

Terminal Evaluation Review form, GEF Independent Evaluation Office, APR 2016

1. Project Data

Summary project data			
GEF project ID		4826	
GEF Agency project ID		4811	
GEF Replenishment Phase		GEF-5	
Lead GEF Agency (include all for joint projects)		UNDP-CO	
Project name		Developing National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan and Mainstreaming Biodiversity Conservation into Provincial Planning	
Country/Countries		Vietnam	
Region		Asia	
Focal area		Biodiversity	
Operational Program or Strategic Priorities/Objectives		BD-5 Integrate CBD Obligations into National Planning Processes through Enabling Activities	
Executing agencies involved		BCA – MONRE	
NGOs/CBOs involvement		IUCN (co-financing and support on NBSAP)	
Private sector involvement		N/S	
CEO Endorsement (FSP) /Approval date (MSP)		3/29/2012	
Effectiveness date / project start		August 2012	
Expected date of project completion (at start)		March 2015 – February 2016	
Actual date of project completion		August 2015	
Project Financing			
		At Endorsement (US \$M)	At Completion (US \$M)
Project Preparation Grant	GEF funding		
	Co-financing		
GEF Project Grant		0.909091	0.86389831
Co-financing	IA own	0.3	0.290785
	Government	0.2	0.175
	Other multi- /bi-laterals	3.8	N/A
	Private sector		
	NGOs/CSOs	0.5	0.225
Total GEF funding		0.909091	0.86389831
Total Co-financing		4.8	N/A
Total project funding (GEF grant(s) + co-financing)		5.709091	N/A
Terminal evaluation/review information			
TE completion date		August 2016	
Author of TE		Eduardo Queblatin and Vu Thi Hoai Thu	
TER completion date		December 23, 2016	
TER prepared by		Mathias Einberger	
TER peer review by (if GEF IEO review)		Molly Watts	

2. Summary of Project Ratings

Criteria	Final PIR	IA Terminal Evaluation	IA Evaluation Office Review	GEF IEO Review
Project Outcomes	NR	S	NR	S
Sustainability of Outcomes		ML	NR	ML
M&E Design		MS	NR	MS
M&E Implementation		MS	NR	MS
Quality of Implementation		S	NR	S
Quality of Execution		S	NR	S
Quality of the Terminal Evaluation Report		-	-	S

3. Project Objectives

3.1 Global Environmental Objectives of the project:

The project's stated objective is to “Integrate CBD Obligations into National Planning Processes through Enabling Activities.” (PRODOC p.22) The project aims to increase both the supply and the demand side of policy relevant, actionable information on biodiversity conservation in Vietnam. It aims to enable the country to fulfill its commitment to the CBD, through the submission of a new National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan and its 5th National Report to the CBD, and to build capacity especially at the provincial level for implementation. The request for CEO endorsement of the project thus notes that global biodiversity benefits will arise from the project through the improved management of Vietnam’s globally threatened biodiversity and its habitats. Indirect global biodiversity benefits can be accrued through capacity development actions in the fulfillment of Vietnam’s CBD obligations. (Request for CEO Endorsement p. 10) This strategic national stocktaking and conservation prioritization exercise is expected to lead to increased knowledge and cooperation, and to guide effective planning and implementation, among important conservation stakeholders. It aims to ensure that future GEF investments in Vietnam could achieve greater impact and reach, while helping to institutionalize programming of GEF investments within the development framework of the government of Vietnam on both the provincial and national level. (PRODOC p. 30)

The project document further specifies long-term global biodiversity benefits based on several of the Aichi Targets:

Target 2: Biodiversity values to be integrated into national and local development plans and planning processes.

Target 3: Incentives that are harmful to biodiversity are eliminated, phased out or reformed in order to minimize or avoid negative impacts, and positive incentives for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity are developed and applied, consistent and in harmony with the CBD and other relevant international obligations, taking into account national socio economic conditions.

Target 5: Rate of loss of all natural habitats including forests, and degradation and fragmentation is significantly reduced.

Target 12: The extinction of known threatened species will be prevented and their conservation status, particularly of those most in decline, will be improved and sustained.

Target 15: Ecosystem resilience and the contribution of biodiversity to carbon stocks to be enhanced, through conservation and restoration, including restoration of degraded ecosystems, thereby contributing to climate change mitigation and adaptation and to combating desertification.

Target 17: Development, adoption as policy instrument, and commencement of implementation of an effective, participatory and updated national biodiversity strategy and action plan.

