

UNDP -UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

GEF - GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY

**TERMINAL EVALUATION REPORT
OF PROJECT PIMS No. 227 Atlas No. 00071405**

**“BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION AND PROTECTED AREA MANAGEMENT SYRIA”
(BCPAM)**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is the independent Terminal Evaluation of the project of the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic, supported by UNDP/GEF, on Biodiversity Conservation and Protected Area Management.

The evaluation was proceeded by Moderately Satisfactory rating assigned by the Mid Term Review (MTR) which was carried out in August 2008, and the initial assessment of Marginally Unsatisfactory rating assigned by the UNDP/GEF RTA of 2006 & 2007. MTR anticipated a huge leap forward in the rating in different aspects of the Project objectives

The aim of the Project is to demonstrate practical methods of Protected Area management that conserve biodiversity effectively while supporting the local communities and consolidating an enabling environment that will facilitate replication throughout the country.

The **Project Objective** was to demonstrate practical methods of protected area management that effectively conserve biodiversity and protect the interests of local communities, while supporting the consolidation of an enabling environment that will facilitate replication and effective PA management throughout the country. It had three Outcomes as follows:

Project outcome 1: Policies and institutional systems that allow for the wise selection and effective operation of protected areas to conserve globally significant biodiversity.

Project outcome 2: Effective techniques for PA management and biodiversity conservation have been demonstrated through the design and implementation of management plans at three sites.

Project outcome 3: Sustainable use of natural resources in and around protected areas has been demonstrated through the development and implementation of a programme for alternative sustainable livelihoods and community resource management.

The Project concept and design are both basically comprehensive with a standard approach on enhancing the protected areas system. The Objective seeks *conservation* as a balance between Biodiversity protection and preserving the communities' way of life. The three Outcomes focus on enabling environment, PA management, and community participation and protection. The budget of just under \$7 million including the Government contribution in kind was adequate and spending was almost within this range.

Project Title:	Syria: Biodiversity Conservation and Protected Area Management			
GEF Project ID:	1169		<i>at endorsement (Million US\$)</i>	<i>at completion (Million US\$)</i>
UNDP Project ID:	PIMS 227	GEF financing:	3,291,850	3,283,750
Country:	Syria	IA/EA own:		
Region:	RBAS	Government:	In Kind 2,407,000	2,439,000
Focal Area:	BD	(500 Trac+ 525 Government) Other:	1,025,000	1,002,000
FA Objectives, (OP/SP):	1: catalysing sustainability of protected areas; OP1: Arid and semiarid ecosystems, crosscutting with land degradation	Total co-financing:	3,432,000	3,441,000
Executing Agency:	MLAE	Total Project Cost:	6,723,850	6,724,750
Other Partners involved:	MSEA MAAR	ProDoc Signature (date project began):		February 8, 2005
		(Operational) Closing Date:	Proposed: February 8, 2012	Actual: December 31, 2012

The Terminal Evaluation aimed to answer the questions related to 7 key evaluation criteria that include: Relevance concerns, Feasibility, Impact of the project on its wider environment, Effectiveness of the project to achieve the project purpose, Efficiency of having the results at reasonable cost, Coherence to assess if the outputs and activities have not deviated from the original ones, and Sustainability.

Project performance was rated according to a scale of six categories, from Highly Satisfactory to Highly Unsatisfactory adapted as necessary to apply to evaluation circumstances. huge amount of documents covering all stages of the project as well as Project Progress Reports were reviewed.

Evaluation was based on the UNDP Handbook on Monitoring and Evaluation together with the ToRs of this work, and in consultation with UNDP Syria. This has been a participatory evaluation which has been carried out through relevant Government officials, the Project Management Unit and UNDP-CO personnel. Consultations with individuals associated with the project took place on face to face meeting or Skype call basis and on small group discussion in Damascus as well as in Hama and Lattakia Governorates in addition to Amman.

The 7-year duration was too short for such ambitious objectives for the project especially regarding change of attitudes and changes of legislations.

As was highlighted by the MTR, Project Document was weak and unhelpful and has contributed to some of the difficulties faced by the PMU and recommended to UNDP/GEF to implement a policy which establishes a Master Copy which should be updated each time substantive revisions are carried out on any of its elements.

There were some changes in activities after the MTR in 2008, and the logical framework was revised, annual work plans were developed, the Project Strategy has been reviewed and progress has been recorded.

The Project is being accomplished with MSEA (MLAE) as the Executing Agency and MAAR as the Implementing Agency after an agreement between the two ministries to govern this relationship in cooperative and clear roles.

The Government (MAAR), as part of its in-kind contribution, has provided office premises and on-site facilities to serve the role needed, but these should be developed to the standard or style expected in a PA similar to those available at Al Fronloq and these should be open for the public.

Minister of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform (MAAR) has adopted site Management Plans as the major documents for implementation at the Protected Areas.

The Project would have not achieved its targets and objectives without the full support that the Government (through its agencies, MSEA & MAAR) whether by offering logistic support, offering in-kind contribution to the success of the project and the future success through the well synchronised cooperation between the two. This alone is a big achievement that was not happening for a long period.

The Project Executive Committee (PEC), has continued to function well to provide guidance and support to the PMU as the highest governance level for the Project. Co-managed approach, including the leadership of local communities, has played a major role in orienting the PA management approaches.

The breakthrough in the project governance happened from being very weak or non-existent at management unit and at site level (MTR, 2008) to be more apparent through the rise in the level of

involvement of the various stakeholders and after having appropriate training and participation in workshops.

Training courses and on-the-job training for PAs staff, central teams and stakeholders took place throughout the project term in a wide range of disciplines, including conservation and natural resources management, ecological survey and monitoring techniques, protected area management planning, eco-tourism development, organizational procedures, conservation-based land use planning and community based participation.

The project has closely collaborated and supervised the already established Community Based Organisations (CBOs) at the three project PA sites running the small projects as an alternative livelihood.

Ecological monitoring guidelines in PAs were adopted and applied by project work teams on ground at the three sites with external assistance. However, the project sometimes failed to have the needed cooperation with the national expertise to carry out some work such as bird surveys when external personnel was not available.

Time has allowed to judge the extent to which the project has affected the institutional arrangements and the governance of the protected areas. Anecdotal evidence for changes in the way that protected areas management has changed is overall positive.

The Project will leave the PAs as a very valuable legacy to the Government and people of Syria; capacity at both central and local levels for the administration and management of PAs would have been enhanced; and community engagement will be another part of the legacy

The Project provided Eight small projects at the three PA sites are functioning in progress: Four projects of revolving funds for sheep fattening at four local CBOs at Jebel Abdul Aziz PA, Two projects run by the two CBOs at Al Fronloq PA site have increased production and marketing their local traditional products of milk and other food products, and Two projects are progressing successfully at Abu Qubeis PA site run by two CBOs on medicinal plants growing and water harvesting project and a pilot project on improving economic returns of cattle husbandry

In addition to these results that had impact on the local communities at the PAs, other activities can be mentioned as: A Picnic Site established at Al Fronloq PA; Herbarium Establishment at Abu Qubeis PA; and Ecological monitoring and surveys

The training of facilitators has included representatives from a Syrian NGO as a mean to build the capacity within Syrian conservation NGOs and to provide scenario planning services to the protected areas in the future.

The Project Brief and the ProDoc was duly prepared and this was followed by the inception phase where a low number of risks were identified, and so did other platforms such as the PIRs. Based on the points raised by the MTR where the evaluators recommended also that UNDP/GEF should develop and implement a policy which confirms the importance of the ProDoc. Hence, A Master Copy should be established and updated every time when substantive revisions are carried out on any of its elements. The project started to pick up risks as was described by recent PIRs, the project has recorded at one time 27 risks, two of which were critical.

The involvement of local communities effectively in the daily life of the PA will reduce the human footprint of the ecosystem. This could be more obvious if it was empowered more in the management of the PA. However, it was noticed that there were significant changes in the involvement of the local communities in providing ideas and discussions about the use of the natural resources in the PA, even though this is not clearly supported by the legislations. This involvement is

something exceptional that is unusual at any level at the PA management. Therefore, this indicates the rating of the objective of the Project can be considered as HIGHLY SATISFACTORY.

Overall, Assessing the three PAs using Management Evaluation Tracking Tool (METT) for GEF Biodiversity Focal Area Strategic Priority One: “Catalysing Sustainability of Protected Areas”, new scores were achieved for the Protected Areas. A big change was noticed in the series of scores as follows from 32 (33.1%) to 57 (59.37%) for Jebel Abdul Aziz and from 37 (38.27%) to 65 (67.71%) for Abu Qubeis and from 33 (34.14%) to 67 (69.79%) for Al Fronloq. This shows a great and significant improvement from both the initial and the MTR assessments. This confirms the prediction of the MTR team of the great leap forward. This gives an overall rating of SATISFACTORY in meeting its objective and for meeting its main outcomes under this objective. The wealth and amount of reports and studies that were produced to a good quality indicates a SATISFACTORY rating for this outcome. planning for the project and activities spending with the limits and budgets planned and having a slight margin of reserve, which gives a SATISFACTORY indication of the finance procedures carried out for the Project.

Evaluation Ratings:			
1. Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)	rating	2. IA& EA Execution	rating
M&E design at entry	N/A	Quality of UNDP Implementation	HS
M&E Plan Implementation	S	Quality of Execution - Executing Agency	HS
Overall quality of M&E	S	Overall quality of Implementation / Execution	S
3. Assessment of Outcomes	rating	4. Sustainability	rating
Relevance	R	Financial resources:	ML
Effectiveness	HS	Socio-political:	L
Efficiency	S	Institutional framework and governance:	ML
Overall Project Outcome Rating	S	Environmental :	L
		Overall likelihood of sustainability:	ML

The delivery and achievement of the UNDP Country Office (CO) can be considered as been done in a SATISFACTORY way. Keeping the pace of the work as needed and has a very good and fruitful relation with both the executing and implementing national agencies, MSEA & MAAR, respectively. The CO ensured the Governance of the Project implementation and directly responded in time to all needed activities. There was Day to Day follow up on the work progress carried out by the PMU and PA site manager and staff. The CO followed the meetings of the Project Steering Committee (PSC) and the Project Executive Committee (PEC), as well as the PIRs and APRs in addition to following the responses to the points highlighted within the MTR. UNDP CO played a crucial role in the governance of the Project and in implementing its goals. The work delivered by the PTA was done in a SATISFACTORY way and this ensured the good delivery of the Project goals according to its objectives.

Despite the ongoing unrest in the country that slowed down and delayed some activities, the project management and the National Project Manager has achieved key planned activities and progressed well towards achieving Project objective to be rated as SATISFACTORY.

National Project Coordinator has played a defining factor that acted and progressed well towards achieving Project objectives and hence this personnel can be rated as SATISFACTORY in delivering the overall objectives of the Project.

ACRONYMS & ABBREVIATIONS:

APR	Annual Progress Report
BCPAM	Biodiversity Conservation and Protected Area Management
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CBNRM	Community-Based Natural Resource Management
CBO	Community Based Organisation
CO	Country Office
EA & IA	Executing Agency & Implementing Agency
GCDB	General Commission for the Development of al Badia
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GIS	Geographical Information System
IRI	Impact Reduction Index
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature
M&E	Monitoring & Evaluation
MAAR	Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform
MaB	Man & Biosphere Reserve
METT	Management Evaluation Tracking Tool
MLAE	Ministry of Local Administration and Environment
MMS	Micro-credit and Micro-enterprise Scheme
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MSEA	Ministry of State for Environment Affairs
MTR	Mid Term Review
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
NPC	National Project Coordinator
NPD	National Project Director
NPM	National Project Manager
NTF	National Task Force
OP	Operational Programme
PA	Protected Area
PEC	Project Executive Committee
PIMA	Project Implementation and Monitoring Adviser
PIP	Project Inception Phase
PIR	Project Implementation Report
PMU	Project Management Unit
ProDoc	Project Document
PSC	Project Steering Committee
PTA	Project Technical Adviser
RSPB	the Royal Society for Protection of Birds
SSC	Site Steering sub-Committees
ToR	Terms of Reference
TRA	Threat Reduction Assessment
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Project Background (vision and outcomes, and Stakeholders)

The GEF/UNDP Biodiversity Conservation and Protected Area Management (BCPAM) Project aims to demonstrate practical methods of Protected Area (PA) management that conserve biodiversity effectively and protect the interests of local communities while supporting the consolidation of an enabling environment that will facilitate replication throughout the country. The original project document outlined three outcomes that would be targeted:

- (1) Policies, legislation and institutional systems are in place that allow for the wise selection and effective operation of protected areas that conserve globally significant biodiversity
- (2) Effective techniques for PA management and biodiversity conservation have been demonstrated at three sites totalling approximately 60,000 ha and are available for replication
- (3) Sustainable use of natural resources in and around protected areas has been demonstrated through the development and implementation of a programme for alternative sustainable livelihoods and community resource management.

The project was conceived under GEF-3 and is consistent with the provisions of Operational Programme (OP#1), Arid and Semi-Arid Ecosystems, crosscutting with the Land Degradation thematic area (OP#15). Its focus is on conservation and sustainable use of forest and dryland ecosystems and its major outputs include threat removal, sectoral integration, sustainable use and institutional strengthening. Many of the activities undertaken by the project are included among those described as 'typical' by the Operational Programme (OP).

The project has a budget of just under US\$7 million funded by GEF, UNDP and the Syrian Government as shown in table 1 and in Annex 1 (Section A). The project was designed to run over seven years from its start date in February 2005, however, it effectively commenced in September 2005. The Project Inception Phase (PIP) was subject to various delays due to a number of reasons.

TABLE 1: PROJECT SUMMARY INITIAL TABLE

Project Title:	Syria: Biodiversity Conservation and Protected Area Management			
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Other Partners involved:	MSEA MAAR	ProDoc Signature (date project began):		February 8, 2005
		(Operational) Closing Date:	Proposed: February 8, 2012	Actual: December 31, 2012

The Executing Agency (EA) of the project is the Ministry of State for Environment Affairs "MSEA" (used to be called the Ministry of Local Administration and Environment (MLAE) at the start of the project, while the Implementing Agency (IA) is the Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform (MAAR). A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the two ministries to ease the delivery of this project. The GEF Implementing Agency is the UNDP.

Since Mid Term Review (MTR) in 2008, changes in activities were made, logical framework was revised, annual work plans were developed, the Project Strategy has been reviewed and some progress has been recorded. Meetings of the Project Steering Committee (PSC) as well as the Project Implementation Reports (PIRs) and Annual Progress Reports (APRs) were followed and the responses to the points highlighted within the MTR were monitored. However, the early implementation stage has not been easy and only now is the project considered to have gathered momentum by the stakeholders.

1.2. Scope of this Evaluation

1.2.1. Principles of Evaluation:

In accordance with the monitoring and evaluation policy of the GEF, this evaluation is guided by, and has applied, the following principles:

Independence The Evaluator is independent and has not been engaged in the Project activities, nor was he responsible in the past for the design, implementation or supervision of the project.

Impartiality The Evaluator endeavoured to provide a comprehensive and balanced presentation of strengths and weaknesses of the project. The evaluation process has been impartial in all stages and taken into account all the views received from stakeholders.

Transparency The Evaluator conveyed in as open a manner as possible the purpose of the evaluation, the criteria applied and the intended use of the findings. This evaluation report aims to provide transparent information on its sources, methodologies and approach.

Disclosure This report serves as a mechanism through which the findings and lessons identified in the evaluation are disseminated to policymakers, operational staff, beneficiaries, the general public and other stakeholders.

Ethical The Evaluator has respected the right of institutions and individuals to provide information in confidence and the sources of specific information and opinions in this report are not disclosed except where necessary and then only after confirmation with the consultee.

Competencies and Capacities The terms of reference provided to the Evaluator appear in Annex 1 and the methodology for the assessment of results and performance is described below.

Credibility This evaluation has been based on data and observations which are considered reliable and dependable with reference to the quality of instruments and procedures and analysis used to collect and interpret information.

Utility The Evaluator has strived to be as well-informed as possible and this ensuing report is considered as relevant, timely and as concise as possible. In an attempt to be of maximum benefit to stakeholders, the report presents in a complete and balanced way the evidence, findings and issues, conclusions and recommendations.

Terminal evaluations specifically assess the main outputs, outcomes, findings, key lessons and best practices of a GEF project. The results are used to benefit the design and implementation of future

projects in the country and the region as well as providing insights to the implementing and executing agencies and the GEF.

The evaluation aimed to provide evidence-based information that is credible, reliable and useful following a consultative approach with close engagement with government stakeholders, in particular the GEF operational focal point, Project management and operational team, executing and implementing agencies, UNDP Country Office (CO), and other key stakeholders.

1.2.2. Coverage of the Evaluation:

The scope of this evaluation covered all key activities undertaken in the framework of the GEF BCPAM project. It compares planned outputs of the project to actual outputs and evaluates the actual results to determine their contribution to the attainment of project objectives. The evaluation highlights lessons learned and best practices thus far from the implementation of the project that would improve the future work in the country and the region and assesses the appropriateness of this project in meeting the long-term objectives of the GEF.

Key findings that aimed to be brought out in the evaluation include whether the project has demonstrated:

- a) verifiable improvements in ecological status,
- b) verifiable reductions in stress on ecological systems, and/or
- c) demonstrated progress towards these impact achievements.

The very first step in order to carry out the assignment properly, the evaluator aimed to review all relevant sources of information, such as the project document, project reports – including (APRs)/ (PIRs), MTR, project budget revisions, progress reports, GEF focal area tracking tools, project files, national strategic and legal documents, and any other materials that the evaluator considered useful for this evidence-based assessment.

The overall guidance on evaluation methodologies were obtained from the UNDP Handbook on Monitoring and Evaluation (UNDP 2002). In general, the Evaluators will base their approach on this guiding document together with the assignment Terms of Reference (ToR), and in consultation with UNDP Country Office (Syria).

The Terminal Evaluation was conducted according to the guidance, rules and procedures established by UNDP and GEF as reflected in the UNDP Evaluation Guidance for GEF Financed Projects.

According to the UNDP Handbook on Monitoring and Evaluation¹¹, “Project evaluations assess the efficiency and effectiveness of a project in achieving its intended results. They also assess the relevance and sustainability of outputs as contributions to medium-term and longer-term outcomes. Project evaluation can be invaluable for managing for results, and serve to reinforce the accountability of project managers. Additionally, a project evaluation provides a basis for the evaluation of outcomes and programmes, as well as for strategic and programmatic evaluations and APRs, and for distilling lessons from experience for learning and sharing knowledge. In UNDP, project evaluations are mandatory when required by a partnership protocol, such as with the Global Environment Facility (GEF)”.

¹¹ *Handbook on Monitoring and Evaluating for Results* (2002) United Nations Development Programme, Evaluation Office.

As clearly highlighted in the Terms of Reference of the assignment, this adopted a participatory approach in carrying out the assignment. Being a desktop assignment, constant and regular communication need to be kept with all relevant personnel and entities for the project through carrying out the direct interviews in the country.

Therefore, this Terminal Evaluation is being carried out:

- To promote accountability and transparency, and to assess and disclose levels of project accomplishments;
- To synthesize lessons that may help improve the selection, design and implementation of future GEF activities;
- To provide feedback on issues that are recurrent across the portfolio and need attention, and on improvements regarding previously identified issues; and,
- To contribute to the GEF Evaluation Office databases for aggregation, analysis and reporting on effectiveness of GEF operations in achieving global environmental benefits and on quality of monitoring and evaluation across the GEF system.

1.3. Evaluation objectives

The Terminal Evaluation aimed to answer the questions related to 7 key evaluation criteria:

- Relevance concerns whether the results, purpose and overall objectives of the intervention are in line with the needs and aspirations of the beneficiaries, and with the policy environment of the intervention, within the context of this project, mainly how research topics, objectives and activities are relevant to build operational and technical national research and institutional capacities to meet the objectives of the GE conventions.
- Feasibility: Strengths, Weaknesses, Risks and Opportunities of Programme Features.
- Impact is the effect of the project on its wider environment, and its contribution to the wider sector objectives summarized in the project's overall objective, and on the achievement of the overarching policy objectives of the national institutions, GE conventions and the various partners involved. Impact includes positive and negative, primary and secondary effects produced by a development intervention on its beneficiaries, whether directly or indirectly, intended or unintended towards them.
- Effectiveness is the contribution made by the project's results/outcomes to the achievement of the project purpose. Effectiveness describes how well the results achieved have furthered the attainment of the intervention purpose both in quality and in quantity. It includes also catalytic and synergistic effects among project components, as well as political, institutional, natural, social economic/financial, cultural factors which supported or impeded project implementation
- Efficiency is used to assess if the results were obtained at reasonable cost, i.e. how well means and activities were converted into results, and the quality of the results achieved. It describes the relationship between the produced outputs and the utilized resources.
- Coherence is used to assess if the outputs and activities, in this project mainly research related ones, are still in line with the original objectives of the programme as well as with national goals, UNDP mandates and key issues of the Rio Conventions.
- Sustainability is the likelihood of a continuation in the stream of benefits produced by the project after the period of external support has ended. Key factors that impact on the likelihood of sustainability include:

- (i) ownership by beneficiaries;
- (ii) policy support/consistency;
- (iii) appropriate technology;
- (iv) environment;
- (v) socio-cultural issues;
- (vi) gender equity;
- (vii) institutional management capacity; and
- (viii) economic and financial viability.

1.4. Approach and Methods

Initially, the Terminal Evaluation Team was composed of two evaluators, one international and one national. The evaluators were independent from both the policy-making process and the delivery and management of assistance surrounding the project.

Overall guidance on evaluation methodologies was obtained from the UNDP Handbook for evaluation Projects². The Evaluation Team based their approach on this guiding document together with the ToRs.

The national evaluator was briefed by the UNDP Team Leader on 24/11/2013 in person and set the guidelines for work in this mission. Both the national and the international evaluators were then briefed by the UNDP Team Leader on 26/11/2014 through a Skype conference call about the work needed and communication channels to the best delivery of the evaluation.

The Evaluators were provided with a list of documents by UNDP and huge set of all available data and documents were also provided by the Project Team to give a clear idea about the background to the project, insights into project implementation and management, a record of project outputs, etc.

However, for personal reasons, the international evaluator apologised in February 2014 from continuing the mission. Hence, the National Evaluator completed the whole evaluation after some in depth consultation according to approval from UNDP office in September 2014. The agreement was renewed on 6th November 2014 to complete the evaluation and finish its report.

This work was completed to consolidate what has been done and to complete the work to the best that can be done and as a wrap up to finish what was not completed by the international evaluator.

Opinions and information were sought and obtained through the following activities:

- Desk review of relevant documents and websites
- Discussions with personnel from UNDP Country Office Syria
- Consultation meetings with Central and Local Government and other stakeholders and partners, if possible.
- Meetings with project personnel from the three project localities.

Face-to-face interviews by the national consultant evaluator were held in Damascus with the following organizations and individuals:

² “Guidance for Conducting Terminal Evaluations of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects (2012)”

- Ministry of State for Environment Affairs (Director of Biodiversity, Protected Areas and Lands Department; Deputy Minister; Ex-Counsellor of Minister of State of Environment Affairs)
- Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform (Forestry Department, Deputy Minister)
- Project Management Unit (National Project Director (NPD), Project Financial Officer)

Furthermore, telephone interviews were held with both of Al Fronloq and Abu Qubeis Site managers and selected staff of the sites. However, It was not possible to held a direct consultation with the site manager of Jebel Abdul Aziz PA as a trip to Al-Hassakeh was not practical due to the current unrest and insecurity to get this done. This might have caused a bit of limitation to the evaluation, however, consultations to other project staff and stakeholders who have been directly or indirectly involved in the project were carried out to fill any gap to evaluate this work from their comments regarding this site.

The evaluation has followed a participatory and consultative approach that ensures a close engagement with government counterparts (in particular the GEF operational national focal point) and it was based on credible information.

GEF guidance requires certain project aspects to be addressed by a terminal evaluation and a commentary, analysis and rating with brief justifications based on findings is required for each of:

- Project concept and design
- Stakeholder participation in project formulation
- Implementation approach
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Stakeholder participation
- Attainment of Outcomes and achievement of Objective.

1.4.1. Performance Rating:

Project performance was rated according to the following scale of standard GEF rating system, adapted as necessary to apply to evaluation circumstances:

- Highly Satisfactory (HS): The project has no shortcomings in the achievement of its objectives, in terms of relevance, effectiveness or efficiency
- Satisfactory (S): The project has minor shortcomings in the achievement of its objectives, in terms of relevance, effectiveness or efficiency
- Moderately Satisfactory (MS): The project has moderate shortcomings in the achievement of its objectives, in terms of relevance, effectiveness or efficiency
- Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU): The project has significant shortcomings in the achievement of its objectives, in terms of relevance, effectiveness or efficiency
- Unsatisfactory (U): The project has major shortcomings in the achievement of its objectives, in terms of relevance, effectiveness or efficiency
- Highly Unsatisfactory (HU): The project has severe shortcomings in the achievement of its objectives, in terms of relevance, effectiveness or efficiency

1.4.2. Documents reviewed and consulted

The Evaluator at the start of the mission in 2013 was provided with a relatively huge amount of documents covering all stages of the project which give an indication of the size of work that has

been carried out. In addition to the earlier evaluation reports, the Evaluator has also reviewed all implementation and progress reports of the project. Through the review process, the Evaluator has also requested to be provided with an additional list of documents, which was also duly provided by UNDP. Due to the huge amount of documentation, the evaluator has spent more time than first estimated for going through these documents. A list of the most important documents reviewed can be found in Annex 2.

1.4.3. Consultations with key stakeholders

Consultations were aimed at individuals from within UNDP, central government institutions (MAAR, MSEA), local authorities (Hama & Lattakia), project personnel, former and current national coordinator of the project, GEF national focal point of Syria, staff from Project Management Unit (PMU) (the National Project Manager (NPM), Site managers) and Site teams (where possible), National stakeholders, Project experts, Technical advisers and consultants. Consultations were carried out on a one to one basis in person in Damascus and Amman or through phone and online interviews with other members of the project outside Damascus. Contact with UNDP/GEF through telephone conversations was aimed for at the beginning of the mission, but was never materialised and achieved. A full list of organizations/institutions and persons met and consulted in this mission can be found in Annex 3.

