the entry fee from approx. USD1 to USD2. Based on that work, a proposal was sent to provincial authorities, and the PPC approved the USD2 entrance fee through Decision No 1780 in August 2014. As of November 2014, implementation of the new fee system is just getting underway. Visitor levels are projected at 54,000 persons in 2015; thus the new fee system should increase revenues for the PA from approximately USD54,000 to USD108,000 in 2015 (with projected 5% annual increases in visitation levels going forward). However, a problem with the new fee system for Cat Ba NP has already been identified, namely that any increase in PA revenues from tourism fees is offset by an equal reduction in Govt. funding for the PA, so there is actually no increase in funds for PA management. Unfortunately, interviews with various stakeholders have indicated that it is not politically feasible to go back to the PPC before the end of the project and ask for another change to the entry fee system. In addition, two tour companies have cancelled their tours to Cat Ba National Park in the face of the increased entry fee; the impacts of these cancellations (and / or other possible decreases in visitation) are not yet known.

Existence of measures to generate revenues from concessions: A proposal for a concession system at Cat Ba National Park has been submitted to the PPC, but approval is still pending. Cat Ba NP worked with 4 tourism companies to establish a mechanism for concession agreements to provide tourism services (e.g. shops, restaurants, accommodations). It is estimated that the concession fee system will provide the NP an additional 400-600 millions Vietnamese Dong (approx. USD20,000 - 30,000 USD) per year. After consultations with other stakeholders, this mechanism was submitted to the PPC in July 2014. However, the PPC has raised a number of concerns that still need to be addressed by Cat Ba NP, including: 1) Is the NP capable of implementing the proposal; 2) how to avoid the negative environmental impacts of concession scheme; 3) are there any good experiences/practices of concession scheme, and what are the lessons learned; and 4) how will the benefits/revenues from concession scheme allocated among the related stakeholders? The Cat Ba National Park management has asked to meet with the PPC to clarify and address these issues, but this will not take place until early next year

Measures to generate PES: The project supported Bidoup - Nui Ba NP to develop a proposal on generating revenues from Payment for Forest Ecosystem Services (PFES). The Provincial People’s Committee (PPC) approved the PFES mechanism for Bidoup - Nui Ba National Park in November 2014. Under the approved system, a local water company and local hydropower company will pay an annual fee into the Lam Dong forest protection and development fund, which is administered by the Lam Dong Provincial authorities. Each quarter, this fund will make payments based on PFES to forest owners, PA management authorities, and households participating in the forest protection program. Payments to households participating in the forest protection program will be made through the Bidoup Nui Ba National Park management board, as the park has signed contracts with these households for forest protection. If the forest is well protected, the household will receive money, otherwise the money will be deducted or the contract may be cancelled. The PFES funds will be allocated as follows:

* Local residents will carry out forest protection activities for the majority of the park (the Ecological Restoration zone). For this, they will earn an average of 400,000 Vietnamese dong (US$20) per hectare per year (depending on type of forest). Out of this total, the National Park will keeps 10% for management of the fund, and the local people get the remaining 90%. In 2014, the area under forest protection contracted to local residents is 42,467 hectares, with 1,197 households contracted. Assuming that these figures don’t change in 2015, this will produce total payments in 2015 of 17,351,000,000 Vietnamese dong, or approximately US$867,550, of which US$780,795 will be paid to local residents and US$86,755 will be retained by the National Park.
* In addition, the National Park management board will receive payments from the fund for its management of the Core Zone of the park. The core zone is 14,271 hectares, primarily within the Srepok river estuary; the current PFES rate applied for river estuary ecosystems is VND 210,000/ha/year. Therefore, the park will receive approximately VND 3 billion or US$150,000 in payments from the fund in 2015.

Measures to generate revenues from sustainable harvesting: A proposal for a payment mechanism based on sustainable harvesting of clams at Xuan Thuy National Park has been submitted to the PPC, but approval is still pending (expected in the 1st quarter of 2015). Clam farming at Xuan Thuy NP is dependent in part on the conservation of mangroves and other natural coastal ecosystems, which provide an important buffer from storm surges and otherwise regulate the ecosystem conditions necessary for clam farming. To support establishment of a PA financing mechanism, areas for clam farming within the park were identified, clam farming techniques were investigated, an Environmental Impact Assessment was carried out, a proposed fee for clam farming (approx. USD100 per hectare per year) was established, and extensive stakeholder consultations were conducted. Under the proposed system, approximately 1,100 hectares within the “ecological restoration” zone of the NP will be licensed for clam farming under the Prime Minister’s Decision No. 126 in 2012, which granted permission to implement this kind of activity as part of pilot benefit sharing among NPs, local governments and local people, at Xuan Thuy and one other national park. Normally, productive activities such as clam farming are not allowed in ecological restoration zones within NPs, but in fact clam farming is already well established within this zone at Xuan Thuy, and the potential for the new payment system to give PA managers some authority over the clam farming that takes place is seen by the PA managers to be at least as important as the financing it will produce. Once operational, the system is projected to provide Xuan Thuy NP income of 300 million Vietnamese Dong (approx. USD15,000) per year.

In addition, it is important to note that Decision 126 on piloting benefit sharing between National Parks, local governments and local people in the management, protection, and sustainable development of protected areas identified five possible community-based sustainable harvesting activities to be implemented at Xuan Thuy NP. In addition to clam farming, the decision also identified: 1) sustainable use of clam seed beds resources in frequently flooded areas in the Red River Estuary and around Lu and Ngan Islands; 2) sustainable local community use of aquatic resources inside the mangrove forests in the core zone of the park; 3) community-based mangrove management model in the park’s buffer zone in Giao An, Giao Lac, and Giao Xuan Communes; and 4) sustainable collection of medical plants in the casuarina forests on Lu Island

Capture of lessons to improve the legal environment: The project has made only minimal progress in capturing and consolidating information and lessons learned on the development and implementation of PA financing mechanisms at the three demonstration sites; this should be a high priority for the project in 2015. As for using lessons learned to revise guidelines listed under Output 1.2 (i.e. Decision No. 99 and Decree No. 24), it is unlikely that the project can use lessons learned to revise guidelines such as Decision No. 99 and Decree No. 24, because to do so would require identifying demonstrated results and then submitting formal recommendations on revisions for approval from the Ministry of Planning and Investment and the Prime Minister’s Office. Given that the project will only start implementing the site-level PA financing mechanisms in 2015, there will not be sufficient time before the end of the project to generate results, write recommendations, and get the necessary approved changes. With regard to changing national PES policy, apart from Decision 99 and Decree 24, most policy on PES relevant to Protected Areas is being developed and implemented at the provincial level, where most PA financing is sourced and controlled. However, the work proposed in the recommendations to document lessons learned and replication will support changes in PES policies over the long term (post-project).

**Output 3.2: Models of operational cooperation and resource sharing among neighbouring PAs**

The project commissioned a technical report and held a workshop at Cat Ba and Bai Tu Long to identify possible coordination between the two parks on tourism management. The project then supported Cat Ba and Bai Tu Long national parks to organize a workshop/campaign to introduce the tourism potential of the two parks, which was attended by more than 25 tourist companies. In addition, the concept of a combination tour between Cat Ba and Bai Tu Long was developed and introduced at the workshop. Following these steps, an agreement on cooperative efforts on tourism development and biodiversity conservation was signed between the Cat Ba and Bai Tu Long management boards in 2013. Since the agreement was signed, the two parks have cooperated to develop a leaflet to introduce a Cat Ba – Bai Tu Long tour and have cooperated on marine patrolling activities. More broadly, the project also supported some joint training between Bidoup – Nui Ba NP and neighbouring PA units and Xuan Thuy NP and neighbouring PA units.

Looking forward, the project has the following activities planned to further support PA coordination: 1) develop tourism flyers to promote joint visits to Bidoup Nui Ba and Chu Yang Sin NPs, and work to create a combined tourism program for both parks; 2) apply the model for PA financing based on sustainable clam farming at Xuan Thuy NP to fish farming activities in Bien Hai NP; and 3) additional collaborative tourism promotion activities with Cat Ba and Bai Tu Long NPs. Finally, the project will carry out a workshop in early 2015 for all six of the PA sites targeted by the project so share lessons learned. To date, it does not appear that any analysis of potential cost efficiencies has been carried out, although this was targeted in the project results framework.

The project results framework also called for the project to use lessons on cost sharing and cooperation among PAs to improve the legal environment, specifically the implementation of the PM's Decision on Sustainable Financing, but to date the project has not made any significant progress in this regard. During 2015, the project intends to develop a video on lessons learned at all demonstration sites, which will include information on PA coordination, but this is not directly addressing the indicator target.

**Output 3.3: Models of provincial biodiversity conservation planning**

The project has supported the Department of Natural Resources and Environment in Cao Bang province to develop a provincial biodiversity plan, which is expected to be approved by the end of 2014. The plan will help to guide biodiversity conservation as well as ensuring that economic development is carried out in accordance with the new Biodiversity Law (for example, using the plan to identify high priority areas for BD conservation where development will be restricted or prohibited). Cao Bang province was selected because of its high biodiversity values and the interest and support of the Provincial People’s Committee. In terms of up scaling and replication, the project has already developed detailed guidelines on BD planning, which were approved by the VEA and disseminated to all 63 provinces

## Outcome 4: Information on biodiversity and PA status supports PA management and builds public support for the PA system

Outcome 4 was originally budgeted for $340,000. As indicated in previous Section V.E on financial management, as of September 30, 2014 the project had disbursed $231,034 or 67.95% of the budget planned for Outcome 4. There are two outputs planned for Outcome 4:

* Output 4.1: A system-wide approach to monitoring to support PA management decisions and budgeting in line with international standards
* Output 4.2: A system-wide approach to reporting on biodiversity status and trends in line with international standards
* Output 4.3: Increased public awareness of the importance of, and threats to the protected area system

The results indicators for Outcome 4 are provided in the results framework in Annex 8. This results framework also provides guidance on actions that should be carried out during the remainder of the project to finalize each of the outputs and meet the indicator targets.

The project has achieved positive results under both of the outputs under Outcome 4 as described below. As of the mid-term review, the **achievement under Outcome 4** is rated ***satisfactory***.

**Output 4.1: A system-wide approach to monitoring to support PA management decisions and budgeting in line with international standards**

A proposal and guidelines for a PA system-wide program of BD monitoring and reporting were developed in cooperation with a JICA project; these guidelines were sent to PAs to get comments/feedbacks and they were tested in Xuan Thuy National Park. The completed guidelines have been used to train PA staff in 45 PAs through training courses organized by the project. However, the formal adoption of a system-wide approach has not yet started, as the draft circular authorizing the program is still waiting for approval. MONRE has shared the circular with relevant Ministries / Agencies for comments, and expects to get it finalized in the 2nd half of 2015. Once the draft circular is approved, all PAs will be required to do BD monitoring based on the program indicators, and they will be required to develop and submit BD reports to MONRE every three years. The draft circular also includes regulations to establish an information sharing mechanism among MONRE, MARD, PPCs and PAs. In the meantime, based on the piloted biodiversity monitoring in Xuan Thuy NP, the project is now identifying cost norms for monitoring activities (see below), while the associated JICA project is developing a database system to obtain and process the data received.

The project was also supposed to develop strategies / mechanisms to link PA budgets to BD monitoring activities. In this regard, Inter-Ministerial Circular 16 was approved and allows PAs to use funds for BD monitoring and reporting; associated cost norms for BD monitoring should be completed by July 2015. Before Inter-Ministerial Circular 16 was approved in 2014, national parks in Vietnam had no budget line that they could use for BD conservation activities. Now, state budget sources for biodiversity monitoring have been designated in Inter-ministerial circular 16 and PAs can allocate funds for BD monitoring and reporting. However, the amount that they can allocate should be based on cost norms for BD conservation activities, and these do not yet exist in Vietnam. The project is now identifying cost norms for monitoring activities based on pilot monitoring in Xuan Thuy NP; which used the DPSIR model (Drive, Pressure, State, Impact, Response) to analyse pressure on biodiversity in Xuan Thuy NP. Based on this work, it will develop guidelines for PAs to calculate costs for biodiversity monitoring, so that PA managers can develop budget estimates for funding by relevant authorities (e.g. PPCs, MARD, etc.). With the support of the project, a sub-decree on cost norms for monitoring should be approved by July 2015, and this will serve as the basis for budget proposals. Once the sub-decree is approved and the guidelines are completed, they will be sent officially from the VEA to all PAs in Vietnam.

While the progress described above is significant, it appears that the project has misunderstood the intent of the indicator as written in the Prodoc. Based on consultations with UNDP, the indicator was intended to promote the use of BD monitoring information to guide PA budget investment priorities (i.e. what ecosystems / species / threats to focus budget on), rather than to establish as system for determining PA budgets for BD monitoring activities. For example, if a Protected Area has sufficiently detailed information on which areas of the PA include globally significant habitat and/or species, it can use that information to direct more of its existing budget resources to activities in those areas (e.g. more patrolling, research, ecosystem rehabilitation, etc.). In fact, the Inception Report proposed changing the target for the indicator from “by the end of the project PA budgeting is linked to monitoring results” to “By the end of the project PA budgeting is defined to monitoring results in pilot demonstration sites”. Although both the original language and the revised language are fairly vague, it would seem that the original language was intended to use BD information to guide PA budget allocation decisions (which the project has not done), whereas the revised language could be interpreted to mean that the budget / costs to carry out BD monitoring are defined, so that PAs can plan for (and justify) spending funds on BD monitoring (which is what the project has done).

**Output 4.2: A system-wide approach to reporting on biodiversity status and trends in line with international standards**

Under the Law on Biodiversity, PA managers and MONRE are obliged to prepare and disseminate regular reports on the status of biodiversity at site and national levels. The project is designed to support the development of the capacity to do this in an effective and consistent manner through the development of guidelines. With regard to systemic approaches to reporting, Inter-Ministerial Circular 16 (see Output 4.1) allows PAs throughout the PA system to use funds for BD monitoring and reporting. The Clearing House Mechanism design has been completed, but the CHM is not yet operational (only Xuan Thuy National Park has uploaded data so far). The project cooperated with the VEA Data Management Office and JICA to establish a Biodiversity Database System, specifically in creating the template and indicators so that PAs could input their data and see the data of other PAs, and by providing monitoring and reporting inputs into the database system. VEA and JICA expect to implement a 2nd phase of their project, which will focus on inputting data from many more PA units.

With regard to PA-specific BD reports, two demonstration PAs (Cat Ba and Xuan Thuy NPs) have finalized comprehensive BD reports based on the new reporting guidelines; the other site (Bidoup – Nui Ba NP) has made significant progress on its report and expects to finalize the report in early 2015. The project’s three demonstration PAs received technical support to consolidate existing data on biodiversity and to create comprehensive BD reports. It is worth noting that the Law on Biodiversity stipulates that all PA units in Vietnam must provide BD reports to MONRE and DONRE (once every three years); now that Circular 16 allows PA management boards to allocate funds for this work, it is reasonable to expect that many more Protected Areas will produce and share their BD reports after this project has ended.

**Output 4.3: Increased public awareness of the importance of, and threats to the protected area system**

The project is significantly behind schedule in developing and implementing a public awareness campaign. The project did implement general education and awareness activities in 2013[[14]](#footnote-14) (at the behest of the UNDP Country Director), and these will be repeated in 2015. In addition, the management boards of the three demonstration sites have implemented various education and awareness activities with support from the project. At Bidoup - Nui Ba NP, activities included developing and circulating a brochure on BD and tourism routes in the park; promoting the park at the bi-annual Da Lat Flower Festival; and organizing a workshop for tourism companies to raise awareness of park. At Cat Ba NP, activities included disseminating the report on the BD status of the park; developing a 25-minute TV clip on national parks to show to park visitors; developing a 3D map of the park; and developing a park website ([www.vuonquocgiacatba.com.vn](http://www.vuonquocgiacatba.com.vn)). Although these education and awareness activities were a positive step, they were carried out in an ad hoc manner and not as part of a coordinated strategy or campaign.

A program strategy for education and awareness activities at three demonstration sites is in draft form and will be finalized in late 2014. The draft awareness raising campaign is focused on local residents within and around the three project demonstration sites; these populations are considered priority targets because of their potential impacts on PA sites and biodiversity, and their low level of awareness of PA management and biodiversity values. The program is designed for three years; at the end of this project, responsibility for the campaign will be transferred officially to BCA so that it can implement the final two years of the campaign. In addition, the project is developing project information to be placed on the existing website of the Vietnam Environment Administration (VEA), as well as the websites of the three national parks at the project demonstration sites.

The project has not yet done any measurements of public awareness and support for PAs. The project should have done an initial baseline survey already; it can still do so prior to the start of its awareness campaign in 2015. It will also need to measure public awareness again at the end of the project; however, given that this will only be one year later, it should encourage PA Management Boards and/or the BCA to implement further surveys in subsequent years in order to generate more useful measurements of changing levels of awareness and support. The Inception Report stated that “another key national expert is the communications national consultant who will lead the PAs public awareness campaign”; it is not clear if this person has been contracted yet, but such a position should be filled as soon as possible.

## Impacts and Global Environmental Benefits

For the GEF biodiversity focal area, project impacts are defined as documented changes in the 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.

The project document identifies the specific Global Environmental Benefits expected for the biodiversity focal area in section 2.4. These include: more secure protection of globally significant biodiversity over nearly 200,000 ha (the GEF CEO ER says 330,000 ha) of demonstration sites, together with increased effectiveness of management of other PAs in the system. The globally significant biodiversity that will be more securely conserved includes a number of globally threatened species, such as the rarest primate in the world, the golden-headed langur, and numerous species of endangered migratory birds, such as the white-winged duck.

Neither the project results framework in the project document nor in the inception report provide any impact indicators. This is a weakness in the project design, as the project has no specific tools or targets for measuring its impact on the conservation of globally significant biodiversity. However, since the project does include activities at the site level in three clusters of national parks, there may be some demonstrable benefits to globally significant biodiversity within these sites by the end of the project (e.g. reduced levels of threats and/or increases in populations of species or # of hectares of key ecosystems). The project team and partners should consult with the site level national park leaders to determine if any such benefits can be identified and documented for the project’s terminal evaluation.

## Strategic and Technical Focus for the 2nd Half of Implementation

This review includes a set of recommendations (recommendations 9-15 of this report) related to technical and strategic aspects of the project that should guide project activities during the 2nd half of project implementation.

**Recommendation 9 – Enhance Institutional Responsibility for Policy & Regulatory Changes:** MONRE, as project implementing agency, should take a more active role (for this and future projects) in supporting project efforts to get approval of policy and regulatory changes, such as new decisions, decrees and circulars. The project can only prepare drafts when seeking changes to regulations / decisions / policies; it must depend on authorized agencies to get them approved. The project has had success (e.g. circulars on biodiversity financing and biodiversity reporting and monitoring; and PPC decisions on PA financing mechanisms) by getting the Director and Deputy Director of BCA directly involved in working with the authorized agencies; this approach should continue with remaining regulatory changes.

**Recommendation 10 – Approve a Revised Project Results Framework:** A number of indicators in the Project Results Framework should be revised in order to better reflect on the ground realities in Vietnam and in order to ensure that the project has a results-oriented approach focused on GEF-biodiversity focal area strategic targets. This review, therefore, recommends that the project results framework be revised and submitted for approval to the PSC in the 1st quarter of 2015. This review provides detailed suggestions for the revised results framework indicators and targets in Annex 8.

**Recommendation 11 - Carry out a Detailed Analysis of Accomplishments to Date and Priority Next Steps with regard to coordination on PA management and financing:** The issue of what has been accomplished with regards to strengthening coordination on PA management and financing, and what remains to be done, has been detailed in Annex 11. However, a comprehensive analysis of these issues is needed in order to guide project activities. The project should create a brief report that clearly outlines 1) the problems / weaknesses in coordination on PA management and financing in Viet Nam (updating the analysis in this document, as well as the Prodoc and Inception Report, and incorporating analysis of changes resulting from the enactment of the Law on Biodiversity in 2009); 2) a summary of what the UNDP-GEF PA financing project has accomplished to date to strengthen coordination on PA management and financing, in particular by improving coordination between MONRE and MARD; and 3) recommendations on key activities / results that the project should strive to accomplish in 2015. The project may want to consider recruiting a consultant (possibly international) through UNDP, so that the work and recommendations of the consultant are general and not linked to any one Ministry.

Among other things, this report should review the following issues / documents:

* As noted above, the functions of MONRE and MARD, as well as the VEA and Dept. of Forestry, have been revised in the last two years through official decrees, but to date there is no analysis of how these decrees have strengthened (or weakened) coordination on PA management and financing
* The project is currently carrying out reviews of existing laws relevant to (the Biodiversity Law, the Forest Protection and Development Law, and the Fisheries Law) and how they may overlap. Since the Forest Protection Law is due to be revised in 2015, this presents a good opportunity to address any overlaps. The project report on this issue are still in draft form, but they should be reviewed for relevant information (in addition, any MOU signed between MONRE and MARD will have to comply with these Laws)
* The report should incorporate the lessons learned from the project’s work at the demonstration sites on PA management and financing, including ecosystem valuations, PA management and business plans, and site-level financing mechanisms, all of which can help to guide systemic (or institutional) PA financing and business planning.
* The end result of this report should be 1) specific ideas to feed into a new draft Agreement between MONRE and MARD to be finalized by the end of the project; and 2) a road map for critical steps needed to consolidate PA management and financing in Viet Nam over the long run

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The project management unit cannot resolve issues related to institutional agreements on its own. MONRE, as the National Implementing Partner of the project, needs to take the leading role in pushing forward resolution of this issue, and high-level officials within VEA need to become involved in this effort. In addition, the Project Executive Board members should be involved in getting sufficient high-level attention paid to the MOU and/or other approaches to collaboration, possibly including getting the Ministers involved directly, or pushing them to delegate the issue to their relevant Vice Ministers. It should be made clear to the Ministries that a strengthened level of collaboration on protected areas management will better position the Government of Viet Nam, and the participating ministries, to benefit from future GEF funding opportunities.

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* + The text of relevant policy and legal changes regarding PA financing and BD conservation (Output 1.1)
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  + Guidelines / Models for Provincial Biodiversity Plans (Output 3.3)
  + Guidelines on using BD monitoring and reporting information to guide PA budget allocations (Output 4.1)
  + Guidelines / Models for PA site-level biodiversity reports (Output 4.2)
  + Report on public awareness and support at the three demonstration sites (Output 4.3)

**Recommendation 15 – Strengthen Biodiversity Management at the PA System Level:** Under Outcome 4, the project has focused significant effort towards increasing and improving monitoring and reporting on biodiversity at the PA site level, and in establishing a clearing house mechanism / biodiversity database system at the national level to collate information collected at the sites. However, the project does not seem to have put any focus yet on how such information can best be used at the systemic level. Therefore, this review recommends that the project team and partners work with the VEA Data Management Office and JICA to ensure that the clearinghouse mechanism is used to guide PA system management. For example, BD reporting information should be actively used to help guide PA system priority setting and management activities based on the locations of critical ecosystems and species, and it should be used to identify overall system-level gaps in the PA system’s coverage of globally significant biodiversity.

# Key GEF Performance Parameters

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. UNDP-GEF project evaluations are also required to discuss the mainstreaming of UNDP program principles. This is covered in Annex 9 of this review report.

## Sustainability

The sustainability of GEF projects is measured in terms of the sustainability of results and benefits, 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. By definition, mid-term reviews are not well positioned to provide ratings on sustainability considering that more activities will be undertaken before project end that may positively or negatively affect the likelihood of sustainability. However, since this project is approximately 75% through its implementation period at the time of this Mid Term Review, the sustainability rating in this case may in fact be more accurate. For the mid-term review, a **sustainability** rating of **moderately likely** is given. The four components of sustainability are briefly discussed below.

### Financial Risks

Description: Are there any financial risks that may jeopardize sustenance of project outcomes? What is the likelihood of financial and economic resources not being available once the GEF assistance ends (resources can be from multiple sources, such as the public and private sectors, income generating activities) and trends that may indicate that it is likely that in future there will be adequate financial resource.

Analysis: The existing financial resources for protected area management in Viet Nam, particularly for the majority of protected areas that are managed at the provincial level, are very low. Provincial budget allocations for protected areas and biodiversity conservation are small and likely to remain so in the foreseeable future; more diverse sources of funding are required. For some protected areas, revenues from visitors or from Payments for Environmental Services may provide noteworthy levels of financing. In these cases, the policies and regulations established by this project regarding PA financing, and the lessons learned and mechanisms established through the demonstration site activities of the project, may well enable other PA sites to generate sustainable revenues for their operations. However, because the project has not yet received final authorization for all of the proposed financing mechanisms from provincial authorities, and even more, because the project is only now beginning to implement those financing mechanisms that have been approved, it is too early to fully determine whether these PA financing mechanisms will be successful or useful for replication and up-scaling. More generally, for many other protected areas, such as those that are highly remote or otherwise not likely to see high levels of visitation, or sites where environmental services are not provided to local industries / communities or those stakeholders are unable to realistically pay for such services, revenue generation will remain a significant challenge and the lessons learned from the demonstration activities of this project may not be highly relevant. Overall, PA financing is likely to remain a significant challenge in Viet Nam for some time, even though this project has provided a useful step for removing financial risk over the long term.

**Rating - Moderately Unlikely (MU):** There are significant risks that affect this dimension of sustainability

### Socio-political Risks

Description: Are there any social or political risks that may jeopardize sustenance of project outcomes? What is the risk that the level of stakeholder ownership (including ownership by governments and other key stakeholders) will be insufficient to allow for the project outcomes/benefits to be sustained? Do the various key stakeholders see that it is in their interest that the project benefits continue to flow? Is there sufficient public / stakeholder awareness in support of the long-term objectives of the project?

Analysis: Biodiversity conservation remains a relatively low priority in Viet Nam; most protected areas are managed primarily for forest resources rather than BD conservation goals, and most financing for BD conservation programs comes from international donors rather than the GoV. Effective biodiversity conservation and benefit sharing requires cooperation between many stakeholders. At the demonstration sites, the socio-political risks are rather minimal as the demonstration activities have received support from various stakeholders including the Provincial People’s Committees. However at the national level the project has made only limited progress in enhancing cooperation between stakeholders or increasing awareness of the importance of biodiversity conservation and effective protected areas management.

**Rating - Moderately Likely (ML):** There are significant risks that affect this dimension of sustainability

### Institutional and Governance Risks

Description: Do the legal frameworks, policies, governance structures and processes pose risks that may jeopardize sustenance of project benefits? While assessing this parameter, also consider if the required systems for accountability and transparency, and the required technical know-how are in place

Analysis: As described in Annex 11, project efforts to enhance institutional coordination for protected areas management, in particular between MONRE and MARD, have not been highly successful. The lack of collaboration between these two ministries, which are most directly responsible for biodiversity conservation and protected area management in Viet Nam, presents an on-going risk that the benefits produced by the project will not be properly integrated into national policies and programs or sustained over the long term. In addition, the project has relied heavily on national and international consultants for project technical inputs, which has limited the capacity building benefits for staff within BCA, VN Forest, MONRE and MARD. On the other hand, the project has achieved a significant amount of institutional capacity building within the staffs of numerous protected areas, as well as some related national agency staff. Furthermore, the fact that the project has adopted Training of Trainer programmes, and that the training modules developed by the project have been officially adopted by MARD and are likely to be officially adopted by MONRE, all indicate that the strengthening of institutional capacities for PA management and biodiversity conservation should continue after the project ends. However, MARD and MONRE should consider establishing a system (preferably jointly) to monitor HQ and PA unit staff capacities for PA management and BD conservation that would identify critical gaps and direct training programs to be developed in response to those gaps.

**Rating - Moderately Unlikely (MU):** There are significant risks that affect this dimension of sustainability

### Environmental Risks

Description: Are there any environmental risks that may jeopardize sustenance of project outcomes? The evaluation should assess whether certain activities will pose a threat to the sustainability of the project outcomes.

Analysis: The main environmental threats identified in the project document, including for example development pressures and increased tourism, remain relevant. The project must also take care that the demonstration activities do not themselves contribute to environmental degradation (for example, the system of Payments for Environmental Services from clam farming at Xuan Thuy National Park could contribute to the pollution problems stemming from clam farming if the system is seen by local residents and authorities as a validation or justification for continued or expanded clam farming in areas where it is not ecologically appropriate). A more detailed assessment of the environmental risks and the sustainability of the environmental benefits of this project will need to take place in the Terminal Evaluation; at this time although the project has established useful BD reports and new BD monitoring systems for the demonstration sites, data on changes in the status / conditions of important ecosystems and species has not yet been produced. However, it is important to note that the project has helped to institutionalize BD monitoring and reporting throughout the PA system; during the remainder of the project, the project team and partners should strive to ensure that such information is used to guide PA budget allocations at the site and system levels.

**Rating - Moderately Likely (ML):** There are moderate risks that affect this dimension of sustainability.

## Catalytic Role: Replication and Up-scaling

As described in recommendation 13, the project should focus significant efforts in 2015 on collating information and documenting lessons learned on the development of the PA financing mechanisms (primarily in 2014) and their implementation (primarily in 2015); this documentation and analysis should also include the work of the project in developing PA Business Plans. This information should be compiled in guidelines, manuals or other forms of detailed documentation (Bidoup – Nui Ba has indicated that it has developed some initial guidance on how to create PES systems) that provide clear guidance for other PA institutions and sites on the steps needed to get regulatory and policy approval for new financing mechanisms, on how to implement such mechanisms, and on developing and implementing PA business plans, with the goal of maximizing the potential for replication of these mechanisms throughout the country. The project should play a leading role in disseminating this information by presenting the manuals and key findings at the annual workshop for all PA Management Boards put on by the Vietnam Forest Administration; and by including information on this topic in the video it is producing on all activities at all three sites.

By documenting lessons learned on how to develop and implement PA financing mechanisms, and providing guidelines on PA business planning, the project can help to ensure that up-scaling of effective PA financing and business planning throughout Vietnam will take place in the short to medium term. In addition, lessons learned can be used to create or revise national policies of PA financing mechanisms; for example, that protected areas can increase entry fees and keep the additional funds generated. These intermediate steps will promote more information sharing and similar financial management strategies among PA units managed by various agencies at the national, provincial and local levels, which will in turn facilitate more effective PA financial coordination at the overall system level in the long term (assuming the political and institutional support for a more integrated PA system develops). In addition, interviews during the Mid Term Review with PA management agencies in Viet Nam identified several priorities among these agencies for future actions that will benefit from effective compiling and dissemination of lessons learned from this project, including: 1) implementing a new PA staff grade system; 2) carrying out PA valuation studies for all protected areas; 3) creating one integrated, top-down PA system where all PAs report to either national-level MONRE or MARD, but not to PPCs or to provincial level MONRE and MARD departments.

# Main Lessons Learned and Recommendations

## Lessons from the Experience of the Project

The mid-term review is relatively early in the project implementation for identifying significant lessons from the project, but a few lessons that have been identified are included below. Note: A review of the 2014 PIR showed that no lessons learned were identified in that document.

**The Project design is very ambitious:** The goal of the project is broad, the institutional arrangements are complex, and the timeframes are challenging. The project at all levels requires stakeholders to work together and in new ways, and this requires time for consultation and consensus building. Accordingly, recognition of the potential for delay should be built into the implementation timetable projects such as this one, and the project design needs to balance ambition and pragmatism to ensure that project objectives are realistic and can be achieved and yet also make a significant positive impact.

**Addressing institutional cooperation among** **government agencies is challenging:** Efforts to harmonise government institutions need realistic and clearly defined targets. Given the complexity of most governmental structures and the differing goals and purposes of institutions, short-term, relatively small projects such as most GEF-funded biodiversity projects can only hope to accomplish limited change in inter-institutional relationships and structures. Furthermore, project management units can only accomplish a limited amount in this environment; it is up to project executing agencies and project steering committees to provide not only guidance and support, but also leadership in addressing institutional reforms.