Target 20: Mobilization of financial resources for effectively implementing the CBD Strategic Plan 2011-2020 from all sources, and in accordance with the consolidated and agreed process in the Strategy for Resource Mobilization, to increase substantially from the current level. (PRODOC p. 30)

3.2 Development Objectives of the project:

The stated objective of this project is to "Strengthen biodiversity conservation by (1) increasing the supply of policy relevant, actionable information through preparation of a new NBSAP in line with Viet Nam's Biodiversity Law and the CBD Strategic Plan 2011-2020; and (2) by building capacity at the provincial level to mainstream biodiversity priorities into land use planning." (PRODOC p.25) The project would achieve this through two components:

- 1) New NBSAP and 5th National Report prepared in compliance with Biodiversity Law and CBD Strategic Plan 2011-2020
- 2) Provincial commitment and capacity strengthened to implement NBSAP

By tackling both the demand and supply side of policy relevant biodiversity information products, the project seeks to strengthen the national policy framework on biodiversity conservation, while at the same time building capacity especially among the provincial officials who will actually have to implement these measures.

The request for CEO endorsement further notes that benefits will also accrue to local communities depending on healthy natural ecosystems for their livelihoods. These local communities stand to benefit from the multiple goods and services provided by intact ecosystems, while the value of these goods and services is likely going to increase in light of the effects of climate change. (Request for CEO Endorsement p. 10)

As GEF-5 Focal Area Strategy for biodiversity notes, "increased understanding about the role intact habitat and biodiversity play to help humans adapt to climate change and advances in ecosystem service valuation provide an opportunity to incorporate this knowledge into the revision of NBSAPs. This should increase the potential of NBSAPs to serve as effective vehicles for mainstreaming biodiversity in sustainable development policy and planning." (GEF/R.5/Inf.14 pp. 8-9)

3.3 Were there any **changes** in the Global Environmental Objectives, Development Objectives, or other activities during implementation?

There were no changes to global environmental objectives or development objectives during implementation.

Under component 1, instead of producing a biodiversity focused State of the Environment (SOE) report as initially planned, the project instead created the Critical Biodiversity Issues Report (CBIR), because the former was focusing on the issue of urban pollution during the NBSAP period. This change in target was approved by the project steering committee. (TE p. 16)

4. GEF IEO assessment of Outcomes and Sustainability

Please refer to the GEF Terminal Evaluation Review Guidelines for detail on the criteria for ratings.

Relevance can receive either a Satisfactory or Unsatisfactory rating. For Effectiveness and Cost efficiency, a six point rating scale is used (Highly Satisfactory to Highly Unsatisfactory), or Unable to Assess. Sustainability ratings are assessed on a four-point scale: Likely=no or negligible risk; Moderately Likely=low risk; Moderately Unlikely=substantial risks; Unlikely=high risk. In assessing a Sustainability rating please note if, and to what degree, sustainability of project outcomes is threatened by financial, sociopolitical, institutional/governance, or environmental factors.

Please justify ratings in the space below each box.

4.1 Relevance	Rating: Satisfactory.
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The project's stated objective is to "[s]trengthen biodiversity conservation by (1) increasing the supply of policy relevant, actionable information through preparation of a new NBSAP in line with Viet Nam's Biodiversity Law and the CBD Strategic Plan 2011-2020; and (2) by building capacity at the provincial level to mainstream biodiversity priorities into land use planning."

The TE rates Relevance as Highly Satisfactory. This TER, which uses a binary rating scale on Relevance, rates Relevance as Satisfactory.

The project is fully consistent with the BD-5 objective: Integrate CBD Obligations into National Planning Processes through Enabling Activities. By enabling the integration of CBD obligations, strategies and work programs into the national planning process, through the development of a new National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, it can make a critical contribution to the mainstreaming of biodiversity into the national development planning framework.

Furthermore, by also paying attention to the demand side for policy relevant biodiversity information products such as the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, the project aims at effective communication and engagement with provincial government entities and officials, who are the parties chiefly responsible for the implementation of these plans.

4.2 Effectiveness	Rating: Satisfactory
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The TE rates Effectiveness as Satisfactory, and the TER follows this assessment. A detailed justification is provided below:

Component 1

Outcome 1.1-1.2: NBSAP and 5th National Report to CBD prepared in compliance with the Biodiversity Law and CBD Strategic Plan 2011-2020

NBSAP

The first indicator under this component is the updating of the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) itself. The baseline is an outdated NBSAP from 1995, which was briefly updated in 2007. The target was a new 10-year NBSAP with a clear institutional design and financing plan, to be approved by the government by December 2012 and submitted to the CBD. The TE rates this indicator as Moderately Satisfactory. (TE p. 56)

The TE notes that the project effectively facilitated a science based and consultative process that produced the updated NBSAP, which was submitted to the CBD in 2013. The new NBSAP technical document is not very clear on the institutional design and provides no overarching capacity building and communication plan. Rather, it inspired the development of complementary documents for its articulation. These are a) MONRE's NBSAP Implementation Guidance Document for Provinces and Cities and b) a set of 7 thematic programs that are being developed by different ministries. This is partly due to a government mandated standard template for national action plans for environmental programs linked to global commitments, which could not fully accommodate every item laid out in the NBSAP project document. At least 4 of the 7 thematic programs are directly supportive of the NBSAP and ready for implementation, although their early effects could not yet be evaluated at the time of the TE. (TE pp. 25-26) The TE also notes that the NBSAP lacks a "road map", which would enable readers to refer to the right supplementary documents. (TE pp. 16)