2. FINDINGS OF THE EVALUATION

2.1. Project Document and Design

2.1.1. Project Document:

The Mid-Term Evaluation report has identified several issues in relation to the Project Document (ProDoc). These are mainly related to the style and structure of the Document that failed to form a coherent document with a logical sequence of numbering and parts of the whole document. It relies heavily on Annexes and this makes it not easy to follow and comprehend when referring to the document and hence distract the reader.

This point was well spotted by the MTR and it confuses the reader to find what is sought from the document. However, after a repeated reviewing to the Document, one will be accustomed to this issue despite the complexity to refer to the Document in future work.

The evaluator endorse the recommendation of the MTE that states: UNDP/GEF should develop and implement a policy which confirms the importance of the ProDoc and establishes a Master Copy which should be updated each time substantive revisions are carried out on any of its elements. It is such a Master Copy that should be used to guide project implementation and given to evaluators and other interested parties.

Moreover, Changing the LogFrame and the refinements of the ProDoc occurred during the Inception Phase which is the right thing that has to be done according to UNDP/GEF rules if the need for any modification was noticed to be a necessity to the advance of the Project and this what was done. Another change occurred to LogFrame in indicators as a response to MTE recommendations, the change was sound.

2.1.2. Project Design:

The Mid-Term Evaluation reported the following:

While the ProDoc is not considered effective as a document, the project design is basically sound. The Objective seeks conservation as a balance between protection and safeguarding the way of life of communities that have traditionally relied on the PA for their livelihoods. The three Outcomes targeted by the Project are considered very rational and complementary with their focus on strengthening the enabling environment (mainly through capacity building), providing for effective management of PAs (not only through management planning, but also through training and capacity), and community participation while safeguarding their livelihoods (including through alternative income generation schemes).

The ProDoc made no reference to stakeholder or communities participation during the project formulation phase. However, the Project brief provided some details on consultations carried out.

The lack of real consultation with stakeholders and beneficiaries – *they never knew what the Project was proposing and they allowed their fears to run away with them*- as was reported by the MTR, is a drawback of the design. However, the former National Coordinator of the Project have mentioned the following remarks regarding the MTR and the Project:

"The period and the circumstances of the MTR were of distinctive basis and this has special specifications,

- 1) during that period a dialogue with local communities was initiated for the first time,
- 2) most of the staff of the 3 PAs haven't got the sufficient experience to do this kind of dialogue.
- 3) Because of the short duration from the beginning of the project until the time of the MTR, the PMU was unable to remove the complete sensitivity and fragility in the relationship between the PAs staffs from MAAR and the local communities and that has taken root over time."

This lack of meaningful consultation, with no transparent or open discussion and no real information flowing in both directions, has made the task of the Project implementation teams much harder.

Expressions in the ProDoc and its annexes to empower local communities to participate in project implementation are set according to the best principles of PA management. Hence, and overall and according to this evaluation, the ProDoc and Project Design was an issue that the PMU and other involved stakeholders have to cope with at the Inception Phase and during the monitoring process of the Project when a referral to the document was needed. This is a drawback that more careful planning could have avoided such effect.

The project concept looks sound and logical, but lacking the awareness of the available capacity in the country to implement such a project had its very clear consequences. The project was esteemed to be the salvation of the protected areas in Syria. It was a very ambitious project looking at the targets it has identified regarding the institutions, sites and personnel, targeting policies, legislations ... etc.

Although the project had some advice on the progress of its activities according to the schedule from various international and regional advisers on an *Ad Hoc* basis, a technical adviser, on full-time basis, was brought in after the mid-term evaluation to assist in the delivery and accomplishment of other tasks when needed at various topics, and so he worked based on the MTR with the UNDP CO, UNDP RTA, NPC and other national stakeholders in the project to revise and finalise the logframe for the project which was updated as a part of the Adaptive Management.

The 7-year duration was still too short for such ambitious objective for the project in Syria especially regarding change of attitudes and changes of legislations. Still, the trend was studied in order to assess and evaluate whether the trends could eventually reach the future targets, as long as the approaches are maintained. The Project has achieved its outcomes planned for when the Project was designed during this period, but was extended a little longer than the set frame due to the changes in the current national situation of unrest in the country.

2.2. Project governance and implementation

2.2.1. Project Implementation:

The project could be defined into two main phases:

- Firstly: the inception and pre- Mid term evaluation, (mostly covered in the MTR),
- Secondly: post-evaluation phase (the focus of this evaluation),

However, a crucial part of the second phase could be distinguished further which is during the civil disturbance phase which would be highlighted also briefly and how the project tackled this issue.

The first phase (Inception) took longer than expected, almost a whole year instead of three months, which is considered to be long for an inception phase, but it had its justification and the main reason for that was the technical capacity of the project staff. Project Document did not pick up any risks, but by the end of the inception phase the number of risks picked and identified was 4 risks. This was started to be picked along the life of the Project and some of these risks (2 risks) were classified as critical.

The day to day management of the project was handled by PMU under a close supervision from UNDP CO, and NPC. They with the PMU followed the developments in the Project through periodical field visits to Project areas to closely monitor the advancement of the Project. The UNDP assisted in preparing, revising and circulating reports and providing technical support through choosing the right expert from the team of experts the CO has good relation with to provide expertise in certain areas on specific issues.

Prior to the mid-term evaluation, the project contracted various international and regional advisers and technical experts on mission-oriented input to help in implementing the Project. The decision to appoint a qualified technical expert on a full-time basis was a critical turning point in the implementation of the project and in providing momentum for the project implementation.

Furthermore, The project team was supported by a specialized international company to provide specialised consultancy with a mission to carry out the thematic subcontract of outcome 2; from January 01, 2009 to December 31, 2011.

Remembering that the MTR had warned that there was a risk in outsourcing project components (such as the management planning). The risk being, that there would be very little capacity building and ownership of the management plan. However, this risk was diminished through the participatory approach and full engagement of all relevant stakeholders.

Furthermore, the BCPAM PMU took an active participation in workshops design and implementation. This last point is subtle but important and reflects a high level of trust and the capacity that PMU has attained through the life of the project.

2.2.2. Project Governance

The highest level of Project governance is the Project Steering Committee (PSC) which has been renamed as the Project Executive Committee (PEC), and its brief extended to give it a more active role in project implementation. The inclusion of two Ministers among the membership would seem a little too high at first sight. However, both have attended meetings and the PEC appears to be functioning well and effectively. It is recognized as the highest governance level for the project and it appears to have the necessary authority and power. It is playing a key role in setting policy for the project, monitoring project performance, providing guidance and directions to the NPD and other project stakeholders, and supporting UNDP which, as the GEF IA, has the ultimate accountability for delivery of project products and the administration of project funds.

The impression taken from the fact that regular meetings of PEC were always headed by two ministers (MAAR & MSEA) and was attended by its members: UNDP CO, NPC, PMU, and others was overwhelming. These meetings were convened to discuss and oversee the execution of project activities and discuss reports and forms written to assess the progress of the Project. This was a the highest level committee of Governance in the Project.

It is important when to discuss the governance of the Project and how it was implemented to look at the relationship between the governmental institutions governing the Project. It was very apparent that there were difficulties in the relationship between the MSEA and the MAAR. These difficulties stemmed from the conflicting and often overlapping roles played by each ministry in the management of protected areas. It is reasonable to say that the relationship between the two institutions was at a very low ebb when the project started its work. The MoU between MAAR & MSEA (Annex 4) has worked well to diminish all the distance between the two agencies and to reach common ground to work on and ensure a success in the project. This was also easily noticed by the external consultancy groups when they started the assignment for the Project. However, a process that is closely linked with the development of the National Protected Areas Policy was adopted to guide the two institutions towards a mutual goal of developing the protected areas system through defining the different roles of the institutions according to the law and also in accordance with international best practices."

The MTR has also highlighted this problem and risk that was anticipated about the historical conflict between the two ministries MLAE/(MSEA) and MAAR and reported that the conflict that could arise between the two ministries (MLAE and MAAR) was successfully overcome. This issue itself is currently considered a continuous success that failed to materialise for over 15 years, hindering any progress in dealing with environmental issues nationally. This cooperation is still valid and striving at other issues of interest to the conservation and protection of biodiversity and wildlife in general such as monitoring and regulating hunting issues which is been under revision by both ministries as key players along with other stakeholders.

As a result of this it has become clear that, while both Ministries remain significant stakeholders in the protected areas system, the MSEA has a strategic and regulatory role whereas the role of MAAR is being responsible for directly managing a large number of the PA sites. This is an important shift considering at one point that the MSEA was considering the possibility of managing some protected areas directly. Therefore, consultations within the project has contributed considerably to improving the institutional framework for protected areas management in Syria.

UNDP as an Implementing Agency is responsible to GEF for the timely and cost-effective delivery of the agreed project outputs and it achieved this through its understanding with the Government. UNDP has an obligation to ensure accountability; UNDP has also made a significant contribution, in cash, in providing support to the project by training project staff and monitoring Project performance through regular field visits, participation in the Project Executive Committee (PEC) meetings and contributions to the mandatory annual reporting tasks.

The NPD considers the PEC as a valuable source of support and guidance to him personally, and very helpful to the PMU.

On the other hand, at the local level regarding project governance, the MTR quoted the following:

The MTR Evaluation Team detected some resistance to serious and meaningful sharing with communities in a partnership arrangement. This could be due to the recognition that involvement in PA management must be based on awareness and capacity so they can participate as equal partners. However, until there is true sharing of the decision-making (and responsibilities) for the PA management, Project site teams cannot expect to be successful and it is essential to start seeing the local communities not only as beneficiaries, but as joint-owners of the PAs. The best way to achieve this is to provide them with meaningful membership of the PA Management Board (previously the Site

Steering sub-Committee) so they can assume a share of the responsibility for the hard decisions that need to be made in managing a PA. “

Reviewing the reports and based of the interviews held for this evaluation, it was concluded that the level of governance has taken the locals into consideration after applying adaptive management and taking representatives from locals communities on board the management meetings and applying the participatory approach and accepting the idea of the shared ownership of the area. This will be discussed and evaluated later at the relevant section in this evaluation.

The breakthrough in the project governance happened from being very weak or non-existent at Management Unit and at site level, as was mentioned by the MTR, to be more apparent through the rise in the level of involvement of the various stakeholders and after having appropriate training and participation in workshops. The number of workshops and meetings in the project was very high. It was all mainly consultative meetings along with actual capacity building. The involvement was kept high since these workshops included decisions that would be critical for stakeholders. The project team followed the slogan “**you’ll miss things if you’re not there!**”. So in other words, if you are not there then some decisions which could be against your interests and objectives might be taken.

UNDP played a remarkable role in governing the Project through the good and fruitful relationship the CO had with both the national EA & IA (MSEA & MAAR, respectively), keeping the pace of the work as needed. The CO ensured the Governance of the Project implementation is adhered to the set AWP and budget; through providing guidance and overseeing the Project in general as well as directly responding in time to all needed activities. There was Day to Day follow up on the work progress carried out by the PMU and PA site manager and staff by UNDP CO and NPC, an approach that was not fully and closely implemented thoroughly with most of the Governmental institutions. The appropriate governance is a key factor for ensuring the success of delivering the project and to meet the goals set in the document and to achieve the outcomes of the project objective. As was mentioned earlier, the UNDP participated effectively in governing the Project through Project Executive Committee (PEC) & Project Steering Committee (PSC) and other supporting bodies and contributed to the success of the Project through the role played in these committees and through the good relationship with other stakeholders. The CO followed up all issues raised at these committees and through the management of the Project. It facilitated holding workshops and training events, offering also guidance when possible and bringing some technical advice to the advance of the Project as well as keeping the timely follow up and supervision of the execution of crucial activities and the delivery of advanced work in the PAs. The CO stressed alongside the NPC on emphasising the role that local communities should have in the PAs and advocated to voice their demands directly with the Managing Boards

2.3. Participatory and Consultative Approach

2.3.1. Management and Local Communities:

Co-managed approach, including the leadership of local communities, has played a major role in orienting the protected area management approaches. The impact to change the approaches and modifications of legislations in order to adapt to the local needs, such as the kiosks in Al Fronloq, the Jobats in Abu Qubeis and grazing in Jebel Abdul Aziz.

Fears, mainly fears of the unknown as they have little or no understanding of what the Project is all about, were the major concerns of the communities. Even through representations in meetings, the community members had expressed concerns to the MTR that their representatives on the Committee would be overwhelmed by the greater numbers of Government officials if it came to a

vote. This point was taken seriously in future meetings and discussions within the project committees. Therefore, transparency, co-ownership, and not raising expectations were critical in keeping the people / stakeholders involved and supportive. This has led to building bridges of trust between the project and the different stakeholders and most importantly the local ones.

The project has closely collaborated and supervised the already established Community Based Organisations (CBOs) at the three project PA sites; these CBOs are the legal and institutional framework that local community, within and around the three PAs, is running the small projects as an alternative livelihood.

- 4 CBOs at Jebel Abdul Aziz are now running four projects on revolving funds for sheep fattening,
- 2 CBOs at Abu Qubeis PA site are running two small projects on improving the economic returns of cattle breeding by decreasing reliance on grasslands and increasing utilization of agricultural land. The application of traditional methods of growing local medicinal plants is also being implemented in Jobats (flat small plains that can be used and have been cultivated for generations by locals as agro areas within the forest for cultivating native races of crops).
- 4 CBOs at Al Fronloq PA site are running two projects on Conservation unit for traditional food industries, and marketing traditional products aiming to improve the economic returns and reduce human pressure on forest natural resources in the villages of Al-Durra and Atira, and gathering, producing and marketing milk and dairy products in order to improve the living conditions of local communities and to reduce the dependence on the natural resources in the villages of Al-Qantara, Al-Mazra'a and surrounding farms.

Ecological monitoring guidelines in PAs were adopted and applied by project work teams on ground at the three sites. However, due to the current unrest situation in the country, the BCPAM could not collaborate with the Royal Society for Protection of Birds (RSPB)-UK on bird watching and monitoring at the project three PA sites and replication PA site of Al Lajjat Man & Biosphere (MaB) Reserve as it was done in previous seasons. RSPB experts and bird watchers could not come to the country for the autumn survey of 2011 and spring survey of 2012. However, the project failed to have cooperation with national expertise to carry out bird surveys when RSPB was not available due the current situation.

Local communities had been initially led to believe that there would be greater "direct" benefits from the project stemming from the Community Development Fund. However, these benefits had not materialized by the midterm of the project and were a constant point of argument between the communities and PMU. Furthermore, how the project had been set up meant that the Community Development Fund provided very few benefits for natural resources conservation and management.

Community-Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) although not a new concept, is not widely practiced within the region as a formal basis for conservation management. In Syria, the concept of local community's formerly managing natural resources within the protected areas has largely been introduced by the BCPAM Project through the initiation of the external consultancy . The national stakeholders and governmental bodies involved in the project had benefited largely through implementing these new concepts and they were able to adopt this successfully in activities carried out at later stages of the project as well as at other national activities not directly related to the project.

By involving the local communities in the management planning process, the process has empowered these communities by building significant social capital. It is important not to overplay the financial benefits of natural resource utilization, or indeed alternative livelihoods. Often they offer only modest income security. However, the benefits of building social capital and the ability of local communities to address environmental challenges and determine their own futures often far outweighs any apparent financial payments and results. Examples of this have been seen at many stages through the Project life when firstly by ensuring that local communities are given an opportunity to participate, then by ensuring that, through the use of various workshop tools, their voices have been heard, and lastly by ensuring that Management Plans provide a framework for their continued and active participation in the planning and management process.

While the MTR described at length about increasing local community participation, it did not link local community participation with conservation management per se. Instead, it linked local community benefits to alternative livelihoods strategies. Therefore, and as a follow up after the MTR, the consulting firm considered this to be a more risky strategy exposing local communities to considerable risks such as market failure; and the traditional use patterns practiced by local communities had, in many instances, created the systems that the PA was seeking to protect and thus they played an integral role in the management. A strong case was made for not only enabling participation of locals in protected areas management, but also in recognizing that there are limitations on the financial, material and human resources that the governmental institution can provide for protected areas management.

Local rural communities' needs are very closely linked with the sustainability and well-being of the natural resource base and depends upon their participation and the sound conservation management of these resources.

The Protected Area communities consider biodiversity and other natural resources as an important part of their livelihood and the sustainable use of these resources and components is of real concern to them. What was at stake was the nature of their participation. Passive participation would incur significant time costs, and alternative livelihoods would likely expose them to significant economic risks which they would be unwilling to incur.

Therefore, the principle of CBNRM was introduced as a formal arrangement for the conservation management of natural resources within parts of the protected areas system through a number of training and informative workshops aimed primarily at the decision-makers within MAAR and MSEA.

2.3.2. Management and Governmental institutions:

Some critical decisions were taken that have ensured the sustainability of the project objective such the formal decision from the Minister of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform (MAAR) to adopt site Management Plans as the major documents for implementing the management in Protected Areas, and ensuring the security of Protected Areas' staff.

Through the two ministries, the Government made a significant contribution to the Project. The contribution includes co-financing (through the UNDP Programme Cost Sharing). It also includes a significant contribution in kind which ranges from staff salaries to management offices and PAs premises, and even fuel for running of Project vehicles. The Project would have not achieved its targets and objectives without the full support that the Government (through its agencies, MSEA & MAAR) whether by offering logistic support, offering in Kind contribution to the success of the project and the future success through the well synchronised cooperation between the two ministries (MSEA & MAAR). This cooperation is a priceless national success that was a result of

executing this project in Syria. This alone is a big achievement that was not happening for a long period.

As Executing Agency for the Project, MSEA carried out its functions effectively as agreed in the MoU with MAAR which did the same but in its capacity as Implementing Agency. MSEA focused on PA policy nationwide and MAAR had the operational responsibility for PAs

All the staff of the Project at site level, from the Site Manager down, are current MAAR employees. MAAR has also provided the bulk of the office space and other physical requirements for each of the site teams. MSEA role was to include facilitation of strategies, policy and legislation for protected areas and to provide necessary guidance to project management. This role is being carried out well up till now.

The Mid-Term Review (MTR) as part of the timely monitoring process of the project had already identified that there was little, if any, participation outside the statutory management institutions with very little collaboration within these. The principle vehicle for increasing this collaboration was workshop facilitation and changing the approach to holding workshops. Formerly most workshops had been, to a large extent, seminars with very little process; that is, there was a very little active participation of the attendants and very limited discussion taking place.

However, in BCPAM workshops, new approach through the external consultancy was adopted by facilitating the discussions and even the arguments, as well as introducing new concepts and approaches for stimulating the discussions and raising difficult questions that needed to be asked by participants regarding protected areas and the roles of the management agencies.

In all, it has been a slow but rewarding process and has continued to move the process forwards to a point where the management plans produced for the three protected areas are now quite sophisticated particularly in terms of the frameworks established to improve protected areas governance. These produced by the national capacities as a result of this project, through the capacities of the team members whether in the central government or at the site level. They were able to produce another management plan for other PAs (Al Lajjat) as will be discussed later.

In effect Syrian protected areas are not only ecosystems, but they are also socio-ecosystems. Therefore, the role of the management plan should be to put in place the necessary structures to manage these areas without losing the ecological, social and economic values that had led to them being declared as protected areas in the first place.

While this was less obvious for Al Fronloq, both Abu Qubeis and Jebel Abdul Aziz Protected Areas anthropogenic management of natural resources was critical for the maintenance of natural values. In Abu Qubeis Protected Area the presence of the Jobats required specific interventions in order to protect these small fields and the traditional farming techniques that maintained them as part of the Syrian Arab Republic commitment to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

That is, a challenge which required changes within the institutions and the way that they relate to each other and non-state actors. A great emphasis was placed on the development of a framework for protected areas governance arguing that **Governance is the means for achieving direction, control, and coordination that determines the effectiveness of management** (Eagles 2008)³.

³ Eagles P. F. J., 2008. *Investigating Governance Within The Management Models Used In Park Tourism*. Paper presented at Tourism and Travel Research Association Canada Conference. October 15 to 17, 2008.

In a Strict Nature Reserve, governance can be relatively simple as the state is the sole executive (decision-making body) authority and is directly responsible for the implementation of management and enforcement of rules. It should also be noted that under this system the governmental institutions also bear all of the direct management costs, although local communities might be expected to bear the opportunity costs.

However, this becomes more complicated when there are contested resources and areas and/or included private lands and insufficient financial, material and human resources available to the state to carry out its management role; a description that more accurately fits the situation within [the Syrian] Protected Area [s].

While the model of a single state agency governance for the Protected Area[s] may be attractive principally because the executive authority and responsibility are nested within a single agency, given the circumstances (large included populations, high local livelihood dependency upon the natural resources, historic patterns of land use, etc.) of the Protected Area[s], there is compounding evidence that it will be the less effective form of governance for the above reasons.

The arguments for more inclusive approaches to managing the Protected Area[s] is also made stronger when ecosystem resilience is considered. Ecosystem resilience can be defined as **“the capacity of a system to undergo disturbance while maintaining both its existing functions and controls and its capacity for future change”** (Gunderson 2000)⁴. However, in complex socio-ecological systems, such as the Syrian Protected Area[s], it might also be argued that **“resilience is determined not only by a systems ability to buffer or absorb shocks, but also by its capacity for learning and self-organization to adapt to change”** (Gunderson and Holling 2002)⁵. Therefore, a governance system that allows for a broader participation in planning and management of the protected area might arguably be more resilient than one which has a narrow scientific [or technocratic] focus.

The three PAs draft Management Plans were submitted to the PMU on 29th September 2010 and then circulated for the PAs teams and related stakeholders from the two ministries, UNDP and the PMU for review. This was followed by a review workshop to the above related stakeholders and according to the discussions and amendments that were made; the three plans were produced in English and Arabic and then endorsed for implementation.

The translation into Arabic served the implementation of the endorsed management plans through greater common ground of understanding between all stakeholders. The Arabic version of these plans provide a good reference tackling the English terms of the PAs management planning and conservation in Arabic Language, that is beside to other documents and manuals that have been produced for this Project in Arabic. The translation of many of the concepts for modern protected areas management, such as adaptive management, CBNRM and participatory processes marks an important point in the development of management plans within the region. Translation services needed only to access documentation and information which was in English. However, looking at some of these translated documents one can conclude that Translation services were found to be not to an acceptable highly professional standard for those documents.

2.4. Monitoring and Evaluation:

⁴ Gunderson, L. H. 2000. Resilience in theory and practice. *Annual Review of Ecology and Systematics* **31**:425-439

⁵ Gunderson, L. H., and C. S. Holling, (eds.) 2002. *Panarchy: understanding transformations in human and natural systems*. Island Press, Washington, D.C., USA

The Project monitoring usually refers to performance monitoring, which is a regular assessment of progress towards the project Objective and Outcomes often using Indicators. The results of performance monitoring are used to guide project implementation and revise and refine implementation plans through adaptive management. The LogFrame is recognized as the paramount tool against which project performance and progress towards targets are measured. The LogFrame is not intended to be a static summary of the project strategy, and its continuing revision, updating and refinement are a result of good, responsible and adaptive management.

The LogFrame for this project was revised at the end of Inception phase. However, adaptive management was not a common and adopted practice, but management had adapted to the needs that arise though the life of the project only when the PMU started to accept this way of change and adaptation to changes in the circumstances as needed through monitoring the reports PIRs, APRs, MTR, METT and discussions within the meetings of the PEC and other reviews. The Monitoring process was accomplished through the following entries:

Monthly reports and Quarterly reports were delivered from the Project Manager at the PMU to describe progress in the work of the Project and its achievements according to planned activities and to monitor the developments at the three PAs sites. These were considered a regular activity that keep the monitoring active in the Project. Field visits were another mean that allowed staff from UNDP CO and ministries MAAR & MSEA to observe development taken place on site.

PIRs & APRs are also means to monitor the development of the progress according to the recommendations set in PMU and sent to PEC for approval at the end of the year.

Reviewing the work progress through PIRs and APRs showed that the very intensive work during 2009 and 2010 which was conducted in a fully participative and consultative approach with all related stakeholders was based on the outcomes of the baseline surveys and using the latest tools of planning for conservation.

The Mid-Term Review (MTR) as part of the timely monitoring process of the project by other monitoring means had covered all the Project activities and deliverables as well as highlighted all aspects of participation and collaboration within and outside the management institutions with the locals. It is a valuable document to verify all aspect of monitoring needed for evaluation of work accomplished. It had highlighted couple of precautions for the successful delivery of future activities in the Project and hence recommended certain points and activities to aid the Project success in meeting its planned objective.

Using Tracking Tools to monitor the impact of The Project on the biodiversity is another way for monitoring the success of the Project. One of the Project requirements was to carry out an Impact Reduction Index (IRI), but Threat Reduction Assessment (TRA) was implemented instead of IRI since TRA is a widespread tool that was developed by the GEF Biodiversity Support Group. It is a simple tool designed to identify threats and quantify them in terms of their extent (area affected), intensity (the impact on biodiversity) and the urgency (how immediate is the threat). The TRA exercise recognizes that due to the constraints of time it is normally not possible to evaluate the impact of a project or management interventions using biological indicators because such indicators may take considerable periods to demonstrate significant changes. However, it is possible to approximate the effectiveness of any intervention by measuring the amount by which it reduces a causative factor. In protected areas management we often refer to causative factors as "threats" and measuring how much a threat has been reduced will provide a robust approximation of whether any intervention is likely to have an impact. Therefore, the TRA provides a reasonable assessment of management

performance, but it is important to bear in mind that reducing the threats is not an end in itself but more often a means to an end goal such as a reduction in grazing to allow vegetation to recover. This is not the same as assessing the overall impact of an intervention which would be the recovery of vegetation as measured by species diversity, abundance and/or structure ... etc.

