**Management Response to the Midterm Review of the Sustainable Management Models for Local Government Organizations to Enhance Biodiversity Protection and Utilization in Selected Eco-regions of Thailand**

Project Title: Sustainable Management Models for Local Government Organizations to Enhance Biodiversity Protection and Utilization in Selected Eco-regions of Thailand

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**Context, background and findings**

The objective of the project is to mainstream biodiversity conservation priorities into the performance management, development planning and budgeting systems of local government in Thailand.

This project will support the realization of this by providing a framework for the inclusion of biodiversity into the development planning, management and performance assessment mechanisms of local government organisations (LGOs). This will be achieved through working on the development of a national level framework to guide LGOs as well as developing the tools (including a Biodiversity Health Index) and capacity to implement it.

The project will also demonstrate how this approach can be achieved within the two pilot locations of Don Hoi Lord (Ramsar No 1099) in Samut Songkram Province and Bang Krachao an “urban oasis” within Samut Prakarn Province. In doing so the project will enhance conservation management of 69,618ha of land and marine area, as well as supporting the conservation of the habitats of a number of threatened species including the Great Knot (Calidris tenuirostris) (IUCN – VU), Bar-tailed Godwit (Limosa lapponica) (IUCN – NT), Eurasian Curlew (Numenius arquata) (IUCN – NT) and Asian Dowitcher (Limnodromus semipalmatus) (IUCN – NT), as well as a locally endemic earthworm (Glyphidrilus sp).

**Findings**

Focus areas are the four categories of project progress: Project Strategy, Progress Towards Results, Project Implementation and Adaptive Management, and Sustainability. A key part of the findings is the Progress Towards Outcomes Analysis – Matrix (Achievement of outcomes against End-of-project Targets) that is presented in Annex 3 of the MTR report, and which should be referred to in parallel.

### Project Strategy

Biodiversity is globally the resource base for people’s food, nutrition, and health, and also for a significant part of every country’s economy concerning agriculture, forestry and fisheries. It has become clear over the years and many spent project budgets that solid institutional setup and capacity at local levels of governance for biodiversity management are equally important, at least, as technical knowledge in fauna and flora characteristics and distribution is. The concept of the project is extremely relevant in relation to global efforts to successfully achieve sustainable development initiatives in biodiversity, natural resource management, poverty reduction and related themes.

### Project design:

**Problem addressed by the project**

Thailand is rich in biodiversity, with many globally significant species and varieties, but these natural assets are threatened by widespread depletion from habitat loss and degradation, and over-exploitation. In efforts to halt this problem, Thailand has implemented many policies and strategies for biodiversity conservation and sustainable use, established many protected areas, and signed international conventions, as clearly presented in the Project Document, pages 6 – 8.

Despite high levels of research and knowledge, and of available technical expertise, biodiversity loss continues to be documented in Thailand and similarly in a wide range of nations worldwide. It is also clear from analyses of this global problem that even though solid biodiversity technical knowhow may support well-founded projects, implementation often falters and expected successful outcomes are diminished, due to gaps in local-level governance capacity. *The gaps may be in biodiversity technical knowledge and/or experience, or in project management, or partnership building, or simply understaffing / time allocation issues* (Project Document page 26). The challenge to achieve successful biodiversity conservation and sustainable use despite these institutional bottlenecks and gaps is the problem addressed by the project.

**Relevance of project design**

The strategy to address biodiversity depletion through local government institutional capacity building has high relevance for Thailand and the development community globally. Lessons from the project will be useful for biodiversity conservation and sustainable use in other parts of Thailand, in Asia, and globally.

The MTR team finds that the project design is thoroughly thought out with a relevant strategy, and comprises a results framework that is relevant to finding solutions to identified challenges (stated above).

As presented in the Project Document page 54, quote “The project strategy is based on the assumptions that by:

- mainstreamingbiodiversity conservation into the performance management, development planning and budgeting systems of LGOs in Thailand,

- providing guidance on how these processes should be achieved, and

- supporting capacity-building of LGOs to implement them,

- stakeholders will take up the approach.

In addition, it has been assumed that increased capacity in Biodiversity-based Economy Development Office (BEDO), under the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment and the Department of Local Administration (DLA), under the Ministry of Interior, in particular, will facilitate the mainstreaming of biodiversity into local government development plans and budgets. …. The risk that these assumptions will fail is very low.”, end quote.