Several building blocks of a financing plan for the NBSAP were established in the form of working papers to identify the financing gaps and range of potential sources of financing, and to provide guidance to local authorities on how to fully tap state resources. The issues and options identified at the national level have yet to be translated into decisions on time bound priorities for national level financing. (TE p. 26)

National reports on biodiversity status, trends, and actions

In the project document, the project sets out to submit its 5th National Report to the CBD and to produce at least two State of the Environment (SOE) reports, which are presented annually to the National Assembly (NA), that contain up-to-date biodiversity data. The TE rates this indicator as Satisfactory. (TE p. 57)

The project enabled the production and submission of the 5th National Report to the CBD, which introduced the NBSAP and tracked progress of work up to 2015. Instead of a biodiversity focused SOE report as initially planned, the Critical Biodiversity Issues Report (CBIR) was instead produced under the project, because the former was focusing on the issue of pollution during the NBSAP period. The change was approved by the project steering committee. The CBIR provides a comparatively candid, incisive analysis of major policy gridlock and institutional realities. Its presentation has been widely attended by local and international organizations and agencies and positively received by the National Assembly.

Both the 5th National Report and the CBIR were communicated to the National Assembly through several workshops. Senior staff of the Science and Technology Committee of the National Assembly reported to the TE team that National Assembly members have increasingly quoted parts of the NBSAP, the 5th National Report and the CBIR on a regular basis in their sessions. (TE pp. 16-17, 57)

National GIS based map of key biodiversity information

With the baseline of no comprehensive geo referenced national database being available, this indicator sought to produce GIS maps with key biodiversity information for wider use and dissemination. The TE rates this indicator as Satisfactory. (TE p 57)

Under this project and in collaboration with the Japan International Cooperation Agency project for supporting the development of a national biodiversity database, GIS based maps were generated for MONRE and several have been used in the NBSAP. The project generated spatial information in order to show and map hot spots and ongoing projects among others. Overall, the maps addressed both national as well as provincial needs, but local authorities especially appreciated the mapping support. (TE p. 17)

Component 2

Outcome 2.1-2.2: Provincial commitment and capacity strengthened to implement NBSAP.

Provincial capacity for NBSAP implementation

This indicator measures the enhancement of the capacity of provincial officials to implement the NBSAP. At baseline, capacity in this regard was very limited. The TE rates this indicator as Satisfactory. (TE p. 57)

The target to enhance NBSAP implementation capacity in at least 20 provinces and to train up to 150 provincial staff has been reached. Through the project, MONRE developed a technical guidance document for NBSAP implementation, entitled "Guidance on the Implementation of the National Biodiversity Strategy to 2020, A Vision to 2030 at Provinces, Cities Under the Central Government," which was issued in 2014, right after the approval of the NBSAP, and communicated to 20+ provinces. More than five workshops/trainings, fully supported by the project, were organized to disseminate this guidance. In two pilot provinces, additional post training technical assistance such as in mapping was provided. (TE pp. 17, 57)

Biodiversity reporting mechanism

At baseline, no guidelines, legal requirements or procedures were in place to support provinces to report to the central government on biodiversity. The goal here was to put such a mechanism in place to report on biodiversity status and good practices from the provincial to the national level. The TE rates this indicators as Moderately Satisfactory. (TE p. 57)

The Project commissioned an expert team and conducted consultation workshops to formulate biodiversity indicators following the State Pressure Response Benefit model and to establish their feasibility. They have been vetted and are perceived feasible according to the TE, but the mechanism for actually using and reporting them to the national level awaits final promulgation of the draft circular. (TE pp. 19-21, 57)

Provincial implementation of NBSAP priorities

Biodiversity was not explicitly incorporated in any provincial land use plans at baseline. Under this indicator the goal was therefore to update land use plans while incorporating NBSAP priorities and to test biodiversity criteria for inclusion in provincial performance assessment systems in two pilot provinces. The TE rates achievement under this indicator as Satisfactory. (TE pp. 57-58)

Stakeholders in both pilot provinces committed to the updated methodology in proposed land use changes, which was created under the project through policy analysis and stakeholder consultation in order to incorporate biodiversity planning in existing protocols. Provincial resolutions in both provinces show political commitment, with the updated protocols to be formally adopted during the mandatory 5-year land use revision process in 2016. (TE pp. 21-22)

Spatial Biodiversity Assessment maps

The project supported the generation of a spatial analysis of biodiversity in the two pilot provinces, while at baseline such maps highlighting biodiversity information did not exist at the provincial level. The project thus achieved its stated objective. The TE rates this outcome as Satisfactory. (TE pp. 23, 58)

Experience and lessons learned from 2 pilot provinces documented and shared nationally

At baseline, there was little cross-provincial learning on biodiversity taking place. The objective here was to disseminate the results from the two pilot provinces for possible replication elsewhere. The TE rates the achievement of this goal as Moderately Satisfactory. (TE p. 58)

Under the project four workshops to promote the sharing of experiences and lessons learned by the two pilot provinces were conducted. The TE indicates that this has sparked some positive curiosity and interest among participants, but also appeared to be a “one time, sharing activity.” According to the TE there is no clear evidence whether a substantive effort was made to assess the extent of replicability in other provinces, or to determine how to sustain a process of learning and feedback based on the pilot experiences. (TE p. 58)

4.3 Efficiency	Rating: Satisfactory
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The TE rates Efficiency as Satisfactory and this TER will follow its assessment.