Reviewing these various activities through the monitoring process from the series of PIRs and APRs as well as other platforms of monitoring activities for the development of the Project such as the Management Response Plans, field visits and MTR based on the points raised by the evaluators.

2.5. Sustainability and replication

The overall sustainability of project outcomes and its replicability is rated as MODERATELY LIKELY based on the following evaluation and discussion.

2.5.1. Outcomes sustainability:

The achievement of a policy document that would unify the approaches for protected area establishment and management and the cooperation between MAAR and MSEA was unprecedented. Having such a document and establishing those productive models of protected areas with the support of local stakeholders, would definitely assure sustainability of the work and that its MODERATELY LIKELY to be replicated, if the country was in ideal conditions and not in a chaos of the prevailing civil disturbance.

Protected Areas management in Syria is by its very nature the management of complex socio-ecological systems. Furthermore, because PAs role is changing, management institutions are currently building their capacity from a situation where they have had a very little responsibility for ecological management (as defined by the CBD), in the case of the MAAR; from a management concept of forest production to a role which involves a larger number of ecosystems, social and economic objectives.

Given that, adaptive management is as much about developing an institutional confidence to challenge assumptions and the status quo, a considerable emphasis was placed on the protected areas management teams as well as the MAAR and MSEA central teams participating in the management planning workshops and challenging the conventional wisdom of protected areas management.

By taking an adaptive management approach it has been possible to address a number of highly contentious issues within the protected areas systems. For instance:

- In Jebel Abdul Aziz Protected Area, the management plan has been able to consider the development of agreed grazing regimes with local Bedouin communities as a means to manage biodiversity, reduce the risk of fire and provide greater livelihood security to those communities and reduce conflicts between management agencies and local communities.
- In Abu Qubeis Protected Area, the previous "red lines" that were imposed through the Forestry Law making it illegal to graze goats within the protected area, despite the fact that grazing by goats has almost certainly been a part of this ecosystem for hundreds, if not thousands, of years, have been "re-drawn". Under the current management plan grazing by local communities will be allowed as part of the experimental management and the effects on habitat structure, fire prevention, species diversity and local incomes and conflicts will be monitored with very clear objectives, the principal objective being biodiversity conservation which can be measured by species diversity or other indices. Thus, there is a powerful management experiment taking place with agreements on grazing intensity and "no-go"

areas agreed between the management team and local communities and a means to understand the impact of this upon the protected areas objectives.

- In Al Fronloq Protected Area, the same process has begun to resolve the longstanding dispute between the Management Team (MAAR) and the local communities operating food and beverage kiosks within the Protected Area. The in-depth analysis of the management objectives, a necessary part of adaptive management determined that the kiosks affect less than 2% of the Turkey Oak (*Quercus cerris* subsp. *pseudocerris*) forest and even then it is questionable whether they have any impact upon regeneration. On this basis, the kiosks have been brought into the management planning and the effects of tourism, under a new Visitor Management Plan, will be monitored to assess the long term impact on a range of indicators such as *Quercus cerris* subsp. *pseudocerris* regeneration, etc.

As was discussed in the M&E section, Threat Reduction Assessment (TRA) was implemented instead of Impact Reduction Index (IRI) since TRA is a widespread tool that was developed by the GEF Biodiversity Support Group to identify threats and quantify them in terms of their extent (area affected), intensity (the impact on biodiversity) and the urgency (how immediate is the threat).

Two changes were made to the standard TRA approach used by Margoluis and Salafsky (2001)⁶. The first adaptation was the use of Rich Pictures to initially identify the threats. This change will be used as a LIKELY sustainable product of the project as was inferred by staff of the Project and PAs. There were a number of benefits in this approach, the principle benefits being that it makes the participants think about issues, it allows for a broad participation and participants of differing capabilities and backgrounds to articulate difficult and controversial issues, as was discussed earlier. The second adaptation involves the separation of the percentage reduction into three parts:

- Enabling environment
- Enforcement/implementation
- Effectiveness

Each part being allocated one third of the 100% Threat Reduction, the purpose of this was to allow participants to focus upon the reasonable steps necessary to address any issue in terms of what regulatory instruments existed, if these were actually implemented and whether they were effective.

The TRA is a useful tool for protected areas but it has a number of limitations.

- Firstly, like any tool, it depends on how it is used. It is important that there is as broad a cross-section of participants involved in identifying both the threats and the responses to the threats as is necessary. Failure to do so will result in any threats being identified and strategies to reduce the threats being developed that are constrained by the limited experience and perspective of the participants.
- Secondly, and perhaps most importantly, it defines protected areas management issues in terms of "threats". Therefore, grazing almost immediately (and often unquestioningly) becomes a "threat". In this regards, the facilitators guided the participants (and based on earlier training workshops on protected areas management) to understand that grazing is not necessarily a threat and in many instances too little grazing can have just as significant an

⁶ Margoluis, R. and N. Salafsky. 2001. *Is our project succeeding? A guide to Threat Reduction Assessment for conservation*. Washington, D.C.: Biodiversity Support Program. 52p.

impact on the values which the protected area seeks to conserve when compared as too much grazing.

These workshops were time consuming, but they were specifically designed to ensure the greatest possible participation, particularly by the PAs Management Teams and the local communities, in the management planning process and ensure that the Teams were familiar and confident with the outcomes of this process. The objectives were developed using a participatory process in which the threats developed during the earlier workshops were clustered according to issues and pressures. In this way, participants were able to develop a much greater understanding of what the objective of protected areas management should be. While this process is time consuming it is very important in overcoming conflicting management approaches such as the planting of exotic trees in Jebel Abdul Aziz and the grazing of sheep in the reserve, the possible management responses to goat grazing in Abu Qubeis, or the continued existence of local community stop kiosks in Al Fronloq. The outcome of the consultations was a draft management objectives report.

Throughout the involvement of the consulting firm with the BCPAM project, its team has stressed that:

protected areas planning and management is not an exact science and that the systems we are seeking to manage, the purpose of the management plans, is shaped by the fields of economics, ecological process and the socio-political situation.

All of which are highly complex and dynamic drivers that shape the existing system and will largely determine the future. Yet they remain extremely unpredictable giving rise to high levels of uncertainty about the future, hence the use of scenario planning as a tool to think about plausible futures and how decision-makers can influence the course of events to try to influence the likely future outcomes. Building the capacity of the protected areas Management Teams and at "the decision-makers" was a target for the Project.

2.5.2. Approaches for Management and Planning:

Indeed, management plans themselves have sought to transfer some of that decision-making power to the local level as much as possible, repeatedly stressing that the protected areas system was not facing a technical challenge that could be resolved by the production of a better management plan, nor the injection of more financing or improved technologies, but rather the system is facing an adaptive challenge.

According to the project's deliverables, visitor's management plans for the demonstration sites was a major task to be achieved. Nevertheless, during the inception phase it was clear that Al Fronloq PA is a major priority due the extensive local tourism use within the PA area during summer time.

A consultative workshop was conducted in Al Fronloq PA on 15-17/4/2009 to create a joint background and understanding on the concept, development and implementation of Ecotourism in the three PAs among the related stakeholders (MAAR, MSEA, Ministry of Tourism, UNDP CO and other related agencies). This joint understanding helped in bridging the gaps of communications, objectives and limitations of tourism development within the three PAs and other areas around Syria. This workshop was used to create development visions for the three PAs and plan for the Al Fronloq PA tourism survey. This survey was designed to include detailed statistics of the PA's number of visitors and survey of the current usage and practices of visitors and services providers and was conducted through close consultations with the PMU and all of the related three PA's staff to have hands-on experience that would help them in preparing similar studies in their own PA.

The survey was finalized by a rapid assessment of visitors and tourism in Al Fronloq PA and the outcome of this survey was the production of the "Al Fronloq PA Visitor's Management Plan" on 30/9/2009.

The sections of the plan were presented in a public hearing meeting and the attendees participated in amending all related activities and suggested new ones which were then approved by all. A contracting formula was suggested between MAAR and the kiosks owners for setting the base for resources utilization rights of local community and the obligations that the kiosks owners must commit themselves in relation to the kiosks design, lettering and the forest protection. This step was approved formally by MAAR to formulate this contractual base.

The Visitors' Management Plan was officially launched and activated by Her Excellency the Minister of State for Environment Affairs on 24/6/2010, through initiating a national campaign to care and clean the Forests of Al Fronloq. On the other hand and in order to accelerate the visitor's services infrastructure of the local community, designs for the new visitors picnic area in Al Fronloq PA, which includes new designs for the kiosks, seating areas, toilets and other related facilities and infrastructure were prepared and presented to Her Excellency the Minister of State for Environment Affairs during this visit to the PA and then approved by the PMU and MAAR to initiate its implementation. This was actively realized by summer season of 2011. The long term use of Kiosks in the PA would be secured within the Management Plan as long as these will keep meeting the condition for their operation on the ground and having no negative impact on the site through regular monitoring activities. This is considered a LIKELY sustainable process based on the cooperation between the locals and the management staff if the tourism activities will resume in a better stable and secure condition.

During the preparation of the visitors management plans and the discussions about ecotourism development at the three PAs, any ecotourism development will be hindered by the issue of ecotourism.

On the other hand, ecotourism conditions that is part of the new forestry law, especially those parts related to development guidelines, investment and area selection criteria that might be taking place at the forestry areas in general and the PAs in particular. This presented an opportunity to use this widely accepted terminology to be a model for other more complicated situations of natural resources utilization, such as grazing and wood cutting, as this might introduce a formula of relationship between the local community and related authorities that can be the base for similar formulas to other issues.

However, a National Code for the Development of Ecotourism in Syria was prepared and this code addressed major elements of the ecotourism conditions and guidelines for selection, development and management and at the same time detailing the technical elements of development, regarding sustainable design and construction in relation to different regions and habitats of Syria.

Enhancing data management and information flows is a very important tool that can improve effective systems for integrated management planning at demonstration sites. Moreover, ensuring support for site managers and the country in general to expand knowledge and reach common goals for biodiversity conservation in Syria is also beneficial. Data and information management is also important because of its critical usage to the development and subsequent revision of conservation plans and can be considered as an extremely valuable institutional asset, which ensures the short and long term value and usefulness of this information is saved.

Data and information management system was designed and established to enhance information flows from the three PAs and to be able to serve any new or existing PA on the national level as well as to support national initiatives for experience sharing and lessons learned from other related projects at the national and regional projects. Capabilities of the two related ministries (MAAR & MSEA) were assessed in order to host and manage the data management system for the three PAs and the biodiversity conservation activities in Syria. and a system was develop for this project according to a web application bases. This system is running at the servers of the Ministry of State for Environment Affairs (MSEA), with related staff at the two ministries being trained on the usage and development of this system (A screen shot of this system is illustrated underneath). The capacity of the three PAs staff was developed to guarantee project sustainability and the PA management of national capabilities in Syria was secured and the confidence in improving the quality of the deliverables, because they will be sustaining essentially "home grown" capacities, was built. It was highlighted that the security of the servers and this data base management system was the only concern during the current unrest and national civil disturbance. This was secured through having a regular back up for the database to face any possible issue of data security.

The screenshot shows a web application interface for 'صيانة بيانات الدراسات' (Study Data Maintenance). The interface is in Arabic and includes a search bar at the top with a 'بحث' (Search) button. Below the search bar, there is a table with columns 'الرمز' (Code) and 'اسم الدراسة' (Study Name). The table contains three rows of data:

الرمز	اسم الدراسة
1	دراسة مجتمعات التباينات
2	مراقبة الطيور
4	fdghf

Below the table, there is a form for adding or editing study data. The form includes fields for 'اسم الدراسة بالعربي' (Study Name in Arabic), 'اسم الدراسة بالانجليزي' (Study Name in English), 'فترة الدراسة من تاريخ' (Study Period from Date), 'إختصاص الدراسة' (Study Specialization), 'ملخص الدراسة' (Study Summary), and 'موقع الدراسة' (Study Location). There are also buttons for 'إضافة' (Add) and 'إلغاء' (Cancel).

Training courses and on-the-job training for PAs staff, central teams and stakeholders took place throughout the project term in a wide range of disciplines, including conservation and natural resources management, ecological survey and monitoring techniques, protected area management planning, eco-tourism development, organizational procedures, conservation-based land use planning and community based participation. Training workshops were also used as a tool for local community participation and co-management approach, therefore, most of the training workshops and sessions included members of the local community and local government representatives.

As documented, the Protected Areas selected to be part of this project were considered to be demonstration sites for the future to ensure the sustainability of the project. Each one of the three sites had its own challenges. Looking at the most productive period during the project after the mid-term review until the beginning of the civil disturbance phase, the project was taking a very productive route and a role model for future projects as a great example of cooperation between all stakeholders involved. Assuring the relative support and involvement of local communities in the protected areas management and in the initiatives around these protected areas could be a sustainable model to be learned from for the country in the future and even for the rest of the Arab region. The relation between the PAs staff and the locals is proved as MODERATLY Sustainable to continue on respect and trust.

A component of the services that was delivered targeted conducting a final capacity assessment and development needs for the PAs staff and Management teams in order to assess the ability to deliver specific training for other protected areas staff.

In addition, the three Management Teams in Jebel Abdul Aziz, Abu Qubeis and Al Fronloq Protected Areas made progress in their capabilities for PAs management and assessment by having the skills needed to deliver knowledge to the individual positions and tasks and within the overall teams. This ensured the Project is LIKELY Sustainable in having capable staff to deliver the needed knowledge through forming a team of trainers from the three sites who contributed well to at the final activity of the project after passing the Train of Trainers (ToT) workshop to deliver their knowledge to selected staff from other PAs from around Syria in a devoted workshop in Latakia.

It is long known that there is a general lack of awareness amongst large sections of the Syrian society and other policy sectors regarding the importance of conserving biodiversity per se and of the function and importance of protected areas in achieving this goal. Accordingly, all aspects of engaging relevant stakeholders in the dialogues has formed a process of learning for participants about the values, resources, benefits, management objectives and management activities of protected areas.

PA policy statement is a very important tool to organize and unify the different PAs related agencies visions in order to clarify the authorities and responsibilities of these agencies and create a legal backstopping point for current and future conservation and PAs activities.

Precaution was noticed in some of the comments made in the MTR about the risks of outsourcing the management plans, however, the contracted consulting firm took another approach to guide the PAs' team to oversee laying the management plans that the team carried out for Al Lajjat MaB as will be highlighted later. This process has been the right thing to be done to build the capable capacity for future national work.

After analysing the original BCPAM project design, considering the statements made by the MTR and assessing the situation within Syria and specifically within the PAs themselves it was concluded that an alternative livelihoods approach might work in some instances, but overwhelmingly the Syrian protected areas of being socio-ecosystems. That is, they have had a long history of anthropogenic use and that the local communities are, to a large extent, part of these systems and in some instances these local communities have shaped the systems and created many of the values that are sought to conserve today. Furthermore, the prohibition of these communities from accessing and using many of the resources was fundamentally unfair, in many cases un-necessary and was creating conflicts between the state management and the local people in which there were no winners and the PAs were becoming rapidly degraded. This conclusion was not based on any

romantic notion about rural communities and traditional uses and customs, but was rather grounded in the reality that the state agencies could not in fact afford to protect the areas, many of the obligations to international conventions (most importantly the CBD) were best served through including the local communities in the PA management and that the arbitrary prohibition of many of the activities was fundamentally unfair and un-necessary.

Such examples include:

- the provision of hospitality services in Al Fronloq PA which was affecting less than 2% of the *Quercus* forest and there was little evidence that the use of these areas was impacting on the habitat,
- the continued use of the Jobat land in Abu Qubeis PA which was necessary to maintain important agro-biodiversity, but was in fact being abandoned due the conflicts with PA management,
- the grazing of sheep in Jebel Abdul Aziz by one of the most disadvantaged and impoverished communities in Syria which was in all likelihood reducing the risk of fires in summer by reducing biomass saving the management the expensive (and ecologically destructive) task of cutting fire tracks with a D8 bulldozer every year.

However, the PA management understandably was resistant partly due to the novelty of these concepts and also because of a genuine concern for the safety of these protected areas. However, as a result of patient discussions and reasoned arguments it has been possible to bring about changes in the way that the Management Teams regard these areas and it is important to stress that the Teams have now very effectively internalized these approaches into their planning and management and are already making the next steps.

The approaches that have been put forward are not a panacea for the protected areas, but the framework, the knowledge and experience, the plans and the draft policies may just mean that it is possible to turn the corner from what was an intolerable situation resulting in the loss of biodiversity and a lack of livelihood opportunities for those involved communities to a situation where they can at least agree on a common future and work towards that vision.

2.6. Other Results and Findings

Time has allowed to judge the extent to which the project has affected the institutional arrangements and the governance of the protected areas. Anecdotal evidence for changes in the way that protected areas management has changed is overall positive.

Having provisionally proved as a successful work in ensuring the sustainability of the three PAs, the Project has significant impacts on both the Global and National levels.

Global benefits of the project should be undisputed. They will accrue from the ecological resources that will have been safeguarded which are accepted as being of global significance. However, at the National level, it developed high expectations among communities that the Project will have an impact on their lives. Fear and uncertainty have been replaced by the misguided belief that this is a social development project for benefiting the local community and the environment surrounding them of natural habitats simultaneously.

Therefore, the Project will have left the PAs as a very valuable legacy to the Government and people of Syria; capacity at both central and local levels for the administration and management of PAs will have been enhanced; and community engagement will be another part of the legacy (**but much more needs to be done, even after the Project is finished, before this can be expected to fully happen**). Based on Governmental contributions from the inception of the project till the closure of

its activities, it is **LIKELY** that this kind of attitude from the governmental bodies towards PAs will continue and to be considered as "**Sustainable**". The staff and facilities are still paid by the government, but external assistance might be more incentive and help further in such activities to fasten the delivery of similar objectives.

In Abu Qubeis and Jebel Abdul Aziz Protected Areas change is most clearly seen with steps taken to resolve long standing disputes and inequalities between management and local communities particularly related to grazing. In Al Fronloq Protected Area the situation is not as clear, although there are good signs that the relationship between government management agencies and the local community have fundamentally changed by the process of management planning. By removing some of the uncertainties created by previous management approaches, namely the formalization of arrangements for the local communities' kiosks, there are positive signs that conflicts have been reduced and hence, there was some hopeful trends of the views of the local communities towards the conservation of the surrounding environment and about their relationship with nature and its components and adopt the subject of sustainability in their livelihood. This will highlight the importance of the surrounding environment on the future of their lives in general. Hence, managers can arguably focus much of their attention on conservation matters in the PA.

Eight small projects at the three PA sites are functioning in progress,

- Four projects of revolving funds for sheep fattening at four local CBOs at Jebel Abdul Aziz PA site villages are operating and well-functioning. 143 beneficiary families have benefited from loans made available to them by the four CBOs, that represent about 31% of the total number of families at PA site villages. Progress is being made towards accomplishing the project objective to reduce pressure on rangelands at the PA site.
- Two projects run by the two CBOs at Al Fronloq PA site have increased production and marketing their local traditional products of milk and other food products. Two marketing centres for local products of the two small projects conducted by the local CBOs were installed and are well functioning, the first one at the picnic area at PA site, and the second marketing centre was installed by the project and managed in Lattakia downtown (city) as these CBOs expanded the marketing outside the PAs site. The number of families benefited from the two projects is 71 representing around 35% of the total families at the two targeted villages at the PA site.
- Two projects are progressing successfully at Abu Qubeis PA site run by two CBOs on medicinal plants growing and water harvesting project and a pilot project on improving economic returns of cattle husbandry by decreasing reliance on natural resources at the PA and increasing utilization of Jobats for agricultural purposes. The number of involved and benefited families from the two projects was 25 out of the 60 total number of targeted families and that represents about 40% of the total families in the two villages at the PA site.

In addition to these results that had impact on the local communities at the PAs, other activities also benefited the local communities directly or indirectly through creating more resources and job opportunities. These can include:

- A Picnic Site established at Al Fronloq PA: Establishment of picnic area facilities and services according to eco-tourism conditions (eco -tourism code developed by the project) at Al Fronloq PA site in Lattakia is efficiently progressing as an activity in process towards installing all facilities and services needed *i.e.* touristic kiosks, benches, tables, WC, and barbeques places in

the picnic area. The picnic area of Al Fronloq PA site as a pilot national park will be an example for other PAs in the country to follow in the future.

- Herbarium Establishment at Abu Qubeis PA: Due to the importance of such a facility in documenting and identifying the richness of the PA site in biodiversity as well as for training and learning purposes a herbarium has been established. The herbarium will contain, preserve, and document (based on scientific plant taxonomy rules) all plant species that exist in the PA site and that are collected through surveys and monitoring programs conducted within the PA site. This can be developed for future work to include specimens from other PAs or sites of interest.
- Ecological monitoring and surveys (Autumn and Spring seasons) for the forest and rangeland's Flora and Fauna were scheduled and accomplished on consecutive years.

Protected Areas Management Planning – an introduction to management planning and the structure of management plans, their purpose and the process of planning. The tasks set for the participants included deciding the vision and objectives for the management plans, this process continued for approximately a year in refining the vision and objectives.

Participatory Planning – an introduction explaining why local community participation was a necessary prerequisite for successful protected areas management planning.

Community-Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) – introducing the concept of local community involvement in the planning and management of resources within the protected areas. It is important to note that these were important workshops and marked significant milestones in changing the way that institutions regarded protected areas vis a vis the local communities.

Adaptive Management – essentially a technical issue but also an important aspect of adaptive management is the shift in institutional thinking that accompanies it. Understanding adaptive management means that institutional players, particularly decision-makers, have to be prepared to listen to criticism and to challenge conventional wisdom.

Threat Reduction Assessment (TRA) – while this was carried out as a training exercise it was still using the “real data” from each protected area. In Jebel Abdul Aziz this was most successful with some very challenging discussions developing between the role of the management agencies, the protected areas Management Team and the local communities. When the workshop was conducted in Abu Qubeis Protected Area there was minimal local community participation due to a heavy snow fall on the day. Even so the divisions between the institutions and the local communities was quite clear as even the few community representatives challenged the Management Team to define how grazing in the protected area was damaging. When the workshop was run in Al Fronloq Protected Area there was no local community participation!!!, perhaps reflecting the leadership challenges that have affected the Management Team. Even though, it was a useful exercise and many of the issues between the Management Team and the enforcement guards were brought to the surface.

Scenario Planning – the value of scenario planning has already been discussed at length in this report. The scenario planning workshop was a considerable investment in time and resources and arguably it carried with it considerable risks. There was no experience of scenario planning in Syria and one of the features of the exercise is that it allows for a very broad participation in the process and provides a forum to raise difficult and challenging issues.

Given that there is in Syria a history of unresolved conflicts between local communities and management agencies, it was critical that the airing of these grievances was "managed" in a way that would allow them to be raised without "closing down" the process, thus it was important for the facilitators to be in control but not controlling the outcomes. The output from the workshop was a report on the process which fed into the management plans and a manual designed specifically for Syria which included the nuances in the terminology of scenario planning with appropriate translations into Arabic and to provide Arabic version of such documents.

Lastly, it is important to note that the training of facilitators has included representatives from a Syrian Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) as a mean to build the capacity within Syrian conservation NGOs and to provide scenario planning services to the protected areas in the future.

The three management plans are not designed to cover every eventuality, that is quite clearly impossible, but they are intended to strengthen natural resource governance within the protected areas system. If they achieve this then the protected areas will be able to respond to changes in circumstances and to those unforeseen events in a coherent manner without losing sight of the original objectives.

The strong emphasis on governance in management plans was deliberate; it is there to ensure that these plans, the people who have to implement them, the local communities and the natural values that the protected areas seek to conserve are not overtaken by events.

While there were commonalities between all three management plans, during the management planning process, there emerged a number of distinguishing themes for each protected area depending upon the socio-ecological circumstances and the vision of the principle stakeholders. These themes are briefly summarized here:

Abu Qubeis Protected Area was earlier identified as a site of considerable natural plant and agricultural biodiversity. Article 15 of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) recognizes that "agricultural biodiversity provides not only food and income, but also raw materials for clothing, shelter, medicines, breeding new varieties, and performs other services such as maintenance of soil fertility and biota, and soil and water conservation, all of which are essential to human survival. Nearly one third of the world's land area is used for food production".

Abu Qubeis Protected Area is one of these important sites and furthermore, the on-farm conservation of local land races is an integral part of maintaining these resources.

Jebel Abdul Aziz Protected Area while extremely important because of the wild pistachio forests is also an important area for local Bedouin communities. Assumptions about their relationship with the protected area required much deeper analysis. It emerged through the process of management planning that these communities are highly dependent upon the natural resources within the protected area and indeed, conservation management in the area is of very real concern to these communities.

Jebel Abdul Aziz PA Management activities such as cutting firebreaks requires considerable resources when carried out mechanically and the use of heavy machinery on steep slopes can contribute to accelerated soil erosion. The management plan puts in place the framework to begin negotiations with the local communities to use grazing in a controlled manner to reduce the risk of fires, thus protecting the vulnerable wild pistachio forests. Once this is in place

there are opportunities for collaborative and community-based management of other resources within the protected area thus fulfilling another important role of contributing to the livelihood security of the local communities who are amongst some of the most disadvantaged in Syria.

Al Fronloq Protected Area emerges as a PA that can **"showcase" the Syrian system for protected areas due to its high numbers of visitor in summer and the robust nature of its habitats**". Al Fronloq receives large amounts of visitors in the summer season and there are considerable opportunities to introduce both Syrians and foreign regional visitors to nature conservation and protected areas concepts.

Al Fronloq role is in providing a living classroom for people to discover nature, to learn about ecology and the importance of conservation and to enjoy the natural surroundings all of which are a prerequisite to building a society that values these resources and is prepared to protect them. As a result of this approach from the initial plans to have a more strictly protected area, Al Fronloq Protected Area is likely to become one of the best known and most widely appreciated protected areas in Syria.