**Results Frameworks must be consistent with the descriptions of project outputs and activities:** Discrepancies between the indicators and targets in the project Results Framework, and the text descriptions of project outputs and activities, can create confusion among project teams and partners about the goals and approaches of the project. Moreover, the Results Framework provides an effective tool for ensuring that project design is realistic; by requiring project stakeholders to consider actual targets and how they are measures, the results framework can help them to avoid proposing activities in general terms and language that in fact are not likely to be successfully implemented.

**Critical questions on project partnerships and responsibilities should be resolved during project design:** It is important to clearly identify and agree on the responsibilities of official project partners during the project design phase, rather than deferring such decisions until project implementation. Relevant partners are generally more flexible and accommodating during the project design phase, when actual funding and implementation of the project are still uncertain and off in the future, whereas once a project is approved and beginning implementation, partners tend to be more determined to structure their participation in ways that most suit them. As a result, delays in clarifying these issues can greatly delay the implementation of the project, as well as negatively affecting the willingness to work together in a collaborative between partners.

## Mid-term Recommendations for the Project

The recommendations from the mid-term review are indicated below, and are divided into: i) Implementation and Execution issues, and ii) Technical issues.

**Implementation and Execution Issues**

**Recommendation 1 – Secure Formal Project Extension from the Government of Viet Nam:** Due to a number of factors at project start-up, implementation of project activities was delayed significantly from the original projected start date. As a result, while the project has made good progress since implementation effectively started in 2012, a number of critical project activities and targeted results are still being implemented as of late 2014, and the original end date of December 2014 was no longer reasonable in terms of allowing the project to fulfil its objectives. For this reason, UNDP and the Government of Vietnam agreed in 2014 to extend the project implementation period until December 2015. However, to date only UNDP has formally approved the project extension. Therefore, it is highly critical that before the end of 2014 the Government of Vietnam has approved the project extension to December 2015.

**Recommendation 2** - **Continue Implementation at Protected Area Demonstration Sites until the end of 2015 (*additional details in Technical Recommendations below):*** It is highly important that the three national parks that are project demonstration sites continue to implement project activities until the end of 2015 (including keeping the project site coordinators in place until the end of 2015). As of late 2014, these sites are only beginning to actually implement the PA financing mechanisms that have been developed and are a key result of the project; during 2015 they need to work closely with the project team to implement the financing mechanism; to report on the progress and lessons learned; and to develop plans and materials for replication and up-scaling of these mechanisms at other PA sites in Vietnam. In addition, other activities, such as performance-based incentives for PA staff; cost efficiencies through cooperation between PAs; the use of biodiversity information to guide PA budget allocations; and public education and awareness campaigns, need to continue to be implemented at the site level during the final year of the project.

**Recommendation 3 - Agree on responsibilities for finalizing project activities under MARD Component:** MARD has declared its intention to end its active participation in implementing project activities at the end of 2014. MARD was responsible for Output 2.2 (PA staff at all levels with necessary skills, including business management, tourism management, monitoring and participatory management) and Output 2.3 (Revised and consistent system-wide incentive measures that promote improved performance). For the most part, activities under these two outputs have been completed. However, the issue of performance-based incentives under Output 2.3 still needs to be addressed, and it is important that responsibility for this work is clearly designated (possibly with guidance from the Project Steering Committee).

**Recommendation 4 – Strengthen the role of the Project Executive Board:** Significant changes are proposed in this Mid Term Review to amend the project; these proposed changes should be carefully reviewed and formally approved by the Project Executive Board (PEB) in early 2015. In addition, the PEB members need to be available (as necessary) to take a leading role in: 1) 3) getting the three demonstration site National Parks to agree to extend their participation until December 2015 (recommendation 2 above); 2) supporting the steps required to achieve progress on institutional coordination for PA management (recommendations 11 and 12 below); and 3) ensuring institutional support for up-scaling and replicating PA financing coordination, mechanisms and strategies at the national level (recommendation 13 below). Additional details on how the PEB can better oversee, support and guide the project implementation in its final year are provided in Section V. G. ii. below.

**Recommendation 5 – Streamline and Focus Project Work Planning:** The process required for the approval of Annual Workplans is very slow and has negatively impacted project implementation. Each year, the Annual Workplan and associated procurement plans have been approved between three and six months into the year (even if they are submitted late in the prior year), meaning that the project cannot implement many activities in a timely manner. UNDP and its counterpart ministries for this project should jointly work to streamline the approval process for workplans. The Annual Work Plan and other project planning processes, as well as the project monitoring tools, also should be used to ensure that project activities remain focused, and contribute directly to project results. The project only has one year of implementation remaining, and therefore it is important that project activities are focused on the results listed in the project results framework.

**Recommendation 6 – Streamline Procurement:** The Harmonized Program and Project Management Guidelines (HPPMG) were agreed between UNDP and the Government of Vietnam and came into effect in July 2010. Among other things, the HPPMG requires all procurement (including consultants and equipment) greater than US$1,500 to undergo significant review and approval processes. UNDP should work with the Ministry of Planning and Investment to revise the HPPMG to better suit relatively small ODA projects. In addition, UNDP and the project’s counterpart ministries should jointly work to streamline the approval process for procurement, possibly including more direct procurement by the UNDP Country Office. In addition, the PMU should seek to combine more activities into larger contracts that go to Contract Companies, rather than to many individual consultants.

**Recommendation 7 - Make Maximum Use of Project Monitoring Tools:** The project should use the GEF and UNDP monitoring tools applicable to the project as guides toward results-based management; these tools can help the project to focus attention on the achievement of outcome level results related to PA financing, capacity strengthening, and conservation of globally significant biodiversity. In addition, the Financial Scorecard and METT tools are required inputs to the portfolio level indicators of the GEF biodiversity focal area results framework. Details on the how the relevant tools should be used are provided in the Updated Results Framework.

**Recommendation 8 – Increase Project Staffing:** The project has a great deal of work to complete in its final year; increasing the resources of the project team could greatly increase the likelihood that the activities will be completed as envisioned. In particular, there is a great deal of technical guidance required for activities related to developing performance-based incentives for PA staff; cost efficiencies through cooperation between PAs; the use of biodiversity information to guide PA budget allocations; and public education and awareness campaigns; among other things. Furthermore, MARD is ending its formal participation in the project at the end of 2014, and this will increase the workload on the MONRE PMU in the final year of the project. Currently, the project has a Technical Specialist who works on a half-time basis; however, to date this role has primarily focused on developing Terms of Reference for project contractors and reviewing technical reports. If this person has sufficient technical expertise to guide the technical issues previously listed, then he should be employed on a full-time basis for all of 2015. Otherwise, other options for on-going technical support should be considered, including hiring of another senior technical expert, or increased staff support from BCA.

**Technical Issues**

**Recommendation 9 – Enhance Institutional Responsibility for Policy & Regulatory Changes:** MONRE, as project implementing agency, should take a more active role (for this and future projects) in supporting project efforts to get approval of policy and regulatory changes, such as new decisions, decrees and circulars. The project can only prepare drafts when seeking changes to regulations / decisions / policies; it must depend on authorized agencies to get them approved. The project has had success (e.g. circulars on biodiversity financing and biodiversity reporting and monitoring; and PPC decisions on PA financing mechanisms) by getting the Director and Deputy Director of BCA directly involved in working with the authorized agencies; this approach should continue with remaining regulatory changes.

**Recommendation 10 – Approve a Revised Project Results Framework:** A number of indicators in the Project Results Framework should be revised in order to better reflect on the ground realities in Vietnam and in order to ensure that the project has a results-oriented approach focused on GEF-biodiversity focal area strategic targets. This review, therefore, recommends that the project results framework be revised and submitted for approval to the PSC in the 1st quarter of 2015. This review provides detailed suggestions for the revised results framework indicators and targets in Annex 8. Note: The MTR has identified numerous problems with the Project Results Framework (see Section V. G. i.), but because the project only has one year of implementation remaining, the MTR is recommending specific, high priority changes to the framework, rather than a wholesale revision of the indicators and targets.

**Recommendation 11 - Carry out a Detailed Analysis of Accomplishments to Date and Priority Next Steps with regard to coordination on PA management and financing:** The issue of what has been accomplished with regards to strengthening coordination on PA management and financing, and what remains to be done, has been detailed in Annex 11. However, a comprehensive analysis of these issues is needed in order to guide project activities. The project should create a brief report that clearly outlines 1) the problems / weaknesses in coordination on PA management and financing in Viet Nam (updating the analysis in this document, as well as the Prodoc and Inception Report, and incorporating analysis of changes resulting from the enactment of the Law on Biodiversity in 2009); 2) a summary of what the UNDP-GEF PA financing project has accomplished to date to strengthen coordination on PA management and financing, in particular by improving coordination between MONRE and MARD; and 3) recommendations on key activities / results that the project should strive to accomplish in 2015. The project may want to consider recruiting a consultant (possibly international) through UNDP, so that the work and recommendations of the consultant are general and not linked to any one Ministry.

Among other things, this report should review the following issues / documents:

* As noted above, the functions of MONRE and MARD, as well as the VEA and Dept. of Forestry, have been revised in the last two years through official decrees, but to date there is no analysis of how these decrees have strengthened (or weakened) coordination on PA management and financing
* The project is currently carrying out reviews of existing laws relevant to (the Biodiversity Law, the Forest Protection and Development Law, and the Fisheries Law) and how they may overlap. Since the Forest Protection Law is due to be revised in 2015, this presents a good opportunity to address any overlaps. The project report on this issue are still in draft form, but they should be reviewed for relevant information (in addition, any MOU signed between MONRE and MARD will have to comply with these Laws)
* The report should incorporate the lessons learned from the project’s work at the demonstration sites on PA management and financing, including ecosystem valuations, PA management and business plans, and site-level financing mechanisms, all of which can help to guide systemic (or institutional) PA financing and business planning.
* The end result of this report should be 1) specific ideas to feed into a new draft Agreement between MONRE and MARD to be finalized by the end of the project; and 2) a road map for critical steps needed to consolidate PA management and financing in Viet Nam over the long run

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  + Report on cost efficiencies (cost savings through shared management activities) at PA demonstration sites (Output 3.2)
  + Guidelines / Models for Provincial Biodiversity Plans (Output 3.3)
  + Guidelines on using BD monitoring and reporting information to guide PA budget allocations (Output 4.1)
  + Guidelines / Models for PA site-level biodiversity reports (Output 4.2)
  + Report on public awareness and support at the three demonstration sites (Output 4.3)

**Recommendation 15 – Strengthen Biodiversity Management at the PA System Level:** Under Outcome 4, the project has focused significant effort towards increasing and improving monitoring and reporting on biodiversity at the PA site level, and in establishing a clearing house mechanism / biodiversity database system at the national level to collate information collected at the sites. However, the project does not seem to have put any focus yet on how such information can best be used at the systemic level. Therefore, this review recommends that the project team and partners work with the VEA Data Management Office and JICA to ensure that the clearinghouse mechanism is used to guide PA system management. For example, BD reporting information should be actively used to help guide PA system priority setting and management activities based on the locations of critical ecosystems and species, and it should be used to identify overall system-level gaps in the PA system’s coverage of globally significant biodiversity.

# Annexes

## Annex 1: Terms of Reference

**Title:** 01 International Consultant and 1 National Consultant for the MTR

**Project:** *Removing Barriers Hindering Protected Area Management Effectiveness in Viet Nam*

**Reporting to:** Head, Sustainable Development Cluster, UNDP

**Duty Station:** Hanoi, Viet Nam

**Contract Type:** Individual Contract (IC)

**Duration:** 20 working days each in October-November 2014

1. **INTRODUCTION**

This is the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the UNDP-GEF Midterm Review (MTR) of the *full* sized project titled “*Removing Barriers Hindering Protected Area Management Effectiveness in Viet Nam*” (PIMS#3695) implemented through the *Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment*, which is to be undertaken in *2014*. The project started on the *Project Document signed on 22 December 2010* and is in its *fourth* year of implementation. The project planned for MTE in 2013, however, due to various reasons, the MTE could not be finalized and this MTR process was initiated for 2014 related to the submission of the Project Implementation Report (PIR). This ToR sets out the expectations for this MTR. The MTR process must follow the guidance outlined in the document *Guidance For Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects*.

**2. PROJECT BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

The project was designed to secure a sustainably financed PA system to conserve globally significant biodiversity”. This will contribute to the broader goal “Effective conservation of biodiversity in Vietnam”. In order to achieve the project objective, a number of outcomes will be secured including: (1) A comprehensive and harmonized legal and policy framework supports sustainable PA financing; (2) Clear and harmonized institutional mandates and processes support sustainable PA financing mechanisms; (3) Knowledge and experience of sustainable financing options developed through demonstrations; (4) Information on biodiversity and PA status supports PA management and builds public support for the PA system.

The project has three demonstration clusters, namely (1) Xuan Thuy National Park (NP) – TienHai Natural Reserve, (2) Cat Ba National Park – BaiTu Long National Park, (3) Bidoup – Nui Ba National Park – Chu Yang Sin National Park. Of which, XuanThuy NP, Cat Ba NP, and Bidoup – Nui Ba NP are being selected/considered as three main demonstration sites of the Project.

The Project Document signed between the Vietnamese Government and UNDP Viet Nam Country Office is available at

<http://www.thegef.org/gef/sites/thegef.org/files/gefprjdocs/GEFProjectDocuments/Biodiversity/Vietnam%20->%20%283603%29%20-%20Removing%20Barriers%20Hindering%20PA%20Management%20Effectiv/5-29- 09%20-%20Project%20Document%20-%203603.pdf

**3. OBJECTIVES OF THE MTR**

The MTR will assess progress towards the achievement of the project objectives and outcomes as specified in the Project Document, and assess early signs of project success or failure with the goal of identifying the necessary changes to be made in order to set the project on-track to achieve its intended results. The MTR will also review the project’s strategy, its risks to sustainability.

**4. MTR APPROACH & METHODOLOGY**

The MTR must provide evidence-based information that is credible, reliable and useful. The MTR team will review all relevant sources of information including documents prepared during the preparation phase (i.e. PIF, UNDP Initiation Plan, UNDP Environmental & Social Safeguard Policy, the Project Document, project reports including Annual Project Review/PIRs, project budget revisions, lesson learned reports, national strategic and legal documents, and any other materials that the team considers useful for this evidence-based review). The MTR team will review the baseline GEF focal area Tracking Tool submitted to the GEF at CEO endorsement, and the midterm GEF focal area Tracking Tool that must be completed before the MTR field mission begins.

The MTR team is expected to follow a collaborative and participatory approach[[15]](#footnote-15) ensuring close engagement with the Project Team, government counterparts (the GEF Operational Focal Point), the UNDP Country Office(s), UNDP-GEF Regional Technical Advisers, and other key stakeholders.

Engagement of stakeholders is vital to a successful MTR. Stakeholder involvement should include interviews with stakeholders who have project responsibilities, including but not limited to MONRE, MARD, National Parks- the executing agencies, senior officials and task team/ component leaders, key experts and consultants in the subject area, Project Board, project stakeholders, academia, local government and CSOs, etc. Additionally, the MTR team is expected to conduct field missions to National Parks*, Cat Ba, Xuan Thuy and Bi Doup- Nui Ba National Parks,* the main project demonstration sites.

The final MTR report should describe the full MTR approach taken and the rationale for the approach making explicit the underlying assumptions, challenges, strengths and weaknesses about the methods and approach of the review.

**5. DETAILED SCOPE OF THE MTR**

The MTR team will assess the following four categories of project progress. See the *Guidance For Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects* for extended descriptions.

**i. Project Strategy**

Project design:

* Review the problem addressed by the project and the underlying assumptions. Review the effect of any incorrect assumptions or changes to the context to achieving the project results as outlined in the Project Document.
* Review the relevance of the project strategy and assess whether it provides the most effective route towards expected/intended results. Were lessons from other relevant projects properly incorporated into the project design?
* Review how the project addresses country priorities. Review country ownership. Was the project concept in line with the national sector development priorities and plans of the country (or of participating countries in the case of multi-country projects)?
* Review decision-making processes: were perspectives of those who would be affected by project decisions, those who could affect the outcomes, and those who could contribute information or other resources to the process, taken into account during project design processes?
* Review the extent to which relevant gender issues were raised in the project design. See Annex 9 of *Guidance For Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects* for further guidelines.
* If there are major areas of concern, recommend areas for improvement.

Results Framework/Logframe:

* Undertake a critical analysis of the project’s logframe indicators and targets, assess how “SMART” the midterm and end-of-project targets are (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-bound), and suggest specific amendments/revisions to the targets and indicators as necessary.
* Are the project’s objectives and outcomes or components clear, practical, and feasible within its time frame?
* 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.
* Ensure broader development and gender aspects of the project are being monitored effectively. Develop and recommend SMART ‘development’ indicators, including sex-disaggregated indicators and indicators that capture development benefits.

**ii. Progress Towards Results**

Progress Towards Outcomes Analysis:

* Review the logframe indicators against progress made towards the end-of-project targets using the Progress Towards Results Matrix and following the *Guidance For Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects*; colour code progress in a “traffic light system” based on the level of progress achieved; assign a rating on progress for each outcome; make recommendations from the areas marked as “Not on target to be achieved” (red).

Table. Progress Towards Results Matrix (Achievement of outcomes against End-of-project Targets)

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Project Strategy** | **Indicator[[16]](#footnote-16)** | **Baseline Level[[17]](#footnote-17)** | **Level in 1st PIR (self- reported)** | **Midterm Target[[18]](#footnote-18)** | **End-of-project Target** | **Midterm Level & Assessment[[19]](#footnote-19)** | **Achievement Rating[[20]](#footnote-20)** | **Justification for Rating** |
| **Objective:** | Indicator (if applicable): |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Outcome 1:** | Indicator 1: |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Indicator 2: |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Outcome 2:** | Indicator 3: |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Indicator 4: |  |  |  |  |  |
| Etc. |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Etc.** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

**Indicator Assessment Key**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Green= Achieved | Yellow= On target to be achieved | Red= Not on target to be achieved |

In addition to the progress towards outcomes analysis:

* Compare and analyse the GEF Tracking Tool at the Baseline with the one completed right before the Midterm Review.
* Identify remaining barriers to achieving the project objective in the remainder of the project.
* By reviewing the aspects of the project that have already been successful, identify ways in which the project can further expand these benefits.

**iii. Project Implementation and Adaptive Management**

Management Arrangements:

* Review 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.
* Review the quality of execution of the Executing Agency/Implementing Partner(s) and recommend areas for improvement.
* Review the quality of support provided by the GEF Partner Agency (UNDP) and recommend areas for improvement.

Work Planning:

* Review any delays in project start-up and implementation, identify the causes and examine if they have been resolved.
* Are work-planning processes results-based? If not, suggest ways to re-orientate work planning to focus on results?
* Examine the use of the project’s results framework/ logframe as a management tool and review any changes made to it since project start.

Finance and co-finance:

* Consider the financial management of the project, with specific reference to the cost-effectiveness of interventions.
* Review the changes to fund allocations as a result of budget revisions and assess the appropriateness and relevance of such revisions.
* Does the project have the appropriate financial controls, including reporting and planning, that allow management to make informed decisions regarding the budget and allow for timely flow of funds?
* Informed by the co-financing monitoring table to be filled out, provide commentary on co-financing: is co-financing being used strategically to help the objectives of the project? Is the Project Team meeting with all co-financing partners regularly in order to align financing priorities and annual work plans?

Project-level Monitoring and Evaluation Systems:

* Review the monitoring tools currently being used: Do they provide the necessary information? Do they involve key partners? Are they aligned or mainstreamed with national systems? Do they use existing information? Are they efficient? Are they cost-effective? Are additional tools required? How could they be made more participatory and inclusive?
* Examine the financial management of the project monitoring and evaluation budget. Are sufficient resources being allocated to monitoring and evaluation? Are these resources being allocated effectively?

Stakeholder Engagement:

* Project management: Has the project developed and leveraged the necessary and appropriate partnerships with direct and tangential stakeholders?
* Participation and country-driven processes: Do local and national government stakeholders support the objectives of the project? Do they continue to have an active role in project decision-making that supports efficient and effective project implementation?
* Participation and public awareness: To what extent has stakeholder involvement and public awareness contributed to the progress towards achievement of project objectives?

Reporting:

* Assess how adaptive management changes have been reported by the project management and shared with the Project Board.
* Assess how well the Project Team and partners undertake and fulfil GEF reporting requirements (i.e. how have they addressed poorly-rated PIRs, if applicable?)
* Assess how lessons derived from the adaptive management process have been documented, shared with key partners and internalized by partners.

Communications:

* Review internal project communication with stakeholders: Is communication regular and effective? Are there key stakeholders left out of communication? Are there feedback mechanisms when communication is received? Does this communication with stakeholders contribute to their awareness of project outcomes and activities and investment in the sustainability of project results?
* Review external project communication: Are proper means of communication established or being established to express the project progress and intended impact to the public (is there a web presence, for example? Or did the project implement appropriate outreach and public awareness campaigns?)
* For reporting purposes, write one half-page paragraph that summarizes the project’s progress towards results in terms of contribution to sustainable development benefits, as well as global environmental benefits.

**iv. Sustainability**

* Validate whether the risks identified in the Project Document, Annual Project Review/PIRs 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.
* In addition, assess the following risks to sustainability:

Financial risks to sustainability:

* What is the likelihood of financial and economic resources not being available once the GEF assistance ends (consider potential resources can be from multiple sources, such as the public and private sectors, income generating activities, and other funding that will be adequate financial resources for sustaining project’s outcomes)?

Socio-economic risks to sustainability:

* Are there any social or political risks that may jeopardize sustainability of project outcomes? What is the risk that the level of stakeholder ownership (including ownership by governments and other key stakeholders) will be insufficient to allow for the project outcomes/benefits to be sustained? Do the various key stakeholders see that it is in their interest that the project benefits continue to flow? Is there sufficient public / stakeholder awareness in support of the long-term objectives of the project? Are lessons learned being documented by the Project Team on a continual basis and shared/ transferred to appropriate parties who could learn from the project and potentially replicate and/or scale it in the future?

Institutional Framework and Governance risks to sustainability:

* Do the legal frameworks, policies, governance structures and processes pose risks that may jeopardize sustenance of project benefits? While assessing this parameter, also consider if the required systems/ mechanisms for accountability, transparency, and technical knowledge transfer are in place.

Environmental risks to sustainability:

* Are there any environmental risks that may jeopardize sustenance of project outcomes?

**Conclusions & Recommendations**

The MTR team will include a section of the report setting out the MTR’s evidence-based conclusions, in light of the findings.[[21]](#footnote-21)

Recommendations should be succinct suggestions for critical intervention that are specific, measurable, achievable, and relevant. A recommendation table should be put in the report’s executive summary. See the *Guidance For Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects* for guidance on a recommendation table.

The MTR team should make no more than 15 recommendations total.

**Ratings**

The MTR team will include its ratings of the project’s results and brief descriptions of the associated achievements in a *MTR Ratings & Achievement Summary Table* in the Executive Summary of the MTR report. See Annex E for ratings scales. No rating on Project Strategy and no overall project rating are required.

Table. MTR Ratings & Achievement Summary Table for *Removing Barriers Hindering Protected Area Management Effectiveness in Viet Nam*” (PIMS#3695)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Measure** | **MTR Rating** | **Achievement Description** |
| **Project Strategy** | N/A |  |
| **Progress Towards Results** | Objective Achievement Rating: (rate 6 pt. scale) |  |
| Outcome 1 Achievement Rating: (rate 6 pt. scale) |  |
| Outcome 2 Achievement Rating: (rate 6 pt. scale) |  |
| Outcome 3 Achievement Rating: (rate 6 pt. scale) |  |
| Etc. |  |
| **Project Implementation & Adaptive Management** | (rate 6 pt. scale) |  |
| **Sustainability** | (rate 4 pt. scale) |  |

1. **TIMEFRAME**

The international consultant is required to work at home based and in Viet Nam. The working period in Vietnam covers 7 working days in October and November 2014.

The tentative MTR timeframe is as follows:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **TIMEFRAME** | **ACTIVITY** |
| *23 September 2014* | Application closes |
| *1 October 2014* | Select MTR Team |
| *15 October 2014* | Prep the MTR Team (handover of Project Documents) |
| *October 4 days* | Document review and preparing MTR Inception Report |
| *October 2 days* | Finalization andValidation of MTR Inception Report- latest start of MTR mission |
| *October – November – 7 days* | MTR mission: stakeholder meetings, interviews, field visits |
| *November 2014* | Mission wrap-up meeting & presentation of initial findings- earliest end of MTR mission |
| *November 2014 - 5 days* | Preparing draft report |
| *November 2014 – 1 day* | Incorporating audit trail from feedback on draft report/Finalization of MTR report |
| *November 2014 – 1 day* | Preparation & Issue of Management Response |
| *November 2014* | Concluding Stakeholder Workshop (not mandatory for MTR team) |
| *30 November 2014* | Expected date of full MTR completion |

Options for site visits should be provided in the Inception Report.

1. **MIDTERM REVIEW DELIVERABLES**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **#** | **Deliverable** | **Description** | **Timing** | **Responsibilities** |
| **1** | **MTR Inception Report** | MTR team clarifies objectives and methods of Midterm Review | No later than 2 weeks before the MTR mission | MTR team submits to the Commissioning Unit and project management |
| **2** | **Presentation** | Initial Findings | End of MTR mission | MTR Team presents to project management and the Commissioning Unit |
| **3** | **Draft Final Report** | Full report (using guidelines on content outlined in Annex B) with annexes | Within 3 weeks of the MTR mission | Sent to the Commissioning Unit, reviewed by RTA, Project Coordinating Unit, GEF OFP |
| **4** | **Final Report\*** | Revised report with audit trail detailing how all received comments have (and have not) been addressed in the final MTR report | Within 1 week of receiving UNDP comments on draft | Sent to the Commissioning Unit |

\*The final MTR report must be in English. If applicable, the Commissioning Unit may choose to arrange for a translation of the report into a language more widely shared by national stakeholders.

1. **MTR ARRANGEMENTS**

The principal responsibility for managing this MTR resides with the UNDP Vietnam CO.

The UNDP Vietnam CO will contract the consultants and ensure the timely provision of per diems and travel arrangements within the country for the MTR team. The Project Team will be responsible for liaising with the MTR team to provide all relevant documents, set up stakeholder interviews, and arrange field visits. Field visit will be arranged by the Project Management Unit to the project sites.

1. **TEAM COMPOSITION**

A team of two independent consultants will conduct the MTR – one International Consultant works as a team leader (with experience and exposure to projects and evaluations in other regions globally) and one national consultant as a team expert, The consultants cannot have participated in the project preparation, formulation, and/or implementation (including the writing of the Project Document) and should not have a conflict of interest with project’s related activities.

The selection of consultants will be aimed at maximizing the overall “team” qualities in the following areas:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Se** | **Criteria** | **Score** |
|  | Recent experience with result-based management evaluation methodologies | 100 |
|  | Experience applying SMART indicators and reconstructing or validating baseline scenarios | 100 |
|  | Competence in adaptive management, as applied to biodiversity conservation | 100 |
|  | Experience working with the GEF preparation/implementation/evaluations | 200 |
|  | Experience working in Vietnam | 20 |
|  | Work experience in relevant to biodiversity conservation, protected areas management/financing for at least 10 years | 80 |
|  | Demonstrated understanding of issues related to gender and biodiversity conservation; experience in gender sensitive evaluation and analysis | 100 |
|  | Excellent communication skill | 50 |
|  | Demonstrable analytical skills | 100 |
|  | Project evaluation/review experiences within United Nations system will be considered an asset; | 50 |
|  | A Master’s degree in environmental sciences/economics, biodiversity conservation, or other closely related field | 100 |
|  |  | 1000 |

1. **PAYMENT MODALITIES AND SPECIFICATIONS**

10% of payment upon approval of the final MTR Inception Report

40% upon submission of the draft MTR report

50% upon finalization of the MTR report

1. **APPLICATION PROCESS[[22]](#footnote-22)**

**Recommended Presentation of Proposal:**

1. **Letter of Confirmation of Interest and Availability** using the [template](https://intranet.undp.org/unit/bom/pso/Support%20documents%20on%20IC%20Guidelines/Template%20for%20Confirmation%20of%20Interest%20and%20Submission%20of%20Financial%20Proposal.docx)[[23]](#footnote-23) provided by UNDP;
2. **CV** and a **Personal History Form** ([P11 form](http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/corporate/Careers/P11_Personal_history_form.doc)[[24]](#footnote-24));
3. **Brief description of approach to work/technical proposal** of why the individual considers him/herself as the most suitable for the assignment, and a proposed methodology on how they will approach and complete the assignment; (max 1 page)
4. **Financial Proposal** that indicates the all-inclusive fixed total contract price and all other travel related costs (such as flight ticket, per diem, etc.), supported by a breakdown of costs, as per template attached to the Letter of Confirmation of Interest template. If an applicant is employed by an organization/company/institution, and he/she expects his/her employer to charge a management fee in the process of releasing him/her to UNDP under Reimbursable Loan Agreement (RLA), the applicant must indicate at this point, and ensure that all such costs are duly incorporated in the financial proposal submitted to UNDP.

All application materials should be submitted to [Huynh.huong.thanh@undp.org](mailto:Huynh.huong.thanh@undp.org) indicating the following reference “Consultant for Midterm Review” by 28 September 2014. Incomplete applications will be excluded from further consideration.

**Criteria for Evaluation of Proposal:** Only those applications which are responsive and compliant will be evaluated. Offers will be evaluated according to the Combined Scoring method – where the educational background and experience on similar assignments will be weighted at 70%and the price proposal will weigh as 30% of the total scoring. The applicant receiving the Highest Combined Score that has also accepted UNDP’s General Terms and Conditions will be awarded the contract.

