

Terminal Evaluation Validation form, GEF Independent Evaluation Office

1. Project Data

Summary project data			
GEF project ID		5124	
GEF Agency project ID		618527 and GCP/LES/049/LDF	
GEF Replenishment Phase		GEF - 5	
Lead GEF Agency (include all for joint projects)		Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)	
Project name		Strengthening capacity for climate change adaptation through support to integrated watershed management in Lesotho	
Country/Countries		Lesotho	
Region		Africa	
Focal area		Climate Change – Least Developed Country Fund (LDCF)	
Operational Program or Strategic Priorities/Objectives		<p>GEF strategic objectives related to climate change adaptation (Updated results Architecture for Adaptation to Climate Change under the Least Developed Countries Fund and the Special Climate Change Fund:</p> <p>i) reduce vulnerability to the adverse impacts of climate change, including variability, at local, national, regional and global level;</p> <p>ii) increasing Adaptive Capacity: Increase adaptive capacity to respond to the impacts of climate change, including variability, at local, national, regional and global level, and;</p> <p>iii) promote transfer and adoption of adaptation technology</p>	
Stand alone or under a programmatic framework		Stand alone	
If applicable, parent program name and GEF ID		-	
Executing agencies involved		<p>FAO</p> <p>Implementing partners:</p> <p>Ministry of Forestry, Range and Soil Conservation (MFRSC), Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (MAFS), Ministry of Energy and Meteorology (MEM), Ministry of Water (MoW), Ministry of Local Government, Department of Environment (DOE) and National University of Lesotho (NUL) (TE, p.1)</p>	
NGOs/CBOs involvement		Not indicated	
Private sector involvement (including micro, small and medium enterprises) ¹		Not indicated	
CEO Endorsement (FSP) / Approval (MSP) date		February 27, 2015	
Effectiveness date / project start date		November 1, 2015	
Expected date of project completion (at start)		October 31, 2019	
Actual date of project completion		July 31, 2021 [Revised project implementation end date, PIR 2021]	
Project Financing			
		At Endorsement (US \$M)	At Completion (US \$M)
Project Preparation Grant	GEF funding	-	-
	Co-financing	-	-
GEF Project Grant		3.593	3.377
Co-financing	IA own	0.937	0.890

¹ Defined as all micro, small, and medium-scale profit-oriented entities, including individuals and informal entities, that earn income through the sale of goods and services rather than a salary. ([GEF IEO 2022](#))

	Government	7.500	6.912
	Other multi- /bi-laterals	-	-
	Private sector	-	-
	NGOs/CBOs	-	-
	Other	-	-
Total GEF funding		3.593	3.377
Total Co-financing		8.437	7.802
Total project funding (GEF grant(s) + co-financing)		12.03	11.179
Terminal evaluation validation information			
TE completion date		January 15, 2021	
Author of TE		Ms Erum Hasan Mr Ramochaha Simon Lethola	
TER completion date		26 November 2022	
TER prepared by		Mariana Vidal Merino	
TER peer review by (if GEF IEO review)		Neeraj Kumar Negi	

2. Summary of Project Ratings

Criteria	Final PIR	IA Terminal Evaluation	IA Evaluation Office Review ²	GEF IEO Review
Project Outcomes	S	S	S	S
Sustainability of Outcomes		ML	ML	ML
M&E Design		MS	MS	MS
M&E Implementation		MS	MS	MS
Quality of Implementation		S	S	S
Quality of Execution		S	S	S
Quality of the Terminal Evaluation Report			—	S

3. Project Objectives and theory of change

3.1 Global Environmental Objectives of the Project:

The project is part of the LDCF, and as such, it has Global Adaptation objectives. The project aims at implementing sustainable land and water management practices (SLM/W) and resource conservation measures in selected watersheds of Lesotho to reduce vulnerability and enhance adaptive capacity at the community level (PD, p.36).

3.2 Development Objectives of the Project:

The Development Objective of the Project is to strengthen diversified livelihood strategies focusing on crops, livestock and agro-forestry systems at the community level in selected watersheds of Lesotho (PD, p.36).

3.3 Were there any **changes** in the Global Environmental Objectives, Development Objectives, or project activities during implementation? What are the reasons given for the change(s)?

Neither TE nor the last PIR (2021) reported any changes in the project's expected adaptation or development objectives.