It was very apparent that there were difficulties in the relationship between the MSEA and the MAAR. These difficulties stemmed from the conflicting and often overlapping roles played by each ministry in the management of protected areas. It is reasonable to say that the relationship between the two institutions was at a very low ebb when the project started its work. The MoU between MAAR & MSEA (Annex 4) has worked well to diminish all the distance between the two agencies and to reach common ground to work on and ensure a success in the project. This was easily noticed by the external consultancy groups when they started the assignment for the Project. However, as a result of carefully following a process that is closely linked with the development of the National Protected Areas Policy, it has been possible as was claimed to guide the two institutions towards a mutual goal of developing the protected areas system.

The first step in this process was to define, through workshops, the different roles of the institutions according to the law and also in accordance with international best practices. As a result of this it has become clear that, while both Ministries remain significant stakeholders in the protected areas system, the MSEA has a strategic and regulatory role whereas the role of MAAR is being responsible for directly managing a large number of the PA sites. This is an important shift considering at one point that the MSEA was considering the possibility of managing some protected areas directly. Therefore, the input of the consulting firm through work and consultations within the Project has contributed considerably to improving the institutional framework for protected areas management in Syria.

Through the introduction of CBNRM in the management of the protected areas system and importantly in their participation in the management planning and implementation through the Protected Areas Advisory Committee, an opportunity has been opened to:

- Provide more cost-effective management of important habitats within the protected areas including the protection of the natural values by local communities with a vested interest in their management.
- Increased livelihood security of local communities around the protected areas
- The integration of the protected areas into the local and national economic framework
- Reduction in conflicts and improved natural resource governance

By involving the local communities in the management planning process, the process has empowered these communities by building significant social capital. It is important not to overplay the financial benefits of natural resource utilization, or indeed alternative livelihoods. Often they offer only modest income security. However, the benefits of building social capital and the ability of local communities to address environmental challenges and determine their own futures often far outweighs any apparent financial payments and results. Examples of this have been seen at many stages through the Project life when firstly by ensuring that local communities are given an opportunity to participate, then by ensuring that, through the use of various workshop tools, their voices have been heard, and lastly by ensuring that Management Plans provide a framework for their continued and active participation in the planning and management process.

2.7. Assumptions and Risks

Assumptions are the conditions necessary in order to ensure that the project activities will produce results.

Risks are the possibility that these assumptions may not occur. Risks need to be recognized and prevented to the extent possible, and contingency plans put in place to deal with them should they happen.

The Project Brief and the ProDoc was duly prepared and this was followed by the inception phase where a low number of risks were identified, and so did other platforms such as the PIRs. Through the monitoring process of PIRs and APRs as well as other platforms of monitoring the Project such as the Management Response Plan, field visits and MTR it is recommended also, as was mentioned earlier in the discussion, that UNDP/GEF should develop and implement a policy which confirms the importance of the ProDoc. As a result of this monitoring process, The project started to pick up risks and, as was described by recent PIRs, the project has recorded at one time 27 risks, two of which were critical.

The Country Office and the project management were encouraged through the duration of the project to keep updated about all issues in the progress of the work and about risks that were encountered or predicted. Risks were observed and updated as appropriate throughout the life of the Project.

3. CHALLENGES AND CONSTRAINTS

Financing: Syria faces a considerable challenge in not just developing the protected areas system but in simply meeting the current financial needs of the existing PAs. The current mechanism for financing the PAs, MAAR has served well to date, but the changing nature of the protected areas system requires a more focused approach to PA budgeting and finance. The current mechanism has been largely created as the PA system grew out of the former forest reserves and grazing reserve reflecting the changing emphasis of management from timber and grazing to a wider range of values such as ecosystem goods and services and in particular biodiversity. Because it grew out of the previous system of MAAR woodlands, it tends towards forestry production and woodland protection and as such it is highly likely that in the future there will be a need to diversify the areas of spending to include a larger range of conservation issues including management payments to local communities in return for their collaborative management under an agreed management plan action.

Management capacities: The BCPAM has trained three teams, and then added a fourth team from Al Lajjat Man & Biosphere Reserve (MaB). These teams will need to remain in place at least until the

first revision of the management plans. However, it was anticipated that this is highly unlikely given the civil service structure and the individual needs for promotion and career advancement added to the needs of other protected areas. This issue is likely to cause a rapid depletion to these teams. However, MAAR has recently considered this issue and there was an internal decision taken that none of the site team member of staff will be allowed to terminate work or employment at PAs. A permit to leave to another position or employment will not be granted before effectively spending ten years in the post or in another PA if needed or by contributing to personally train and monitor ten individuals for PA management work and surveys. This is a critical decision which should also include in the future an improvement in the management of human resources within the protected areas system.

The local community aspirations: There is a considerable body of goodwill from local communities, but if they do not see progress, a continuation of the process and an increase in their involvement in the protected areas planning and management then they will rapidly become disillusioned and the goodwill can be lost. Once lost, it will be much harder to regain their trust and cooperation.

External forces: It is unfortunate that the BCPAM is coming to an end at such a troubled time. The management plans were designed for a process that was heading towards a decentralized and more localized planning system (as was expressed in the five-year plan). Any change in this process such as a re-centralization of powers and a more authoritarian approach towards government will inevitably be a constraint to achieving the objectives of managing the protected areas per se.

4. EVALUATION:

4.1. Overall Review and Impacts

As of the MTR, it can be seen that the MTR Evaluation Team was concerned by the progress achieved by the Project towards the process indicators. Progress for eight out of ten indicators was deemed to have been UNSATISFACTORY or MODERATELY UNSATISFACTORY, at that time, with the other two scoring MODERATELY SATISFACTORY. The most serious of these was the lack of progress towards a Management Plan in each PA which was meant to become available by the end of Year 2.

Overall progress as measured by the process indicators set up by the Project Brief was considered to be UNSATISFACTORY as there were "major shortcomings in the achievement of the project outcomes".

The Project analysts in 2008 concluded with a score of **32** (33.1%) for Jebel Abdul Aziz Protected Area and **37** (38.27%) for Abu Qubeis Protected Area and **33** (34.14%) for Al Fronloq Protected Area. This is a vast improvement on the 2006 score of 25.86, 25.86, and 20.68 for those sites, respectively, awarded by the Project analysts on that occasion in 2006.

Reassessing the three PAs using Management Evaluation Tracking Tool (METT)⁷ for GEF Biodiversity Focal Area Strategic Priority One: "Catalysing Sustainability of Protected Areas" (Annex 5) after revising work progress reports and interviewing relevant individuals from team members at sites, site managers, PMU staff, and officers at MSEA & MAAR as well as own observation, new scores were achieved. A series of scores of **57 (59.37%) for Jebel Abdul Aziz** Protected Area and **65 (67.71%) for Abu Qubeis** Protected Area and **67 (69.79%) for Al Fronloq** Protected Area were achieved. This shows a great and significant improvement from both the initial and the MTR assessments and illustrates the good management response to the MTR and its recommendations. This confirms the prediction of the MTR team of the great leap forward. This gives an overall rating of **SATISFACTORY** by meeting its objective and for meeting its main outcomes under this objective.

4.2. Objectives Achieved

Objective: To demonstrate practical methods of protected area management that effectively conserve biodiversity

The MTR Evaluation Team recorded towards the project Objective that:

*"In the circumstances and being aware of the progress, albeit modest, made by the project, an overall rating of **MODERATELY SATISFACTORY** is deemed appropriate".*

Looking at the progress made and recorded through PIRs it was clear that The PMU has invested in reviewing the indicators that assess the success of achieving the targets set by the objective of the project. The level of development in PA related national policies and legislations is supporting effective and collaborative approaches: At the start of the project the situation was merely to support conventional PA management and this required a substantial development to adapt to the new approaches. By the end of the project the National PA policies are developed and operational. The Government has set the guidelines for the future establishment of PAs and paved the way for a

⁷ Stolton, S., M. Hockings, N. Dudley, K. MacKinnon & T. Whitten (2003) *Reporting Progress in Protected Areas - A Site-Level Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool*. World Bank/WWF Alliance for Forest Conservation and Sustainable Use. Washington

fruitful cooperation between different stakeholders and ministries for a successful outcome provided financial support is available.

Increase in land area under PA status "at least in one site": The three PA areas were officially gazetted at project inception. Furthermore, there was an increase in new land area under PA status by end of project. The number of the declared national Protected Areas has increased from 27 PA in 2008 and reached 38 PAs according to the MSEA list of 2013. This process is joined with active work for accurate demarcation of the PAs in progress.

The involvement of local communities effectively in the daily life of the PA will reduce the human footprint of the ecosystem. This could be more obvious if it was empowered more in the management of the PA. It is noticed that there were some significant changes in the involvement of the local communities in providing ideas and discussions about the use of the natural resources in the PA, even though this is not clearly supported by the legislations. This involvement is something exceptional that is unusual at any level at the PA management. Therefore, this indicates the rating of being considered as **HIGHLY SATISFACTORY** can be adopted

Outcome 1: Policies and institutional systems that allow for the wise selection and effective operation of protected areas to conserve globally significant biodiversity

The MTR Evaluation Team recorded that:

"As a result of the low delivery in this Outcome (1) but also in recognition of the small amount of progress the overall rating is MODERATELY SATISFACTORY".

Level of effectiveness of the national institutional arrangements in relation to PA planning and management is supported by sound policies and legislations

There was clear institutional arrangement for the newly set approach for PA management at the sites as well as nationally in setting some guidelines and instructions for the best practices in sustainable activities and for ecotourism future planning as well.

Duties of each party (at least for the main active ones within this scope, MAAR, MSEA, UNDP) are clearly set. Furthermore, there is still room for improvement in issuing more details for the roles of other parties that have some role at certain PAs. The Government has staff that is capable to demonstrate how set action plans and management plans for sites.

There is a good team at the level of MAAR & MSEA cooperation for operational management of the PA system which should further develop more to create a unit (PMU) to coordinate the planning of future PAs work. The shift of the management level of PAs at the MAAR from the central to the site level is completely effective, as some decisions can only be taken by the central management. There should be more clear definition for roles and responsibilities for each level and there should be more clear institutional and legal definition for the next step after the end of this project. This process has not finished yet!!

There is a big shift in the role that MSEA is playing for targeting national biodiversity conservation with other local agencies and institutions, but there is still some more work to oversee and approve any issue for all parties through a properly enforced EIA system.

Therefore, this indicates the rating of being considered as **SATISFACTORY** can be adopted

Outcome 2: Effective techniques for PA management and biodiversity conservation have been demonstrated through the design and implementation of management plans at three sites

The MTR Evaluation Team recorded the following:

The assessment of progress toward Outcome 2 is hindered by the ineffectual Indicators. However, the only slight progress is with ecological indicators and monitoring and this is only MODERATELY UNSATISFACTORY. Work on management plans is poised to start and the sooner this happens the better.....

In the knowledge that the PTA is ready to make serious progress with this Outcome, the rating assigned by the Evaluation Team for Outcome 2 is MODERATELY UNSATISFACTORY.

Despite that, the only international experience they were exposed to was through Jordan, the local cadre has achieved in total a big shift of being just a normal person in the PA to a good staff that is capable of training others in this domain and pass the knowledge they acquired to others (Al Lajjat MaB experience)

The project has managed to make clear and good reports about the status of the ecosystems and biodiversity at all three sites along with all relevant reports of Biodiversity components and Socio-economic status on the ground. Reports tell exactly the quality the Project managed to achieve through its staff.

Site management plans were produced for the three sites as well as a contribution in preparing and then finalizing the plan for the Al Lajjat MaB solely by the project staff with a remote supervision of the Project Technical Adviser (PTA). Management plans for each site are in place after revision by the project management team along with the TA, These plans were put after a thorough training and discussions to accommodate the needs of the site taking also those of local communities

PAs are still not on independent budget, but these are still linked with Forestry Department budget within MAAR. The PAs have benefited from the project fund to have a good equipment and these should be remained within each site that it was allocated for (there is a risk that these, such as the car and the PCs, other equipment, might be shifted to other locations within MAAR). This might be considered a step back if not legalized to keep arrangement already set for PAs. However, this issue was discussed in more details in a recent request in a study assessed by the former Project Coordinator where it was requested and planned within the new National Action Plan to achieve National System for Protected Areas to have a new independent special budget within the general budget of the Ministry (2012)

Therefore, this indicates the rating of being considered as **SATISFACTORY** can be adopted

Outcome 3: Sustainable use of natural resources in and around protected areas has been demonstrated through the development and implementation of a programme for alternative sustainable livelihoods and community resource management

The MTR Evaluation Team recorded the following:

Progress towards Outcome 3 is urgently needed if the Project is to retain its credibility among communities. Surveys and training do not satisfy cynicism and fear – tangible products do.

The overall progress towards Outcome 3 is UNSATISFACTORY.

A big leap happened at Al Fronloq and Abu Qubeis sites from the locals being considered as just residents within the area without any management share to become as partners that attend meetings and voice own needs equally to officials and have their message listened to. Still some

work to be done at Jebel Abdul Aziz site which is also due to the culture background of the eastern part of Syria.

Two successful Micro-credit and Micro-enterprise schemes that were initiated at Al Fronloq PA are managed by the community under the supervision by the PA staff and PMU. Similarly, cases of success were also recorded at Abu Qubeis with productive projects for the locals being supported by the project. While locals at Jebel Abdul Aziz also managed to get SGP fund with the support of PA team. However, this needs more solid formations to ensure its sustainability based on legal grounds.

Locals were considered as just residents within the area without any management share. This has changed and locals have become as partners and hence attending meetings, voice their needs, and deliver messages to boards and committees.

Therefore, this indicates the rating of being considered as **SATISFACTORY** can be adopted

4.3. Evaluation of outcomes and delivery of Project:

4.3.1. Project documentation and information 2013:

Based on the finding of this evaluation regarding the Design of the Project and the layout of the Project Document and taking into account the comments made and the observation noted, the Project Document can be considered as **MODERATELY SATISFACTORY**.

However, the Project has produced and contributed to the production of a wealth of materials. The following list is among the most important materials.

1- Project Inception Phase (PIP) report: included the following

- Detailed and final project institutional arrangements.
- Description of the roles, responsibilities and capacities of project team members, particularly vis-à-vis Project outputs
- Planning and preparation for Year 1 of the project
- An Adaptive Management framework for the implementation of the project
- Project Risks (possible barriers to successful project implementation and identified externalities that may reduce project effectiveness).
- Prepare a detailed risk management strategy for project implementation
- Monitoring and evaluation plan.
- Updating project planning matrix.

Prepared by PMU staff

2- Report on updating project (consultancies ToRs): for first two years.

Updating ToRs according to the new concepts and recent developments in PA management and new GEF and UNDP strategies.

Prepared by regional expert Dr. Nedal Al-Ouran

3- Report on demarcation of Abu-Qubeis PA site.

4- Report on demarcation of Al Fronloq PA site

5- Report on demarcation of Jebel Abdul Aziz PA site

The three reports include details of demarcation process in the three sites. The objective is to set accurate and clear boundaries for the 3 sites.

These three reports were prepared by national experts from MAAR, MLAE (MSEA), and the national remote sensing commission.

6- Report on traditional community knowledge gathering:

To assess and record community knowledge of, and traditional practices towards, natural resources, including medicinal herbs.

Prepared by national consultant Mrs. Abeer Munlla Hassan

7- Report on socio-economic – Baseline indicators:

For definition of baseline socio-economic indicators and monitoring program for demonstration sites. Determine their baseline levels (with field work as appropriate) and devise a system for ongoing monitoring (by Forestry Directorate) at all three sites.

Prepared by national consultant Dr. Iskander Ismail

8- Report on Forest ecological – Baseline indicators (Fauna):

For definition of baseline Ecological indicators and monitoring program for demonstration sites: define ecological indicators, determine their baseline levels and devise a system for ongoing monitoring (by Forestry Directorate of MAAR) at all 3 sites.

Prepared by national consultant Dr. Wajeeh Kassiss

9-Report on Forest ecological – Baseline indicators (Flora):

For definition of baseline Ecological indicators and monitoring program for demonstration sites: define ecological indicators, determine their baseline levels and devise a system for ongoing monitoring (by Forestry Directorate) at all 3 sites.

Prepared by national consultant Dr. Ghalia Martini

10- Report includes Interim PA management plan for Abu-Qubeis PA site:

The plan explains in details all activities to be done till a permanent plan be prepared.

Prepared by Project Implementation and Monitoring Adviser (PIMA) and project work team

11- Report includes Interim PA management plan for Al Fronloq PA site:

The plan explains in details all activities to be done till a permanent plan be prepared.

Prepared by PIMA and project work team.

12- Report includes Interim PA management plan for Jebel Abdul Aziz PA site:

The plan explains in details all activities to be done till a permanent plan be prepared.

Prepared by PIMA and project work team.

13- Report includes critical knowledge areas: regarding the ToR 17 on institutional and human capacities assessment.

Prepared by Regional Sub-contractor "ELARD firm".

14- PA Data base on-line report.

Prepared by the consultant Mr. Camille Gaspard.

15- Report on assessment of institutional and legislative structure relating to biodiversity conservation and PA management.

Prepared by sub.- contractor "ELARD firm".

16- Financial sustainable plan, marketing strategy and business plan.

Prepared by Regional consultant Mr. Eyad Abdul Khaleq.

17- Developing eco-tourism at the three project sites.

Prepared by Regional consultant Mr. Ammar Al Azzeh.

18- Micro-credit and Micro-enterprise Scheme (MMS) Specialist

Prepared by National consultant Dr. Samer Kantakji.

19- Socio-economic study report for the three project PA sites.

Prepared by Socio-Economic Specialist, International consultant Mr. Geraldine Chatelard.

20- PA Administrative and organizational structures for the three sites.

Prepared by PTA Mr. Sami Tarabieh.

21- Training manual for the integrated PA management (Vocational training).

Prepared by PTA Mr. Sami Tarabieh.

22- Miscellaneous reports: as required to various concerned parties about project activities and accomplishments.

Prepared by NPD (PMU)

23- PA investment planning capabilities and revenue generation options through PAs Report.

24- National Action Plan to Achieve National System for Protected Areas. Prepared by Dr. Akram Eissa Darwich.

25- National System for the Classification of the National PAs. Prepared by Dr. Akram Eissa Darwich.

On top of that, there is a lot of studies and reports prepared by PMU as well as by Via Nova during the consultancy to serve the project and be considered as a reference for future work.

Therefore, and from this wealth of reports and studies that were produced to a good quality indicates as **SATISFACTORY** rating for this outcome which can be adopted

4.3.2. Project finance / co-finance

A Terminal Evaluation is not a financial audit and assessment should be focussed on the relative allocation of financial resources and on the changes that have occurred during the life of the project. Therefore, the evaluation will assess the key financial aspects of the project, including the extent of co-financing planned and realized. Project cost and funding data will be required, including annual expenditures. Variances between planned and actual expenditures will need to be assessed and explained. Results from recent financial audits, as available, can be taken into consideration. After consultation and clarification from the PMU and UNDP Country Office (CO) and Project Team to obtain financial data in order to complete the co-financing table below needed to be included in the terminal evaluation report, it can be noticed that the finance status was done overall to an acceptable efficiency. Discussions with all those who were involved in the management of the project at various levels, confirmed that there was a considerable change in managing financial

matters between the start and the final stages of the Project. All expenses were done according to forecasted budget, and in exceptional situations where a modification was needed to shift expenditures between outputs and items, approval from the PMU was sought during its periodical meetings within the capacity the PMU had. However, if the change was for a substantial amount, then a full approval from New York office was sought. This indicates a well management of the financial issues and a great shift in the way that management of budget was adopted through the Project.

Co-financing (type/source)	UNDP own financing (mill. US\$)		Government (mill. US\$)		Partner Agency (mill. US\$)		Total (mill. US\$)	
	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual
Grants	0.500	0.481	0.525	0.521	3.291	3.283	4.316	4.285
Loans/Concessions								
• In-kind support			2.407	2.439			2.407	2.439
• Other								
Totals	0.500	0.481	2.932	2.960	3.291	3.283	6.723	6.724

However, there was a notice that the actual spending on the project from all parties was slightly less than what was planned at the project initiation. This was just about 1% overall of the total budget but ranged among the parties between 1 and about 3% of the Financial grants for. This indicates a satisfactory planning for the project and activities spending with the limits and budgets planned and having a slight margin of reserve, which gives a **SATISFACTORY** indication of the finance procedures carried out for the Project.

On the other hand, looking at the financial support that was offered in kind from the government this has exceeded the allocated budget and the actual share contributed by the final stage of the Project has exceeded 42% of the initial planned budget in kind. This significant increase of spending on the project by the government in kind can be attributed to several issues, such as the increase rate of inflation and the extension of the Project duration from February 2012 to December 2012 and what incurred from this through monthly wages and usage of equipment and facilities at the sites. Even though this should account for a good portion of the increased spending in kind, but this would not justify the huge increase of this actual spending from the planned spending which can be accepted almost as **MODERATELY SATISFACTORY**.

4.3.3. UNDP Country Office:

Even though that there was a change in UNDP management during the project, the work of UNDP Country Office was satisfactorily carried out regardless of the change in the management of the office. However, and despite the continuity and the increase of the unrest political situation that prevailed in Syria lately, the project team with the role played by the CO as was described in the governance of the Project managed to implement a considerable percentage of its annual work plan and anticipated delivery with a justified deviation, for the following:

- 1) Finalisation of a practical institutional framework and guidelines in accordance with the Draft National Protected Areas Policy, the legislation, the requirements of international agreements and conventions and the developments that have taken place in protected areas management in Syria.

- 2) Facilitating the transferring of knowledge and acquired practical experiences into Al Lajjat where the project has supported the development of an adaptive management planning process of Al Lajjat MaB Reserve for producing an interim management document and building a consensus between different stakeholders. In addition, the project team has contributed to staff capacity development for both technical and management areas.
- 3) Carrying out part of the ecological monitoring programs for Flora and Fauna.
- 4) Initiating the implementation of the tourism plan in accordance with the eco -tourism code that was previously developed by the project
- 5) Producing the best practices guidelines on PAs planning and management report. The report described the best techniques and methods in PAs planning and management techniques, sustainability, PAs governance for the national PAs system in the country
- 6) Developing and initiating the implementation of a practical Environmental Awareness and Education that include a set of themes, messages and several instruments to mobilize learning and raise awareness among different stakeholders.
- 7) Completion of the local community supporting programme and setting monitoring plans.

The project team has demonstrated a full capacity and effectiveness to work under pressure and difficult situation. As indicated previously the associated risk with the political unrest situation, led to some delay particularly to the ecological surveys and monitoring programs, awareness activities, supporting local communities livelihood programme and the international cooperation. [The delivery and achievement of the UNDP Country Office can be considered as been done in a **SATISFACTORY** way.](#) Keeping the pace of the work as needed and has a very good and fruitful relation with both the implementing and executing national agencies, MAAR & MSEA, respectively.

4.3.4. UNDP –Technical Adviser:

The project implementation is being rated as **SATISFACTORY**, as the project was managed in a reasonably effective and efficient manner, largely in accordance with the work plan, schedule and budget. Hence, good progress was made in achieving the targets set by the project which include the following;

1. Preparing Institutional Framework and Guidelines in accordance with draft National Protected Areas Policy: this report examines the current institutional arrangements in the Syrian Arab Republic for protected areas management, particularly as it relates to MSEA and MAAR.
2. Arabic version of the PAs national policy statement and strategy on Protected Areas of Syria which was submitted to the national partners for adoption at the ministerial level by MSEA & MAAR.
3. Producing an interim Management Plan for Al Lajjat Man & Biosphere (MaB) Reserve and building a consensus between different stakeholders:
4. Continued ecological monitoring programs for Flora and Fauna at the three project PA sites.
5. Establishment of a picnic area facilities and services at Al Fronloq PA site.
6. Finalizing the Best Practices Guidelines on PAs Planning and Management describing relevant methods for the national PAs system in the country

7. Implementing Alternative Sustainable Livelihood Program at some villages of the three PA sites, as eight CBOs were supported during this programme for various projects such as sheep fattening, medicinal plant production, dairy product manufacturing,etc.

8. Finalizing Human Resource Capacity Assessment and Development Needs Report to determine the current and future needs of the PAs human resources through some strategic as well as some more immediate project related recommendations.

All these can justify that the work delivered by the PTA was done in a **SATISFACTORY** way and this ensured the good delivery of the Project goals according to its objectives.

4.3.5. National Project Manager:

Despite the ongoing unrest in the country that slowed down and delayed some activities, the project management has achieved key planned activities and progressed well towards achieving its objectives to be rated as **SATISFACTORY**.

The main activities and outputs regarding Policies & Institutional System that were accomplished included:

- finalizing Arabic Version of The National Policy and Strategy on Protected Areas of Syria,
- the revision of the current legislations and laws for the ecology and forest areas,
- A report of Protected Areas Institutional Management Structures for MSEA, MAAR,
- A report of training needs assessment,
- A report on practical institutional framework guidelines between MSEA and MAAR based on the policy statement,

Key activities that were undertaken regarding effective techniques for PA management and sustainable use of natural resources included:

- (i) A practical educational program in each PA to raise the environmental awareness of students;
- (ii) Execution of ecological monitoring programs for Flora and Fauna at the three PA sites (Spring and Autumn surveys);
- (iii) Human resources capacity assessment and development needs report;
- (iv) The best practices guidelines on PAs planning and management report. In addition to:
- (v) The completion of micro enterprises (small projects) program for CBOs of local communities at the three PA sites.

A National Task Force (NTF) formed of national experts from MAAR and MSEA were operational to review all issues, weaknesses and constraints in the Forestry Law No 25 and Environment Law No 50 of MSEA and other relevant Ministerial Laws, in order to update them.

The project has applied the approach of the adaptive management as a means to address the uncertainties in ecosystem management and PAs management. The project has faced the fact that the NTF formed to review and identify gaps in the current PAs policies and legislations related to national Protected Areas Planning and Management has not functioned as expected and as scheduled in the project annual plans. The Project recognized the importance of developing a national protected areas policy. Accordingly, instead of NTF, the project developed ToRs for consultancy with the same mission on PAs Policies and Legislations to compile and consolidate the results and deliverables that the project produced and relevant to the legislative frame of Protected

Areas declaration and management in Syria. Further, the consultant aimed to review, propose, and update national legislations and policies based on the national policy and the strategic plan on protected areas of the Syrian Arab Republic.

