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Desert Margins Programme
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Evaluation of Phase I

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Contents

Annexes

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Executive summary

1. The Global Environment Facility (GEF) has committed $16,335,000 million to the Desert Margins Programme. Of that amount $4,987,134 is for the implementation of Phase I and $5,617,044 and $5,365,822 have been allocated for the implementation of Phases II and III of the programme.

2. The evaluation took place in five of the nine countries involved in the programme. The lead consultant visited Niger, Burkina Faso, South Africa and Botswana twice in June 2004 and late July–early August 2004. The other consultant visited sites in Kenya. The terms of reference are attached to the present report as annex I. Each part of the consultancy began with highly professional presentations given by combined teams comprising the Global Coordinator, the two subregional coordinators, some of the country coordinators and other persons carrying out research connected to the activities of the programme.

3. The evaluation was limited in terms of time and the number of sites visited. The evaluators did not visit Mali, Namibia, Senegal or Zimbabwe and the field visits in the other countries were brief owing to the large distances involved. The evaluation therefore refers largely to what was observed in the field and may not always reflect the situation on the ground in the sites and countries not visited. Moreover, the evaluation essentially revolved around the installation and start-up procedures of the Desert Margins Programme rather than around its results. In Kenya, for example, the project has just begun because the disbursement of the GEF funds received by the national coordinating unit in January 2003 to partner institutions was delayed until July 2003 as a result of logistical limitations, including the operationalization of the national coordinating unit and the signing of memorandums of understanding. The timing of the evaluation of the programme in Kenya therefore does not correspond to the two-year period of Phase I as stipulated in the project document. In addition, it was found that in several countries the reporting covered work done prior to the GEF co-funding.

4. In the Marsabit sites, for example, previous initiatives by the Integrated Project on Arid Lands (IPAL) and the national research institutes — the University of Nairobi, the Kenya Forestry Research Institute (KEFRI) and the Kenya Agricultural Research Institute (KARI) — make it difficult to identify the impact of the programme on the ground. Thus, although the same partners and organizations are being enabled by the GEF incremental funding to address best practices and capacity in degraded drylands, the point of departure is only vaguely captured by the benchmark characterization and diagnostic report. Similar findings were made in West Africa where, for example, it was at times difficult to distinguish the work of the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) from work done within the framework of the programme.

5. The evaluators were impressed by the enthusiasm, commitment and professionalism of the members of the programme team, both full- and part-time. The efforts of the team to reach milestones in time and to achieve a worthwhile impact are commendable. The programme, however, is still at an early stage and it is too early to expect it to have an extensive impact. While promising technologies exist and have been implemented in some areas, for example, the African Market Garden, the Sahelian Ecofarm, the conservation and promotion of wild varieties of existing crops, the introduction of improved cultivars of fruit and trees, most of the work in Phase I has concentrated on developing a sound biophysical baseline. While this is critical, the socio-economic baseline should be established concomitantly with or indeed should even take precedence over the biophysical data. Furthermore, it was observed that some of the baseline indicators were too qualitative; for example, lists of endemic species (comments on this are made further on). Good quantitative data are also required, especially for woody biomass, grass cover, the age structure of trees and the distribution of species.

6. The consultants considered that the programme could be perceived as excessively research-driven. This perception derived from the fact that the consultants mostly met researchers. Most of the interventions of the programme should be demonstrative and the consultants were informed that that the aim of the programme was to demonstrate practical technologies deriving from the long-term research programmes, for example, the work on the date palm in West Africa. In Phase II, the research should be demand-driven

and focused on field-oriented action of direct relevance to small farmers and land users. In many of the participating countries, the number of research organizations involved (national agricultural research systems, international research centres, agricultural research institutes, universities, etc.) is considerable and at times the research also appears to be the end rather than the means to the end; also, some of the research is of questionable relevance to the problems in hand. The linkage between some current research activities and the goals of the programme is not always clear. The purpose of the research centres should be to provide backstopping services to the country coordinators.

7. The involvement of the ultimate beneficiaries (target communities, peasant farmers, etc.) is hardly obvious at this stage. There is a need for country and subregional coordinators to be more selective in the research carried out to ensure that the research is of direct relevance to the goal of the programme, which is to arrest land degradation through demonstration, training and capacity-building activities. This should improve livelihoods in the desert margins by reversing land degradation and conserving biodiversity.

8. The livestock sector is the mainstay of the agricultural production system, particularly in southern Africa and in areas with very low rainfall. Any attempt to improve this sector must be preceded by a comprehensive study of the existing or traditional livestock system, for example, breeding, disease control, herding, dry season nutrition and watering strategies. This has certainly been done in parts of the subregions, but it should be noted that the seasonal rainfall and the nutritional stresses of the dry season limit the potential of dryland livestock farming. One way of overcoming this is the cultivation of dryland fodder trees of nutritional value which are principally high in digestible crude protein, such as *Pterocarpus sp*., *Acacia tortilis*, *Balanites aegyptiaca* and *Ziziphus mauritiana*. Seemingly minor interventions such as providing poultry with unrestricted access to drinking water may result in major positive increases in productivity and should therefore be promoted.

9. Each country has a consortium of between 10 and 15 partners with a lead institution responsible for collating in-country reports. In some cases, that arrangement appears to be causing delays in financial and technical reporting. Each national coordinator submits the reports to the subregional coordinators, who in turn submit them to the Global Coordinator (based at the ICRISAT Regional Headquarters in Niger). As soon as a certain proportion (currently 75 per cent of the outstanding imprest) of funds has been spent, the national programme can then request that the imprests be topped up after approval by the Global Coordinator. As the Global Coordinator is frequently away, top-ups are delayed and this has caused some financial embarrassment at the country level. Ways of overcoming those bottlenecks are suggested in the main recommendations.

10. With regard to audits, the financial arrangements appear rather cumbersome. Most of the countries have differing accounting and auditing systems, some clearly better than others. In some countries and institutions, it seems that it is difficult to extract the right information on what has been funded by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)/GEF and what has been funded by the institutions and other co-funding agencies. It was also mentioned that co-funding was not always transparent.

I. Background

A. Project objectives and design

11. The Desert Margins Programme is a collaborative initiative of nine African countries — Burkina Faso, Botswana, Kenya, Mali, Namibia, Niger, Senegal, South Africa and Zimbabwe — assisted by five centres of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) — the International Centre for Research in Agroforestry (ICRAF), International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT), the International Centre for Soil Fertility and Agricultural Development (IFDC), the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) and the Tropical Soil Biology Fertility of the International Centre for Ecology for Tropical Agriculture (TSBF-CIAT) — and three advanced research institutes — the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology (CEH), the Centre for International Cooperation in Agricultural Research for Development (CIRAD) and the Institut de recherche pour le devéloppement (IRD). The project is being implemented over six years in three phases. Phase I was launched in November 2002.

12. The overall objective of the programme is to arrest land degradation in the desert margins of Africa through demonstration and capacity-building activities developed by unravelling the complex causative factors of desertification, both climatic (internal) and human-induced (external), and the formulation and piloting of appropriate holistic solutions. The following are the broader objectives of the overall programme:

(a) To develop a better understanding of the causes, extent and severity as well as the physical processes of land degradation in traditional crop, tree and livestock production systems in the desert margins, and the impact, relative importance, and relationship between natural and human factors;

(b) To document and evaluate, with the participation of farmers, non-governmental organizations and national agricultural research systems, current indigenous soil, water, nutrient, vegetation, and livestock management practices for arresting land degradation, and to identify socio-economic constraints on the adoption of improved management practices;

(c) To develop and foster improved and integrated soil, water, nutrient, vegetation, and livestock management technologies and policies to achieve greater productivity of crops, trees and animals to enhance food security, income generation, and ecosystem resilience in the desert margins;

(d) To evaluate the impact and assist in the design of policies, programmes, and institutional options that influence the incentives for farmers and communities to adopt improved resource management practices;

(e) To promote more efficient drought management policies and strategies;

(f) To enhance the institutional capacity of countries participating in the programme to undertake land degradation research and the extension of improved technologies, with particular emphasis on multidisciplinary and participatory socio-economic research;

(g) To facilitate the exchange of technologies and information among farmers, communities, scientists, development practitioners and policymakers;

(h) To use climate change scenarios to predict shifts in the resource base and incorporate them into land-use planning strategies.

13. Since the inception of the programme, a monitoring, evaluation and dissemination strategy has been put in place which has several key elements. The project outputs are monitored annually through individual reports presented by the collaborating institutions and partners at the national annual technical meetings and by the combined annual project reports. At each annual meeting, the participating institutions present their work plans and budgets for the following year. The steering committee of the programme evaluates the documents for consistency with the goals and objectives of the project and approves the annual work programme and budgets. It has been planned that the entire programme will be subjected to external reviews after each phase to obtain an independent assessment of progress and recommendations for the completion of the project. In addition, a final external review will be carried out at the end of the project to assess its achievements and impacts and make recommendations on how to ensure its long-term sustainability. The general and specific objectives of the programme and the list of its planned outputs have provided the basis for the monitoring and evaluation plan.

B. Evaluation procedures

14. The two evaluators met in Nairobi at the start of the consultancy where the Chief of the Evaluation and Oversight Unit, UNEP and UNEP/Division of GEF Coordination Task Manager for the project briefed them. The consultants then carried out the evaluation of the programme. In Kenya, the evaluation covered progress and activities during the period January 2003–June 2004. One consultant, assisted by the staff of the coordination units of the programme, carried out the evaluation between 10 June and 16 August 2004.

15. The lead consultant visited Niger and Burkina Faso from 13 to 22 June 2004. He also visited South Africa and Botswana from 21 to 27 July 2004. The evaluation was based on the following:

(a) A desk review of project documents and work plan outputs such as progress reports, workshop reports, minutes of meetings and other correspondence obtained from the Evaluation and Oversight Unit, the Desert Margins Programme, country coordinators and the national coordination units (see annex V for the list of documents consulted and reviewed);

(b) Discussions of the above documents with the Global Coordinator and the two subregional coordinators;

(c) Consultations and interviews with the programme secretariat, subregional coordinators and other institutes such as the International Institute for Food and Nutrition (INRAN), the Botswana College of Agriculture and KEFRI (see annex IV for the list of persons consulted);

(d) Field visits conducted in Niger, Burkina Faso, South Africa (North-West Province), Botswana, and the southern rangelands of Kenya to observe ongoing project activities such as trial farms and demonstration plots and discussions conducted with farmers participating in the on-farm trials (see annex III for the itinerary).

