

## GEF EO Terminal Evaluation Review Form for OPS4

1. PROJECT DATA				
			Review date:	October 27, 2008
GEF Project ID:	2726		<u>at endorsement</u> (Million US\$)	<u>at completion</u> (Million US\$)
IA/EA Project ID:	3189	<b>GEF financing:</b>	\$0.98	\$1.0
Project Name:	Capacity Building for Sustainable Land Management (SLM) in Bulgaria	IA/EA own:	\$0.37	\$0.37
Country:	Bulgaria	Government:	\$7.6	\$7.6
		Other*:	\$4.3	\$4.3
		<b>Total Cofinancing:</b>	\$12.2	\$12.2
Operational Program:	OP 15	<b>Total Project Cost:</b>	\$13.2	\$13.2
IA:	UNDP	<b>Dates</b>		
Partners involved:	Ministry of Environment and Water, National Agriculture Advisory Services, EU-Special Accession Program for Agriculture and Rural Development, Ministry of Agriculture and Food Supply	Effectiveness/ Prodoc Signature (i.e. date project began):		March 25, 2005
		Closing Date	Proposed: December 2007	Actual: May 2008
Prepared by:	Reviewed by:	Duration between effectiveness date and original closing (in months): 32	Duration between effectiveness date and actual closing (in months): 37	Difference between original and actual closing (in months): 5
Josh Brann	Neeraj Negi			
Author of TE:		TE completion date:	TE submission date to GEF EO:	Difference between TE completion and submission date (in months): Three months
Jean-Joseph Bellamy and EcoLogic Consultancy Ltd.		May 29, 2008	August 2008	

\* Other is referred to contributions mobilized for the project from other multilateral agencies, bilateral development cooperation agencies, NGOs, the private sector and beneficiaries.

### 2. SUMMARY OF PROJECT RATINGS AND KEY FINDINGS

Please refer to document GEF Office of Evaluation Guidelines for terminal evaluation reviews for further definitions of the ratings.

Performance Dimension	Last PIR	IA Terminal Evaluation	IA Evaluation Office evaluations or reviews	GEF EO
2.1a Project outcomes	S	HS	N/A	S
2.1b Sustainability of Outcomes	N/A	HS	N/A	ML
2.1c Monitoring and evaluation	Not specified	S	N/A	S
2.1d Quality of implementation and Execution	N/A	N/A	N/A	HS
2.1e Quality of the evaluation report	N/A	N/A	HS	MS

#### 2.2 Should the terminal evaluation report for this project be considered a good practice? Why?

Yes, in some respects. However, as a whole it has some weaknesses. The structure of the report is extremely well-

organized, although some of the content is not always well-organized. The structure of the report covers the key evaluation parameters, and makes it easy for a reader to identify key topics of discussion, but in some cases the evaluative evidence one would expect to find in certain sections of the report is not included under the relevant section heading.

The main aspects that could be considered good practice are the organization of the report structure, and the documentation of the evaluation methodology.

Another issue is that the content of the report is not well-balanced in terms of the amount of discussion devoted to particular topics. The TE spends more time discussing the evaluation procedures and methodology, and the relevance of the project, but has a smaller than expected discussion on project effectiveness.

Some of the evidence presented in the TE is not well-organized, and the TE repeats itself in multiple sections. For example, the financial sustainability of the project achievements is mentioned in multiple places in the TE, but not in the section on financial sustainability.

In some cases the TE does not present sufficient evidence to support its conclusions. For example, in the section on project management approach and adaptive management, the TE recognizes the great achievement of flexibility and adaptive management by the project management team, but does not give specific examples of how this flexibility was implemented. The impression is that the TE's conclusions are well-founded, but specific evidence should be included.

Some parts of the TE are not well-written, and there are multiple English errors.

**2.3 Are there any evaluation findings that require follow-up, such as corruption, reallocation of GEF funds, mismanagement, etc.?**

Only positive aspects: The TE recommends that a case study be done on the project as an excellent model of a capacity development initiative.

**3. PROJECT OBJECTIVES**

**3.1 Project Objectives**

**a. What were the Global Environmental Objectives of the project? Were there any changes during implementation?**

According to the project brief the project objective is “to enhance the enabling environment and capacity for arresting land degradation and establishing sustainable land management practices, so as to contribute to enhancing ecosystem health, integrity, functions and services while promoting sustainable livelihoods in Bulgaria.” Although this objective has been listed in the project document as the project development objective, it best encapsulates the global environmental objectives of the project.