The TE notes that despite initial procurement delays in the first year, the project quickly caught up with implementation and exhibited timely work planning, adhering to sound procurement systems to ensure cost effectiveness. The project supported a range of products, including the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP), the 5th National Report to the CBD, and the Critical Biodiversity Issues Report, as well as 58 workshops attended by 3,000 participants, two local planning and monitoring guides, and three land use planning policy instruments. It trained 317 provincial and local personnel from different government sectors in 36 provinces, exposing them to the concept of AICHI targets, and it produced a range of communication materials and scientific articles, and made equipment available to the pilot provinces. The initial delay was largely due to the project team having to familiarize itself with the new procurement system mandated by the Vietnam UN Harmonized Programme and Project Management Guidelines (HPPMG), which, together with timely work planning, was however integral to the cost effectiveness of the project, according to the TE. (TE p. vi, 28)

The TE further notes that the project prioritized provinces that already had a head start with biodiversity and at least some track record in localized biodiversity planning to show for. This decision probably enabled the project to maximize the use of its limited technical assistance resources in demonstrating good practices for implementing the NBSAP, including the incorporation of biodiversity issues in land use planning. (TE p. 19)

4.4 Sustainability	Rating: Moderately Likely
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The TE assesses the project's sustainability along the four dimensions of institutional, financial, social, and environmental risks to sustainability, thereby largely following GEF guidelines. It provides a rating for each category and gives an overall rating of Moderately Likely. The TER follows this assessment.

Institutional: The TE rates institutional sustainability as moderately likely.

The government of Vietnam set up an inter-ministerial steering committee for the project, which is chaired by the Ministry for Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE) and supported by a small technical secretariat with experts from the different ministries. The National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) also defined key roles for government line agencies and ministries in formulating the 7 thematic priority programs that would link the high level actions cited in Part III of the NBAP to the physical targets summarized in its supplementary document. The two of the seven themes were prepared by MONRE, three by the Ministry for Agriculture and Rural Development, one by the Ministry for Science and Technology, and one by the Ministry of Public Administration. (TE pp. 15, 30)

The TE also notes that timely issuance of several decrees and circulars has ensured that local authorities do not face legal obstacles to invest in biodiversity conservation, especially in land use planning and enforcement. It is not yet clear however, which agency is going to provide what form of the continued

technical support needed for the formulation and implementation of provincial versions of the NBSAP. (TE p. 30)

Financial: The TE rates financial sustainability as moderately likely.

At the onset, the project document prescribed the following financial planning measures: an NBSAP declaration to conduct economic valuation, a study on financing options, the conducting of a dialogue among potential financing initiations, and guidance to provincial authorities on how to optimize access to resources on the national level. The TE notes that these are remarkable works in progress but that the NBSAP also lacks formal cost estimates and a clear articulation of sources of priority funding for the government, including a strategy to mobilize those resources. (TE pp. 15-16)

The TE also notes that the business sector was not adequately consulted in NBSAP and that the NBSAP guidance document did not also sufficiently discuss the economic rationale for local authorities to invest in biodiversity conservation. Therefore, local authorities may readily agree to expand protected areas largely for compliance purposes, while it may be difficult to sustain interest and long-term financing for enforcement, if the economic benefits are not clear compared to other land use options. (TE pp. 30-31)

Social: The TE rates social sustainability as moderately likely.

The TE notes that there is no perceived political risk to the project at this stage. (TE p. 30)

The TE further notes that the inputs of a wide range of stakeholders have been obtained, although it does not clearly specify which stakeholders. While the NBSAP will produce public goods, such as intact ecosystems, and promote the sharing of these environmental benefits among stakeholders, especially among affected communities, benefits may not materialize in the short-term. Some of the proposals call for resettling of hamlets from protected to non-protected areas. Such dislocations may cause disruptions in traditional sources of livelihoods, social systems and traditional knowledge, especially if there are no adequate resettlement plans in place.

The Departments of Agriculture and Rural Development in the provinces have expressed interest to promote the concept of co-management. If the local discourse around the preparation of biodiversity action plans as well as biodiversity friendly land use plans includes this concept, it could enrich the range of options for local authorities to render their measures more (socially) sustainable. (TE p. 32)

Environmental: The TE rates environmental sustainability as moderately likely.

