

GEF EO Terminal Evaluation Review Form for OPS4

| 1. PROJECT DATA | | | | |
|--|---|--|--|---|
| GEF Project ID: | 497 | | Review date: | |
| IA/EA Project ID: | PO57109 | GEF financing: | <u>at endorsement</u> (Million US\$) | <u>at completion</u> (Million US\$) |
| Project Name: | Conservation of Biodiversity and Protected Areas Management | IA/EA own: | 0.75 | 0.70 |
| Country: | Syrian Arab Republic | Government: | 0.28 | 0.17 |
| | | Other*: FAO | 0.20 | 0 |
| | | UNDP | 0.20 | 0 |
| | | Total Cofinancing | 0.68 | 0 |
| Operational Program: | OP3-Forest Ecosystems; Focus-Biodiversity | Total Project Cost: | 1.43 | 0.87 |
| IA | World Bank | Dates | | |
| Partners involved: | MNSRE (now MLAE - Ministry of Local Administration and Environment) MAAR - Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform FAO/UNDP | Effectiveness/ Prodoc Signature (i.e. date project began) | | October 1999 |
| | | Closing Date | Proposed: September 2002 | Actual: March 2005 |
| Prepared by: Pallavi Nuka | Reviewed by: Neeraj Negi | Duration between effectiveness date and original closing (in months): 36 | Duration between effectiveness date and actual closing (in months): 66 | Difference between original and actual closing (in months): 30 |
| Author of TE: Kanta Rigaud (Lead author), assisted by Jumana Farah | | TE completion date: October 2006 | TE submission date to GEF EO: July 2008 | Difference between TE completion and submission date (in months): 21 months |

* 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 | MS | NA | MS |
| 2.1b Sustainability of Outcomes | MS | MU | NA | MU |
| 2.1c Monitoring and evaluation | MS | MS | NA | MS |
| 2.1d Quality of implementation and Execution | NA | NA | NA | MS |
| 2.1e Quality of the evaluation report | N/A | N/A | NA | S |

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

Overall, the TE report (ICR) provides a detailed, well-organized, and balanced assessment of project outcomes, sustainability, and implementation relative to the objectives in the ProDoc. There were no gaps in project information and the project's actual costs were included in the report.

2.3 Are there any evaluation findings that require follow-up, such as corruption, reallocation of GEF funds,

mismanagement, etc.?
No.

3. PROJECT OBJECTIVES

3.1 Project Objectives

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

The global environmental objective of the project was to support “conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in forest ecosystems” (p.1 ProDoc). The ProDoc further states: “Through promotion of alternative livelihoods, sustainable use of forest resources, and public awareness, biodiversity loss as a result of human encroachment will be reduced and protection of globally significant biodiversity strengthened.”

There were no changes in global environmental objectives during implementation.

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)?

The project had two immediate objectives, (i) “to strengthen the Syrian Arab Republic’s ability to protect and manage biodiversity of global and national importance” and (ii) “to protect and manage a priority demonstration site [Cedar Forest Protected Area] encompassing biodiversity of global importance.”

To achieve these objectives, the project focused on:

- (i) “Strengthening the institutional and legal framework and building national capacity for protected area management to enable the Govt. of Syria to meet its obligations under the CBD.”
- (ii) “Increasing effectiveness of hunting regulations through enforcement and public awareness on national basis will reduce pressures on migratory birds.”
- (iii) “Strengthening application of grazing regulations would reduce pressures on natural ecosystems.”

The project had five components:

1. Drafting of enabling legislation.
2. Capacity building and institutional development
3. Extension and legal designation of the protected area.
4. Development and implementation of the protected area management plan.
5. Public awareness program.