No changes to objectives.

**b. What were the Development Objectives of the project? Were there any changes during implementation? (describe and insert tick in appropriate box below, if yes at what level was the change approved (GEFSEC, IA or EA)?)**

According to the project brief, “As immediate objective the project will build capacity for sustainable land management and development and implementation of a coherent land policy. It will focus on mainstreaming, institutional and technical capacity building, and establishment of financial mechanisms and resource mobilisation for sustainable land management.”

No changes to objectives.

<b>Overall Environmental Objectives</b>	<b>Project Development Objectives</b>	<b>Project Components</b>	<b>Any other (specify)</b>
		Some minor changes - Support from Rural Development Program for	

		local National action plan implementation allowed project to shift resources to create additional demonstration sites.	
<b>If yes, tick applicable reasons for the change in objectives</b>			
<b>Original objectives not sufficiently articulated</b>	<b>Exogenous conditions changed, causing a change in objectives</b>	<b>Project was restructured because original objectives were over ambitious</b>	<b>Project was restructured because of lack of progress</b>
			<p>According to the TE, there was a shift of resources from outcomes 1,2, and 4 to outcome 3, and to the project management unit. "Outcome 3 includes the 10 demonstration projects, which cost more than the initially planned 5 demonstration projects. Finally, less project resources were used for outcomes 1, 2, and 4 mostly due to some related legislation work that started prior to the start of the project (which was delayed) and the change of focus of outcome 4, which instead of focusing on identifying new financial schemes it was decided to focus on how assisting stakeholders better accessing Bulgarian funding initiatives under the EU structural funds."</p>

**4. GEF EVALUATION OFFICE ASSESSMENT OF OUTCOMES AND SUSTAINABILITY**

**4.1.1 Outcomes (Relevance can receive either a satisfactory rating or a unsatisfactory rating. For effectiveness and cost efficiency a six point scale 6= HS to 1 = HU will be used)**

<p><b>a. Relevance (of outcomes to focal areas/operational program strategies and country priorities) Rating: S</b></p> <p>The project was highly relevant to GEF objectives and strategic priorities, the UN Convention to Combat Desertification, and the priorities of Bulgaria. According to the TE, "The SLM project with its strong focus on capacity development for SLM in Bulgaria is highly relevant to the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) in Bulgaria and to the GEF Operational Programme (OP) 15 objective. The project provided a platform to develop the capacity of the key players in Bulgaria; intervening at three distinct levels: system, institutional and individual. It addressed the identified barriers preventing the implementation of the obligations under the UNCCD, which Bulgaria ratified on January 12, 2001 through the adoption of the Law (No 7/23/01/2001)."</p>
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<p>The TE also includes a table summarizing the exact relevance of the project to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification.</p> <p>The project also supported Bulgaria’s development objectives, and the associated relevant national policies and donor programs. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National Agri-Environmental Program, 2007-2013</li> <li>• National Strategy Plan for Rural Development, 2007-2013</li> <li>• Rural Development Program, 2007-2013 (funded by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the Government of Bulgaria)</li> <li>• National Plan for Development of Organic Farming in Bulgaria, 2006-2013</li> <li>• National Strategy for the Environment and Action Plan, 2000-2006</li> </ul> <p>The project is also relevant for the UNDP Country Programme for Bulgaria, 2006-2009.</p>	
<p><b>A.1. What is the relevance of the project outcomes/results to:</b></p>	
<p><b>(i) the national sustainable development agenda and development needs and challenges?</b></p>	
<p>Relevant to the development agenda of the country through the Rural Development Program and other national programs and policies. See Relevance section of TER.</p>	
<p><b>(ii) the national environmental framework, agenda and priorities?</b></p>	
<p>See Relevance section of TER.</p>	
<p><b>(iii) the achievement of the GEF strategies and mandate?</b></p>	
<p>The project responded to the land degradation focal area of the GEF, and supported Bulgaria’s responsibilities under the UNCCD. Also see Relevance section of the TER.</p>	
<p><b>(iv) the implementation of the global conventions the GEF supports (countries obligations and responsibilities towards the convention as well as the achievement of the conventions objectives)</b></p>	
<p>The project supported the country’s obligations under the UNCCD, and supported the achievement of the convention objectives. On pg. 7, Table 2, the TE presents an informative table showing the project outcomes relevance to various aspects of the UNCCD.</p>	
<p><b>A2. Did the project promote of International (Regional and / or Global) Cooperation and Partnership<sup>1</sup></b></p>	
<p>The project did not include aspects that addressed international cooperation and partnership. Information available in the TE does not allow assessment of this aspect, other than the fact that there was financial support from the EU to support implementation of sustainable land management at the local level.</p>	
<p><b>b. Effectiveness</b></p>	<p><b>Rating: S</b></p>
<p>The project successfully achieved its objectives, and, according to the TE, in some cases exceeded its targets. As described by the TE, “The project contributed to the development of a better capacity – particularly within the government of Bulgaria - for the development and implementation of a coherent land policy. The project delivered what it was supposed to deliver and Bulgaria is now better equipped to implement SLM measures and prevent further land degradation. The strong capacity development focus contributed to the success of the project and its long-term sustainability. This approach was very much in line with the global acceptance that capacity development encompasses the acquisition of skills and knowledge for individuals, the improvements of institutional structures, mechanisms and procedures and finally the strengthening of an enabling environment with adequate policies and laws.”</p> <p>The results of the project include,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A better land policy and comprehensive legal and regulatory framework</li> <li>- Strengthened institutional and technical capacity for sustainable land management</li> </ul>	