**ToR ANNEX A: List of Documents to be reviewed by the MTR Team**

1. PIF
2. UNDP Initiation Plan
3. UNDP Project Document
4. UNDP Environmental and Social Screening results
5. Project Inception Report
6. All Project Implementation Reports (PIR’s)
7. Quarterly progress reports and work plans of the various implementation task teams
8. Audit reports
9. Finalized GEF focal area Tracking Tools at CEO endorsement and midterm (*fill in specific TTs for this project’s focal area*)
10. Oversight mission reports
11. All monitoring reports prepared by the project
12. Financial and Administration guidelines used by Project Team

The following documents will also be available:

1. Project operational guidelines, manuals and systems
2. UNDP country/countries programme document(s)
3. Minutes of the (*Project Title*) Board Meetings and other meetings (i.e. Project Appraisal Committee meetings)
4. Project site location maps

**ToR ANNEX B: Guidelines on Contents for the Midterm Review Report**[[25]](#footnote-25)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **i.** | Basic Report Information *(for opening page or title page)*   * Title of UNDP supported GEF financed project * UNDP PIMS# and GEF project ID# * MTR time frame and date of MTR report * Region and countries included in the project * GEF Operational Focal Area/Strategic Program * Executing Agency/Implementing Partner and other project partners * MTR team members * Acknowledgements | | |
| **ii.** | Table of Contents | | |
| **iii.** | Acronyms and Abbreviations | | |
| **1.** | Executive Summary *(3-5 pages)*   * Project Information Table * Project Description (brief) * Project Progress Summary (between 200-500 words) * MTR Ratings & Achievement Summary Table * Concise summary of conclusions * Recommendation Summary Table | | |
| **2.** | Introduction *(2-3 pages)*   * Purpose of the MTR and objectives * Scope & Methodology: principles of design and execution of the MTR, MTR approach and data collection methods, limitations to the MTR * Structure of the MTR report | | |
| **3.** | Project Description and Background Context *(3-5 pages)*   * Development context: environmental, socio-economic, institutional, and policy factors relevant to the project objective and scope * Problems that the project sought to address: threats and barriers targeted * Project Description and Strategy: objective, outcomes and expected results, description of field sites (if any) * Project Implementation Arrangements: short description of the Project Board, key implementing partner arrangements, etc. * Project timing and milestones * Main stakeholders: summary list | | |
| **4.** | Findings *(12-14 pages)* | | |
| **4.1** | Project Strategy   * Project Design * Results Framework/Logframe | |
| **4.2** | Progress Towards Results   * Progress towards outcomes analysis * Remaining barriers to achieving the project objective | |
| **4.3** | Project Implementation and Adaptive Management   * Management Arrangements * Work planning * Finance and co-finance * Project-level monitoring and evaluation systems * Stakeholder engagement * Reporting * Communications | |
| **4.4** | Sustainability   * Financial risks to sustainability * Socio-economic to sustainability * Institutional framework and governance risks to sustainability * Environmental risks to sustainability | |
| **5.** | Conclusions and Recommendations *(4-6 pages)* | | |
|  | **5.1** | | Conclusions   * Comprehensive and balanced statements (that are evidence-based and connected to the MTR’s findings) which highlight the strengths, weaknesses and results of the project |
| **5.2** | | Recommendations   * Corrective actions for the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the project * Actions to follow up or reinforce initial benefits from the project * Proposals for future directions underlining main objectives |
| **6.** | Annexes   * MTR ToR (excluding ToR annexes) * MTR evaluative matrix (evaluation criteria with key questions, indicators, sources of data, and methodology) * Example Questionnaire or Interview Guide used for data collection * Ratings Scales * MTR mission itinerary * List of persons interviewed * List of documents reviewed * Co-financing table (if not previously included in the body of the report) * Signed UNEG Code of Conduct form * Signed MTR final report clearance form * *Annexed in a separate file:* Audit trail from received comments on draft MTR report * *Annexed in a separate file:* Relevant midterm tracking tools METT and FSC | | |

**ToR ANNEX C: Midterm Review Evaluative Matrix Template**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Evaluative Questions** | **Indicators** | **Sources** | **Methodology** |
| **Project Strategy: To what extent is the project strategy relevant to country priorities, country ownership, and the best route towards expected results?** | | | |
| (include evaluative question(s)) | (i.e. relationships established, level of coherence between project design and implementation approach, specific activities conducted, quality of risk mitigation strategies, etc.) | (i.e. project documents, national policies or strategies, websites, project staff, project partners, data collected throughout the MTR mission, etc.) | (i.e. document analysis, data analysis, interviews with project staff, interviews with stakeholders, etc.) |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Progress Towards Results: To what extent have the expected outcomes and objectives of the project been achieved thus far?** | | | |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Project Implementation and Adaptive Management: Has the project been implemented efficiently, cost-effectively, and been able to adapt to any changing conditions thus far? To what extent are project-level monitoring and evaluation systems, reporting, and project communications supporting the project’s implementation?** | | | |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Sustainability: To what extent are there financial, institutional, socio-economic, and/or environmental risks to sustaining long-term project results?** | | | |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |

**ToR ANNEX D: UNEG Code of Conduct for Evaluators/Midterm Review Consultants[[26]](#footnote-26)**

**Evaluators/Consultants:**

1. Must present information that is complete and fair in its assessment of strengths and weaknesses so that decisions or actions taken are well founded.
2. Must disclose the full set of evaluation findings along with information on their limitations and have this accessible to all affected by the evaluation with expressed legal rights to receive results.
3. Should protect the anonymity and confidentiality of individual informants. They should provide maximum notice, minimize demands on time, and respect people’s right not to engage. Evaluators must respect people’s right to provide information in confidence, and must ensure that sensitive information cannot be traced to its source. Evaluators are not expected to evaluate individuals, and must balance an evaluation of management functions with this general principle.
4. Sometimes uncover evidence of wrongdoing while conducting evaluations. Such cases must be reported discreetly to the appropriate investigative body. Evaluators should consult with other relevant oversight entities when there is any doubt about if and how issues should be reported.
5. Should be sensitive to beliefs, manners and customs and act with integrity and honesty in their relations with all stakeholders. In line with the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, evaluators must be sensitive to and address issues of discrimination and gender equality. They should avoid offending the dignity and self-respect of those persons with whom they come in contact in the course of the evaluation. Knowing that evaluation might negatively affect the interests of some stakeholders, evaluators should conduct the evaluation and communicate its purpose and results in a way that clearly respects the stakeholders’ dignity and self-worth.
6. Are responsible for their performance and their product(s). They are responsible for the clear, accurate and fair written and/or oral presentation of study limitations, findings and recommendations.
7. Should reflect sound accounting procedures and be prudent in using the resources of the evaluation.

**MTR Consultant Agreement Form**

Agreement to abide by the Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN System:

Name of Consultant: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Name of Consultancy Organization (where relevant): \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**I confirm that I have received and understood and will abide by the United Nations Code of Conduct for Evaluation.**

Signed at *\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (Place)* on *\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (Date)*

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

## 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.

## Annex 3: Project Mid-term Review Matrix

| **Review Questions** | | **Indicators** | **Sources** | **Data Collection Method** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ***Review Criteria: Relevance*** | | | | |
| * Does the project’s objective align with the priorities of the local government and local communities? | * Level of coherence between project objective and stated priorities of local stakeholders | | * Local stakeholders * Document review of local development strategies, environmental policies, etc. | * Local level field visit interviews * Desk review |
| * Does the project’s objective fit within the national environment and development priorities? | * Level of coherence between project objective and national policy priorities and strategies, as stated in official documents | | * National policy documents, such as National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, National Capacity Self-Assessment, etc. | * Desk review * National level interviews |
| * Did the project concept originate from local or national stakeholders, and/or were relevant stakeholders sufficiently involved in project development? | * Level of involvement of local and national stakeholders in project origination and development (number of meetings held, project development processes incorporating stakeholder input, etc.) | | * Project staff * Local and national stakeholders * Project documents | * Field visit interviews * Desk review |
| * Does the project objective fit GEF strategic priorities? | * Level of coherence between project objective and GEF strategic priorities (including alignment of relevant focal area indicators) | | * GEF strategic priority documents for period when project was approved * Current GEF strategic priority documents | * Desk review |
| * Was the project linked with and in-line with UNDP priorities and strategies for the country? | * Level of coherence between project objective and design with UNDAF, CPAP, CPD | | * UNDP strategic priority documents | * Desk review |
| * Does the project’s objective support implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity? Other relevant MEAs? | * Linkages between project objective and elements of the CBD, such as key articles and programs of work | | * CBD website * National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan | * Desk review |
| ***Review Criteria: Efficiency*** | | | | |
| * Is the project cost-effective? | * 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 | | * Project documents * Project staff | * Desk review * Interviews with project staff |
| * Are expenditures in line with international standards and norms? | * Cost of project inputs and outputs relative to norms and standards for donor projects in the country or region | | * Project documents * Project staff | * Desk review * Interviews with project staff |
| * Is the project implementation approach efficient for delivering the planned project results? | * 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.) | | * Project documents * National and local stakeholders * Project staff | * Desk review * Interviews with project staff * Interviews with national and local stakeholders |
| * Is the project implementation delayed? If so, has that affected cost-effectiveness? | * Project milestones in time * Planned results affected by delays * Required project adaptive management measures related to delays | | * Project documents * Project staff | * Desk review * Interviews with project staff |
| * What is the contribution of cash and in-kind co-financing to project implementation? | * Level of cash and in-kind co-financing relative to expected level | | * Project documents * Project staff | * Desk review * Interviews with project staff |
| * To what extent is the project leveraging additional resources? | * Amount of resources leveraged relative to project budget | | * Project documents * Project staff | * Desk review * Interviews with project staff |
| ***Review Criteria: Effectiveness*** | | | | |
| * Are the project objectives likely to be met? To what extent are they likely to be met? | * Level of progress toward project indicator targets relative to expected level at current point of implementation | | * Project documents * Project staff * Project stakeholders | * Field visit interviews * Desk review |
| * What are the key factors contributing to project success or underachievement? | * Level of documentation of and preparation for project risks, assumptions and impact drivers | | * Project documents * Project staff * Project stakeholders | * Field visit interviews * Desk review |
| * What are the key risks and barriers that remain to achieve the project objective and generate Global Environmental Benefits? | * Presence, assessment of, and preparation for expected risks, assumptions and impact drivers | | * Project documents * Project staff * Project stakeholders | * Field visit interviews * Desk review |
| * Are the key assumptions and impact drivers relevant to the achievement of Global Environmental Benefits likely to be met? | * Actions undertaken to address key assumptions and target impact drivers | | * Project documents * Project staff * Project stakeholders | * Field visit interviews * Desk review |
| ***Review Criteria: Results*** | | | | |
| * Have the planned outputs been produced? Have they contributed to the project outcomes and objectives? | * Level of project implementation progress relative to expected level at current stage of implementation * Existence of logical linkages between project outputs and outcomes/impacts | | * Project documents * Project staff * Project stakeholders | * Field visit interviews * Desk review |
| * Are the anticipated outcomes likely to be achieved? Are the outcomes likely to contribute to the achievement of the project objective? | * Existence of logical linkages between project outcomes and impacts | | * Project documents * Project staff * Project stakeholders | * Field visit interviews * Desk review |
| * Are impact level results likely to be achieved? Are the likely to be at the scale sufficient to be considered Global Environmental Benefits? | * Environmental indicators * Level of progress through the project’s Theory of Change | | * Project documents * Project staff * Project stakeholders | * Field visit interviews * Desk review |
| ***Review Criteria: Sustainability*** | | | | |
| * 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? | * 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 | | * Project documents * Project staff * Project stakeholders | * Field visit interviews * Desk review |
| * 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? | * Level of initiative and engagement of relevant stakeholders in project activities and results | | * Project documents * Project staff * Project stakeholders | * Field visit interviews * Desk review |
| * Do relevant stakeholders have the necessary technical capacity to ensure that project benefits are maintained? | * Level of technical capacity of relevant stakeholders relative to level required to sustain project benefits | | * Project documents * Project staff * Project stakeholders | * Field visit interviews * Desk review |
| * To what extent are the project results dependent on socio-political factors? | * Existence of socio-political risks to project benefits | | * Project documents * Project staff * Project stakeholders | * Field visit interviews * Desk review |
| * To what extent are the project results dependent on issues relating to institutional frameworks and governance? | * Existence of institutional and governance risks to project benefits | | * Project documents * Project staff * Project stakeholders | * Field visit interviews * Desk review |
| * Are there any environmental risks that can undermine the future flow of project impacts and Global Environmental Benefits? | * Existence of environmental risks to project benefits | | * Project documents * Project staff * Project stakeholders | * Field visit interviews * Desk review |
| ***Cross-cutting and UNDP Mainstreaming Issues*** | | | | |
| * Did the project take incorporate gender mainstreaming or equality, as relevant? | * Level of appropriate engagement and attention to gender-relevant aspects of the project | | * Project documents * Project staff * Project stakeholders | * Field visit interviews * Desk review |

## 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

1. PLANNING / PRE-IMPLEMENTATION
2. **Relevance**
   1. Did the project’s objectives fit within the priorities of the local government and local communities?
   2. Did the project’s objectives fit within national priorities?
   3. Did the project’s objectives fit GEF strategic priorities?
   4. Did the project’s objectives support implementation of the relevant multi-lateral environmental agreement?
3. *Incremental cost*
4. Did the project create environmental benefits that would not have otherwise taken place?
5. Does the project area represent an example of a globally significant environmental resource?
6. *Country-drivenness / Participation*
7. How did the project concept originate?
8. How did the project stakeholders contribute to the project development?
9. Do local and national government stakeholders support the objectives of the project?
10. Do the local communities support the objectives of the project?
11. Are the project objectives in conflict with any national level policies?
12. Monitoring and Evaluation Plan / Design *(M&E)*
13. Were monitoring and reporting roles clearly defined?
14. Was there either an environmental or socio-economic baseline of data collected before the project began?
15. MANAGEMENT / OVERSIGHT
16. Project management
17. What were the implementation arrangements?
18. Was the management effective?
19. Were workplans prepared as required to achieve the anticipated outputs on the required timeframes?
20. Did the project develop and leverage the necessary and appropriate partnerships with direct and tangential stakeholders?
21. Were there any particular challenges with the management process?
22. If there was a steering or oversight body, did it meet as planned and provide the anticipated input and support to project management?
23. Were risks adequately assessed during implementation?
24. Did assumptions made during project design hold true?
25. Were assessed risks adequately dealt with?
26. Was the level of communication and support from the implementing agency adequate and appropriate?
27. *Flexibility*
28. Did the project have to undertake any adaptive management measures based on feedback received from the M&E process?
29. Were there other ways in which the project demonstrated flexibility?
30. Were there any challenges faced in this area?
31. **Efficiency** *(cost-effectiveness)*
32. Was the project cost-effective?
33. Were expenditures in line with international standards and norms?
34. Was the project implementation delayed?
35. If so, did that affect cost-effectiveness?
36. What was the contribution of cash and in-kind co-financing to project implementation?
37. To what extent did the project leverage additional resources?
38. Financial Management
39. Was the project financing (from the GEF and other partners) at the level foreseen in the project document?
40. Where there any problems with disbursements between implementing and executing agencies?
41. Were financial audits conducted with the regularity and rigor required by the implementing agency?
42. Was financial reporting regularly completed at the required standards and level of detail?
43. Did the project face any particular financial challenges such as unforeseen tax liabilities, management costs, or currency devaluation?
44. Co-financing *(catalytic role)*
45. Was the in-kind co-financing received at the level anticipated in the project document?
46. Was the cash co-financing received at the level anticipated in the project document?
47. Did the project receive any additional unanticipated cash support after approval?
48. Did the project receive any additional unanticipated in-kind support after approval?
49. Monitoring and Evaluation *(M&E)*
50. Project implementation M&E
51. Was the M&E plan adequate and implemented sufficiently to allow the project to recognize and address challenges?
52. Were any unplanned M&E measures undertaken to meet unforeseen shortcomings?
53. Was there a mid-term evaluation?
54. How were project reporting and monitoring tools used to support adaptive management?
55. Environmental and socio-economic monitoring
56. Did the project implement a monitoring system, or leverage a system already in place, for environmental monitoring?
57. What are the environmental or socio-economic monitoring mechanisms?
58. Have any community-based monitoring mechanisms been used?
59. Is there a long-term M&E component to track environmental changes?
60. If so, what provisions have been made to ensure this is carried out?
61. *Full disclosure*
62. Did the project meet this requirement?
63. Did the project face any challenges in this area?
64. ACTIVITIES / IMPLEMENTATION
65. **Effectiveness**
66. How have the stated project objectives been met?
67. To what extent have the project objectives been met?
68. What were the key factors that contributed to project success or underachievement?
69. Can positive key factors be replicated in other situations, and could negative key factors have been anticipated?
70. Stakeholder involvement and public awareness *(participation)*
71. What were the achievements in this area?
72. What were the challenges in this area?
73. How did stakeholder involvement and public awareness contribute to the achievement of project objectives?
74. **RESULTS**
75. Outputs
76. Did the project achieve the planned outputs?
77. Did the outputs contribute to the project outcomes and objectives?
78. Outcomes
79. Were the anticipated outcomes achieved?
80. Were the outcomes relevant to the planned project impacts?
81. Impacts
82. Was there a logical flow of inputs and activities to outputs, from outputs to outcomes, and then to impacts?
83. Did the project achieve its anticipated/planned impacts?
84. Why or why not?
85. If impacts were achieved, were they at a scale sufficient to be considered Global Environmental Benefits?
86. 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?
87. Replication strategy, and documented replication or scaling-up *(catalytic role)*
88. Did the project have a replication plan?
89. Was the replication plan “passive” or “active”?
90. Is there evidence that replication or scaling-up occurred within the country?
91. Did replication or scaling-up occur in other countries?
92. LESSONS LEARNED
    1. What were the key lessons learned in each project stage?
    2. In retrospect, would the project participants have done anything differently?
93. **SUSTAINABILITY**
94. Financial
95. To what extent are the project results dependent on continued financial support?
96. What is the likelihood that any required financial resources will be available to sustain the project results once the GEF assistance ends?
97. Was the project successful in identifying and leveraging co-financing?
98. What are the key financial risks to sustainability?
99. Socio-Political
100. To what extent are the project results dependent on socio-political factors?
101. What is the likelihood that the level of stakeholder ownership will allow for the project results to be sustained?
102. Is there sufficient public/stakeholder awareness in support of the long-term objectives of the project?
103. What are the key socio-political risks to sustainability?
104. Institutions and Governance
105. To what extent are the project results dependent on issues relating to institutional frameworks and governance?
106. 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?
107. Are the required systems for accountability and transparency and the required technical know-how in place?
108. What are the key institutional and governance risks to sustainability?
109. Ecological
110. Are there any environmental risks that can undermine the future flow of project impacts and Global Environmental Benefits?

## 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 (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) | 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 |

## Annex 6: Mid-term Review -- Mission Itinerary & Interviews; Overall Workplan; Calendar of Deliverables

**6a. Mission Itinerary and Persons Interviewed**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Time** | **Activities** | **Participants** | **Venue** |
| **Monday, 3 November** | | | |
| 8:30 - 11:30 | Opening meeting to discuss 1) planning for the Mid Term Review and 2) results of the MONRE component of the project | * Mr. Pham Anh Cuong – Project Director, BCA * Ms. Tran Huyen Trang – Project Coordinator, MONRE * Ms. Ha Thanh Hang – Training Coordinator, MARD * Ms. Ha Thi Tuyet Nga – Project Coordinator, MARD * Ms. Do Thi Huyen – Programme Analyst, UNDP * Ms. Le Ha Thanh - National Consultant * Mr. Brad Auer - International Consultant | MONRE PMU office |
| 13:30 - 16:00 | Discussion of the progress and results of the MARD component of the project | * Ms. Tran Huyen Trang – Project Coordinator, MONRE * Ms. Ha Thanh Hang – Training Coordinator, MARD * Ms. Nguyen Thu Huong - Project Accountant, MARD * Ms. Ha Thi Tuyet Nga – Project Coordinator, MARD * Ms. Do Thi Huyen – Programme Analyst, UNDP * Ms. Le Ha Thanh - National Consultant * Mr. Brad Auer - International Consultant | MARD PMU Office |
| **Tuesday, 4 November** | | | |
| 10.00 - 10.30 | Meeting with UNDP to discuss planning for the Mid Term Review | * Ms. Do Thi Huyen – Programme Analyst, UNDP * Ms. Le Ha Thanh - National Consultant * Mr. Brad Auer - International Consultant | UNDP Country Office |
| 10.30 - 16.00 | Car and Air Travel to Bidoup - Nui Ba national park | * Ms. Tran Huyen Trang – Project Coordinator, MONRE * Ms. Le Ha Thanh - National Consultant * Mr. Brad Auer - International Consultant |  |
| 18.00 - 19:30 | Dinner with National Park team | * Ms. Tran Huyen Trang – Project Coordinator, MONRE * Ms. Le Ha Thanh - National Consultant * Mr. Brad Auer - International Consultant * Representatives of the Bidoup – Nui Ba National Park Management Board | Da Lat |
| **Wednesday, 5 November** | | | |
| 8.30 - 10.30 | Meeting with BD-NB management board to discuss project activities at demonstration site | * Ms. Tran Huyen Trang – Project Coordinator, MONRE * Ms. Le Ha Thanh - National Consultant * Mr. Brad Auer - International Consultant * Mr. Do Van Ngoc - Deputy Director, Bidoup – Nui Ba National Park * Mr. Ton That Minh - Director of Intl. Centre for Tropical Highlands Ecosystem Research (ICTHER) * Mr. Truong Quang Cuong - Project Site Coordinator | Bidoup – Nui Ba National Park Office |
| 10.30 - 13.00 | Site visit to BD-NB facilities (visitor centre, medicinal plant greenhouse / laboratory) and tour of park | * Ms. Tran Huyen Trang – Project Coordinator, MONRE * Ms. Le Ha Thanh - National Consultant * Mr. Brad Auer - International Consultant * Mr. Truong Quang Cuong (Project Site Coordinator) | Bidoup – Nui Ba National Park |
| 15.25 - 17.10 | Car and Air Travel to Hanoi | * Ms. Tran Huyen Trang – Project Coordinator, MONRE * Ms. Le Ha Thanh - National Consultant * Mr. Brad Auer - International Consultant |  |
| **Thursday, 6 November** | | | |
| 7.00 - 12.00 | Mini-bus and boat travel to Cat Ba National Park | * Ms. Tran Huyen Trang – Project Coordinator, MONRE * Ms. Le Ha Thanh - National Consultant * Mr. Brad Auer - International Consultant |  |
| 13.30 - 15.00 | Meeting with Cat Ba management board to discuss project activities at demonstration site | * Mr. Hoang Van Thap - Director, Cat Ba National Park * Mr. Nguyen Van Thuong - Vice Director, Cat Ba National Park * Mr. Nguyen Van Huong - Accountant, Cat Ba National Park * Mr. Hoang Van Cau - Project Site Coordinator * Ms. Tran Huyen Trang – Project Coordinator, MONRE * Ms. Le Ha Thanh - National Consultant * Mr. Brad Auer - International Consultant | Cat Ba National Park Office |
| 15.00 - 19.00 | Site visit to Cat Ba (visitor centre; tour) and dinner with Cat Ba team | * Numerous staff of Cat Ba National Park * Mr. Hoang Van Cau - Project Site Coordinator * Ms. Tran Huyen Trang – Project Coordinator, MONRE * Ms. Le Ha Thanh - National Consultant * Mr. Brad Auer - International Consultant | Cat Ba National Park facilities |
| **Friday, 7 November** | | | |
| 8.00 - 13.30 | Boat and mini-bus to Xuan Thuy NP | * Ms. Tran Huyen Trang – Project Coordinator, MONRE * Ms. Le Ha Thanh - National Consultant * Mr. Brad Auer - International Consultant |  |
| 14.30 - 16.30 | Meeting with XT management board to discuss project activities at demonstration site | * Mr. Nguyen Viet Cach - Director, Xuan Thuy National Park * Mr. Nguyen Phuc Hoi - Vice Director, Xuan Thuy National Park * Ms. Tran Huyen Trang – Project Coordinator, MONRE * Mr. Phan Van Truong - Project Site Coordinator * Ms. Le Ha Thanh - National Consultant * Mr. Brad Auer - International Consultant | Xuan Thuy National Park office |
| 16.30 - 20.30 | Mini-bus to Hanoi | * Ms. Tran Huyen Trang – Project Coordinator, MONRE * Ms. Le Ha Thanh - National Consultant * Mr. Brad Auer - International Consultant |  |
| **Saturday, 8 November** | | | |
| 14.00 - 17.00 | Discussion on MONRE components and overall project issues | * Ms. Tran Huyen Trang – Project Coordinator, MONRE * Ms. Le Ha Thanh - National Consultant * Mr. Brad Auer - International Consultant | At hotel |
|  | Prepare initial findings and recommendations for final meetings | * Mr. Brad Auer - International Consultant | At hotel |
| **Sunday, 9 November** | | | |
|  | Prepare initial findings and recommendations for final meetings | * Mr. Brad Auer - International Consultant | At hotel |
| **Monday, 10 November** | | | |
| 09.00-10.30 | Teleconference to discuss initial findings, planning to finalize MTR | * Mr. Johan Robinson – Regional Technical Advisor, UNDP-GEF * Ms. Do Thi Huyen – Programme Analyst, UNDP * Ms. Le Ha Thanh - National Consultant * Mr. Brad Auer - International Consultant | UNDP Country Office |
| 11.00-12.30 | Discussion of MARD component of project | * Ms. Ha Thanh Hang – Training Coordinator, MARD * Ms. Ha Thi Tuyet Nga – Project Coordinator, MARD * Ms. Le Ha Thanh - National Consultant * Mr. Brad Auer - International Consultant | MARD PMU Office |
| 14.00-17.00 | Discussion of MONRE component of project | * Ms. Tran Huyen Trang – Project Coordinator, MONRE * Ms. Le Ha Thanh - National Consultant * Mr. Brad Auer - International Consultant | MONRE PMU Office |
| **Tuesday, 11 November** | | | |
| 10.30-12.00 | Discussion of MTR initial findings and planning to finalize MTR | * Mr. Dao Xuan Lai – Assistant Country Director, UNDP * Mr. Pham Anh Cuong – Project Director, BCA * Ms. Do Thi Huyen – Programme Analyst, UNDP * Ms. Le Ha Thanh - National Consultant * Mr. Brad Auer - International Consultant | UNDP Country Office |
| 14.00-16.00 | Wrap-up meeting – Presentation of Initial Findings of Mid Term Review | * Ms. Hoang Thi - Thanh Nhan, Vice Project Director, BCA * Mr. Nguyen Xuan Dung - Vice Project Director, BCA * Ms. Tran Huyen Trang – Project Coordinator, MONRE * Ms. Ha Thanh Hang – Training Coordinator, MARD * Ms. Ha Thi Tuyet Nga – Project Coordinator, MARD * Ms. Do Thi Huyen – Programme Analyst, UNDP * Ms. Le Ha Thanh - National Consultant * Mr. Brad Auer - International Consultant | MONRE PMU office |
| **Wednesday, 12 November** | | | |
| 09.00-10.30 | UNDP Debriefing | * Ms. Do Thi Huyen – Programme Analyst, UNDP * Ms. Le Ha Thanh - National Consultant * Mr. Brad Auer - International Consultant | UNDP Country Office |
| 10.30-12.00 | Internal work of consulting team | * Ms. Le Ha Thanh - National Consultant * Mr. Brad Auer - International Consultant | UNDP Country Office |
| 12.00-17.00 | Consolidate information and plan for next steps | * Mr. Brad Auer - International Consultant | At hotel |

**6b. MTR Workplan**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Timeframe** | **Responsibility\*** | **Days of Work (IC)** | **Activities** |
| **MTR Preparation** | | | |
| 20 October | UNDP CO |  | Prep the MTR Team (handover of Project Documents) |
| 23 October | IC | 1 | Prepare **MTR Inception Report** |
| 20-31 October | IC & NC | 3 | Document review and preparation for meetings, interviews, etc. |
| 28 October | UNDP CO |  | Provide feedback on MTR Inception Report |
| 30 October | IC | 1 | Finalization of MTR Inception Report |
| **MTR Implementation (Mission)** | | | |
| 3-4 November | IC, NC & PMU | 2 | MTR Mission – Hanoi: Stakeholder meetings, interviews, meetings with UNDP CO |
| 4-8 November | IC, NC & PMU | 5 | MTR Mission - Field Visits: Assessment of project sites; stakeholder meetings; interviews |
| 10-12 November | IC, NC & PMU | 3 | MTR Mission – Hanoi: Wrap-up meeting & presentation of **Initial Findings** |
| **MTR Drafting (Post-Mission)** | | | |
| 13 November – 30 November | UNDP CO, PMU |  | Review of Initial Findings with key stakeholders |
| 13 November – 19 December | IC & NC | 5 | Prepare and submit **Draft Final Report** |
| 20 December –  2 January 2015 | UNDP CO, RTA, PMU, GEF OFP |  | Provide feedback on draft final report |
| 9 January 2015 | IC & NC | 1 | Prepare and submit **Final Report** (incorporating audit trail from feedback on draft report) |
| **Post MTR** | | | |
| TBD | UNDP CO |  | Preparation & Issue of Management Response and request for comments from the MTR Team to the management response |
| TBD | UNDP CO |  | Concluding Stakeholder Workshop (not mandatory for MTR team) |
| 15 January 2015 | IC & NC |  | MTR Team comments on management response (this is the expected date of full MTR completion) |
| After 15 Jan. | UNDP CO |  | Implementation of follow-up actions and Information sharing |

\* IC = International Consultant; NC = National Consultant; UNDP CO = UNDP Country Office (Vietnam); PMU = Project Management Unit; RTA = Regional Technical Advisor; GEF OFP = GEF Operational Focal Point

**6c. MTR Calendar of Deliverables**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **#** | **Deliverable** | **Description** | **Timing** | **Responsibilities** |
| **1** | **MTR Inception Report** | MTR team clarifies objectives and methods of Midterm Review | 23 October | MTR team submits to the Commissioning Unit and project management |
| **2** | **Presentation** | Initial Findings | 12 November | MTR Team presents to project management and the Commissioning Unit |
| **3** | **Draft Final Report** | Full report (using guidelines on content outlined in Annex B) with annexes | 19 December | MTR Team sends to the Commissioning Unit; reviewed by RTA, Project Coordinating Unit, GEF OFP |
| **4** | **Final Report** | Revised report with audit trail detailing how all received comments have (and have not) been addressed in the final MTR report | 9 January (2015) | MTR Team sends to the Commissioning Unit |