The MTR made several recommendations based on which some project activities were adjusted, including (i) incorporating actions to improve water access for home consumption, other household uses, and livestock (TE. P. 19); and (ii) increasing consultation and participatory engagement of households to identify and prioritize (or discontinue) project interventions in a contextualized manner. None of the changes in project activities impacted the initial project outputs and outcomes (PIR2021, p. 28).

3.4 Briefly summarize project's theory of change – describe the inputs and causal relationships through which the project will achieve its long-term impacts, key links, and key assumptions.³

² The terminal evaluation was commissioned by the Office of Evaluation of the FAO. Therefore, the ratings provided in the terminal evaluation are repeated.

³ The project document (PD) did not present an explicit theory of change (ToC). The MTR provided a reconstructed ToC that, although it had a solid causal logic, contained more components and outcomes that were later on found in reporting documents (project implementation reports [PIRs] and project progress reports [PPRs]) (TE, p.12).

Lesotho is facing climate change variability, which negatively impacts wetlands and water resources. High temperatures, reduced precipitation and climate variability, could exacerbate soil erosion, land degradation and loss of valuable natural resources at the watershed management scale. The latter threatens to affect the sustainability of water development infrastructure as well as vulnerable smallholder and subsistence farmers.

The project aims to reduce vulnerability and enhance adaptive capacity at the community level. For this, the project will (i) implement sustainable land and water management practices (SLM/W), and resource conservation measures and; (ii) strengthen diversified livelihood strategies focusing on crop, livestock and agro-forestry systems in selected watersheds. The project focus is placed on strengthening the technical capacity of national and district level staff and institutions on SLM/W and climate-resilient livelihood strategies; assessing the vulnerability of livelihoods and impacts of climate change on land suitability and use at watershed scale; promoting tested SLM/W practices; strengthening diversified livelihood strategies and implementation of improved income generating activities at the community level.

4. GEF IEO assessment of Outcomes and Sustainability

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

The outcome ratings (relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and overall outcome rating) are on a six point scale: Highly Satisfactory to Highly Unsatisfactory. The sustainability rating is on a four point scale: Likely to Unlikely.

Please justify the ratings in the space below each box.

4.1 Relevance and Coherence	Rating: Satisfactory
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TE assesses project relevance as **Highly Relevant**, whereas this review assesses it to be **Satisfactory**.

The project outcomes are aligned with the GEF strategic objectives related to climate change adaptation outlined in the Updated results Architecture for Adaptation to Climate Change under the Least Developed Countries Fund and the Special Climate Change Fund⁴: i) reduce vulnerability to the adverse impacts of climate change, including variability, at local, national, regional and global level; ii) increasing Adaptive Capacity: Increase adaptive capacity to respond to the impacts of climate change, including variability, at local, national, regional and global level, and; iii) promote transfer and adoption of adaptation technology (PD, p. 1).

The project objectives are aligned with FAO's Strategic Objective 2 (SO2) "Increase and improve provision of goods and services from agriculture, forestry and fisheries in a sustainable manner". They are also aligned with FAO Country Programming Framework priorities and national priorities as set out in the

⁴ [Updated results Architecture for Adaptation to Climate Change under the Least Developed Countries Fund and the Special Climate Change Fund \(2018-2022\)](#)

National Strategic Development Plan, which includes strengthening agriculture and rural economy, nutrition, environment and climate change adaptation (TE, p.18).

The TE assesses the project as highly relevant to national and government priorities, particularly concerning SLM/W and drought management actions. The project was drafted in response to the National Adaptation Programme of Action (NAPA) and responded directly to some of its priorities (TE, p. 18). The TE doesn't explicitly mention the project's compatibility with other relevant projects and programs in Lesotho. However, the Project Document (PD) mentions synergies and complementarity with the government project "Integrated Watershed Management Programme" and the FAO-supported project "Capacity building in agribusiness development".

The TE also notes that the project design responded to the needs of local stakeholders, especially livelihoods and water related needs. It also notes that access to water was initially not sufficiently considered in the project design; however, following the recommendations in the MTR, the project adapted to respond to this pressing need (TE, p.18).

The project document (PD) did not present an explicit theory of change (ToC). The TE notes that the initial M&E framework was adequate but not entirely followed, especially regarding the timeline of some activities. Adding to this, some risks were not identified in the initial project document.

4.2 Effectiveness	Rating: Satisfactory
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The TE assesses project effectiveness as **Satisfactory** and this review concurs.