<sup>1</sup> Please consider for regional and global project only

- Strengthened local capacity for land planning and participatory decision-making
- Financial resources for implementation of the National Action Plan

The main results of the project are summarized below:

Availability of information on land and sustainable land management in Bulgaria:

- Gathered information on degradation processes of agricultural and forest land soils, and degradation from industrial, mining, urban and other activities
- Identified options for sustainable land management based on the basis of integrated land-use planning, including possible conflicts between sectors/stakeholders
- Collected data constituted baseline data on sustainable land management in Bulgaria which was used to produce annual State of Environment Report

A more cohesive land policy with related implementation instruments:

- Supported development of the National Action Plan, which was approved by all ministries, and was awaiting final approval from the Council of Ministers, expected in Summer 2008
- Reviewed local planning processes, and implementation of sustainable land management policy at the municipal level; supported demonstration projects in 10 municipalities
- National Advisory Committee to oversee implementation of UNCCD in Bulgaria established and met four times
- Strategy for capacity building and communication strategy for sustainable land management developed and implemented

Comprehensive legal framework to prevent further land degradation and promote sustainable land management:

- Development and adoption by National Assembly of the Soil Act (gazetted November 6, 2007)
- Three related regulations developed and gazetted – a. regulation for reference values; b. regulation for contaminated sites; c. regulation for biodiversity monitoring
- Development and approval by Ministry of Agriculture of “10 National Environmental Standards related to Land Use,” which must be followed by farmers

Financial resources available for sustainable land management measures to be implemented at the local level

- National round table meeting on financing of National Action Plan held, resulting in financing approved by Ministry of Finance for implementation of National Action Plan
- Financing mechanisms developed under the Rural Development Program

Stronger institutional capacity on sustainable land management

- Capacity development of key institutions such as National Agricultural Advisory Service, Regional Inspectorate of Environment and Water, State Forest Agency
- Five training modules conducted, with 205 staff members trained
- Development of one year Masters program at Agrarian University of Plovdiv, which has been completed thus far by 11 students

Greater awareness at the local level by farmers and demonstrated best practices

- 618 farmers provided with information on sustainable land management through extension services; also information on application for funding sources for sustainable land management
- Implementation of 10 demonstration projects in 10 municipalities to demonstrate practical implementation of sustainable land management
- Information on best practices disseminated in demonstration site communities

The TE also includes a significant discussion on the project’s contribution to capacity building for sustainable land management.

**c. Efficiency (cost-effectiveness)**

**Rating: S**

Based on information presented in the TE, the project can be considered to be efficient. By all accounts, the project management team was appropriately-sized, well-managed, and effective in project implementation. One note of importance is that the resources spent for the project management unit exceeded the initially planned budget, but according to the TE, this was due to underestimated costs for both the mid-term and final evaluation.