The project document included the effects of climate change as a potential risk, as they may supersede any gains made in biodiversity conservation. An adequate assessment of such risk is beyond the scope of both the TE and the TER. The NBSAP does include interventions to increase the resilience of Vietnam's ecosystems and there are no expected negative effects on the environment from the implementation of the plans advocated through the NBSAP, according to the TE. (TE p. 32)

5. Processes and factors affecting attainment of project outcomes

5.1 Co-financing. To what extent was the reported co-financing essential to the 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 so, in what ways and through what causal linkages?

The project received co-financing from national and international sources through enabling activities that made a significant contribution to the project's ultimate objective. The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE) provided full support for project preparation and implementation from 2011 to 2014, through activities such as studying the scientific and practical basis for developing a new National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP), reviewing and assessing the NBSAP period 2007-2010, and other technical, managerial, coordination, and office maintenance inputs. UNDP Vietnam fully supported the project through a number of activities from 2012 to 2014, which are part of a UNDP / MONRE project titled "Strengthening Capacity for Natural Resources and Policy Development and Environmental Performance" through activities such as policy development on the integrated management of natural resources and environmental protection of seas and islands, the provision of technical inputs for the Law on Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of Seas and Islands adopted in 2015, and the development and testing of a Provincial Environmental Performance Index. The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) provided co-financing from the UNDEF-funded Project "Promoting Active Participation of Civil Society in Environmental Governance" to expand and strengthen the participation of local NGOs in environmental reporting and monitoring. The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) finally committed co-financing through the Technical Cooperation Project for Development of the National Biodiversity Database System in Vietnam from 2011 to 2015. (TE p. 63)

Co-financing materialized to a large extent from most partners (roughly 97% for UNDP's co-financing, 87.5% of the government's share, and 90% of IUCN's) but since the actual co-financing from JICA was not yet made available at the time of the TE, the total actual co-financing is unknown. (TE p. 62)

5.2 Project extensions and/or delays. 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 so, in what ways and through what causal linkages?

As mentioned in section 4.3, the project exhibited initial procurement delays in its first year. These were however quickly caught up with in implementation. There is no indication in the TE that this delay negatively affected the project's outcomes or sustainability, since it was largely due to the project team needing to familiarize itself with the new procurement system mandated by the Vietnam UN Harmonized Programme and Project Management Guidelines. Despite the initial delay, these guidelines eventually made an important contribution to the cost-effectiveness of the project, according to the TE. (TE p. 28)

5.3 Country ownership. 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:

Government agencies, particularly the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE), provided active co-leadership in designing the project and ensuring input of key stakeholders, actively sustaining their leadership throughout implementation. Since the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) was formatted to follow the government's uniform format for national action strategy papers, despite the resulting shortcomings mentioned under 4.2, it can therefore easily be compared and cross-referenced with other national programs. In addition, while the NBSAP's timely promulgation represents political commitment to the international agenda, the government of Vietnam has also created a coordinating mechanism to implement the NBSAP at both the national and local level. Although MONRE directly managed the project's actual design and implementation, as well as the utilization and accounting of resources to support project activities, several ministries beyond MONRE have been mandated to contribute, especially through the preparation of the 7 thematic programs. Last but not least, UNDP support for quality assurance allowed staff to learn about CBD practices on-the-job, leading to a high level of perceived ownership of and confidence in project outcomes. (TE p. 29)

6. Assessment of project's Monitoring and Evaluation system

Ratings are assessed on a six point scale: Highly Satisfactory=no shortcomings in this M&E component; Satisfactory=minor shortcomings in this M&E component; Moderately Satisfactory=moderate shortcomings in this M&E component; Moderately Unsatisfactory=significant shortcomings in this M&E component; Unsatisfactory=major shortcomings in this M&E component; Highly Unsatisfactory=there were no project M&E systems.

Please justify ratings in the space below each box.

6.1 M&E Design at entry	Rating: Moderately Satisfactory
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The TE discusses both M&E design and M&E implementation in one combined section, but provides separate ratings for both. The TE rates M&E design at entry as Moderately Satisfactory. So does the TER.

The project document specifies an M&E plan that includes an inception workshop, annual PIRs, quarterly progress reports, a final evaluation, a terminal report, two audits, and several field visits, all under an indicative M&E budget of US\$ 34,000. (PRODOC pp. 14-15)

The M&E design at entry was not linked with the project results framework however. While the project results framework was discussed and clarified during the inception workshop in September 2012, the inception report did not refer to the development of an M&E plan (despite the budget allocated in the PRODOC). The project was arguably limited in scope, with most of its critical deliverables (such as the reports under component 1) being relatively straightforward outcome indicators in and of themselves, while under component 2 the baselines were low enough and the targets unambitious enough for the results framework to fulfill its function without a sophisticated M&E system linked to it.