The PMU followed up the execution of the annual plans with full collaboration and close coordination with MAAR & MSEA, the management cadre and with work teams at the three PA sites for implementing different activities.

Management of the project and all operations were largely done according to UNDP rules and requirements. The project has done well regarding, work planning and financial expenditure. Furthermore, funds management and project monitoring through UNDP facilities were well advanced.

Evaluation Ratings:			
1. Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)	<i>rating</i>	2. IA& EA Execution	<i>rating</i>
M&E design at entry	N/A	Quality of UNDP Implementation	HS
M&E Plan Implementation	S	Quality of Execution - Executing Agency	HS
Overall quality of M&E	S	Overall quality of Implementation / Execution	S
3. Assessment of Outcomes	<i>rating</i>	4. Sustainability	<i>rating</i>
Relevance	R	Financial resources:	ML
Effectiveness	HS	Socio-political:	L
Efficiency	S	Institutional framework and governance:	ML
Overall Project Outcome Rating	S	Environmental :	L
		Overall likelihood of sustainability:	ML

The abbreviated evaluation rating is mentioned here according to adopted ratings for specified targets as illustrated in Section D of Annex 1

4.3.6. National Project Coordinator:

The National Coordinator (former and current) of the Project has played a critical and important role in facilitating all operations and the easing the execution of various activities needed for the project. This was simply achieved through the role within the Executing Agency (MSEA) for the Project and in accordance with the MoU signed between the two entities and largely according to UNDP rules and requirements. The preparation was done to high standards and strong relationships based on own role at the ministry has played a defining factor that acted and progressed well towards achieving Project objective and hence the work of this personnel can be rated as **SATISFACTORY** in delivering the overall targets of the Project.

4.3.7. Project monitoring and the LogFrame Matrix

The Project monitoring used to guide project implementation and revise and refine implementation plans through adaptive management. The LogFrame is recognized as the paramount tool against which project performance and progress towards targets are measured.

The LogFrame for this project was first revised at the end of Inception phase. However, adaptive management was not a common and adopted practice, but management had adapted to the needs that arise though the life of the project only when the PMU started to accept this way of change and

adaptation to changes in the circumstances as needed through monitoring the reports PIRs, APRs, MTR, METT and discussions within the meetings of the PEC and other reviews.

However, Project monitoring and applying adaptive management in the Project can be considered as **MODERATELY SATISFACTORY**.

The following table is a highlight and summary of ratings and evaluations to the Project.

Criterion	Concluding Remarks	Rating
Overall project implementation	project was managed in an effective and efficient manner, largely in accordance with the work plan, schedule & budget.	Satisfactory
Overall Review and Impacts	meeting Project objective and for meeting its main outcomes under this objective based on the METT	Satisfactory
Objective achieved	exceptional results and achievement that is unusual at any level at the PA management	Highly satisfactory
<u>Outcome 1</u> : Policies and institutional systems for the wise selection and effective operation of protected areas	a big shift in MSEA role for targeting national biodiversity conservation with other local agencies and institutions	Satisfactory
<u>Outcome 2</u> : Effective techniques for PA management and biodiversity conservation have been demonstrated at three sites	Site management plans were produced for the three sites as well as in preparing and finalizing Al Lajjat MaB plan by project staff. However, PAs are still not on independent budget, but it was planned within the new National Action Plan to achieve National System for protected Areas to have a new independent special budget	Satisfactory
<u>Outcome 3</u> : Sustainable use of natural resources in and around protected areas has been demonstrated	successful Micro-credit and Micro-enterprise schemes and SGP grants managed by the local to Sustainably use the natural resources. Locals have become as partners and hence attending meetings, voice their needs,	Satisfactory
Project Design and layout of Project Document		Moderately satisfactory
Project monitoring and LogFrame Matrix		Moderately satisfactory
Project documentation and information	Project has produced and contributed to the production of a wealth of materials to a good quality	Satisfactory
Project finance / co-finance	a considerable change in managing financial matters between the start and the final stages of the Project, actual spending on the project from all parties was coincides with what was planned at initiation	Satisfactory
Project co-finance	in kind government contribution has exceeded the allocated budget by 42% from initial planned budget	Moderately satisfactory
UNDP Country Office	achievement at all levels through keeping the pace of the work as needed and having a very good and fruitful relation with both IA & EA and stakeholders.	Satisfactory
UNDP –Technical Adviser	Providing advice as good progress was made in achieving Project goals according to its objective	Satisfactory
National Project Manager	project management achieved key planned activities and progressed well towards achieving its objective	Satisfactory
National Project Coordinator	facilitating all operations and the easing the execution of various activities needed for the project	Satisfactory
M&E Plan Implementation		Satisfactory
Overall quality of M&E		Satisfactory
Quality of UNDP Implementation		Highly satisfactory
Quality of Execution - Executing Agency		Highly satisfactory
Overall quality of Implementation / Execution		Satisfactory
Effectiveness of Outcomes	Reaching the project targets despite the length of time needed.	Highly satisfactory
Efficiency of Outcomes		Satisfactory
Overall Project Outcome Rating		Satisfactory
Sustainability of Financial resources	Based on Governmental contributions from the inception of the project till the closure of its activities. The staff and facilities are still	Moderately Likely

	paid by the government, but external assistance might be more incentive and help further in such activities	
Sustainability of Institutional framework and governance:	The PAs has its own directorate and monitoring at the government, but this directorate needs more empowerment by having the final and independent say in PAs issues	Moderately Likely
Socio-political Sustainability	The relation between the PAs staff and the locals is proved to continue on respect and trust	Likely
Environmental Sustainability		Likely
Overall likelihood of sustainability		Moderately Likely

5. LESSONS LEARNED:

One of the major changes that have critically switched this Project into a truly national locally co-owned project was that it has profoundly changed relationships between the Management Teams and the local communities, between the decision-makers and the local communities and even within the local communities and the way they relate to the protected areas. This has opened up opportunities for protected areas management that simply did not exist before.

Certainly the management plans developed are geared towards a more equitable and participatory system with greater accountability of decision-makers and the transfer of greater powers to the local level. This transfer of decision-making powers is in line with the planned transformational process of the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic Five-Year Plan (FYP) 2006-2010.

Syria boast some extremely important protected areas, furthermore, its bio-geographic location within the fertile crescent means that these protected areas hold species, land races and land use systems that might be arguably considered vital to the very sustainability of the modern agriculture, but the protected areas system is still poorly developed.

Scaling up the advances made by the BCPAM should be the next step. The Draft Protected Areas Strategy (2010) lists a number of tasks expected of the protected areas system stakeholders in the short to medium term future (five – ten years):

- Rationalizing the institutional management arrangements to ensure national coordination and regulation of the national protected areas system and effective site management including developing the internal management structures within management agencies to meet the demands of the future system.
- Developing a national classification scheme for protected areas that will provide a range of different types of protected areas according to their circumstances and broadly based upon the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) categories and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) guidance. The classification scheme will provide guidelines as to the approach to management that would be applied to each category of PA.
- Developing a supportive legal environment by implementing Law 50 and developing a national law on Protected Areas that will, *inter alia*: provides a means for the establishment of nationally protected areas, place obligatory requirements upon institutional "owners" or custodians of designated sites to manage the site according to its designation and makes provision for collaborative and devolved management agreements.
- Conducting a thorough gap assessment of the protected area system to identify priority sites and ensure that there is connectivity between sites and that the system fulfils the conservation of needs of Syria and meets international obligations.
- Developing a diversity of management approaches that include conservation through prohibition and adopt sustainable use as a conservation management tool.
- Building the skills necessary for effective protected areas management of the current PAs and the greatly expanded system of the future including greater participation of civil society organizations.
- Assessing the financial resources needed to operate the system and mobilizing the resources to ensure that the national protected areas system is fully resourced and accounted for in the national auditing system.

- Supporting rural communities through the protected areas system by protecting and sustainably utilizing wild resources and natural processes that they rely upon for their livelihoods.
- Encouraging management-oriented research to support conservation.
- Monitoring the effectiveness of management, the impact of interventions and adapting management in light of experience.
- Communicating the importance of the protected areas system and biodiversity conservation to a wide audience at all levels through education and awareness.

Clearly it is not possible for MSEA and MAAR (and other protected areas managers, e.g. the General Commission for the Development of al Badia (GCDB)) to carry out all of these tasks on their own. The scale of the training programme just to provide skilled staff to the current system is overwhelming without considering the future needs of the system as more and different protected areas are established.

It is important that the Management Teams begin to implement the management plans and build their confidence, working with local communities and other stakeholders, learning to trust each other and building gaining experience. These really are "first generation" management plans and they will need time to develop the final management systems.

It is very apparent that Syria will continue to require outside assistance for some time to come in order to develop the protected areas system. It would be unfair to expect the key stakeholders to carry out this task on their own, neither technically nor financially.

Therefore, it should be a fundamental component of the policy to package up parts of the development process into projects and to leverage financing from donors for those parts that cannot be carried out internally.

This is not to say that the MSEA, MAAR and Management Teams should not be actively in control of this process and they have a considerable task in making sure that the institutional arrangements between national regulator and site managers, between strategic planning and site management planning, is built upon.

However, Recognising the great work carried out by the Project team in applying a strong project strategy and meeting standards and indicators that will usually measure and reflect the level of success, recommendations from lessons learned can be grouped where relevant to the future benefit. However, there is a danger that recommending too many detailed points might cause confusion to comprehend the results and interpret the outcomes of such a pilot and challenging Project in Syria, which might consequently lead to underestimate of a successful conclusion:

- It is important that the major partner (UNDP/GEF) through the Country Office will keep offering support where needed to the national stakeholders in various ways of support of providing financial and technical support to maintain the positive outcomes achieved through the life of the Project, and keep a fair level of engagement in the activities of the PAs where possible.
- Keep the Management Unit that proved a satisfactorily way of managing the Project at both the centralised and localised levels, and this Unit will continue to act as a training centre for developing new work where possible of the network of National PAs.
- Implement and review the management plan for each site to strengthen its position within the national network of PAs.

- A level of autonomy and some independence from the central governmental institutions should be stressed upon to keep the promising approach of managing the PAs and to integrate locals with the dialogue needed to use and benefit from natural resources within the site in a sustainable way for the full benefit of all relevant stakeholders. However, this autonomy must not lead to a weak relationship with other governmental bodies, but it will empower the PMU to deliver better services for the PAs as a whole.
- PMU and PAs staff, being on secondment position from other governmental institutions, must be kept at this role of the PAs for at least a period of 10 years before given the permission to being relocated to other departments. Alternatively, a Project staff can be given a leave permit from their position if they successfully trained and contributed to raise the capabilities of newly appointed staff at the sites or at other locations within the national network of PAs. This needs more clarification about the employment status for staff that on a secondment position from other governmental institutions.
- All equipment and material that were provided to the project and the sites must be kept to the use of the location where it was devoted for. This will include transportation vehicles, computing peripherals, offices and buildings as of the continued support provided in kind from the government.
- As with the recommendation set for the PMU, any employee of the ministries that has been subject to intensive training and capacity development within the Project in activities that can be used for building capacities for future staff must not be given permission to leave to other posts unless a replacement is provided to cover the gap that might result from such move. All equipment and resources within the PAs can be fairly shared where needed and feasible to reduce the costs of running the Project.
- Promote and emphasize the participatory approach through a greater involvement of the community in all decisions relating to the natural reserves and in bringing the locals on board the meeting of management team through their participation in meetings of the PA steering committee. This will enable the locals to voice their needs to the higher levels of the management boards.
- Strengthen the capabilities of locals within the Protected Area Management Board for each PA to participate actively through active membership and to include representation from each community within the PA.
- Strengthen and implement a strategic approach to the PA system in Syria based on representation and ecological surveys.
- Utilise fully all the financial mechanisms available at UNDP to facilitate the efficient implementation of the project activities.
- Provide for true participation (through meaningful membership of the PA Management Board) by the communities that live and/or depend on the PAs for their livelihoods and existence – a true sharing of the decision-making (and responsibilities) for the PA management. Start seeing the local communities not only as beneficiaries, but as joint-owners of the PAs.
- Provide training from Project staff, on issues related to developing management procedures for other PAs to pass the knowledge to relevant stakeholders and staff from other PAs.
- Strengthen the strategy for communities' engagement and participation in management activities as to be approached as partners.
- Promote achieving a self-revenue and income for the PAs which ensures their financial independence and consequently the sustainability of their work.

CONCLUDING REMARKS:

The long process of evaluation that this BCPAM Project has gone through where the current situation of unrest in Syria has resulted in a thorough assessment of the items it reached. The outputs of the BCPAM Project are considered as lessons and cases that the stakeholders would recently have learned from and will continue to learn from based on the observations and notices made in this terminal evaluation. It proved that this process was productive in changing attitude towards Biodiversity Conservation and Management of Protected Areas among several stakeholders in the country, whether from the governmental sector or from the local community and enhancing the good relationship with the surrounding environment forming a momentum of cooperation among them.

The most important point that contributed to the success of this BCPAM Project can be attributed to the work of establishing a good level of cooperation between the most important governmental authorities dealing with biodiversity conservation MAAR & MSEA. The cooperation prior to the BCPAM Project between MAAR and MSEA was always facing a level of disagreement between the two entities and a minimal agreement trying to have the leading/sole role in the management of Biodiversity conservation and to eliminate the role of the other ministry. This was clearly pointed out and expressed by national experts as well as the governmental personnel who were met during the evaluation. The UNDP office, through the role played in this project, materialised the fruitful cooperation between the two ministries as a condition to proceed in the BCPAM Project according to the Project Document (despite being a lengthy document and not well organised in format and coherence) and according to the initial agreement between the two entities that assign a role for each ministry in the project. This has laid the way for a continuous cooperation between the two ministries. The Mid-Term Evaluation was a critical process that rectified the work in various aspects of the BCPAM Project and pointed out where a focus is needed also to reach its objectives. Transparency was a key factor that made this possible.

The BCPAM Project has proved to be a success in achieving a significant improvement on the ecological status of the sites it directly worked at (PAs) as well as other off sites that indirectly benefited from the Project. This was achieved in copying the success reached within other PAs and hence reducing the level of eco-stress on the ecosystems of these sites or other relevant projects which are using or adopting the participatory approach. The BCPAM Project have left the PAs as a very valuable legacy at both levels of the Government and public. It has succeeded in building national capacities which are capable of replicating such objectives and achieving the needed outcomes within the Management of PAs elsewhere in the country. The right investment in HR has resulted in such a remarkable team which has the capability to carry on the job with very minimal support and external supervision as proved through work carried out in Al-Lajat. This is a well planned investment that will ensure the sustainability of the BCPAM Project. However, offering support, where possible, from external donors and international organisations, such as UNDP/GEF to targeted national stakeholders in different ways such as providing financial and technical support to maintain the Project positive outcomes, is very beneficial and motivating factor.

The acceptance of having the local communities on-board the discussions for managing the PAs, is a nationally success case of such approach that should be recommended for future projects where applicable. This was a result of well planned work of the Project to raise the awareness of locals and the public in general about biodiversity conservation and the Management of PAs through various activities, occasions and media. This increase in awareness and share in management will ensure that the support of locals is guaranteed as a winning factor for securing long term success being the

ultimate primary or secondary aim of several working projects around this concept. Adopting local making income small to medium project that will help the locals develop their economic status using their own local traditional knowledge after being optimally shaped according to the status of ecosystems and what can be offered from the various aspects of ecosystems services within the PA in accordance with habitat capacity. However, two sites, Al Fronloq and Abu Qubeis, are having a kind of connectivity between them in using resources and exchanging products within as part of the income making projects. Hence, conducting a thorough assessment to identify any other priority sites in the geographical context is recommended to ensure that there is more solid connectivity between sites.

ANNEX 1: TERMINAL EVALUATION TERMS OF REFERENCE

A- INTRODUCTION

In accordance with UNDP and GEF M&E policies and procedures, all full and medium-sized UNDP support GEF financed projects are required to undergo a terminal evaluation upon completion of implementation. These terms of reference (ToR) sets out the expectations for a Terminal Evaluation (TE) of the project **Biodiversity Conservation & Protected Area Management (PIMS 227)**.

The essentials of the project to be evaluated are as follows:

PROJECT SUMMARY TABLE

Project Title:	Syria: Biodiversity Conservation and Protected Area Management			
GEF Project ID:	1169		<i>at endorsement (Million US\$)</i>	<i>at completion (Million US\$)</i>
UNDP Project ID:	PIMS 227	GEF financing:	3,291,850	3,291,850
Country:	Syria	IA/EA own:		
Region:	RBAS	Government:	In Kind 2,407,000	2,429,000
Focal Area:	BD	(500 Trac+ 525 Government) Other:	1,025,000	995,000
FA Objectives, (OP/SP):	1: catalysing sustainability of protected areas; OP1: Arid and semiarid ecosystems, crosscutting with land degradation	Total co-financing:	3,432,000	3,434,000
Executing Agency:	MLAE	Total Project Cost:	6,723,850	6,725,850
Other Partners involved:	Ministry of Environment & Ministry of Agriculture	ProDoc Signature (date project began):	February 8, 2005	
		(Operational) Closing Date:	Proposed: February 8, 2012	Actual: December 31, 2012

B- OBJECTIVE AND SCOPE

The project was designed to demonstrate practical methods of protected area management that effectively conserve biodiversity and protect the interest of local communities while supporting the consolidation of an enabling environment that will facilitate replication throughout the country. The Executing Agency of the project is Ministry of Local Administration and Environment in cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform. The project was subjected to a Midterm Review in 2008. Based on the results and recommendations of the MTR, changes in activities were made. Furthermore, the project team revised the logical framework and annual work plans was developed and implemented based on the revised logframe.

The TE will be conducted according to the guidance, rules and procedures established by UNDP and GEF as reflected in the UNDP Evaluation Guidance for GEF Financed Projects.

The objectives of the evaluation are to assess the achievement of project results, and to draw lessons that can both improve the sustainability of benefits from this project, and aid in the overall enhancement of UNDP programming.

C- EVALUATION APPROACH AND METHOD

An overall approach and method⁸ for conducting project terminal evaluations of UNDP supported GEF financed projects have developed over time. The evaluator is expected to frame the evaluation effort using the criteria of **relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and impact**, as defined and explained in the UNDP Guidance for Conducting Terminal Evaluations of UNDP-supported, GEF-financed Projects. A set of questions covering each of these criteria have been drafted and are included with this ToR (Annex 1C). The evaluator is expected to amend, complete and submit this matrix as part of an evaluation inception report, and shall include it as an annex to the final report.

The evaluation must provide evidence-based information that is credible, reliable and useful. The evaluator is expected to follow a participatory and consultative approach ensuring close engagement with government counterparts, in particular the GEF operational focal point, UNDP Country Office, project team, UNDP GEF Technical Adviser based in the region and key stakeholders. Due to the current conflict situation in the country, the international evaluator will be home-based and not undertake missions to Syria. The international consultant will conduct telephone/internet interviews where possible and be in regular contact with the national consultant ensuring the relevant and required questions are incorporated in the face-to-face or telephone/internet interviews the national consultant will conduct. Field visits will not be undertaken. Face-to-face interviews by the national evaluator will be held in Damascus with the following organizations and individuals at a minimum:

Ministry of Environment (Biodiversity department)

Ministry of Agriculture (forestry department)

Forestry directorate at the three sites (if possible)

Site teams

Representative of local communities

The evaluator will review all relevant sources of information, such as the project document, project reports – including Annual APR/PIR, project budget revisions, midterm review, progress reports, GEF focal area tracking tools, project files, national strategic and legal documents, and any other materials that the evaluator considers useful for this evidence-based assessment. A list of documents that the project team will provide to the evaluator for review is included in Annex 1B of this Terms of Reference.

⁸ For additional information on methods, see the [Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating for Development Results](#), Chapter 7, pg. 163

D: EVALUATION QUESTION MATRIX

Evaluative Criteria Questions	Indicators	Sources	Methodology
Relevance: How does the project relate to the main objectives of the GEF focal area, and to the environment and development priorities at the local, regional and national levels?			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did the project's objective align with the priorities of the local government and local communities? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level of coherence between project objective and stated priorities of local stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local stakeholders Document review of local development strategies, environmental policies, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviews Desk review
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did the project's objective fit within Croatia's national environment and development priorities? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level of coherence between project objective and national policy priorities and strategies, as stated in official documents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National policy documents, such as National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, National Capacity Self-Assessment, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desk review National level interviews
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did the project concept originate from local or national stakeholders, and/or were relevant stakeholders sufficiently involved in project development? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level of involvement of local and national stakeholders in project origination and development (number of meetings held, project development processes incorporating stakeholder input, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project staff Local & national stakeholders Project documents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviews Desk review
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did the project objective fit GEF strategic priorities? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level of coherence between project objective and GEF strategic priorities (including alignment of relevant focal area indicators) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GEF strategic priority documents for period when project was approved Current GEF strategic priority documents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desk review
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did the project's objective support implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity? Other relevant MEAs? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Linkages between project objective and elements of the CBD, such as key articles and programs of work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CBD website National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desk review
Effectiveness: To what extent have the expected outcomes and objectives of the project been achieved?			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are the project objectives likely to be met? To what extent are they likely to be met? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level of progress toward project indicator targets relative to expected level at current point of implementation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents Project staff Project stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviews Desk review
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What were the key factors contributing to project success or 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level of documentation of and preparation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviews

underachievement?	for project risks, assumptions and impact drivers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project staff Project stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desk review
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the key risks and barriers that remain to achieve the project objective and generate Global Environmental Benefits? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presence, assessment of, and preparation for expected risks, assumptions and impact drivers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents Project staff Project stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviews Desk review
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are the key assumptions and impact drivers relevant to the achievement of Global Environmental Benefits likely to be met? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Actions undertaken to address key assumptions and target impact drivers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents Project staff Project stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviews Desk review
Efficiency: Was the project implemented efficiently, in-line with international and national norms and standards?			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Was the project cost-effective? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality and adequacy of financial management procedures (in line with GEF Agency and national policies, legislation, and procedures) Financial delivery rate vs. expected rate Management costs as a percentage of total costs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents Project staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desk review Interviews with project staff
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Were expenditures in line with international standards and norms? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cost of project inputs and outputs relative to norms and standards for donor projects in the country or region 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents Project staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desk review Interviews with project staff
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Was the project implementation approach efficient for delivering the planned project results? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adequacy of implementation structure and mechanisms for coordination and communication Planned and actual level of human resources available Extent and quality of engagement with relevant partners Quality and adequacy of project monitoring mechanisms (oversight bodies' input, quality and timeliness of reporting, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents National & local stakeholders Project staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desk review Interviews with project staff Interviews with national & local stakeholders
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Was the project implementation delayed? If so, did that affect cost-effectiveness? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project milestones in time Planned results affected by delays Required project adaptive management measures related to delays 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents Project staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desk review Interviews with project staff
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What was the contribution of cash and in-kind co-financing to project implementation? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level of cash and in-kind co-financing relative to expected level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents Project staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desk review Interviews with project staff

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent did the project leverage additional resources? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amount of resources leveraged relative to project budget 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents Project staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desk review Interviews with project staff
Sustainability: To what extent are there financial, institutional, social-economic, and/or environmental risks to sustaining long-term project results?			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent are project results likely to be dependent on continued financial support? What is the likelihood that any required financial resources will be available to sustain the project results once the GEF assistance ends? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial requirements for maintenance of project benefits Level of expected financial resources available to support maintenance of project benefits Potential for additional financial resources to support maintenance of project benefits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents Project staff Project stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviews Desk review
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do relevant stakeholders have or are likely to achieve an adequate level of "ownership" of results, to have the interest in ensuring that project benefits are maintained? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level of initiative and engagement of relevant stakeholders in project activities and results 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents Project staff Project stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviews Desk review
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do relevant stakeholders have the necessary technical capacity to ensure that project benefits are maintained? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level of technical capacity of relevant stakeholders relative to level required to sustain project benefits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents Project staff Project stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviews Desk review
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent are the project results dependent on socio-political factors? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existence of socio-political risks to project benefits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents Project staff Project stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviews Desk review
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent are the project results dependent on issues relating to institutional frameworks and governance? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existence of institutional and governance risks to project benefits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents Project staff Project stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviews Desk review
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are there any environmental risks that can undermine the future flow of project impacts and Global Environmental Benefits? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existence of environmental risks to project benefits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents Project staff Project stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviews Desk review
Impact: Are there indications that the project has contributed to, or enabled progress toward, reduced environmental stress and/or improved ecological status?			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Was there a logical flow of inputs and activities to outputs, from outputs to outcomes, and then to impacts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inputs, outputs and outcomes of project directly targeted towards reducing environmental stress and/or improved ecological status 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual Work Plans Logical Framework (original and revised versions) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desk review Interviews
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did the project achieve its anticipated/planned impacts? Why or why not? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improvement in Management Effectiveness in the target Protected Areas leading to conservation of biodiversity Reduction of fires at Fronloq & Abu Qbais PAs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wildlife surveys METTs Park Records 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviews Desk review

E- EVALUATION CRITERIA & RATINGS

An assessment of project performance will be carried out, based against expectations set out in the Project Logical Framework/Results Framework (see Annex 1A), which provides performance and impact indicators for project implementation along with their corresponding means of verification. The evaluation will at a minimum cover the criteria of: **relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact**. Ratings must be provided on the following performance criteria. The completed table must be included in the evaluation executive summary. The obligatory rating scales are included in Annex 1D.

Evaluation Ratings:			
1. Monitoring and Evaluation	rating	2. IA& EA Execution	rating
M&E design at entry		Quality of UNDP Implementation	
M&E Plan Implementation		Quality of Execution - Executing Agency	
Overall quality of M&E		Overall quality of Implementation / Execution	
3. Assessment of Outcomes	rating	4. Sustainability	rating
Relevance		Financial resources:	
Effectiveness		Socio-political:	
Efficiency		Institutional framework and governance:	
Overall Project Outcome Rating		Environmental :	
		Overall likelihood of sustainability:	

The obligatory abbreviated evaluation rating scales are summarised as follows.