II. Implementation of project components and activities

16. Several activities and research themes are being undertaken currently that reflect both variations in the ecosystem and in traditional livelihoods. These are now itemized into seven categories as the consultants perceived them. The main activities undertaken by the programme are indicated below.

A. Understanding the ecosystem

17. The following activities were carried out under this theme:

(a) Thorough characterization of sites carried out in almost all countries. This, however, was not always relevant. The characterization of four out of 20 sites was not done. The characterization included data on crops, livestock, vegetation, fauna, soils, agroclimatic and socio-economic data. Biophysical data appeared more comprehensive than socio-economic data;

(b) Indicators of degradation and biodiversity status using birds or invertebrates;

(c) Soil fertility baseline studies;

(d) Linkages between land degradation, biodiversity loss and climate change;

(e) Using nature reserves, for example, Molopo in North-West Province in South Africa, as a control against which alternative land-use strategies can be measured (commercial or subsistence). Here, the assumption is that a nature reserve has maximum or optimum biodiversity;

(f) Site- and community-specific reactions to land degradation.

B. Understanding the socio-economic environment

18. The following activities were carried out under this theme:

(a) Monitoring and evaluation of existing practices with respect to the impact on land degradation and biodiversity loss;

(b) Ensuring that technologies that are promoted will lead to sustainable increases in income generation while at the same time increasing biodiversity.

C. Interventions for improving productivity or providing alternative livelihoods

19. The following activities were carried out under this theme:

(a) Soil fertility improvements (mulching, windbreaks);

(b) The Sahelian Ecofarm (combining soil conservation structures (zai systems and hills for crop planting), tree planting and cash crops, for example, Roselle, (but not always relevant), (*Ziziphus Mauritiana*), dates etc);

(c) Irrigated, small-scale horticulture, for example, the African Market Garden;

(d) Advising farmers on alternative crops and value-added strategies (organic produce, fair trade, sustainable wild harvest);

(e) New crops and trees for small-scale farming (fliers have been produced);

(f) Use of indigenous grasses, for example, hay from *Alysicarpus ovalifolius*, and many lost or endangered cultivars of common crops (groundnuts, sorghum, cucurbits, *Sesamum* etc.).

D. Ecological interventions for conserving biodiversity

20. The following activities were conducted under this theme:

(a) Biodiversity corridors;

(b) Woodlots for trees of commercial importance;

(c) Wetland monitoring and conservation.

E. Training and awareness creation

21. The following activities were carried out under this theme:

(a) Strengthening the extension service;

(b) Needs assessment;

(c) Technology transfer (scientist-farmer; farmer-farmer);

(d) Capacity-building;

(e) Community-based information and knowledge systems, for example, the Virtual University for the Semi-Arid Tropics in West and Central Africa (VASAT-WCA), currently funded by CGIAR and the World Bank. Rural radio stations have been constructed using CGIAR and World Bank funds but fewer than half were still operational in Niger;

(f) Conserving and recording indigenous knowledge, which includes an indigenous plant use forum in southern Africa, an idea that should be established in all the country programmes.

F. Technical advice to Governments

22. The following activities were conducted under this theme:

(a) Strengthening links with Government departments, in particular advising on national action plans in relation to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Countries Experiencing Severe Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa;

(b) Advising lawmakers on national legislation and policy within the framework of the programme.

G. Monitoring and evaluation

23. The following activities were conducted under this theme:

(a) Inventories of endemic species;

(b) Establishment of transects and exclosures;

(c) Use of indicator species (birds, plants, for example, *Rhus sp*. and arthropods);

(d) Use of fixed photo points.

24. In phase I, biological and physical parameters have been given more attention than socio-economic factors on the whole, partly because they are easier to measure. Understanding the physical causes of land degradation and biodiversity loss (loss of habitat and tree cover, overgrazing, soil erosion by wind and

water, declining soil fertility and loss of organic matter, etc.) may be of limited use when it comes to reversing these trends. Although it is well known that exclosures give rise to rapid recovery of vegetative biomass and biodiversity, community management of exclosures on a sustainable basis has been difficult to effect. In reality, it is largely the socio-economic constraints that hinder increased productivity in these arid regions (poverty, cultural factors, labour shortages, lack of environmental and agricultural education, lack of credit, land ownership and other similar issues). Poor farmers consider financial concerns and social priorities to be more important than ecological principles and ecosystem resilience. The task of the programme is to demonstrate to farmers and livestock owners that ecological health (enhancing soil fertility, reversing land degradation, promoting biodiversity, tree planting, etc.) will lead to poverty reduction. Despite the biophysical research of recent decades, land degradation and biodiversity loss have increased in most regions of Africa. This suggests the need for problem-solving-oriented research.

25. In southern Africa, research in these ecosystems is relatively recent for political and other reasons. The former political environment in South Africa undoubtedly contributed to inappropriate natural resource management. For understandable reasons, agricultural research was largely concentrated on crops and livestock systems on the medium- to high-potential areas.

26. While it is easy to establish a linkage between land degradation and falling productivity, it may be more difficult to establish a link between biodiversity conservation and increased productivity. Biodiversity conservation is clearly a goal in protected areas such as nature reserves or national parks, but on commercial land biodiversity is not always compatible with the maximization of productivity. A commercial cattle ranch, for example, is primarily interested in producing good-quality grass. Reducing the stocking rate may result in an increase in herbs, shrubs and ultimately trees, but this would be at the price of lower productivity of cattle. In this scenario, therefore, plant and, by extension, other types of biodiversity would increase while economic returns would drop. A balance has to be struck. It might be difficult to persuade ranchers and community land users to increase biodiversity when the economic advantages are not obvious.

III. Findings

A. Success of delivered outputs and project implementation

1. Attainment of objectives and planned results

27. The performance and dedication of the teams visited was positive, professional and scientifically competent. The commitment of the coordinators met by the consultants was unquestionable and provides the most important resource for the continued success of the project. What is required now is some fine-tuning and further thought to ensure that research is applied, participatory and relevant to the overall goals of the programme.

28. Improved understanding of the status and dynamics of the ecosystem with regard to biodiversity loss was an important initial objective and has largely been achieved. In both West and southern Africa, the work carried out during Phase I and before GEF/UNEP funding is undoubtedly contributing to greater understanding of the dryland ecosystems. Site characterization is well underway and the baseline studies are ongoing. The baseline studies are often qualitative; there is little point in providing lists of plant species without ranking them according to relative abundance, condition or age (see recommendations).

29. The consultants visited only a small number of the national agricultural research systems, advanced research institutes (agricultural research institutes such as CEH, the Centre de coopération internationale en recherché agronomique pour le développement (CIRAD) and IRD) or international agricultural research centres (ILRI, ICRAF etc). The performance of many national agricultural research systems in Africa has been disappointing in recent decades and a consistent criticism of the international agricultural research centres has been their limited ability to ensure that research is both practical and relevant. In arid and semi-arid lands, this decline in agricultural productivity has been associated with land degradation and biodiversity loss. It is not yet clear how these organizations are contributing to the objectives of the programme. Country coordinators should specify in their reports how the research organizations have assisted the programme. At present, the country coordinators themselves cannot readily show what is being done by some of their own partners. More transparency and better reporting would, therefore, appear to be appropriate.

2. Attainment of outputs and objectives

30. The programme was officially launched in November 2002. After this, field studies in Phase I were dominated by baseline data collection, site characterization and establishment of benchmark sites. Implementation in the field appears to have been satisfactory. The consultants, however, thought that the reports provided excessively descriptive data that were not helpful in guiding policy decisions. The outputs and objectives have been achieved according to the logical framework and milestones.

3. Cost-effectiveness

31. It is premature to assess the cost-effectiveness of the programme. If cost-effectiveness is judged as the cost of the programme in relation to its impact on the ground in terms of improved socio-economic conditions of the majority of the stakeholders, then the cost-effectiveness to date is clearly low, but this would be an unfair assessment. In order to demonstrate cost-effectiveness, by the end of Phase II, substantial efforts at increasing incomes and improving livelihoods must be achieved. In terms of the data collected, the awareness created, training and exchange of ideas to date, the programmes would appear to be quite cost-effective.

4. Sustainability

(a) Institutional sustainability

32. The institutional sustainability of the programme also depends on the commitment of Governments and other partners co-funding the programme. Sustainability would increase with more publicity (web sites, brochures etc.). In Kenya, for example, the commitment of other partners was very limited.

(b) Financial sustainability

33. Co-funding appears to be on the increase, in part owing to the successful fund-raising activities by the Global Coordinator.

(c) Socio-economic sustainability

34. Socio-economic sustainability is the most important aspect of overall sustainability. The bottom line of the programme is increasing income generation in marginal lands. The programme has sown the seed and the potential for generating high socio-economic sustainability should be achieved, provided Phase II places greater emphasis on promising activities, for example, small-scale irrigated horticulture, the Sahelian Ecofarm, sustainable wild rooibos production, and related agricultural activities.

(d) Stakeholder participation

35. Some stakeholders made the comment that they had not had any feedback from the site characterization reports. They mentioned that researchers had come and had been assisted with data-gathering by communities but still had not been fully engaged in sharing the findings. Similarly, there was no feeling of community ownership of the project. This could probably be partly explained by the fact that the consultants were mainly accompanied by researchers and were observing research sites. If the consultants had had time to visit other countries or sites, this feeling might have been abated since many of the initial presentations covered community participation. This gap between the research institute and the ordinary farmer remains an ever-present problem in most research in Africa. The programme is well placed to try and bridge this gap provided that this is considered as a major goal in Phase II.

(e) Country ownership

36. In the six countries visited by the consultants, a strong sense of country ownership was apparent. The teams were from the countries themselves and they worked with partners who mainly had a vested interest in the area. There is a reduced sense of country ownership in the agricultural research institutes. Ownership needs to be extended to include beneficiary ownership, which at present appears unsatisfactory.

There was little evidence that the farmers felt that they owned the programme. This sense of ownership must be extended so that it includes grassroots beneficiaries.

(f) Implementation approach and strategy

37. The consultants considered that the overall approach and strategy of the programme was well considered and sound, particularly as regards the baseline studies. However, the bias towards research must be shifted towards improved extension and enhancement of existing technologies.