## Annex 7: Documents Reviewed

| **Document** | **Year** | **# of Pages** | **Notes** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Documents for Project Submission & Inception** | | | |
| GEF CEO Endorsement Request | 2009 | 192 | Approved GEF project document |
| UNDP Prodoc | 2010 | 226 | Approved UNDP project document |
| Project Inception Report | 2011? | 60 | Includes:   * Potential collaboration between GEF and GIZ projects * Key issues for implementation of the Biodiversity Law * Revised logical framework matrix * Revised total budget and work plan (2011-2014) * Quantity and scheduling of international and national consultants * Outline ToR for international and national consultants |
| **Mid Term Review Guidance / Templates** | | | |
| Draft of rejected MTR (2013) | 2014 | 88 | Prepared in December 2013 but updated in July 2014 |
| Guidance for UNDP-GEF MTRs | 2014 | 69 | Detailed guidance on how to do Mid Term Review |
| **Project Reporting Documents** | | | |
| METTs | 2014 | Excel | The BD1 Tracking Tool, with METTs for 5 sites |
| Financial Scorecard | 2014 | Excel | Financial Scorecard (including 2014 updated scores) |
| Capacity Scorecard | 2010 | 9 | Original scorecard from UNDP Prodoc (Annex 5) and updated version (with scores used in 2014 PIF) |
| PIR – 2012 | 2012 | Excel | PIR in Excel format |
| PIR – 2013 | 2013 | 31 | PIR in Word format |
| PIR - 2014 | 2014 | 36 | PIR in Word format |
| APR – 2013 | 2013 | 39 | APR in Word format |
| Quarterly progress reports (for entire term of project) | 2012 – 2014 | Excel | Received QPRs for Q1-3 in 2012, Q2 in 2013, and Q1-3 in 2014 (none were produced in 2011; include budget info. and explanation of any activities that are delayed |
| UNDP Vietnam Spot Check | 2013 | 17 | Spot Check team reviewed finances and procurement in 2012 and 2014; produced 7 documents; most important is the Project Progress report from 2013 |
| Reports from project oversight missions |  |  | * Two mission reports (one from 2013 and one from 2014) from UNDP-GEF Regional Technical Advisor * 2013 Evaluation by UNDP Deputy Res Rep, together with MFA & MPI |
| **Project Implementation Documents – Technical Reports & Publications** | | | |
| PFES Decision for Bidoup – Nui Ba | 2014 |  | Approved Decision from PPC of Lam Dong Province |
| Concession Proposal for Cat Ba | 2014 |  | Draft proposal for Concessions system to PPC |
| **Project Implementation Documents – Contracts** | | | |
| Draft MOU between MONRE and MARD | 2013 |  | This is the draft MOU for coordination between MONRE and MARD on biodiversity and protected area issues |
| Contract between MONRE and MARD | 2012 | 6 | This is the contract signed by MONRE and MARD for implementation of the GEF project (in Vietnamese) |
| Contracts between project and 3 demonstration sites | 2013 | 20 each | In Vietnamese |
| Contract for Training of Trainers | 2014 | 20 | Mostly UNDP standard text, but some details on the training of trainers the project is doing from October – December 2014 |
| **Project Implementation Documents – Meeting Notes** | | | |
| Various technical documents (provided by UNDP) |  |  | Most important document is the minutes from 2012 MARD-MONRE meeting on cooperation |
| Project Steering Committee minutes |  |  | Minutes from 2012-2014: 2012-2013 in English; 2014 in Vietnamese |
| **Project Implementation Documents – Budgets / Finance** | | | |
| Up to date Budget info. for Mid Term Review | 2014 | Excel | * Table showing expected and actual GEF spending for each year of project (through 30/09/14) * Table showing expected and actual GEF spending for each project Outcome (incl. project management) (through 30/09/14) * Table showing expected and actual GEF spending for each of the 3 project demonstration sites (through 30/09/14) * Table showing projected GEF spending for 4th quarter 2014 and 2015 for each project Outcome |
| Up to date Co-Financing Information for Mid Term Review | 2014 | Excel | Table showing co-financing spending through 30/09/14, with a breakdown between cash and in-kind, and with brief descriptions of how funds were spent |
| Audit reports | 2014 | 48 | Audit from April 24, 2014 (also includes Direct Project Costs) |
| Annual Workplan | 2014 | Excel | Spreadsheet and cover page document |
| UNDP ATLAS Monitoring Reports | 2014 | 4 | Screen captures showing the kind of reporting in Atlas |
| List of contracts and procurement | 2014 | 1 | All items over ~$25,000 USD with organizations or companies contracted for project outputs, etc. (except in cases of confidential information) |
| **Project Implementation Documents – Administration** | | | |
| HPPMG | 2010 | 132 | The project follows HPPMG for all Financial and Administration guidelines |
| UNDP Direct Project Costs |  |  | UNDP charges the project for some services (e.g. procurement); these were in the 2013 Audit and the 2011, 2012 and 2014 CDRs |
| **Supporting Documents** | | | |
| Study of Legal – Inst. Framework for PAs | 2011 | 48 | Among other things, has information on “Options for joint agreement between MARD and MoNRE leaders to improve management of biodiversity conservation in Vietnam protected areas” |
| Review of BD Related Legislation and Responsibility of Ministries | 2010 | 55 | Includes 1) Review on legal provisions of State management responsibilities of ministries, line ministries for biodiversity; 2) Findings of demarcation of State management responsibilities of ministries, line ministries for biodiversity; and 3) Recommendations and solutions for more effective assignment of State management responsibilities of ministries, line ministries for biodiversity |
| MONRE Decree | 2013 | 16 | Decree that lays out the authority / responsibilities of MONRE (in Vietnamese) |
| MARD Decree | 2013 | 11 | Decree that lays out the authority / responsibilities of MARD (in Vietnamese) |
| UNDP One Country Plan document | 2012 | 152 | Vietnam’s version of the UNDP Country Programme document |

## Annex 8: Project Results Framework and Assessed Level of Indicator Target Achievement

### Results Framework Assessment Key

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Green = Achieved** | **Yellow = On target to be achieved** | **Red = Not on target to be achieved** |

| **Component** | **Indicator** | **Baseline** | **Target** | **Level at 30 June 2014** | **Mid-term Review Assessment** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **OBJECTIVE:** To secure a sustainably financed PA system, to conserve globally significant biodiversity | Overall PA System's Financial scorecard scores | 67 | By the end of the project the score is at least 85 | 111/220  50.45% | **On target to be achieved:** Financial Scorecard has gone up significantly (score in 2014 was 111), but results are skewed by differing formats. In 2008, the score was 67/196 (34.18%); while in 2014 the score was 111/220 (50.45%). However, these scores cannot be compared to each other because they were calculated using different versions of the Financial Scorecard. These different versions not only allowed for a different total possible score (196 vs. 220), they also had numerous differences in the questions listed, the wording of the questions, etc. It is also unclear whether they were assessing the same sample set of Protected Areas; the 2014 Financial Scorecard was focused on a subset of 44 PA Units (which provided feedback), whereas the 2008 scorecard does not specify the sample set (it could be all 103 PA Units listed or some subset within that number). This difference in samples size is more relevant to the financing sections of the Financial Scorecard, rather than the scoring itself (which is scoring at the overall system level regardless of the # of sites), but it could still skew the results. Finally, it is believed (though no one is sure) that the 2008 scorecard was completed by a single (international) project design consultant, whereas the 2014 scorecard was completed by two national consultants; furthermore, the 2014 team created a simplified version of the scorecard that they then asked PA managers to fill in. Thus, this difference in approaches and perspectives / experience may also have skewed the results, as the scorecard questions are generally quite subjective. It is important to note that obtaining financial information on Protected Areas in Vietnam is generally quite difficult, primarily because PA units are managed by different institutions at the national, provincial and local levels, and typically each separate PA Management Board must be contacted to get information. Therefore, when the financial scorecard is completed at the end of the project, it should focus only on the subset of 44 PA units that provided feedback in 2014, both to create comparable data but also because these sites have proven their willingness to participate.  **Guidance:** The project team should ensure that the Financial Scorecard is filled out at the end of the project in the same way as the 2014 scorecard (i.e. using the same sample set, the exact same format, and ideally filled out by the same persons), so that useful comparisons can be made of project progress between the mid-term and end of the project, and lessons can be drawn about: 1) the actual and potential (assuming future replication) overall impact of the PA financing mechanisms established by the project; 2) the status of the overall national PA financing gap at the end of the project; 3) areas of the institutional, legal, policy and capacity frameworks for PA financing that most need improvement |
| Overall Capacity scorecard scores | 40.9 | By the end of the project the score is at least 52 | 49.5 | **On target to be achieved:** Appears to be good progress (level in 2013 was 49.5); however, in the original scorecard the overall target score was listed as 52, whereas the target scores for the three components add up to 63.5. It is also important to note that the scorecard was not properly filled out at project start; respondents included scores apart from the choices of 0, 1, 2 and 3 (such as 1.5 and 1.2) and they left some sections blank. Overall, the project has done quite a bit of capacity building for PA management. However, it would seem that the project has made the most progress in capacity building at the PA site level, regarding PA site functions. The area that seems weakest is the capacity building at the institutional and systemic level, including capacities to promote the PA agenda and to consolidate institutional coordination and policy and regulatory development. The project has done training courses for staff of DONRE, PA managers and technical staffs as well as rangers on Biodiversity law, Forest Protection law, biodiversity planning. Although there are no additional capacity building activities planned for the project under MARD; MONRE does have additional training planned for the next few months (training of trainers). Even though MARD will not implement additional activities, the target score may be reached, due in part to the fact that the training materials developed by MARD have been officially approved as materials to be used for MARD internal training programs and courses, so that they will continue to have a positive spill over effect throughout the system of PA sites overseen and supported by MARD (similar positive spill over is expected from the dissemination and use of the MONRE training modules once those are officially approved by the VEA).  **Guidance**   * Correct the Results Framework to show the accurate target score of 63.5 * Using the Capacity Scorecard, the project team should review the areas where capacity development has not made much progress, and define activities to carry out during 2015 to address these areas. In particular, the team should consider how it could provide capacity building at the system and institutional levels. |
| Average METT scores (for all sites) | 0.45 | By the end of the project the score is at least 59% | Average METT scores of 5 PAs is: 64.4  Total possible score is: 96 | **On target to be achieved:** Appears to be good progress - average METT scores of 5 PAs in 2014 was 64.4 out of 102 possible (63%). However, for some unknown reason, during the project preparation phase, different forms of the METT were used for different PA sites, with total possible scores ranging from 91 to 99. In addition, in the original Prodoc, the “average overall METT score of 45%” is a mistake; in fact the average score for the 5 sites was 54 out of an average possible score of 95.8, resulting in a baseline average of 56% instead of 45%. Thus, the true baseline average score of 56% was already very close to the target average score of 59%. In order to get a more realistic target, therefore, we will assume that the project should aim for a similar % increase as that listed in the original Prodoc: in other words, an increase from 45 to 59 is a 31% increase, so if the baseline is now 56, a 31% increase from that produces a target score of 73%. Based on this revision of the target, the project has increased the average scores from a baseline of 56% to the current score of 63%, with a final target of 73%. Thus, at the mid-term the project has only increased the total score by 7%, out of the increase of 17% targeted.  **Guidance:** The project team should review and compare the original METT scores and the updated 2014 scores for each PA site individually. Comparison of these scores will allow the team to identify the areas in which the project has made good progress (increased scores) and which areas still need progress |
| **OUTCOME 1**: A comprehensive and harmonized legal and policy framework supports sustainable PA financing | Legal, regulatory and institutional frameworks component of the UNDP Financial Scorecard | 33 | At the end of the project the score for has increased to at least 50 | 56 | **On target to be achieved:** Very strong progress (score in 2014 was 56), but results are not reliable as explained under the 1st indicator of the Project Objective |
| Capacity to conceptualize and formulate policies, legislations, strategies and programmes component of the UNDP Capacity Scorecard | 5.5 | At the end of the project the score has increased to at least 7.5 | 6 | **Not on target to be achieved:** Very little progress (score in 2014 was 6). The scoring of the 2014 capacity scorecard is difficult to understand; it only shows progress in one area (PA institutional planning / strategizing), although in fact it would appear that the project has made more progress in the other two areas (PA agenda and legal mandate).  **Guidance:** The project team and MONRE should put renewed focus on the overall PA system agenda and PA institutional coordination in the final year of the project, as detailed in various recommendations below. The team should start by reviewing the comments provided in the 2014 Capacity Scorecard and try to identify reasons why some scores did not increase, and how the project can best address those reasons. |
| **Output 1.1:** Regulations under the Law on Biodiversity that ensure consistency in protected area administration in the context of national BD planning | Approval of regulations | No regulations approved | By the end of year 4 of project implementation regulations have been formally issued (these regulations incorporate specific measures related to populations living within PAs) | Achieved partly. | **On target to be achieved:** With regard to supporting implementation of the Law on Biodiversity (which was approved in 2008), significant progress has been made since the start of the project, including: the Master plan for biodiversity conservation in the country to 2010 and orientations to 2030 was approved in 2014; a circular on criteria to identify natural ecosystems that are of global, national, local importance, unique or representative ecosystems for ecological and ecosystem represents for local nature is under development; a Joint Circular stipulating criteria for invasive alien species and a list of invasive alien species was promulgated in 2013; and a clearing house mechanism on sharing and exchanging information on biodiversity has been developed (with support from JICA). With regard to PA financing regulations, the project has made good progress in getting technical work done and submitting draft documents on 4 new “regulations”: Decision No 24 of Prime Minister on investment on special use forest, came into effect on 20 July, 2012; Inter-ministerial circular No. 16 between MONRE and MOF on biodiversity financing has been sent to 63 provinces to get official comments; Lam Dong PPC issued a decision in Nov. 2014 to allow Bidoup - Nui Ba NP to implement a PFES system; and the draft decision on sustainable mollusk harvesting in Xuan Thuy NP was submitted to Nam Dinh PPC in September 2014 and is currently pending. Finally, the project supported MONRE in getting approval for decree 179/2013/ND-Cp on administrative fines and penalties for violations in the field of environmental protection, and in supporting the design and implementation of Decree 126 on benefit sharing by supporting the implementation of clam farming at Xuan Thuy National Park.  **Guidance**   * The project team should prioritize getting approval for the final PA financing “regulation”, the decision of the Nam Dinh Provincial People Committee on sustainable mollusk harvesting. * The project team and MONRE should ensure that the draft report on BD financing institutional coordination and management presented to the National Assembly in November 2014 is duly acted upon |
| **Output 1.2:** Emerging policy on PA financing that allows revenue generation and effective management of revenues for individual PAs and the system as a whole | National PES policy identifies PES as one of the financing mechanisms for PAs | Draft policy under development | The text of the PM's Decision on PES incorporates unambiguous wording establishing the basis for PAs to receive a significant proportion of PES funding for ecosystem services originating from land within the PA | Achieved | **Achieved:** Generally good; PM Decision No. 24 was issued in 2012, which further strengthens Decree No. 99 issued in 2010 (both explained above). It is important to note that “wording establishing the basis for PAs to receive a significant proportion of PES funding for ecosystem services originating from land within the PA” is actually contained within the decision in Nov. 2014 to allow Bidoup - Nui Ba NP to implement a PFES system (see point above); in general, PM Decisions are only general guidelines, and it is subsequent provincial level regulations that provide actual detailed regulatory guidance. |
| Guidelines for operationalization of PM's Decision on PA financing | No guidelines prepared | Guidelines on implementation of the PM's Decision on Sustainable Financing issued during the first year of project implementation reflect international best practice | Achieved. | **Achieved:** This has been completed. Inter-ministerial circular No. 100 between MOF and MARD, which guides the implementation of Decision No. 24 on investment on special use forests was approved on 26 Jul, 2013. Also, the approved MONRE and MOF inter-ministerial circular (noted above) allows for the use of state budget funds to value ecosystem services and to develop PES systems (previously this has only been done with project-specific funding). In addition, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development stipulated Circular No. 20/2012/TT-BNNPTNT in 2012, which provides guidelines for monies payable to the forestry environment service, which is another administrative support for PES systems. It is important to note that several decrees and decisions have been approved at the three demonstration sites (as described in Outcome 3); this is a critical step as most PA financing is managed at the provincial level. |
| Existence of off-site financing policy and strategy | New strategy under development | By the end of year 1 of project implementation a new Tourism Development Strategy incorporates off-site financing | Achieved | **Not on target to be achieved:** The Vietnam Tourism Development Strategy to 2020, Vision to 2030 was approved by the Prime Minister’s Decision No. 2473 in late 2011. Although the strategy supports tourism promotion for protected areas, it does not incorporate “off-site financing” for PAs. However, the project had no opportunity to integrate off-site financing into the strategy, which was approved just as project implementation was getting under way. Similarly, directives to implement the new Tourism Development Strategy were also approved already (in 2013), so there are no opportunities at this time to include off-site financing mechanisms in the implementation of the tourism development strategy. Discussion with stakeholders revealed general agreement that there is little chance of working with the tourism sector to make progress on this issue; in fact, the best approach would be to work directly with the Ministry of Finance, although stakeholders had few ideas on specific mechanisms that might be viable. For example, there was some consideration to emulate a program in China where people entering the country can opt to pay an extra US$1 to have a panda stamp put into their visa, with revenues from this going towards panda conservation. However, further scoping of this option revealed that Viet Nam is currently implementation a national visa exemption program for many countries, which would greatly reduce the potential revenues that might be raised through a visa stamp program.  **Guidance**   * The Inception Report proposed to remove this indicator; however this change was never incorporated into the project implementation. The MTR recommends that the indicator should be kept, and that the project team should commission a report on the potential for various off-site financing mechanisms for protected areas in Vietnam, and follow this with workshops and consultative meetings to determine the best options for implementing such mechanisms in the future (after the project ends). The project will not have achieved the specific indicator target, but it will have contributed to the goal of supporting off-site financing. * The project team should investigate if it may be possible to integrate increased PA financing into Tourism strategies at the provincial level (as demonstrations), focusing on Hai Phong, Quang Ninh and Lam Dong provinces |
| **OUTCOME** 2:  Clear and harmonized institutional mandates and processes support sustainable PA financing mechanisms | Score for the "Business planning and tools for cost-effective management" component of the UNDP Financial Scorecard | 21 | At the end of the project the score has increased to at least 45 | 25 | **Not on target to be achieved:** Very little progress (score in 2014 was 25), but results are not reliable as explained under the 1st indicator of the Project Objective |
| Score for the "Capacity to implement policies, legislation, strategies and programmes" component of the UNDP Capacity Scorecard | 21.4 | At the end of the project the score has increased to at least 32 | 25.5 | **Not on target to be achieved:** Fair progress (score in 2014 was 25.5), but the target score is still a far way off. According to the 2014 scorecard, the project has not produced any progress in several areas where it may have been expected, including: skills for protected area planning and management; transparent oversight; effective leadership; well qualified and motivated staff; implementation of management plans; clear PA institutional authority; opportunities for staff to advance; training opportunities. However, some of the issues listed in this part of the scorecard are out of the scope of this project, and in general it would appear that the project has made some good progress on capacity building. Nevertheless, the project needs to clarify why it has scored so low in many of these areas, and if necessary, take corrective action.  **Guidance:** The project team should start by reviewing the comments provided in the 2014 Capacity Scorecard and try to identify reasons why some scores did not increase, and how the project can best address those reasons. The team should also consider whether any of the areas noted as lacking progress should be incorporated into the training materials being promoted by MARD and MONRE. |
| **Output 2.1:** Clarified and coordinated institutional management of a unified PA system | Establishment of a mechanism to promote coordination between MONRE and MARD | No mechanism exists | By the end of year 2 of project implementation, a coordinating mechanism has been created by decree/decision | The draft on mechanism to promote coordination between MONRE and MARD has been delayed. Until now, the Draft Cooperation mechanism is pending. | **Not on target to be achieved:** The primary accomplishment of the project to date has been the drafting of an MOU between MONRE and MARD. After an internal review process, MONRE sent the draft MOU to MARD in 2013 for its review and approval, but to date MARD has given no reply or update on the draft MOU. However, even in the absence of a signed MOU, activities by the project and other stakeholders have led to some specific improvements in coordination on protected areas management (these are detailed in Annex 11).  **Guidance:** As detailed in Annex 11, interviews with stakeholders and a review of relevant documents leaves no doubt that there is a need for improved coordination on PA management and financing in Viet Nam. In addition though, the analysis and findings in these documents also make it clear that this is a very complicated issue with many important national and provincial stakeholders involved. In the view of the MTR team, this issue is not something that can be easily addressed by an externally-funded, short term project, particularly one that is also addressing many other goals and objectives. The goals and targets of this project with regard to PA management and financing were unclear and in fact inconsistent in the project document. In particular, the text of the project outputs described a vision and proposed activities that were much more ambitious than any indicator targets in the project’s Results Framework. In the view of the MTR team, the vision and activities in the text of the project outputs were unrealistic, and between this unrealistic approach and disparity between the Outputs text and the Results Framework, it is understandable that the project team and partners chose to focus on the more realistic targets in the Results Framework. Having said that, during project implementation, little progress has been made even towards the indicator for a coordination mechanism between MONRE and MARD, and in general, the project should have done much more to strengthen PA coordination on management and financing. For this reason, the MTR recommends that the project undertake a number of activities in 2015 in order to try to meet its objectives regarding these issues; these are detailed in Recommendations 11-13 of the Mid Term Review. |
| Mechanism is operational | As above | By the end of year 3 of the project the coordinating mechanism is promoting a coordinated approach to PA management (see also Output 4.1). | As mentioned above, the mechanism has not been official adopted by 2 ministries therefore the mechanism has not been implemented | **Not on target to be achieved:** See above |
| **Output 2.2:** PA staff at all levels with necessary skills, including business management, tourism management, monitoring and participatory management | Proportion of PA managers and staff trained in essential skills | No PA managers trained in issues such as business planning | By the end of year 3 of project implementation, PA directors from at least 50% of PAs have been trained in key skills, such as business planning; by the end of the project this figure is 85% | From Jun 2013 to Jun 2014: MONRE organized 12 training courses and MARD organized 13 training courses. Total PAs participated in all 25 training courses are 97 PAs, taking 90,6% of all PAs (just count on 107 PAs having management board), among these, 83 PAs sent PA directors/vice directors to attend the training, occupying 77,5% | **Achieved:** Overall, staff from 97 of the 107 PAs with Management Boards (90.6%) participated in at least one of the training courses; of these, 83 of the 107 PAs (77.5%) sent either PA directors or deputy directors to attend the training. In total, 757 PA staff participated in at least one of the training workshops. MONRE delivered training courses on: Policy, Legal Framework on Biodiversity and Guidelines on Provincial Biodiversity Conservation Planning; Management and sustainable financing planning and Biodiversity integration into environmental impact assessment reporting; Invasive Alien Species Management in Vietnam; and Biodiversity Monitoring and Reporting in protected areas. MARD delivered training courses on: SMART indicators (in cooperation with GIZ in Hoa Binh); Capacity Building for Planning, Management and Financial Management Conservation Area; PA management, planning and financing management; law enforcement; Management, biodiversity monitoring; PAs, community and ecological development; Biodiversity evaluation and ecosystem services; and Capacity building on policy and law of PAs organization and management. Additional training remains to be delivered: MONRE will carry out training of trainers on 7 topics in collaboration with the Centre on Natural Resources and Environment Studies, while MARD will carry out training on 3 additional topics. MONRE is also waiting for VEA to approve the training manuals that it developed; once these are approved, they will be disseminated to PAs and other stakeholders. Furthermore, MARD has set aside funds for future training in Decision 2585/QD-BNN-TCCB dated 31/10/2013, which will use 5 of the training materials developed by the project. MARD is also preparing to develop a capacity assessment tool to measure future trainings before and after (such assessments were not done for the trainings delivered so far through the project)  **Guidance:**   * Note: The Inception Report proposed changing the indicator from “Proportion of PA managers and staff trained in essential skills” to “Proportion of PA staff and related staff trained in essential skills”, presumably because of the difficulty in getting PA managers to attend training workshops. The MTR recommends that the indicator should be changed as proposed in the Mid Term Review. * The project should recommend to both MONRE and MARD to develop additional strategies for future staff training, including 1) adding training strategies that do not rely only on off-site workshops, for example on-the-job training at PA sites, which would help to ensure actual changes on the ground, or distance learning / degree programs for PA staff; and 2) establishing capacity assessment and monitoring activities to gauge effectiveness of various trainings and to identify priority areas for future training. |
| Proportion of PA rangers trained in essential skills | Pilot programme for ranger training (CBBC) | By the end of year 3 of project implementation, rangers and other staff from at least 60% of PAs have been trained in key skills; by the end of the project this figure is 85% | Achieved. | **Achieved:** See above |
| **Output 2.3:** Revised and consistent system-wide incentive measures that promote improved performance | Existence of system-wide system of incentives | Current incentive system ineffective and disjointed | By the end of year 2 of project implementation, a revised system of incentives designed to promote improve performance among PA staff has been drafted and endorsed by PA managers | MARD is going to draft inter-ministerial between MARD and Ministry of Internal Affairs to issue professional standards for the conservation staffs to attract personnel working and committing to conservation work. | **Not on target to be achieved:** The project has made little progress in this area. The project was supposed to focus on performance-based incentives, such as “linking the performance of rangers to changes in levels of threats to biodiversity, or the performance of managers to both the reduction of threats and to meeting targets with regard to revenue generation and financial sustainability”. The UNDP RTA recommended in the 2014 PIR that “a system of incentive-based patrolling should also be considered and tested” and that “the project should further explore performance incentives based on different indicators e.g. number of kilometres patrolled per month, number of arrests, number of confiscated arms, etc.”. The RTA further advised that GIZ is working on the MIST system, which will track data on PA management (including for example the percentage of a PA that is patrolled each month) and that this could be used to support a performance based incentive system. National stakeholders advised the MTR team that a similar effort was made five years ago (possibly through the Vietnam Conservation Fund), but it failed to make any progress, and this should have been taken into account in the design of this project. Stakeholders also advised that direct financial payments to staff for performance are not possible (they are contrary to the law), although “awards” systems for government employees are common in the country and might provide an alternative mechanism to reward performance. In any case, the project has not addressed performance-based incentives. Instead, the project supported a Review and Evaluation Study of Current Situation of Incentive Mechanism in PA, which found that current state regulations regarding conservation officials produce an inequity between forest rangers and PA staff -- although these two categories of workers operate in the same locality and do the same job, because PA staff have no clear standard grades and ranks, they are not eligible to enjoy the professional seniority allowance or to received subsidies for working in remote areas. As a result, PA staffers are paid less than traditional forest rangers, and therefore PAs frequently have trouble attracting a high quality labour force. Establishing grades and ranks for PA staffers will not only help to attract and keep qualified persons, it will also prompt universities to re-orient their training programs to support such positions. Based on this analysis, MARD is working on a draft inter-ministerial circular between MARD and Ministry of Internal Affairs to issue professional standards for PA staff. However, MARD advised the MTR team that the draft Circular can only be approved after the 2015 revision of the Forest Protection & Development Law (MARD had previously been advised by the Ministry of Home Affairs that the Circular could be approved without legal changes, but this is no longer the case).  **Guidance**   * The project needs to carry out work on performance-based incentives at the site level. If financial payments as incentives are not feasible, then other options such as strengthening / reorienting awards systems (specifically related to BD conservation and/or PA financing) should be considered. In addition, the project should study what has been developed under the CBCC project with regard to incentives. * The project should determine whether anything can be done before the project ends to make changes to PA staff grades / ranks |
| Evidence of incentive system in operation | As above | By the end of year 3 of project implementation the revised system is in operation | Not yet started by project | **Not on target to be achieved:** See above |
| Level of support for revised incentive system | Little awareness of benefits of effective system | By the end of the project, at least 60% of PA managers indicate that the revised incentives have improved PA management | Not yet started by project | **Not on target to be achieved:** See above |
| **OUTCOME 3:**  Knowledge and experience of sustainable financing options developed through demonstrations | Score for the “Tools for revenue generation” component of the UNDP Financial Scorecard | 13 | At the end of the project the score has increased to at least 35 | 30 | **On target to be achieved:** Very good progress (score at project mid-term of 30), but results are not reliable as explained under the 1st indicator of the Project Objective. The primary accomplishments were the PPC decisions for financing mechanisms at Bidoup Nui Ba and Cat Ba and the draft decision for Xuan Thuy; these are important not only for creating revenues, but also for giving PA managers official guidance on how the revenues can be used (for example, at Bidoup Nui Ba they can now use the revenues for BD conservation and forest protection, and they can increase salaries for PA staff). It is important to note that site-level activities are only now beginning implementation, and yet PA site managers intend to end project activities in early-mid 2015; this poses a substantial risk to the implementation of the PA financing mechanisms at the site level. Also, in addition to the PA financing mechanisms, the project also implemented several other activities related to PA financing and financial management, including: 1) creation of guidelines on developing PA business and management plans; 2) business plans developed for Bidoup Nui Ba and Cat Ba national parks; and 3) ecosystem valuation studies at all three demonstration national parks. |
| **Output 3.1:** Models of effective collection and sharing of revenues to support sustainable PA financing | Existence of measures to increase tourism revenues | Tourism revenue generation low | By the end of year 1 of project implementation measures to increase tourism revenue (in parallel with improved tourism services) have been identified at one or more pilot sites | Achieved | **Achieved:** The tourism fee system is approved and beginning implementation at Cat BA National Park. The project supported Cat Ba NP in testing a new entry fee system (including stakeholder consultations and surveys of visitors), which doubled the entry fee from approx. USD1 to USD2. Based on that work, a proposal was sent to provincial authorities, and the PPC approved the USD2 entrance fee through Decision No 1780 in August 2014. As of November 2014, implementation of the new fee system is just getting underway. Visitor levels are projected at 54,000 persons in 2015; thus the new fee system should increase revenues for the PA from approximately USD54,000 to USD108,000 in 2015 (with projected 5% annual increases in visitation levels going forward). However, a problem with the new fee system for Cat Ba NP has already been identified, namely that any increase in PA revenues from tourism fees is offset by an equal reduction in Govt. funding for the PA, so there is actually no increase in funds for PA management. Unfortunately, interviews with various stakeholders have indicated that it is not politically feasible to go back to the PPC before the end of the project and ask for another change to the entry fee system. In addition, two tour companies have cancelled their tours to Cat Ba National Park in the face of the increased entry fee; the impacts of these cancellations (and / or other possible decreases in visitation) are not yet known.  **Guidance**   * The project needs to ask the PA managers to monitor the effect of the new fee system (i.e. are increased fees offset by decreased # of visitors?). * The project needs to investigate how to revise the Decision so that revenues from financing schemes provide additional funding to the NP, rather than replacement funding (even if a formal proposal cannot be made to the PPC before the end of the project, a draft proposal should be developed) |
| Existence of measures to generate revenues from concessions | Concession revenue generation low | By the end of year 1 of project implementation measures to increase revenue from commercial concession have been identified at one or more pilot sites | A concession price and benefit sharing mechanism have been proposed in proposal submitted to PPC. In June, 2014, the proposal was sent to related provincial departments as DONRE, DARD, DOF, and district authorities to get comments. Cat Ba national park revised the proposal based on comments and submitted the 2nd time to PPC for approval at the beginning of Jul, 2014 | **On target to be achieved:** A proposal for a concession system at Cat Ba National Park has been submitted to the PPC, but approval is still pending. Cat Ba NP worked with 4 tourism companies to establish a mechanism for concession agreements to provide tourism services (e.g. shops, restaurants, accommodations). It is estimated that the concession fee system will provide the NP an additional 400-600 millions Vietnamese Dong (approx. USD20,000 - 30,000 USD) per year. After consultations with other stakeholders, this mechanism was submitted to the PPC in July 2014. However, the PPC has raised a number of concerns that still need to be addressed by Cat Ba NP, including: 1) Is the NP capable of implementing the proposal; 2) how to avoid the negative environmental impacts of concession scheme; 3) are there any good experiences/practices of concession scheme, and what are the lessons learned; and 4) how will the benefits/revenues from concession scheme allocated among the related stakeholders? The Cat Ba National Park management has asked to meet with the PPC to clarify and address these issues, but this will not take place until early next year  **Guidance:** The Project Inception Report recommended removing this indicator. However, although the target for this indicator has not been met yet, the MTR recommends keeping this indicator. The project team needs to ensure that the Cat Ba NP works with the PPC to meet their concerns, so that the proposal for the concession revenue system is approved early in 2015. The project team then needs to support and monitor implementation of the concession system through the remainder of 2015. |
| Measures to generate PES | Pilot revenue generation yet to be tested | By the end of year 2 of project implementation, measures are in place to generate revenues from PES at one or more pilot sites | A proposal will be submitted to PPC for approval in Sep, 2014. | **Achieved:** The Provincial People’s Committee (PPC) approved the PFES mechanism for Bidoup - Nui Ba National Park in November 2014. Under the approved system, a local water company and local hydropower company will pay an annual fee into the Lam Dong forest protection and development fund, which is administered by the Lam Dong Provincial authorities. Each quarter, this fund will make payments based on PFES to forest owners, PA management authorities, and households participating in the forest protection program. Payments to households participating in the forest protection program will be made through the Bidoup Nui Ba National Park management board, as the park has signed contracts with these households for forest protection. If the forest is well protected, the household will receive money, otherwise the money will be deducted or the contract may be cancelled.  **Guidance**   * The project team should provide technical support (as needed) to the Bidoup – Nui Ba management board and other stakeholders in implementing the new PFES system; the project team should also ensure that the management board shares information on the implementation of the system in 2015, and based on that information, the project team should document and draw lessons learned of the effectiveness of the PFES system * Add an indicator: “No. of households contracted for forest protection activities with female contract holders” |
| Measures to generate revenues from sustainable harvesting | No revenue generation | By the end of year 2 of project implementation, measures are in place to generate revenues from sustainable harvesting of natural resources at one or more pilot sites | Xuan Thuy NP was identified as pilot site to generate revenue from sustainable mollusk; meetings among stakeholders were organized 2 times and 1 more time next month to get consensus | **On target to be achieved:** A proposal for a payment mechanism based on sustainable harvesting of clams at Xuan Thuy National Park has been submitted to the PPC, but approval is still pending (expected in the 1st quarter of 2015). Clam farming at Xuan Thuy NP is dependent in part on the conservation of mangroves and other natural coastal ecosystems, which provide an important buffer from storm surges and otherwise regulate the ecosystem conditions necessary for clam farming. Under the proposed system, approximately 1,100 hectares within the “ecological restoration” zone of the NP will be licensed for clam farming under the Prime Minister’s Decision No. 126 in 2012, which granted permission to implement this kind of activity as part of pilot benefit sharing among NPs, local governments and local people, at Xuan Thuy and one other national park. In addition, it is important to note that Decision 126 on piloting benefit sharing between National Parks, local governments and local people in the management, protection, and sustainable development of protected areas identified five possible community-based sustainable harvesting activities to be implemented at Xuan Thuy NP. In addition to clam farming, the decision also identified: 1) sustainable use of clam seed beds resources in frequently flooded areas in the Red River Estuary and around Lu and Ngan Islands; 2) sustainable local community use of aquatic resources inside the mangrove forests in the core zone of the park; 3) community-based mangrove management model in the park’s buffer zone in Giao An, Giao Lac, and Giao Xuan Communes; and 4) sustainable collection of medical plants in the casuarina forests on Lu Island  **Guidance:**   * The project team needs to work to secure passage of the proposal for payments from sustainable harvesting of clams, and then to support and monitor implementation of the system in 2015 * The project team should work with Xuan Thuy NP to ensure that clam farming is carried out sustainably and efficiently through 1) awareness raising among harvesters of sustainable practices; 2) engagement with harvesters and other stakeholders in developing a participatory management approach to clam harvesting; and 3) assessments of the on-going environmental impact of the clam farming * Add an indicator: “No. of households licensed for clam farming with female license holders” |
| Capture of lessons to improve the legal environment | Sustainable financing guidelines have no lessons on which they are based | By the end of year 3 of project implementation, lessons from increasing revenues have contributed to revised guidelines under Output 1.2 | On going, lessons and experiences in the three demonstration sites are being captured. | **On target to be achieved:** The project has made only minimal progress in capturing and consolidating information and lessons learned on the development and implementation of PA financing mechanisms at the three demonstration sites; this should be a high priority for the project in 2015. As for using lessons learned to revise guidelines listed under Output 1.2 (i.e. Decision No. 99 and Decree No. 24), it is unlikely that the project can use lessons learned to revise guidelines such as Decision No. 99 and Decree No. 24, because to do so would require identifying demonstrated results and then submitting formal recommendations on revisions for approval from the Ministry of Planning and Investment and the Prime Minister’s Office. Given that the project will only start implementing the site-level PA financing mechanisms in 2015, there will not be sufficient time before the end of the project to generate results, write recommendations, and get the necessary approved changes. With regard to changing national PES policy, apart from Decision 99 and Decree 24, most policy on PES relevant to Protected Areas is being developed and implemented at the provincial level, where most PA financing is sourced and controlled. However, the work proposed in the recommendations to document lessons learned and replication will support changes in PES policies over the long term (post-project).  **Guidance:** The project team (Project Manager and Site Coordinators), together with the PA Management Boards from the three demonstration sites, should focus significant efforts in 2015 on collating information and documenting lessons learned on the development of the PA financing mechanisms (primarily in 2014) and their implementation (primarily in 2015); this documentation and analysis should also include the work of the project in developing PA Business Plans. This information should be compiled in guidelines, manuals or other forms of detailed documentation (Bidoup – Nui Ba has indicated that it has developed some initial guidance on how to create PES systems) that provide clear guidance for other PA institutions and sites on the steps needed to get regulatory and policy approval for new financing mechanisms, on how to implement such mechanisms, and on developing and implementing PA business plans, with the goal of maximizing the potential for replication of these mechanisms throughout the country. The project should play a leading role in disseminating this information by presenting the manuals and key findings at the annual workshop for all PA Management Boards put on by the Vietnam Forest Administration; and by including information on this topic in the video it is producing on all activities at all three sites (see Output 3.2) |
| **Output 3.2:** Models of operational cooperation and resource sharing among neighbouring PAs | Analysis of opportunities for cost efficiencies | No analyses undertaken | By the end of year 1 of project implementation, opportunities for increased cost efficiencies by cross-PA cooperation and coordination have been identified at one or more pilot sites | Achieved. | **Achieved**: A technical report was produced on this subject and a workshop was held at Cat Ba and Bai Tu Long to identify possible tourism coordination. It does not appear that any analysis of potential cost efficiencies was carried out. The project supported Cat Ba and Bai Tu Long national parks to organize a workshop/campaign to introduce tourism potential of 2 parks. More than 25 tourist companies were invited to participate the workshop and they were introduced to tourism tours and services in Cat Ba and Bai Tu Long; the concept of a combination tour between Cat Ba and Bai Tu Long was developed and introduced at the workshop as well.  **Guidance:** The project should produce a report on potential cost efficiencies (cost savings through shared management activities) at the Cat Ba and Bai Tu Long demonstration sites |
| Measures to promote cost efficiencies | No measures in place | By the end of year 2 of project implementation, measures are in place to increase cost efficiencies by cross-PA cooperation and coordination at one or more pilot sites | Achieved. | **Achieved:** The project has made some progress; an agreement on cooperative efforts on tourism development and biodiversity conservation was signed between the Cat Ba and Bai Tu Long management boards in 2013. Since the agreement was signed, the two parks have cooperated to develop a leaflet to introduce a Cat Ba – Bai Tu Long tour and have cooperated on marine patrolling activities. More broadly, the project also supported some joint training between Bidoup – Nui Ba NP and neighbouring PA units and Xuan Thuy NP and neighbouring PA units. Looking forward, the project has the following activities planned to further support PA coordination: 1) develop tourism flyers to promote joint visits to Bidoup Nui Ba and Chu Yang Sin NPs, and work to create a combined tourism program for both parks; 2) apply the model for PA financing based on sustainable clam farming at Xuan Thuy NP to fish farming activities in Bien Hai NP; and 3) additional collaborative tourism promotion activities with Cat Ba and Bai Tu Long NPs. Finally, the project will carry out a workshop in early 2015 for all six of the PA sites targeted by the project so share lessons learned.  **Guidance:** The Project Inception Report recommended removing this indicator; however, the MTR recommends keeping it. In addition to supporting implementation of the cooperation activities described in the Analysis column, the project team should also use the report on possible cost savings through shared management to identify and possibly implement some of the options for cost savings |
| Capture of lessons to improve the legal environment | Sustainable financing guidelines have no lessons on which they are based | By the end of year 3 of project implementation, lessons from increasing cost efficiencies by cross-PA cooperation and coordination have contributed to revised guidelines under Output 1.3 and the decree/decision to create a PA authority under Output 1.5 | On-going, lessons and experiences are being captured | **Not on target to be achieved:** The project has not made any significant progress on using lessons on cost sharing and cooperation among PAs to improve the legal environment. However, there has been confusion about this activity, as the target for the indicator listed in the Prodoc states that lessons should “contribute to revised guidelines under Output 1.3 and the decree/decision to create a PA authority under Output 1.5”; and yet there are no Outputs 1.3 or 1.5 in the Prodoc. A review of the Inception Report, though, showed that the indicator was corrected there to refer to “revised guidelines under Output 1.2”; although it was not specified, presumably this refers to the “Guidelines on implementation of the PM's Decision on Sustainable Financing”. However, these guidelines have already been issued and do not include lessons on increasing cost efficiencies through PA cooperation and coordination. During 2015, the project intends to develop a video on lessons learned at all demonstration sites, which will include information on PA coordination, but this is not directly addressing the indicator target. |
| **Output 3.3:** Models of local and provincial BD planning | Existence of a pilot provincial BD plan | No such plans exist | By the end of year 2 of project implementation, a provincial BD plan has been developed at one or more pilot sites | Draft report for Cao Bang province was revised and officially submitted to Biodiversity Conservation Agency to review | **On target to be achieved:** A draft plan for Cao Bang province has been created; approval is expected by the end of 2014. The project has supported the Department of Natural Resources and Environment, Cao Bang province to develop a provincial biodiversity plan, which will help to guide biodiversity conservation as well as ensuring that economic development is carried out in accordance with the new Biodiversity Law (for example, using the plan to identify high priority areas for BD conservation where development will be restricted or prohibited). Cao Bang province was selected because of its high biodiversity values and the interest and support of the Provincial People’s Committee. To finalize the plan, the project will convene a final appraisal meeting, make revisions, and then submit the draft plan to the PPC for approval. In terms of up-scaling and replication, the project has already developed detailed guidelines on BD planning, which were approved by the VEA and disseminated to all 63 provinces  **Guidance:** The project team should ensure the final approval of the Cao Bang biodiversity plan, and should help to disseminate this “model” plan to other provinces, with guidance on how the plans can support improved PA management |
| **OUTCOME 4**:  Information on biodiversity and PA status supports PA management and builds public support for the PA system | Score for components 3-5 of the UNDP Capacity Scorecard (“Build consensus”, “Mobilize information”, and “Monitor, report and learn”) | 14 | At the end of the project the score has increased to at least 24 | 18 | **On target to be achieved:** Fair progress (score at mid-term is 18), but still needs more improvement. According to the 2014 scorecard, the project has not produced any progress in several areas where it may have been expected, including: political commitment; public support; clearly defined mission; partnerships; information and reporting; policy updates; and monitoring and evaluation. However, some of the issues listed in this part of the scorecard are out of the scope of this project, and in general it would appear that the project has made some good progress on capacity building. Nevertheless, the project needs to clarify why it has scored so low in many of these areas, and if necessary, take corrective action.  **Guidance:** The project team should start by reviewing the comments provided in the 2014 Capacity Scorecard and try to identify reasons why some scores did not increase, and how the project can best address those reasons. The team should also consider whether any of the areas noted as lacking progress should be incorporated into the training materials being promoted by MARD and MONRE. |
| **Output 4.1:** A system-wide approach to monitoring to support PA management decisions and budgeting in line with international standards | Existence of endorsed system-wide approach | Draft system developed (VCF) | By the end of 6 months of project implementation a proposal for a system-wide approach to monitoring that meet international standards has been prepared and endorsed by key stakeholders, including PA managers | Achieved | **Achieved:** The proposal and guidelines for a system-wide program of BD monitoring and reporting were completed and have been using already in training; the program has not yet started implementation, as the draft circular authorizing the program is still waiting for approval from MONRE, which has shared the circular with relevant Ministries / Agencies for comments and expects to get it finalized in the 2nd half of 2015. The biodiversity monitoring and reporting guidelines were developed in cooperation with a JICA project; these guidelines were sent to PAs to get comments/feedbacks and they were tested in Xuan Thuy National Park. The completed guidelines have been used to train PA staff in 45 PAs through training courses organized by the project.  **Guidance:** The project team and MONRE need to ensure that the Circular is approved |
| Application of system-wide monitoring | No system-wide application | By the end of year 4 of project implementation the system-wide monitoring programme is operational | Project is now developing circular on biodiversity monitoring and reporting and identifying cost norm for monitoring activities | **On target to be achieved:**  When the draft circular noted above is approved, all PAs will be required to do BD monitoring based on the program indicators, and they will be required to develop and submit BD reports to MONRE every three years. The draft circular also includes regulations to establish an information sharing mechanism among MONRE, MARD, PPCs and PAs”. In the meantime, based on the piloted biodiversity monitoring in Xuan Thuy national park, the project is now identifying cost norms for monitoring activities (see below), while the associated JICA project is developing a database system to obtain and process the data received.  **Guidance:** The project team and MONRE need to ensure that the monitoring programme is “operational” before the end of the project |
| Linking of budgets to needs defined from monitoring | Budgets not linked to needs | By the end of the project PA budgeting is linked to monitoring results | The sources of budget for biodiversity monitoring have been designated in inter-ministerial circular guiding on biodiversity financing; project is now identifying cost norm for monitoring activities based on pilot monitoring in Xuan Thuy national park | **On target to be achieved:** Inter-Ministerial Circular 16 was approved and allows PAs to use funds for BD monitoring and reporting; associated cost norms for BD monitoring should be completed by July 2015. Before Inter-Ministerial Circular 16 was approved in 2014, national parks in Vietnam had no budget line that they could use for BD conservation activities. Now, state budget sources for biodiversity monitoring have been designated in the Inter-ministerial circular between MONRE and MOF on biodiversity financing (see Output 1.1), and PAs can allocate funds for BD monitoring and reporting. However, the amount that they can allocate should be based on cost norms for BD conservation activities, and these do not yet exist in Vietnam. The project is now identifying cost norms for monitoring activities based on pilot monitoring in Xuan Thuy NP; which used the DPSIR model (Drive, Pressure, State, Impact, Response) to analyse pressure on biodiversity in Xuan Thuy NP. Based on this work, it will develop guidelines for PAs to calculate costs for biodiversity monitoring, so that PA managers can develop budget estimates for funding by relevant authorities (e.g. PPCs, MARD, etc.). With the support of the project, a sub-decree on cost norms for monitoring should be approved by July 2015, and this will serve as the basis for budget proposals. Once the sub-decree is approved and the guidelines are completed, they will be sent officially from the VEA to all PAs in Vietnam.  While the progress described above is significant, it appears that the project has misunderstood the intent of the indicator as written in the Prodoc. Based on consultations with UNDP, the indicator was intended to promote the use of BD monitoring information to guide PA budget investment priorities (i.e. what ecosystems / species / threats to focus budget on), rather than to establish as system for determining PA budgets for BD monitoring activities. For example, if a Protected Area has sufficiently detailed information on which areas of the PA include globally significant habitat and/or species, it can use that information to direct more of its existing budget resources to activities in those areas (e.g. more patrolling, research, ecosystem rehabilitation, etc.). In fact, the Inception Report proposed changing the target for the indicator from “by the end of the project PA budgeting is linked to monitoring results” to “By the end of the project PA budgeting is defined to monitoring results in pilot demonstration sites”. Although both the original language and the revised language are fairly vague, it would seem that the original language was intended to use BD information to guide PA budget allocation decisions (which the project has not done), whereas the revised language could be interpreted to mean that the budget / costs to carry out BD monitoring are defined, so that PAs can plan for (and justify) spending funds on BD monitoring (which is what the project has done).  **Guidance:** The project team should work with the three project demonstration sites to determine how they can use BD monitoring and reporting information to guide their budget allocations (it may be that some PAs already use BD values in their budget planning, which would provide a potential model to replicate at the other sites) |
| **Output 4.2:** A system-wide approach to reporting on biodiversity status and trends in line with international standards | Existence of system-wide reporting approach | No system in place | By the end of year 2 of project implementation a reporting process has been designed and endorsed by key stakeholders, including PA managers | Achieved. | **Achieved:** Inter-Ministerial Circular 16 (see Output 4.1) was approved and allows PAs to use funds for BD monitoring and reporting. Guidelines were finalized after getting comments from PAs and submitted to VEA for approval, but after working with VEA leaders, both BCA and PA project agreed that guidelines to develop reports on biodiversity status of PAs should be upgraded into a circular on biodiversity reporting. |
| CHM operational | No CHM design | By the end of year 2 of project implementation the Clearing House is operational | CHM design completed, but not yet operational | **On target to be achieved:** The Clearing House Mechanism design has been completed, but the CHM is not yet operational (only Xuan Thuy National Park has uploaded data so far). The project cooperated with the VEA Data Management Office and JICA to establish a Biodiversity Database System, specifically in creating the template and indicators so that PAs could input their data and see the data of other PAs, and by providing monitoring and reporting inputs into the database system. VEA and JICA expect to implement a 2nd phase of their project, which will focus on inputting data from many more PA units.  **Guidance:** The project and MONRE should work to ensure that the CHM guides PA system management (in other words, that BD reporting information is actively used to help guide PA system priority setting and management activities) |
| PA-specific BD reports | No reports produced | By the end of year 4 of project implementation reports are produced for at least 30% of all PAs; by the end of the project this figure is at least 60% | The project has supported Xuan Thuy, Cat Ba and Bidoup - Nui Ba NPs to develop BD reports based on the guidelines. | **Not on target to be achieved:** Two demonstration PAs (Cat Ba and Xuan Thuy NPs) have finalized comprehensive BD reports based on the new reporting guidelines; the other site (Bidoup – Nui Ba NP) has made significant progress on its report and expects to finalize the report in early 2015. The project’s three demonstration PAs received technical support to consolidate existing data on biodiversity and to create comprehensive BD reports. The indicator target of 60% of all PAs completing such reports will not be met as no additional sites are expected to produce reports before the project ends. However, it is important to note that this indicator was not realistic as the project design never proposed site level activities at sites apart from the three demonstration sites (in addition, PA units in Vietnam were unable to allocate funds for BD reporting until the passage in 2014 of Inter-ministerial circular No. 16 between MONRE and MOF on biodiversity financing). In recognition of this, the Inception Report proposed changing the target for this indicator to “By the end of year 3 reports are produced by at least 1 pilot site; by the end of the project this figure is at least 2”, which is a more realistic indicator for this project. Nevertheless, because the changed indicator was not adopted at project inception, the original indicator must be retained, and this means that the project is very unlikely to meet the indicator target. However, it is also worth noting that the Law on Biodiversity stipulates that all PA units in Vietnam must provide BD reports to MONRE and DONRE (once every three years); now that Circular 16 allows PA management boards to allocate funds for this work, it is reasonable to expect that many more Protected Areas will produce and share their BD reports after this project has ended.  **Guidance:**   * The project team should ensure that Bidoup – Nui Ba completes its BD report * The indicator for PA reporting in the Results Framework should be changed to “By the end of year 3 reports are produced by at least 1 pilot site; by the end of the project this figure is at least 2”. |
| **Output 4.3:** Increased public awareness of the importance of, and threats to the protected area system | Existence of public awareness campaign design | No campaign designed | By the end of year 1 of project implementation a public awareness campaign has been designed and approved by MONRE | An awareness raising program for local people around protected areas has been developed; the program is being finalized | **On target to be achieved:** The project is significantly behind schedule in developing and implementing a public awareness campaign. A program strategy for education and awareness activities at 3 demonstration sites is in draft form and will be finalized in late 2014. The draft awareness raising campaign is focused on local residents within and around the three project demonstration sites (priority targets because of their potential impacts on PA sites and biodiversity, and their low level of awareness of PA management and biodiversity values). The project did implement general education and awareness activities in 2013 (at the behest of the UNDP Country Director), and these will be repeated in 2015. Although the education and awareness activities implemented in 2013 were a positive step, they were carried out in an ad hoc manner and not as part of a coordinated strategy or campaign.  **Guidance:** The project team should ensure that the site-level education and awareness program strategy is finalized by end of 2014 |
| Public awareness campaign implemented | As above | By the end of year 2 of project implementation the public awareness campaign is operational | To be started in Q4 of this year | **On target to be achieved:** The program is designed for three years; at the end of this project, responsibility for the campaign will be transferred officially to BCA so that it can implement the final two years of the campaign. In addition, the project is developing project information to be placed on the existing website of the Vietnam Environment Administration (VEA), as well as the websites of the three national parks at the project demonstration sites.  **Guidance:** The project team should ensure that the site-level education and awareness program strategy is implemented in 2015 |
| Increase in public awareness | Basic awareness | By the end of the project, measures of public awareness and support for PAs have increased by at least 30% of their baseline values | Project will do assessment/survey by the end of project | **On target to be achieved:** The project has not yet done any measurements of public awareness and support for PAs. The project should have done an initial baseline survey already; it can still do so prior to the start of its awareness campaign in 2015. It will also need to measure public awareness again at the end of the project; however, given that this will only be one year later, it should encourage PA Management Boards and/or the BCA to implement further surveys in subsequent years in order to generate more useful measurements of changing levels of awareness and support.  **Guidance:** The project should commission a baseline survey of public awareness and support at the three demonstration sites in early 2015, and again at the end of 2015, in order to determine levels of public support and awareness, and also to measure the impact of project activities |