Ratings for Outcomes, Effectiveness, Efficiency, M&E, I&E Execution 6: Highly Satisfactory (HS): no shortcomings 5: Satisfactory (S): minor shortcomings 4: Moderately Satisfactory (MS) 3: Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU): significant shortcomings 2: Unsatisfactory (U): major problems 1: Highly Unsatisfactory (HU): severe problems	Sustainability ratings: 4. Likely (L): negligible risks to sustainability 3. Moderately Likely (ML): moderate risks 2. Moderately Unlikely (MU): significant risks 1. Unlikely (U): severe risks	Relevance ratings 2. Relevant (R) 1.. Not relevant (NR) Impact Ratings: 3. Significant (S) 2. Minimal (M) 1. Negligible (N)
Additional ratings where relevant: Not Applicable (N/A) Unable to Assess (U/A)		

F- PROJECT FINANCE / COFINANCE

The Evaluation will assess the key financial aspects of the project, including the extent of co-financing planned and realized. Project cost and funding data will be required, including annual expenditures. Variances between planned and actual expenditures will need to be assessed and explained. Results from recent financial audits, as available, should be taken into consideration. The evaluator(s) will receive assistance from the Country Office (CO) and Project Team to obtain financial data in order to complete the co-financing table below, which will be included in the terminal evaluation report.

Co-financing (type/source)	UNDP own financing (mill. US\$)		Government (mill. US\$)		Partner Agency (mill. US\$)		Total (mill. US\$)	
	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual
Grants								
Loans/Concessions								
• In-kind support								
• Other								
Totals								

G- MAINSTREAMING

UNDP supported GEF financed projects are key components in UNDP country programming, as well as regional and global programmes. The evaluation will assess the extent to which the project was successfully mainstreamed with other UNDP priorities, including poverty alleviation, improved governance, the prevention and recovery from natural disasters, and gender.

H- IMPACT

The evaluators will assess the extent to which the project is achieving impacts or progressing towards the achievement of impacts. Key findings that should be brought out in the evaluations include whether the project has demonstrated: a) verifiable improvements in ecological status, b) verifiable reductions in stress on ecological systems, and/or c) demonstrated progress towards these impact achievements.⁹

I- CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS & LESSONS

The evaluation report must include a chapter providing a set of **conclusions, recommendations** and **lessons**.

J- IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

The principal responsibility for managing this evaluation resides with the UNDP CO in Syria. The UNDP CO will contract the evaluators and ensure the timely provision of per diems , if applicable, within the country for the national evaluator. The Project Team will be responsible for liaising with the Evaluators team to set up stakeholder interviews (face to face or via internet and or telephone when possible), coordinate with the Government etc.

K- EVALUATION TIMEFRAME

The total duration of the evaluation will be 18 days according to the following plan:

Activity	Timing	Completion Date
Preparation	2 days	<i>10-12 November 2013</i>
Evaluation process (desk review and Telephone/internet-communication, face to face meetings in Damascus)	7 days	<i>22 November 2013</i>
Draft Evaluation Report	7 days	<i>5 December 2013</i>
Final Report	2 days	<i>22 December 2013</i>

L- EVALUATION DELIVERABLES

The evaluation team is expected to deliver the following:

Deliverable	Content	Timing	Responsibilities
Inception Report	Evaluator provides clarifications on timing and method	No later than 1 week before the evaluation process start up.	Evaluator submits to UNDP CO
Presentation	Initial Findings	End of evaluation process	To project management, UNDP CO
Draft Final Report	Full report, (per annexed template) with annexes	Within 3 weeks of the evaluation process	Sent to CO, reviewed by RTA, PCU, GEF OFPs
Final Report*	Revised report	Within 1 week of receiving UNDP comments on draft	Sent to CO for uploading to UNDP ERC.

⁹ A useful tool for gauging progress to impact is the Review of Outcomes to Impacts (ROtI) method developed by the GEF Evaluation Office: [ROtI Handbook 2009](#)

*When submitting the final evaluation report, the evaluator is required also to provide an 'audit trail', detailing how all received comments have (and have not) been addressed in the final evaluation report.

M- TEAM COMPOSITION

The evaluation team will be composed of *(1 international and 1 national evaluators)*. The consultants shall have prior experience in evaluating similar projects. Experience with GEF financed projects is an advantage. The international evaluator will be designated as the team leader and will be responsible for finalizing the report. The evaluators selected should not have participated in the project preparation and/or implementation and should not have conflict of interest with project related activities.

The Team members must present the following qualifications:

International evaluator (team leader):

- Minimum 12 years of relevant professional experience
- Knowledge of UNDP and GEF
- Previous experience with results based monitoring and evaluation methodologies
- Academic and/or professional background in institutional/governance aspects of natural resource management and nature conservation
- Experience in the review of technical assistance projects, preferably with UNDP or GEF or other United Nations development agencies and major donors. If possible, experience in the review of multilateral funded biodiversity conservation projects
- Experience in project design, project cycle management, and project monitoring and evaluation
- Have a broad based knowledge and experience related to capacity building, community development and natural resource management
- Excellent English writing and communication skills. Demonstrated ability to assess complex situations in order to succinctly and clearly distil critical issues and draw practical conclusions
- An ability to assess institutional capacity and incentives
- Understanding of political, economic, institutional issues associated with protected areas management and good environmental governance within the Syrian context
- Excellent interpersonal, coordination and planning skills and ability to work in a team
- Experience leading multi-disciplinary, multi-national teams to deliver quality products in high stress, short deadline situations

National evaluator:

- A minimum of 8 years relevant working experience is required
- Academic and professional background in community based natural resource and/or protected area management. With extensive experience in biodiversity conservation
- Knowledge of UNDP and GEF
- Previous experience with results-based monitoring and evaluation methodologies
- Technical knowledge in the targeted focal area
- Academic and/or professional background in institutional/governance aspects of natural resource management and nature conservation

N- EVALUATOR ETHICS

Evaluation consultants will be held to the highest ethical standards and are required to sign a Code of Conduct (Annex 1E) upon acceptance of the assignment. UNDP evaluations are conducted in accordance with the principles outlined in the UNEG 'Ethical Guidelines for Evaluations'

O- PAYMENT MODALITIES AND SPECIFICATIONS

%	Milestone
10%	At contract signing
40%	Following submission and approval of the 1 ST draft terminal evaluation report
50%	Following submission and approval (UNDP-CO and UNDP RTA) of the final terminal evaluation report

P- APPLICATION PROCESS

Applicants are requested to apply online by **30 June**. Individual consultants are invited to submit applications together with their CV for these positions. The application should contain a current and complete C.V. in English with indication of the e-mail and phone contact. Shortlisted candidates will be requested to submit a price offer indicating the total cost of the assignment (including daily fee, per diem).

UNDP applies a fair and transparent selection process that will take into account the competencies/skills of the applicants as well as their financial proposals. Qualified women and members of social minorities are encouraged to apply.

Q-MODIFIED ITEMS OF THE TERMINAL EVALUATION TERMS OF REFERENCE

Modification to the ToRs after the recent agreed changes made and agreed upon on 6th November 2014..

The evaluation will be carried out by the national evaluator based on the interviews carried out according to the initial ToR and after completing shotages of the initial evaluation that was ought to be done by the international evaluator. The schedule was re-arranged after a new discussion to complete the work to be as in the following table.

Activity	Timing	Completion Date
Preparation	2 days	6-7 November 2014
Evaluation process (desk review and Telephone/internet-communication, face to face meetings in Damascus)	7 days	22 November 2014
Draft Evaluation Report	7 days	30 November 2014
Final Report	2 days	3 December 2014

The evaluator is expected to deliver the following:

Deliverable	Content	Timing	Responsibilities
Inception Report	Evaluator provides clarifications on timing and method	No later than 1 week before the evaluation process start up.	Evaluator submits to UNDP CO
Draft Final Report	Full report, (per annexed template) with annexes	Within 1 week of the evaluation process	Sent to CO, reviewed by RTA, PCU, GEF OFPs
Final Report	Revised report	Within 1 week of receiving UNDP comments on draft	Sent to CO for uploading to UNDP ERC.

Payment was agreed to be as in accordance with the following table:

%	Milestone
50%	Following submission and approval of the 1 st draft terminal evaluation report
50%	Following submission and approval (UNDP-CO and UNDP RTA) of the final terminal evaluation report

R: EVALUATION CONSULTANT CODE OF CONDUCT AND AGREEMENT FORM**Evaluator:**

1. Must present information that is complete and fair in its assessment of strengths and weaknesses so that decisions or actions taken are well founded.
2. Must disclose the full set of evaluation findings along with information on their limitations and have this accessible to all affected by the evaluation with expressed legal rights to receive results.
3. Should protect the anonymity and confidentiality of individual informants. They should provide maximum notice, minimize demands on time, and respect people's right not to engage. Evaluators must respect people's right to provide information in confidence, and must ensure that sensitive information cannot be traced to its source. Evaluators are not expected to evaluate individuals, and must balance an evaluation of management functions with this general principle.
4. Sometimes uncover evidence of wrong doing while conducting evaluations. Such cases must be reported discreetly to the appropriate investigative body. Evaluators should consult with other relevant oversight entities when there is any doubt about if and how issues should be reported.
5. Should be sensitive to beliefs, manners and customs and act with integrity and honesty in their relations with all stakeholders. In line with the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, evaluators must be sensitive to and address issues of discrimination and gender equality. They should avoid offending the dignity and self-respect of those persons with whom they come in contact in the course of the evaluation. Knowing that evaluation might negatively affect the interests of some stake holders, evaluators should conduct the evaluation and communicate its purpose and results in a way that clearly respects the stakeholders' dignity and self-worth.
6. Are responsible for their performance and their product(s). They are responsible for the clear, accurate and fair written and/or oral presentation of study imitations, findings and recommendations.
7. Should reflect sound accounting procedure sand be prudent in using the resources of the evaluation.

Evaluation Consultant Agreement Form¹**Agreement to abide by the Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN System****Name of Consultant:** NABEGH GHAZAL ASSWAD _____**Name of Consultancy Organization** (where relevant): _____**I confirm that I have received and understood and will abide by the United Nations Code of Conduct for Evaluation.**Signed at *Damascus* on *07th/November/2014*Signature:  _____¹www.unevaluation.org/unegcodeofconduct

ANNEX G: EVALUATION REPORT CLEARANCE FORM

(to be completed by CO and UNDP GEF Technical Adviser based in the region and included in the final document)

Evaluation Report Reviewed and Cleared by

UNDP Country Office

Name: Abir Zeno

Signature:

Date: 4 December 2014

UNDP GEF RTA

Name: Daley T Shering

Signature:

Date: 4 December 2014

ANNEX 2: A list of the most important documents reviewed for the evaluation

1-Project Inception Phase (PIP) report: Prepared by PMU staff

2-Report on updating project consultancies ToRs for first two years. Prepared by Dr. Nedal Al-Ouran

3-Report on demarcation of Abu-Qubeis PA site.

4-Report on demarcation of Al Fronloq PA site

5-Report on demarcation of Jebel Abdul Aziz PA site

These 3 reports were prepared by experts MAAR, MSEA, and National Remote Sensing Commission.

6-Report on traditional community knowledge gathering: Prepared by Mrs. Abeer Munlla Hassan

7-Report on socio-economic – Baseline indicators at all three sites. Prepared by Dr. Iskander Ismail

8-Report on Forest ecological–Baseline indicators (Fauna) at 3 sites. Prepared by Dr. Wajeeh Kassiss

9-Report on Forest ecological– Baseline indicators (Flora)at all 3 sites. Prepared by Dr. Ghalia Martini

10-Report includes Interim PA management plan for Abu-Qubeis PA site:

11-Rport includes Interim PA management plan for Al Fronloq PA site:

12-Report includes Interim PA management plan for Jebel Abdul Aziz PA site:

These three reports were prepared by PIMA and project work team.

13-Report includes critical knowledge areas: regarding the ToR 17 on institutional and human capacities assessment. Prepared by "ELARD firm".

14-PA Data base on-line report. Prepared by Mr. Camille Gaspard.

15-Report on assessment of institutional and legislative structure relating to biodiversity conservation and PA management. Prepared by "ELARD firm".

16-Financial sustainable plan, marketing strategy & business plan. Prepared by Mr. Eyad Abdul Khaleq.

17-Developing eco-tourism at the three project sites. Prepared by Mr. Ammar Al Azzeh.

18-Micro-credit and Micro-enterprise Scheme (MMS) Specialist Prepared by Dr. Samer Kantakji.

19-Socio-economic study report for the three project PA sites. Prepared by Mr. Geraldine Chatelard.

20-PA Administrative and organizational structures for the 3 sites. Prepared by Mr. Sami Tarabieh.

21-Training manual for the integrated PA management (Vocational training). Prepared by Mr. Sami Tarabieh.

22-Miscellaneous reports prepared by NPD (PMU): as required to various concerned parties about project activities and accomplishments.

23- PA investment planning capabilities and revenue generation options through PAs Report.

24- MTR: Mid Term Evaluation Report for the BCPAM-Syria. Prepared by Philip Tortell & Mohammad M Ajlouni.

25- UNDP Project Document for the BCPAM-Syria. (PIMS No. 227).

26- Project Quarterly Reports from 2009 onwards.

27- Annual Progress Reports (APR) from 2009 onwards

28- Project Implementation Reports (PIR) from 2009 onwards

ANNEX 3: A full list of organizations and persons met and consulted for the evaluation

1. Ministry of State for Environment Affairs (MSEA)
 - Mr. Emad Hassoun: Deputy Minister: 2005-2013.
 - Dr. Akram Eissa Darwich: Former National Project Coordinator; Ex-Counsellor of Minister of State of Environment Affairs: 2012-2013
 - Mr. Bilal Al-Hayek: National Project Coordinator; Director of Biodiversity, Protected Areas and Lands Department;
2. Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform (MAAR)
 - Mr. Ahmed Kadiesh: Deputy Minister.
 - Mr. Omar Zourek: Head of Biodiversity Department, Forestry Directorate.
3. Project Management Unit (PMU)
 - Mr. Adnan Saad: National Project Director (NPD),
 - Mr. Firas Al-Helou: Project Financial Officer
 - Mr. Firas Shoeman: ex Deputy of National Project Director
4. Protected Areas Staff
 - Mr. Somar Maryam: Al Fronloq Site manager
 - Mr. Fadi Al-Mahmoud: Abu Qubeis Site manager
 - Mr. George Daoud: Fauna Officer at Abu Qubeis Site staff
 - Mr. Yaser Nassour: Flora and GIS Officer at Abu Qubeis Site staff
 - Mr. Maher Dayyoub: Fauna Officer at Al Fronloq Site
5. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
 - Ms. Abir Zeno: Energy & Environment Team Leader
6. Mr. Sami Tarabieh: Project Technical Adviser in Amman
7. Mr. Ammar Al-Azzeh: Via Nova Company Manager in Amman
8. Dr. Mwaffak Cheikh Ali: El-Ard Company Regional Manager in Damascus

ANNEX 4: MoU: of agreement between the two national partners (MLAE "MSEA" & MAAR)

محضر إتفاق بين

وزارة الإدارة المحلية والبيئة — وزارة الزراعة والإصلاح الزراعي

إشارة إلى المشاورات الجارية بين المسؤولين في وزارة الإدارة المحلية والبيئة والمسؤولين في وزارة الزراعة والإصلاح الزراعي في الجمهورية العربية السورية بشأن تنفيذ النشاطات التي تضمنها مشروع المحافظة على التنوع الحيوي وإدارة المحميات من قبل وزارة الزراعة والإصلاح الزراعي ، كما هو مفصل في وثيقة المشروع التي تم فيها اختيار وزارة الإدارة المحلية والبيئة كهيئة منفذة.

فقد تم الإتفاق على ما يلي:

- 1 - تنفيذ نشاطات المشروع بالتعاون والاتفاق التام بين الوزارتين وذلك وفقاً لخطة العمل الواردة في وثيقة المشروع كل حسب النشاطات المتعلقة به (الملحق رقم 2).
- 2 - اختيار مدير المشروع (الذي سيكون مقره في وزارة الإدارة المحلية والبيئة) بطريقة الإعلان المباشر والاختيار وفقاً للمعايير الدولية ، من قبل لجنة مؤلفة من ممثلين من الوزارتين ومن برنامج الأمم المتحدة الإنمائي.
- 3 - تشارك وزارة الزراعة والإصلاح الزراعي باختيار الخبراء الوطنيين والدوليين التي سيتم بطريقة الإعلان المباشر وذلك في النشاطات الخاصة بها حسب ورودها في وثيقة المشروع.
- 4 - تشارك وزارة الزراعة والإصلاح الزراعي باختيار الجهات والشركات الوطنية والدولية التي سيتم التعاقد معها عند الضرورة لتنفيذ بعض النشاطات ، والتقيد عند التعاقد بمبادئ المناقصة التنافسية.
- 5 - تضمن وزارة الزراعة والإصلاح الزراعي تقديم كل التسهيلات اللازمة لتنفيذ نشاطات المشروع الخاصة بها وذلك وفقاً للقوانين والأنظمة السورية ذات الصلة.
- 6- تلتزم وزارة الإدارة المحلية والبيئة بتحويل ميزانية النشاطات المتعلقة بوزارة الزراعة والإصلاح الزراعي إما عن طريق الدفعات المسبقة أو عن طريق الدفعات المباشرة المعتمدة على طبيعة النشاطات وذلك وفقاً للمرفق رقم 3 (إجمالي الميزانية وخطة العمل).
- 7- تلتزم وزارة الزراعة والإصلاح الزراعي بعدم تجاوز الميزانية المحددة في وثيقة المشروع كما تحتفظ بالسجلات والحسابات المنفصلة ووثائق الدعم المتعلقة بالمشروع ، وفي حال الحاجة إلى تعديل في بنود الميزانية يكون ذلك بالتشاور بين الوزارتين والجهة المانحة.

- 8- يعمل أي مقاول فرعي بما فيها المنظمات غير الحكومية المعينة من قبل وزارة الزراعة والإصلاح الزراعي في المشروع بموجب عقد مع وزارة الزراعة والإصلاح الزراعي تحت إشراف المسؤول المعين من قبل وزارة الزراعة والإصلاح الزراعي.
- 9- تقوم وزارة الزراعة والإصلاح الزراعي بتسليم تقرير النفقات التراكمية في كل ربع (31 آذار - حزيران - 30 أيلول - 31 كانون الأول) عن النشاطات المتعلقة بها وتسلم التقارير إلى وزارة الإدارة المحلية والبيئة والتي ستقوم بدورها بإدراج هذه المصروفات ضمن التقارير المالية الربعية التي تقدمها لبرنامج الأمم المتحدة الإنمائي (UNDP) عن مصروفات المشروع الكلية وفقا ل نموذج تقارير النفقات (المرفق رقم 4).
- 10- تسلم وزارة الزراعة والإصلاح الزراعي تقارير سير عمل المشروع المعدة من قبل مدير المشروع الوطني مرة كل ثلاثة أشهر (تقارير ربعية).
- 11- تسلم وزارة الزراعة والإصلاح الزراعي سنويا إلى وزارة الإدارة المحلية والبيئة وال UNDP بيانا مدققا ومصدقا عن الحسابات، يبين حالة المبالغ المالية المقدمة إليها من قبل وزارة الإدارة المحلية والبيئة.
- 12- تقدم وزارة الزراعة والإصلاح الزراعي تقريراً سنوياً لوزارة الإدارة المحلية والبيئة عن وضع المعدات غير المستهلكة المستخدمة من قبلها من أجل المشروع ويتم تسليم التقرير خلال 15 يوماً بعد 31 كانون الأول وتقوم وزارة الإدارة المحلية والبيئة بتضمينه في الجرد الأساسي للمشروع وتسليمه للـ UNDP بعد 31 كانون الثاني كموعد أقصى من كل سنة.
- 13- تقدم وزارة الزراعة والإصلاح الزراعي تقريراً نهائياً بعد شهرين من انتهاء المشروع متضمناً البيانات المالية كافة المدققة أو المصدقة والسجلات المتعلقة بالمشروع.
- 14- إن أي تغيير في وثيقة المشروع يمكن أن يؤثر على العمل المنفذ من قبل وزارة الزراعة والإصلاح الزراعي يجب أن يتم بعد التشاور بين الأطراف جميعها.
- 15- في كل ما لم يرد عليه نص في محضر الاتفاق تطبق بشأنه الشروط المناسبة الموجودة في وثيقة المشروع وأحكام الأنظمة المالية النافذة في الـ UNDP .
- 16- تبقى الإجراءات المحددة في هذا الاتفاق سارية المفعول حتى نهاية المشروع.
- 17- يجب أن توجه المراسلات جميعها المتعلقة بهذه الاتفاقية ماعدا رسائل الاتفاقية الموقعة أو التعديلات الجارية عليها إلى العنوان التالي : السيد وزير الإدارة المحلية والبيئة (دمشق - سوريا صندوق بريد 3773) و إلى السيد علي الزعترى الممثل المقيم لـ UNDP (دمشق سوريا صندوق بريد 2317) .
- 18- تلتزم وزارة الزراعة والإصلاح الزراعي بإعلام وزير الإدارة المحلية والبيئة بالأعمال المنفذة وفقاً لهذه الاتفاقية.

- 19 - تلتزم وزارة الزراعة والإصلاح الزراعي بتسمية ممثليها في وحدة إدارة المشروع واللجان الخاصة بإدارة المشروع والكوادر الوطنية المتدربة وفقاً لمعايير وكفاءات تساعد على تنفيذ المطلوب بأفضل النتائج.
- 20 - تحتفظ وزارة الإدارة المحلية والبيئة بالمسؤولية الكاملة عن مشروع المحافظة على التنوع الحيوي وإدارة المحميات أمام برنامج الأمم المتحدة الإنمائي ومرفق البيئة العالمي.
- 21 - تتشكل وحدة إدارة المشروع من مدير المشروع وممثل عن وزارة الزراعة والإصلاح الزراعي وممثل عن وزارة الإدارة المحلية والبيئة.
- 22 - تؤول ملكية التجهيزات والآليات والمعدات المشتراة من قبل المشروع إلى الجهة المستفيدة (وزارة الزراعة والإصلاح الزراعي) بعد انتهاء المشروع.
- 23 - تلتزم وزارة الزراعة والإصلاح الزراعي بإعادة المبالغ المتبقية من المنحة بعد انتهاء المشروع إلى وزارة الإدارة المحلية والبيئة ليتم تحويلها لاحقاً لبرنامج الأمم المتحدة الإنمائي.
- 24 - في حال عدم الوصول إلى اتفاق ضمن وحدة إدارة المشروع حول أي نقطة تتعلق بتنفيذ أي من نشاطات المشروع يتم رفع الموضوع إلى اللجنة التوجيهية ، وفي حال عدم التوصل إلى حل فيتم رفع الموضوع إلى السيدين وزير الزراعة والإصلاح الزراعي والإدارة المحلية والبيئة.
- 25 - باستثناء ما هو منصوص عليه في الفقرة 24 أعلاه فإن أي خلاف بين وزارة الإدارة المحلية والبيئة ووزارة الزراعة والإصلاح الزراعي ناجم عن هذا الاتفاق أو متعلق به ويتعذر تسويته بالتفاوض أو أي شكل آخر من أشكال التسوية يخضع للقوانين السورية السائدة والناظمة للعلاقات بين المؤسسات الحكومية من أجل تسويته.