38. Standardized research methodologies are not necessary because flexibility is required at this stage and the best strategies are likely to emerge after trying a wide variety of approaches. Standardizing methods may seem easier but the methods may be wrong or less efficient than others. Moreover, what is the correct methodology for one site may be inappropriate for another. Even in South Africa there is a wide range of ecosystems in which the programme is operating, from the savannah of the Kalahari Thornveld in the north to the Nama and Succulent Karoo of the west and south.

(g) Financial planning

39. Financial planning is satisfactory. Two things, however, need attention — the flow of funds (see major recommendations) and greater transparency and access to information.

40. In Kenya, the disbursement of the GEF funds received by the national coordinating unit in January 2003 to partner institutions was delayed until July 2003 as a result of logistical limitations, including the operationalization of the national coordinating unit and the signing of memorandums of understanding.

41. The subregional and country coordinators should have easy access to the reports of the agricultural research centres showing exactly how they spend the programme funds. At present, it is not clear how the research institutes and other partners spend their funds or the extent to which their research directly supports the country programmes of the programme. In Kenya and Botswana, it was noted that partners gave priority to their own mandates and paid little attention to collaboration. Moreover, it was mentioned that where country programmes needed to request institutes of agricultural research to conduct some research on their behalf, the country programmes would still be expected to pay for them irrespective of the fact that the agricultural research institutes received a portion of the overall budget.

42. If the auditing process were facilitated by more standardized auditing, annual visits by the programme accountant to those country programmes and institutes where expenditure was centralized and difficult to extract could be considered (South Africa and Namibia have already rigorously audited accounts). It may not be a good idea to send all receipts to the programme accountant in Niger, who must go through them in different currencies and languages. At present, the programme accountant operates 180 separate accounts.

43. Some of those interviewed suggested that the level of expenditure at which top-up funds can be requested should be reduced from 75 per cent to 60 per cent, but others did not regard that as a constraint. Delayed disbursement of funds was partly attributable to delays in the ability of the national coordinating unit to account for funds. Innovative ways should now be found to address those constraints.

(h) Replicability

44. Before technologies are replicated, their economic viability must be ensured. For example, one must ask whether farmers can buy the equipment needed for the African Market Garden without credit. A 200-litre tank irrigates 80 square metres and costs $45, and a 4,000-litre tank that irrigates 500 square metres costs $260. However, the cost of the entire package of tank plus well construction, treadle pump and fencing would be closer to $700, far beyond the budget of the average small farmer.

45. Replicability will increase if training is intensified. The limited attempts by some communities in West Africa to plant trees cannot be replicated on the basis of the results available to date. The consultant was shown a piece of bare ground in Niger where trees had been planted too late and too young; livestock had eaten them and survival rate was below 5 per cent. The extension service was weak, training was inadequate and the community had clearly lost interest. To achieve replicability, the work must be successful, visually impressive and have the potential to generate income.

46. In general, however, West Africa shows more promise with regard to replicable activities because agricultural potential is greater in that region. It is too early to determine what is replicable across regions. It is difficult to see what technologies would be replicable in the degraded parts of the Kalahari thornveld. The greatest potential in those areas is on the commercial farms and in the nature reserves, where game cropping and ecotourism already provide useful alternative livelihoods and sources of income.

(i) Monitoring and evaluation

47. Monitoring and evaluation are mainly carried out through the technical and financial progress reports. There is room for improvement in those reports (see the main recommendations) and the consultants recognize that the programme is on a learning curve as regards monitoring and evaluation. The main finding is that there is a need to meet deadlines at all stages of reporting. In addition to the excellent benchmark reports, the programme has submitted three technical and financial progress reports for the following periods:

(a) June–December 2002 (dated January 2003);

(b) January–June 2003 (dated 9 September 2003 and resubmitted with additional data in November 2003);

(c) July–December 2003 (dated April 2004).

48. Only the last report was substantial. Several improvements should be made (see main recommendations). The executive summary of 11 lines is inadequate. No table of contents is provided. The main text skips haphazardly from one country to another and from one subject to another. At several points, the language changes from English to French within the same section. There is no mention of Namibia or South Africa in the report. The main text also includes work that predates the programme. There are also minor technical problems that suggest lack of understanding of ecological terminology by the country authors and there are numerous other editorial errors.

49. The advantages of standardized reporting (especially financial reporting) across nine countries are obvious. The project document specifies consolidated half-yearly progress reports for approval, monitoring and transmission by UNEP in addition to the annual project implementation review.

50. With regard to the meetings of national steering committees, activities within the project are summarized in various reports of meetings and project progress reports prepared and collated by each national steering committee. The national steering committees tend to have little representation from the private sector. In Kenya, by early August 2004 only one meeting of the national steering committee and one stakeholders' meeting had been held. The staff of the collaborating institutions had participated in two regional meetings, including the Seventh International Range Congress held in Durban, South Africa. To the list of those meetings can be added documents relating to national activity reports. It should be noted that in Kenya the reports by the national coordinating unit and consultants were of low quality and often inconclusive. Many of them contained no recommendations and did not follow the reporting procedures agreed on during the first East African regional meeting of the Desert Margins Programme held in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, from 14 to 16 July 2004. The distribution of important documents to stakeholders was either poor or nonexistent. The reports of national coordinating units from southern Africa were considerably better.

B. Rating of the success of the implementation of the programme

Category	Rating*	Comment
Attainment of the objectives and planned results	3	On course, but needs fine-tuning to ensure that research is participatory and relevant to the needs of the programme
Attainment of outputs and objectives	3	On target, according to the logical framework and milestones

Cost-effectiveness	4	Difficult to assess at the moment, but in terms of the data collected and the awareness created, it appears to be cost-effective. Improved incomes and livelihood options in Phase II would only increase this.
Sustainability (institutional = 4; financial = 2; socio-economic = 3)	3	Enhanced institutional and financial and socio-economic sustainability will depend on the upscaling of promising livelihood activities.
Stakeholder participation	4	Key actors are yet to be involved and stronger emphasis should be placed on this in Phase II.
Country ownership	2	To be extend to include "beneficiary ownership"
Implementation approach/strategy	2	Well-considered and sound, but the bias should be shifted to extension and upscaling of the existing technologies.
Financial planning	4	Disbursement should be streamlined and more transparent.
Replicability	4	Relevant demonstrations are ongoing, but is too early to rate them; replicability will increase with training.
Monitoring and evaluation	4	To improve the content of reports and the meeting of deadlines at all stages of reporting.

* Rating: 1 = Excellent; 2 = Very good; 3 = Good; 4 = Satisfactory; and 5 = Satisfactory

C. Overall rating of the programme

51. The overall rating of the programme is 3 (Good)**.**

IV. Lessons learned

52. A co-funded multinational project of this size is ambitious. There is a natural tendency towards some degree of geographical and linguistic polarization, which must be countered by effective coordination. Since the Global Coordinator is based in the ICRISAT Regional Headquarters in Sadore, Niger, there is an equally natural tendency for the Global Coordinator to be more involved in West African and ICRISAT activities. The southern Africa subregion (comprising Botswana, Namibia. South Africa and Zimbabwe) forms a natural geographical unit and at first sight it would appear that it has little in common with the problems of West Africa. The most important role of the Global Coordinator, however, is to ensure that there is a constant flow of ideas and technologies between the subregions. Without such a regular exchange of ideas, the whole raison d'être of the programme would disappear. The programme is a multidimensional partnership whose objective is to pool resources and to help partners gain expertise.

53. The programme is mostly being implemented in an environment with a weak extension service and this is likely to continue to be a constraint. Extension needs to be greatly strengthened through capacity-building. Moreover, improvements in the desert margins are unlikely to come about through research alone. It should be accompanied by changes in Government policy with regard to land tenure, availability of credit, privatization and better marketing. In many countries, credit is unavailable and there continues to be a problem of technology transfer. In contrast, it is difficult to find national research findings that have contributed widely to poverty alleviation over the last 30 years.

54. It should be stressed that while negative change (land degradation and biodiversity loss) can be quite rapid, reversing those changes can be a long-term process. The task of the programme is to initiate those positive ecological changes without expecting any major impact in the short term. However, concomitant with those changes could be and should be rapid improvements in agricultural productivity by upscaling technologies such as small-scale irrigation plots.

V. Recommendations

55. The following recommendations are made:

(a) There is a need to extend Phase I until the end of 2004. Since the project was effectively at least six months late in starting, Phase I should be granted a budget-neutral extension of six months until the end of 2004. Phase II would therefore run for the two years from January 2005 to December 2006;

(b) There is a need to enhance the pivotal role of the Global Coordinator. The Global Coordinator plays a major role of uniting the various subregions of the programme. He should visit every country programme during each phase to acquaint himself with the situation on the ground. Given that he already travels widely for conferences and fund-raising, it would be advisable for him to take advantage of those trips to visit nearby country programmes;

(c) The Global Coordinator should authorize the replenishments of imprests more expeditiously so as to improve the flow of funds and ensure the timely receipt of funds by the country programmes. This would prevent situations where country programmes have to borrow funds from other partners, as was the case in Botswana where the Botswana College of Agriculture had to bail out the country programme for a number of weeks. In the event of the Global Coordinator's being away from his desk for longer than 10 working days, it would be advisable for him to delegate the approval of requests to the subregional coordinators. In any event, on his return from missions, he should give the highest priority to funding country programmes. He should consult each country about its needs before soliciting funds on its behalf;

(d) There is a need for the Global Coordinator to revise his method of presenting the technical and financial progress report. The report should comprise no more than 5 to 10 pages in both English and French, with an executive summary and an overview of the major events of the previous six months. The half-yearly report of each country programme should then be attached as an annex in the original language. There would then be nine annexes authored by each country coordinator. It would be advisable to set deadlines for the issuance of reports of meetings;

(e) The upscaling of proven technologies should be widespread and immediate. The technologies for widespread dissemination would seem to be small-scale irrigated horticulture and possibly the Sahelian Ecofarm, using a combination of soil conservation techniques, for example, stone bunds and improved cultivars and varieties of current tree crops. The impression that the programme is research-driven persists. While the role of research is very important, it remains a means and not an end: the end is a sustainable improvement in the socio-economic standards of the target population. Greater priority should be given to participatory research and development. All on-farm research should be fully understood by the target population;