Furthermore, the various implementing units, such as the technical assistance teams for the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, also had their own de facto monitoring plans in place, which the PMU hosted in the Biodiversity Conservation Agency likewise used to monitor progress. (TE p. 9)

6.2 M&E Implementation	Rating: Moderately Satisfactory
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The TE rates M&E implementation as Moderately Satisfactory and the TER follows this assessment.

The TE notes that annual work plans prepared for the project were clearly articulated in line with the project components and outcome indicators. As a basis for monitoring, these annual work plans, together with regular references to the log frame, mitigated the project's noted lack of a customized M&E plan intricately linked to its results framework. The PMU submitted annual reports that were in turn based on quarterly reports and monitored outputs of the various consultants engaged by the project. The TE further notes that work plans and progress reports were generally submitted on time but that according to the terminal report, approval of these work plans was often delayed by both government agencies and UNDP. There is limited reference to risk management as laid out in the project design.

Lastly, the TE notes that the project steering committee addressed key issues raised by project staff during the reporting periods, which required adjustments in plans and programs. For more substantial issues in relation to the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, an Inter-Ministerial Drafting Committee, of which some project steering committee member agencies were also members, was established. The project steering committee itself only met once per year, which according to the TE seemed to be too infrequent for a project that produced so many knowledge products over a very short period. As a result, the identified project management related lessons learned at the end of each year related mostly to administrative issues and the proposed solutions tended to be too generic to be of substantial value for adaptive management.

Notwithstanding some noted gaps, the TE correctly highlights that M&E at design and implementation were able to support project management to a degree that enabled the project to deliver core outputs that met reasonable quality standards within the project's timeframe. (TE pp. 9-10)

7. Assessment of project implementation and execution

Quality of Implementation includes the quality of project design, as well as the quality of supervision and assistance provided by implementing agency(s) to execution agencies throughout project implementation. Quality of Execution covers the effectiveness of the executing agency(s) in performing its roles and responsibilities. In both instances, the focus is upon factors that are largely within the control of the respective implementing and executing agency(s). A six point rating scale is used (Highly Satisfactory to Highly Unsatisfactory), or Unable to Assess.

Please justify ratings in the space below each box.

7.1 Quality of Project Implementation	Rating: Satisfactory
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The TE discusses quality of implementation and execution in one section, but provides separate ratings for the quality of "implementation" for both UNDP (the implementing agency) and the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (the executing agency). The TE rates the quality of implementation (UNDP's work) as Satisfactory. The TER follows this assessment.

The TE notes that both the implementing agency and the executing agency were generally conscious about results management, which is reflected by the minutes of the project steering committee meetings, annual work plans and annual reports, consistently referring to the results framework.

According to the TE, the Biodiversity Conservation Agency positively noted its deep partnership with UNDP and appreciated the consistency of overall technical support provided, although turnover of project officers was high during the project period. UNDP accordingly facilitated, among others, the orientation of the project team on CBD protocols, results-based project management, sharing of international lessons learned, and preparation of TORs.

The TE notes that while UNDP provided a thorough review of the draft National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP), several key recommendations could not be accommodated, because interagency review guidelines were not available to UNDP until after NBSAP approval by the government of Vietnam. However, with UNDP's help, the project steering committee reviewed the recommendations and provided suggestions on how to manage their incorporation into the NBSAP. (TE pp. 12-13)

7.2 Quality of Project Execution	Rating: Satisfactory
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TE rates quality of execution (i.e. quality of "implementation" by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment) as Satisfactory. The TER follows this assessment.

The project document describes the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE) as the executing agency, while the Biodiversity Conservation Agency (BCA) is the operational manager and acted as lead organization on behalf of MONRE. As the national executing agency, MONRE has been accountable to the government of Vietnam and UNDP for ensuring substantive quality, effective use of resources, timeliness and proper coordination. MONRE, through the Vietnam Environment Administration (VEA), provided regular supervision on the work of BCA, while BCA provided guidance and monitoring to the project's implementing agents, such as provincial governments and consultant teams, resulting in the accomplishment of key project outputs generally within the project's timeframe.

The TE notes productive teamwork as evident from a relatively high volume of written outputs, at both the national and local level, produced by a barebones BCA staff relying predominantly on local consultants for technical assistance. The BCA team also provides continuing secretariat support for and monitoring of NBSAP progress even after project completion. Overall, MONRE, through BCA, demonstrated its conceptual leadership on biodiversity concerns, while at the same time performing a facilitator role among different national and local stakeholder agencies. (TE pp. 12-13)

8. Assessment of Project Impacts

Note - In instances where information on any impact related topic is not provided in the terminal evaluations, the reviewer should indicate in the relevant sections below that this is indeed the case and identify the information gaps. When providing information on topics related to impact, please cite the page number of the terminal evaluation from where the information is sourced.

8.1 Environmental Change. Describe the changes in environmental stress and environmental status that occurred by the end of the project. Include both quantitative and qualitative changes documented, sources of information for these changes, and how project activities contributed to or hindered these changes. Also include how contextual factors have contributed to or hindered these changes.