وزير الزراعة والإصلاح الزراعي

الدكتور عادل سفر

وزير الإدارة المحلية والبيئة

السيد هلال الأطرش



**Tracking Tool for GEF Biodiversity Focal Area Strategic Priority One:
Catalysing Sustainability of Protected Areas**

ANNEX 5: *Tracking Tool for GEF Biodiversity Focal Area Strategic Priority One: “Catalysing Sustainability of Protected Areas”*

**Biodiversity Conservation and Protected Area Management
SYR/05/010**

- 1- Al Fronloq Protected Area**
- 2- Abu Qubeis Protected Area**
- 3- Jebel Abdul Aziz Protected Area**

12/2013

Tracking Tool for GEF Biodiversity Focal Area Strategic Priority One:
Catalysing Sustainability of Protected Area Systems

Reporting Progress in Protected Areas: Data Sheet

Name of protected area	AL FRONLOQ	
Location of protected area (country, eco-region, and if possible map reference)	Syria, governorate of Lattakia, eco-region: it falls within the Eu-Mediterranean - Upper Mediterranean vegetation zones; climatically, the area falls within the cool variant of the sub-humid to humid bio-climatic zone of the Mediterranean climate.	
Date of establishment (distinguish between agreed and gazetted*)	Agreed	Gazetted 29/May/1999
Ownership details (i.e. owner, tenure rights etc.)	State ownership with minor private ownership	
Management Authority	Forestry Department, Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform	
Size of protected area (ha)	1,500 ha (during <i>PDF-B</i> , additional 3,000 ha were recommended for gazetting by the project team during a site visit to sum to 4,500ha "proposal still under consideration by MAAR)	
Number of staff	Permanent (7) Temporary (6)	
Annual budget (US\$)	No budget specifically allocated for the protected area	
Designations (IUCN category, World Heritage, Ramsar etc.)	Not officially designated according to IUCN categories. Category IV: Habitat/Species Management Area can be proposed for this site. This needs a thorough revision.	
Reasons for designation	Conservation of the poly climax vegetation as it is the most developed/mature ecosystem in Syria. This ecosystem is considered very fragile and sensitive to pressures.	
Brief details of GEF funded project or projects in PA		
Brief details of other relevant projects in PA		
List the two primary protected area objectives		
Objective 1	The protection and the conservation of the existing fragile ecosystem.	
Objective 2		
List the top two most important threats to the PA (and indicate reasons why these were chosen)		
Threat 1	Unplanned tourism	
Threat 2	Fire	
List top two critical management activities		
Activity 1	Fire control and monitoring	
Activity 2	Patrolling Law enforcement (wood cutting)	

Date assessment carried out (Day/Month/Year): 31/12/2013

* Or formally established in the case of private protected areas

**Tracking Tool for GEF Biodiversity Focal Area Strategic Priority One:
Catalysing Sustainability of Protected Areas**

Issue	Criteria	Score	Comments	Next steps
1. Legal status	The protected area is not gazetted	0		
Does the protected area have legal status?	The government has agreed that the protected area should be gazetted but the process has not yet begun	1		
	The protected area is in the process of being gazetted but the process is still incomplete	2		
Context	The protected area has been legally gazette (or in the case of private reserves is owned by a trust or similar)	3		
2. Protected area regulations	There are no mechanisms for controlling inappropriate land use & activities in the PA.	0		
Are inappropriate land uses and activities (e.g. poaching) controlled?	Mechanisms for controlling inappropriate land use and activities in the PA exist but there are major problems in implementing them effectively	1		
	Mechanisms for controlling inappropriate land use and activities in the protected area exist but there are some problems in effectively implementing them	2		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More Staff; • Staff advanced training ; • Better Equipment (transportation)
Context	Mechanisms for controlling inappropriate land use and activities in the protected area exist and are being effectively implemented	3		
3. Law enforcement	The staff have no effective capacity/resources to enforce PA legislation and regulations	0		
Can staff enforce protected area rules well enough?	There are major deficiencies in staff capacity/ resources to enforce PA legislation and regulations (e.g. lack of skills, no patrol budget)	1		
	The staff have acceptable capacity/ resources to enforce PA legislation and regulations but some deficiencies remain	2		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff advanced training is required; • Budget allocation; • Equipment is needed
Context	The staff have excellent capacity/resources to enforce protected area Legislation and Regulations	3		

**Tracking Tool for GEF Biodiversity Focal Area Strategic Priority One:
Catalysing Sustainability of Protected Areas**

Issue	Criteria	Score	Comments	Next steps
4. Protected area objectives	No firm objectives have been agreed for the protected area	0		
Have objectives been agreed?	The protected area has agreed objectives, but is not managed according to these Objectives	1		
	The protected area has agreed objectives, but these are only partially implemented	2		Need more concentration on the implementation of the scientific and socio economic issues
<i>Planning</i>	The protected area has agreed objectives and is managed to meet these objectives	3		
5. Protected area design	Inadequacies in design mean achieving the protected areas major management objectives of the protected area is impossible	0		
Does the PA need enlarging, corridors etc. to meet its objectives?	Inadequacies in design mean that achievement of major objectives are constrained to some extent	1		
	Design is not significantly constraining achievement of major objectives, but could be improved	2		More clarification for the designation of areas and the PA zoning according to usage within
<i>Planning</i>	Reserve design features are particularly aiding achievement of major objectives of the protected area	3		
6. Protected area boundary demarcation	The boundary of the protected area is not known by the management authority or local residents/neighbouring land users	0		
Is the boundary known and demarcated?	The boundary of the protected area is known by the management authority but is not known by local residents/neighbouring land users	1		

**Tracking Tool for GEF Biodiversity Focal Area Strategic Priority One:
Catalysing Sustainability of Protected Areas**

<i>Context</i>	The boundary of the protected area is known by both the management authority and local residents but is not appropriately demarcated	2		Accurate demarcation is done through GIS, and local communities are more aware about the accurate boundaries of the protected area
	The boundary of the protected area is known by the management authority and local residents and is appropriately demarcated	3		
Issue	Criteria	Score	Comments	Next steps
7. Management plan	There is no management plan for the protected area	0		
Is there a management plan and is it being implemented?	A management plan is being prepared or has been prepared but is not being implemented	1		
	An approved management plan exists but it is only being partially implemented because of funding constraints or other problems	2		Comprehensive Management plan is set according to the PA objectives, Organize more funding and institutional arrangement for the complete implementation
<i>Planning</i>	An approved management plan exists and is being implemented	3		
Additional points	The planning process allows adequate opportunity for key stakeholders to influence the management plan	+1		
	There is an established schedule and process for periodic review and updating of the management plan	+1		
	The results of monitoring, research and evaluation are routinely incorporated into planning	+1		
<i>Planning</i>				

**Tracking Tool for GEF Biodiversity Focal Area Strategic Priority One:
Catalysing Sustainability of Protected Areas**

Issue	Criteria	Score	Comments	Next steps
8. Regular work plan	No regular work plan exists	0		
Is there an annual work plan?	A regular work plan exists but activities are not monitored against the plan's targets	1		
	A regular work plan exists and actions are monitored against the plan's targets, but many activities are not completed	2		monitoring plan based on the management plan is needed
<i>Planning/Outputs</i>	A regular work plan exists, actions are monitored against the plan's targets and most or all prescribed activities are completed	3		
9. Resource inventory	There is little or no information available on the critical habitats, species and cultural values of the protected area	0		
Do you have enough information to manage the area?	Information on the critical habitats, species and cultural values of the protected area is not sufficient to support planning & decision making	1		
	Information on the critical habitats, species and cultural values of the protected area is sufficient for key areas of planning/decision making but necessary survey work is not being maintained	2		
<i>Context</i>	Information concerning on the critical habitats, species and cultural values of the protected area is sufficient to support planning and decision making and is being maintained	3		Planned studies, researches and monitoring programs are conducted
10. Research	There is no survey or research work taking place in the protected area	0		
Is there a programme of management-orientated survey & research work?	There is some ad hoc survey & research work	1		
	There is considerable survey and research work but it is not directed towards the needs of protected area management	2	MSc studies, taxonomy and surveys were conducted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compile available & historic data • research & management needs; • Establish research programme

**Tracking Tool for GEF Biodiversity Focal Area Strategic Priority One:
Catalysing Sustainability of Protected Areas**

<i>Inputs</i>	There is a comprehensive, integrated programme of survey and research work, which is relevant to management needs	3		
Issue	Criteria	Score	Comments	Next steps
11. Resource management	Requirements for active management of critical ecosystems, species and cultural values have <u>not been assessed</u>	0		
Is the protected area adequately managed (e.g. for fire, invasive species, poaching)?	Requirements for active management of critical ecosystems, species and cultural values are <u>known but are not being addressed</u>	1		
	Requirements for active management of critical ecosystems, species and cultural values are only being partially addressed	2		Enhancement of active management component to monitor ecosystem integrity
<i>Process</i>	Requirements for active management of critical ecosystems, species and cultural values are being substantially or fully addressed	3		
12. Staff numbers	There are no staff	0		
Are there enough people employed to manage the protected area?	Staff numbers are inadequate for critical management activities	1		
	Staff numbers are below optimum level for critical management activities	2	Shortage in supportive cadre wardens and rangers for protection	need for more Human resources for enforcement and supporting purposes and for building their Capacity.
<i>Inputs</i>	Staff numbers are adequate for the management needs of the site	3		
13. Personnel management	Problems with personnel management constrain the achievement of major management objectives	0		
Are the staff managed well enough?	Problems with personnel management partially constrain the achievement of major management objectives	1		

**Tracking Tool for GEF Biodiversity Focal Area Strategic Priority One:
Catalysing Sustainability of Protected Areas**

<i>Process</i>	Personnel management is adequate to the achievement of major management objectives but could be improved	2		Establishment of committees for follow up management and institutional issues with other institutions such MAAR, MSEA.
	Personnel management is excellent and aids the achievement major management objectives	3		
Issue	Criteria	Score	Comments	Next steps
14. Staff training	Staff are untrained	0		
Is there enough training for staff?	Staff training and skills are low relative to the needs of the protected area	1		
	Staff training and skills are adequate, but could be further improved to fully achieve the objectives of management	2		
	Staff training and skills are in tune with the management needs of the protected area, and with anticipated future needs	3		
15. Current budget	There is no budget for the protected area	0		
Is the current budget sufficient?	The available budget is inadequate for basic management needs and presents a serious constraint to the capacity to manage	1		
	The available budget is acceptable, but could be further improved to fully achieve effective management	2	Budget allocated for the protected area is part of the general budget allocated through the forestry department	Proper management of budget allocation and the establishment of special budget for PA within Forestry Dept.
<i>Inputs</i>	The available budget is sufficient and meets the full management needs of the protected area	3		

**Tracking Tool for GEF Biodiversity Focal Area Strategic Priority One:
Catalysing Sustainability of Protected Areas**

Issue	Criteria	Score	Comments	Next steps
16. Security of budget	There is no secure budget for the protected area and management is wholly reliant on outside or year by year funding	0		
Is the budget secure?	There is very little secure budget and the protected area could not function adequately without outside funding	1		
	There is a reasonably secure core budget for the protected area but many innovations and initiatives are reliant on outside funding	2		
<i>Inputs</i>	There is a secure budget for the PA and its management needs on a multi- year cycle	3		Institutional arrangement within the financial department for the allocation of a secure budget independent from those funds allocated to local communities
17. Management of budget	Budget management is poor and significantly undermines effectiveness	0		
Is the budget managed to meet critical management needs?	Budget management is poor and constrains effectiveness	1		
	Budget management is adequate but could be improved	2		
<i>Process</i>	Budget management is excellent and aids effectiveness	3		
18. Equipment	There are little or no equipment and facilities	0		
Are there adequate equipment and facilities?	There are some equipment and facilities but these are wholly inadequate	1		
	There are equipment and facilities, but still some major gaps that constrain management	2		
<i>Process</i>	There are adequate equipment and facilities	3	Equipment for patrolling and research	Keep the working equipment within the PA for future work, support and enforcement.

**Tracking Tool for GEF Biodiversity Focal Area Strategic Priority One:
Catalysing Sustainability of Protected Areas**

Issue	Criteria	Score	Comments	Next steps
19. Maintenance of equipment	There is little or no maintenance of equipment and facilities	0		
Is equipment adequately maintained?	There is some ad hoc maintenance of equipment and facilities	1		
	There is maintenance of equipment and facilities, but there are some important gaps in maintenance	2		
Process	Equipment and facilities are well maintained	3		Keep the logistic and institutional support
20. Education and awareness programme	There is no education & awareness programme	0		
	There is a limited & ad hoc education & awareness program, but without overall planning	1		
Is there a planned education programme?	There is a planned education and awareness programme but there are still serious gaps	2		
Process	There is a planned and effective education and awareness programme fully linked to the objectives and needs of the protected area	3		Enforcement of education and awareness programme for Schools, Tour agents, Agricultural Units, Agricultural extension:
21. State and commercial neighbours	There is no contact between managers and neighbouring official or corporate land users	0		
Is there co-operation with adjacent land users?	There is limited contact between managers and neighbouring official or corporate land users	1		
	There is regular contact between managers & neighbouring official or corporate land users, but only limited co-operation	2		
Process	There is regular contact between managers & neighbouring official or corporate land users, and substantial co-operation on management	3		Strengthen the cooperation for Biodiversity conservation within their activities

**Tracking Tool for GEF Biodiversity Focal Area Strategic Priority One:
Catalysing Sustainability of Protected Areas**

Issue	Criteria	Score	Comments	Next steps
22. Indigenous people	Indigenous and traditional peoples have no input into decisions relating to the management of the protected area	0	Not applicable: no indigenous people living in or around the protected area	
Do indigenous and traditional peoples resident or regularly using the PA have input to management decisions? <i>Process</i>	Indigenous and traditional peoples have some input into discussions relating to management but no direct involvement in the resulting decisions	1		
	Indigenous and traditional peoples directly contribute to some decisions relating to management	2		
	Indigenous and traditional peoples directly participate in making decisions relating to management	3		
23. Local communities	Local communities have no input into decisions relating to the management of the PA	0		
Do local communities resident or near the PA have input to management decisions? <i>Process</i>	Local communities have some input into discussions relating to management but no direct involvement in the resulting decisions	1		
	Local communities directly contribute to some decisions relating to management	2		
	Local communities directly participate in making decisions relating to management	3		Strengthen the participatory approaches with the local communities
Additional points	There is open communication and trust between local stakeholders and protected area managers	+1		
<i>Outputs</i>	Programmes to enhance local community welfare, while conserving protected area resources, are being implemented	+1		

**Tracking Tool for GEF Biodiversity Focal Area Strategic Priority One:
Catalysing Sustainability of Protected Areas**

Issue	Criteria	Score	Comments	Next steps
24. Visitor facilities Are visitor facilities for (tourists, pilgrims etc.) good enough? <i>Outputs</i>	There are no visitor facilities and services	0		
	Visitor facilities and services are inappropriate for current levels of visitation or are under construction	1		
	Visitor facilities and services are adequate for current levels of visitation but could be improved	2		
	Visitor facilities and services are excellent for current levels of visitation	3		
25. Commercial tourism Do commercial tour operators contribute to PA management? <i>Process</i>	There is little or no contact between managers and tourism operators using the PA	0		
	There is contact between managers and tourism operators but this is largely confined to administrative or regulatory matters	1		
	There is limited co-operation between managers and tourism operators to enhance visitor experiences and maintain PA values	2		
	There is excellent co-operation between managers and tourism operators to enhance visitor experiences, protect values and resolve conflicts	3		
26. Fees If fees (tourism, fines) are applied, do they help protected area management? <i>Outputs</i>	Although fees are theoretically applied, they are not collected	0	No fees	
	The fee is collected, but it goes straight to central government and is not returned to the protected area or its environs	1		
	The fee is collected, but is disbursed to the local authority rather than the protected area	2		
	There is a fee for visiting the protected area that helps to support this and/or other PA	3		

**Tracking Tool for GEF Biodiversity Focal Area Strategic Priority One:
Catalysing Sustainability of Protected Areas**

Issue	Criteria	Score	Comments	Next steps
27. Condition	Important biodiversity, ecological and cultural values are being severely degraded	0		
Is the protected area being managed consistent to its objectives?	Some biodiversity, ecological and cultural values are being severely degraded	1	The effects of the current situation on the habitats	More Ecological surveys
	Some biodiversity, ecological and cultural values are being partially degraded but the most important values have not been significantly impacted	2		
<i>Outcomes</i>	Biodiversity, ecological and cultural values are predominantly intact	3		
Additional points <i>Outputs</i>	There are active programmes for restoration of degraded areas within the protected area and/or the protected area buffer zone	+1		
28. Access assessment	Protection systems (patrols, permits etc.) are ineffective in controlling access or use of the reserve in accordance with designated objectives	0		
Is access/resource use sufficiently controlled?	Protection systems are only partially effective in controlling access or use of the reserve in accordance with designated objectives	1		Implement an effective protection system within protected area management.
	Protection systems are moderately effective in controlling access or use of the reserve in accordance with designated objectives	2		
<i>Outcomes</i>	Protection systems are largely or wholly effective in controlling access or use of the reserve in accordance with designated objectives	3		

**Tracking Tool for GEF Biodiversity Focal Area Strategic Priority One:
Catalysing Sustainability of Protected Areas**

Issue	Criteria	Score	Comments	Next steps
29. Economic benefit assessment Is the protected area providing economic benefits to local communities? <i>Outcomes</i>	The existence of the protected area has reduced the options for economic development of the local communities	0	<i>Possible issue for comment:</i> how does national or regional development impact on the protected area?	
	The existence of the protected area has neither damaged nor benefited the local economy	1		
	There is some flow of economic benefits to local communities from the existence of the protected area but this is of minor significance to the regional economy	2		
	There is a significant or major flow of economic benefits to local communities from activities in and around the protected area (e.g. employment of locals, locally operated commercial tours etc.)	3		
30. Monitoring and evaluation Are management activities monitored against performance? <i>Planning/Process</i>	There is no monitoring & evaluation in the PA	0		
	There is some ad hoc monitoring and evaluation, but no overall strategy and/or no regular collection of results	1		
	There is an agreed and implemented monitoring and evaluation system but results are not systematically used for management	2		
	A good monitoring and evaluation system exists, is well implemented and used in adaptive management	3	However, the current situation has an uncontrolled effect on performing the M&E	
TOTAL SCORE		67	69.79%	

Tracking Tool for GEF Biodiversity Focal Area Strategic Priority One:
Catalysing Sustainability of Protected Area Systems

Reporting Progress in Protected Areas: Data Sheet

Name of protected area	ABU QUBEIS		
Location of protected area (country, Ecoregion, and if possible map reference)	Syria, governorate of Hama, eco-region: it falls within the sub-humid to humid Mediterranean climate with cool to cold variant.		
Date of establishment (distinguish between agreed and gazetted*)	Agreed	Date of establishment (distinguish between	
Ownership details (i.e. owner, tenure rights etc)	State ownership with minor private ownerships (<i>including villages and private land ownerships</i>)		
Management Authority	Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform through its newly established body: the General Commission for Management and Development of Al-Ghab (<i>established in 2005 effective 2006</i>).		
Size of protected area (ha)	<i>(in PDF-B the national team survey concluded that the correct area actually selected is only 5000 ha)</i>		
Number of staff	Permanent (6) Temporary (8)		
Annual budget (US\$)	No budget specifically allocated for the protected area		
Designations (IUCN category, World Heritage, Ramsar etc)	Not officially designated according to IUCN categories. Category VI: Protected area with sustainable use of natural resources can be proposed for this site. This needs revision.		
Reasons for designation	<i>The decree did not specify the reasons for the establishment of the protected area; however, it clearly banned all activities within its boundaries.</i>		
Brief details of GEF funded project or projects in PA			
Brief details of other relevant projects in PA			
List the two primary protected area objectives			
Objective 1	The protection of existing and threaten plant species		
Objective 2	The protection of existing ecosystems		
List the top two most important threats to the PA (and indicate reasons why these were chosen)			
Threat 1	Woodcutting and charcoal production		
Threat 2	Overgrazing " <i>mainly goat herding</i> "		
List top two critical management activities			
Activity 1	Enforcement of Forestry of Law # 7 including patrolling for compliance and monitoring.		
Activity 2	Forestry activities including: afforestation, fire combating and forest development as part of the general plan of the General Commission for Management and Development of Al-Ghab.		

Date assessment carried out (Day/Month/Year): 31/12/2013

* Or formally established in the case of private protected areas

**Tracking Tool for GEF Biodiversity Focal Area Strategic Priority One:
Catalysing Sustainability of Protected Areas**

Issue	Criteria	Score	Comments	Next steps
1. Legal status	The protected area is not gazetted	0		
Does the protected area have legal status?	The government has agreed that the protected area should be gazetted but the process has not yet begun	1		
	The protected area is in the process of being gazetted but the process is still incomplete	2		
Context	The protected area has been legally gazette (or in the case of private reserves is owned by a trust or similar)	3		
2. Protected area regulations	There are no mechanisms for controlling inappropriate land use and activities in the protected area	0		
Are inappropriate land uses and activities (e.g. poaching) controlled?	Mechanisms for controlling inappropriate land use and activities in the protected area exist but there are major problems in implementing them	1		
	Mechanisms for controlling inappropriate land use and activities in the protected area exist but there are some problems in effectively implementing them	2		More Staff; Staff advanced training ; Better Equipment (transportation)
Context	Mechanisms for controlling inappropriate land use and activities in the protected area exist and are being effectively implemented	3		
3. Law enforcement	The staff have no effective capacity/resources to enforce PA legislation and regulations	0		
Can staff enforce protected area rules well enough?	There are major deficiencies in staff capacity/resources to enforce protected area legislation and regulations (e.g. lack of skills, no patrol budget)	1		

**Tracking Tool for GEF Biodiversity Focal Area Strategic Priority One:
Catalysing Sustainability of Protected Areas**

<i>Context</i>	The staff have acceptable capacity/ resources to enforce PA legislation and regulations but some deficiencies remain	2		More Staff with proper Staff Training ; Better Equipment (transportation) Linking PA guards and rangers with forestry guards More watching & guarding stations
	The staff have excellent capacity/resources to enforce protected area Legislation and Regulations	3		
Issue	Criteria	Score	Comments	Next steps
4. Protected area objectives	No firm objectives have been agreed for the protected area	0		
Have objectives been agreed?	The protected area has agreed objectives, but is not managed according to these Objectives	1		
<i>Planning</i>	The protected area has agreed objectives, but these are only partially implemented	2		Need more concentration on the implementation of the scientific and socio economic issues
	The protected area has agreed objectives and is managed to meet these objectives	3		
5. Protected area design	Inadequacies in design mean achieving the protected areas major management objectives of the protected area is impossible	0		
Does the PA need enlarging, corridors etc. to meet its objectives?	Inadequacies in design mean that achievement of major objectives are constrained to some extent	1		
<i>Planning</i>	Design is not significantly constraining achievement of major objectives, but could be improved	2		More clarification for the designation of areas and the PA zoning according to usage within
	Reserve design features are particularly aiding achievement of major objectives of the protected area	3		

**Tracking Tool for GEF Biodiversity Focal Area Strategic Priority One:
Catalysing Sustainability of Protected Areas**

Issue	Criteria	Score	Comments	Next steps
6. Protected area boundary demarcation	The boundary of the protected area is not known by the management authority or local residents/neighbouring land users	0		
Is the boundary known and demarcated?	The boundary of the protected area is known by the management authority but is not known by local residents/neighbouring land users	1		
	The boundary of the protected area is known by both the management authority and local residents but is not appropriately demarcated	2		Accurate demarcation is done through GIS, and most of the local communities are more aware about the accurate boundaries of the protected area
Context	The boundary of the protected area is known by the management authority and local residents and is appropriately demarcated	3		
7. Management plan	There is no management plan for the protected area	0		
Is there a management plan and is it being implemented?	A management plan is being prepared or has been prepared but is not being implemented	1		
	An approved management plan exists but it is only being partially implemented because of funding constraints or other problems	2		Comprehensive Management plan is set according to the PA objectives, Advance planning and organize more funding and institutional arrangement for complete implementation
Planning	An approved management plan exists and is being implemented	3		
Additional points	The planning process allows adequate opportunity for key stakeholders to influence the management plan	+1	Stakeholders have their say in the PA management issues	

**Tracking Tool for GEF Biodiversity Focal Area Strategic Priority One:
Catalysing Sustainability of Protected Areas**

Issue	Criteria	Score	Comments	Next steps
<i>Planning</i>	There is an established schedule and process for periodic review and updating of the management plan	+1		
	The results of monitoring, research and evaluation are routinely incorporated into planning	+1		
8. Regular work plan	No regular work plan exists	0		
Is there an annual work plan?	A regular work plan exists but activities are not monitored against the plan's targets	1		
<i>Planning/Outputs</i>	A regular work plan exists and actions are monitored against the plan's targets, but many activities are not completed	2		monitoring scheme for various activities based on the management plan is needed
	A regular work plan exists, actions are monitored against the plan's targets and most or all prescribed activities are completed	3		
9. Resource inventory	There is little or no information available on the critical habitats, species and cultural values of the protected area	0		
Do you have enough information to manage the area?	Information on the critical habitats, species and cultural values of the protected area is not sufficient to support planning & decision	1		
<i>Context</i>	Information on the critical habitats, species and cultural values of the protected area is sufficient for key areas of planning/decision making but necessary survey work is not being maintained	2		Planned studies, researches and monitoring programs are conducted, but further work on planning more work is also needed
	Information concerning on the critical habitats, species and cultural values of the protected area is sufficient to support planning and decision making and is being maintained	3		

**Tracking Tool for GEF Biodiversity Focal Area Strategic Priority One:
Catalysing Sustainability of Protected Areas**

Issue	Criteria	Score	Comments	Next steps
10. Research	There is no survey or research work taking place in the protected area	0		
Is there a programme of management-orientated survey & research work?	There is some ad hoc survey & research work	1		
	There is considerable survey and research work but it is not directed towards the needs of protected area management	2	several studies, taxonomy and surveys were conducted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compile available & historic data • Research & management needs • Establish research programme
	There is a comprehensive, integrated programme of survey and research work, which is relevant to management needs	3		
<i>Inputs</i>				
11. Resource management	Requirements for active management of critical ecosystems, species and cultural values have not been assessed	0		
Is the protected area adequately managed (e.g. for fire, invasive species, poaching)?	Requirements for active management of critical ecosystems, species and cultural values are known but are not being addressed	1		
	Requirements for active management of critical ecosystems, species and cultural values are only being partially addressed	2		Enhancement of management issues to monitor ecosystem integrity
	Requirements for active management of critical ecosystems, species and cultural values are being substantially or fully addressed	3		
<i>Process</i>				
12. Staff numbers	There are no staff	0		
Are there enough people employed to manage the protected area?	Staff numbers are inadequate for critical management activities	1		
	Staff numbers are below optimum level for critical management activities	2		
	Staff numbers are adequate for the management needs of the site	3	More specialized Human Resources for enforcement, monitoring and supporting purposes and for building their capacity.	
<i>Inputs</i>				

**Tracking Tool for GEF Biodiversity Focal Area Strategic Priority One:
Catalysing Sustainability of Protected Areas**

Issue	Criteria	Score	Comments	Next steps
13. Personnel management	Problems with personnel management constrain the achievement of major management objectives	0		
Are the staff managed well enough?	Problems with personnel management partially constrain the achievement of major management objectives	1		
	Personnel management is adequate to the achievement of major management objectives but could be improved	2		
<i>Process</i>	Personnel management is excellent and aids the achievement major management objectives	3	Follow up institutional issues with other institutions such as MSEA.	
14. Staff training	Staff are untrained	0		
Is there enough training for staff?	Staff training and skills are low relative to the needs of the protected area	1		
	Staff training and skills are adequate, but could be further improved to fully achieve the objectives of management	2		
<i>Inputs/Process</i>	Staff training and skills are in tune with the management needs of the protected area, and with anticipated future needs	3	Keep the good level of staff capacity	
15. Current budget	There is no budget for the protected area	0		
Is the current budget sufficient?	The available budget is inadequate for basic management needs and presents a serious constraint to the capacity to manage	1		
	The available budget is acceptable, but could be further improved to fully achieve effective management	2	Budget allocated for the PA is part of the general budget allocated through Provincial level: Forestry Department/ General Commission for Management & Development of Al-Ghab	Proper management and assessment of budget allocation and the establishment of special budget for PA
<i>Inputs</i>	The available budget is sufficient and meets the full management needs of the protected	3		

**Tracking Tool for GEF Biodiversity Focal Area Strategic Priority One:
Catalysing Sustainability of Protected Areas**

Issue	Criteria	Score	Comments	Next steps
16. Security of budget	There is no secure budget for the protected area and management is wholly reliant on outside or year by year funding	0		
Is the budget secure?	There is very little secure budget and the protected area could not function adequately without outside funding	1		
	There is a reasonably secure core budget for the protected area but many innovations and initiatives are reliant on outside funding	2		Institutional arrangement within the financial department for the allocation of a secure budget independent from those funds allocated to local communities
<i>Inputs</i>	There is a secure budget for the PA and its management needs on a multi- year cycle	3		
17. Management of budget	Budget management is poor and significantly undermines effectiveness	0		
Is the budget managed to meet critical management needs?	Budget management is poor and constrains effectiveness	1		
	Budget management is adequate but could be improved	2		Institutional arrangement for better and more efficient management of budget
<i>Process</i>	Budget management is excellent and aids effectiveness	3		
18. Equipment	There are little or no equipment and facilities	0		
Are there adequate equipment and facilities?	There are some equipment and facilities but these are wholly inadequate	1		
	There are equipment and facilities, but still some major gaps that constrain management	2		
<i>Process</i>	There are adequate equipment and facilities	3	Equipment needed for patrolling and research	Keep the working equipment within the PA for future work, support and enforcement.