(f) Immediate steps should be taken to introduce dryland silviculture in all countries. This requires upscaling of tree nurseries and exclosures for tree planting. This would have the dual benefit of carbon sequestration and income generation from fuelwood, building materials, fruit, honey, medicines, resins, etc. Among the target communities, silviculture/arboriculture (tree-growing) is neither a cultural nor a socio-economic activity, it is seen as a long-term investment with no immediate financial return. While this is true, communities and beneficiaries should be made aware that success after 20 to 30 years is self-perpetuating, but only when tree-planting becomes part of the annual agricultural calendar. Woodlots need protection, and the programme is well placed to give grants for fencing and to supply seeds and planting materials. Tree cover is disappearing in all the desert margins. Incorporating trees into the agricultural system will be the only sustainable way of reversing this trend. It will also diversify income-generating opportunities in marginal areas and address issues relating to carbon sequestration and climate change;

(g) Immediate steps should be taken to get socio-economic and productivity baseline data at all sites. Unless the work done within the framework of the programme results in rapid increases in income generation, the project will not achieve its main goal. Demonstrable poverty alleviation must be a priority in Phase II. Without a strong socio-economic baseline, it will not be possible to demonstrate that interventions actually lead to income generation. The data should include estimates of food and livestock productivity per

unit area and the value thereof. Implicit in this is the increase in productivity resulting from sustainable natural resource management (soil conservation, soil fertility increases and useful biodiversity increases);

(h) Project management should be strengthened at the national and subregional levels. Subregional coordinators should attend the annual meetings of steering committees (at least as observers) as they would have a substantial contribution to make. The national steering committees should have representation from the private sector. In Kenya, thought should be given to appointing an assistant coordinator and better gender balance in the national steering committee would be desirable;

(i) Publicity and outreach activities and means should be prioritized. The GEF/UNEP Desert Margins Programme web site should be finalized as soon as possible and should include links to all the other co-funding agencies, international agricultural research centres, national agricultural research systems and agricultural research institutes. A programme newsletter would be beneficial to raising the profile of the project. Such a newsletter could also be produced nationally or subregionally, in English for East and southern Africa and in French for West Africa. UNEP/GEF should be given greater prominence as the funding agency of the programme. Each country coordinator should have a card bearing the logo of the programme, GEF and UNEP. Likewise, stickers for cars should show GEF and UNEP logos in addition to that of the programme;

(j) Data-collection, studies and reporting methods should be improved. Data collection is too qualitative. The existing reports list the composition of species, often without any indication of the quantitative status. All the existing benchmark sites should give baseline estimates of standing woody and herbaceous biomass, the age structure of trees, canopy and shrub-layer cover, etc. It would be useful to conduct a study on the role of land tenure and land ownership on land degradation and biodiversity loss. Land tenure can be a source of conflict and ownership issues can affect biodiversity. There should be greater use of indices for both the condition of rangelands and biodiversity. An index of the condition of rangelands can be simple; for example, one to five where five represents optimal rangeland condition. Biodiversity indices are much more complex in that the type of biodiversity must be specified — for example, higher plant or avian — and involves an understanding of the complex nature of plant dynamics (age structure, species composition, fire/grazing/browsing sub-climax communities, number and distribution of biome or site endemics, number of endangered species, etc). The linkage between land degradation, biodiversity loss and declining agricultural productivity should be spelled out in brochures. It should be stressed that reversing land degradation and conserving biodiversity will increase productivity and incomes. There should be more flexibility in establishing milestones, which may vary from one country to another. Milestones should not be cast in iron;

(k) Upscaling should be a leading principle of research development and application. Care should be taken to ensure that technologies are acceptable to farmers. The zai system works on research stations but is not very effective on farms, as manure availability is a limiting factor even though the system was devised by farmers themselves. Similarly, introducing a new crop such as *Jatropha curcas* is a good idea provided a secure market is available. In a remote country such as Niger, competitive access to international markets may always be a constraint. In view of the limited options in some of these marginal areas, upscaling of improved enterprises or new crops should be considered at the beginning of Phase II, for example, honey and improved hives, the shea-nut, the desert grape (*Lannea sp*.), the baobab (as a relish), *Vitellaria* [and] *Leptadenia* flowers, *Grewia bicolor*, *Sclerocarya* nuts, etc. The parameters of soil science should be restricted to those which can easily be improved by farmers, for example, organic matter content, or which could be used cheaply to give an indicator of land degradation. Microelement and other analyses are expensive and largely irrelevant to small farmers and livestock owners;

(l) The management of the programme should give higher priority to certain biodiversity issues. In areas where threatened important species are found, for example, the giraffe project in Niger, attempts should be made to establish a nature reserve or protected area. At present, these areas are being unsustainably exploited for wood. Woodlots should be established nearby to ease pressure on important biodiversity areas. Serious thought should be given to methods of controlling invasive species such as *Typha australis* and *Prosopis sp*. and the conservation of wetlands should be part of the programme in West Africa as the programme countries have potential for sustainable production of materials, for example, papyrus, and as important sanctuaries of fauna;

(m) There is a need for more effective training and awareness creation among farmers, scientists and the staff of the programme and increased cross-border visits and training of farmers and scientists,

especially within subregions. The staff of the programme at all levels should be further trained so that they have a clear understanding of the differences between categories of species, namely, locale/biome-specific endemics, indigenous, exotic, invasive indigenous, for example, *Acacia hebeclada*, invasive exotics, for example, *Prosopis*, and endangered and threatened species. There should be in-country stakeholders' field meetings at the end of the extension of Phase I to discuss, among others, site characterization and relevance to the beneficiaries. Farmers should be among the stakeholders. Further thought should be given to innovative ways of working with vested-interest groups. The term community is an over-used term that describes people living in one area who may or may not have anything in common. Vested-interest groups comprise groups that share a common concern, such as livestock owners or women's groups, who need to cooperate to improve their lot.

Annex I

Terms of reference for the evaluation of Phase I of the Desert Margins Programme

1. Under the guidance of the Chief, Evaluation and Oversight Unit (EOU) and in close cooperation with the Regional Representative of the International Centre for Research in the Semi-Arid Tropics for West and Central Africa (ICRISAT-Niamey), based in Sadore, Niger, the Director, Division of Global Environment Facility (DGEF) of the United nations Environment Programme (UNEP/DGEF) and Task Manager for the project in DGEF in Nairobi, Kenya, the evaluator shall undertake a detailed review and evaluation of the first two-year phase of the project known as the Desert Margins Programme. The evaluation will be conducted by an external consultant in consultation with the Evaluation and Oversight Unit during the period 1-22 June 2004.

I. Background

2. The Desert Margins Programme is a collaborative initiative among the following nine African countries: Botswana, Burkina Faso, Kenya, Mali, Namibia, Niger, Senegal, South Africa and Zimbabwe assisted by five centres of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) — the International Centre for Research in Agricultural (ICRAF), the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT), the International Centre for Soil Fertility and Agricultural Development (IFDC), the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), the Tropical Soil Biology and Fertility Institute of the International Centre for tropical Agriculture (TSBF-CIAT) and three advanced research institutes — the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology (CEH), the Centre de cooperation internationale en recherche agronomique pour le développement (CIRAD) and the Institut de recherche pour le développement (IRD). The project is being implemented over six years in three phases. Phase I was launched in November 2002.

3. The overall goal of the programme is to arrest land degradation in the desert margins of Africa through demonstration and capacity-building activities. The general objective of the project is to conserve and restore biodiversity in desert margins through sustainable utilization; while the following are the specific objectives: to develop and to implement strategies for conservation, restoration and sustainable use of dryland biodiversity (to enhance ecosystem function and resilience); and to recommend policies for and approaches to sustainable natural resource management to key government decision makers, farmers and field practitioners.

4. Since its inception, a monitoring, evaluation and dissemination strategy has been put in place with the following key elements. The project outputs are monitored annually through individual reports presented by the collaborating institutions and partners at the annual national technical meetings, and by the combined annual project reports. At each annual meeting, the participating institutions present their work plans and budgets for the following year. The steering committee of the programme evaluates the documents for consistency with the goals and objectives of the project and approves the annual work programme and budgets. It has been planned that the entire Desert Margins Programme/GEF project will be subjected to external reviews after each phase to obtain an independent assessment of the progress and recommendations for the completion of the project. In addition, a final external review will be conducted at the end of the project to assess its achievements and impacts and make recommendations on how to ensure its long-term sustainability. The general and specific objectives of the project and the list of its planned outputs have provided the basis for the monitoring and evaluation plan.

II. Scope of the evaluation

5. The objective of the evaluation is to assess progress in the implementation of the components and activities in the logframe scheduled for the implementation of Phase I of the project. The evaluation will be in depth.

6. The project will be evaluated on the basis of four parameters.

A. Execution performance

7. Monitoring will concentrate on the management and supervision of project activities, seeking to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of project implementation. It is a continuous process that will collect information about the execution of activities programmed in the annual workplans (annex II), advise on improvements in the methodology and performance, and compare the accomplished tasks with the programmed tasks. This activity will be the direct responsibility of the Coordinator of the Programme, under the supervision of the Executive Committee. See Table 3.1 for the execution performance indicators.

B. Delivered outputs

8. Continuous evaluation will assess the success of the project in producing each of the programmed outputs, both in quantity and quality. The subregional coordinators will provide internal assessment continuously and mid-term and final evaluations of outputs will be carried out by external consultants contracted by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in consultation with ICRISAT as well as by consultants contracted by the Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel. (See table 3.2 for a summary of expected outputs by project objectives, and annex II for a detailed list of project activities and the corresponding outputs.

C. Project performance

9. The evaluation of the project performance will assess the success of the project in achieving one third of its objectives. Monitored internally through reports and meetings, particularly of the Executive Committee, and by the project steering committee, success will be evaluated twice during the life of the project (after two and four years of project execution) and at the end by external consultants contracted by UNEP in consultation with ICRISAT. See table 3.3 for a summary of the project performance indicators**.**

D. Impact of the project

10. Two major areas have been identified for the assessment of the impact, namely, poverty alleviation and the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. The assessment of the impact in these two areas will depend on the phases and milestones of the project. The tools, methods and indicators for measuring the impact will be sorted out during an initial methodology workshop to ensure that a standardized framework is shared by all the concerned countries.

III. Terms of reference

11. The evaluator shall provide a rigorous assessment of the progress made so far in the implementation of the Desert Margins Programme by establishing the extent to which the objectives of the programme are being met and the planned results obtained, taking into account the indicators listed in the project document (see the annex), the extent to which project activities are completed and outputs are attained, particularly focusing on making recommendations for the effective and efficient implementation of Phase II of the project.

