**Strengthening Management Effectiveness and Generating Multiple Environmental Benefits Within and Around the Greater Kafue National Park and West Lunga National Park in Zambia Project**

**PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION ACCELERATION STRATEGY**

**1.0 Introduction**

The Government of the Republic of Zambia has received support from the Global Environment Facility and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), under a project entitled “Strengthening Management Effectiveness and Generating Multiple Environmental Benefits Within and Around the Greater Kafue National Park and West Lunga National Park in Zambia”. The Project was initiated in May 2014 and is expected to end in May 2019.

The project objective is biodiversity and carbon sinks of Kafue/West Lunga protected area systems of Zambia are better protected from threats and effectively managed by national and local institutions, communities and economic actors using sustainable forestry and land management practices. The project is being implemented through two components:

Component 1: Increased management effectiveness and financial sustainability of Greater Kafue and West Lunga Protected Areas systems;

Component 2: Sustainable land and forest management by “Community Conservancies” in GMA buffer areas through selected CBNRM practices”.

The project which is focused around the Kafue and West Lunga Ecosystems has a Project Implementation Unit (PIU) office in Mumbwa with sub-offices in Kasempa and Mufumbwe. It is jointly implemented by the Department of National Parks and Wildlife and Forestry Department.

**2.0 Background and Context**

The project area, comprising the Greater Kafue National Park ecosystem comprises Kafue National Park, West Lunga National Park, 13 Game Management Areas (GMAs and several open forest areas and supporting over 225,000 people is threatened by various factors. The underlying cause of these threats is weak management effectiveness, financial unsustainability, open access exploitation of land and resources, exacerbated by centralised and uncoordinated resource management policies, poverty, land degradation and climate change.

The project seeks to address a number of threats to the two ecosystems which include extensive fires, wildlife poaching, deforestation and forest degradation, unsustainable land uses, loss of a large, intact ecosystem. Since the commencement of the Project in 2014, a number of activities aimed at addressing the threats have been initiated. The Mid Term Review conducted in 2017, acknowledged that some progress in achieving the Project’s objective and expected outcomes was made, although it had not yet translated into notable actual on-ground impact, resulting in the two target ecosystems, and their natural resources, still being subjected to significant threats. This was attributed partly to the significant delay in initiating and slower than planned implementation of activities but also due to some activities that had been initiated and were being planned were expected to generate long-term impact, which might not be significantly notable during the Project’s duration. In order to ensure that the Project achieved its objectives and expected outcomes and to enhance their sustainability, the Mid-Term Review made a number of recommendations to urgently address the challenges identified that had affected timely implementation. The first recommendation was the urgent acceleration of implementation. This recommendation was accepted by management with a corresponding action to finalise the acceleration strategy, which had already been initiated.

It is against the above background that the implementation acceleration strategy has been developed

**3.0 Objective**

The objective of the acceleration strategy is to provide a framework to guide the completion of planned activities by May 2019 when the project is expected to end.

**4.0 Strategic Interventions**

The Project has 1 year and 5 months in which to complete implementation of activities in order to achieve the intended objective and outcomes. It is important to identify activities that can be implemented during this period and to put in place measures that will facilitate timely achievement of the intended results. In this regard, the following 6 strategic interventions will be undertaken to accelerate implementation:

* Advanced planning in the preparation of concept notes and reviewing them by technical committee
* Speeding up disbursement of project funds;
* Joint implementation of activities;
* Sub-contracting;
* Increasing capacity;

**4.1 Advanced planning in the preparation of concept notes and reviewing them by the technical committee**

Concept notes are prepared to provide more details on the execution of project activities. The current practice is to prepare them when an activity is about to be undertaken. This in some cases has proved to inefficient particularly if activities are required to be implemented concurrently resulting in delays in the implementation of activities. The preparation of concept notes was also identified by the MTR as a procedure that contributed to the delay in implementation of some activities due to the clearance process. To minimise delays and to accelerated implementation, concept notes will be prepared in advance for activities taking place within a six- month period and reviewed by the technical committee at once. The involvement of technical committee will also facilitate the integrated and multi sectorial approach being promoted in the 7th National Development Plan.

**4.2 Speeding up disbursement of project funds**

There are 2 systems in which UNDP disburse funds to the project:

* Request for Direst Payment (RDP): Where UNDP is requested to provide support services based on UNDP rules and regulations
* Quarterly Advance (QA): Where cash is transferred to the National Implementing Partner for activities agreed in the annual workplan.

The project since its inspection has been operating on RDP. This is because the IPs did not meet the financial management standards for QAs. The use of the RDP was identified as one of the reasons that had led to the delay in project implementation particularly for community based activities. In this regard the Project Implementation Unit (PIU) capacity has been enhanced with an accountant who will be responsible for project finance management. With this increased capacity in financial management, the project will open a bank account at the Project Site in Mumbwa and start operating on QA system particularly for the community based activities.

