

Terminal Evaluation Review form, GEF Evaluation Office, APR 2014

1. Project Data

Summary project data			
GEF project ID		537	
GEF Agency project ID		8290	
GEF Replenishment Phase		Pilot Project	
Lead GEF Agency (include all for joint projects)		World Bank	
Project name		Biodiversity Protection	
Country/Countries		Belarus	
Region		ECA	
Focal area		Biodiversity	
Operational Program or Strategic Priorities/Objectives		3 – Forest Ecosystems	
Executing agencies involved		Belarus Council of Ministers' Committee for Ecology; Belovezhskaya National Park staff; Natural Resources Dept., in Min. of Env't.	
NGOs/CBOs involvement		Through consultation	
Private sector involvement		Through consultation	
CEO Endorsement (FSP) /Approval date (MSP)		May 1991 (approval by agency: January 1993)	
Effectiveness date / project start		January 1993	
Expected date of project completion (at start)		December 1996	
Actual date of project completion		June 1997	
Project Financing			
		At Endorsement (US \$M)	At Completion (US \$M)
Project Preparation Grant	GEF funding		
	Co-financing		
GEF Project Grant		1.0	1.0
Co-financing	IA own		
	Government	0.25	0.25
	Other multi- /bi-laterals		
	Private sector		
	NGOs/CSOs		
Total GEF funding		1.0	1.0
Total Co-financing		0.25	0.25
Total project funding (GEF grant(s) + co-financing)		1.25	1.25
Terminal evaluation/review information			
TE completion date		June 1998	
TE submission date			
Author of TE		<i>Unknown</i>	
TER completion date		October 2014	
TER prepared by		Daniel Nogueira-Budny	
TER peer review by (if GEF EO review)		Joshua Schneck	

2. Summary of Project Ratings

Criteria	Final PAR*	IA Terminal Evaluation	IA Evaluation Office Review	GEF EO Review
Project Outcomes	S	S	S	MS
Sustainability of Outcomes	"Uncertain"	ML	L**	MU
M&E Design	N/A	N/R	N/R	MU
M&E Implementation	N/A	N/R	N/R	U/A
Quality of Implementation	MS	S	U	MU
Quality of Execution	S	S	S	MS
Quality of the Terminal Evaluation Report	-	-	S	MU

*No PIR was found; the "Performance Audit Report" (PAR; Report No. 22073) ratings are shown here.** While ICRR rates overall Sustainability as "Likely", it also mentions that, "given the ongoing fiscal difficulties of the state government, there is no indication that the national park's budget will be increased in the short-term" (p 1).

3. Project Objectives

3.1 Global Environmental Objectives of the project:

The project's Global Environmental Objective (GEO) was to preserve the biodiversity of the key endangered forests of the Belovezhskaya Protected Forest Reserve (BPF), as well as the wetlands and forests of the Berezinsky and Pripiatsky Reserves, according to the Project Document (PD). The Reserves' forests are among the most important and unique in Europe, housing threatened and endangered species such as the European bison, as well as possessing ecosystem processes found nowhere else in the world (PD, p 1). According to the Technical Report¹ (TR) are over 900 known plant, 220 bird, and 56 mammal species in the region (p 7). Furthermore, the forests are still of viable size and can therefore offer the best opportunities with which to explore the preservation and management of natural forests in Europe. These key endangered forests "are sites of international importance being among Europe's largest expanse of remaining natural forests and areas of high endemism" (PD, p 2). This project would complement the establishment of facilities for biodiversity protection of the Bialowieza Primeval Forest area of Eastern Poland.

3.2 Development Objectives of the project:

According to the TR (cf. pp 9-21), the project had eight Development Objectives (DOs) in the BPF, as well as four others that involve the BPF plus the Berezinsky and Pripiatsky Reserves:

1. Development of a number of ex-situ and in-situ conservation measures (seed and plant parts storage and collection in-situ conservation of native populations and the determination of genetic diversity);
2. Development of a protection and management program (conservation planning, expansion of protected areas, applied research);
3. Implementation of a Geographical Information System (GIS) to assist with land and conservation planning;
4. Fostering ecological agriculture on farms operating within and abutting the BPF;

¹ The Technical Report comprises the second half of the Project Document. TR is identified for clarification of page numbers cited in this TER.