According to the TE there was no change in the objectives. However, the first component dealing with the “drafting of enabling legislation” was dropped at the beginning of the project as the anticipated co-financing expected from FAO and UNDP, which was to cover the implementation of this component, did not materialize. (See 4.4 a. on cofinancing below)

| | | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| Overall Environmental Objectives | Project Development Objectives | Project Components | Any other (specify) |
| | | IA and EA | |

c. If yes, tick applicable reasons for the change (in global environmental objectives and/or development objectives)

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Original objectives not sufficiently articulated | Exogenous conditions changed, causing a change in objectives | Project was restructured because original objectives were over ambitious | Project was restructured because of lack of progress | Any other (specify) |
| | | | | Project activities were dropped or scaled down because |

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|--|--|--|--|---|
| | | | | cofinancing did not materialize. |
|--|--|--|--|---|

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)

a. Relevance (of outcomes to focal areas/operational program strategies and country priorities) Rating: S

A.1. What is the relevance of the project outcomes/results to:

(i) the national sustainable development agenda and development needs and challenges?

Most of Syria’s challenges to sustainable development are related to population growth, including agricultural encroachment, overgrazing, and desertification. Forest ecosystems, particularly coastal forests, are being decimated by development and tourism. The 40,000 ha project site, the Fir/Cedar Forests, is experiencing multiple pressures due to agricultural expansion, grazing, fuel wood harvesting, and more recently from construction of secondary homes and tourism. This project was designed to reduce some of these pressures by making protected area management more participatory, promoting sustainable use of resources, and increasing public appreciation of conservation goals.

According to the TE the project, the first supported by the World Bank in advancing the concept of biodiversity conservation in Syria, has contributed positively to increasing the human and institutional capacity of the GoS in understanding the importance of biodiversity and protected areas, and to embark on a process to enhance and manage its protected areas more systematically.

(ii) the national environmental framework, agenda and priorities?

Following ratification of the Convention on Biodiversity in 1996, the Govt. of Syria created a biodiversity unit within the Environment Ministry (MLAE) and drafted an Environmental Framework Law citing responsibility for the identification and coordination of management of high priority protected areas. The Agriculture Ministry (MAAR) also has a mandate (under a 1994 law) to safeguard forest biodiversity and promote sustainable forestry. However, this legal framework was considered insufficient for the creation of a national system of protected areas. Therefore, this project was developed to strengthen the legal framework and enhance national capacities for biodiversity conservation. The project site was identified as a priority site for conservation in the *National Country Study for Biodiversity in the Syrian Arab Republic* (UNEP-GEF) and in independent ornithological surveys.

(iii) the achievement of the GEF strategies and mandate?

This project falls under OP#3-Forest Ecosystems (including some mountain and wetlands ecosystems) and the Biodiversity focal area.

(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)

This project was designed to help the Govt. of Syria meet its obligations under the CBD, and the Ramsar Convention.

A2. Did the project promote of International (Regional and / or Global) Cooperation and Partnership¹

The project did not have any international linkages.

b. Effectiveness

Rating: MS

Based on the terminal evaluation report, the project has achieved targeted outputs in four out of five components. Management of the Cedar/Fir Protected Area (PA) has been improved through training for various stakeholders and enhanced capacities within the Ministries of Environment (MLAE) and Agriculture (MAAR). The Cedar/Fir PA has been enlarged, and a management plan has been developed with some community input and adopted by the Ministries. The project has established a provisional arrangement between the MLAE and MAAR to jointly manage the PA, and MAAR has appointed a dedicated PA team from its own staff and allocated a budget for the management of Cedar/Fir PA.

The first component, which would have provided the necessary legal framework for the establishment and management of a national network of protected areas, was dropped due to the fact that the requisite FAO co-financing did not materialize.

The second component, focusing on capacity building and institutional development achieved all its planned activities. A training needs assessment was conducted by an international consultancy and training modules were developed and delivered to select decision makers and senior staff in MLAE and MAAR, the management team of the Cedar/Fir PA, and other targeted stakeholder groups, including representatives of the local communities. A review of the institutional and legislative framework for PA management at the national and local level was conducted and recommendations

¹ Please consider for regional and global project only

made to the Government to divide the tasks of PA management between MLAE and MAAR. MLAE's responsibilities include ecosystem monitoring, planning, and advocacy, while MAAR's responsibilities include day-to-day park management, enforcement, patrolling, community relations, and fieldwork. The review team also proposed appointing a permanent management team for the Cedar/Fir PA. This proposal was adopted by both MLAE and MAAR, and a management team was appointed from MAAR's staff. However, this appointment came late in project implementation, due to delays in the preparation of the Management plan (component 3).