The targets for Component 1 "Strengthening technical capacity of national and district level staff and institutions on sustainable land and water management and climate-resilient livelihood strategies" were achieved and slightly exceeded. There is evidence that the project strengthened the capacity of over 170 government staff (the initial target was 150). At the community level, the project strengthened the capacity of 1374 direct beneficiaries and 40 communities (the initial target was 1200 farm households and 60 representatives of the three livelihood zones).

The TE indicates that targets for Component 2 "Assessing vulnerability of livelihoods and impacts of climate change on land suitability and use at watershed scale" were achieved (TE, p. 22). Under this component, the project aimed to develop a database, several land use assessments, and train at least 30 Ministry of Forestry and Land Reclamation staff members. By the end of the project, most targets were achieved, but the database was still under development and not fully functional. In addition, there were no mentions of progress in training activities.

Targets for Component 3 "Promoting tested Sustainable Land and Water Management (SLM/W) practices to build resilience to climate risks in vulnerable sub-catchments and watersheds", were only partially met. The TE reports several achievements under this component, such as range rehabilitation, increased plant cover, and rehabilitation efforts, among others (TE, p. x). The quantitative targets specified in the project Results Chain were "1200 households and 4800 individuals as beneficiaries and SLM/W practices

implemented in 2400 hectares area". While the TE has no direct mention to progress in the quantitative targets of this Component, the PIR2021 reports that 11% or 127 hectares have been covered.

The TE assesses the targets for Component 4 "Strengthening diversified livelihood strategies and implementation of improved income generating activities at the community level" as achieved. The TE indicates that the project provided around 900 households with vegetable seed packages and materials for keyhole gardens, trenches, and communal gardens. It supported 36 savings and internal lending communities (SILCs), facilitating access to credit to 597 participants. However, this review notes that there were no direct mentions of the achievement of the quantitative targets specified in the project Results framework: "livelihood strategies and small-scale and household-level income-generating activities successfully demonstrated and adopted by 24 target communities, including women-headed households. (Benefit 750 households [3 000 individuals] in an area covered under this investment of 375 hectares)."

Component 5 "Dissemination of best practices, project monitoring and evaluation" aimed to develop a communication strategy on issues relevant to the project focus. The strategy was developed but was not closely adhered to. As such, the TE notes that this target was moderately achieved.

4.3 Efficiency	Rating: Satisfactory
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The TE provides a rating of **Satisfactory** for project efficiency, and this review concurs. The project was designed as a continuation of a Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP)⁵. This allowed the "project to be rolled out in a straightforward manner; since FAO was not a new partner, the expectations and value added were clear from the onset from shared experience" (TE, p. 32).

The GEF CEO endorsed the project for implementation on February 27, 2015, and the project start date was November 1, 2015. The initial estimated project completion date was October 31, 2019. A first project extension was granted until December 31, 2020. On account of the Covid-19 pandemic, the project was given a subsequent no-cost extension up to March 31, 2021, and later on to July 2021 (PIR, p. 30)

The TE indicates the project delivered activities efficiently, cost-effectively and in as timely a manner as possible. Overall, the project was well executed and responded well to changing circumstances and to MTR recommendations (TE, p.42) However, the project did face some efficiency related challenges. For example, slow procurement resulted in reduced stakeholder morale and, interruption of activities, which posed a risk to project's success (TE, p. 54).

⁵ TCP project, "Strengthening capacity for climate change adaptation in the agriculture sector", implemented from 2009 to 2011.

4.4 Outcome	Rating: Satisfactory
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The TE rates the overall achievement of project results as **Satisfactory**. This review concurs with the TE assessment and rates project outcomes as Satisfactory. At the project outcome level, targets were met, were relevant and cost effective.

Key outcomes related to environment, human well-being, and enabling conditions (Policy, Legal & Institutional Development; Individual & Institutional Capacity-Building; Knowledge Exchange & Learning; Multistakeholder Interactions) are summarized below:

A. Environmental Change. The TE reports that the project "resulted in global environmental benefits such as restored landscapes, landscapes under improved practices, and strengthened biodiversity" (TE, p. xviii). One of the project outcomes included improving plant cover and adopting range resource management measures on 1200 hectares (TE, p.77). The TE does not report on quantitative progress towards these targets. However, it does note positive results regarding wetlands rehabilitation, with one site (Mafeteng wetland) being used as a centre for excellence for wetlands rehabilitation (TE, p. xiii). Community members mentioned a significant improvement in plant cover, brush control, decreasing run-off, and flash flooding. Furthermore, "communities reported increased availability of spring water due to rehabilitation efforts and rainfall infiltration" and that "there were accounts of the return of wildlife and biodiversity in restored zones (TE, p. 77). The TE notes that the project contributed to GEF's Biodiversity and Land Degradation Focal Areas. Notably, "the work under this project (restoration of wetlands, promotion of agro-forestry and conservation agriculture, conservation of wildlife) has contributed to GEF's goal of conserving and sustainably using biodiversity and maintaining ecosystem goods and services" (TE, p. 53).