5. Design of a program for mitigating local air and water pollution;
6. Furthering cooperation with Poland;
7. Provision of professional development and training opportunities;
8. Provision of support for a foundation to develop a mechanism for on-going funding;
9. Preservation of the European Bison;
10. Preservation of the Capercaillie Grouse;
11. Creation of a Genetic Resources Management Policy;
12. Standardization of data management among the three Reserves.

According to the PD (p 3), the project was designed to do two things. First, it would provide institutional support to the Belovezhskaya National Park, Council of Ministers, and the Committee of Ecology to enable it to carry out its biodiversity conservation management activities, including the establishment of facilities for a biodiversity protection program for the Bialowieza Primeval Forest (BPF) ecosystem located in Belarus, as well as of scientific linkages to the ongoing GEF work in the abutting Bialowieza Primeval Forest, in Poland. Second, it would provide investments in programs to preserve endangered forest ecosystems for biodiversity conservation through: provision of funding for pilot investments in air and soil monitoring equipment; land planning (GIS) equipment; protected area planning; financial support for a program for supporting the transition to ecological agriculture for farms operating within the BPF; and professional development, training, and consulting services.

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

Neither the GEO nor DOs were changed during project implementation.

4. GEF EO 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 was relevant both to the GEF and National priorities. Consistent with OP3 – the conservation of biodiversity in forest ecosystems, the project aimed to contribute to biodiversity conservation in the forests of Belovezhskaya, Berezinsky, and Pripiatsky Reserves (as well as the wetlands found in the latter two Reserves). Inefficient and inappropriate land uses have resulted in accelerating human-related incursions and transformations that threaten the regions’ natural areas, in turn affecting their flora and fauna. Such developments are significant to the GEF because of the global environmental benefit: these

forests contain rare, endemic species found nowhere else. Indeed, “the global significance of the two areas initially selected is confirmed and supported by their designations by UNESCO [the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization] as possible Biosphere Reserves, and the World Wildlife Fund (International) by being identified among the ‘existing ecological bricks’ of Europe” (PD, p 2). The project was relevant to National priorities because not only Belarussian ecologists, but also foresters will benefit from some of the modern approaches to biodiversity conservation and management being used elsewhere in the world. According to the PD, this project has been accorded “high priority” by the Belarussian government and that, “the Government and the people of Belarus...are concerned at the potential loss of critical flora and fauna in parts of Belarus’s forests” (TR, p 4); however, sufficient funds with which to carry out the work proposed are simply not available, it continues.

4.2 Effectiveness	Rating: Moderately Satisfactory
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The project’s effectiveness was rated moderately satisfactory, as most project objectives were achieved. ICR claims that *all* objectives were achieved, however, it omits some objectives and activities. It appears that the ICR team did not visit the Berezinsky and Pripiatsky Reserves, where activities for the last four DOs would have been undertaken. For those objectives that are mentioned, the ICR does not detail the extent to which such objectives were actually achieved. Achievements and challenges for the various DOs are as follows:

- DO1: Upgrading of protected areas management to European standards and levels
- DO2: A multidisciplinary management plan was prepared for the national park and is currently under implementation;
- DO3: *status unknown*;
- DO4: Technical assistance provided for developing ecological agriculture on farms in the buffer zone of the BPF;
- DO5: National park is engaging in activities to monitor pollution;
- DO6: Cooperation furthered between Ukraine and neighboring Poland in order to improve management of the Bialowieza and Belovezhskaya transboundary forest (according to the ICRR, collaboration between the two countries “went well beyond the project work plan);
- DO7: A successful professional development and training program was completed in technical subjects and business aspects of park management;
- DO8: National park has been developing income to support its operational budget, particularly through donations from private and public sponsors at home and abroad, as well as through targeted efforts in tourism and hunting.
- DO9: *status unknown*;
- DO10: *status unknown*;
- DO11: *status unknown*;
- DO12: *status unknown*.

4.3 Efficiency	Rating: Moderately Satisfactory
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ICR does not explicitly mention project’s efficiency. However, it does note that the project experienced delays during start-up and that project progress proceeded slowly during the implementation phase. The principal reason for this, according to the ICR, was Belarus’ inexperience with the World Bank’s procurement procedures, as well as the relative inexperience with the project’s explicit approach to interdisciplinary management planning (pp 4-5). Nonetheless, project was completed within budget and only six months after expected completion date.