12. The evaluator shall undertake the following:

(a) Evaluate the execution performance of the project, including the implementation strategy and governance of the project, i.e. the effectiveness of the coordination unit of the programme and its two subregional coordination units, contributions of the international agricultural research centres and agricultural research institutes in the work of the programme, the performance of the country partners of the programme;

(b) Assess the success of the programme in producing each of the programmed outputs, both in quantity, quality and timeliness;

(c) Assess the performance and impact of the project, i.e. the success of the project in achieving one third of its objectives, monitored internally through reports and meetings, especially of the Executive Committee and by the Steering Committee of the project ;

(d) Evaluate the level of stakeholder participation. Attention should be paid to the type and level of participation of the various stakeholders at different stages of project implementation;

(e) Examine the country ownership of the project during project design and implementation. Attention should be paid to the relevance of the project and the impact on the national development and environmental agendas, regional and international agreements, and the commitment of the recipient country;

(f) Review from the viewpoint of adaptive project management the effectiveness of the institutional structure, financial planning, including the level of co-financing both cash and in-kind, the staffing, administrative arrangements and operational mechanisms at the project level;

(g) Assess the future replicability of the project taking into account the arrangements and steps taken so far in this respect;

(h) Review the monitoring and evaluation system as an effective management tool of the project. Attention should be paid to the identification of baselines and indicators, the quality of backstopping, quality assurance and monitoring of deliverables;

(i) Identify the lessons and best practices learned so far and the potential benefit for Phase II;

(j) Provide recommendations to UNEP and its executing partners regarding future actions to follow up this project.

IV. Format and procedure of the evaluation report

13. The evaluation report shall be detailed, written in English, of no more than 30 pages exclusive of the executive summary, the lessons learned, and the findings and recommendations and include an executive summary of no more than three pages, a separate section on the lessons learned and a separate section on the findings and recommendations. All annexes should be typed.

14. The success of project implementation will be rated on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being the highest rating and 5 being the lowest. The following items should be considered for rating purposes:

(a) Attainment of the objectives and planned results;

(b) Attainment of outputs and activities;

(c) Cost-effectiveness;

(d) Impact;

(e) Sustainability;

(f) Stakeholder participation;

(g) Country ownership;

(h) Implementation approach/strategy;

(i) Financial planning;

(j) Replicability;

(k) Monitoring and evaluation.

15. Each of the items should be rated separately and then an overall rating given. The following rating system is to be applied:

1 = Excellent (90–100 per cent achievement)

2 = Very Good (75–89 per cent)

3 = Good (60–74 per cent)

4 = Satisfactory (50–59 per cent)

5 = Unsatisfactory (49 per cent and below)

16. In accordance with UNEP/GEF policy, all GEF projects are evaluated by an independent evaluator contracted by the Evaluation and Oversight Unit and not associated with the implementation of the project. The evaluator should have the following qualifications: basic expertise in the subject matter (i.e. land degradation control, biodiversity conservation and natural resources management and capacity- building and their environmental implications); experience with projects in Africa, especially in semi-arid and arid zones; and project evaluation.

V. Outputs of the evaluation

17. The final report shall be written in English and submitted in electronic form in MS Word format by 30 July 2004 and should be addressed as follows:

Mr. Segbedzi Norgbey,
Chief, Evaluation and Oversight Unit
UNEP, P.O. Box 30552
Nairobi, Kenya
Tel.: (254-2) 623387
Email: Segbedzi.norgbey@unep.org

With a copy to:

Mr. Saidou Kaola
Regional Representative
ICRISAT-Niamey
Mr.Ahmed Djoghlaf,
Assistant Executive Director, UNEP and Director
UNEP/Division of GEF Coordination
P.O. Box 30552
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Tel: + 254-20-624166
Fax: + 254-20-624041/4042
Email: Ahmed.Djoghlaf@unep.org

Mr. Mohamed Sessay
Programme Officer
UNEP/Division of GEF Coordination
P.O. Box 30552
Nairobi, Kenya
Tel: + 254-20-624294
Fax: + 254-20- 624041
Email: Mohamed.Sessay@unep.org

18. The evaluation report will be printed in hard copy and published on the web site of the Evaluation and Oversight Unit, www.unep.org/eou.

VI. Schedule of the evaluation

19. The contract will run from 1 to 22 June 2004 (three weeks spread over a period of six weeks). The consultant will submit a first draft to the Evaluation and Oversight Unit on 19 July 2004. A draft version will be forwarded to the Regional Representative, ICRISAT-Niamey, the Director, UNEP/Division of GEF Coordination (DGEF) and the Task Manager of the project in UNEP/DGEF for initial comment. Comments on the final draft report will be sent to the consultants after a maximum of two weeks. After incorporating the comments, the consultant will submit the final report. The writing of the report will take place at ICRISAT, Sadore, Niger with Coordination Unit of the programme providing logistical support.

20. A staff member of the Coordination Unit of the programme will accompany the external consultant appointed by UNEP during the field visits. To help to ensure that the assessment of the consultant is adequately grounded (in the reality of operations of the programme in the field), he will be expected to undertake country/field visits to at least one country each in East, southern and West Africa.

Number of days	Place	Task
1	Nairobi, Kenya	Briefing with UNEP
2	Niamey, Niger	Briefing with the Coordinating Unit of the programme
5	Southern Africa	Visit with the programme partners
2	Kenya and KARI	Visit with programme partners
5	West Africa	Visit with the programme partners
6	Niamey, Niger	Writing up

VII. Payment schedule

21. The evaluator will receive an initial payment of 30 per cent of the total amount due upon signature of the contract. An intermediate payment of 30 per cent of the total amount will be made upon assessment of satisfactory progress. Final payment will be made upon satisfactory completion of work. The fee is payable under the individual special service assignment of the evaluator and is inclusive of all expenses such as travel, accommodation and incidental expenses.

22. In the event that the evaluator cannot provide the products in accordance with the terms of reference, the timeframe agreed, or the products are substandard, the payment to the evaluator could be withheld until such a time as the products are modified to meet standards of UNEP. In the event that the evaluator fails to submit a satisfactory final product to UNEP, the product prepared by the evaluator may not constitute the evaluation report.

11 May 2004

Annex II

Budget by outputs and activities

Activities	Project Phase	Baseline	Alternative	Co-funding	GEF
Output 1. Monitoring and evaluation					
1.1. Inventory of endemic species	1	2,093,863	3,634,370	906,161	634,346
1.2. Ecosystems stability	2	2,415,909	3,740,909	657,143	667,857
1.3. Document IK	1	404,500	581,720	151,850	25,370
1.4. Inventory of endangered species	1	12,400	124,460	106,225	5,835
1.5. Biodiversity degradation	2	497,000	1,132,000	335,000	300,000
1.6. Regeneration	2	12,180	173,960	121,780	40,000
1.7. Restoration of biodiversity	2	717,175	930,175	111,000	102,000
1.8. Characterization of benchmarks	1	276,000	1,313,000	801,000	236,000
1.9. Standardized data collection	1	1,256,133	2,736,133	895,000	585,000
1.10. Identify social skills	2	625,000	1,115,000	310,000	180,000
1.11. Develop packages	3	500,000	1,315,000	580,000	235,000
1.12. Scaling up methodologies	3	1,534,857	4,336,785	1,669,071	1,132,857
1.13. Modelling	3	590,000	1,252,000	340,000	322,000
Total 1		**10,935,017**	**22,385,513**	**6,984,230**	**4,466,265**
Output 2. Testing and implementation					
2.1. Document best-bet practices	1	813,043	1,850,727	803,290	235,738
2.2. Pilot technologies	1	401,658	1,738,393	932,400	404,335
2.3. Adoption and implementation	2	1,014,176	2,461,938	1,009,665	438,097
2.4. Conservation and restoration	3	647,371	1,991,716	939,131	405,214
2.5. Enhance IK	3	203,200	1,235,200	792,880	239,120
2.6. Overall synthesis	3	485,000	1,548,640	608,640	455,000
Total 2		**3,564,448**	**10,827,950**	**5,086,006**	**2,177,504**

Activities	Project Phase	Baseline	Alternative	Co-funding	GEF
Output 3. Capacity building					
3.1. Assess Training needs		946,904	2,600,970	912,554	741,512
3.2. Develop training programmes	1	929,029	2,976,617	1,378,469	669,119
3.3. Planning and implementation	2	813,333	2,788,333	1,202,000	773,000
3.4. Sensitize partners	2	1,214,272	2,871,272	1,398,600	258,400
3.5. Organize training courses		654,500	3,255,150	2,132,960	467,690
3.6. Information packages	3	338,100	1,104,330	416,250	349,980
3.7. Training packages	3	317,125	2,335,425	1,528,300	490,000
Total 3		**5,213,263**	**17,932,097**	**8,969,133**	**3,749,701**
Output 4. Sustainable alternative livelihoods					
4.1. Livelihoods options	1	1,047,500	2,500,650	1,008,150	445,000
4.2. Empower communities	1	58,100	670,800	543,100	69,600
4.3. Implement best-bet options	3	826,462	2,687,862	1,408,900	452,500
Total 4		**1,932,062**	**5,859,312**	**2,960,150**	**967,100**
Output 5. Policy and legal framework					
5.1. Document existing policies	1	757,219	1,838,834	461,615	620,000
5.2. Develop policy documents	2	27,266	805,631	594,365	184,000
5.3. Implement policies	3	789,800	797,165	1,124,365	623,000
Total 5		**1,574,285**	**4,721,630**	**[2,180,345]**	**1,427,000**

Activities	Project Phase	Baseline	Alternative	Co-funding	GEF
Output 6. Upscaling of NRM options					
6.1. Promote soil fertility	2	1,027,933	2,740,033	1,017,100	695,000
6.2. Promote integrated land and pastoral spaces	2	415,000	1,545,000	920,000	210,000
6.3. Promote multiple land use systems	3	150,000	1,400,000	650,000	600,000
6.4. Integrated management of biodiversity	3	201,714	1,446,737	1,183,872	61,151
6.5. Support to NARS	2	1,195,000	2,931,000	800,000	936,000
Total 6		**2,989,647**	**10,062,770**	**4,570,972**	**2,502,151**
Output 7. stakeholder participation					
7.1. Participation of vulnerable groups	1	254,333	1,246,797	732,185	260,279
7.2. Permanent dialogue framework	1	100,000	755,000	600,000	55,000
7.3. Scientific teams exchanges	2	1,575,000	3,394,286	1,454,286	365,000
Total 7		**1,929,333**	**5,396,083**	**2,786,471**	**680,279**
Grand Total		**28,358,055**	**77,865,362**	**33,537,307**	**15,970,000**