### Suggested Results Framework Revisions

| **Component** | **Current Indicator** | **Current Target** | **Proposed Indicator (New / Revised)** | **Proposed Target** | **Explanation and Justification** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Objective: To secure a sustainably financed PA system, to conserve globally significant biodiversity | Overall Capacity scorecard scores: Baseline Value = 40.9 | By the end of the project the score is at least 52 | No change | By the end of the project the score is at least 63.5 | In the original scorecard, the overall target score was listed as 52. However, this was a miscalculation; if one adds up the three target scores listed for components 1, 2 and 4 (7.5, 32, and 24 respectively), they add up to 63.5 |
| Output 2.1: Clarified and coordinated institutional management of a unified PA system | None | None | Develop management and business plans for PAs | * By the end of year 2, management and business plans are developed for at least 1 PA * By the end of year 3, these management and business plans are operational | Development of management and business plans is important for ensuring the success of financing mechanisms at the site level. As explained in the Inception Report: “sustainable financing mechanisms can only be developed at the 6 demonstration sites if they are based on a sound management plan. Thus, an integrated approach has been devised based on a suite of activities”; this proposed suite of activities included: “1) review, and revise as necessary, the existing management plan through a participatory process to ensure that management objectives are sound and supported by stakeholders from the outset; and 2) develop a business plan for the demonstration site (protected area) based on the objectives of the management plan”. |
| Output 2.2: PA staff at all levels with necessary skills, including business management, tourism management, monitoring and participatory management | Proportion of PA managers and staff trained in essential skills | By the end of year 3 of project implementation, PA directors from at least 50% of PAs have been trained in key skills, such as business planning; by the end of the project this figure is 85% | Proportion of PA staff and related staff trained in essential skills | By the end of year 3 of project implementation, PA staff from at least 50% of PAs have been trained in key skills, such as business planning; by the end of the project this figure is 85% | Directors and Vice-Directors of Protected Area Management Boards are typically extremely busy and find it difficult to attend 4 - 5 day training courses. As a result, in many cases these managers nominate staff to attend the training workshops. |
| Output 3.1: Models of effective collection and sharing of revenues to support sustainable PA financing | None | None | No. of households contracted for forest protection activities at Bidoup – Nui Ba National Park with women involved in forest protection activities | By the end of the project, at least a 25% increase in the number of households with women participating in forest protection activities | The approved project documents had no gender strategy and no ways to measure whether and to what degree the project will generate benefits for women. In line with UNDP guidelines on the use of sex-disaggregated indicators, this new indicator has been proposed. |
| Output 3.1: Models of effective collection and sharing of revenues to support sustainable PA financing | None | None | No. of households licensed for clam farming at Xuan Thuy National Park with women participating in clam farming activities | By the end of the project, at least a 25% increase in the number of licenced households with women participating in clam farming activities | The approved project documents had no gender strategy and no ways to measure whether and to what degree the project will generate benefits for women. In line with UNDP guidelines on the use of sex-disaggregated indicators, this new indicator has been proposed. |

### Changes to Results Framework proposed in the project Inception Report

**Summary of Primary Changes in Results Framework**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Changes to Indicators / Targets** | **Analysis** |
| Under Output 1.2, the Inception Report removed 3 indicators (on National PES Policy; guidelines to implement PM’s Decision on PA financing, and a new Tourism Development Strategy that incorporates off-site financing) and replaced them with one new indicator for a draft legal document on PA financing mechanisms | The main impact of this change would be to eliminate any work on off-site financing mechanisms (which the project has yet to start on). The other impact would be to make the target for legal changes for PA financing mechanisms more general, but since these changes have been achieved already, it really shouldn’t have much impact. Summary: Prodoc indicators are more detailed, but project has not achieved the third one; Inception Report indicator is simpler and has been achieved already. |
| Under Output 2.1, the Inception Report revised the indicator on institutional coordination to focus specifically on “establishment of a mechanism to promote coordination between MONRE and MARD with respect to classifying and managing PAs” and it changed the target from a “decree / decision” to “an agreement” | This changed language about “with respect to classifying and managing PAs” would seem to narrow the intended focus of the project, but it is hard to say for sure as the language is still fairly vague. The change from decree/decision to agreement is more in line with what the project has tried to work on (but still has not achieved). Summary: Overall, probably not much of an impact, but the Inception Report indicator does make the target more narrow and viable, so probably better. |
| Under Output 2.1, the Inception Report added a new indicator on development and implementation of PA management and business plans | This is fairly important as it reflects text in the Prodoc that was not accounted for in the original Prodoc. The project has managed to create new management plans for all 3 sites, and business plans for 2 sites, so adding this indicator should not create much impact, but it is a useful gauge of project progress. Summary: The Inception Report indicator would improve the project. |
| Under Output 2.2, the baseline values and targets have been changed to include all PA staff and relevant staff, not just PA managers. | This is a useful change, and addresses a complaint from the project team and partners about the original indicator. Summary: The Inception Report indicator would improve the project. |
| Under Output 3.1, the indicator “Existence of measures to generate revenues from concessions” was removed | I’m not sure why this was removed. However, this is probably the one PA financing mechanism that the project will fail to implement by the end of the project, so removing it would remove a negative indicator of project progress (however, it might also remove the incentive for the project and project partners to continue to pursue this goal). Summary: Removing the Inception Report indicator would improve the rating of project performance, but might reduce useful project activities |
| Under Output 3.2, the indicator to analyse opportunities for cost efficiencies was retained, but the subsequent indicator “measures are in place to increase cost efficiencies by cross-PA cooperation and coordination at one or more pilot sites” was removed | The change proposed would limit the project’s activities to analysing cost efficiencies, without actually implementing any. So far, the project has made some progress in implementing cost efficiencies through cooperation (PA cooperation has been supported at Cat Ba and Bai Tu Long National Parks through joint tourism development and monitoring / patrolling activities, and at Xuan Thuy through joint training with nearby PA sites) and the project has some other, fairly limited, ideas for additional work on this in 2015. So the impact of this change would not be large, but it would eliminate an indicator that the project has addressed somewhat successfully. Summary: The removal of this indicator in the Inception Report is not desirable |
| Under Output 4.1, the target for the indicator for “linking of budgets to needs defined from monitoring” was changed from “by the end of the project PA budgeting is linked to monitoring results” to “By the end of the project PA budgeting is defined to monitoring results in pilot demonstration sites” | Both the original language and the revised language are fairly vague. However, it would seem that the original language was intended to use BD information to guide PA budget allocation decisions (which the project has not done), whereas the revised language could be interpreted to mean that the budget / costs to carry out BD monitoring are defined, so that PAs can plan for (and justify) spending funds on BD monitoring (which is what the project has done). The impact therefore would be to go from an indicator that the project has not achieved to one that it has; on the other hand, leaving the original indicator would allow us to recommend that the project try to achieve in 2015 the goal of using BD information to guide PA budget allocations. Summary: This is hard to judge; but it is probably better to keep the original indicator and its intent |
| Under Output 4.2, the target for the indicator on PA-specific BD reports was changed from “By the end of year 4 of project implementation reports are produced for at least 30% of all PAs; by the end of the project this figure is at least 60%” to “By the end of year 3 reports are produced by at least 1 pilot site; by the end of the project this figure is at least 2” | This was another indicator that there were numerous complaints about, and in fact the draft Mid Term Review has proposed changing the target for this indicator to “by the end of the project, at least 80% of all PAs in Vietnam will provide annual reports to MARD on ecosystem conditions”. If we adopt the changed indicator from the Inception Report, then our project has met its target, and we don’t need this new indicator about reports to MARD on ecosystem conditions. Summary: The Inception Report indicator would improve the project |