The third component concerning the extension and legal designation of the PA has been partially successful. Based on consultants' recommendations, MLAE and MAAR agreed to an 88-km² extension to the Cedar/Fir PA, and another 112-km² extension by 2010. A workshop was conducted with adjoining village communities to ensure a participatory approach to boundary delineation. Legal designation of the new boundaries, which was expected to occur prior to project closing, was not achieved. This is due in part to the continuing discussions on which entity should be responsible for the management of the steadily growing network of PAs in Syria.

Under the fourth component, a management plan for the Cedar/Fir PA was developed and adopted by the ministers of MLAE and MAAR in 2006. The plan, which was produced by the TA firm, in co-operation with local consultants, university staff, and the technical committee of the PMU, is according to the TE report, "very satisfactory and provides an excellent basis for implementation." The plan includes a proposed biodiversity M&E system, options and recommendations for participatory PA management and alternative income generation for the surrounding communities, and suggests possible funding sources for continued PA management. However, delays in contracting the TA firm, and the reduced time frame this activity (12 months, rather than 21 months) greatly constrained implementation. Flora and fauna baseline surveys were not conducted and plan implementation was restricted to construction of a visitor's center and the acquisition of physical infrastructure and some equipment. This component also suffered from the loss of UNDP co-financing, which was to target alternative livelihoods promotion.

The public awareness component effectively achieved all its targeted outputs. A Communication, Education, and Public Awareness (CEPA) strategy was developed following stakeholder surveys and interviews in the villages surrounding the PA. The strategy included the production of informative 2 TV spots, a TV documentary, and publication of educational material in Arabic and English on the project and its objectives, as well as on the area's ecosystem, flora and fauna. Materials were distributed to school students during field visits, at stakeholder and steering committee meetings, and at general training sessions. There was also a production of in English, Arabic and Italian on the PA, and the activities of the project. According to the government's ICR report (March 2006), a film on PAs and another on birds were produced. Throughout project implementation, there was national media coverage of workshops and training activities.

c. Efficiency (cost-effectiveness)

Rating: MU

At approval, the project budget was \$1.43 million. Actual project costs were much lower, at \$0.87 M of which \$0.70 M came from the GEF, and \$0.17 M from the GoS. UNDP and FAO co-financing did not materialize and as a result some project activities were curtailed. The component regarding enabling legislation was dropped, and activities in component four (the largest component by budget) relating to the development and implementation of the management plan were significantly reduced. Additionally, the actual costs for the public awareness component were only half of the proposed costs. The project has met many of its targeted outputs, though in some cases with significant delays. It has enhanced government understanding of biodiversity conservation, but it has fallen short of meeting the objective of implementing a management plan for the Cedar/Fir PA. Therefore, efficiency is rated moderately unsatisfactory.

d. To what extent did the project result in trade offs between environment and development priorities / issues (not to be rated) – this could happen both during the designing of the project where some choices are made that lead to preference for one priority over the other, and during implementation of the project when resources are transferred from addressing environmental priorities to development priorities and vice versa. If possible explain the reasons for such tradeoffs.

The project design addressed both environmental and development priorities. Proposed activities included extending the PA, strengthening enforcement, and establishing a program to promote alternative livelihoods to reduce human pressures in the PA. The loss of the promised UNDP/FAO financing meant that the project had to scale back activities during implementation and, aside from some community consultations, the alternative livelihoods program was abandoned.