There are no environmental changes documented by the TE and no other sources indicating environmental change were available for the TER.

8.2 Socioeconomic change. Describe any changes in human well-being (income, education, health, community relationships, etc.) that occurred by the end of the project. Include both quantitative and qualitative changes documented, sources of information for these changes, and how project activities contributed to or hindered these changes. Also include how contextual factors have contributed to or hindered these changes.

There are no socioeconomic changes documented by the TE and no other sources indicating socioeconomic change were available for the TER.

8.3 Capacity and governance changes. Describe notable changes in capacities and governance that can lead to large-scale action (both mass and legislative) bringing about positive environmental change. “Capacities” include awareness, knowledge, skills, infrastructure, and environmental monitoring systems, among others. “Governance” refers to decision-making processes, structures and systems, including access to and use of information, and thus would include laws, administrative bodies, trust-building and conflict resolution processes, information-sharing systems, etc. Indicate how project activities contributed to/ hindered these changes, as well as how contextual factors have influenced these changes.

a) Capacities

Under its component 2, the project built capacity among provincial officials, to integrate biodiversity concerns in land use planning and development. Under the project, a national technical guidance document was produced and communicated to more than 20 provinces, with orientation workshops conducted for personnel from these provinces and other national and local state and non-state actors. The project further assisted two pilot provinces in implementing selected aspects of the guidance, vetting a set of biodiversity indicators in order to establish a mechanism for reporting biodiversity issues from the provinces to the national government, and develop, vet and adopt proposals for the formal revision of land use plans in these two provinces. (TE pp. 57-58)

b) Governance

Under component 1 of the project, a new National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) was developed, approved and submitted to CBD. Implementation plans and financing plan were also created but are housed in separated and attached documents. At least 6 legal instruments were also produced to provide the legal basis for financing strategies on the local level and to optimize state budgets and land use enforcement. The 5th National Report to the CBD was also developed and communicated to the National Assembly, the CBD and other key stakeholders. Additionally, a report on Critical Biodiversity Issues (CBIR) was released and communicated to the National Assembly and other stakeholders. As a result, National Assembly members have actively joined the discourse and its technical arm is beginning to study approaches for revising at least 3 overlapping laws, using the NBSAP, the 5th National Report and the CBIR. (TE pp. 56-57)

8.4 Unintended impacts. Describe any impacts not targeted by the project, whether positive or negative, affecting either ecological or social aspects. Indicate the factors that contributed to these unintended impacts occurring.

There are no unintended impacts documented by the TE and no other sources indicating unintended impacts were available for the TER.

8.5 Adoption of GEF initiatives at scale. Identify any initiatives (e.g. technologies, approaches, financing instruments, implementing bodies, legal frameworks, information systems) that have been mainstreamed, replicated and/or scaled up by government and other stakeholders by project end. Include the extent to which this broader adoption has taken place, e.g. if plans and resources have been established but no actual adoption has taken place, or if market change and large-scale environmental benefits have begun to occur. Indicate how project activities and other contextual factors contributed to these taking place. If broader adoption has not taken place as expected, indicate which factors (both project-related and contextual) have hindered this from happening.

Selected personnel from 20 provinces were trained under the project, in the hope of providing the initial set of catalysts that will help mobilize local stakeholders under imperfect and challenging institutional conditions. Two pilot provinces have demonstrated the feasibility of implementing key parts of this project, specifically the preparation of biodiversity conservation plans, the adoption of biodiversity performance indicators, and the preparation of specific funding proposals. The project catalyzed consensus on how stakeholders could measure their effectiveness through key performance indicators at the level of protected areas, the provincial and the national level, using the NBSAP as guidance. In addition, the project started the very important process of developing a methodology for the inclusion of biodiversity consideration in land use choices by local authorities as part of the local governance process.

These methodologies are now being institutionalized through the recent promulgation of one decree and two circulars on land use planning, which are considered as major policy breakthroughs, because they give biodiversity concerns the appropriate legal status in local land use planning in all provinces of Vietnam. (TE p. 27)