4.4 Sustainability	Rating: Moderately Unlikely
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Sustainability of the project is rated as moderately unlikely. Although there is strong support for the project, relevant resources to fund the project’s activities past project completion are not present. Sustainability is assessed along the following four dimensions:

- a) *Environmental sustainability (U/A)* – ICR does not provide enough information on potential threats to environmental sustainability to rate this factor.
- b) *Financial sustainability (MU)* – ICR acknowledges that sustained funding is the biggest threat to the project’s sustainability. According to the ICR, “there is no indication that the national park’s budget will be increased in the near-term. The national park has been developing income to support its operational budget...Whether this will be sufficient to sustain the project activities is unknown. Taken together, however, these factors indicate a moderate chance of the project being sustainable” (5-6). According to the PAR, which was written years after the project ended, “despite the best efforts of those involved in the project (and in the subsequent management of the reserves) to develop alternative funding sources, the sustainability of their efforts remains uncertain” (p vii). Furthermore, while “ Park management and the foundation have displayed considerable ingenuity in tapping into new sources of funding for the management of the parks....because of the weak state of the Belarus economy and finances, the ability to continue to do so remains tenuous. Since the project ended, external support has been limited” (p 5).
- c) *Institutional sustainability (L)* – According to the ICR, the Belovezskaya National Park’s management plan—as well as the interdisciplinary management planning approaches to the other sites— will continue to be implemented following project completion (p 5).
- d) *Socio-Political sustainability (L)* – The ICR states that implementation of the project’s management plans is high on the list of priorities of relevant government officials (p 5).

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?

There was no difference in level of expected vs. actual co-financing. ICR does not mention whether the reported co-financing—USD250,000 from the Belarussian government, or one fifth of the total project—was essential to the achievement of GEF objectives.

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?

Project experienced both delays in start-up and in implementation. ICR claims that the reason for the delays and overall slow implementation process was due to the Belarussian government's inexperience in dealing with the World Bank, as well as the executing agency's inexperience in modern management practices.

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:

ICR notes that "ownership of the project was high at all levels throughout implementation. According to the directors of the national park and the Department of Protected Areas, implementing the management plan is one of their highest priorities" (p 5).

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 Unsatisfactory
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The project's M&E design at entry is rated moderately unsatisfactory. The PD states that "monitoring and evaluation are built into the terms of reference for the Project Management who will be reporting on a quarterly basis" (p 6), although little more information was provided. The Joint Scientific Committee, whose establishment by the Council of Ministers by March 1993 was set forth in the PD (cf. p 4), was tasked to review the project and its progress on a semi-annual basis (p 6). Annex 1 of the PD establishes the M&E systems, and that there will be three supervision missions per annum, estimated at approximately two weeks each. A very general guideline of what is to be expected is detailed for three

of the six missions; however, no key performance indicators or targets from which to assess project performance is provided

6.2 M&E Implementation	Rating: Unable to Assess
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The project's M&E Implementation was not rated, as ICR makes no mention of the subject matter.

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: Moderately Unsatisfactory
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The quality of project implementation was rated moderately unsatisfactory. Rating the World Bank's role in the project proved difficult, as the PAR rated it moderately satisfactory, the ICR rated in satisfactory, and the ICRR rated in unsatisfactory. All the documents agree that the Bank's technical supervision was excellent; the Bank provided capable support from biodiversity and forestry specialists with sufficient experience in supervising technical issues. The PAR judges that Bank's performance as only moderately satisfactory, however, because supervision reporting was incomplete. The ICRR agrees that adherence to the internal Bank reporting requirement was weak, but it goes farther, adding two more criticisms. First, project appraisal was insufficient: shortcomings at project appraisal resulted in supervision costs that were four times the appraisal estimate (ICRR, p 1). Second, the Bank's administrative support was unsatisfactory: the Bank did not provide adequate non-technical management and procurement support, which in turn hampered implementation (p 2).