4.1.2 Results / Impacts² (Describe Impacts) (please fill in annex 1 – results scoresheet and annex 2 – focal area impacts (against GEF Strategic Priority indicators, where appropriate and possible)

This project has laid the foundation for the implementation of a long-term biodiversity conservation program in the Cedar/Fir PA. It has raised awareness and understanding of the concept of biodiversity conservation within the two key Ministries (MLAE and MAAR), which have a role and stake in PA management. An inter-ministerial management team for the Cedar/Fir PA has been appointed and dedicated financing has been secured from the Agriculture Ministry (MAAR) to implement the management plan. At the policy level, although the project has not succeeded in formulating a legal framework for protected areas in Syria, it has, nevertheless, advanced the agenda for expanding and improving the PA system, and created a working arrangement between the two relevant Ministries. The government has endorsed the extension Cedar/Fir PA by 88km², and the legal designation of this extension is pending. Both the Ministries have accepted the role of communities within the context of PA management. The project has improved the level of consultation, participatory dialogues, and training with local communities, but concrete measures have yet to be taken to involve locals in PA management and to promote sustainable resource use.

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.

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| a. Financial resources | Rating: ML |
| Dedicated financing from MAAR has been secured to implement some, but not all, elements of the management plan. There is no guaranteed financing to implement the community involvement and sustainable livelihoods part of the management plan. The PA management plan also provides some recommendations for revenue generating projects (i.e. ecotourism) to finance operational costs for the PA and the visitors' center. | |
| b. Socio-economic / political | Rating: MU |
| Based on information in the TE report there was a high level of public awareness and support for the project aims. Government support for the project at the cabinet level was strong, but the delays in implementing the management plan risks losing the momentum and interest generated by project activities. Also, community participation and co-management of the PA, and support for sustainable use of natural resources is weak. Some specific concerns of the communities must be addressed: (i) lack of alternatives to fuel wood harvesting while the restriction to enter the PA appears to have been enforced more stringently; (ii) no program to support alternative livelihoods; (iii) continued application of some of the forest law provisions which discourage planting of trees within the buffer area. | |
| c. Institutional framework and governance | Rating: ML |
| According to the TE several aspects that were meant to be addressed have fallen short, including legal designation of the proposed extension to the PA (to ensure legal sustainability), the endorsement of the management plan by the GoS, and institutional arrangements to transfer knowledge and skills acquired by the PMU to key government departments within the two key ministries (to ensure institutional sustainability). The provisional working arrangement and division of responsibilities between the MLAE and MAAR should be finalized in an MOU to guarantee stable, long-term management of the Cedar/Fir PA. | |
| There are some positive signs for the continued and improved management of the Cedar/Fir PA due largely to the appointment of a dedicated and trained management team and provision of infrastructure (in particular, office, ranger stations, and research center) and equipment (vehicles, computers, binoculars etc.) for the PA, as well as funding from MAAR to implement some elements of the management plan. | |
| d. Environmental | Rating: ML |
| While PA enforcement has been enhanced, the failure to engage local communities, develop co-management solutions, and address human needs for forest resources means that there are some risks to long-term sustainability of the project outcomes. | |
| e. Technological | Rating: N/A |
| This project did not involve any new technologies or approaches to biodiversity conservation. | |

² 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)