B. Socioeconomic change. The TE notes that the project contributed to eradicating poverty and increasing food security by investing in livelihoods through inputs in agriculture, livestock, agro-forestry and nutrition clubs, and improving access to water, thereby also enhancing the adaptive capacity of local communities (p.53). Stakeholders perceived the project as successful regarding achieved results. The project supported the establishment of local structures and natural resource management and improved nutrition and access to funds, which promise to be sustainable beyond the project duration (p. 19). The TE also remarks on the gender-sensitive approach to climate adaptation of the project, especially in relation to "(i) targeting sites that affect women; ii) targeting women's livelihoods sectors; and iii) facilitating opportunities for economic empowerment and social participation" (TE, p. 56).

C. Enabling conditions. The TE reports on the following project achievements:

- Policy, Legal & Institutional Development: The TE mentions that the project includes activities to strengthen the relevant policy framework in Lesotho. No specific measures are reported.
- Individual & Institutional Capacity-Building: The TE notes that activities to strengthen the technical capacity of project stakeholders incl. government organizations at the national and district levels, on climate change adaptation and integrated watershed management were successfully conducted. At the community level, the project strengthened the capacity of 1374 direct beneficiaries through training on diversified livelihoods, nutrition, food preservation,

conservation agriculture, and credit and lending (TE, p. x). The Project supported capacity building and policy reform to integrate climate change into sectoral development plans by "sustaining district-level government work, aligning ministerial programming, and supporting capacity-building training "(TE, p. 17).

- Knowledge Exchange & Learning: The TE highlights the way the project was implemented, especially regarding the decentralized nature of its activities, which allowed enhanced coordination among district-level government partners and authorities and fostered a learning-by-doing approach (TE, xxiii). It is also noted that the Mafeteng wetland, rehabilitated by the project, was established as a centre for excellence and a site for learning TE, p. 47).
- Multistakeholder Interactions: The TE indicates that the project adopted a participatory approach during project design and implementation that was generally very well perceived by project stakeholders and that "the informed and active participation of a variety of stakeholders reflected country ownership, which contributed to the successful achievement of several project outcomes" (TE, p. 43). Stakeholders mentioned that the project facilitated interactions among otherwise competitive ministries and participation of low-capacity and more isolated institutions.

D. Unintended impacts. The TE mentions that the project duration was too short to observe the impacts of some of the project activities. Project reports didn't provide information on whether the provision of livelihood-related inputs triggered conflicts between those who received them and those who did not, or affected product prices. The project supported the government in repairing an access road below a wetland being restored, which was an activity not initially planned. The TE notes that "while this met the community's needs and was overseen by the Government and the project, due diligence was not observed; FAO should have conducted an assessment for this type of activity" (TE, p. xvii).

4.5 Sustainability	Rating: Moderately Likely
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Sustainability is rated in the TE as **Moderately Likely**, and this review agrees with this assessment.

Financial resources: The TE notes that the project was not able to leverage the kind of funds anticipated in the design phase, with co-financing limited to in-kind contributions. The government's difficulties raising funds and conducting site visits might also be a challenge beyond the project's lifetime. However, some activities might get further financial support, such as the grazing associations, which are likely to be supported by the Wool and Mohair Promotion Project (funded by IFAD), and vegetable production and beekeeping by the Smallholder Agricultural Development Project (SADP).

Sociopolitical: The MTR and the TE concur that the government's de-prioritization of natural resource conservation is a major political risk. Regarding social risks, the MTR indicated it to be low, provided that the project generates tangible socioeconomic benefits accruing to the communities. Some of the measures that positively influence the longevity of project outcomes include the trained technical staff from the different government agencies and increased public awareness about conservation and good range management practices. The project also invested in social service mechanisms such as grazing associations and grazing committees, nutrition clubs, savings and lending, all of which are expected to positively affect the sustainability of project outcomes (TE, p. 55).