**Original Results Framework from the Prodoc** (with changes from Inception Report)

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **RESULT** | **INDICATOR** | **BASELINE VALUE** | **TARGET** | **MEANS OF VERIFICATION** | **RISKS AND ASSUMPTIONS** |
| **Objective: To secure a sustainably financed PA system, to conserve globally significant biodiversity** | Overall PA System’s Financial scorecard scores | 67 | By the end of the project the score is at least 85 | Scorecard assessment | * All PA management agencies responsive to new legal environment * Governance fundamentals support capacity improvements * Conservation remains government priority |
| Overall Capacity scorecard scores | 40.9 | By the end of the project the score is at least 52 | Scorecard assessment |
| Average METT scores (for all sites) | 45% | By the end of the project the score is at least 59%% | METT assessment |
| **Outcome 1: A comprehensive and harmonized legal and policy framework supports sustainable PA financing** | “Legal, regulatory and institutional frameworks” component of the UNDP Financial Scorecard | 33 | At the end of the project the score for has increased to at least 50 | Score card assessment | * Processing of legal documents is not delayed * Inter-agency cooperation on legal environment is effective |
| “Capacity to conceptualize and formulate policies, legislations, strategies and programmes” component of the UNDP Capacity Scorecard | 5.5 | At the end of the project the score has increased to at least 7.5 | Score card assessment |
| Output 1.1: Regulations under the Law on Biodiversity that ensure consistency in protected area administration in the context of national BD planning | Approval of regulations | No regulations approved | By the end of year 4 (changed to “ by end of project”) of project implementation regulations have been formally issued (these regulations incorporate specific measures related to populations living within PAs) | Project reports/ regulations | * Law on Biodiversity is not superseded by other legal instruments * Consensus can be reached on revised regulations |
| Output 1.2: Emerging policy on PA financing that allows revenue generation and effective management of revenues for individual PAs and the system as a whole | National PES policy identifies PES as one of the financing mechanisms for PAs (inception report removed this indicator) | Draft policy under development | The text of the PM’s Decision on PES incorporates unambiguous wording establishing the basis for PAs to receive a significant proportion of PES funding for ecosystem services originating from land within the PA | Project reports/ Decision | * Policy development processes effectively engage with project * Issuance of new policy documents does not incur unreasonable delays |
| Guidelines for operationalization of PM’s Decision on PA financing (inception report removed this indicator) | No guidelines prepared | Guidelines on implementation of the PM’s Decision on Sustainable Financing issued during the first year of project implementation reflect international best practice | Project reports |
| Existence of off-site financing policy and strategy (inception report removed this indicator) | New strategy under development | By the end of year 1 of project implementation a new Tourism Development Strategy incorporates off-site financing | Project reports/ survey |
| Policy/regulation on financing mechanisms for PAs | No regulations approved | Draft legal document on financing mechanism | Project reports/ Decision |  |
| **Outcome 2: Clear and harmonized institutional mandates and processes support sustainable PA financing mechanisms** | Score for the “Business planning and tools for cost-effective management” component of the UNDP Financial Scorecard | 21 | At the end of the project the score has increased to at least 45 | Score card assessment |  |
| Score for the “Capacity to implement policies, legislation, strategies and programmes” component of the UNDP Capacity Scorecard | 21.4 | At the end of the project the score has increased to at least 32 | Score card assessment |
| Output 2.1: Clarified and coordinated institutional management of a unified PA system | Establishment of a mechanism to promote coordination between MONRE and MARD with respect to classifying and managing PAs | No mechanism exists | By the end of year 2 of project implementation, a coordinating mechanism has been created by decree/decision (changed to “by means of an agreement”) | Project reports/ decree |  |
| Mechanism is operational | As above | By the end of year 3 of the project the coordinating mechanism is promoting a coordinated approach to PA management (see also Output 4.1). | Project reports |
| Develop management and business plans for PAs (new indicator added in Inception Report) | As above | * By the end of year 2, management and business plans are developed for at least 1 PA * By the end of year 3, management and business plans are operated | Management and business plans for PA |  |
| Output 2.2: PA staff at all levels with necessary skills, including business management, tourism management, monitoring and participatory management | Proportion of PA managers and staff (changed to “PA staff and related staff”) trained in essential skills | No PA managers (changed to “staff”) trained in issues such as business planning | By the end of year 3 of project implementation, PA directors (changed to “staff”) from at least 50% of PAs have been trained in key skills, such as business planning; by the end of the project this figure is 85% | Project reports/ training reports |  |
| Proportion of PA rangers trained in essential skills | Pilot programme for ranger training (CBBC) | By the end of year 3 of project implementation, rangers and other staff from at least 60% of PAs have been trained in key skills; by the end of the project this figure is 85% | Project reports/ training reports |
| Output 2.3: Revised and consistent system-wide incentive measures that promote improved performance | Existence of system-wide system of incentives | Current incentive system ineffective and disjointed | By the end of year 2 of project implementation, a revised system of incentives designed to promote improve performance among PA staff has been drafted and endorsed by PA managers | Project reports |  |
| Evidence of incentive system in operation | As above | By the end of year 3 (changed to “year 4”) of project implementation the revised system is in operation | Project reports |
| Level of support for revised incentive system | Little awareness of benefits of effective system | By the end of the project, at least 60% of PA managers indicate that the revised incentives have improved PA management | Survey/interviews |
| **Outcome 3: Knowledge and experience of sustainable financing options developed through demonstrations** | Score for the “Tools for revenue generation” component of the UNDP Financial Scorecard | 13 | At the end of the project the score has increased to at least 35 | Score card assessment | * Demonstrations are an effective way of developing new policy and procedures * Local political support for demonstrations |
| Output 3.1: Models of effective collection and sharing of revenues to support sustainable PA financing | Existence of measures to increase tourism revenues | Tourism revenue generation low | By the end of year 1 (changed to “year 2”) of project implementation measures to increase tourism revenue (in parallel with improved tourism services) have been identified at one or more pilot sites | Project reports | * Pilot PES policy is up-scaled to national level * REDD is developed as a component of a post-Kyoto instrument |
| Existence of measures to generate revenues from concessions (this indicator was removed in Inception Report) | Concession revenue generation low | By the end of year 1 of project implementation measures to increase revenue from commercial concession have been identified at one or more pilot sites | Project reports |
| Measures to generate PES | Pilot revenue generation yet to be tested | By the end of year 2 of project implementation, measures are in place to generate revenues from PES at one or more pilot sites | Project reports |
| Measures to generate revenues from sustainable harvesting | No revenue generation | By the end of year 2 of project implementation, measures are in place to generate revenues from sustainable harvesting of natural resources at one or more pilot sites | Project reports |
| Capture of lessons to improve the legal environment | Sustainable financing guidelines have no lessons on which they are based | By the end of year 3 (changed to “end of project”) of project implementation, lessons from increasing revenues have contributed to revised guidelines under Output 1.2 | Project reports/ revised guidelines |
| Output 3.2: Models of operational cooperation and resource sharing among neighbouring PAs | Analysis of opportunities for cost efficiencies | No analyses undertaken | By the end of year 1 (changed to “year 2”) of project implementation, opportunities for increased cost efficiencies by cross-PA cooperation and coordination have been identified at one or more pilot sites | Project reports | * Different PA management agencies are willing to cooperate |
| Measures to promote cost efficiencies (this indicator was removed in Inception Report) | No measures in place | By the end of year 2 of project implementation, measures are in place to increase cost efficiencies by cross-PA cooperation and coordination at one or more pilot sites | Project report |
| Capture of lessons to improve the legal environment | Sustainable financing guidelines have no lessons on which they are based | By the end of year 3 of project implementation, lessons from increasing cost efficiencies by cross-PA cooperation and coordination have contributed to revised guidelines under Output 1.3 and the decree/decision to create a PA authority under Output 1.5 (changed to “Output 1.2”) | Project reports/ revised guidelines/draft decree |
| Output 3.3: Models of local and provincial BD planning | Existence of a pilot provincial BD plan | No such plans exist | By the end of year 2 (changed to “year 3”) of project implementation, a provincial BD plan has been developed at one or more pilot sites | Project reports | * Local planning will improve effectiveness of PA management |
| **Outcome 4: Information on biodiversity and PA status supports PA management and builds public support for the PA system** | Score for components 3-5 of the UNDP Capacity Scorecard (“Build consensus”, “Mobilize information”, and “Monitor, report and learn”) | 14 | At the end of the project the score has increased to at least 24 | Score card assessment | * There is willingness to support transparent information exchange * Staff turnover does not negate benefits of training |
| Output 4.1: A system-wide approach to monitoring to support PA management decisions and budgeting in line with international standards | Existence of endorsed system-wide approach | Draft system developed (VCF) (changed to “No system-wide approach in place; only site-based monitoring approach developed by VCF”) | By the end of 6 months (changed to “end of year 2”) of project implementation a proposal for a system-wide approach to monitoring that meet international standards has been prepared and endorsed by key stakeholders, including PA managers | Project reports | * Framework approach to BD monitoring proves to be effective |
| Application of system-wide monitoring | No system-wide application | By the end of year 4 (changed to “end of project”) of project implementation the system-wide monitoring programme is operational | Project reports |
| Linking of budgets to needs defined from monitoring (changed to “Definition of needed budgets from monitoring”) | Budgets not linked to needs (changed to “Needed budgets defined”) | By the end of the project PA budgeting is linked to monitoring results (changed to “By the end of the project PA budgeting is defined to monitoring results in pilot demonstration sites”) | Project reports |
| Output 4.2: A system-wide approach to reporting on biodiversity status and trends in line with international standards | Existence of system-wide reporting approach | No system in place | By the end of year 2 of project implementation a reporting process has been designed and endorsed (Inception report removed the words “and endorsed”) by key stakeholders, including PA managers | Project reports | * Reporting on BD contributes to effectiveness of PA management * No delays in establishment of clearing house * All agencies willing to cooperate |
| CHM operational | No CHM design | By the end of year 2 (changed to “year 3”) of project implementation the Clearing House is operational | Project reports |
| PA-specific BD reports | No reports produced | By the end of year 4 of project implementation reports are produced for at least 30% of all PAs; by the end of the project this figure is at least 60% (changed to “By the end of year 3 reports are produced by at least 1 pilot site; by the end of the project this figure is at least 2”) | Project reports |
| Output 4.3: Increased public awareness of the importance of, and threats to the protected area system | Existence of public awareness campaign design | No campaign designed | By the end of year 1 of project implementation a public awareness campaign has been designed and approved by MONRE (changed to “By the end of year 3 a public awareness campaign has been designed”) | Project reports | * Increased public awareness translates into increased political support |
| Public awareness campaign implemented | As above | By the end of year 2 of project implementation the public awareness campaign is operational (changed to “By the end of year 3 and throughout year 4 the public awareness campaign is operational”) | Project reports |
| Increase in public awareness | Basic awareness | By the end of the project, measures of public awareness and support for PAs have increased by at least 30% of their baseline values[[27]](#footnote-27) | Survey/interviews |

## Annex 9: Project Mainstreaming of UNDP Programme Principles

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **UNDAF / CPAP / CPD** | The project is aligned with the ONE PLAN 2012 – 2016, agreed between the Government of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam and the United Nations in Viet Nam on 27 March 2012 (see Section IV. A. for details) |
| **Poverty-Environment Nexus / Sustainable Livelihoods** | As a project focused on biodiversity conservation, with specific field-level activities, the project is closely and inherently addressing the Poverty-Environment Nexus and Sustainable Livelihoods. In particular, the demonstration site activities are directly focused on demonstrating sustainable livelihood activities related to PA financing mechanisms (i.e. forest protection and sustainable natural resource production activities). |
| **Disaster Risk Reduction, Climate Change Mitigation / Adaptation** | These issues were not identified as relevant to the scope of the project |
| **Crisis Prevention and Recovery** | These issues were not identified as relevant to the scope of the project |
| **Gender Equality / Mainstreaming** | There is no discussion of gender issues in the approved project documents or the project inception report. Both MONRE and MARD strived to ensure adequate participation by female PA staff / forest rangers in the training programs that they delivered, although no data was provided on the actual number of female staff who received training. The communities that will enjoy benefit sharing include women and it is reasonable to assume that they will enjoy some of the benefits produced by the project, but to measure this, two new indicators have been proposed for inclusion in the project Results Framework:   * Number of households contracted for forest protection activities with female contract holders * Number of households licensed for clam farming with female license holders |
| **Capacity Development** | A great deal of training has been developed and delivered by both MONRE and MARD through the project. Overall, staff from 97 of the 107 PAs with Management Boards (90.6%) participated in at least one training course, and in total 757 PA staff participated in at least one of the training workshops. MONRE delivered 12 training courses on 1) Policy, Legal Framework on Biodiversity and Guidelines on Provincial Biodiversity Conservation Planning; 2) Management and sustainable financing planning and Biodiversity integration into environmental impact assessment reporting; 3) Invasive Alien Species Management in Vietnam; and 4) Biodiversity Monitoring and Reporting in protected areas. MARD delivered 16 training courses, covering the following topics: SMART indicators (in cooperation with GIZ in Hoa Binh); Capacity Building for Planning, Management and Financial Management Conservation Area; PA management, planning and financing management for managers and technical staffs of PAs/NAs in Northern areas; law enforcement for legal staff working in Northern PFPD and southern PFPD; Management, biodiversity monitoring (topics: Rescue, conservation, development and biodiversity survey) for rangers from Northern, Central and South area; PAs, community and ecological development for ecotourism staff from Southern areas; Biodiversity evaluation and ecosystem services for financial staff from PAs/NAs in central and South; and Capacity building on policy and law of PAs organization and management for female staff working in central management level. Additional training remains to be delivered: MONRE will carry out training of trainers on 7 topics from Oct. – Dec. 2014 in collaboration with the Centre on Natural Resources and Environment Studies, while MARD will carry out training on 3 additional topics in 2015. |
| **Rights** | These issues were not identified as relevant to the scope of the project |

## Annex 10: Analysis of GEF Biodiversity Focal Area SP-1 Tracking Tool and UNDP Capacity Scorecard

The project is making use of two tracking tools, the GEF Biodiversity Focal Area SP-1 Tracking Tool (including both the Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool and the Financial Scorecard) and the UNDP Capacity Scorecard, to help to monitor and evaluate the progress and success of the project objectives and outcomes. During the project design phase, scores for all of these tools were established; these scores have been updated at the project mid-term, and will be updated again at the end of the project, in order to measure progress against the baseline scores.

**GEF Biodiversity Focal Area SP-1 Tracking Tool**

**Part II – Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool**

During the project preparation phase, different forms of the METT were used for different PA sites, with total possible scores ranging from 91 to 99. In addition, in the original Prodoc, the “average overall METT score of 45%” is a mistake; in fact the average score for the 5 sites was 54 out of an average possible score of 95.8, resulting in a baseline average of 56% instead of 45%. Thus, the true baseline average score of 56% was already very close to the target average score of 59%. In order to get a more realistic target, therefore, we will assume that the project should aim for a similar % increase as that listed in the original Prodoc: in other words, an increase from 45 to 59 is a 31% increase, so if the baseline is now 56, a 31% increase from that produces a target score of 73%.

Based on this revision of the target, the project has increased the average scores from a baseline of 56% to the current score of 63%, with a final target of 73%. Thus, at the mid-term the project has only increased the total score by 7%, out of the increase of 17% targeted.

Details on the scoring for each site at project inception and project mid-term are provided in the table below, as well as a summary of the correct calculations for total possible score, actual score, and % of score.

**METT Summary Table**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Name of Protected Area** | **Bai Tu Long National Park** | **Bidoup – Nui Ba National Park** | **Cat Ba National Park** | **Chu Yang Sin National Park** | **Xuan Thuy National Park** | **Average – All Sites** |
| **Total Possible Score: 2008-2009** | 99 | 91 | 99 | 91 | 99 | 95.8 |
| **Actual Score: 2008-09** | 49 | 38 | 64 | 53 | 66 | 54.0 |
| **% Score: 2008-09** | 49% | 42% | 65% | 58% | 67% | 56% |
| **Total Possible Score: 2014** | 102 | 102 | 102 | 102 | 102 | 102 |
| **Actual Score: 2014** | 56 | 63 | 70 | 60 | 73 | 64.4 |
| **% Score: 2014** | 55% | 62% | 69% | 59% | 72% | 63% |

**Part III – Financial Scorecard**

The project scores in the Financial Scorecard appear to have increased significantly from the score at project inception in 2008 (67) to the score at project mid term in 2014 (111). However, these results are skewed by differing formats. In 2008, the score was 67/196 (34.18%); while in 2014 the score was 111/220 (50.45%), because different versions of the Financial Scorecard were used at these times (see tables below). These different versions not only allowed for a different total possible score (196 vs. 220), they also had numerous differences in the questions listed, the wording of the questions, etc. It is also unclear whether they were assessing the same sample set of Protected Areas; the 2014 Financial Scorecard was focused on a subset of 44 PA Units (which provided feedback), whereas the 2008 scorecard does not specify the sample set (it could be all 103 PA Units listed or some subset within that number). This difference in samples size is more relevant to the financing sections of the Financial Scorecard, rather than the scoring itself (which is scoring at the overall system level regardless of the # of sites), but it could still skew the results. Finally, it is believed (though no one is sure) that the 2008 scorecard was completed by a single (international) project design consultant, whereas the 2014 scorecard was completed by two national consultants; furthermore, the 2014 team created a simplified version of the scorecard that they then asked PA managers to fill in. Thus, this difference in approaches and perspectives / experience may also have skewed the results, as the scorecard questions are generally quite subjective. It is important to note that obtaining financial information on Protected Areas in Vietnam is generally quite difficult, primarily because PA units are managed by different institutions at the national, provincial and local levels, and typically each separate PA Management Board must be contacted to get information. Therefore, when the financial scorecard is completed at the end of the project, it should focus only on the subset of 44 PA units that provided feedback in 2014, both to create comparable data but also because these sites have proven their willingness to participate.

**PROJECT INCEPTION: FINANCIAL SCORECARD – SCORING AND MEASURING PROGRESS[[28]](#footnote-28)**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Total Score for PA System | 61 |
| Total Possible Score | 196 |
| Actual score as a percentage of the total possible score | 31.1 |
| Percentage scored in previous year or previous time the scorecard was applied | N/A |

**PROJECT INCEPTION: FINANCIAL SCORECARD – SCORING AND MEASURING PROGRESS[[29]](#footnote-29)**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Total Score for PA System | 111 |
| Total Possible Score | 220 |
| Actual score as a percentage of the total possible score | 50.45 |
| Percentage scored in previous year or previous time the scorecard was applied | 29.59 |

**UNDP Capacity Scorecard**

The project’s scores in the Capacity Scorecard appeared to make good progress between project inception (40.9) and project mid-term (49.5). However, in the original scorecard, the overall target score was listed as 52, whereas the target scores for the three components actually added up to 63.5. It is also important to note that the scorecard was not properly filled out at project start; respondents included scores apart from the choices of 0, 1, 2 and 3 (such as 1.5 and 1.2) and they left some sections blank.

Analysis of the scores for specific elements of the scorecard revealed the following:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Scorecard Element** | **Analysis** |
| Score for “Capacity to conceptualize and formulate policies, legislations, strategies and programmes” component of the UNDP Capacity Scorecard | Very little progress (score went from 5.5 at inception to 6 in 2014). The scoring of the 2014 capacity scorecard is difficult to understand; it only shows progress in one area (PA institutional planning / strategizing), although in fact it would appear that the project has made more progress in the other two areas (PA agenda and legal mandate). |
| Score for the "Capacity to implement policies, legislation, strategies and programmes" component of the UNDP Capacity Scorecard | Fair progress (score went from 21.4 at inception to 25.5 in 2014). but the target score is still a far way off. According to the 2014 scorecard, the project has not produced any progress in several areas where it may have been expected, including: skills for protected area planning and management; transparent oversight; effective leadership; well qualified and motivated staff; implementation of management plans; clear PA institutional authority; opportunities for staff to advance; training opportunities. However, some of the issues listed in this part of the scorecard are out of the scope of this project, and in general it would appear that the project has made some good progress on capacity building. Nevertheless, the project needs to clarify why it has scored so low in many of these areas, and if necessary, take corrective action. |
| Score for components 3-5 of the UNDP Capacity Scorecard (“Build consensus”, “Mobilize information”, and “Monitor, report and learn”) | Fair progress (score went from 14 at inception to 18 in 2014). but still needs more improvement. According to the 2014 scorecard, the project has not produced any progress in several areas where it may have been expected, including: political commitment; public support; clearly defined mission; partnerships; information and reporting; policy updates; and monitoring and evaluation. However, some of the issues listed in this part of the scorecard are out of the scope of this project, and in general it would appear that the project has made some good progress on capacity building. Nevertheless, the project needs to clarify why it has scored so low in many of these areas, and if necessary, take corrective action. |

## Annex 11: Issues related to strengthening coordination for Protected Area Management and Financing

1. **Overview**

This summary of issues related to strengthening PA management and financing does not attempt to provide a full analysis of the problems currently in effect in Viet Nam with regard to PA management and financing; such analyses were provided in the approved Project Document (Prodoc) and updated in the project Inception Report. In addition, numerous other reports have addressed this in detail, including the “Study of the Legal, Institutional and Administrative Framework for Biodiversity Conservation in the Vietnam Protected Areas System” produced in 2011 by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development together with the German International Cooperation Agency (GIZ), as well as the report “Review on Biodiversity Related Legislation and Responsibility of Ministries / Line Ministries for Implementation” produced in 2010 by the Biodiversity Conservation Agency (BCA), together with the Law and Policy of Sustainable Development Research Centre (LPSD), with support from the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

Nevertheless, the MTR team has reviewed a report that was submitted to the National Assembly in November 2014 on biodiversity institutions, governance and financing, as it represents the most up to date information on challenges in biodiversity and PA management in Viet Nam. A summary of the key issues in the report is provided in Appendix 1 below. It is worth noting here that the report confirms that there are significant challenges for the coordination of PA management and PA financing in Viet Nam, including:

Problems in PA Management:

* Lack of unified system for managing protected areas in the country
* *Internationally*, protected areas are an important tool manage and conserve for biodiversity; *in Vietnam* they are managed across two different ministries and all provinces
* Separated, overlapping, and weak biodiversity management bodies
* Unclear division of biodiversity management responsibilities between MARD and MONRE

Problems in PA Financing:

* Funding varies widely between protected areas and fluctuates between years
* Protected areas rely on a very narrow funding based
* Protected area funding is not coordinated with biodiversity financing in buffer areas
* Better use of resources, accountability, and monitoring
  + Conservation outputs not consistent with funding for conservation management
  + Key protected area conservation activities are underfunded
  + Large expenditure on infrastructure, little on conservation management

A review of the documents listed above leaves no doubt that there is a need for improved coordination on PA management and financing in Viet Nam. However, the analysis and findings in these documents also make it clear that this is a very complicated issue with many important national and provincial stakeholders involved. In the view of the MTR team, this issue is not something that can be easily addressed by an externally-funded, short term project, particularly one that is also addressing many other goals and objectives.

As detailed below, the goals and targets of this project with regard to PA management and financing were unclear and in fact inconsistent in the project document. In particular, the text of the project outputs described a vision and proposed activities that were much more ambitious than any indicator targets in the project’s Results Framework. In the view of the MTR team, the vision and activities in the text of the project outputs were unrealistic, as detailed below, and between this unrealistic approach and disparity between the Outputs text and the Results Framework, it is understandable that the project team and partners chose to focus on the more realistic targets in the Results Framework.

Having said that, during project implementation, little progress has been made even towards the relevant indicators in the Results Framework, and in general, the project should have done much more to strengthen PA coordination on management and financing. The primary accomplishment of the project to date has been the drafting of an MOU between MONRE and MARD. After an internal review process, MONRE sent the draft MOU to MARD in 2013 for its review and approval, but to date MARD has given no reply or update on the draft MOU. Other progress on this issue is described below, but in the view of the MTR team, more could be done by this project. For this reason, the MTR recommends that the project undertake a number of activities in 2015 in order to try to meet its objectives regarding these issues, as detailed below.

1. **PA Institutional Coordination**

**Analysis**

**Challenges to Improved Coordination (General)**

The existing System of Protected Areas is highly diffuse: Even with the new 2008 Biodiversity Law, institutional responsibilities for PAs remain highly diffuse, and the Law and its related Decrees do not in fact authorize a consolidation of PA management authority. In addition, the process for reclassifying some PA units (identified as a first step in consolidating authority for PAs) requires a great deal of assessment and will take years to be finalized. Responsibility for PA units is not only split between two national ministries (MARD and MONRE), it is also divided up with many provincial and district departments and political structures (especially Provincial People’s Committees).

Institutional Rivalry: At the national level, both MONRE and MARD are protective of their current institutional mandates and do not want to cede any authority (or appearance of authority) to each other. Because MONRE was established much more recently, MARD views them as a “junior partner” and is reluctant to give them any responsibility. Furthermore, MARD has official responsibility for most existing PA sites, and is even reluctant to allow MONRE to carry out biodiversity conservation activities within these sites (as one stakeholder described it, “MARD is like the landowner of the house, and MONRE is the tenant; MONRE might want to do conservation, but they are doing it in MARD’s house”.

Competing Institutional Mandates: MARD is primarily focused on forest use and protection, not on biodiversity conservation, whereas MONRE is more focused on biodiversity conservation. As a result, they have different priorities for protected areas, which cannot be easily overcome. This also affects how many PA units are managed; under MARD, “forest rangers” continue to receive more official authority and higher pay than “protected areas staff”, even if they all work for the same institution (typically local Departments of Agriculture and Rural Development under MARD) and at the same site.

**Challenges to Improved Coordination (for this project)**

Confusion in Project Design: The text describing Output 2.1 includes a number of activities and goals that are not reflected in the Results Framework in terms of PA Management Coordination. A review of the text describing Output 2.1 (paragraph 140 in the UNDP Prodoc) reveals that the project design called for a substantial change to protected areas management in Vietnam, including text stating that “while it is not feasible to envisage a single PA authority having management responsibility for all PAs, it is nevertheless necessary to ensure that an agency has the authority and mandate to ensure that PAs are managed consistently across the system”. However, the Prodoc does not explain how an agency can “ensure consistent PA management” if PAs remain under the authority of various ministries and institutions at the national, provincial and local levels. In addition, the text of Output 2.1 then goes on to state that the project will undertake activities that will in fact seek to create a new PA management authority, including “analysis of options for possible mandates for a PA management authority” and “drafting of proposal for a PA management authority”, which would seem to contradict the idea that “it is not feasible to envisage a single PA authority having management responsibility for all PAs”. Finally, the Results Framework in the Prodoc makes no mention of a PA management authority; the only relevant indicator simply seeks to establish “a mechanism to promote coordination between MONRE and MARD”. Table 1 below summarizes the differences between the text in the Outputs section of the Prodoc and the indicators in Results Framework. In sum, the stated goals of the project regarding PA institutional coordination are unclear. The project team and partners appear to have focused their energies on meeting the results of the Results Framework, and have not paid as much attention to the other text.

**Table 1: Comparison of Prodoc approaches to PA Management goals and activities**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Prodoc Text** | **Prodoc Results Framework** | | |
| **Results & Activities** | **Indicators** | **Baseline** | **Target** |
| Results   * Necessary to ensure that an agency has the authority and mandate to ensure that PAs are managed consistently across the system.   Activities   * Analysis of options for possible mandates for a PA management authority * Drafting of proposal for a PA management authority | Establishment of a mechanism to promote coordination between MONRE and MARD  Mechanism is operational | No mechanism exists  As above | By the end of year 2 of project implementation, a coordinating mechanism has been created by decree/decision  By the end of year 3 of the project the coordinating mechanism is promoting a coordinated approach to PA management (see also Output 4.1). |

Lack of Institutional Authority: The more ambitious interpretation of the goals in the Prodoc (activities to support the establishment of a new PA management authority) are extremely unlikely in the current political and institutional framework in Vietnam, and given the operational framework of this project. Firstly, the two agencies responsible for implementing the project, MONRE/BCA and MARD/VNForest, have little or no direct responsibility for PA management. In most cases such responsibility lies either with the PPCs or the provincial DARDs. In addition, neither MARD, which has overall responsibility for all terrestrial and marine protected areas in the country, nor MONRE, which has overall responsibility for all wetland protected areas in the country, are interested in ceding their current responsibilities. Perhaps more importantly, actual management and funding of the vast majority of PA units in Vietnam is actually carried out at the provincial and local levels. Furthermore, the creation of a single PA management authority would require not only significant changes to institutional mandates (including the approval of the National Assembly), but also revised laws at the national, provincial and local levels (including changes to the Law of Forest Protection, the Law on Biodiversity, and numerous regulations, decisions, decrees and circulars related to these and other laws), changes for which there exists little support at present (and which are far beyond the scope of this project). The difficulties of making significant changes to the legal and institutional framework for protected areas in Vietnam may explain why the Results Framework only proposed a much more modest goal of improved coordination among MONRE and MARD, and this greatly justifies the decision of the project team to focus on such coordination and not to seek to establish a new PA management authority.

Lack of Agreement between Ministries on the need for Improved Coordination:

* MONRE representatives cite the following as issues where coordination needs to be improved:
  + BD Conservation / Reporting: The BD Law says that MONRE is in charge of BD conservation, and MARD is in charge of PA, so each PA is supposed to report separately to MONRE and MARD each year, which creates much more work for the PA sites.
  + Wildlife management: MARD is in charge of CITES, and MONRE for BD, so they both do wildlife management, and they need agreement on how responsibilities are divided
  + Policy Development: In 2013, MONRE created a new NBSAP while MARD created a National Strategy on Forest Protection; there was a lot of overlap between the two.
* The UNDP RCU concurs with MONRE; as noted in the 2014 PIR:“The cooperation between MONRE and MARD on protected area management and biodiversity conservation with overlapping and lack of clarity could slow down the effort to improve the coordination. MARD and MONRE efforts to issue cooperation mechanism would take longer time to be finalized. This is a critical risk not only to the project, but also to protected area management in general in Viet Nam. A close and supportive relationship between MONRE and MARD is needed for protected area management to be effective and efficient.”
* On the other hand, in meetings during the MTR mission, MARD representatives consistently stated that they do not see any need for an agreement or MOU with MONRE, and cited the following reasons:
  + The 2013 Decrees that laid out the roles and responsibilities of both MARD and MONRE are clear and do not overlap (see Table 4 below for details); they added that the Prodoc was written after the new Biodiversity Law was approved, but before the two new decrees on MONRE and MARD responsibilities were written to clarify that law
  + There was a misunderstanding about roles for forests and biodiversity that confused PA staff, but that the new decree written last year clarified everything
  + During the “discussion period” after a draft MOU between MONRE and MARD was written and disseminated, MARD determined that they have to fulfil their functions according to the law, and that the MOU won’t add anything to that primary mandate
  + In MARD’s view, they already have great collaboration with MONRE (e.g. when either institution develops any policy, they always “invite” the other to participate), so there is no need for an MOU
* Cooperation is dependent on individuals: In the view of many stakeholders interviewed during the MTR mission, cooperation between MONRE and MARD improved in 2012-2013 and there was strong momentum for the signing of an MOU. However, personnel changes and retirements resulted in new persons being brought into the discussion who either did not support or were not as focused on this issue, and since then no progress has been made.

**What has been accomplished**

The project has not achieved the specific targets in the Results Framework (“Establishment of a mechanism to promote coordination between MONRE and MARD” and “Mechanism is operational”) or in the Outputs text (“an agency has the authority and mandate to ensure that PAs are managed consistently across the system” and “drafting of proposal for a PA management authority”). However, since the project start, progress has been made in some areas in terms of strengthening coordination on PA management issues, including:

* As noted above, a draft MOU has been developed (but not approved) between MONRE and MARD. The appointed focal point within MARD for this issue has retired and BCA/VEA has urged the relevant department within MARD (Department of Science and Technology) to nominate another focal point and to send their final comments, but has not received any response. It is important to note that in fact the draft MOU is very general, that most of key issues that the ministries were seeking cooperation on related to issuing regulations/policies in the field of biodiversity conservation, and that most of these decrees, joint circulars, strategies etc. have now been officially approved (see Appendix 3 for details). As a result, signing of the MOU (at least its current form) may not accomplish much at this point.
* The functions of the two ministries (MONRE and MARD) are in fact more clear thanks to the new decrees that were issued in 2013 (see Table 4 below for details), as well as a decree issued in March 2014 on the VEA’s responsibilities, and another decree issued in October 2014 on the Dept. of Forestry’s responsibilities. However, no analysis has been done on this yet.
* As noted in the Overview section above, a study was carried out of the experiences of 40 other countries in PA management and biodiversity conservation management. A report was drafted for the National Assembly on the current status, issues / problems of biodiversity management mechanisms in Vietnam, including proposed recommendations on restructuring the institutional mechanism for biodiversity conservation; and a conference was organized for the National Assembly in November 2014 to discuss the issues / problems of biodiversity management mechanisms in Vietnam, and to present the international experiences in biodiversity conservation mechanisms and lessons learned for Vietnam (this is the report summarized in Annex 1 below).

**Recommendations**

Carry out a Detailed Analysis of Accomplishments to Date and Priority Next Steps with regard to coordination on PA management and financing (this is recommendation 11 of the MTR):The issue of what has been accomplished with regards to strengthening coordination on PA management and financing, and what remains to be done, has been outlined above. However, a comprehensive analysis of these issues is needed in order to guide project activities. The project should create a brief report that clearly outlines 1) the problems / weaknesses in coordination on PA management and financing in Viet Nam (updating the analysis in this document, as well as the Prodoc and Inception Report, and incorporating analysis of changes resulting from the enactment of the Law on Biodiversity in 2009); 2) a summary of what the UNDP-GEF PA financing project has accomplished to date to strengthen coordination on PA management and financing, in particular by improving coordination between MONRE and MARD; and 3) recommendations on key activities / results that the project should strive to accomplish in 2015. The project may want to consider recruiting a consultant (possibly international) through UNDP, so that the work and recommendations of the consultant are general and not linked to any one Ministry.

Among other things, this report should review the following issues / documents:

* As noted above, the functions of MONRE and MARD, as well as the VEA and Dept. of Forestry, have been revised in the last two years through official decrees, but to date there is no analysis of how these decrees have strengthened (or weakened) coordination on PA management and financing
* The project is currently carrying out reviews of existing laws relevant to (the Biodiversity Law, the Forest Protection and Development Law, and the Fisheries Law) and how they may overlap. Since the Forest Protection Law is due to be revised in 2015, this presents a good opportunity to address any overlaps. The project report on this issue are still in draft form, but they should be reviewed for relevant information (in addition, any MOU signed between MONRE and MARD will have to comply with these Laws)
* The report should incorporate the lessons learned from the project’s work at the demonstration sites on PA management and financing, including ecosystem valuations, PA management and business plans, and site-level financing mechanisms, all of which can help to guide systemic (or institutional) PA financing and business planning.
* The end result of this report should be 1) specific ideas to feed into a new draft Agreement between MONRE and MARD to be finalized by the end of the project; and 2) a road map for critical steps needed to consolidate PA management and financing in Viet Nam over the long run

Revise and Finalize an Agreement between MARD and MONRE on Coordination for PA Management (this is recommendation 12 of the MTR):The project should continue to work towards getting MONRE and MARD to sign an Agreement on how they will collaborate on integrating PA management and financing functions and strategies. In the view of the MTR team, a new MOU should be drafted, in part because most of the goals in the existing draft MOU have been accomplished, but also because the existing draft MOU does not provide any sort of joint vision or way forward to strengthen PA management and financing in Viet Nam over the long term. The fact remains that the long-term goal for Viet Nam should be the consolidation of management for protected areas in the country. One of the key lessons learned from the report to the National Assembly in November 2014 is that PA systems, biodiversity conservation, and forestry management should be managed centrally, and its review of PA management in 40 other countries found that “36/40 (90%) countries manage protected areas and biodiversity in same ministry”. While consolidation of PA management authority is well beyond the scope of this project, a critical step in that direction will be improved collaboration between Ministries and other institutions responsible for protected areas, and for related areas such as biodiversity conservation and forest management.

The project management unit cannot resolve issues related to institutional agreements on its own. MONRE, as the National Implementing Partner of the project, needs to take the leading role in pushing forward resolution of this issue, and high-level officials within VEA need to become involved in this effort. In addition, the Project Executive Board members should be involved in getting sufficient high-level attention paid to the MOU and/or other approaches to collaboration, possibly including getting the Ministers involved directly, or pushing them to delegate the issue to their relevant Vice Ministers. It should be made clear to the Ministries that a strengthened level of collaboration on protected areas management will better position the Government of Viet Nam, and the participating ministries, to benefit from future GEF funding opportunities.