According to the TE, “The management procedures to procure the few project assets and equipment and to recruit short-term consultants followed the existing UNDP rules and procedures to be applied to project using the NEX mode. All project transactions were promptly recorded and properly classified; showing good internal controls mechanisms to

manage and control project resources. Financial resources were also used prudently and overall the project has been very cost-effective.”

In addition, the project made good use of partnerships to contribute to project progress. According to the TE, “Through these partnerships, numerous activities were supported by a small project team (2 people). It used the project resources and the partnership approach as levers to multiply the impact of the project and achieve an excellent cost effectiveness of project resources. The support provided to partners included the provision of technical assistance, the payment of some discreet activity costs and/or the hiring of short-term consultants to provide particular expertise.”

In addition, because the project was able to tap into funding available from the EU through the Rural Development Program to support local implementation of the National Action Plan, the project was then able to support 10 demonstration sites instead of the initially anticipated 5.

**d. To what extent did the project result in trade offs between environment and development priorities / issues (not to be rated)**

None noted in the TE, but the project helped support a national program to provide resources for farmers to institute sustainable land management practices. It is not clear if the implementation of sustainable land management practices requires some trade-offs with development priorities.

**4.1.2 Results / Impacts<sup>2</sup> (Describe Impacts) (please fill in annex 1 – results scoresheet and annex 2 – focal area impacts (against GEF Strategic Priority indicators, where appropriate and possible)**

**4.2 Likelihood of sustainability.** Using the following sustainability criteria, include an assessment of risks to sustainability of project outcomes and impacts based on the information presented in the TE. Use a four point scale (4= Likely (no or negligible risk); 3= Moderately Likely (low risk); 2= Moderately Unlikely (substantial risks) to 1= Unlikely (High risk)). The ratings should be given taking into account both the probability of a risk materializing and the anticipated magnitude of its effect on the continuance of project benefits.

<b>a. Financial resources</b>	<b>Rating: L</b>
<p>According to the TE, there are “adequate” resources for the implementation of the National Action Plan, including financial mechanisms and economic incentives promoting sustainable land management to be implemented under the Rural Development Program and 80% funded by the EU and 20% by the Government of Bulgaria.</p> <p>According to the TE, the Ministry of Finance has approved resources for the implementation of the National Action Plan, once it reaches final approval by the Council of Ministers.</p>	
<b>b. Socio-economic / political</b>	<b>Rating: ML</b>
<p>According to the TE, “the long-term sustainability of the project achievements may be hampered by the slow approval of the NAP and the creation of a SLM unit within MOEW. As discussed in Section 4.2.4, these two elements are still pending for approval by the GOB. The risk of the NAP not be approved is low but the risk of the SLM unit not created is medium. In case of any delays regarding these two elements, the sustainability of the project achievements should not be much altered; however, these delays may diminish or delay the potential impact of the project achievements on the implementation of SLM measures/practices at the local level in Bulgaria.”</p> <p>To provide support for sustainability, the TE notes that “the achievements are already institutionalized within the key Stakeholders, and therefore should be sustainable over the long-term.”</p> <p>Furthermore, as described by the TE, “The sustainability is also reinforced by the existence of the Rural Development Program, and the erosion control program from the State Forestry Agency.”</p>	
<b>c. Institutional framework and governance</b>	<b>Rating: L</b>

<sup>2</sup> Please consider direct and indirect global environmental results; any unexpected results; local development benefits (including results relevant to communities, gender issues, indigenous peoples, NGOs and CBOs)

The TE states that the project had a long-term sustainability strategy involving three components:

- The approval of regulations, codes and acts, including the Code of Good Farming Practices, National Agri-Environment Program, and Soil Conservation Act.
- Financial resources for follow up
- Government agencies with enhanced capacity are able to retain staff that have benefited from project

According to the TE, these conditions have been met.

However, the TE states that the “potential for achieving the long-term goal of the project may be hampered or delayed by the non-approval of the NAP and the creation of a SLM unit within MOEW (see Section 4.2.4). These two elements are part of an enabling environment for the implementation of SLM measures in Bulgaria. The risk is low to medium but any delay should diminish or reduce the potential impact of the project achievements on the implementation of SLM measures/practices at the local level in Bulgaria.”