The MTR team finds that the assumptions underpinning the project strategy are objective, logical, and relevant.

In connection to defining these assumptions the Project Document also presents 7 risks with ratings on page 54. The risk number 2 listed there: “Weak coordination and cooperation between different stakeholders and between different levels of government” was rated as a moderate risk with moderate likelihood. However, events unfolded to bring this risk to the centre of project implementation issues when the Department of Local Administration (DLA) did not engage with the project, as earlier agreed. DLA had participated in all project preparation meetings with the other parties and endorsed the final version of the Project Document, so the change of position to not participate when it became time to start implementation was surprising.

The MTR team finds that the change to the context to achieving the project results as outlined in the Project Document from the absence of DLA was unforeseen and not due to incorrect assumptions.

**Project alignment with country priorities**

The SLBT is fully aligned with the country’s priorities. It fits within the framework of Thailand’s 20-year strategic plan which consists of six areas including ‘green growth’. It also aligns with the development strategies under the 12th National Economic and Social Development Plan (2017-2021) gearing to reduce income disparity and poverty and promote natural capital and environmental quality, underpinned by the three core principles of the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy: moderation, reasonableness, self-immunity.

**Gender**

The Project Document provides a clear guidance how gender elements could be mainstreamed into project activities throughout project inception, implementation and monitoring processes. There are guidelines for gender mainstreaming in project outcomes and outputs, as well as mechanisms for adaptive management to address emerging gender concerns. During Inception Phase, it is expected that the concept and methods of gender analysis and gender-disaggregated of project activities will be introduced and that the PM and project staff will be fully versed with gender considerations within the project. Project monitoring will ensure that gender consideration indicators are included within all monitoring, review and evaluation activities.

Gender mainstreaming in project activities implementation could be achieved through considerations how guidance on integration of biodiversity consideration into planning processes will affect genders differently and potential differential impacts of proposed policy framework across genders; women’s engagement in assessment of biodiversity and development of BHI/BBI; promotion of income generation activities that are relevant of both genders; and gender mainstreamed into extension activities.

Despite the clear and practical guidance on gender mainstreaming in the Project Document, the MTR team finds that gender considerations are not sufficiently addressed throughout the project inception, implementation and monitoring. The project did not engage gender specialist to assist with gender mainstreaming planning, training and implementation. Project work planning is not based on gender-disaggregated data.

To meet EOP gender targets, gender mainstreaming should be emphasized throughout the remaining period of the project.

**Recommendation and management response**

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| **Recommendation 1:** In the absence of DLA’s active participation, the project should shift the focal point to the Ministerial level, to MoI. At the national level, MoI is sitting in the National Integrated Planning Committee chaired by the Prime Minister. At provincial level, the governor (under MoI) chairs the Provincial Integrated Planning Committee (BEDO). To get MoI’s ‘buy in’ of the policy statement developed by KPI, there should be MoI representative sitting in the Project’s Board. A courtesy visit to MoI Permanent Secretary is planned by BEDO’s DG, to give a briefing on the project and to explore MoI’s support towards the achievement of Project Aims and Outcomes, with focus on Outcome 1.  |
| **Management Response:** Recommendations are noted and will be undertaken within proposed timeframes below. |
| **Key Actions** | **Timeframe** | **Responsible**  | **Tracking** |
| **Comments** | **Status** |
| Project manager to consult with DG and DDG of BEDO to initiate the formal high-level meeting between MoNRE, UNDP, MoI.  | Jan 19 – Mar 19 | Project Manager / BEDO | So far, the DG of BEDO has already briefed the project elements and expected outcome to the Minister of Interior. The Permanent Sec of MoI will be appointed as the Project Board Co-chair in 2019-2020. | Started in Dec 2019 |
| **Mid-term Review Recommendation 2:** Review the Results Framework to refine the indicators to be SMART /section 4.1.2 refers, (UNDP / PMU). |
| **Management Response:**  Programme Analyst will work with PMU to initiate the review and revise process.  |
| **Key Actions** | **Time Frame** | **Responsible Unit** | **Tracking** |
| **Comments** | **Status** |
| Project manager to consult with UNDP GEF Regional Technical Advisor about the quality of indicators, tracking tools, METTs. | Jan 19 – Mar 19 | Project Manager / BEDO | No further comments | Not yet started |