Institutional framework and governance: The TE notes high political instability with the project being implemented by three different administrations. Despite this, "the nature of the [project] outputs is such that they can be utilized by different government entities and meet overarching needs" (TE, p.37-38). The TE further notes that there are early indications of the uptake of some project outputs by government programmes (TE, p. 38).

Environmental: The TE acknowledged the environmental risks to sustainability identified in the MTR. These include future impacts to crop production due to water shortage, hailstorm, and frost. Negative effects on the country's wool and mohair enterprise due to rangeland degradation and increased distribution of invasive plant species were also mentioned as potential threads (MTR in TE, p. 35).

Adoption of GEF initiatives at scale: The TE indicates that the project was designed to upscale the adaptation practices identified in the Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP) project "Strengthening capacity for climate change adaptation in the agriculture sector" (TE, p.10). The TE recommends to "showcase local conflict management strategies on natural resource management so that they may be replicated and upscaled" (TE, p. xxii).

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, 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 total project budget was USD 12.030 million, including an allocation from the GEF LDCF of USD 3.563 million and an expected co-financing of USD 8.437 million from other partners. While the TE indicates that the project estimated a co-financing of USD 1.031 million (TE, p. 55), the PIR notes a level of co-financing implementation from August 2016 to December 2020 of USD 7.802 million. The local Government, Smallholder Agricultural Development Project (SADP) and Wool and Mohair Promotion Project (WAMPP) joined as new co-financing sources during project implementation.

Contrary to the initial planning, the Government co-financing was provided entirely in-kind, in the form of government staff, rent for project staff and office space, general operating expenses, district-level operations and technical backstopping by different government departments. Challenges related to co-financing noted by the TE include the lack of detailed value/cost information of pledged co-financing; the government partners' lack of adherence to the project budget (TE, p.38); and that co-financing was underreported and difficult to quantify (TE, p. 55-56).

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?

The initial estimated project completion date was October 31, 2019. This date was shifted to December 31, 2020, and subsequently, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, to March 31, 2021, and later on to July 31, 2021. These extensions didn't entail an increase in the project budget (PIR, p. 30)

The TE recurrently mentions procurement delays as the main challenge regarding project efficiency, particularly i) no explicit knowledge or training on the complex procurement guidelines at project initiation, which caused some activities to be postponed for a year (e.g., agriculture the planting season). ii) procurement delays caused project delays, incl. the need to re-adjust the implementation of the M&E plan, suboptimal expenditures, and demoralized beneficiaries and stakeholders, iii) The procurement guidelines sometimes prioritized international vendors whose products were perceived as unsuitable to the project needs (TE, p.32-33).

The Covid-19 pandemic also negatively impacted on the project activities, which ordinarily would have been completed before the terminal evaluation (TE, p. 7).

5.3 Stakeholder ownership. Assess the extent to which stakeholder ownership has affected project outcomes and sustainability? Describe the ways in which it affected outcomes and sustainability, highlighting the causal links:

The project followed a participatory approach that was positively perceived by project stakeholders. The TE reports high participation of staff and representatives from relevant government agencies in the Project Steering Committee and the District Technical Teams. The active participation of a variety of stakeholders reflected country ownership, which contributed to the successful achievement of several project outcomes (TE, p. 43). The TE highlights that providing the National Project Coordinator (NPC) with an office within the government was particularly favourable for country ownership of the Project (TE, p. xv).

The TE notes that the training of technical staff from different government agencies and their deployment at the local level allowed them to play a leading role in project implementation through the District Technical Teams. Through the development of staff capacities, the project fostered greater project ownership (TE, p. 39).

5.4 Other factors: In case the terminal evaluation discusses other key factors that affected project outcomes, discuss those factors and outline how they affected outcomes, whether positively or negatively.

The TE notes that adaptive management allowed the project to adjust activities and respond to emerging challenges which, in turn, allowed it to achieve most of its project outcomes (TE, p. 19).

6. Assessment of Project's Monitoring and Evaluation system

Ratings are assessed on a six point scale: Highly Satisfactory to Highly Unsatisfactory.