4.3 Catalytic role³

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| <p>a. INCENTIVES: To what extent have the project activities provided incentives (socio-economic / market based) to contribute to catalyzing changes in stakeholders</p> |
| <p>Project activities did not include any incentive or market based approaches to changing stakeholder behaviors.</p> |
| <p>b. INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE: To what extent have the project activities contributed to changing institutional behaviors</p> |
| <p>The TE report notes: “At the start of the project the conceptual understanding and management responsibility associated with PAs and biodiversity conservation was very limited, and where existing, was rudimentary – built on a belief that PAs should be fenced, with communities having no access to the PA, nor a role in their management or oversight.” Project activities have shifted government thinking about PA management and encouraged collaboration between the Agriculture and Environment Ministries. For the first time in Syria, local communities were consulted by in developing a PA management plan and a dedicated management team was appointed for the Cedar/Fir PA (with staff who were trained through the project).</p> |
| <p>c. POLICY CHANGE: To what extent have project activities contributed to policy changes (and implementation of policy)?</p> |
| <p>Project activities have not led to policy changes, but they have improved national capacity and understanding of protected areas and promoted a more systematic approach to conservation in Syria. Policy discussions have taken place between the MLAE and the General Commission for Environmental Affairs) regarding the establishment of a national system of protected areas.</p> |
| <p>d. CATALYTIC FINANCING: To what extent did the project contributed to sustained follow-on financing from Government and / or other donors? (this is different than co-financing)</p> |
| <p>The project has been able to leverage human resources (a dedicated management team) for the future management of the Cedar/Fir PA, and a reallocation of the Ministry of Agriculture (MAAR) budget to ensure dedicated funds for continued implementation of the management plan. The project has also led to a follow-up UNDP/GEF protected area project with significant government commitment (\$ 2.44 million), which would replicate the Cedar/Fir PA experience, through a national training and cross-learning program, at three other protected areas.</p> |
| <p>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)?</p> |
| <p>According to the TE there was a lack of technical leadership on the conservation and park management aspects within the PMU – hence there was no champion to lead on that aspect. It is important to note that the project did start to make progress when the current ministers (both MLAE and MAAR) assumed office, in the last two years of the project. Having high-level champions and continued interest and commitment from them greatly enhanced the progress of the project in the last 18 months.</p> |

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

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| <p>a. Co-financing. 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>At approval, the project budget was \$1.43 million and the proposed government co-financing was \$280,000 including both cash and in-kind contributions. According to the TE, the anticipated co-financing from FAO (USD 100,000 for component 1-enabling legislation, and USD 100,000 for forest ecology experts to conduct a baseline ecological survey) and from UNDP (USD 125,000 towards component 4-the development and implementation of the PA management plan, and USD 75,000 towards component 5-public awareness campaigns) never materialized. Consequently, component 1 for the drafting of enabling legislation was dropped; while components 4 and 5 for development and implementation of the management plan (including the development of alternative livelihoods), and the public awareness program were scaled down.</p> <p>Actual co-financing from the GoS was \$174,000 due to the delays and scaling back of some activities within the various components. The GOS counterpart contribution includes in-kind contribution in staff time for government oversight, participation in Steering committee, participation of key MAAR and MLAE staff in training and consultation activities.</p> |
| <p>b. 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 it did, then in what ways and through what causal linkages?</p> |
| <p>According to the TE the delay in project start-up (due largely to institutional hiccups resulting from poor design at entry), delays in the hiring a consultant firm for the development of the management plan, and the high turnover of</p> |

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

personnel (including Ministers, and World Bank TTLs) meant that the project was continually playing “catch-up” till the end. These compounded delays resulted in a project extension and in the PA management plan being finalized just six months prior to closing.

Additionally, delays in purchasing the project vehicles represents a lost opportunity for a fuller engagement of the FAD/MAAR staff in project activities through more frequent field visits to the park for monitoring and surveillance and community consultations. It may also have reduced the opportunity for more intensive exchanges that could have taken place with the consultants during the preparation of the management plan, and for inventory and survey work related to baseline monitoring.

c. 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.

Country ownership has had mixed impacts on the project. Initially, the strained institutional relationship between the two key Ministries (MAAR and MLAE) led to delays getting the project off the ground. After a change in the Task Team Leader of the IA and in the leadership of the two Ministries, provisional institutional arrangements were put in place for the management of the Cedar/Fir PA, and designated roles and responsibilities clarified. In the last two years of project implementation, the MAAR and MLAE showed a high degree of support and enthusiasm for the project, extending the area protected, appointing a park management team, and allocating follow-on funding to ensure sustainability of some project activities.

Another issue related to country ownership is the placement of the PMU external to the key executing agencies, “in a private office, with no staff seconded from the ministries, and no clear transition strategy to transfer capacity and skills acquired in managing Bank projects” (TE report). The Ministries are relying on the PMU for project management, and in that regard, there has not been much increase in national capacity.

