

# UNDP-GEF TE Management Response

## Management response to the Terminal Evaluation of CHFP<sup>1</sup>

**Project Title:** Building a Multiple-use Forest Management Framework to Conserve Biodiversity in the Caspian Hyrcanian Forest Landscape

UNDP Project ID (PIMS) #: 4078

GEF Project ID (PMIS) #: 4470

Terminal Evaluation Mission Completion Date: 22th April 2019

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## Context, background and findings

1. The project was designed to develop and test a new and innovative multi sectoral, multi-purpose, collaborative planning framework to achieve enhanced sustainable livelihoods and enhanced protection of the Caspian Hyrcanian Forest (CHF) and the habitats it provides to sustain native biodiversity. The project was not intended to go beyond the development and testing phase of the new planning framework. The intent of the CHFP was that the planning framework developed should be fully endorsed, approved and ready for implementation to cover all areas of the CHF. Recognizing the capacity development needs for implementation of the new planning framework, the project design included both “learning by doing” capacity development for those participating in the pilot landscapes, and capacity development through the development and testing of supporting guidelines and training materials. The latter intended to support implementation of the new planning framework after the CHFP was completed.

2. The CHFP has successfully produced high quality outputs supporting the three project outcomes and the project objective. The communities engaged in the pilot landscapes have improved livelihoods and they have committed to enhanced protection of the CHF. The CHFP has made an important contribution to protecting the most important areas for biodiversity in this globally significant ecoregion through approval of a Guideline for selecting and managing Special Areas for Biodiversity (SAB) and identification of 400,734 ha of potential SABs across the CHF. Through the development of the GDS Integrated Management Plan (IMP) process and the associated capacity development a paradigm shifts away from traditional forest management to multi-sectoral, multiple purpose, and collaborative forest management with an emphasis on community

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<sup>1</sup> This template is in alignment with the [Management Response Template](#) for UNDP project-level evaluations in the Evaluation Resource Centre.

engagement and forest protection and restoration has been initiated. The project also leaves a legacy of guideline documents and training manuals supporting the GDS, Community Forestry Forest Management Plan (CF-FMP), sustainable forest management biodiversity mainstreaming and much needed future capacity development. Field studies completed by the CHFP have provided increased knowledge of the biodiversity, ecosystem services and land capability of the CHF, including trends in some populations and an understanding of impacts, including human-wildlife conflicts.

3. There remain concerns regarding the sustainability of CHFP outcomes and there are lessons learned and/or recommendations as noted below. FRWO and UNDP are willing to scale up the project and replicate it in other villages or other landscapes and counties. The TE recommendations and the management responses are as the followings:

## Recommendations and management response

<b>Terminal Evaluation recommendation 1: Scaling up CHFP</b>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• there is a need for UNDP and FRWO to urgently work together to plan a five year scale-up phase to ensure that the momentum created by CHFP is not lost</li> <li>• FRWO to consider allocating the unspent national co-financing to support scaling-up over the five-year period, thereby allowing a proportion of the existing project staff and their associated capacity to be retained</li> <li>• UNDP and FRWO work together to seek additional sources of international funding to continue to bring international best practices and support to help FRWO achieve the paradigm shift to multi-purpose, community based forestry</li> </ul>				
<b>Management response:</b> Project management team fully accepts this recommendation, five year period is too little for planning and implementation of CF-FMP and for completion of this process and use of achieved lessons learned, it should be extended and scaled up for another five years.				
Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking <sup>2</sup>	
			Comments	Status <sup>3</sup>
1.1 Financial support of FRWO (from the remained co-financing part) for scaling-up over the five-year period	July 2019	NPD		
1.2 Preparing of new project document for the scale-up phase	June 2019	CHFP		
1.3 signing of a new project document for the scale -up	July 2019	NPD & UNDP		

<sup>2</sup> If the TE is uploaded to the ERC, the status of implementation is tracked electronically in the Evaluation Resource Centre database (ERC).