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 rated the design of the M&E criterion as **Moderately Satisfactory**, and this review concurs. The M&E plan specified the use of the Adaptation Monitoring and Assessment Tool (AMAT) and the Results Framework to track project progress. Key indicators progress was to be recorded in AMAT and reported on at CEO endorsement and mid-term. The Results Framework was to be reported on in progress reports and PIRs. The indicators were specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART), although mostly quantitative. Qualitative indicators would have been desirable to track social changes in terms of capacity, social collaboration, attitudes or practices (TE, p. xiv). While the project reports provided gender-disaggregated data, and gender was accounted for in the AMAT, indicators in the Results Framework were not disaggregated by gender. The M&E plan did not include relevant risks or costs for oversight, which was m (TE, p. 68)

6.2 M&E Implementation	Rating: Moderately Satisfactory
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The TE rated the implementation of the Project M&E system as **Moderately Satisfactory**, and this review concurs.

The TE notes that the M&E framework was not fully adhered to and that project monitoring was inconsistent across project sites. This hindered capturing nuances of results across the sites, which would have been desirable given the positive project results (TE, p. 14). The AMAT tracking tool was poorly understood by project staff (TE, p. xxiv)

Adjustments were made to the M&E plan during project implementation in response to procurement delays, including the identification of new emerging risks. Also, following the recommendations in the MTR, the operations of the Project Steering Committee were adjusted to increase the frequency of their meetings to improve oversight, some monitoring activities were reframed to better align them with the project strategy (TE, p. 14).

The TE reports the absence of a specialized M&E officer as a drawback in overseeing project advancement and evaluating outcomes. The project supplied biophysical and socioeconomic datasets as inputs for government databases, thereby linking project findings to broader national monitoring tools (TE, p. xx).

7. Assessment of project implementation and execution

Quality of Implementation rating is based on the assessment of the performance of GEF Agency(s). Quality of Execution rating is based on performance of the executing agency(s). 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 rates the quality of project implementation as **Satisfactory**, and this review concurs. The implementing agency for the project was the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO).

The TE indicates FAO provided robust strategic oversight, technical support and close supervision to project implementation via the Project Coordination Unit (TE, p. 55). Also, the Coordination Unit provided adaptive management and effectively responded to the recommendations made in the MTR (TE, p. xv).

The TE also notes that the FAO Lesotho Office supported the project, although no details regarding the nature of the support are provided.

7.2 Quality of Project Execution	Rating: Satisfactory
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The TE provides a rating of **Satisfactory** for the quality of project execution, and this TER concurs. The project was directly executed by FAO, following the direct execution modality. FAO delivered well on project execution through its project Coordination Unit, providing good technical support and adaptive management. It was prompt in addressing most of the MTR recommendations. However, the project failed to identify some relevant risks to project sustainability from the onset and mitigation strategies were not always implemented promptly. These risks included the weak capacity of the Lesotho Meteorological Services, the non-materialization of the government co-financing, and salary issues related to differences between the project and government staff (TE, p. 34). The project team reacted to these emerging risks by taking adequate strategic decisions that included two budget revisions (TE, p. 36). The TE notes procurement delays as a persistent challenge regarding project efficiency.

Mitigation actions taken during the Covid-19 pandemic were not sufficiently described in the project reports (TE, p. 36).

8. Lessons and recommendations

8.1 Briefly describe the key lessons, good practices, or approaches mentioned in the terminal evaluation report, including how they could have application for other GEF projects. Lessons must be based on project experience.

The TE provides ten lessons, summarized as follows:

- Lesson 1. Livelihoods and other basic needs, such as water and food security, must be at the heart of sustainable development initiatives to obtain traction. The project created an ongoing presence at the local level, leaning on social structures and including people in a learning-by-doing approach. However, the question of incentives in motivating people to work on communal projects without financial gain will remain a challenge for other projects.

- Lesson 2. Decentralized elements of the project team were successful: staff residing in the project area fostered strong linkages and opportunities for feedback and adaptive management. It also fosters a culture of trust among stakeholders.
- Lesson 3. The Project Steering Committee must be composed of members who can influence their own divisions/departments to foster ownership of project activities, synergies and buy-in from the national government.
- Lesson 4. Although climate data are available, they still do not meet the needs or expectations of users at the local level. These needs must be clarified since there is a gap in communications and expectations.
- Lesson 5. Having an NPC working in government offices is beneficial for project ownership, alignment of the project with national programmes, capacity building, and the retention of skills in the government. However, the salary of this position should be commensurate with expectations of a United Nations project for purposes of equity with the rest of the project team financed by the project.
- Lesson 6. Project Steering Committee budget costs should include modest costs related to Project Steering Committee site visits, which can be paid for by co-financing. The Project Steering Committee's participation was a strength of this project, partially due to the site visits they made.
- Lesson 7. The lack of a dedicated M&E staff member was perceived as a weakness in monitoring project progress and measuring results. It is recommended that this be included in the M&E budget.
- Lesson 8. Besides adherence to national environmental assessment procedures, FAO should carry out additional oversight to ensure that works don't exacerbate risks.
- Lesson 9. Lack of understanding of FAO's procurement procedures was challenging in this project. To overcome it, project staff must receive the support necessary to understand and employ procurement procedures as early as possible.