**4.3 Joint Implementation of Activities**

The multi-focal nature of the Project entails the implementation of activities by different partners at different times. This has meant that sequencing of activities has been dependant on the completion of one activity before the next could be initiated, as the same target groups have been the focus of the interventions. Joint implementation of activities will be encouraged for efficiency in time and resource use. This will involve the clustering of partners with different activities which require the same target groups. This will be particularly effective for community based activities, which were spread out at different times throughout the year to a few months. Table 2 provides details on which activities have been earmarked for joint implementation.

**4.4 Sub-Contracting**

There are currently two Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) that have been sub-contracted by the Project to facilitate some of the activities in the Project area. The Nature Conservancy (TNC) is spearheading fire management activities while Conservation Farming Unit (CFU) is working with the Project in implementing conservation farming activities through the provision of agriculture extension services and training of farmers to bring at least 3,760 ha of land under sustainable agriculture practices. Sub-contracting will be extended to other activities such as promotion of and support to alternative income generating activities and strengthening law enforcement.

The facilitation of livelihood activities will use the Small Grants approach. In this regard, the Project will collaborate with the GEF Small Grants Programme to identify NGOs that will work directly with communities in the Village Action Groups (VAGs), to promote alternative sustainable livelihoods to address the identified threats to the Kafue and West Lunga ecosystems. Some of the livelihood activities that have been identified include bee keeping, fish farming and livestock farming.

Law enforcement activities have already begun to show results, as evidenced by increased sighting of animals in both the Kafue and West Lunga ecosystems. However, data capture into a system has not yet commenced. Strengthening of law enforcement activities will be done in collaboration with Panthera. Panthera is an organization leading in implementation of the Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool (SMART) software to facilitate targeted law enforcement in identified hotspots to promote cost effectiveness. In this regard, Panthera, an NGO, has been identified as a potential long-term partner, that the Project will engage to integrate SMART into law enforcement monitoring, as well as mapping natural resources management parameters, such as distribution of wildlife species. Panthera shall also train ecologists and field personnel (Wildlife Police Officers, Community Scouts & District Forest Officers) in the application of SMART.

Game Rangers International (GRI) another NGO has been working with the Department of National Parks and Wildlife in resource protection. With the SMART software and capacity building received from Panthera, GRI has been able to provide practical aspects of SMART and presented the progressive results achieved so far in terms of combating poaching, including contravention of the Wildlife and Forestry Acts in general**.** The work that has been done will be up-scaled to cover larger areas of Kafue National Park as animal populations are increasing.

**4.5 Training of Implementing Partners**

In addition to the capacity building requirements identified in the Project Document (PRODOC), various consultancies commissioned by the Project have recommended specific training for Implementing Partner (IP) staff. The training ranges from in-house, short courses to long-term Masters programmes. In order to accelerate the training, especially for the skills required to implement activities during the lifespan of the Project, different approaches will be applied. Individual specialist partners and consultants will be contracted to conduct workshops to train staff. Arrangements will be made with training institutions such as Zambia Forestry College and Chunga Wildlife College to conduct specialised training for staff. One member of staff from each IP will be sent for Masters training.

**4.6 Increasing Staff Capacity**

UNDP is responsible for providing oversight and support project administration e.g. reviewing of the Project Implementation Report (PIRs), Annual Workplans (AWP) and technical reports as well as conducting periodic monitoring activities and sub-contracting upon request from IPs. Implementation of the acceleration strategy will require increased staff capacity at UNDP to provide the oversight functions as well as deal with periodic and routine administrative issues. In this regard, a Project Officer will be transferred from another project to focus on project administration issues. work planning, budgeting and reporting, while an Administration.

Another aspect the project has lagged is on communications. This issue was also pointed out by the MTR and recommended to have a dedicated person handing communications. In this regard a communication officer will be transferred from another project which is about to end. It is anticipated that the increased staff capacity will contribute to the acceleration of project implementation activities and improve the communication of project results to the public.