One interesting and important aspect of the project was that the project manager came from the Ministry of Environment and Water, and was able to serve as the project manager by taking an unpaid sabbatical from the Ministry. At the end of the project, the project manager was able to return to her original position at the Ministry as the Head of Monitoring of Land, Biodiversity, and Protected Area Department. This will contribute greatly to the likely sustainability of project results.

**d. Environmental**

**Rating: L**

There are no risks to the environmental sustainability of the project’s achievements, although the environmental sustainability may be enhanced if the institutional/governance risks do not occur.

**e. Technological**

**Rating: L**

No risks to technological sustainability noted.

**4.3 Catalytic role<sup>3</sup>**

**a. INCENTIVES: To what extent have the project activities provide incentives (socio-economic / market based) to catalyze changes in stakeholders**

The project contributed to the implementation of the Rural Development Program, which provides funding for farmers to implement sustainable land management practices.

The TE also states that “the project specifically supported the methodology to calculate the payments for agri-environment measures.” But the TE does not elaborate on this specific activity.

**b. INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE: To what extent have the project activities changed institutional behaviors**

The project enhanced the capacity of the relevant institutions, and thus this will impact institutional behaviors in the future. However, there are no specific behaviors that were addressed and changed through project implementation.

**c. POLICY CHANGE: To what extent have project activities led to policy changes (and implementation of policy)?**

The project was involved with and contributed to the development of multiple national policies and regulations relating to sustainable land management. Some of these pieces of legislation were under development before the project started, so it cannot be said that the project was solely responsible for their development, but the project clearly made an important contribution. Most of the relevant policies and regulations were approved in 2007, and the TE does not comment on the degree of implementation yet undertaken. The National Action Plan developed under the project had yet to reach final approval at the time of the TE.

<sup>3</sup> Please review the ‘Catalytic Role of GEF: How is it measured and evaluated – A conceptual framework’ prior to addressing this section.

<p><b>d. CATALYTIC FINANCING: To what extent did the project led to sustained follow-on financing from Government and / or other donors? (this is different than co-financing)</b></p>
<p>The most notable achievement in this area is the project’s ability to tap into and leverage the EU structural funds available through the Rural Development Program. The availability of these resources allowed the project to shift some resources to expand other project objectives. According to the TE, the project results are well-integrated with the work plans of the relevant ministries.</p>
<p><b>e. PROJECT CHAMPIONS: To what extent have changes (listed above) been catalyzed by particular individuals or institutions (without which the project would not have achieved results)?</b></p>
<p>It appears that the project manager was highly capable and a Bulgarian national, and thus could be considered a project champion that strongly contributed to project success.</p> <p>In addition however, the terminal evaluation received feedback that the project benefited from the support of a “team of champions”: “the review indicates that in addition to the strong involvement of Stakeholders during the design and implementation phases, the project was implemented by a “team of Champions”. Over time the project developed a network of key Stakeholders (the Champions), that were highly motivated and dedicated to the SLM objectives in Bulgaria; often going beyond the call of duty to get the job done. They championed the project initiatives in their respective organizations and this group of Stakeholders - as an informal network - should continue to have an impact on SLM in Bulgaria over the long-term.”</p>

**4.4 Assessment of processes and factors affecting attainment of project outcomes and sustainability.**

<p><b>a. Co-financing.</b> To what extent was the reported cofinancing (or proposed cofinancing) essential to achievement of GEF objectives? If there was a difference in the level of expected co-financing and actual co-financing, then what were the reasons for it? Did the extent of materialization of co-financing affect project’s outcomes and/or sustainability? If it did, then in what ways and through what causal linkages?</p>
<p>According to the TE, “The total amount of co-financing pledged at the design phase was USD 12.2M. The breakdown amounts were supported by co-financing letters from the MOEW, MOAFS and UNDP. It is reported in the PIR 2008 (end of February 2008) that all the pledged co-financing amounts (USD 12.2M) will be disbursed (100%) by the end of the project (May 31, 2008).”</p>
<p><b>b. Delays.</b> If there were delays in project implementation and completion, then what were the reasons for it? Did the delay affect the project’s outcomes and/or sustainability? If it did, then in what ways and through what causal linkages?</p>
<p>The TE briefly states that the project was delayed, but does not provide additional discussion of the length or cause of the delay. The initial PIR (in 2005) notes that the project had an extremely long approval time from UNDP and the GEF, and the anticipated end point was already pushed back 5 months at this point. Thus, it appears that the project did not have any additional delays or extensions once it was underway.</p>
<p><b>c. Country Ownership.</b> Assess the extent to which country ownership has affected project outcomes and sustainability? Describe the ways in which it affected outcomes and sustainability highlighting the causal links.</p>
<p>The TE states that the project had strong country ownership, partially as a result of the highly participatory and consultative project development process. In addition, since the project manager has returned to her role in the Ministry of Environment and Water, this will obviously contribute to a continued level of country ownership.</p> <p>The strong country ownership had several positive contributions to project implementation. The cost-effectiveness of the implementation was increased as project stakeholders contributed their own time and resources toward the achievement of project objectives. The relatively rapid development and approval of relevant national legislation was an example of national ownership as well – normally national creation of legislation takes much more time. In addition, because stakeholders feel they have directly contributed to project outcomes, there is much greater likelihood of sustainability.</p>