7.2 Quality of Project Execution	Rating: Moderately Satisfactory
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The quality of project execution was rated moderately satisfactory, a downgrade from the grade of satisfactory given by the ICR. While the executing agency's scientific and administrative staff proved highly capable and proficient in many technical aspects of the project, ICR notes that they were relatively inexperienced in preparing long-term management plans that integrated modern principles of conservation biology and social issues in natural resource management (p 4). ICR acknowledges that some serious delays in project implementation occurred, explaining those as the natural result a lack of experience on the part of Belarus in working with the World Bank; however, its grade of project execution does not reflect this fact that avoidable delays in implementation occurred(cf. p 7).

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.

ICR does not report any changes in environmental stress or status that occurred by the end of the project.

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.

ICR does not report any change in socioeconomic well-being that occurred due to the project.

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 – Project improved the technical and scientific capacity of the National Park and Protected Reserve Managements. Project’s use of GIS and digital processing led to knowledge and skill transfer to Belarus.

b) Governance – Project established a Joint Scientific Committee, created by the country’s Council of Ministers.

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.

ICR did not mention any unintended impacts resulting from the project.

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.

ICR did not mention any examples of GEF initiatives becoming mainstreamed, replicated, and/or scaled up by project's completion.

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.

- ICR1: The social assessment component of the management plan conducted in the last year of the project revealed that public awareness of the project objectives and activities was weak. Local residents valued the park's conservation objectives and would be more supportive of the national park if they received some of the benefits. As a result, the national park is improving its communication with local communities, and is looking for opportunities to contribute to local benefits while protecting the park's resources. Participation of local communities would have been more successful if the social assessment had been conducted earlier in the project.
- ICR2: The project was strongly oriented to achieving results, especially in technical subjects. The project design could have been improved by identifying discrete results to be achieved at different stages of the project, and used as measures of success. These should include measures of sustainability, technical aspects, social changes, policy decisions, and innovation.
- ICR3: Professional development and training activities were an important ingredient of the project's success. Training should be targeted at mid-career professionals and students. Part of the program should include extended studies for individuals who will be responsible for training others.
- ICR4: Early in the project, a needs assessment of the Project Management Unit could have identified the need for training in the office management and business skills needed to implement the project. This could have reduced the initial delays in implementation and given greater time to the substantive work to be done.
- PAR1: This operation was initiated in the early stages of the pilot phase of the GEF where it was implicitly assumed that, with the additional support provided by the GEF, countries would be able to obtain follow-up funding to take the place of the initial GEF input. The lesson for this project is that this assumption is outdated and that GEF should review whether steps are required to ensure long-term support for efforts to protect resources of high global biodiversity value. GEF should consider taking a longer-term and broader nation-wide view of biodiversity and conservation issues following the model piloted in Mexico. A more general review on how

to ensure sustainability of globally important bio-resources should be raised in the run-up to the 10h anniversary of the Rio Conference (pp 7-8).

9.2 Briefly describe the recommendations given in the terminal evaluation.

ICR does not provide any recommendations.

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 EO 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?	ICR contains an assessment of most of the relevant outcomes and impacts of the project, and achievement of objectives. However, it does not comment on those four objectives linked to the Berezinsky and Pripiatsky Reserves, and it only perfunctorily covers some of the other objectives. Additionally, the assessments are rarely supported with appropriate performance indicators.	U
To what extent is the report internally consistent, the evidence presented complete and convincing, and ratings well substantiated?	The report is internally consistent. However, little evidence is presented and what ratings are given are not always well substantiated.	MU
To what extent does the report properly assess project sustainability and/or project exit strategy?	ICR provides a fairly detailed account of the financial threats to project sustainability. A broader discussion of the other threats to sustainability would have provided more value.	MS
To what extent are the lessons learned supported by the evidence presented and are they comprehensive?	Lessons are concise and well supported.	S
Does the report include the actual project costs (total and per activity) and actual co-financing used?	ICR neither includes the actual project costs nor the actual co-financing used.	U
Assess the quality of the report's evaluation of project M&E systems:	ICR does not adequately discuss or report on the project's M&E systems.	U
Overall TE Rating		MU

Overall TE rating: $0.3 * (2+3) + 0.1 * (4+5+2+2) = 2.8$

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

- Belarus Forest Biodiversity Protection Project: Technical Report (this report is found in the same archive as the TE)
- Implementation Completion Report Review (ICRR): 18 August 1998
- Performance Audit Report – Belarus: Forest Biodiversity Protection Project. Report No. 22073. 12 April 2001.