8.2 Briefly describe the recommendations given in the terminal evaluation.

The TE elaborates five recommendations:

R1. To FAO, Project Management Unit: Ensure that project indicators mainstream gender issues. The project Results Framework did not include gender indicators, which hindered monitoring of the project's many positive gender results.

R2. To the Project Team: Develop case studies to showcase how women's circumstances were improved through the project, examining their livelihoods, and economic, social and environmental factors.

R3. To Project Management: Showcase local conflict management strategies and attempts to share natural resource management information so that they may be replicated and upscaled. The project used innovative means to achieve results, particularly on communal lands, and engaged various social structures and mechanisms to enhance cooperation.

R4. To FAO: For future projects, FAO/GEF should consider providing funds in order to conduct a socioeconomic survey in a timely manner, involving the project participants in tracking changes.

R5. To Government partners: Alternative livelihood activities promoted by the project should be followed up by the relevant project partners to ensure their sustainability and verify whether they require any additional inputs.

9. 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/indicators of terminal evaluation quality	GEF IEO COMMENTS	Rating
1. Timeliness: terminal evaluation report was carried out and submitted on time?	TE was conducted within six months before project completion and submitted at the GEF Portal before project completion. The project was given a 6 months extension due to the Covid-19 pandemic.	HS
2. General information: Provides general information on the project and evaluation as per the requirement?		HS
3. Stakeholder involvement: the report was prepared in consultation with – and with feedback from - key stakeholders?	TE identifies key stakeholders, and mentions these were consulted on the draft and in finalization of the evaluation report. Yet, it is not clear which stakeholders were consulted or asked to provide feedback at each stage of the evaluation.	S
4. Theory of change: provides solid account of the project's theory of change?	TE uses the Project's Results Framework ufor the analysis of the ToC. Main causal links are presented but not	MS

	discussed. Key assumptions are missing.	
5. Methodology: Provides an informative and transparent account of the methodology?	The TE discusses information sources; it provides information on who was interviewed although it is not clear which stakeholders were interviewed at each stage; no information regarding specific project sites/activities covered for verification was found; methods used for the evaluation and limitations were clearly described.	S
6. Outcome: Provides a clear and candid account of the achievement of project outcomes?	TE assesses relevance to GEF and country's priorities, relevance of project design, performance of outcome targets is not sufficiently discussed, especially regarding some quantitative targets. TE discusses factors that affect outcome achievement at sufficient depth, reports on timeliness of activities, assesses efficiency in using project resources and discusses factors that affected efficiency in use of resources	S
7. Sustainability: Presents realistic assessment of sustainability?	TE identifies risks that may affect sustainability although the likelihood of key risks materializing is not mentioned and their likely effects not discussed in-depth.	S

	The overall likelihood of sustainability is mentioned.	
8. M&E: Presents sound assessment of the quality of the M&E system?	TE analyzes quality of M&E design at entry, during implementation and discusses its use for project management.	HS
9. Finance: Reports on utilization of GEF funding and materialization of co-financing?		HS
10. Implementation: Presents a candid account of project implementation and Agency performance?	TE provided account of GEF and FAO performances yet depth was lacking	S
11. Safeguards: Provides information on application of environmental and social safeguards, and conduct and use of gender analysis?	Strong emphasis on gender and detailed discussion on factors related to social and environmental safeguards	HS
12. Lessons and recommendations are supported by the project experience and are relevant to future programming?		HS
13. Ratings: Ratings are well-substantiated by evidence, realistic and convincing?	Ratings provided are supported in sufficient evidence, however some evidence is anecdotal	S
14. Report presentation: The report was well-written, logically organized, and consistent?	The report was well-written, but the structure of the report was not easy to follow (e.g. rankings were presented in 3 different sections of the document, (minor) conflicting information was found.	MS
Overall quality of the report		S

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