**4.5 Assessment of the project's monitoring and evaluation system based on the information in the TE**

<p><b>a. M&amp;E design at Entry</b> <span style="float: right;"><b>Rating (six point scale): MU</b></span></p>
<p> </p>



The project M&E design contains the necessary elements for a complete M&E system, but the performance indicators in the project document are at the output level, and not explicitly linked to project objectives. The TE cites the project mid-term evaluation: “The objective level indicators are not clearly linked to the project’s framework. It is not always clear ‘why’ the project is pursuing particular activities and what the intended result is or how the activities undertaken will specifically result in the achievement of the project’s development and/or immediate objective.”

In addition, the mid-term and terminal evaluations were initially under-budgeted.

**b. M&E plan Implementation                      Rating (six point scale): S**

Despite the shortcomings of the design, the M&E plan appears to have been implemented in a manner that met the project’s needs. Since the mid-term and terminal evaluations were under-budgeted, some resources were shifted to adequately support these activities.

According to the TE, there were multiple monitoring mechanisms, including an inception report, annual work plans, operational monthly and quarterly reports, annual reports, and annual Project Implementation Reports.

The mid-term and terminal evaluations were carried out, although the mid-term evaluation appears to have come late in the project’s progress. According to the TE the mid-term evaluation was undertaken in July 2007. The project began in the first half of 2005, and was completed in May 2008. Thus the mid-term evaluation took place less than one year before the end of the project. The TE does not discuss whether the recommendations from the mid-term evaluation were followed up on.

**b.1 Was sufficient funding provided for M&E in the budget included in the project document?**

According to the TE, the costs of the mid-term and final evaluation were under-budgeted in the original project document.

**b.2a Was sufficient and timely funding provided for M&E during project implementation?**

Despite the initial under-budgeting for both the mid-term and final evaluation, funds were shifted to ensure that these evaluation activities were carried out.

**b.2b To what extent did the project monitoring system provided real time feed back? Was the information that was provided used effectively? What factors affected the use of information provided by the project monitoring system?**

The regular and consistent project monitoring appears to have helped ensure the project was on track. The mid-term evaluation appears to have come very late in the project’s implementation, and thus was likely of little use for making any adjustments to project implementation to increase the potential project achievements.

**b.3 Can the project M&E system (or an aspect of the project M&E system) be considered a good practice? If so, explain why.**

There is nothing particular about the project M&E system that should be used as an example for other projects. There were a few shortcomings in the M&E system design including those pertaining to performance indicators.

**4.6 Assessment of Quality of Implementation and Execution**

**a. Overall Quality of Implementation and Execution (on a six point scale): HS**

**b. Overall Quality of Implementation – for IA (on a six point scale): S**

**Briefly describe and assess performance on issues such as quality of the project design, focus on results, adequacy of supervision inputs and processes, quality of risk management, candor and realism in supervision reporting, and suitability of the chosen executing agencies for project execution.**

The project appears to have been well-designed and set appropriate objectives for the challenges and barriers to sustainable land management in Bulgaria. According to the TE, the project originated from a concept developed by a national-level NGO. As described by the TE, “The project concept/design was highly relevant to the implementation of the project. The design elements of the project were coherent with the set of expected results.”

The four components of the project focused heavily on policy and regulatory development, and capacity building at the national and local levels. According to the TE, “The design focused on the systematic development of capacity for

improving sustainable land management in Bulgaria. The approach was that of a ‘building block’ approach whereby the project would support the development and implementation of key elements to ensure the enhancement of the enabling environment for arresting land degradation in the country and establish sustainable land management practices in the agriculture and forestry sectors.”