Annex III

Travel itinerary of the consultants for the evaluation of the Desert Margins Programe

Mr. Nicholson, lead consultant

June 12:	Briefing of consultants at UNEP
June 13:	Departure for Niamey, Niger
June 14:	Arrival in Niamey. Meetings at ICRISAT
June 15–20:	Field visits (Niger and Burkina Faso)
June 21:	Departure from Niamey
June 22:	Arrival in Kenya
July 21–27:	Southern Africa (Botswana and South Africa)
Late July–6 August:	Write-up, e-mail drafts and work with the local consultant

Mr. Ogutu, local consultant

June 10:	Arrival in Nairobi from Uganda
June 12:	Briefing of the consultants at UNEP
June 13–16:	Field visit and discussion with Desert Margins Programme-Kenya (KARI)
June 17:	Return to Uganda
July 28	Arrival in Nairobi to work with the lead consultant
August 3:	Discussion with the Director of KARI, Kenya
August 5:	Return to Uganda

Desert Margins Programme evaluation itinerary: South Africa and Botswana

Programme : 21–27 July 2004

Wednesday, 21 July 2004

1045	Arrival of Dr. Nicholson at Johannesburg Airport
	Travel to Potchefstroom
1400	Lunch in Potchefstroom
1500	Book in at Ou Drift Guest House.
1600–1800	Discussions with the national coordinating unit of the programme at North-West University
Any time	Arrival of Dr Mmolawa from Botswana
1900	Dinner

Thursday, 22 July 2004

0900–1400	Presentations and discussions of the Desert Margins Programme projects in South Africa
	(See separate programme)
1400–1700	Presentations and discussions of the Desert Margins Programme projects in Botswana

	(See separate programme)
1900	Dinner

Friday, 23 July 2004

0700	Depart for Desert Margins Programme target areas in North-West Province (Molopo region) (Approx. 360 km)
1100	Arrival at study site 1 near Ganyesa (Austrey). Communal area Meet ADC manager and extension officers
1300	Lunch in field
1400	Travel to and visit next study site at Tseoge. Communal area (Approx. 100 km)
1600	Travel to Molopo Nature Reserve for accommodation. (Approx. 70 km) Accommodation will be rustic. Meals have to be prepared.

Saturday, 24 July 2004

0800	Breakfast at Molopo Nature Reserve
1000–1200	Travel to study site 3 – farm of Mr Bruwer (Commercial area) (Approx. 30 km)
1300	Lunch at Molopo Nature Reserve.
1400	Visit study sites in Molopo Nature Reserve
1700	Dinner at Molopo Nature Reserve

Sunday, 25 July 2004

0800	Breakfast
0900	Depart to Botswana study sites (Tsabong) (Approx. 120 km)
1100	Arrival at Tsabong

Here the Botswana Desert Margins Programme team will take over

1800	Accommodation in Tsabong as organized by Botswana programme team.

Monday, 26 July 2004

Morning :	Tsabong
±1200	Travel back to Potchefstroom
1800	Arrive in Potchefstroom and book in at Guest House
1900	Dinner (Potchefstroom)

Tuesday, 27 July 2004

0730	Travel to Johannesburg airport
1135	Departure of Dr Nicholson to Nairobi (Kenya)

Annex IV

List of persons met

Dr. Mohamed Sessay	UNEP, Headquarters
Dr. Segbedzi Norgbey	UNEP, Headquarters
Dr. Saidou Koala	Global Coordinator, Desert Margins Programme, Sadore
Dr. R. Tabo	Subregional Coordinator, Desert Margins Programme (Sadore)
Dr. S. Ouedraogo	Country Coordinator, Burkina Faso
Dr. A. van Rooyen	Subregional Coordinator, Desert Margins Programme (ICRISAT, Bulawayo)
Prof. K. Kellner	Country Coordinator, South Africa
Anuschka Barac	Vegetation Ecologist, Science and Ecosystem Support Division, North-West University
Adrian Hudson	Biologist, Science and Ecosystem Support Division, North-West University
Dr. K. Mmolawa	Country Coordinator, Botswana
Dr. Benedict Kayombo	Soil Scientist, Botswana College of Agriculture
Mr. Bruwer	Lefras farm. NWP
Dr. Dov Pasternak	ICRISAT, Sadore
Dr. A.M.M Gitunu	KARI, Makindu
Dr. A. Esilaba	KARI, Desert Margins Programme secretariat
Mr. J.W Munyasia	KARI, Makindu
Mr. G. M. Muturi	KEFRI, Desert Margins Programme secretariat
M. W.N. Mnene	KARI, Makindu
Ms E. N. Muthiani	KARI, Makindu
Ms. E. C. Kirwa	KARI, Makindu
Mr. P.O Odanga	KARI, Makindu
Mr. W Ego	KARI, Makindu
Mr. B.P Ogillo,	KARI, Makindu
Mr. A.J.N Ndathi	KARI, Makindu
Dr. D.K Musembi	KARI, Makindu
Dr. H.K Cheruiyot	KARI, Desert Margins Programme secretariat
Dr. Nyariki	University of Nairobi, Task Force
Dr. Franci Jordaan	Science and Ecosystem Support Division, North-West University
Loriane van den berg	Science and Ecosystem Support Division, North-West University
Kirsten Botha	Science and Ecosystem Support Division, North-West University
Mr. Abdoulaye Moussa	Soil Scientist, Science and Ecosystem Support Division, North-West University
Dr. S. Masinde	National Museums of Kenya, National Steering Committee
Mr. P. Muthoka	National Museums of Kenya, Task force

Mr. D. Musya	KEMFRI, Kibwezi
Ms. J. Katiku	KEMFRI, Kibwezi
Mr. L. Kimotho	KEMFRI, Kibwezi
Mr. P. Matieka	KEMFRI, Kibwezi
M. E. Mengich	KEMFRI, Kibwezi
L Wekesa	KEMFRI, Kibwezi
Mr. B. Musya	Farmer, Kibwezi
Mr. J. Masya	Farmer, Kibwezi
Mr. S. Maundu	Farmer, Kiboko
Dr. P.K.A Konunche	Director, KEFRI, National Steering Committee
Dr. Kiome	Director, KARI, National Steering Committee Chairperson

Annex V

List of reviewed project documents

Project Agreement between KARI and KEMFRI on the implementation of the Desert Margins Programme, 2004

Desert Margins Programme progress report for Kenya – 1 January to 31 December 2003

Desert Margins Programme Project Documents

Programme of work for the Desert Margins Programme activities for Kenya (January to 30 June 2004)

Desert Margins Programme technical and financial report submitted by ICRISAT to UNEP – January 2003

Draft summary of report of the Desert Margins Programme submitted to UNEP by ICRISAT 9 September 2003

Desert Margins Programme Eastern and Southern Africa Technical Report Phase I: July to November 2003 compiled by A. F. van Rooyen

Desert Margins Programme's Programme of Work and Budget 2002–2004: strengthening the knowledge base in Desert Margins of sub-Saharan Africa, May 2004

KARI briefing paper on the Desert Margins Programme

Desert Margins Programme technical and financial report submitted by ICRISAT to UNEP – November 2003

Minutes of the first meeting of the Desert Margins Programme/GEF steering committee, Thursday, 20 February 2003 held at KARI headquarters

Kenya Desert Margins Programme National Workshop, KARI headquarters 27 February 2003

Desert Margins Programme Kenya Country Report – Benchmark characterization, May 2004

UNEP project implementation review individual Report FY2003, Desert Margins Programme

Draft report on benchmark sites characterization for Desert Margins Programme project in Kenya, November 2003

Desert Margins Programme project implementation review and project performance report (PPR) by ICRISAT, 11 September 2003

Experimenting with the design of policies on sustainable resource management, progress report June 4, 2004

Minutes of the first east African regional meeting of the Desert Margins Programme, 14–16 July 2003, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

Desert margins programme Botswana, Progress report July–December 2003 compiled by B. Kayombo and K.B Mmolawa

Minutes of the second Desert Margins Programme Regional Steering Committee meeting, 6 and 8 December 2003, Niamey, Niger

Annex VI

I: The case of Kenya

Executive Summary

1. This report is an evaluation of Phase I of the Kenya project based on the desk review of project documents, interviews and field observation conducted between late June and early August 2004. Kenya Desert Margins Programme is part of the Desert Margins Programme, a six-year collective initiative that commenced in November 2002 and covers Botswana, Burkina Faso, Mali, Namibia Niger, Senegal, South Africa and Zimbabwe, which are experiencing desertification.

2. The primary objective of the programme is to arrest land degradation in the desert margins of Africa through demonstration of best practices and capacity-building activities using the Global Environment Facility (GEF) incremental funding. The project is being implemented by a coordinating unit at KARI in partnership with various national research institutions based on letters of commitment that are being replaced by memorandums of understanding.

3. Despite delays that were associated with the disbursement of funds and setting up of a functioning national coordinating unit, the Kenya Desert Margins Programme undertook limited activities in seven components, building on existing networks and knowledge for effective impact of the programme. Although it is too early to point out the impact of the programme on the ground, it is important to note that commendable steps such as the establishment of consultative mechanisms have been made. The programme is building on past initiatives by the Integrated Project on Arid lands (IPAL) and national research institutes. The major output, the benchmark and diagnostic report, provides biophysical data that are too qualitative. The report fails to adequately capture the socio-economic baseline, especially points of divergence in existing livelihood options. The project has set up demonstrations that have been designed in a manner that will promote their subsequent replication elsewhere. A high level of enthusiasm among the partner institutions has been achieved through consultations.

4. Project output may be hampered unless key institutions such as non-governmental organizations are brought on board and gender considerations are addressed. There is also a need to sufficiently address staffing matters.

I. Introduction and background

5. The Desert Margins Project was developed by a Task Force of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) through a series of consultations involving potential partners in response to a recommendation made to the international community at the United Nations Conference on Economic Development (UNCED). The project is being executed by the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) in collaboration with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and national and international partners. The Kenya Agricultural Research Institute (KARI) is the national implementing agency. The GEF Council approved funding for the programme under GEF Operational Program 1 on 12 August 2002.

