## **UNDP-GEF5 MTR Management Response**

**Management response to the Midterm Review of the R2R Strengthening the Management Effectiveness of the National System of Protected Areas**

Project Title: Strengthening the Management Effectiveness of the National System of Protected Areas

UNDP Project ID (PIMS) #: PIMS 5261

GEF Project ID (PMIS) #: 0005510

Midterm Review Mission Completion Date: 24 June 2019

Date of Issue of Management Response: 30 July 2019

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Cleared by: *The Commissioning Unit, UNDP-GEF RTA, and Project Board*

**Context, background and findings**

The MTR reviewed: a) the progress towards, and likeliness of, achieving the intended results (the project’s objectives and outcomes), b) the solidity and appropriateness of the project strategy, and c) the project’s sustainability and associated risks. Based on the findings, the MTR has come up with implementable recommendations vis-à-vis the key challenges and shortcoming identified, in order to ensure the project will achieve the intended results before its completion and ensuring their longer-term sustainability.

The GEF/UNDP-funded project PIMS 5261, Strengthening the Management Effectiveness of the Protected Areas Project, is a strong partner of CEPA to establish and strengthen the national system of protected areas. Under CEPA leadership, the project has completed the costed ***PNG Protected Area Policy Implementation Plan 2018-2028*,** that has been endorsed by the Minister for Environment and CEPA MD and derives its legal basis from the **2014 PNG Protected Area Policy**. The Plan was formulated by the CEPA and consulted extensively with customary landowners and provincial/local level government, NGOs and communities at regional and national workshops. CEPA has used the Plan to solicit government/donor financial and technical support to implement the Policy.

The Mid-Term Review (MTR) from March to June 2019, was aimed to gain an independent analysis of the progress midway through the project. The MTR focussed on identifying potential project design problems, assessing progress towards the achievement of the project objective, and identifying and documenting lessons learned about the project design, implementation and management. The MTR examined also the implementation arrangements among project’s partners, including CEPA, UNDP, Responsible Parties and the Project Management Unit. The exercise also provided an opportunity to introduce modifications to ensure achievements of project outcomes as well as to ascertain that interventions are coherent and conducted in an efficient and effective manner within the life of the CEPA/GEF/UNDP Strengthening Protected Areas Management Project.

PIMS 5261 was rated as **Moderately Satisfactory** with 10 recommendations to be carried out either immediately or throughout the remaining months of the project. The management response and actions taken to date are based on consultations and discussions among project partners which relate to improved project coherence, increased involvement of CEPA staff in institutionalising project outputs, prioritizing the mobilisation of on ground support to the Varirata National Park, improvement of financial controls and oversight, project monitoring and evaluation, strengthening project oversight, more synergy and communication amongst partners, and recommendations for a sustainability strategy and action plan and an analysis of lessons learned and best practices regarding green commodities.

This report contains the management response to the MTR recommendations. While many of these recommendations are being addressed, efforts are being made to complete important components until the project’s operational closure on 11 November 2020.

Overall, the Project Board agrees and endorses 9 out of the 10 recommendations and will take steps to implement the recommendations that can be addressed during the timeframe left in the project.