The project development process was participatory and developed through consensus building, eventually taking two years to reach approval by key stakeholders.

As documented by the TE, the UNDP Country Office provided the level of support necessary to allow the project to achieve its objectives. The UNDP Country Office effectively disbursed the funds, and provided support for procurement and recruitment procedures. As described by the TE, “It provided project management support to the project implementation team including financial management and overseeing of expenditures to ensure proper use of GEF resources, project evaluation, reporting and results-based project monitoring. UNDP CO provided support in disbursing efficiently the project resources, as well as support for applying the UNDP procedures for procurement and recruitment. Most interviewees recognized UNDP’s comparative advantage in delivering technical assistance, in emphasizing participatory decision-making, in addressing environmental issues, and in securing environmental financing as key factors contributing to an effective project management support.”

**c. Quality of Execution – for Executing Agencies<sup>4</sup> (rating on a 6 point scale): HS**

**Briefly describe and assess performance on issues such as focus on results, adequacy of management inputs and processes, quality of risk management, and candor and realism in reporting by the executive agency.**

Based on the results of the project and the processes undertaken to achieve project objectives, the quality of execution can be rated highly satisfactory. The rating is justified based on the flexible/adaptive management approach adopted by the project management unit in order to ensure the project goals were met. This is an area in which many GEF projects fall short. Many GEF projects do use adaptive management, but the level of achievement for this project in this regard is above and beyond what is normally found in GEF projects.

As described by the TE, “The project has been well managed and the project management team used an adaptive management approach extensively to secure project outcomes while maintaining adherence to the overall project design.” In addition, “The adaptability and flexibility of the project were viewed by most interviewees as key ingredients in the success of the project.” “Flexibility was said by a few interviewees to be one of the key elements (if not the major one) explaining the success of the project. This flexibility was described as the ability of the project management team to adapt to Stakeholder’s processes, timing and types of initiatives to be supported.”

There were multiple additional institutional implementation arrangements and partnerships. As described by the TE, “UNDP was the GEF implementing agency, MOEW was the national implementing partner and MOAFS (including NAAS) was an official project partner. MOEW appointed a National Project Director (NPD) to oversee the implementation of the project and represent the ministry for day-to-day project decision-making. A PMU – headed by the Project Manager – was set up at MOEW to carry day-to-day project activities and ensure that the implementation is done in compliance with the approved project document and work plans. The Project Manager regularly consulted the NPD and reported to UNDP.

Two management bodies were created to oversee project progress: a Project Steering Committee (PSC) and an Advisory Board. The PSC included representatives from MOEW (Chairperson), MOAFS, NAAS, SFA and UNDP and the Project Manager acted as the Secretary to the PSC. The PSC was the project decision-making body; it met on average twice a year to assess project progress and endorsed the project annual work plans. The Advisory Board was set up as a consultative body to serve as a platform for information dissemination to a broad array of SLM Stakeholders such as government ministries and agencies, research institutions, NGOs, landowners, land users and representatives from the UNCCD National Coordination Committee. It met only once (January 2007) with the participation of more than 100 Stakeholders.”

## **5. LESSONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

<sup>4</sup> Executing Agencies for this section would mean those agencies that are executing the project in the field. For any given project this will exclude Executing Agencies that are implementing the project under expanded opportunities – for projects approved under the expanded opportunities procedure the respective executing agency will be treated as an implementing agency.

Assess the project lessons and recommendations as described in the TE

**a. Briefly describe the key lessons, good practice or approaches mentioned in the terminal evaluation report that could have application for other GEF projects**

The TE includes multiple lessons with a short description. The key lessons are summarized below:

- A project design that is the product of a strong participatory process facilitates the implementation of the project and ensures a greater potential for long-term impact and long-term sustainability.
- The strong ownership of the project by stakeholders leads to cost-effective project achievements.
- Addressing a national issue such as land degradation necessitates an interdisciplinary approach whereby the capacity of all relevant stakeholders needs to be developed at all three levels: system, organization and individual levels.
- Despite the success of this project, this type of project emphasizing capacity development requires a longer timeframe to ensure greater results.
- Within the context of a project focusing on policy, legislation and institution development, the implementation of demonstration projects is vital.