6. The programme commenced in June 2002 with the establishment of a coordinating unit at ICRISAT in Niamey, Niger. It was formally launched on 11 November 2002 at UNEP headquarters followed by a four-day stakeholders workshop that discussed, inter alia, rolling out the programme of work and budget, a methodological framework and schedule for national launching of programme workshops.

7. The overall objective of the programme is to arrest land degradation in the desert margins of Africa through demonstration of best practices and capacity-building activities using GEF incremental funding for six years involving nine African countries, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Kenya,

Mali, Namibia, Niger, Senegal, South Africa and Zimbabwe, which are experiencing land degradation. In addition, the project was to address issues of national economic and environmental importance such as biodiversity loss, reduced carbon sequestration and increased soil erosion and sedimentation. The beneficiary countries endorsed their commitment to support the programme between August and September 2001. Memorandums of understanding have been concluded with the collaborating national institutions and a national coordinating unit has been established at KARI, Kenya's lead agency.

8. Key sites harbouring globally significant ecosystems and threatened biodiversity have been selected in three zones, the Turkana/Turkwel river basin and the Marsabit and southern rangelands, and field sites for demonstration of best practices were identified during a national workshop held on 20 June 2002 to launch the Kenya programme. Some of the Marsabit sites were formerly used for the IPAL activities. Thus, the Kenya programme is building on existing networks and knowledge for effective impact on the ground.

II. Procedures and scope of the evaluation

9. This evaluation covers progress and activities in the Kenyan component of the programme during the period January 2003–June 2004. The consultant, assisted by the staff of the Coordination Unit of the programme, carried out the evaluation between 10 June and 19 September 2004 under the terms and conditions laid down in the terms of reference attached to the present report as annex I. The evaluation was based on the following:

(a) A desk review of project documents and work plan outputs such as progress reports, workshop reports, minutes of meetings and other correspondences obtained from the Evaluation and Oversight Unit of UNEP and the national coordinating unit at KARI;

(b) Consultations and interviews with secretariat of the Kenya programme, the staff of the Kenya Forestry Research Institute (KEFRI), the National Museums of Kenya, the University of Nairobi and of the Evaluation and Oversight Unit at UNEP. Annex IV contains the list of people interviewed;

(c) Field visits conducted in the southern rangelands by the consultant to observe ongoing project activities such as trial farms and demonstration plots and discussions conducted with farmers participating in the on-farm trials.

Although this evaluation has benefited from various sources of information, the consultant noted the following limitations:

(a) Some key actors in project implementation, for example, members of the national steering committee and of the task force that undertook benchmark characterization and diagnosis were not available for interviews;

(b) Since field visits were made in the southern rangelands, there may be limitations with regard to the application of some of the recommendations of the evaluation for the Marsabit and Turkana zones;

(c) The project has just begun. Furthermore, the fact that it is building on previous initiatives by IPAL (in the case of the Marsabit sites) and national research institutes such as the University of Nairobi, KEFRI and KARI made it difficult to identify the impact of the programme on the ground. Thus, the point of departure is vaguely captured by the benchmark characterization and diagnostic report.

III. Current status of the project

10. The disbursement of the GEF funds to partner institutions by the national coordinating unit in January 2003 was delayed until July 2003 as a result of logistical limitations, including the operationalization of the national coordinating unit and the signing of agreements with partner institutions. The timing of this evaluation, therefore, does not correspond to the two-year period for operational Phase I stipulated in the project document. Thus, this evaluation covers the progress

made during planning for the operational phase and a prognosis regarding operational phase activities and their likely outputs.

11. Despite the above delay, the project had an advantage with regard to the start-up because staff were appointed from a team of scientists who were familiar with desert margins and there was an elaborate network of collaborating institutions. It also gained from office space provided by the national implementing agency, KARI. It must be recognized, however, that the programme encountered difficulties in the acquisition of equipment and materials following the compulsory leave given to all purchasing officers as part of the Government's attempt to root out corruption.

12. Activities within the project are summarized in various reports of meetings and progress reports and collated by the national coordinating unit. As of August 2004, two meetings of the National Steering Committee and one stakeholders' meeting had been held. The staff of collaborating institutions had participated in two regional meetings, including the Seventh International Range Congress held in Durban. Added to the reports of meetings were documents relating to national activities. It should be noted at this point that the reports by the national coordinating unit and consultants are of low quality and often inconclusive – many of them have no recommendations and fail to follow reporting procedures agreed upon during the Bulawayo meeting. The distribution of project documents to stakeholders is poor.

13. The GEF incremental funding received in March 2004 has been disbursed by the national coordinating unit to KEFRI and the National Museums of Kenya, which are considered as two key partners. The consultant observed that these funds were disbursed without the approval of the National Steering Committee and without a memorandum of understanding in the case of the National Museums of Kenya. It was reported that the Kenya programme missed what could have been the second tranche of June-December 2003 as a result of delays by the national coordinating unit to account for the first tranche for replenishment. Going by the project document, Phase I of the programme ended in June 2004. Needless to say, this situation calls for a revised work plan that could place the Kenya programme in a strategic position to gain from the experience of partner States. The dynamic nature of the environment in the project zones also hampered timely implementation of planned activities, calling for cautious and effective coordination of partners.

14. The priority sites for restoration and protection have been identified and proposals for pilot activities submitted to the national coordination unit for funding. In addition, the three zones for the demonstrations of best practices have been selected and initial demonstrations have started, mainly at KARI (in Emali, Kiboko and Kibwezi) and the Kenya Marine Fisheries Research Institute (KEMFRI) field stations in Turkana.

15. Other than delays experienced in setting up the national coordination units, associated with compulsory leave given to purchasing and supplies officers, the other major project drawback was inadequate commitment by the partners of the Kenya programme. Important players such as the Intermediate Technology Development Group (ITDG-EA) and the Environment Liaison Centre International that were to represent the non-governmental organizations community have not been active, although they attended the second meeting of the National Steering Committee held in July 2004. Some partners tend to give priority to their own mandates, paying little attention to collaboration, including the co-financing component of the programme.

IV. Performance of the programme to date

16. This section examines the performance of the Kenya programme to date by addressing separately accomplished activities in each project component, including project management, as a means of assessing progress towards the fulfilment of objectives and the achievement of expected outputs.

A. Institutional arrangements

17. The Desert Margins Programme is being executed by ICRISAT under the supervision of UNEP. At the national level, ICRISAT is working through the national coordinating unit housed at KARI headquarters. The national coordinating unit is responsible for the day-to-day management and coordination of project activities and reports to ICRISAT through the National Steering Committee.

1. The National Steering Committee

18. The National Steering Committee consists of members drawn from the University of Nairobi, (KEFRI, KARI as the implementing agency, the National Museums of Kenya, the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA) and the National Council for Science and Technology (NCST). The director of KARI chairs the National Steering Committee.

19. Given the current composition, the National Steering Committee has no representation from the private sector that is so very crucial for effective drylands resource utilization. The Committee has managed to incorporate ITDG-EA and ELCI, two key institutions proposed during the launching workshop of the Kenya programme held on 27 February 2003. ITDG-EA has grassroots support in selected field sites having worked in the three zones over 10 years. The key functions of the Committee include approval of applications for GEF funds and hiring of the staff of the national coordinating unit. Indeed, wide representation of the Committee in general and of the partners in particular is likely to contribute towards strong project ownership and scaling up of best practices.

20. Going by the mandate of NEMA, which includes vetting proposed project sensitivity to environmental welfare, its participation in the Committee somewhat compromises its role. Other important actors that ought to be in the Committee include the Ministry of Water Resources and the Kenya Wildlife Service. Water is a critical component of best practices in drylands, as are the wildlife resources that comprise the biodiversity of the three target zones and potential resources for alternative livelihoods through ecotourism development.

2. The national coordinating unit

21. The national coordinating unit is the secretariat of the Kenya programme, which implements decisions made by the National Steering Committee. It is made up of three technical staff and six support staff as follows: a coordinator and two assistants, one accountant, two secretaries, two messengers and one driver. This team has been appointed from the staff of partner institutions as part of the KARI policy of integration of projects into institutional activities. This policy overlooks the need to appoint staff on a competitive basis and an assistant coordinator taken at 100 per cent time, as spelt out in the project document and endorsed by the minutes of the meeting of 20 February 2003. The coordinator is an employee of KARI. KARI and KEFRI have each seconded an assistant at 40 per cent time each.

22. The programme staff have no job descriptions. Given that GEF activities may not be a priority to the two assistants, it may be necessary for the project to recruit an assistant on a full-time basis. Discussions with various scientists and members of the National Steering Committee tend to point to the current structure of Committee as partly responsible for the delays in project activities.

B. Gender considerations in project implementation

23. Close examination of the existing management structure reveals important gaps in gender considerations. The current membership consists only of men, with partners such as KEFRI and NEMA having two representatives. Lately, NEMA representatives have not been active in programme activities. For reasons of policy, it may be important to tie membership to institutions rather than to individual experts, as recommended by the national coordinating unit. This will not only minimize project risks associated with the transfer of Government officers, but will also promote broader project ownership. Indeed, some of the members of the National Steering Committee interviewed were unaware of their roles and the status of the project so far.

24. Furthermore, the task force constituted by the National Steering Committee to undertake benchmark characterization and diagnosis comprised men only. This anomaly is likely to have

important consequences for the effective accomplishment of the project objectives, and target options that may be sensitive to the various beneficiaries on the ground may be left out.

C. Consultations and cooperation

25. The consultation process within the project was effective in the preparatory phase. ICRISAT and UNEP/GEF devoted a great deal of effort to the launching of the project and clarification of the roles of various actors. At the national level, efforts were made to establish the National Steering Committee and the national coordination unit. The entire consultation process is embodied in the project document. This structure incorporates the three regional working units and national actors on specific project components, while assigning decision-making to the Steering Committee at national focal points.

26. The programme puts emphasis on memorandums of understanding used to formalize agreements at various levels of project activities. At the national level, KARI has received written commitment to participate in the programme from some partner institutions. KEMFRI, the only institution that has signed a memorandum of understanding with KARI, has had disbursed funds increased from 75 per cent to 100 per cent of the approved budget. This procedure enhances accountability, as the management of project components becomes easy to trace and track from the perspectives of the coordinating unit and the implementing agency. It also induces far greater commitment from partner institutions and leads to capacity-building among participating institutions. Otherwise, the other partners receive imprests accountable to KARI.