**Tracking Tool for GEF Biodiversity Focal Area Strategic Priority One:
Catalysing Sustainability of Protected Areas**

Issue	Criteria	Score	Comments	Next steps
19. Maintenance of equipment	There is little or no maintenance of equipment and facilities	0		
Is equipment adequately maintained?	There is some ad hoc maintenance of equipment and facilities	1		
	There is maintenance of equipment and facilities, but there are some important gaps in maintenance	2		
Process	Equipment and facilities are well maintained	3		Keep the logistic and institutional support
20. Education and awareness programme	There is no education & awareness programme	0		
Is there a planned education programme?	There is a limited & ad hoc education & awareness program, but without overall planning	1		
	There is a planned education and awareness programme but there are still serious gaps	2		
Process	There is a planned and effective education & awareness programme fully linked to the objectives & needs of the protected area	3		Strengthening education and awareness programmes for Schools, Tour Agents, Agricultural Units and Extension:
21. State and commercial neighbours	There is no contact between managers and neighbouring official or corporate land users	0		
Is there co-operation with adjacent land users?	There is limited contact between managers and neighbouring official or corporate land users	1		
	There is regular contact between managers & neighbouring official or corporate land users, but only limited co-operation	2		Strengthen the cooperation for Biodiversity conservation within their activities with other stakeholders
Process	There is regular contact between managers & neighbouring official or corporate land users, and substantial co-operation on management	3		

**Tracking Tool for GEF Biodiversity Focal Area Strategic Priority One:
Catalysing Sustainability of Protected Areas**

Issue	Criteria	Score	Comments	Next steps
22. Indigenous people	Indigenous and traditional peoples have no input into decisions relating to the management of the protected area	0	Not applicable: no indigenous people living in or around the protected area	
Do indigenous and traditional peoples resident or regularly using the PA have input to management decisions? <i>Process</i>	Indigenous and traditional peoples have some input into discussions relating to management but no direct involvement in the resulting decisions	1		
	Indigenous and traditional peoples directly contribute to some decisions relating to management	2		
	Indigenous and traditional peoples directly participate in making decisions relating to management	3		
23. Local communities	Local communities have no input into decisions relating to the management of the PA	0		
Do local communities resident or near the PA have input to management decisions? <i>Process</i>	Local communities have some input into discussions relating to management but no direct involvement in the resulting decisions	1		
	Local communities directly contribute to some decisions relating to management	2	The current unrest has negatively affected the willing of locals to have their input.	Strengthen participatory approaches with the local communities to participate effectively in shaping decisions
	Local communities directly participate in making decisions relating to management	3		
Additional points	There is open communication and trust between local stakeholders and protected area managers	+1		
<i>Outputs</i>	Programmes to enhance local community welfare, while conserving protected area resources, are being implemented	+1		

**Tracking Tool for GEF Biodiversity Focal Area Strategic Priority One:
Catalysing Sustainability of Protected Areas**

Issue	Criteria	Score	Comments	Next steps
24. Visitor facilities	There are no visitor facilities and services	0		
Are visitor facilities (for tourists, pilgrims etc.) good enough?	Visitor facilities and services are Inappropriate for current levels of visitation or are under construction	1		
	Visitor facilities and services are adequate for current levels of visitation but could be improved	2		
	Visitor facilities and services are excellent for current levels of visitation	3		
25. Commercial tourism	There is little or no contact between managers <u>and tourism operators using the PA</u>	0		
Do commercial tour operators contribute to PA management?	There is contact between managers and tourism operators but this is largely confined to administrative or regulatory matters	1		
	There is limited co-operation between managers and tourism operators to enhance visitor experiences and maintain PA values	2		There are some positive cooperation between the parties from earlier experiences, but more close cooperation need to be planned for future work
	There is excellent co-operation between managers and tourism operators to enhance visitor experiences, protect values and resolve conflicts	3		
26. Fees	Although fees are theoretically applied, they are not collected	0	No fees	
If fees (tourism, fines) are applied, do they help protected area management?	The fee is collected, but it goes straight to central government and is not returned to the protected area or its environs	1		
	The fee is collected, but is disbursed to the local authority rather than the protected area	2		
	There is a fee for visiting the protected area that helps to support this and/or other PA	3		

**Tracking Tool for GEF Biodiversity Focal Area Strategic Priority One:
Catalysing Sustainability of Protected Areas**

Issue	Criteria	Score	Comments	Next steps
27. Condition	Important biodiversity, ecological and cultural values are being severely degraded	0		
Is the protected area being managed consistent to its objectives?	Some biodiversity, ecological and cultural values are being severely degraded	1	The effects of the current situation on the habitats (WOOD-CUTTING, FIRE, HUNTING, ...etc.)	More ecological surveys to be carried out to match the management objectives.
	Some biodiversity, ecological and cultural values are being partially degraded but the most important values have not been significantly impacted	2		
<i>Outcomes</i>	Biodiversity, ecological and cultural values are predominantly intact	3		
Additional points <i>Outputs</i>	There are active programmes for restoration of degraded areas within the protected area and/or the protected area buffer zone	+1		
28. Access assessment	Protection systems (patrols, permits etc.) are ineffective in controlling access or use of the reserve in accordance with designated objectives	0		
Is access/resource use sufficiently controlled?	Protection systems are only partially effective in controlling access or use of the reserve in accordance with designated objectives	1		
	Protection systems are moderately effective in controlling access or use of the reserve in accordance with designated objectives	2	There are limited cases of illegal usage and over-exploitation of natural resources	Implement an effective protection system within protected area management.
<i>Outcomes</i>	Protection systems are largely or wholly effective in controlling access or use of the reserve in accordance with designated objectives	3		

**Tracking Tool for GEF Biodiversity Focal Area Strategic Priority One:
Catalysing Sustainability of Protected Areas**

Issue	Criteria	Score	Comments	Next steps
29. Economic benefit assessment	The existence of the protected area has reduced the options for economic development of the local communities	0	<i>Possible issue for comment:</i> how does national or regional development impact on the protected area?	
Is the protected area providing economic benefits to local communities?	The existence of the protected area has neither damaged nor benefited the local economy	1		
	There is some flow of economic benefits to local communities from the existence of the protected area but this is of minor significance to the regional economy	2		More alternative income generation programmes are crucially needed such as Micro credit scheme, SGP...
<i>Outcomes</i>	There is a significant or major flow of economic benefits to local communities from activities in and around the protected area (e.g. employment of locals, locally operated commercial tours etc.)	3		
30. Monitoring and evaluation	There is no monitoring & evaluation in the PA	0		
	There is some ad hoc monitoring and evaluation, but no overall strategy and/or no regular collection of results	1		
Are management activities monitored against performance?	There is an agreed and implemented monitoring and evaluation system, but results are not systematically used for management	2	The current situation has an uncontrolled effect on performing the M&E	Translate the results of Monitoring programmes into the management plans
<i>Planning/Process</i>	A good monitoring and evaluation system exists, is well implemented and used in adaptive management	3		
TOTAL SCORE		65	67.71%	

Tracking Tool for GEF Biodiversity Focal Area Strategic Priority One:
Catalysing Sustainability of Protected Area Systems

Reporting Progress in Protected Areas: Data Sheet

Name of protected area	JEBEL ABDUL AZIZ	
Location of protected area (country, eco-region, and if possible map reference)	Abdul Aziz mountain, located at the north-eastern region of Syria, with arid Mediterranean of cool variant with a continental dominance. Extreme cold and frost are quite common. Great daily and seasonal differences in temperature exist in the site. The ecosystem of the site is composed of steppe vegetation with dominance of scattered woody elements.	
Date of establishment (distinguish between agreed and gazetted*)	Agreed	Gazetted 11/May/2002
Ownership details (i.e. owner, tenure rights etc.)	State ownership	
Management Authority	Forestry Department, Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform	
Size of protected area (ha)	(4,220 ha decision No 20 of 1993, then increased to 18,900 ha then finally to 49.000 in 2002)	
Number of staff	Permanent: (6) Temporary: (13)	
Annual budget (US\$)	No budget specifically allocated for the protected area	
Designations (IUCN category, World Heritage, Ramsar etc.)	It is included within the national Important Bird Area (IBA) list. However, it is not officially designated according to IUCN categories. Category V Protected Landscape can be proposed for this site. This needs a thorough revision.	
Reasons for designation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> According to Initial area of 4,220 ha had more than 10% vegetation density. Protect and restore <i>Pistacia atlantica</i> woodland 	
Brief details of GEF funded project or projects in PA		
Brief details of other relevant projects in PA		
List the two primary protected area objectives		
Objective 1	Restore fauna and flora population	
Objective 2	Improve tourism and the environmental situation of the area	
List the top two most important threats to the PA (and indicate reasons why these were chosen)		
Threat 1	Overgrazing & Illegal hunting	
Threat 2	Wood cutting	
List top two critical management activities		
Activity 1	Protection through patrolling	
Activity 2	Afforestation currently on the periphery (<i>Pistacia</i> spp)	

Date assessment carried out (Day/Month/Year): 31/12/2013

* Or formally established in the case of private protected areas

**Tracking Tool for GEF Biodiversity Focal Area Strategic Priority One:
Catalysing Sustainability of Protected Area Systems**

Issue	Criteria	Score	Comments	Next steps
1. Legal status	The protected area is not gazetted	0		
Does the protected area have legal status?	The government has agreed that the protected area should be gazetted but the process has not yet begun	1		
	The protected area is in the process of being gazetted but the process is still incomplete	2		
Context	The protected area has been legally gazette (or in the case of private reserves is owned by a trust or similar)	3	The protected area was gazetted by formal governmental act 27T/11-May-2002.	
2. Protected area regulations	There are no mechanisms for controlling inappropriate land use and activities in the PA	0		
Are inappropriate land uses and activities (e.g. poaching) controlled?	Mechanisms for controlling inappropriate land use and activities in the protected area exist but there are major problems in implementing them effectively	1		
	Mechanisms for controlling inappropriate land use and activities in the protected area exist but there are some problems in effectively implementing them	2	The only mechanisms in place is Forestry Law No 7.that regulates the protection & exploitations of forests. (Limited staff capacities and equipment)	Staff advanced training is required; Equipment is needed (transportation); Budget allocation;
Context	Mechanisms for controlling inappropriate land use and activities in the protected area exist and are being effectively implemented	3		
3. Law enforcement	The staff have no effective capacity/resources to enforce PA legislation and regulations	0		
Can staff enforce protected area rules well enough?	There are major deficiencies in staff capacity/ resources to enforce PA legislation and regulations (e.g. lack of skills, no patrol budget)	1		

**Tracking Tool for GEF Biodiversity Focal Area Strategic Priority One:
Catalysing Sustainability of Protected Area Systems**

<i>Context</i>	The staff have acceptable capacity/resources to enforce protected area legislation and regulations but some deficiencies remain	2	The current staff consists of rangers and forestry guards that need capacity and resources to effectively enforce existing legislations within the area designated.	Staff Training is required; Budget allocation; Equipment is needed.
	The staff have excellent capacity/resources to enforce protected area legislation and Regulations	3		
Issue	Criteria	Score	Comments	Next steps
4. Protected area objectives	No firm objectives have been agreed for the protected area	0		
Have objectives been agreed?	The protected area has agreed objectives, but is not managed according to these Objectives	1		
<i>Planning</i>	The protected area has agreed objectives, but these are only partially implemented	2	The objectives are stated by the authorities;	More concentration on implementing the Management plan & PA objectives
	The protected area has agreed objectives and is managed to meet these objectives	3		
5. Protected area design	Inadequacies in design mean achieving the protected areas major management objectives of the protected area is impossible	0		
Does the PA need enlarging, corridors etc. to meet its objectives?	Inadequacies in design mean that achievement of major objectives are constrained to some extent	1		
<i>Planning</i>	Design is not significantly constraining achievement of major objectives, but could be improved	2	The size is good	More clarification for the designation of areas and the PA zoning
	Reserve design features are particularly aiding achievement of major objectives of the protected area	3		

**Tracking Tool for GEF Biodiversity Focal Area Strategic Priority One:
Catalysing Sustainability of Protected Area Systems**

Issue	Criteria	Score	Comments	Next steps
6. Protected area boundary demarcation	The boundary of the protected area is not known by the management authority or local residents/neighbouring land users	0		
Is the boundary known and demarcated?	The boundary of the protected area is known by the management authority but is not known by local residents/neighbouring land users	1		
Context	The boundary of the protected area is known by both the management authority and local residents but is not appropriately demarcated	2		Accurate demarcation is done through GIS, local communities are more aware about the accurate boundaries of the PA
	The boundary of the protected area is known by the management authority and local residents and is appropriately demarcated	3		
7. Management plan	There is no management plan for the protected area	0		
Is there a management plan and is it being implemented?	A management plan is being prepared or has been prepared but is not being implemented	1		
Planning	An approved management plan exists but it is only being partially implemented because of funding constraints or other problems	2		Comprehensive Management plan is set according to the PA objectives,
	An approved management plan exists and is being implemented	3		
Additional points	The planning process allows adequate opportunity for key stakeholders to influence the management plan	+1		
Planning	There is an established schedule and process for periodic review and updating of the management plan	+1		
	The results of monitoring, research and evaluation are routinely incorporated into Planning	+1		

Tracking Tool for GEF Biodiversity Focal Area Strategic Priority One:
Catalysing Sustainability of Protected Area Systems

Issue	Criteria	Score	Comments	Next steps
8. Regular work plan	No regular work plan exists	0		
Is there an annual work plan?	A regular work plan exists but activities are not monitored against the plan's targets	1		
Planning/Outputs	A regular work plan exists and actions are monitored against the plan's targets, but many activities are not completed	2	work plan is linked to the forestry work plan	performance monitoring plan is needed based on the management plan
	A regular work plan exists, actions are monitored against the plan's targets and most or all prescribed activities are completed	3		
9. Resource inventory	There is little or no information available on the critical habitats, species and cultural values of the protected area	0		
Do you have enough information to manage the area?	Information on the critical habitats, species and cultural values of the protected area is not sufficient to support planning and decision making	1		
Context	Information on the critical habitats, species and cultural values of the PA is sufficient for key areas of planning/decision making but the necessary survey work is not being maintained	2		Planned studies and monitoring programs should continue to be conducted
	Information concerning on the critical habitats, species and cultural values of the protected area is sufficient to support planning and decision making and is being maintained	3		

Tracking Tool for GEF Biodiversity Focal Area Strategic Priority One:
Catalysing Sustainability of Protected Area Systems

Issue	Criteria	Score	Comments	Next steps
10. Research	There is no survey or research work taking place in the protected area	0		
Is there a programme of management-orientated survey & research work? <i>Inputs</i>	There is some ad hoc survey and research Work	1		
	There is considerable survey and research work but it is not directed towards the needs of protected area management	2		Compile available and historic data Identify research & management needs; Establish research programme
	There is a comprehensive, integrated programme of survey and research work, which is relevant to management needs	3		
11. Resource management	Requirements for active management of critical ecosystems, species and cultural values have not been assessed	0		
Is the protected area adequately managed (e.g. for fire, invasive species, poaching)?	Requirements for active management of critical ecosystems, species and cultural values are known but are not being Addressed	1		
	Requirements for active management of critical ecosystems, species and cultural values are only being partially addressed	2		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extensive assessment of present ecosystems, species and cultural values • Active management component to monitor ecosystem integrity
<i>Process</i>	Requirements for active management of critical ecosystems, species and cultural values are being substantially or fully Addressed	3		
12. Staff numbers	There are no staff	0		
Are there enough people employed to manage the protected area?	Staff numbers are inadequate for critical management activities	1		
	Staff numbers are below optimum level for critical management activities	2		
<i>Inputs</i>	Staff numbers are adequate for the management needs of the site	3		

**Tracking Tool for GEF Biodiversity Focal Area Strategic Priority One:
Catalysing Sustainability of Protected Area Systems**

Issue	Criteria	Score	Comments	Next steps
13. Personnel management	Problems with personnel management constrain the achievement of major management objectives	0		
Are the staff managed well enough?	Problems with personnel management partially constrain the achievement of major management objectives	1		
<i>Process</i>	Personnel management is adequate to the achievement of major management objectives but could be improved	2		Personnel for follow up management can be improved
	Personnel management is excellent and aids the achievement major management objectives	3		
14. Staff training	Staff are untrained	0		
Is there enough training for staff?	Staff training and skills are low relative to the needs of the protected area	1		
<i>Inputs/Process</i>	Staff training and skills are adequate, but	2		
	Staff training and skills are in tune with the management needs of the protected area, and with anticipated future needs	3		
15. Current budget	There is no budget for the protected area	0		
Is the current budget sufficient?	The available budget is inadequate for basic management needs and presents a serious constraint to the capacity to manage	1		
<i>Inputs</i>	The available budget is acceptable, but could be further improved to fully achieve effective management	2	Budget allocated for the protected area is part of the general budget allocated through the forestry department	Proper management of budget allocation and the establishment of special budget for PA within Forestry Dept.
	The available budget is sufficient and meets the full management needs of the protected area	3		

**Tracking Tool for GEF Biodiversity Focal Area Strategic Priority One:
Catalysing Sustainability of Protected Area Systems**

Issue	Criteria	Score	Comments	Next steps
16. Security of budget	There is no secure budget for the protected area and management is wholly reliant on outside or year by year funding	0		
Is the budget secure?	There is very little secure budget and the protected area could not function adequately without outside funding	1	Secured budget allocated for the protected area is part of the general annual budget allocated at provincial level	Propose the allocation of secured budget
Inputs	There is a reasonably secure core budget for the protected area but many innovations and initiatives are reliant on outside funding	2		
	There is a secure budget for the PA and its management needs on a multi-year cycle	3		
17. Management of budget	Budget management is poor and significantly undermines effectiveness	0		
Is the budget managed to meet critical management needs?	Budget management is poor and constrains effectiveness	1		
Process	Budget management is adequate but could be improved	2		
	Budget management is excellent and aids effectiveness	3		
18. Equipment	There are little or no equipment and facilities	0		
Are there adequate equipment and facilities?	There are some equipment and facilities but these are wholly inadequate	1		
Process	There are equipment and facilities, but still some major gaps that constrain management	2	Equipment for patrolling are inadequate to cover the total PA effectively	facilities to support responsible staff
	There are adequate equipment and facilities	3		

Tracking Tool for GEF Biodiversity Focal Area Strategic Priority One:
Catalysing Sustainability of Protected Area Systems

Issue	Criteria	Score	Comments	Next steps
19. Maintenance of equipment	There is little or no maintenance of equipment and facilities	0		
Is equipment adequately maintained?	There is some ad hoc maintenance of equipment and facilities	1		
	There is maintenance of equipment and facilities, but there are some important gaps in maintenance	2		Improve the logistic and institutional support
Process	Equipment and facilities are well maintained	3		
20. Education and awareness programme	There is no education and awareness programme	0		
Is there a planned education programme?	There is a limited and ad hoc education and awareness programme, but no overall planning	1		
	There is a planned education and awareness programme but there are still serious gaps	2		
Process	There is a planned and effective education and awareness programme fully linked to the objectives and needs of the PA	3		
21. State and commercial neighbours	There is no contact between managers and neighbouring official or corporate land users	0		
Is there co-operation with adjacent land users?	There is limited contact between managers and neighbouring official or corporate land users	1		
	There is regular contact between managers and neighbouring official or corporate land users, but only limited co-operation	2	contact between managers and Local communities is insignificant	Enhance and create the trust between managers and local communities through participatory approach.
Process	There is regular contact between managers & neighbouring official or corporate land users, and substantial co-operation on management	3		

**Tracking Tool for GEF Biodiversity Focal Area Strategic Priority One:
Catalysing Sustainability of Protected Area Systems**

Issue	Criteria	Score	Comments	Next steps
22. Indigenous people	Indigenous and traditional peoples have no input into decisions relating to the management of the protected area	0	Not applicable: no indigenous people living in or around the protected area	
Do indigenous and traditional peoples resident or regularly using the PA have input to management decisions? <i>Process</i>	Indigenous and traditional peoples have some input into discussions relating to management but no direct involvement in the resulting decisions	1		
	Indigenous and traditional peoples directly contribute to some decisions relating to management	2		
	Indigenous and traditional peoples directly participate in making decisions relating to management	3		
23. Local communities	Local communities have no input into decisions relating to the management of the PA	0		
Do local communities resident or near the PA have input to management decisions?	Local communities have some input into discussions relating to management but no direct involvement in the resulting decisions	1		
<i>Process</i>	Local communities directly contribute to some decisions relating to management	2	Continue on the trust built	Strengthen the participatory approaches with the local communities
	Local communities directly participate in making decisions relating to management	3		
Additional points	There is open communication and trust between local stakeholders and PA managers	+1		
<i>Outputs</i>	Programmes to enhance local community welfare, while conserving protected area resources, are being implemented	+1		

Tracking Tool for GEF Biodiversity Focal Area Strategic Priority One:
Catalysing Sustainability of Protected Area Systems

Issue	Criteria	Score	Comments	Next steps
24. Visitor facilities	There are no visitor facilities and services	0		
Are visitor facilities (for tourists, pilgrims etc.) good enough? <i>Outputs</i>	Visitor facilities and services are inappropriate for current levels of visitation or are under construction	1		
	Visitor facilities & services are adequate for current levels of visitation. It could be improved	2		
	Visitor facilities and services are excellent for current levels of visitation	3		
25. Commercial tourism	There is little or no contact between managers and tourism operators using the protected area	0		
Do commercial tour operators contribute to protected area management?	There is contact between managers and tourism operators. this is largely confined to administrative or regulatory matters	1		
	There is limited co-operation between managers and tourism operators to enhance visitor experiences and maintain protected area values	2		
<i>Process</i>	There is excellent co-operation between managers and tourism operators to enhance visitor experiences, protect values and resolve conflicts	3		
26. Fees	Although fees are theoretically applied, they are not collected	0	No fees originally imposed	
If fees (tourism, fines) are applied, do they help protected area management?	The fee is collected, but it goes straight to central government and is not returned to the protected area or its environs	1		
	The fee is collected, but is disbursed to the local authority rather than the protected area	2		
<i>Outputs</i>	There is a fee for visiting the protected area that helps to support this and/or other protected areas	3		

**Tracking Tool for GEF Biodiversity Focal Area Strategic Priority One:
Catalysing Sustainability of Protected Area Systems**

Issue	Criteria	Score	Comments	Next steps
27. Condition assessment	Important biodiversity, ecological and cultural values are being severely degraded	0		
Is the protected area being managed consistent to its objectives?	Some biodiversity, ecological and cultural values are being severely degraded	1	No sufficient information is available	Ecological and social surveys to verify
	Some biodiversity, ecological and cultural values are being partially degraded but the most important values have not been significantly impacted	2		
	<i>Outcomes</i> Biodiversity, ecological and cultural values are predominantly intact	3		
Additional points <i>Outputs</i>	There are active programmes for restoration of degraded areas within the protected area and/or the protected area buffer zone	+1		
28. Access assessment	Protection systems (patrols, permits etc.) are ineffective in controlling access or use of the reserve in accordance with designated objectives	0		
Is access/resource use sufficiently controlled?	Protection systems are only partially effective in controlling access or use of the reserve in accordance with designated objectives	1	limited permanent trained staff	Implement more effective protection system within protected area management
	Protection systems are moderately effective in controlling access or use of the reserve in accordance with designated objectives	2		
	<i>Outcomes</i> Protection systems are largely or wholly effective in controlling access or use of the reserve in accordance with designated objectives	3		

**Tracking Tool for GEF Biodiversity Focal Area Strategic Priority One:
Catalysing Sustainability of Protected Area Systems**

Issue	Criteria	Score	Comments	Next steps
29. Economic benefit assessment	The existence of the protected area has reduced the options for economic development of the local communities	0		
Is the protected area providing economic benefits to local communities?	The existence of the protected area has neither damaged nor benefited the local economy	1		
	There is some flow of economic benefits to local communities from the existence of the protected area but this is of minor significance to the regional economy	2		
Outcomes	There is a significant or major flow of economic benefits to local communities from activities in and around the protected area (e.g. employment of locals, locally operated commercial tours etc.)	3		
30. Monitoring and evaluation	There is no monitoring and evaluation in the protected area	0		
Are management activities monitored against performance?	There is some ad hoc monitoring and evaluation, but no overall strategy and/or no regular collection of results	1		
	There is an agreed and implemented monitoring and evaluation system but results are not systematically used for management	2		
Planning/Process	A good monitoring and evaluation system exists, is well implemented and used in adaptive management	3	Monitoring and evaluation system in place for a better adaptive management plan. However, the current situation has an uncontrolled effect on performing the M&E	
TOTAL SCORE		57	59.37%	