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| **Mid-term Review Recommendation 3:** Due to the continued absence of the initial habitat indicator species *Glyphidrilus* *sp* ‘Flying’ Earthworm at BKC, an alternative species with feasible survey outcome should be identified immediately in order to avoid a gap in BKC’s science-based results by EOP. Or, as little time remains, focus on a BKC water quality study only in the remaining project time, as biodiversity conservation supportive activity. PMU and BEDO to urgently discuss with UNDP for decision (UNDP / BEDO / PMU). |
| **Management Response:** The country office takes note of this recommendation and will consult with UNDP GEF Regional Technical Advisor and the project manager. |
| **Key Actions** | **Time Frame** | **Responsible Unit** | **Tracking** |
| **Comments** | **Status** |
| Project manager to consult with the Pollution Control Department and the Provincial Environmental Office in Samutprakarn and Samut Songkram to conduct regular water quality monitoring and communication plan.  | Feb 19 – Mar 19 | Project Manager  | No further comments | Not yet started |
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| **Mid-term Review Recommendation 4:** PMU and BEDO to discuss with UNDP to establish modality of reporting to GEF (as required), about the change in available project co-finance due to the absence of DLA, and resulting fund shortfall in order to re-align co-finance priorities (UNDP / PMU).  |
| **Management Response:** The Country Office takes note of this.  |
| **Key Actions** | **Time Frame** | **Responsible Unit** | **Tracking** |
| **Comments** | **Status** |
| The Programme Analyst/UNDP will share the spreadsheet for recording the co-financing figure of each partners. | Jan 19 – Feb 19 | Project manager | The spreadsheet is comprehensive. The Programme Analyst received this spreadsheet from the team leader of another MTR (Flora & Fauna project) in Dec 2018. It is applicable for all projects. | Not yet started. |

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| **Mid-term Review Recommendation 5:** To meet EOP gender target,gender mainstreaming should be emphasized throughout the remaining period of the project. This could be done through, for example, including more women in decision-making and leading roles to implement the project’s community-based activities in biodiversity conservation and sustainable use at both sites. For example, in produce harvesting, handling and sales, and also in related waste management. The project should also support and encourage more women to be placed in management positions at the Local Government Unit or Community Leaders, and in Social Enterprise Business. Moreover, women should also be considered as trainers in project activities, to ensure that the planned activities are responsive to women’s as well as men’s needs. Gender Mainstreaming Guidance provided in the Project Document (pp. 60-63) should be used as reference. In order to achieve the gender target, the project will need to develop sex-disaggregated data and needs assessment, and develop/implement gender responsive activities that benefit both women and men (PMU).  |
| **Management Response:** Woman has involved in several project activities. But the PMU hasn’t reported to the official project document, publication.  |
| **Key Actions** | **Time Frame** | **Responsible Unit** | **Tracking** |
| **Comments** | **Status** |
| PM to initiate reporting system and documentation with PMU and/or communication consultant. | Jan19 – Dec19 | Project manager  | Country office takes note of this recommendation and worked closely with the project manager/PMU.  | Not yet started |
| **Mid-term Review Recommendation 6:** The project should ensure there is documentation of activities and their outcome, in film, photo and written formats at both target sites. This is in order to have material for discussions about project lessons learned, and for promotion of the project’s local government focus for biodiversity conservation and sustainable use throughout Thailand (PMU). |
| **Management Response:** Country Office is fully agreed. |
| **Key Actions** | **Time Frame** | **Responsible Unit** | **Tracking** |
| **Comments** | **Status** |
| PM to initiate a consultant contract to the professional communication (individual or firm) | Jan 19 –Apr 19 | Project manager/PMU | None | Not yet started |