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| **Midterm Review recommendation 1. Improve project coherence through strengthening project governance arrangements, internal coordination and communication.** Improvements should include, but not be limited to: (a) include TCA and WPZ/TKCP on project steering committee (PSC); (b) prepare a project-specific terms of reference (TOR) for the PSC; (c) consider inviting DNPM to co-chair the PSC; (d) officially identify and prepare a TOR for the National Project Director; (e) update the TOR for the project manager; (f) invite JICA and Kokoda Initiative representatives to PSC meetings (as observers); (g) rotate PSC meetings among project sites; and (h) organize cross-learning exchanges among the project sites.  |
| Recommendation | Management Response  | Key Action (s) | Timeframe | Responsible Party | Tracking[[1]](#footnote-1) |
|  |  |  |  |  | Status[[2]](#footnote-2) |
| **Rec. 1:** Improve project coherence through strengthening project governance arrangements, internal coordinationand communication. Improvements should include, but not be limited to: (a) include TCA and WPZ/TKCP onproject steering committee (PSC); (b) prepare a project-specific terms of reference (TOR) for the PSC; © consider inviting DNPM to co-chair the PSC; (d) officially identify and prepare a TOR for the National ProjectDirector; (e) update the TOR for the project manager; (f) invite JICA and Kokoda Initiative representatives to PSC meetings (as observers); (g) rotate PSC meetings among project sites; and (h) organize cross-learningexchanges among the project sites. | Senior Management will ensure that Project Management will improve project coherence and governance arrangement  | CEPA confirmed that they will remain the co-chair of the SC. And DNPM can participate in the SC. | August 2020 | Project PMU | Partially  |
| **Rec. 2:** Increase involvement of CEPA staff and advocate and facilitate institutionalization of project outputs.Recommended actions included, but not limited to: (a) identify the roles of CEPA staff members on theproject; (b) assign a CEPA staff member with each technical assistance team; (c) issue and brand project outputs as CEPA deliverables; (d) link this issue to risk management process and regularly report progress/issues. | Management agree with the recommendation, the project is full CO support to NIM, hence, TOR will be prepared to identify CEPA’s staff role in the project management. | By March 2020:1. Project will finalize the TOR for CEPA staff and identify the technical assistance to provide by CEPA staff.
2. UNDP will ensure that project branding will include CEPA as part project visibility plan.
3. Lessons Learned and Risk Management will be updated every 3 months
 | March 2020 | Project PMU |  initiated  |
| **Rec. 3:** Prioritize mobilization of on-the-ground support to the Varirata National Park. In coordination with CEPA and JICA teams, prepare an adaptive management implementation plan for the final 1-1/2 years of the project regarding the Varirata NP, including coordination of recruitment of NP staff to the organization proposed in draft management plan for the NP. The annual work plan for 2019 should be reviewed to according to the agreed support to the Varirata NP, which might affect the new funding considerations for the Managalas CA & Review of Fauna (Control & Protection) Act. | Management accepted the recommendation and more coordination will be applied with the revision of the work-plan | Project started initiating the Varirata Business Plan with Queensland Park and Wild Life Services As the activity will be also implemented in 2020, the project has updated the AWP including the activity “1.4 Activity in the work-plan” CEPA will take the responsibility of Managalas CA & Review of Fauna.  | Feb 2020 | Project PMU |  initiated |
| **Rec. 4:** Improve financial controls and oversight. Recommended improvements for strengthening financial management include, but are not limited to: (a) responsible parties should retain support from professional financial professionals or service providers; (b) allocation of project management costs should be reconciled;(c) co-financing contributions should be regularly tracked, also including co-financing materialized after start of implementation. | Management agreed  | 1. RPs have hired dedicated finance person to management the RP resources and provide more control on the resource utilization.
2. UNDP Project Management team will work with GEF team on identify the amount and take the appropriate action in Jan 2020
3. UNDP project management team continuously following up with CEPA on the co-financing. However, it seems it is quite challenging to fully get the exact co-financing contribution from other donors.
 | June 2020 | Project PMU | Initiated  |
| **Rec. 5:** Improve project monitoring & evaluation. Recommended improvements include, but are not limited to: (a)finalize the midterm tracking tool assessments and clear with the UNDP-GEF RTA, including reconciling midterm METT scores; (b) adapt the capacity development scorecard according to the mandates of the NGO responsible parties and provincial government administrations; (c) update the project results framework; (d) integrate gender mainstreaming objectives into the results framework; (e) reflect the envisaged project outcomes in the results framework; (f) orient project M&E according to progress towards long-term impact considerations and maintain a record; (g) strengthen risk management, e.g., delays in approval of the proposed PA bill, gazettal of TMRCA, expansion of YUS CA, challenges with respect to the YUS CBO. | Management agree, especially this note was captured in the CO audit for FY2018. | The Mid-term tracking tool, RRF, integrating gender mainstream, risk log management all were reviwewed and the final updated version will be ready in Feb 2020 | Feb 2020 | Project PMU | Initiated |
| **Rec. 6:** Strengthen project oversight, through:(a) recruiting a part-time chief technical advisor to support review of technical outputs and liaise with CEPA officials, ensuring value-for-money of the services rendered andincreasing the likelihood that project outputs are sustained after GEF funding ceases, and (b) increasing engagement with the UNDP-GEF regional technical advisor based in Bangkok, e.g., supporting approval of high value contracts, delivering strategic guidance and facilitating South-South cooperation among other UNDP-GEFprojects in the region. | Management agreed  | Procurement unit in the CO was not centralized. This issue has caused incompliances, hence since 2019, CO has centralized the procurement unit to ensure all the process compliance with UNDP procurement rules and regulation and value for money is fully adhered toProject Management Team will inform CO procurement Unit to engage with GEF team for high value contract. | Jan 2020 | Project PMU |  initiated |
| **Rec. 7:** Design and implement a project communication and knowledge management strategy and action plan. It would be advisable to prepare a joint communication and knowledge management strategy and action plan. | Management agree | The project will initiate the process in January, and finalize the communication plan by March  | March 2020 | Project PMU | Not initiated |
| **Rec. 8:** Develop and implement a sustainability strategy and action plan. Link the strategy and action plan to the project theory of change (draft theory of change provided in the MTR report). Implementation of the action plan should start during the second half of the project and extend over the timelines outlined in the theory ofchange. One part of the sustainability strategy should address increasing involvement and strengthening capacities of landowners and community-based organizations (CBOs) in leading community conservation modalities. | Management agree | This work is part of work done on recommendation 5 and the report will be ready by Feb  | Feb2020 | Project PMU | initiated |
| **Rec 9:** Increase participation of the PNG professional community. Create a roster of PNG specialists and institute a policy of assigning a national counterpart with each international consultancy. | Management agree | CEPA has established already a roster of professionals that they can call upon.  | Dec 2019 | Project PMU | Completed  |
| **Rec. 10:** Commission an analysis of lessons learned and best practices regarding implementation of commodity conservation. Commodity conservation is an important modality for PNG and is widely promoted globally. Such an analysis would provide valuable insight for PA management administrations, PA institutions, local governments and the broader conservation community. | Management agree | This is part of 2020 AWP for GEF5 and looking at lessons learned from GEF4 to ensure synergies and sustainability  | March 2020 | Project PMU | initiated  |

1. If the MTR is uploaded to the ERC, the status of implementation is tracked electronically in the Evaluation Resource Centre database (ERC). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Status of Implementation: Completed, Partially Completed, Pending. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)