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

a. M&E design at Entry Rating (six point scale): MS

The M&E plan elaborated in the project document included an implementation timeline and a list of indicators to measure achievement of project outcomes and objectives. The M&E plan did not include a logical frame matrix. Project M&E was to be carried out through Bank supervision missions as well as quarterly reports on each project component. An ICR was to be prepared at project completion. M&E of conditions in the Cedar/Fir PA was to be elaborated in the PA management plan.

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

The TE report rates M&E as moderately satisfactory. The project management team (PMU) provided regular, and thorough reports on project activities and the administrative and financial aspects of implementation. Based on information in the TE report, the PMU did not monitor the indicators (relating to PA management and conservation aspects) listed in the project document, due to the absence of a conservation specialist on its staff. Nevertheless, the information provided by the PMU was deemed sufficient to measure progress towards objectives. The 2005 GRM notes: “The monitoring and evaluation activities had some shortcomings with minor impacts on the provision of necessary information, and this is mainly due to the fact that the project management unit was external to both concerned ministries.”

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

There was no separate line for M&E in the budget presented in the project document, but funding was included as part of the component on capacity building.

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

Unable to assess.

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? There were no evaluations of training sessions and community consultations, and no tracking of ecosystem indicators, which could provide feedback to project components. The monitoring of project finances and procurement was useful in highlighting and correcting problems early on in implementation, as the project team was unfamiliar with World Bank administrative procedures.

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.
No.

4.6 Assessment of Quality of Implementation and Execution

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

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

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.

According to the TE, the overall performance of the Bank can be said to be moderately satisfactory. The performance of the Bank has been very uneven during the project duration - during the initial period it was moderately unsatisfactory, followed by more satisfactory performance during the later stages.

The TE report commends the IA for fostering “a pioneering and innovative project in Syria where an overall vision for protected areas/conservation practically did not exist.” But, in terms of project design, two issues should have been given greater attention to ensure smoother implementation. The first is confirmation of co-financing from other funding partners. The second is the realistic assessment of borrower capacities. The executing agency did not have the capacity to apply Bank procurement procedures, institutional arrangements between the Ministries were ill-defined, and their conceptual understanding of biodiversity conservation quite different from that of the Bank. These issues should have been noted and addressed prior to project implementation.

Compounding the design issues was weak supervision by the Bank and turnover of TTLs in the project’s early years. There was no formal launch workshop or training on Bank procedures for the project team. There were nine supervision missions by the Bank, but the TE notes “the timing and frequency [of these visits] was not commensurate with the objectives of the project nor the difficulties encountered in its implementation.” The project had a total of three TTLs over its lifetime, and there was no site visit by a TTL until the 4th year of the project. On the positive side, the Bank did facilitate two project extensions and reallocate funds to enable the project to complete some activities.

c. Quality of Execution – for Executing Agencies⁴ (rating on a 6 point scale) MS

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.

According to the TE report, the overall performance of the national executing agency can be said to be moderately satisfactory. The Ministry of the Environment (MLAE) was the executing agency, with the Ministry of Agriculture (MAAR) as a partner. Day-to-day project management was done through a project management unit (PMU) led by a National Project Director (NPD). The PMU operated outside of the Ministries, with technical specialists from MLAE and MAAR joining the PMU’s administrative and programmatic meetings. Oversight (in terms of overall supervision, budget, etc.) was provided by an 18-member Steering Committee, which included the two Ministers, and representatives from various Directorates, the State Planning Commission, and the province.

According to the TE report, the PMU overall “did an excellent job in continually pushing to have the project move forward,” and provided the necessary “continuity and institutional memory” when there was turnover of Ministers and the World Bank’s TTL. Reporting by the project management unit (PMU) was timely, and “fairly thorough” in reporting on the procurement, administrative and managerial aspects of the project. However, the PMU’s lack of familiarity with Bank procurement guidelines delayed implementation, as did the initially the difficult relationship between the two Ministries and the PMU. This slowed down the approving and hiring of a consultant for the management plan and getting activities off the ground. The TE report also notes “there were some aspects [of implementation] that were inadequate, including unwarranted delays in the procurement of vehicles accompanied by poor documentation, and the use of procurement method (e.g. for civil works) contrary to Bank procedures despite repeated reminders from the Bank.”