27. Stakeholder participation was high during benchmark characterization and diagnosis. The task force used various participatory approaches, including participatory learning and action research for soliciting important information and selecting demonstration sites. Existing initiatives have a successful cost-sharing component upon which the programme is building with respective local communities contributing in cash or in kind. Pilot activities have built on existing environmental committees, for example, in Marsabit, that are responsible for management of natural resources.

28. The use of members of the task force drawn from different institutions has been instrumental in providing unique opportunities in data collection. The National Museums of Kenya, for instance, have a rich database on drylands biodiversity that has helped to contextualize data obtained using questionnaires by the task force. The programme is exploiting existing research networks, giving priority to partners with advantages on selected zones and the capacity to contribute towards project objectives. This approach is intended to reduce the cost of project implementation, maximize the impact of GEF incremental funding and increase the sustainability of the project.

D. Financial management

29. Following the signing of a contract between KARI and ICRISAT on 11 December 2002, a cheque of $50,000 was disbursed to the Kenya Desert Margins Programme in January 2003 for staff and project-related activities. Delays in disbursement were reported both by the secretariat and partner institutions. As mentioned earlier, these were partly associated with the staffing of the national coordinating unit. The secretariat had not yet received the 50 per cent balance for 2003 and a request had been submitted to ICRISAT. The staff interviewed confirmed that the Government was contributing both in cash and in kind. As part of its contribution, the Government provides office space for the project and staff, such as the coordinator (50 per cent time) and two assistants (90 per cent time).

30. The financial rules of the Government of Kenya are being applied in managing financial resources based on a budget approved by ICRISAT. Initially, funds were disbursed to partner institutions mainly on an imprest basis. The project is giving up to 100 per cent of approved funding to institutions that have signed memorandums of understanding with KARI. There was no evidence, however, that subcontracts were signed for payments made to the members of the task force.

V. Accomplishment of the project components

31. The following sections constitute a descriptive presentation of the activities and progress of the Kenya programme to date.

A. Component 1: Ecological monitoring and assessment

32. This component has 13 subcomponents covering the three inter-related ecological zones — the Marsabit sites, the Turkana sites and the southern rangelands. Its focus is on laying the basis for further work, providing a baseline from which to work and information on the impact of biodiversity loss.

33. A task force constituted by the National Steering Committee undertook various activities under this component, which were documented as Benchmark characterization: Kenya country report. Close scrutiny of this report reveals that it fails to adequately address the specific items under this component as required by the project document. Instead, it gives descriptive data that are not sufficient in guiding policy decisions or serving as a reference to the impact of the project with regard to biodiversity restoration. Field staff should capture the various components for detailed documentation in the second phase of the project process, especially for monitoring and evaluation.

B. Component 2: Strategies for the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of degraded agro-ecosystems

34. Although this component is not budgeted for in Phase I, KARI and KEFRI are undertaking field-testing and implementation of best practices that could be upgraded during subsequent phases of the project.

C. Component 3: Capacity-building

35. Discussions with partners suggest that there is no clear-cut strategy on capacity-building at various levels of the project. The starting point of needs assessment has not been harmonized. Despite records of capacity gaps in the characterization document, no attempt has been made to uplift and translate them into capacity-building, especially at the local level.

36. So far, through collaboration with international agencies such as the Tropical Soil Biology and Fertility (TSBF) Institute of the International Centre for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT), a PhD student is working on soil fertility promotion through nitrogen fixing-legumes. The local population is also involved in KARI and KEFRI demonstrations that could be scaled up during subsequent phases of the project.

D. Component 4: Alternative livelihood systems

37. The benchmark characterization and diagnosis report points out many opportunities for livelihoods among the target communities. In the list are best natural resource management practices that have worked elsewhere and are being promoted in the three zones. These opportunities ought to be effectively documented for timely sharing.

E. Component 5: Sound policy interventions for sustainable resource management

38. The characterization document captures a number of policy options that promote natural resource management in the three zones. This report, however, provides only descriptive data, thus failing to build a critique on policy aspects such as land-tenure and property rights that are important for the programme.

F. Component 6: Participatory methods of the programme

39. Nothing much was accomplished under this component. The main achievement was the participation of the Kenya programme in TSBF testing of the soils/water/nutrient management model in the southern rangelands. Another important achievement was empowerment of the national coordinating unit through the procurement of equipment and materials for the coordination of the various partners.

G. Component 7: The target population involved in project process

40. The programme has involved local populations in the characterization of benchmarks and the subsequent choice of field sites. Initial and follow-up contacts were made during site characterization with potential stakeholders on the concepts and principles of the programme and on how synergy can produce sustainable impacts. The process, however, failed to identify vulnerable groups at this initial stage, especially for deciding which areas should be given priority.

41. The programme sponsored scientists to attend a course run by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in Vienna from 1 to 25 July 2003 within the framework of capacity-building. One scientist was sponsored by the AfNet network of TSBF-CIAT to attend a course on Farmer Participatory Research and Scaling Up (FPR/SU) course held in Arusha, Tanzania, from 28 October to 11 November 2003. Target groups at the local level have benefited through participation in demonstrations.

VI. Impact and Sustainability

42. Arresting land degradation through demonstrations of best practices and capacity-building can be an uphill task given the complex causative factors of desertification. The project under review has not made a visible impact given that it has been in place for less than two years. Despite the limitations, an examination of specific components, such as established consultation mechanisms, reveals that the set goal has been achieved.

A. Stakeholder participation

43. The project has involved stakeholders at various levels, including initial planning during the International Development Research Centre funding and the subsequent implementation since February 2003. KARI has subcontracted partners, initially by use of a letter of commitment that is being replaced with memorandums of understanding. The same partners were involved in the launching of the Kenya Desert Margins Programme and the setting up of the national coordination unit through decisions made by the National Steering Committee. There have been consultations with international agricultural research centres, national agricultural research systems and ICRISAT through various forums, including workshops and meetings at the beginning of the project to ensure that they take ownership of the project. However, additional effort is required to ensure that key partners such as ITDG-EA and the Kenya Wildlife Service play an active role for greater synergy. There also a need for the project to draw expertise from international agricultural research centres.

B. Sustainability and replicability

44. The project has been designed with a number of in-built sustainability components. As a result of limited funding, it has taken advantage of existing initiatives such as the Agroforestry for Integrated Development in the Semi-Arid Areas of Kenya (ARIDSAK), often invigorating the activities undertaken by partner agencies. The sustainability of the project and follow-up activities are assured by the active participation of government institutions and co-financing mechanisms. The priority of the project to promote alternative livelihoods and win-win measures is likely to have a positive impact on the set objectives by releasing pressure on natural resources and alleviating

poverty among vulnerable groups. Deliberate efforts, however, should be made to complement the cost-sharing strategies common in the ongoing initiatives if poor farmers are to benefit.

VII. Rating of project components

45. The terms of reference for the evaluation of Phase I contain a requirement to rate the success of the project on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being the highest (most successful) rating and 5 being the lowest as shown in the table below.

Component	Rating	Comments
Attainment of objectives and planned results	3	The delays experienced by the project could have been avoided
Attainment of outputs and activities	2	Some of the delays that occurred were beyond the control of the project
Cost-effectiveness	2	A model project in terms of consultative arrangements
Impact	2	Good chance of a visible impact to be realized
Sustainability	1–2	Activities are integrated into ongoing initiatives and the project has established a consultation mechanism.
Stakeholder participation	3	Key actors are yet to be involved and gender considerations are poorly addressed.
Country ownership	2	Partner institutions should give more time to project activities.
Implementation approach	1	Exemplary because it is participatory
Financial planning	3	Disbursement should be streamlined.
Replicability	2	Relevant demonstrations ongoing, but it is too early to rate this category.
Monitoring and evaluation	3	Staffing at the national coordinating unit ought to be addressed

VIII. Constraints and lessons learned

A. Constraints

46. The project experienced problems with regard to the procurement of office equipment and materials as the purchasing officers were sent on compulsory leave. This, coupled with the failure of the National Steering Committee to appoint a full-time assistant coordinator, has partly contributed to delays in the implementation of the planned activities and low-quality output. The performance of the project at this initial phase is dependent on the capacity of the partner institutions. Delay in the disbursement of GEF incremental funding has made it difficult for some institutions to implement the approved activities.

B. Lessons learned

47. It is too early to report with confidence on the lessons learned and good practices since work has not yet started at most sites. However, the following lessons and good practices have emerged:

(a) The Kenya Desert Margins Programme, through timely consultations with the stakeholders, has promoted confidence. Partners are involved in the project process through cash and in-kind contributions;

(b) The use of strategic partners in the project process means that the diverse expertise required to implement the various activities could be available now and at the end of project to sustain the impact;

(c) The diverse activities of the programme at geographically isolated sites is likely to have a limited impact given the limited resources involved and the shortness of the project period. The situation is compounded by delays that were experienced during the initial phase.

IX. Conclusions and recommendations

A. Conclusions

48. The project is timely in contributing the needed resources in view of fears that ARIDSAK support from the European Union and other donors may come to an end by mid-2004. Most of the activities of the project are building on existing initiatives. For this reason, the project has a start-up advantage in terms of networks and technologies that have already worked. All that is needed is for the project to incorporate complementary initiatives for greater impact.

B. Recommendations

49. The following recommendations are made:

(a) To ensure full commitment and timely delivery of services by the national coordinating unit, the National Steering Committee should address the staffing of the unit either by recruiting a full-time assistant coordinator on a competitive basis as stipulated in the project document or by increasing the man-hours of the current assistants on the project;

(b) Inasmuch as the Kenya programme will take advantage of existing initiatives, there is a need to use the lessons learned from past interventions as entry points. It is also important to address the gaps that have emerged following the benchmark characterization and diagnostic exercise, and as part of the recognition of expertise associated with the diversity of actors in the project process. This may need scientific documentation and consultation on proposal writing by the partners on respective sites;

(c) The national coordinating unit should make a deliberate effort, taking advantage of the staff of UNEP, to document and disseminate established and emerging lessons and livelihood options for timely impact at the national and regional levels.

(d) The non-governmental organizations community and government institutions should be actively involved in the project process for greater impact on the ground and project ownership. It may be useful to leave NEMA out of this committee to avoid compromising its role in project vetting.