1. **PA Financing**

**Analysis**

**Challenges to Improved Coordination (general)**

Diffuse and Weak PA Financing Systems: Financing of protected areas is highly diffused in Vietnam, with most PA funding coming from provincial and local governments. In addition, business planning and the use of revenue mechanisms at the PA site level is only just beginning in Vietnam; the three sites targeted in this project are some of the very first PA sites to develop and implement either business plans or PA revenue mechanisms. Thus, even if political support existed for coordinated PA financial management and/or the transfer of revenues among PA units, and the necessary legal and management changes were implemented, most PA units remain a long way from being able to generate revenues or to accurately manage and report on their financing to allow for coordinated PA financing.

**Challenges to Improved Coordination (for this project)**

Confusion in Project Design: The project’s Output text includes a number of activities and goals that are not reflected in the Results Framework in terms of PA financing. A review of the text describing Output 2.1 (paragraph 140 in the UNDP Prodoc) reveals that the project design called for a substantial change to protected areas financing in Vietnam, including text stating that the project will ensure that “PA financing and budgeting is consistently applied across the system”, that “a system is required to permit transfer of surplus revenues to protected areas that are under-funded”, and that the project would formulate “a proposal for mandate of a new or modified legal entity to coordinate PA financing” as well as “support to the process of establishing a modified or new PA financing entity” and “capacity building for the new or modified entity”.

However, the Results Framework in the Prodoc makes no mention of these new national or systemic level changes. Instead, the indicators in the Results Framework are focused on more modest targets (see Table 2 below, which summarizes the differences between the text in the Outputs section of the Prodoc and the indicators in Results Framework). In sum, the stated goals of the project regarding PA financing are unclear. The project team and partners appear to have focused their energies on meeting the results of the Results Framework, and have not paid as much attention to the other text.

**Table 2: Comparison of Prodoc approaches to PA Financing goals and activities**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Prodoc Text** | **Prodoc Results Framework** | | |
| **Results & Activities** | **Indicators** | **Baseline** | **Target** |
| Results   * PA financing and budgeting is consistently applied across the system * A system is required to permit transfer of surplus revenues to protected areas that are under-funded   Activities   * Review of legal basis for PA budgeting * Formulation of proposal for mandate of a new or modified legal entity to coordinate PA financing * Support to the process of establishing a modified or new PA financing entity; capacity building for new or modified entity | Overall PA System’s Financial scorecard scores  National PES policy identifies PES as one of the financing mechanisms for PAs  Guidelines for operationalization of PM’s Decision on PA financing  Existence of off-site financing policy and strategy  Various site level measures to increase PA revenues (see Output 3.1) | 67  Draft policy under development  No guidelines prepared  New strategy under development  Lack of existing site level measures | By the end of the project the score is at least 85  The text of the PM’s Decision on PES incorporates unambiguous wording establishing the basis for PAs to receive a significant proportion of PES funding for ecosystem services originating from land within the PA  Guidelines on implementation of the PM’s Decision on Sustainable Financing issued during the first year of project implementation reflect international best practice  By the end of year 1 of project implementation a new Tourism Development Strategy incorporates off-site financing  Various measures for site level PA financing authorized and operational by the end of the project |

**Recommendations**

Recommendation – Support Up-scaling and Replication of Site-Based PA Financing Mechanisms (this is recommendation 13 of the MTR):The project team (Project Manager and Site Coordinators), together with the PA Management Boards from the three demonstration sites, should focus significant efforts in 2015 on collating information and documenting lessons learned on the development of the PA financing mechanisms (primarily in 2014) and their implementation (primarily in 2015); this documentation and analysis should also include the work of the project in developing PA Business Plans. This information should be compiled in guidelines, manuals or other forms of detailed documentation (Bidoup – Nui Ba has indicated that it has developed some initial guidance on how to create PES systems) that provide clear guidance for other PA institutions and sites on the steps needed to get regulatory and policy approval for new financing mechanisms, on how to implement such mechanisms, and on developing and implementing PA business plans, with the goal of maximizing the potential for replication of these mechanisms throughout the country. The project should play a leading role in disseminating this information by presenting the manuals and key findings at the annual workshop for all PA Management Boards put on by the Vietnam Forest Administration; and by including information on this topic in the video it is producing on all activities at all three sites. In addition, by documenting lessons learned on how to develop and implement PA financing mechanisms, and providing guidelines on PA business planning, the project can help to ensure that up-scaling of effective PA financing and business planning throughout Vietnam will take place in the short to medium term. In addition, lessons learned can be used to create or revise national policies of PA financing mechanisms; for example, that protected areas can increase entry fees and keep the additional funds generated. These intermediate steps will promote more information sharing and similar financial management strategies among PA units managed by various agencies at the national, provincial and local levels, which will in turn facilitate more effective PA financial coordination at the overall system level in the long term (assuming the political and institutional support for a more integrated PA system develops)

**Appendix 1: Summary of issues on PA and biodiversity institutional coordination and management (from report presented to National Assembly in November 2014)**

Gaps in the National PA System

Although the establishment of a national PA system has been a major cornerstone of Viet Nam’s biodiversity conservation efforts, historically the emphasis has been on conserving high-biodiversity forest areas, with a particular emphasis on conserving the diversity of higher vertebrates. Indeed, most of PAs were created from existing SUFs. However, a major concern regarding PAs within SUFs is that these have been primarily managed for their forest values, rather than biodiversity values, and that the management requirements for maintaining and enhancing the latter are not always well understood or applied properly. Classic examples of the latter include the tendency to afforest ecologically important inter-tidal mudflats with mangroves, regardless of whether these areas originally had mangroves or not and without assessing the uniqueness or ecological importance of maintaining these mudflats.

Lack of clarity over mandates, roles, responsibilities and priorities for biodiversity conservation

Viet Nam’s policy, legal and institutional context for biodiversity management, is complex and sometimes unclear. The development of laws and policies in a partly sector-based/ecosystem-based fashion (i.e. with different Government agencies having primary responsibility for different ecosystems) has also led to some overlap, as well as gaps, in mandates, roles and responsibilities. This has contributed to a lack of direction and clarity over who is to do what in relation to biodiversity conservation and management.

Responsibility for environmental management, including biodiversity, is divided among several central government institutions, notably the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE), the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD), the Ministry of Science and Technology (MOST), and the Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI). Under Viet Nam’s decentralization policies, Provincial People’s Committees (PPCs) also play a major role in environmental management including biodiversity conservation. At the provincial and district levels, national line ministries usually have specialized departments that mirror their parent ministries in administrative structure and function. For example, the provincial agency of MARD, MONRE and MPI are, respectively, Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD), Department of Natural Resources and Environment (DONRE) and Department of Planning and Investment (DPI). These departments receive technical instructions from their national line ministries, but are accountable to the Provincial People’s Committees (PPCs).

MONRE is the national focal point for various multilateral environmental agreements, including the Ramsar Convention and the Convention on Biological Diversity. Within MONRE, the Viet Nam Environment Agency (VEA) is mandated to advise and assist MONRE on all aspects of environmental management, including the development and promulgation of environmental laws and policies and overseeing their implementation. Responsibility for biodiversity conservation and management was assigned to MONRE. MONRE, however, is a large ministry with wide-ranging responsibilities that include the management of air, land and water resources under the amended Law on Environmental Protection (2005) as well as of biodiversity under Viet Nam’s first Law on Biodiversity (2008). Within MONRE, the Biodiversity Conservation Agency (BCA), which falls under VEA, has been given the mandate for state management of biodiversity. Thus, biodiversity conservation and management falls within the purview of BCA’s responsibilities.

MARD has long-standing responsibility for forest and fisheries management through its Forest Protection Department (FPD) and its Department for Capture Fisheries and Resource Protection (DCFRP), respectively, and thus also has responsibility for aquatic biodiversity conservation. Prior to the Biodiversity Law of 2008, PAs could be established under the Law on Forest Protection and Development as well as under the 2003 Law on Fisheries, whose implementation was the primary responsibility of the PPCs and the then Ministry of Fisheries, now MARD’s DCFRP. Thus, historically MARD has been responsible for developing the national PA system within forest, marine and inland water ecosystems and enforcing wildlife protection regulations.

To date, most of Viet Nam’s existing PAs have been established within Special Use Forests (SUFs). These include 30 national parks, 69 nature reserves, 45 landscape conservation areas (including cultural and historical conservation sites) and 20 experimental research forests. Together these cover approximately 2.2 million hectares or around 7% of the country’s geographic area. The proposed marine protected area (MPA) system will include some 16 MPAs, cover around 270,271 ha and account for 0.3% of Viet Nam’s marine territory. So far, 5 MPAs have been formally established by different provinces. Additionally, under Prime Ministerial Decision No. 1479, MARD has been mandated to develop and plan 44 Inland Water Conservation Areas (IWCAs), including 15 areas to be managed nationally and 29 provincially. Planning has been underway for the first 5 IWCAs that are representative of the Red River and the Mekong River basins and the Central highlands but none has been established as yet.

In recent years, institutional roles and responsibilities for different aspects of biodiversity conservation management have been evolving, especially since the promulgation of the 2008 Biodiversity Law and its associated Decree 65. Thus, under Article 8.1(c) of Decree 65, MONRE has been given responsibility for working with PPCs to establish national-level PAs comprising wetlands, limestone mountains, and mixed ecosystems that occupy at least two provinces and that are not already within a SUF or in the sea, and, under Article 9.3, to manage such wetland PAs. Under Article 9.1 of Decree 65, PPCs are responsible for managing those PAs that lie entirely within their provincial territory, while under Article 9.2, MARD continues to be responsible for national-level PAs that are within terrestrial Special Use Forests (SUFs) and for marine PAs lying within at least 2 provinces. Additionally, Article 11 of Decree 65 requires MONRE, in cooperation with MARD, to review and reclassify PAs established prior to 1st July 2009 according to the criteria defined in the Biodiversity Law and under Decree 65. This process is currently underway under the leadership of MONRE’s Biodiversity Conservation Agency (BCA). PAs that do not match these criteria are further required to be modified and adapted such that they fulfil the specified criteria. This will eventually result in a unified national PA system.

Given the socioeconomic importance of ecosystem services, a number of other sectors and agencies also play an important role in the use and management of biodiversity resources including the water, agricultural, hydroelectric, industrial development and tourism sectors. Water resources management including pollution control are both under the purview of different sections of MONRE, while agriculture and hydroelectric power generation fall under MARD’s remit. Industrial development is overseen by the Ministry of Industry and Trade, while infrastructure development may be undertaken by the Ministry of Transport and the Ministry of Construction. Meanwhile tourism planning and development are spearheaded by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism.

At the subnational level, the different People’s Committees also have important roles and responsibilities in relation to environmental management, including biodiversity conservation. One of the key principles of Viet Nam’s national reform (‘renovation’) process (Đổi mới) is the decentralization of authority to the lowest appropriate level. Thus, in addition to national government, the State system of governance includes three further tiers: Provincial, District and Commune People’s Committees. Viet Nam currently has 63 provinces and cities (under the central government) with approximately 698 districts and over 11,000 communes.

The Provincial People’s Committees (PPCs) are the executive organizations of the National People’s Councils and are the state administrative organs with responsibility for leading and implementing administrative processes and government policy and programmes at the local level together with the District People’s Committees (DPCs) and Commune People’s Committees (CPCs), under the overall guidance of the Central Government in line with its directives. This includes preparing and implementing socio-economic development and conservation programmes. In relation to biodiversity, Article 35.3 of the Biodiversity Law assigns responsibility to the PPCs for the “survey, statistical and inventory reviews and assessment of the current status of biodiversity”. Article 3 defines sustainable development of biodiversity as “the rational exploitation and use of natural ecosystems, development of genetic resources and species and assurance of ecological balance in service of socio-economic development.”

Viet Nam has developed a significant and complex body of environment policies and legislation over the past two decades. This includes various strategies, action plans, laws and numerous associated decrees, decisions, circulars and regulations.

The *National Strategy for Environmental Protection until 2020 and vision toward 2030* sets the agenda for sustainable environmental management in Viet Nam. It includes amongst its objectives the reduction of biodiversity loss and degradation of artificial and natural wetlands, as well as sustainable use and improved management of water resources and quality. It also proposes a number of specific measures for promoting improved management and conservation of natural wetlands, including proper survey and inventory, planning for establishing wetlands protected areas, identifying and addressing underlying drivers of degradation and mobilizing investment to conserve wetlands of international, national and local significance.

Viet Nam became a party to the Ramsar Convention in 1989 and ratified the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in 1994. However, prior to the enactment of the Biodiversity Law in 2008, biodiversity conservation was mainly addressed under the 1991 Law on Forest Protection and Development (LFPD), the 1994 Law on Environmental Protection (LEP) and the 2003 Law on Fisheries (LF). All three laws along with their associated decrees, decisions and latest revisions have some general provisions of relevance to the management and conservation of biodiversity. Table 3 summarizes some of the key laws and policies on environment and natural resource management, highlighting those of greatest relevance to biodiversity management. Article 9 of the Law on Fisheries, which covers the planning, establishment and management of protected areas (PAs) in inland waters and marine ecosystems, has been of particular significance as it makes reference to certain types of wetlands.

The **National Action Plan on Biodiversity (NBSAP) up to 2010** with orientations up to 2020, which was approved in May 2007, contains specific targets for the sustainable use of biodiversity more generally. Subsequently, in 2008, Viet Nam passed a dedicated **Law on Biodiversity** (No. 20/2008/QH12), which came into effect on 1st July 2009. This is essentially an umbrella law that is in the process of being clarified through a series of decrees, circulars and guidelines.

Soon after the passing of the Biodiversity Law, a **Prime Ministerial Decision No. 1479**/2008/QD-TTg **(Decision 1479**) was issued on 13 October 2008 on **“Approving the planning on the system of inland water conservation areas up to 2020**. The decision identifies 45 priority water conservation areas supporting significant biodiversity and rare aquatic resources of scientific and economic significance. These sites include most typical inland wetland types of Viet Nam, such as rivers, rivers in limestone areas, reservoirs, natural lakes, lagoons, swamps and estuaries. However, some of the identified ‘inland water conservation areas’ are in fact in coastal areas. Furthermore, four of the proposed areas, Ba Be, U Minh Thuong, Bau Sau and Ca Mau coastal areas, are existing Special Use Forests (SUFs) with management boards, under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD).

Decision 1479 does not assign any particular management categories to the identified areas but classifies them into 16 conservation areas at national level and 29 areas at provincial level. The Decision also identifies 40 commercially important fish species for protection in the proposed areas. Whilst the decision refers to the need to survey and protect biodiversity, its primary focus is actually on the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of economically important fish and their habitats.

In May 2010, Prime Ministerial **Decision No.742**/QD-TTg approved the planning process for establishing a system of 16 Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in Viet Nam in the period up to 2020. Planning for this took place between 2008-2010. In June 2010, Decree 65/2010/ND-CP **(Decree 65**) on *“Detailed Guidelines for Implementation of some Articles of Biodiversity Law*” was issued. Amongst other things, this decree clarified MONRE’s role in relation to biodiversity management and Protected Areas. In 2011 **Decree 99**/2010/ND-CP on **Payment for Forest Ecosystem Services** came into effect. This is the first national legal framework supporting payments for ecosystem services in the Indo-Burma hotspot and marks a significant addition in potential approaches to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in Viet Nam.

**Table 3: Primary policies and laws of relevance to biodiversity conservation in Viet Nam**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Laws & Policies** | **Associated Decrees, Circulars & Decisions** | **Lead Agency** | **Comments** |
| UN Convention on Biological Diversity | Decision No. 79/2007/QD-TTg of May 31, 2007, approving the National Action Plan On Biodiversity up to 2010 and Orientations towards 2020 for implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety | MONRE | Viet Nam ratified the CBD in 1994. |
| Biodiversity Law 2008 | Decree 65/2010/ND-CP: *Detailed Guidelines for Implementation of some Articles of Biodiversity Law* | MONRE | Clarifies MONRE’s mandates in relation to biodiversity, PA management & related regulatory provisions |
| Law on Environmental Protection (last revised 2005) | Decree 80/2006/ND-CP: *Detailed Guidelines for Implementation of some Articles of Law on Environmental Protection* | MONRE | Guidelines for implementation of articles relating to environmental quality standards, Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), waste management and environmental database |
| Decree 109/2003/ND-CP: *The Conservation and Sustainable Development of Wetlands* | Circular No. 18/2004/TT-BTNMT of 23 August 2004 | MONRE | This is the first legislation on wetlands in Viet Nam. It provides a definition of wetland; assigns state management mandate of wetlands to MONRE; and also clearly defines activities allowed and not allowed in wetlands to ensure the conservation and sustainable use of this ecosystem. |
| Law on Forest Protection and Development (last revised 2004) | Decree 23/2006/ND-CP: *Guiding Implementation of Law on Forest Protection & Development* | MARD | Guidelines for implementation of articles relating to forest protection and development, including articles about state management mandate of MARD on monitoring of forest trend, planning and organization of SUFs, development and conservation of endangered species, |
| Decree 117/2010/ND-CP: *Establishment, Organization and Management of Special Use Forests* | MARD | Clarifies MARD’s mandate in relation to biodiversity and PA management and allows for increased decentralization to local authorities. |
| Decision No.62/2005/QD-BNN&PTNT: *Regulations on Special Use Forest Classification Criteria* | MARD | The Decision defines in detail the categories under the SUF system in Viet Nam and their roles and functions, as well as the criteria to classify SUFs. Based on these criteria, a National Park, Nature Reserve or Landscape/Species Conservation Area can be established. |
| Law on Fisheries (last revised 2003) | Decree 27/2005/ND-CP: *Detailed regulations and guidelines for Implementation of Certain Articles in the Law on Fisheries* | MARD (from 2008) | Formerly responsibility of Ministry of Fisheries, which was absorbed by MARD in 2008.  Contains provisions for the establishment of PAs in inland waters and marine areas |
| Decree 57/2008/ND-CP: *Management of Marine Protected Areas of National and International Importance* | MARD (after 2008) | This regulations set out criteria for classification, organisation, management, protection and development of Viet Nam MPAs |
| Decision 82/2008/QD-BNN&PTNT *promulgating List of rare and endangered aquatic species in need of protection, recovery and development* | MARD | The List covers 71 inland freshwater species that are listed in the Red Book of Viet Nam |
| PM Decision 485/QD-TTg dated 2 May 2008 *approving Programme “Protection of endangered aquatic species to the year 2015 and vision to 2020*” | MARD | This Programme aims to prevent the further decline of endangered aquatic species and promote rehabilitation of rare and endemic species. The Programme includes 19 prioritized projects to be implemented from 2008 to 2020 through various measures, i.e. policies, science and technology; education and training |
| PM Decision No. 1479/2008/QD-TTg (or Decision 1479): *Approving the planning on the system of inland water conservation areas up to 2020*. | MARD | 44 areas are planned in this system, which fall within 2 categories: national and provincial levels. A list of 40 aquatic species in need of protected is attached. The management mechanism for the Inland Water Conservation Areas (IWCAs) is not included in the Decision. |
| PM Decision No. 742/QD-TTg of 2010: *approving the planning of Viet Nam Marine Protected Areas System to the year 2020* | MARD | 16 MPAs are planned for establishment in Viet Nam up to the year 2020 |
| Law on Water Resources 2012 | Decree 120/2008/ND-CP: *on management of river basins* | MONRE | This new version of the Law on Water Resources aims at efficient exploitation and sustainable development of water resources based on research, planning, monitoring and application of economic instruments in water resource management.  Decree 120 includes detailed provisions for the management of river basins, such as inventory, planning, protection of water quality, allocation of water resources within and between basins. Issues relating to establishment of River Basin Organisation are also included in this Decree. |

Weak Institutional Capacity for Biodiversity Conservation and PA Management within MONRE

Biodiversity management requires specific kinds of technical knowledge and expertise. Current capacity at national and local levels is not commensurate with the ambitious goals and targets that have been set for biodiversity conservation under existing national policies and laws. For example, MONRE, which is the designated national lead agency for biodiversity conservation, has multiple major mandates, including primary responsibility for the state management of land, water and mineral resources. Furthermore, MONRE’s Biodiversity Conservation Agency (BCA), which is tasked with state management of biodiversity, is a relatively young institution, with little experience of establishing or managing a PA system, as historically this has occurred mainly in forest areas under the aegis of MARD.

The current institutional and staff capacities within the Ministry are low relative to what is required for the effective administration of biodiversity conservation, particularly within BCA, which, for example, has only some 45 staff out of VEA’s 600-plus staff. This situation reflects the wider picture of staffing and capacity for biodiversity management in Viet Nam. Thus, out of nearly 42,000 government officers working in the natural resources management and environmental protection sectors in Viet Nam, over 52% work on land administration, while only some 3% are concerned with biodiversity conservation, water resources management, hydrometeorology, geology and minerals. It is therefore not surprising that there are relatively few staff with wetlands planning and management experience within the Ministry.

Under Viet Nam’s decentralization policies, most planning and budgeting take place at sub-national levels (at provincial and district levels). Thus, site-level management of PAs is primarily the direct responsibility of the PPCs (other than in the case of PAs that span more than one province, i.e. interprovincial PAs, which are managed nationally). However, DONRE and the District Divisions of Natural Resources & Environment (DDNRE), which are the Provincial and District “arms” of MONRE respectively, also currently lack capacity for biodiversity management at local levels as they are largely concerned with issues pertaining to land administration and pollution control. Indeed, apart from Ho Chi Minh City, which has a dedicated division for environmental risk management and biodiversity conservation, there are no particular divisions or staff under DONRE with responsibility specifically for biodiversity conservation. Existing human resources within DONRE are also limited. In general, there are approximately 20 permanent staff in each province within DONRE’s Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), which mirrors the same functions as MONRE’s VEA. There is thus a severe lack of direction and capacity on biodiversity conservation and sustainable management at the local level.

As a result of the PPC’s and DONRE’s limited capacity for biodiversity management and given also that most PAs (128 in total) are in areas previously designated as SUFs, MARD continues to play a major role in the management of these PAs. Thus, in practice, the PPC generally requests MARD’s provincial department, DARD, to carry out PA management on their behalf and to head the Protected Area Management Board (PAMB), either directly or through its Forest Protection Division (FPD) or Fisheries Division (FD). DONRE may be part of the PAMB, but is not generally actively engaged in the design, establishment or management of PAs as it has neither the experience nor any dedicated biodiversity management staff. However, local planning and budget allocation is still decided by the local bodies, which do not generally prioritize conservation, particularly PAs, due to many competing development priorities.

**Appendix 2: Comparison of MONRE and MARD Functions**

**Table 4: MONRE and MARD Functions under Old and New Decrees**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **MONRE** | | **MARD** | |
| **Old Decrees**  **Decree 25/2008/NĐ-CP**  **(4 March 2008)**  **Decree 19/2010/NĐ-CP**  **(5 March 2010)** | **New Decree**  **Decree 21/2013/*NĐ*-CP**  **(4 March 2013)** | **Old decree**  **Decree 01/2008/NĐ-CP**  **(3 January 2008)** | **New decree**  **Decree 199/2013/NĐ-CP (26 November 2013)** |
| MONRE takes responsibility for guiding, monitoring and implementing policies, legislation on natural reservation and biodiversity | * Issue national target of biodiversity * Make a master plan of national biodiversity conservation; give guidance to provincial agencies or local authorities * Evaluate the establishment of interprovincial PAs; chair and coordinate with PPCs on establishing national PAs * Instruct and supervise the management of conservation facilities * Instruct and supervise the management of species on the list of endangered, rare and priority protected animals. * Prepare to issue or promulgate the endangered species list and protection programs. * Give guidance on storing and managing genes source * Create and manage a biodiversity monitoring system, a national report on biodiversity data | * Give instruction and direction on forest planning, protection, and development; forest resources statistics. * Regulate the criteria for the classification of forests * Publish the list of endangered forest animals and plants * Give direction and guidance on the forest allocation and leasing | * Chair, coordinate with stakeholders on planning, managing the PUF system * Give state direction on managing, planning, developing, protecting and using forests; on deriving and processing forest products * Instruct and supervise the management of species on the list of extremely endangered and rare species * Direct the implementation of forest concession |

**Comments:**

General comment: Based on the 2 new decrees, MONRE is responsible for the overall state management of biodiversity; while MARD is responsible for managing biodiversity in specialized fields

Specific comments:

1. **Planning:**

* In the past, MONRE was not assigned the responsibility for biodiversity planning, and MARD had the responsibility of directing forest planning.
* Now, MONRE leads the national biodiversity planning (has been issued); MARD leads the forest planning suitable to MONRE's national biodiversity planning

1. **Managing PAs**

* In the past, the management of PAs from SUF system was leaded by MARD; MONRE did not have a specific function on this issue.
* Now, for PAs established within in the area of 1 province, the province will lead the establishment and approval; for PAs in the area of 2 or more than 2 provinces, MARD will lead the establishment and management and MONRE will be responsible for the assessment.

1. **Managing conservation facilities**

* In the past, the facilities were managed by provinces; the roles of Ministries were unclear
* Now, MONRE is responsible of guiding and monitoring the management of conservation facilities

1. **Managing rare and endangered forest plants and animals**

* In the past, MARD promulgated the list and instructions on managing rare and endangered forest animals and plants
* Now, MONRE chairs and coordinates with MARD to prepare for promulgation or promulgate the list and the conservation program. MARD instructs, monitors the management of forest creature on the issued list of rare and endangered species

**Appendix 3: Draft Memorandum of Understanding between MONRE and MARD**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **MINISTRY OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT- MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT**    No: / QCPH-BTNMT-BNNPTNT | **SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM**  **Independence -Freedom - Happiness**    *Hanoi, April, 2012* |

**REGULATION**

**Coordinate implementation of state management on biodiversity conservation between the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development**

**CHAPTER I**

**GENERAL PROVISIONS**

**Article 1.Scope of regulation and subjects of application**

1. This Regulation provides for the coordination of the implementation of state management on biodiversity conservation in accordance with the Law on Biodiversity, Law on Forest Protection and Development, Law on Fisheries, the Law on Environmental Protection and other relevant legal documents.

2. This Regulation applies to agencies, organizations and individuals under the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment; Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development in the area of state management on biodiversity conservation.

**Article 2. Principles of coordination**

1. Coordination of activities among the subsidiary units of the two ministries related to biodiversity conservation is based on the functions and tasks of each unit in accordance with the law and this Regulation, in order to improve the efficiency of state management of biodiversity conservation.

2. In collaborative activities, it is necessary to clearly identify the units who is take the leading role and who is take the supporting role.

3. To ensure the feasibility and effectiveness of the coordination activities of state management of biodiversity conservation.

4. Budget for coordination shall comply with the provisions of the law on the state budget on the basis of integrated in the annual budget plan of each Ministry.

**Chapter II**

**COORDINATION ACTIVITIES**

**Article 3. The content of coordination**

1. Develop and submit for approval laws and policies on biodiversity conservation: i) The draft laws and ordinances; draft resolution of the National Assembly Standing Committee's Resolution of Government, resolutions and decrees of the Government; ii) The strategies and plans; programs, projects, national projects; draft decisions and directives of the Prime Minister; iii) Decision Directive, Circular; national technical regulations in the field of biodiversity conservation.

2. Guide, implement and inspect the implementation of laws and policies on biodiversity conservation.

3. Establish, manage and share database, information, data and reports on biodiversity conservation.

4. Scientific research; education and training capacity; communication, awareness raising; international cooperation on biodiversity conservation.

**Article 4. Develop legislation and policy**

1. In the process of developing legislation and policies on biodiversity conservation, the in-charged agencies under the two ministries should consult the relevant agencies and get agreement on the contents before submitting to the National Assembly, the Government and the Prime Minister for approval.

2. Annually, the two Ministries inform each other about the program of legislation development, consulted Ministry is responsible for compiling information and reporting to the Ministry's leadership and responding in writing within the required time limit.

The program of legislation development, including content and mechanism for cooperation, which shall be approved by the two Ministries in the Appendix to this Regulation and the two ministries shall have responsibility for implementation (The program of legislation development under the two Ministries during the period 2012-2014 in Appendix 1 attached to this Regulation).

3.The proposal for development of new legal document which is not in the annual program of legislation development of each Ministry should be promptly consulted, discussed and agreed on the name, the legal basis and the internal frame content of the text between representatives of the two ministries, to avoid overlap.

4. The formulation and promulgation of joint documents between the two ministries shall comply with the provisions of the Law on Promulgation of legal documents, the guidelines of the Law on the procedures; after receiving proposal in writing from one Ministry, the other Ministry is responsible for assigning focal point to review and submit the Minister consider and decide on the legal basis, necessary, name, content and mechanism on cooperation.

**Article 5. Guidance, inspection and implementation of laws and policies on biodiversity conservation**

1. According to the functions and tasks, two ministries shall actively develop plan on guidance, inspection and implementation of laws and policies on biodiversity conservation of each ministry, including inter-ministry tasks, with the participation of representatives of the both Ministries to ensure close coordination and avoid overlap.

2. Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment and Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development are responsible for the appointment of representatives to involve in the coordination of guidance, inspection and implementation of laws and policies on biodiversity conservation.

**Article 6. Establish, management and share of database, information and data; information and reports on biodiversity conservation**

1. Annually, the two Ministries exchange information on the list and results of projects carried out by each Ministry.

2. Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment and Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, according to their functions, missions and authorities, shall have the responsibility to assign their agencies to closely collaborate in sharing information on biodiversity conservation.

**Article 7. Scientific research; education and capacity training; communication, awareness raising; international cooperation on biodiversity conservation**

1. Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment shall collaborate with the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development in organizing the following activities:

a) To propose development and implementation of programs, projects, research, new tools, methods and approaches related to biodiversity conservation.

b) To assess need and designing training programs, capacity building for staff at all levels.

c) Communication and awareness raising about biodiversity conservation, and to guide and direct the local agencies, grassroots; Organizing communication program on the mass media.

d) To study the content of new treaties to advise the Government on the possibility to join the treaty; jointly organize or attended international events in order to improve capacity in biodiversity conservation.

2. The agencies under the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development shall inform each other when organize training, seminars and conferences on the conservation of biological diversity.

**Chapter III**

**Implementation**

**Article 8. Implementation**

1. Vietnam Environment Administration, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment is the focal organization, the implementation of this Regulation in the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment; Department of Science, Technology and Environment, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development to act as focal points for implementation of this Regulation in the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development.

2. Annually, the Vietnam Environment Administration, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment and the Department of Science, Technology and Environment, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and the detailed plan and coordinate the content specified in Article 3 of this Circular approved by the leaders of the two ministries.

3. On the basis of the approved plan, the two ministries shall implement agreed content, regular or irregular adjustment of the content, and inform each other about these adjustment.

**Article 9. Information and report**

1. Annually, the Vietnam Environment Administration in collaboration with agencies under the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment co-chaired the meeting with agencies under the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, review and evaluate the results of the implementation of coordinate specific tasks according to the requirements of the job and the functions, duties, powers.

2. Annually, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment; Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development co-organize ministerial-level meeting to implement the tasks and solve the difficulties in the implementation process management activities relating to the field of biodiversity conservation.

3. In extraordinary cases, representatives of the two ministries defined in Clause 2 of Article 2 of this Regulation shall coordinate to resolve and report to the competent authorities for consideration and direction.

**Article 10. Enforcement and responsibility**

              1. This Regulation comes into force on September 2012.

              2. The leaders of the two Ministries: Natural Resources and Environment, Agriculture and Rural Development; heads of agencies under both the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, Agriculture and Rural Development shall be responsible for the implementation of this regulation.