A significant weakness of the PMU was the lack of technical leadership regarding conservation and park management. The PMU should have included a full-time conservation specialist. As noted in the TE report, the “lack of technical capacity within the PMU, and limited involvement by MAAR and MLAE on a day-to-day basis” meant that the follow-up action relating to the implementation of the Cedar/Fir PA management plan was limited.

5. LESSONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Assess the project lessons and recommendations as described in the TE

⁴ 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.

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| <p>a. Briefly describe the key lessons, good practice or approaches mentioned in the terminal evaluation report that could have application for other GEF projects</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Co-financing needs to be secured and committed prior to project effectiveness; otherwise it can hamper delivery on key components of the project, and compromise achievement of the stated objectives. 2. Quality at entry must ensure that key aspects that are essential for the project to be effective are clearly designed (e.g. institutional arrangements, especially in areas of intervention which are new to the country; key legal/policy reform). 3. Caution against over ambitious project design, especially in areas of intervention, which are new to the country. 4. The 'Project Management Unit' (or comparable unit) should have resident technical expertise relating to the objective of the project, over and above staff with general project management skills. 5. Need for a grant agreement with clear thresholds acceptable to the Bank for prior review of procurement decisions in a country where administrative procedures have not been reviewed and updated. 6. Prolonged (undue) delays for Bank related clearances are not acceptable (e.g. review of TOR and provision of 'no-objection'). 7. Transitional arrangements (including institutional, financial, technical) need to be put in place prior to the end of the project to ensure continuity and sustainability on various fronts, and to ensure that the progress made by the project is not undermined/lost. 8. Raising expectations of key stakeholders (especially communities), with limited, or no follow-up is poor strategy and can undermine achievement of the project objectives. 9. Training on Bank financial and procurement procedures is essential, especially for clients that have not been engaged with the Bank for a long time. 10. Need for much closer supervision in a country, which has not engaged with the World Bank for a length of time. |
| <p>b. Briefly describe the recommendations given in the terminal evaluation</p> <p>The terminal Evaluation does not have a section on recommendations. However, some can be extracted from other sections.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The project would have benefited from technical and strategic advice from the World Bank in developing a roadmap to guide implementation of the proposed management plan, particularly in getting the management plan endorsed by the GoS, in preparing annual work plans with clear roles and responsibilities, including budgetary requirements. This would have provided greater assurances of project sustainability, building on the momentum of the last year of the project. However, recommendations, which should have been provided by the Bank prior to the closing of the project, or as comments to the Management Plan, were not officially communicated to the Govt., despite requests from the PMU. Part of this may be attributed to the internal transition process within the Bank between TTLs, whereby comments and recommendations appear to have fallen through the cracks. It is critical in the immediate-term for the appointed PA management team to produce annual working plans based on the management plan towards longer-term management of the Cedar/Fir PA. |

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.

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>a. To what extent does the report contain an assessment of relevant outcomes and impacts of the project and the achievement of the objectives?</p> <p>The assessment of outcomes and impacts is comprehensive.</p> | S |
| <p>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?</p> <p>No inconsistencies or evidence gaps were noted.</p> | S |
| <p>c. To what extent does the report properly assess project sustainability and /or a project exit strategy?</p> <p>Sustainability is assessed on financial, political, and institutional aspects. Several suggestions are made to improve chances of sustainability.</p> | S |
| <p>d. To what extent are the lessons learned supported by the evidence presented and are they comprehensive?</p> <p>The lessons are learned are fairly specific, and supported by the evidence presented on project</p> | |

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| implementation. | S |
| e. Does the report include the actual project costs (total and per activity) and actual co-financing used? Yes. | S |
| e. Assess the quality of the reports evaluation of project M&E systems? The assessment of the M&E system is brief and focused on the quality of reporting by the PMU. | MS |

7. SOURCES OF INFORMATION FOR THE PRERATATION OF THE TERMINAL EVALUTION 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)