<sup>3</sup> Status of Implementation: Completed, Partially Completed, Pending.

phase				
1.4 Seeking of new international funding	July 2019	CHFP & UNDP		
<p><b>Terminal Evaluation recommendation 2.: <i>FRWO support of pilot landscape communities, particularly those communities which have not received direct allocation of CF-FMP</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the CHFP should provide guidance to FRWO in regard to the importance of supporting pilot landscape communities that have participated in the project, particularly those which are awaiting approval of CF-FMP, to mitigate potential negative social, economic or ecological impacts on communities and the pilot landscapes</li> <li>the FRWO should acknowledge the fact that those communities awaiting approval and allocation of CF-FMPs have made a significant investment in the CHFP</li> <li>there is a need to maintain the trust and participation of these communities to allow them the opportunity to engage in better management, protection and restoration of the CHF</li> <li>continued visits to these communities should be made to communicate the status of their CF-FMP</li> <li>FRWO should encourage quick resolution of the issue of direct allocation to community groups</li> <li>when allocation is approved, ongoing support of these communities will be needed to assist them in their efforts to implement their CF-FMP (e.g. forest park and/or nursery establishment and operation), including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ongoing support may include liaison with appropriate government experts or hiring consultants to provide technical advice</li> <li>ongoing support may also include assistance in securing the required financing and capacity development to manage financial aspects of the CF-FMP</li> <li>ongoing support may include addressing issues of marketing, including market chain analysis to ensure sustainability of expanding alternative livelihood activities. Where possible, marketing should avoid “middle men”, to maximize the benefits which go to local communities. There are some CHFP examples which show the success of local packaging, branding and direct selling products to enhance the marketing community based enterprises.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>				
<p><b>Management response: Project management team fully accepts this recommendation that along with FRWO's new approach for forest management with participation of key stakeholders.</b></p>				
Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking	
			Comments	Status
2.1 Finalization of Youj CF-FMP	June 2019	CHFP		
2.2 Obtaining of FRWO and General governors acceptance for allocation of CF plans (Youj, Baliran and Zilakirud) with canceling of open bidding process.	June 2019	NPD, NPM		

2.3 Training and capacity development of local communities, FRWO staff and other key stakeholders	Ongoing	LCC secretariat with support of FRWO (especially BEPP)		
2.4 Holding of Forestry Advisory Council meeting to support and supervision of implementation of community forestry	Ongoing	GDS secretariat & FRWO		
2.5 Financial support of FRWO (from the remained co-financing part) for capacity building and helping local communities in implementation of CF	July 2019	NPD		

**Terminal Evaluation recommendation 3: *Support of GDS sign off and implementation initiation***

- sign off of the GDS by the Head of FRWO with a formal letter to the Governor Generals is an essential step towards implementation
- with sign off of the GDS has identified several tasks to be completed by the FRWO and the provinces to initiate implementation
- financing will be required to assist the GDS secretariat's support of GDS initiation
- while the GDS provides broad goals and strategies there is need to develop a detailed action plan for GDS initiation, such as has been recommended for each CHF province
- GDS initiation will include project launches that advocate the GDS, and high level meetings to provide capacity building of key GDS stakeholders and to establish roles, responsibilities, tasks, timelines and funding mechanisms
- it is recommended to develop a strong supervision and oversight mechanism to ensure quality assurance, transparency and auditing of the activities of the GDS.
- a strategy is needed to encourage the many government staff who may be involved in the implementation of the GDS to participate in capacity development using training materials developed by the CHFP to achieve the paradigm needed to support the GDS
- There is a need to move forward with the agreement between the former Head of FRWO and the three Provincial Governors committing to better protection of the CHF
- While sign off of the GDS document by the current head of FRWO is important there is also a need to establish a coordination structure which has the authority to advocate for it. Including engagement of the High Council of Environment (HCE), Chaired by President or Vice President, with members representing Ministers and deputy president, to agree on the establishment of a National Forest Committee or a Special Working Group for Hyrcanian Forest. Two possible options are:
  - A) FRWO sign off of the GDS and using the existing agreement, request the Provincial Governors to establish Regional Coordinating Committee (RCC). Under guidance of the RCC, the PPDC will review and follow up on plans and required budgets thereby

providing support for the LCC operating at the county level to implement the GDS IMP. This strategy is in line with the existing GDS structure.