**5.0 Execution Plan**

**Table 1: Strategic Interventions Schedule**

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| **Interventions** | **Actions** | **Duration** | **Responsible** | **Status/comments** |
| Advanced planning in the preparation of concept notes and reviewing them by the technical committee | * Drafting concept notes * Stakeholders’ workshops to approve concept notes | Feb 2018 - Mar 2019  Jul 2018 - Aug 2018 | PIU, DNPW, FD, UNDP | The PIU has begun preparing concept notes to be reviewed by technical committee |
| Speeding up disbursement of project funds | * Opening of account in the project areas after clearance from Ministry of Finance | Jan 2018 - Mar 2019 | DNPW, FD | On-going, IPs have engaged Ministry of Finance toward this process |
| Joint Implementation of activities | * Many activities will be done back-to-back as per Table 2 | Feb 2018 - Feb 2019 | Partners, PIU, Technical Committee | Activities facilitated by different partners will be clustered at the same time where the target group is the same. |
| Sub-Contracting | i. Implementing small grants: Collaborate with the GEF Small Grants Programme to identify NGOs | Mar 2018 – Feb 2019 | Small Gants Project, UNDP, NGOs, PIU | Income Generating Activities have been identified by various communities pending funding |
| ii.Strengthening Law Enforcement: finalise implementation modalities with Panther | Feb 2018 - Feb 2019 | DNPW, FD, PIU, Panthera | Initial discussions have been held with Panthera |
| Training of IPs | * Conduct validation workshop for Training Needs Assessment Report * Prioritise courses to be undertaken * Conducting searches for training institutions * Staff attending courses | Apr 2018 - Feb 2019 | PIU, DNPW, FD | Various fields have been identified by a Training needs consultant and training workshops will commence soon after consultancy validation |
| Increasing Staff Capacity | Add capacity through Project Officer and Communications Officer | Jan 2018 - Mar 2018 | UNDP/IPs | On-going, a staff member has been added toward this |

**Table 2: Joint Implementation of Activities:**

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| **Summary** | **Activity** | **Responsible** |
| SMART capacity building in both Components will be rolled out back to back in both GMAs and PAs | 1.2.3.1 Capacity building in the application of Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool (SMART)  2.10.1.2 Strengthening the capacities for forest and wildlife resources protection | Panthera, IPs |
| Implementation of the fire management strategy under both components | 1.2.5.3 Create, Upgrade fire breaks, access routes and boundaries as per fire management strategy  2.10.2.2 Strengthening VAGs in fire management | TNC, IPs |
| Translation of information for dissemination relating to multiple activities | 1.2.5.7 Translation and dissemination of the fire management plans in local languages  2.8.1.2 Translation of the REDD guidelines including VCS and CCB standards into 6 local languages | Contractor, IPs |
| Training programs for postgraduate students to be carried out simultaneously | 1.2.6.2 Training of 1 staff at Masters level  2.2.1 Training of 1 staff at masters level in a CBNRM/REDD+ field of study | IPs, UNDP & education institution |
| Instead of having multiple field visits to each VAG for various activities, each VAG visit will combine multiple activities to cover more work over a shorter period | 2.1.1.9. Facilitate development, Implementation, monitoring and enforcement of participatory VAG land use plans to protect and manage wildlife, forests and ecosystem services  2.9.1.1 Consensus on the wood fuel collection zones in 25 VAGs  2.5.1 Facilitation in integrating gender in the CRB/VAG constitution and other activities  2.9.4.1 Development of by-laws to govern the wood fuel collection | PIU and IPs |
| Training during each VAG visit will be carried out one after the other following themes on gender mainstreaming and sustainable forest management | 2.3.1.2 Training for CFM activities  2.5.1Training of communities on gender mainstreaming  2.6.1 Training of women in entrepreneurship activities  2.8.1.4 Train communities in REDD+ practices  2.9.3.1 training of communities in assisted regeneration, fire management, coppicing and carbon emission measurement  2.10.2.1 Training of VAGs and development of the fire action plans | PIU and IPs |
| During each VAG visit, income generating activities will commence alongside each other | 2.6.2 Award Grants to activities favouring women for goat herding, beekeeping coming from gender mainstreaming recommendations  2.6.3 Forming of women's user group cooperatives and linking them to the market  2.3.1.3 Grants for CFM activities | PIU and IPs |
| Activities relating to conservation farming have been subcontracted, the subcontractor will spread out activities and carry out trainings simultaneously through their staff | 2.7.1.1 Mobilize and train1,600 (30% female) farmers in 40 VAGs engaged in conservation farming covering 3,760 Ha.  2.7.1.2 Training Lead farmers to monitor the change of the areas under conservation farming to be used for the compilation of carbon emissions  2.7.1.3 Upscaling of Conservation Farming to West Lunga | CFU, PIU |
| Use of a consultant to carry out multiple activities per VAG | 2.8.1.1 Consultancy to set up and establish criteria for making payments to identified REDD+ communities (for avoided deforestation, REDD- Readiness Pilots)  2.8.1.3 Community consensus on the establishment of REDD+ pilot sites including agreement on VCS and CCB standards to be used  2.8.1.4 Train communities in REDD+ practices  2.8.1.6 Identify and establish REDD plots in VAGs.  2.10.3.1 VAG grants paid annually on the basis of quantified performance assessments. (support to livelihoods) | REDD+ Consultant, IPs and PIU |
| Both activities will be completed during each VAG visit | 2.9.2.1 Conduct forestry resource assessment and inventories in the selected PFAs in 25 VAGs  2.9.2.2 Develop forest management plans in 25 VAGs | REDD+ consultant, PIU & IPs |