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| **Mid-term Review Recommendation 7:** Consider working through LGO’s Associations of Thailand to identify ‘champions’ with strong interests in sustainable BD conservation and utilization. |
| **Management Response:** Key LGO’s Association of Thailand is the Municipal League of Thailand.  |
| **Key Actions** | **Time Frame** | **Responsible Unit** | **Tracking** |
| **Comments** | **Status** |
| The Programme Analyst will suggest several LGO association options to the Project Manager and BEDO will interview the key person of those choices. |  June 2019- August 2019 | Project Manager/ BEDO | This is to prepare for the project’s exist strategy. | Not start |
| **Mid-term Review Recommendation 8:** Community business group should be strengthened in management capacity and good governance/ transparency principles, with the use of simple language and visualized methods. |
| **Management Response: Agreed**  |
| **Key Actions** | **Time Frame** | **Responsible Unit** | **Tracking** |
| **Comments** | **Status** |
| PM to discuss with UNDP to approach together the potential private company in order to prepare for supporting the Social Enterprise Business | Jan – Dec 2019 | UNDP/ BEDO | This action to be align with UNDP Private SectorEngagement Plan. | Started engagement of the business development unit under BEDO. Skill enhancement training for 39 business and community enterprise operators who conduct their bio-resource based businesses in Kung Bang Krachao. |
| **Mid-term Review Recommendation 9:** Review the project M&E system to include modifications that could assist to track consultants’ progress in a uniform manner and enable smooth reporting to PSC. |
| **Management Response: Agreed** |
| **Key Actions** | **Time Frame** | **Responsible Unit** | **Tracking** |
| **Comments** | **Status** |
| PM to organize the multiple consultants roundtable meeting periodically in order to develop the systematic M&E of each consultant's work in line with the project's tracking tool, result framework, objectives' indicator. | Dec 2018- Dec 2019 | Project Manager/ BEDO | The multiple consultants meeting was organizedin early Dec 2019. | 1st meeting in Dec 2018, 2nd meeting in April 2019 |
| **Mid-term Review Recommendation 10:** Organize a roundtable meeting with all consultants for the purpose to share outputs from individual contracts, and to identify linkages and possible integration of related outputs across the groups.PMU and BEDO support the PFCs to do close follow up with the PAO mayors and teams to engage fully in the BHI/BBI training by TEI and KPI, and related test sessions. This will help the PAO groups to establish BHI/BBI targets in their development plans, and monitor the progress. |
| **Management Response:**  **Agreed** |
| **Key Actions** | **Time Frame** | **Responsible Unit** | **Tracking** |
| **Comments** | **Status** |
| PM to develop an integrated workplan that BEDO officers will work closely with the mayors and city officers in developing the biodiversitydevelopment plan. Activities, budget, responsible officers, timeline shall be cleared. | Jan-Dec 2019 | PMU/BEDO | Need to build a professional working relationshipwithin BEDO's divisions and the 11 target LGOs. | 1st technical roundtable meeting in Mar 2019. All BEDO’s divisions involved. The meeting was chaired by the Deputy DG of BEDO. The interactive map was presented on the project’s website. |
| **Mid-term Review Recommendation 11:** Review the project website to be more engaging for more effective project awareness raising, and to showstories from project activities for stronger impact.  |
| **Management Response:**  Agreed |
| **Key Actions** | **Time Frame** | **Responsible Unit** | **Tracking** |
| **Comments** | **Status** |
| PM to hire a professional webmaster and content provider. | Jan-Dec 2019 | Project Manager/ PMU | Need to prepare a ToR in Jan 2019 | BEDO’s IT officer is in-charge. Bio-resource database system in the 2 project areas that are linked with the GIS database system from which were developed and transferred onto the main archive of BEDO’s database.Q4-2018 |
| **Mid-term Review Recommendation 12:**  Identify and promote show cases from LGOs which have already demonstrated good practice in integration of BD PMU - Q2/2019 indicators in their planning and monitoring and use them as concrete examples for sharing lessons learned. |
| **Management Response:**   **Agreed** |
| **Key Actions** | **Time Frame** | **Responsible Unit** | **Tracking** |
| **Comments** | **Status** |
|  PM and PMU to make a knowledge management plan and engage a consultant to execute the plan. |  Jan-Dec 2019 |  Project Manager/ PMU |  UNDP can suggest the potential consultant. |  PMU engaged Suan Dusit University for developing the Biodiversity Management Plan for two pilot sites. They could have potential to carry out the KM. If not, UNDP will suggest an individual consultant to PMU.  |
| **Mid-term Review Recommendation 13:**  In order to achieve the gender target, the project will need to develop sex-disaggregated data and needsassessment, and develop/implement gender responsive activities that benefit both women and men. Gender training must have practical sessions. |
| **Management Response:**   **Agreed** |
| **Key Actions** | **Time Frame** | **Responsible Unit** | **Tracking** |
| **Comments** | **Status** |
|  PM to include this task into the ToR of knowledge management |  Jan- Mar 2019 | PMU/BEDO/UNDP |  UNDP can suggest a potential consultant. |  PMU started to collect data on gender and migrant group through training delivery to school and business groups.  |