              3. In the implementation process, if any obstacles occur, the relevant agencies should promptly inform to the focal points including: the Vietnam Environment Administration, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment and the Department of Science, Technology and Environment, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development to coordinate in timely adjustments and supplements./.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **FOR. MINISTER**  **MINISTRY OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT**    **DEPUTY MINISTER**            **Bui Cach Tuyen** | **FOR. MINISTER**  **MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND**  **RURAL DEVELOPMENT**  **DEPUTY MINISTER**            **.....** |
| - As stated in paragraph 1 of Article .....;  - Minister of Natural Resources and Environment Nguyen Minh Quang (to report);  - Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development Cao Duc Phat (to report);  - Department of Natural Resources & Environment, Department of Agriculture and Rural Development of the provinces and cities directly under the Central Government (for coordination);  - Archive: VEA, DOF. |  |

**Appendix: List of legal documents, policies and tasks for biodiversity conservation need to establish to 2015**

*(status updates in italics)*

1. National strategy on biological diversity by 2020, vision to 2030; and National strategy for PA management by 2020 *(the 2 strategies were approved at the end of 2013)*
2. Master plan for biodiversity conservation in the country to 2010 and orientations to 2030; *(Master plan was approved in early 2014)*
3. Unified management of wetland protected areas and protected areas of inland waters; Done. *(master plan for PA of inland water was approved at the end of 2013)*
4. National Tiger Conservation Program 2020; *(the program has been promulgated by the Prime Minister)*
5. Circular on criteria to identify the natural ecosystems that are of global, national, local importance, unique or representative ecosystems for ecological and ecosystem represents for local nature (as specified in Clause 5, Article 7. Criteria for decentralization of protected area under Decree 65/2010/ND-CP detailing and guiding a number of articles of the Law on Biological Diversity); *(the draft circular has been supported by the project; 2 ministries are working to finalize this draft)*
6. Joint Circular stipulated criteria for invasive alien species and issued the list of invasive alien species; *(the circular was promulgated in October 2013)*
7. Review and convert the existing protected areas in accordance with the Biodiversity Law and Decree 65/2010/ND-CP detailing and guiding a number of articles of the Law on Biodiversity; *(the draft circular on the criteria in point 5 above needs to be approved before this activity is carried out)*
8. Establish and implement mechanism on sharing and exchanging information on biodiversity *(this activity is being supported by JICA, and will be continued in phase 2)*
9. Review system on biodiversity conservation facility; *(this must be reviewed the conversion of PAs before reviewing the preservation facilities)*

## Annex 12: Audit Trail

The following comments on the Draft Midterm Review report of the project “Removing Barriers Hindering Protected Area (PA) Management Effectiveness in Viet Nam” were received on 30 December 2014 from BCA; 11 January 2015 from the UNDP RCU; 13 January 2015 from the UNDP Country Office; 27 January 2015 from UNDP HQ; and 23 February from UNDP Country Office.

| **Author** | **#** | **Page** | **Comment** | **MTR team**  **Response and actions taken** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| UNDP RCU | 1 | 6 | “Is it correct that both MONRE and MARD are official project Executing Agencies? See Section III E I” | The original documents submitted for approval were inconsistent; the UNDP Prodoc only listed MONRE as an “Executing Agency”, while the CEO Endorsement Request listed both MONRE and MARD as “Executing Partners”. Because agreement was reached during project implementation that MONRE is the “National Implementing Partners” and MARD is the “Co-Implementing Partner”, the MTR team decided that it is most accurate to only list MONRE as the Executing Agency. |
| UNDP CO | 2 | 6 | “Distinguish NIP and CIP” | The document has been amended to clarify that MONRE is the National Implementing Partner (NIP) and MARD is the Co-Implementing Partner (CIP) |
| BCA | 3 | 8 | “Should mention here: project has many indicators and some indicators are ambitious and should be changed/revised” | The document has been amended with a sentence that reads: “It should be noted here that by including 38 different indicators, including indicators at the Output level, the Results Framework did not follow current GEF practice for prioritized and targeted indicators; Annex 8 provides detailed guidance on potential changes to improve the Results Framework”. |
| BCA | 4 | 9 | BCA wrote the following regarding Recommendation 3: “Last years, VCF supported MARD to create incentive mechanism for PA staff but it was not successful. PA project under MARD component spent 93,000 USD on this issue and the results are (1) existing incentives reviewed and (2) draft inter-ministerial circular on working code for PA staff developed. Recommendation here should be: Project Steering Committee should recommend MARD, at PSC meeting, to follow up and submit for approval of the inter-ministerial circular on working code for PA staff” | The MTR Team revised the text of Recommendation 3 to further detail what had been accomplished by MARD thus far during the project. However, the team did not agree with BCA’s proposed change to the recommendation itself, as the team feels that 1) the inter-ministerial circular on working codes will not actually address performance-based incentives, and 2) it is unrealistic to expect that submitting the inter-ministerial circular in 2015 will lead to any actual change before the project ends. For these reasons, the MTR team feels it is more appropriate for the PSC to determine if there is a viable way to make progress on performance-based incentives in 2015, and if so, to designate responsibility for relevant activities |
| UNDP CO | 5 | 10 | We would like to discuss the wording of part of Rec. 4: ‘significant changes are proposed in this MTR to reorient the project’. What is meant by reorient in this context? Could we soften to ‘amend’? | Reorient simply meant to refocus some of the project activities which I felt had strayed from the stated targets.  In any case, I have changed reorient to amend as you requested. |
| BCA | 6 | 11 | BCA wrote the following regarding Recommendation 11: “It might not be feasible because:  AWP 2015 should be approved by UNDP and PSC as soon as possible, in early Feb as expected  Recruiting consultants takes long time with government procedure and at least 2 months with UNDP procedure (starting from TOR development) and it takes at least 2 months to complete the report, so it takes at least 4 months, until beginning of May to have that report, it’s too late to guide PMU what to do in 2015  Final review should be started by Sep, 2015 so PMU just have 4 months (from May to Aug) to do something, it is not enough time  Therefore the project should implement priority activities in 2015 based on recommendations in MTR report/updated project result framework  These things should be included into lesson learnt project report at the end of 2015” | BCA rightly points out that undertaking a detailed analysis of the accomplishments to date, the gaps in those accomplishments, and the priority steps to address those gaps, with regard to strengthened coordination on PA management and financing will be challenging to carry out with only 1 year of project implementation remaining. However, this is possibly the single biggest gap in the accomplishments of this project, and it should be a top project priority to devote effort and resources to addressing this issue. Furthermore, while the MTR report provides some guidance on key issues, it was not within the scope of the MTR to review all of the detailed legal, regulatory and policy changes that have taken place during the project and compare them against the project goals for better PA management and financing, particularly since some of the relevant documents were still being finalized at the time of the MTR. Therefore, the MTR Team does not agree with BCA’s proposed change to Recommendation 11. Furthermore, the MTR Team recommends that BCA, UNDP Viet Nam, and the Project Steering Committee work together to find a way to streamline the hiring of a consultant to undertake this work. Alternatively, BCA may want to consider tasking one of its technical experts to carry out this assessment, which would greatly shorten the time required to start this work. |
| BCA | 7 | 12 | BCA wrote the following regarding Recommendation 12: “2 ministries have new decree on functions and mandates and 2 administrative have new decisions on functions and mandates. Other things will be solved in revised Law on Forest Protection and Law on Biodiversity Conservation. At the meeting between MARD and MTR team, MARD also mentioned that MOU is not necessary. Therefore the project should not develop any new MOU.” | Recommendation 12 has been revised to propose that MONRE and MARD reach an “Agreement” on Coordination for PA Management. However, the MTR Team does not agree with simply getting rid of Recommendation 12; the fact that the two ministries have new decrees on functions and mandates has not by all accounts resolved / eliminated the overlaps and gaps in responsibilities between the Ministries, nor have these changes demonstrated any improvements in coordination on protected areas management between the Ministries. Furthermore, although members of the MARD PMU for this project expressed their opinion that an agreement is not necessary, in fact MARD was supportive of the idea in the past, and this willingness to cooperate should be explored and pursued by the VEA at the highest levels. |
| BCA | 8 | 13 | BCA proposed several slight changes regarding the project outputs that should be communicated to various stakeholders as explained in Recommendation 14. | Recommendation 14 did not recommend that a separate report be issued and disseminated on each of the listed outputs. Instead, it simply recommends that the project should “collect the various reports/guidelines and policy/legal changes resulting from the project activities and put them onto the VEA or BCA website”; “disseminate the appropriate information to these stakeholders and/or actively reach out to them to visit the website”; and “present some of the key results at public meetings”; and then it proposes an “indicative” list of relevant outputs for dissemination that the project “might include”. In other words, the MTR team has tried to identify which project outputs/results are most important for collating and sharing, and it has tried to recommend some steps for doing this. But Recommendation 14 does not say that a separate report must be issued for each of the listed outputs; it expects that the project team can best determine how to consolidate its reporting on these outputs/results. |
| BCA | 9 | 13 | BCA wrote the following regarding Recommendation 15: “This is an idea recommendation, the project will try to:  - support competent agencies to get approval in 2015  - Hopefully, the project supports BCA to send this circular to PAs to request them to report by the end of next year” | The MTR team does not understand the comments from BCA; the comments seem to imply that the project should support getting approval of a circular and the sending this to PAs, but the recommendation does not make mention of a circular (and it is not clear why a circular would be needed in this case). Therefore, the MTR team has not amended the Recommendation. |
| UNDP HQ | 10 | 14 | As stated in the ToR for this Vietnam MTR, the required ratings at the Midterm include progress towards results (objective achievement, and ratings by each outcome's achievement), project implementation and adaptive management, and sustainability. I note that in this MTR report, ratings on project implementation and sustainability are already included, but that the other required ratings are missing. This all being said, there is a high level of detail already in the report (especially in regards to progress towards results), and most other areas of the ToR were followed. Therefore it is up to you if you’d like to ask the consultant to reformulate the ratings to adhere to the ToR and MTR Guidance. You might consider asking the consultants to add the additional required ratings, in addition to the ratings they have already provided. | Additional ratings on objective and outcome achievements were provided on page 14; the rating for overall project progress was removed (per the TOR) |
| UNDP CO | 11 | 14 | We would like to revisit the rating scores. Is there a possibility of reviewing the ratings for institutional framework and governance? | The rating for institutional framework and governance was Moderately Unlikely (MU), which is defined as “there are significant risks that affect this dimension of sustainability/linkages”.  I based this rating primarily on the problem of the sustainability of protected area institutional cooperation and therefore effectiveness in governance, noting that “As described in Annex 11, project efforts to enhance institutional coordination for protected areas management, in particular between MONRE and MARD, have not been highly successful.  The lack of collaboration between these two ministries, which are most directly responsible for biodiversity conservation and protected area management in Viet Nam, presents an on-going risk that the benefits produced by the project will not be properly integrated into national policies and programs or sustained over the long term.”  I’ve reviewed this and I do think it is an appropriate rating; this issue is one of the key issues for the project and it is why I devoted 20 pages to an Annex on the subject. |
| UNDP HQ | 11 | 15 | The MTR Scope as outlined on pg. 15 is not in complete alignment with scope outlined in the ToR. Sections/topics on reporting and communications are missing, yet most other areas are represented, if not exactly, as they are in the ToR. | Additional text on reporting and communications was added to page 15 |
| BCA | 12 | 26 | With regard to the text “The relevant agencies within these Ministries, VEA and VNFOREST, signed a Letter of Agreement in late 2012 to enable implementation of activities to commence. As part of this negotiation, it was agreed that the CIP would report directly to UNDP, which then forwards the report to the NIP”, BCA wrote: “It is not as part of negotiation, it follows project document” | The MTR has been revised to state: “The relevant agencies within these Ministries, VEA and VNFOREST, signed a Letter of Agreement in late 2012 to enable implementation of activities to commence, in which it was agreed that the CIP would report directly to UNDP, which then forwards the report to the NIP” |
| UNDP RCU | 13 | 27 | With regard to the text “For Site Level activities, each site has one full-time Site Coordinator. They are supported by the Director and Deputy Director of each Management Board, whose participation is part of the project co-financing”, UNDP RCU wrote “Not clear who pays for the site coordinator – it seems to be government employees so should also be co-financing?” | The MTR Report has been revised to read: “For Site Level activities, each site has one full-time Site Coordinator, who is supported by the Director and Deputy Director of each Management Board; the participation of the Site Coordinators, Directors and Deputy Directors constitutes a part of the project co-financing”. |
| BCA | 14 | 28 | With regard to the actual role of Provincial Departments of Natural Resources and Environment (DONREs) in the project implementation, BCA wrote: “DONREs take their role in contributing comments on draft proposal on financing mechanism at 3 sites. PPCs only approve when receiving their agreements, as well as DARD and DOF agreements” | The MTR Report has been revised to state: “DONREs have participated by contributing comments on the draft proposals on financing mechanisms at the three project demonstration sites; the PPCs only approved these proposals after receiving agreement from DONRE (as well as from DARD and DOF)” |
| BCA | 15 | 29 | With regard to the actual role of International donors (e.g. World Bank, Asian Development Bank) in the project implementation, BCA wrote: “Project cooperated with WB project on wildlife consumption to organize public awareness events in 2013. Project work with ADB project on biodiversity corridor (BCC project) to invite its CTA to organize workshop for National Assembly members in 2014” | The MTR Report has been revised to state: “A World Bank-funded project on wildlife consumption cooperated with the project in organizing public awareness events in 2013; an ADB-funded project on biodiversity corridors (the BCC project) collaborated with the project in organizing a workshop for National Assembly members in 2014; and a GIZ-funded initiative cooperated with the MARD component of this project to organize training in the SMART system for rangers” |
| BCA | 16 | 29 | With regard to the actual role of Vietnam Forest Protection and Department Fund (VFF) and Vietnam Environmental Protection Fund (VEPF) in the project implementation, BCA wrote: “Will work and consult with them in proposing off-site financing mechanism in 2015” | The MTR Report has been revised to state: “The project will seek to work with VFF and VEPF in developing ideas for off-site financing mechanisms during 2015; in addition, as financial institutions for environmental protection and natural conservation, both VFF and VEPF will be beneficiaries of the project.” |
| BCA | 17 | 29 | With regard to the actual role of International and Vietnamese non-governmental organisations (INGOs, VNGOs) in the project implementation, BCA wrote: “Project cooperated with SNV and Forest Trend to organize public awareness event in 2013 (forum on new financing mechanism)  GIZ cooperated with MARD project component to organize training of SMART system for rangers.  MCD has supported Xuan Thuy NP to develop technical guidance on sustainable mollusk raising” | The MTR Report has been revised to state: “The project cooperated with the Netherlands Development Organization (SNV) and Forest Trends to organize public awareness events in 2013 (including a forum on new financing mechanisms); in addition, the Centre for Marine Life Conservation and Community Development (MCD) supported Xuan Thuy National Park in developing technical guidance on sustainable mollusk raising”. Note: The text about the GIZ cooperation was move to the description of international donor cooperation. |
| UNDP CO | 18 | 32 | The UNDP CO wrote: “Could it be formulated in recommendations to encourage future GEF projects to select sites at the design stage?” | In fact, the project did select the sites at the design stage, the delays arose because the project decided to revisit those selections once implementation began. However, the MTR Report has been revised to state: “However, no detailed justification for this decision to re-validate the site selection appears to have been made, and given that this re-validation process greatly delayed project site activities without actually making any changes in the sites, it seems doubtful that this was an advisable strategy. The MTR team would advise that future GEF-funded projects carefully consider revisiting project site selection after the project has started, and if they do so, that they clearly communicate and document the reasons for doing so.” |
| BCA | 19 | 38 | With regard to that statement that MONRE bears some responsibility for the failure to streamline the project procurement process, BCA wrote: “If MONRE send an official letter to MPI, the bidding threshold cannot be changed because of HPPMG development because approval is role of not only MPI but also other UN agencies. PMU and other PMUs raised the issue many times when attending workshops on HPPMG, procurement procedures organized by UNDP” | This bullet point on failure to streamline the project procurement process has been removed from the MTR report. |
| UNDP CO | 20 | 38 | With regard to the text stating: “Failure to convince MONRE and MARD to adopt a unified project management structure, or to resolve their differences over project responsibilities in a timely manner”  This project is being overseen by the Project Executive Board (PEB), which acts as a steering committee and comprises of high level representatives from a number of Ministries, providing a unified management structure to the project. This project involves two sets of activities and two sets of funding under two Ministries (MONRE and MARD). As per GoV requirements, each Ministry has appointed a National Project Director (NPD). These NPDs each head PMUs in their Ministries, with the lead PMU under MONRE and the sub-PMU under MARD.  These management arrangements were detailed in the approved ProDoc. | Given your clarification about the requirement to have two National Project Directors with supporting staff, I will change the comment to read “Limited success in convincing MONRE and MARD to resolve their differences over project responsibilities in a timely manner”. |
| UNDP CO | 21 | 38 | With regard to the text: “Failure to streamline the project procurement process”  UNDP with two other UN Agencies (UNFPA, UNICEF) are currently revising the HHPMG in collaboration with GoV.  It is a very long and strenuous process. The Project and PEB recommendations as well as UNDP oversight of this project (or any of the approximately 40 other UN projects currently under implementation) have little influence on this broader process. | I agree fully that this is not something specific to this project; but I do think it is fair to say that UNDP (as one of the key partner agencies on the HPPMG) bears some responsibility for not having succeeded in making the HPPMG more suitable for this (and other) projects.  Please note that I also clearly state in this section that “Clearly the responsibility for the problems with HPPMG do not rest solely with UNDP, since the Govt. of Viet Nam is the counterparty to the HPPMG.”  Based on your comment, however, I have gone ahead and removed the text that stated “However, as the project Implementing Agency, UNDP should take the leading role in addressing this issue, as evidenced in comments made at the 2013 Project Steering Committee meeting calling for UNDP to work together with the Ministry of Planning and Investment so as to revise the provisions of bidding at HPPMG”; and I have added the following sentence: “Furthermore, UNDP has been working with two other UN Agencies (UNFPA, UNICEF) and the Govt. of Viet Nam to revise the HHPMG, and although this has not been completed, UNDP should be commended for addressing this issue, and hopefully it will be resolved by the end of the project.” I have also changed the text to read: “Further work is required to streamline the project procurement process”. |
| BCA & UNDP RCU | 22 | 41 | Both BCA and the UNDP RCU noted problems in Table 7 with regard to the planned and actual / projected project budget spending in year 5. | Table 7 has been corrected. |
| BCA | 23 | 49 | BCA clarified that Inter-ministerial circular No. 100 between MOF and MARD was not an output of this project, but instead was a “contribution of government” | Reference to Circular No. 100 has been removed here |
| BCA | 24 | 50 | With regard to the idea of integrating increased PA financing into Tourism strategies at the provincial level, BCA wrote that “There is no chance to do in project circle because PPCs at 3 provinces have no plan to revise tourism strategies” | The MTR Report has been revised to: “Investigate if it may be possible to integrate increased PA financing into provincial or district level tourism and/or socio-economic development plans (as demonstrations), focusing on Hai Phong, Quang Ninh and Lam Dong provinces” |
| BCA | 25 | 50 | With regard to performance-based incentives, BCA wrote “VCF spent resources to propose incentives but failure because of lacking legal base. MARD component try to support MARD to develop draft inter-ministerial circular on working code for PA staff. The recommendation here should be: recommend MARD to continue doing necessary procedure to get official approval” | The MTR team has not changed the MTR report, for the same reasons outlined under point 4 above (regarding MTR Recommendation 3). |
| BCA | 26 | 51 | With regard to the possible project activity during 2015 to “Discuss the viability of implementing any of the other 4 sustainable harvesting options with the Xuan Thuy NP management board; if any of the options seem to be promising, the project should provide funds for a scoping exercise of the option(s)”, BCA wrote “with one year left, the project should try to work with Xuan Thuy NP to get approval from PPC; implement the PPC decision and do needed monitoring and reporting therefore should not do any extensive activity”. | The MTR team agreed that given the many other activities that need to be completed at Xuan Thuy NP during 2015, this activity should not be undertaken as it is not directly the responsibility of this project. Therefore, this idea has been removed from the MTR report. |
| BCA | 27 | 51 | With regard to the possible project activity during 2015 to “produce a report on potential cost efficiencies (cost savings through shared management activities) at the three pairs of PA demonstration sites”, BCA wrote “should be one (Cat Ba and Bai Tu Long NPs because cooperating activities exist” | The MTR report has been revised as suggested. |
| BCA | 28 | 51 | With regard to the possible project activities during 2015 to   * Work with the three project demonstration sites to determine how they can use BD monitoring and reporting information to guide their budget allocations * Work to ensure that the CHM guides PA system management (in other words, that BD reporting information is actively used to help guide PA system priority setting and management activities)   BCA suggested revising the activities to:   * 3 sites actively participate in CHM * Ensure BD information guide PA management at 3 sites * Project request MONRE/VEA to operate CHM and guide PA system management | The MTR team feels that the activities proposed in the MTR report are more clear and more aligned with the Prodoc, and therefore no change has been made to the MTR report. |
| BCA | 29 | 53 | BCA directed that the following policies were not developed / supported by the project, and should be removed from the description of Output 1.1:   * The National strategy on biological diversity by 2020, vision to 2030, and the National strategy for PA management by 2020, were both approved in 2013 * A Master Plan for protected areas of inland waters was approved in 2013; * A National Tiger Conservation Program 2020 was promulgated by the Prime Minister’s office; | These policies have been removed from the MTR report. |
| UNDP CO | 30 | 65 | With regard to the statement that “Neither the project results framework in the project document nor in the inception report provide any impact level indicators”, UNDP wrote “can this be included in proposed Results Framework changes?” | The MTR team does not feel that the Results Framework should be amended to include new impact indicators; with less than one year left in the project, it is not reasonable to expect that the project can establish any baseline figures now for impact indicators and then undertake activities in the remaining months to achieve measurable changes in those indicators. |
| UNDP HQ | 31 | 106 | In response to the consultant’s inquiry (written in the text of the report), I can confirm that the Assessment Key (pg. 106) that should be used in Annex 8 "Project Results Framework and Assessed Level of Indicator Target Achievement” is the second one listed, the one in the UNDP-GEF document “Guidance for Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects”, not the one based on the template used in the Lao PDR ABP Mid Term Review. Therefore, please have the consultants revise the table based on this key. | Table has been revised based on correct assessment key; in addition, summary analysis of ratings has been changed on page 8 |
| UNDP CO | 32 | 114 | With regard to the project indicator “Score for the “Tools for revenue generation” component of the UNDP Financial Scorecard”, the UNDP CO wrote “any guidance to be mentioned here?”. | The guidance on how to address the problems with the data and scoring in the UNDP Financial Scorecard was provided in the analysis of the scorecard at the overall project objective level on p. 107, namely: “The project team should ensure that the Financial Scorecard is filled out at the end of the project in the same way as the 2014 scorecard (i.e. using the same sample set, the exact same format, and ideally filled out by the same persons), so that useful comparisons can be made of project progress between the mid-term and end of the project, and lessons can be drawn about: 1) the actual and potential (assuming future replication) overall impact of the PA financing mechanisms established by the project; 2) the status of the overall national PA financing gap at the end of the project; 3) areas of the institutional, legal, policy and capacity frameworks for PA financing that most need improvement”. |
| UNDP CO | 33 | 118 | With regard to the project indicator “Capture of lessons to improve the legal environment”, the UNDP CO wrote “same as above”, referring to the question in point 25 “any guidance to be mentioned here?” | The MTR team has no guidance to provide here. As noted in the MTR report, it is assumed that the indicator’s target “lessons from increasing cost efficiencies by cross-PA cooperation and coordination have contributed to revised guidelines” referred to taking lessons from the PA demonstration sites and applying them to the Guidelines on implementation of the PM's Decision on Sustainable Financing. However, these guidelines have already been issued, and therefore the project cannot do anything now to integrate any lessons into them. The project could seek to integrate lessons it has developed on cost efficiencies and cooperation into other legal and policy platforms, but given the large number of activities that still remain to be done in 2015, the MTR team does not feel that this would be a good use of the project’s very limited time and resources. |
| BCA | 34 | 122-123 | BCA recommended changing the targets for two indicators measuring women’s participation in project activities. | The wording of the two indicators and their targets were revised; the wording of the targets is now:   * By the end of the project, at least a 25% increase in the number of households with women participating in forest protection activities * By the end of the project, at least a 25% increase in the number of licenced households with women participating in clam farming activities |
| UNDP HQ | 35 | 124 | In regards to the suggested results framework revisions to indicators and targets (pg. 124), with specific reference to the suggested revision to the indicator for outcome #4, please ensure that these revisions do not lead to a significant downscaling of the results to be achieved. | The proposed changed to the indicator has been removed from the table on page 124, and the achievement rating for that indicator has been adjusted accordingly on page 120 |
| UNDP HQ | 36 | 165 - 166 | In addition to the annexes already listed, following the UNDP-GEF MTR Guidance, the annexes in the final report should additionally include the following:   * Signed UNEG Code of Conduct form (see attached) * Signed MTR final report clearance form: must be signed by the RTA and the CO/Commissioning Unit and annexed in the final report (see attached) | The new annexes were added to the MTR. |

## Annex 13: UNEG Code of Conduct for Evaluators/Midterm Review Consultants[[30]](#footnote-30)

**Evaluators/Consultants:**

1. Must present information that is complete and fair in its assessment of strengths and weaknesses so that decisions or actions taken are well founded.
2. Must disclose the full set of evaluation findings along with information on their limitations and have this accessible to all affected by the evaluation with expressed legal rights to receive results.
3. Should protect the anonymity and confidentiality of individual informants. They should provide maximum notice, minimize demands on time, and respect people’s right not to engage. Evaluators must respect people’s right to provide information in confidence, and must ensure that sensitive information cannot be traced to its source. Evaluators are not expected to evaluate individuals, and must balance an evaluation of management functions with this general principle.
4. Sometimes uncover evidence of wrongdoing while conducting evaluations. Such cases must be reported discreetly to the appropriate investigative body. Evaluators should consult with other relevant oversight entities when there is any doubt about if and how issues should be reported.
5. Should be sensitive to beliefs, manners and customs and act with integrity and honesty in their relations with all stakeholders. In line with the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, evaluators must be sensitive to and address issues of discrimination and gender equality. They should avoid offending the dignity and self-respect of those persons with whom they come in contact in the course of the evaluation. Knowing that evaluation might negatively affect the interests of some stakeholders, evaluators should conduct the evaluation and communicate its purpose and results in a way that clearly respects the stakeholders’ dignity and self-worth.
6. Are responsible for their performance and their product(s). They are responsible for the clear, accurate and fair written and/or oral presentation of study limitations, findings and recommendations.
7. Should reflect sound accounting procedures and be prudent in using the resources of the evaluation.

**MTR Consultant Agreement Form**

Agreement to abide by the Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN System:

Name of Consultant: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Brad Auer\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Name of Consultancy Organization (where relevant): \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**I confirm that I have received and understood and will abide by the United Nations Code of Conduct for Evaluation.**

Signed at *\_\_San Francisco, CA, USA\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (Place)* on *\_\_\_\_31 January 2015\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (Date)*

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

## Annex 14: MTR Report Clearance Form

*(to be completed by the Commissioning Unit and RTA and annexed to the final report)*

**Midterm Review Report Reviewed and Cleared By:**

**Commissioning Unit**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**UNDP-GEF Regional Technical Advisor**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. Project Document (ProDoc) p 20 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. See <http://www.thegef.org/gef/Evaluation%20Policy%202010>. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. See <http://www.uneval.org/normsandstandards/index.jsp?doc_cat_source_id=4>. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. See <http://www.undp.org/evaluation/handbook>. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. 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. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. HPPMG, Hanoi 2010; p. 17 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Inception report p 1 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Inception report p 13 [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Sources: 1a Not applicable; 1b GEF online Projects Database; 2a Not applicable; 2b GEF online Projects Database; 3a Not applicable; 3b GEF online Projects Database; 4a Not applicable; 4b UNDP-GEF online PIMS; 5a Not applicable; 5b UNDP-GEF online PIMS; 6a As per standard GEF requirement for CEO Endorsement within 18 months of inclusion in Council Workplan; 6b UNDP-GEF online PIMS; 7a Prodoc signature should normally take place shortly following CEO Endorsement; 7b UNDP-GEF online PIMS; 8a Establishment of project oversight mechanism should normally take place shortly following CEO Endorsement; 8b Information provided by Project Manager; 9a Establishment of project team should normally take place shortly following CEO Endorsement; 9b Information provided by Project Manager; 10a Inception Workshop should normally take place shortly following CEO Endorsement; 10b Information in Project Inception Report; 11a Establishment of project team should normally take place shortly following CEO Endorsement; 11b Information provided by Project Manager; 12a Review should take place 24 months after project start; 12b Date of MTR data collection phase; 13a Within three months before project completion, as per UNDP-GEF requirements; 13b Not applicable; 14a 2014 PIR (note: original date was 31 December 2014); 14b Not applicable; 15a As per standard UNDP operating procedures; 15b Not applicable. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. For the focal area strategic priorities for GEF-5, see GEF Council document GEF/R.5/31, “GEF-5 Programming Document,” May 3, 2010. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Additional details on some of these problems are provided in Section V G. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. As noted in the Recommendations, the project has a great deal of activities to carry out at the demonstration sites in the final year. The evaluators believe that provision of technical support and advice to the stakeholders at the project demonstration sites will be critical to the success of the activities there, and by extension, the success of the overall project. For this reason, it is critically important that the project allocate the resources required for sufficient technical oversight and guidance from the PMU to the sites, as well as the resources required to maintain the project site coordinator positions until the end of the project. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Note on “Regulations” in Vietnam: Vietnam employs the following primary types of regulations (in ranked order)

    * + Laws & Regulations: Approved by the National Assembly
      + Decrees: Issued by Government Ministries
      + Decisions: Issued by the Office of the Prime Minister (less powerful than decrees)
      + Circulars: Typically written by more than one ministry (“Inter-Ministerial”), these provide the details needed to implement laws or decrees (usually at the national level)

    [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Activities included: 1) A photo and logo contest on Biodiversity in Vietnam; 2) an award ceremony combining the Biodiversity Day ceremony and a photo exhibition; 3) a 20-minute program on the importance of and need to conserve Vietnam's biodiversity, shown on national television around International Biodiversity Day; and 4) a Forum on Biodiversity financing initiatives [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. For ideas on innovative and participatory Monitoring and Evaluation strategies and techniques, see [UNDP Discussion Paper: Innovations in Monitoring & Evaluating Results](http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/capacity-building/discussion-paper--innovations-in-monitoring---evaluating-results/), 05 Nov 2013. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Populate with data from the Logframe and scorecards [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Populate with data from the Project Document [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. If available [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Color code this column only [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Use the 6 point Progress Towards Results Rating Scale: HS, S, MS, MU, U, HU [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Alternatively, MTR conclusions may be integrated into the body of the report. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Engagement of the consultants should be done in line with guidelines for hiring consultants in the POPP: <https://info.undp.org/global/popp/Pages/default.aspx> [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. <https://intranet.undp.org/unit/bom/pso/Support%20documents%20on%20IC%20Guidelines/Template%20for%20Confirmation%20of%20Interest%20and%20Submission%20of%20Financial%20Proposal.docx> [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. <http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/corporate/Careers/P11_Personal_history_form.doc> [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. The Report length should not exceed *40* pages in total (not including annexes). [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. [www.undp.org/unegcodeofconduct](http://www.undp.org/unegcodeofconduct) [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Measures are described in the Baseline section of the project document; specific targets for each measure will be defined before submission of the project document [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. extracted from the ProDoc [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. extracted from the METT 2014 [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. [www.undp.org/unegcodeofconduct](http://www.undp.org/unegcodeofconduct) [↑](#footnote-ref-30)