9. Lessons and recommendations

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

- **Balancing international and national standards.** The project is rich in experience with how focal points of intentional agreements like the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE) have to balance the standards of the international conventions (e.g. CBD) with national priorities. There is a need to anticipate and plan ahead on how to adopt unique government requirements and to reflect them in the TORs. It would be desirable for MONRE to catalyze consultations with other teams with experience in preparing other national action plans, other national teams responsible for macro-socioeconomic planning, and technical staff of the CBD and its scientific committees.
- **Quality assurance for a short paced knowledge intensive project.** The project produced many knowledge products in a relatively short timeframe, but the project steering committee only met once a year. For better quality assurance, the project steering committee or a subcommittee thereof, should have met more frequently.
- **Time frame for plan preparation and piloting.** The inherently short time period for preparing the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) and piloting its elements at the local level was further shortened by administrative delays. Perhaps this type of endeavor should really plan for a 4-year timeframe with the same resources, because from experience the first year is usually prone to delays.
- **Partnership management.** The sharing of manpower, knowledge and financial resources of projects under MONRE, the Vietnam Environment Administration and others enhanced the achievement of outcomes. Sustained communication beyond formal partnership contracts is crucial for strategic collaboration.
- **Capacity building measurement.** Simple baselines and final assessments about basic human resource capacities need to be established in order to enable a more meaningful assessment of capacity interventions. There are tools to achieve this even when budgets are limited.
- **Financial planning.** The project opted not to include an official estimate of NBSAP budget. An estimate was prepared for technical reference only instead. In hindsight, this should not have prevented the project make a definitive statement about the proper mobilization of funds (how, when, and where). This would guide NBSAP implementers in a clear direction in regards to short- and long-term actions to acquire funding. (TE pp. 35-36)

9.2 Briefly describe the recommendations given in the terminal evaluation.

- **Communicate the NBSAP and associated documents as one “package”.** To promote better appreciation of the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) and prevent confusion among partners not familiar with the internal process within the government of Vietnam and MONRE, clearly communicate the nature of the current NBSAP as a “package” to national and international MONRE partners.

- **Consolidate the directions for financing.** Building on the recommendations and technical consensus on innovative financing options so far, MONRE and other ministries should jointly come up with a collaborative work program in order to systematically develop guidance documents on financial resource mobilization. This would complement recent moves to promote the optimal use of the state budget and can build on the relevant working papers commissioned by the project, covering the following: a) valuation of biodiversity as part of national accounts, b) matching specific needs with targeted official development assistance, and c) research on corporate social responsibility, biodiversity and other offsets that can be piloted during the NBSAP period.
- **Follow up technical guidance for local authorities through responsive programs.** Utilizing available national and local resources of the government of Vietnam, as well as potential contributions from partner organizations, MONRE in collaboration with other ministries, may want to catalyze a post-project follow-up support to the two local pilot authorities. The purpose of this is to ensure that other key local governance processes for local NBSAP implementation are also being piloted, building on what was already implemented under the project. Consider institutionalizing the sharing process started under the project by strengthening available sharing systems such as the one being practiced among local authorities in the Northern region. Furthermore, in order support this initiative it would be advisable that technical support be provided to the national technical agencies, so that they are be able to finalize the 7 thematic programs with responsiveness to the needs of local authorities.
- **Fortify protocols for biodiversity in land use and approaches for enforcement.** Study the feasibility of piloting the approach suggested by the international land use consultant, which provides greater emphasis on the use of maps in the methodology for factoring biodiversity into land use planning. If it is found feasible in this context, the practice may lead to a more energized and participatory process for land use changes. It can also enhance deeper understanding and ownership by non-technical planners who have a stake in the changes (e.g. political leaders, community leaders, urban and peri-urban residents, etc.).
Most land use revisions involve the issue of communities residing in protected areas. The Departments of Agriculture and Rural Development are interested in expanding the coverage of some successful pilots in co-management. Future updates of the biodiversity indicators may consider including the practice of co-management. In addition, the incorporation of biodiversity in land use may also be considered to represent one of the performance indicators.
Furthermore, based on the technical recommendations from a project study, consensus that incorporates biodiversity corridors and buffer zone in land use planning protocols should be catalyzed and the dialogue with those with experience on corridor development in other parts of Vietnam and other parts of the world should be strengthened. (TE pp. 34-35)

10. Quality of the Terminal Evaluation Report

A six point rating scale is used for each sub-criteria and overall rating of the terminal evaluation report (Highly Satisfactory to Highly Unsatisfactory)

Criteria	GEF IEO comments	Rating
To what extent does the report contain an assessment of relevant outcomes and impacts of the project and the achievement of the objectives?	The report contains an assessment of all relevant outcomes and impacts of the project and of the achievements of its objectives.	HS
To what extent is the report internally consistent, the evidence presented complete and convincing, and ratings well substantiated?	The report is internally consistent, the evidence presented appears to be complete and mostly convincing, and ratings appear generally well substantiated.	S
To what extent does the report properly assess project sustainability and/or project exit strategy?	The report properly assesses project sustainability along all four dimensions, but does not include an explicit discussion of a project exit strategy.	S
To what extent are the lessons learned supported by the evidence presented and are they comprehensive?	The lessons learnt presented in the report are comprehensive and supported by the evidence.	S
Does the report include the actual project costs (total and per activity) and actual co-financing used?	The report does not include the total actual project costs, because information on a major co-financing item was not available at the time.	MS
Assess the quality of the report's evaluation of project M&E systems:	The report's evaluation of the project's M&E systems was overall well substantiated and appeared adequate.	S
Overall TE Rating		S

11. Note any additional sources of information used in the preparation of the terminal evaluation report (excluding PIRs, TEs, and PADs).

No additional sources of information were used in the preparation of this TER.