B) FRWO sign off of the GDS and it is sent to the MoJA Minister to request Ministry of Jihad Agriculture (MoJA) send the GDS document to the HCE for approval and endorsement. With HCE approval of the GDS then it would be possible to establish a National Forest Committee and Hyrcanian Forest Working Group to coordinate implementation of GDS IMP.

- Allocate national funding to form a permanent "National Expert Group on Community Forestry" that will engage all key CHFP staff and consultants, as well as selected FRWO experts who among them share the expertise available on community forestry in Iran. Under the purview of FRWO, this expert group shall be continuously engaged to provide support to finalizing the approvals for the pending CF-FMPs, provide on-going capacity building on-the-job or through BEPP, and support the implementation of CF-FMPs.
- FRWO may be required to take charge of the finalization and approval of the guideline for sustainable tourism currently being developed in direct consultation with Bureau of Education and Public Participation (BEPP) and Forest, Rangeland and Watershed Management High Council (FHC) by CHFP. CHFP should ensure this matter is stressed in Project Steering Committee (PSC), with Iran Cultural Heritage, Handicraft and Tourism Organization (ICHTO) and Department of Environment (DOE) representatives present.

**Management response:** The project team accepts this recommendation,

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking	
			Comments	Status
3.1 Establishment of GDS secretariat in FRWO	June 2019	NPD		
3.2 Signing off GDS and sending formal letter to General Governors	June 2019	NPD, UNDP, NPM		
3.3 Holding meeting with Provincial authorities	Aug 2019	NPD, GDS secretariat		
3.4 Establishment of coordination structure for GDS	End of 2019	NPD, GDS secretariat		
3.5 FRWO takes charge of the finalization and approval of the guideline for sustainable ecotourism	Aug 2019	NPD, GDS secretariat and FHC		

**Terminal Evaluation recommendation 4.: *Support of Local Coordination Committees (LCCs) in Pilot Landscapes***

- the CHFP established LCCs to implement IMP within the entire area of each pilot landscape
- to date LCCs have successfully worked with a limited number of pilot landscape communities that represent only a part of the total pilot landscape area
- it is recommended the GDS secretariat continue to provide targeted support to LCCs, particularly to LCC Secretariats, in the pilot landscapes to build on the capacity development and positive results seen so far
- the GDS secretariat can assist LCCs in prioritizing the extensive lists of detailed activities provided in the IMPs, including assistance making proposals to the provincial government to support IMPs
- co-mentoring approaches should be used to work towards the development of local capacity in government who are capable of implementing all IMP tasks with limited support from the GDS secretariat

**Management response:** Project team fully accepts this recommendation, all LCC's members at the last meeting announced their acceptance for holding LCC meeting for coordination and collaboration for implementing of IMPs.

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking	
			Comments	Status
4.1 Holding LCC meetings 3 times per year	Ongoing	LCC secretariats		
4.2 LCCs discuss and identify priority actions from the extensive list of detailed activities provided in the IMPs	Ongoing	LCC secretariats with support of FRWO		
4.3 LCCs will request PPDC for allocating the required budget for implementation of the activities	Ongoing	LCC secretariats with support of FRWO		

**Terminal Evaluation recommendation 5: *Addressing the issue of national co-financing***

- national co-financing was to contribute approximately 42% of the CHFP budget
- the CHFP terminal report should provide a comprehensive assessment of the implications of the lack of co-financing, including the adaptive management strategy used by the project and the impact of a reduced budget on project outcomes
- the CHFP terminal report should also provide recommendations in regard to actions required following project closure needed to address the impact of CHFP operating with a reduced budget

**Management response:** Project team accepts this recommendation, but due to some restrictions for

allocation of government cost sharing during at last two years- payment has been changed from cash to treasury documents for any contracts- the payment modality should be changed from co-finance to parallel.

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking	
			Comments	Status
5.1 Preparing a report for Head of FRWO in regards to impact of lack of co-finance on project activities	June 2019	CHFP		
5.2 Obtaining acceptance of Head of FRWO for payment of co-finance	July 2019	NPD, NPM		
5.3 Considering remaining co-finance for scale up phase plan	July 2019	NPD, NPM		