**b. Briefly describe the recommendations given in the terminal evaluation**

- Recommended that the project results be incorporated into the UNDP/GEF project “Integrating Global Environmental Issues into Bulgaria’s Regional Development Process,” which is under implementation from 2006 – 2010. The latter project is a good opportunity to introduce sustainable land management principles and measures into spatial and development planning.
- Recommended that the project management team (UNDP and the Project Manager) writes a memorandum and/or organizes a meeting with the Minister of Environment (and possibly with the Secretariat of the Council of Ministers) regarding the creation of the SLM unit. It is part of the expected results of the UNDP Country Programme 2006-2009 and it is a critical point for ensuring the continuity of the SLM project achievements without major disruptions.”
- Recommended that an end of project workshop is organized with the members of the project advisory board or of the UNCCD Advisory Committee to highlight the project achievements and the way forward.
- Recommended to explore the possibility of posting and exchanging information with the Global Mechanism of the UNCCD.

**6. QUALITY OF THE TERMINAL EVALUATION REPORT**

**6.1 Comments on the summary of project ratings and terminal evaluation findings based on other information sources such as GEF EO field visits, other evaluations, etc.**

None.

Provide a number rating 1-6 to each criteria based on: Highly Satisfactory = 6, Satisfactory = 5, Moderately Satisfactory = 4, Moderately Unsatisfactory = 3, Unsatisfactory = 2, and Highly Unsatisfactory = 1. Please refer to document GEF Office of Evaluation Guidelines for terminal evaluations review for further definitions of the ratings. Please briefly explain each rating.

6.2 Quality of the terminal evaluation report	Ratings
<p><b>a. To what extent does the report contain an assessment of relevant outcomes and impacts of the project and the achievement of the objectives?</b></p> <p>The TE assesses project achievements and outcomes, but it would be helpful for this assessment to be done within the framework of the project components or logframe to clearly identify which project results are correlated with which project components.</p>	S
<p><b>b. To what extent the report is internally consistent, the evidence is complete/convincing and the IA ratings have been substantiated? Are there any major evidence gaps?</b></p>	MS

<p>The TE does not always sufficiently support its conclusions and assertions with specific evaluative evidence, which is especially important in light of the very high ratings given by the TE for most aspects of the project. For example, in the section on project design and on project adaptive management, the TE is highly laudatory, but does not specific examples with evaluation evidence.</p> <p>It also would have been helpful if the TE had included any technical information on the status of land degradation and management in Bulgaria that was documented through the project, or was affected by the project.</p>	
<p><b>c. To what extent does the report properly assess project sustainability and /or a project exit strategy?</b></p> <p>The TE does assess sustainability at various points throughout the TE, but curiously in the section on financial sustainability the TE does not mention the financial sustainability of the project achievements, which appear to be good.</p> <p>Also, in the section on ecological sustainability assess the project’s risk to the environment, rather than risks to the ecological sustainability of project achievements.</p> <p>Technological sustainability is not mentioned.</p>	MS
<p><b>d. To what extent are the lessons learned supported by the evidence presented and are they comprehensive?</b></p>	S
<p><b>e. Does the report include the actual project costs (total and per activity) and actual co-financing used?</b></p>	S
<p><b>f. Assess the quality of the reports evaluation of project M&amp;E systems?</b></p> <p>The TE does include a section on the monitoring approach and progress reporting, but does not sufficiently or accurately assess the quality of the design of the M&amp;E system. The TE cites the mid-term evaluation’s assessment of the weak indicators, but does not provide any additional assessment of the indicators, and does not indicate that the indicators were modified following the mid-term evaluation. The TE appears to attempt to refute the mid-term evaluation’s assessment of indicator quality to some extent, by providing a discussion on the difficulty of identifying indicators for capacity building activities. The TE does not discuss the apparent late timing of the mid-term evaluation, and does not provide an assessment on the degree that recommendations from the mid-term evaluation were followed up on.</p>	MU

**7. SOURCES OF INFORMATION FOR THE PRERATATION OF THE TERMINAL EVALUATION REVIEW REPORT EXCLUDING PIRs, TERMINAL EVALUATIONS, PAD.**

**8 Project stakeholders and Key Contacts (Names, addresses, emails etc – mandatory for field visit countries)**

**9. Information Gaps (for Field visit countries only)**