

Document of
The World Bank

Report No: ICR00002730

IMPLEMENTATION COMPLETION AND RESULTS REPORT
(TF54199)

ON A

GRANT FROM THE

GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY TRUST FUND

IN THE AMOUNT OF US\$5.50 MILLION

TO THE

REPUBLIC OF MALI

FOR A

GOURMA BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION PROJECT

June 27, 2013

AFT – Environment, Natural Resources, Water & Disaster Risk Management
AFCW3
Africa Region

CURRENCY EQUIVALENTS

(Exchange Rate Effective June 2013)

Currency Unit= FCFA France

550 FCFA = US\$1

US\$0.18 =100 FCFA

FISCAL YEAR

January 01 to December 31

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AFD	<i>Agence Française de Développement</i> (French Development Agency)
AIG	<i>Association Intercommunale du Gourma</i> (Inter-communal Gourma Association)
AMCFE	<i>Association Malienne pour la Conservation de la Faune et de l'Environnement</i> (Malian conservation NGO)
ANICT	<i>Agence Nationale pour l'Investissement des Collectivités Territoriales</i> (National Agency for Investment in Local Governments)
CAS	Country Assistance Strategy
CCC	<i>Centre des Conseils Communaux</i> (Center for Communal Councils)
CDD	Community-Driven Development
CDP	Communal Development Plan
CIO	Intercommunal Orientation Committee (<i>Comite International d'Orientation</i>)
CMO	<i>Cellule de mise en œuvre</i> (Field Implementation Unit)
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora
DNCN	<i>Direction Nationale de la Conservation de la Nature</i> (National Directorate for Nature Protection)
DNCT	<i>Direction Nationale des Collectivités Territoriales</i> (National Directorate of Local Governments)
DNPN	National Directorate for Pollution and Nuisance
DRCN	<i>Directions Régionales de la Conservation de la Nature</i> (Regional Directorate for Nature Protection)
FFEM	<i>Fonds Français pour l'Environnement Mondial</i> (French GEF)
FICT	<i>Fonds d'Investissement des Collectivités Territoriales</i> (Investment Fund for Local Governments)
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GEFCOPG EPRENAF	<i>Projet de Gestion Participative des Ressources Naturelles et de la Faune</i> (Pilot Community-Based Natural Resources and Wildlife Management project)
ICD	Interactional Convention on Desertification
IER	L'Institut d'Economie Rurale
UCN	<i>Union Mondiale pour la Conservation de la Nature</i> (International Union for Conservation of Nature)
MDR	<i>Ministère du Développement Rural</i> (Ministry of Rural Development)
OGAC	<i>Organisation de Gestion des Aires de Conservation</i> (Conservation Area Management Organizations)
PACL	<i>Projet d'Appui aux Collectivités Territoriales</i> (Local Government Support Project)
PACR	<i>Projet d'Appui aux Collectivités Régionales</i> (Regional Government Support Project)
PADL	<i>Projet d'Appui au Développement Local</i> (Local Development Support Project)
PAGEN	Partnership for Natural Ecosystem Management (in Burkina Faso)
PAIB	<i>Projet d'Appui aux Initiatives de Base</i> (Grassroots Initiatives Support Project)
PASAOP	<i>Projet d'Appui aux Services Agricoles et aux Organisations Professionnelles</i> (Agriculture and Professional Organization Support Project)
PCVBG	<i>Projet de Conservation et Valorisation de la Biodiversité du Gourma</i> (French acronym for the Project)
PGRN	<i>Projet de Gestion des Ressources Naturelles</i> (Natural Resources Management Project)
P I M	Project Implementation Manual
PNIR	<i>Projet National d'Équipement Rural</i> (Rural Equipment Project)

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MALI
GOURMA BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION PROJECT

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Data Sheet

A. Basic Information

Country:	Mali	Project Name:	Gourma Biodiversity Conservation Project
Project ID:	P052402	L/C/TF Number(s):	TF-54199
ICR Date:	03/18/2013	ICR Type:	Core ICR
Lending Instrument:	SIL	Borrower:	GOVERNMENT OF MALI
Original Total Commitment:	USD 5.50M	Disbursed Amount:	USD 5.36M
Revised Amount:	USD 5.50M		
Environmental Category: B		Global Focal Area: B	
Implementing Agencies: Unité de gestion de projet (UGP), Ministère de l'environnement et de l'assainissement			
Cofinanciers and Other External Partners: Le Fonds français pour l'environnement mondial (FFEM), UNDP, IUCN			

B. Key Dates

Process	Date	Process	Original Date	Revised / Actual Date(s)
Concept Review:	06/24/1998	Effectiveness:	07/14/2005	09/09/2005
Appraisal:	10/17/2002	Restructuring(s):		03/22/2011
Approval:	09/02/2004	Mid-term Review:	03/30/2007	03/26/2009
		Closing:	06/30/2011	12/31/2012

C. Ratings Summary

C.1 Performance Rating by ICR

Outcomes:	Moderately Satisfactory
Risk to Global Environment Outcome	High
Bank Performance:	Moderately Satisfactory
Borrower Performance:	Moderately Satisfactory

C.2 Detailed Ratings of Bank and Borrower Performance

Bank	Ratings	Borrower	Ratings
Quality at Entry:	Moderately Unsatisfactory	Government:	Moderately Satisfactory
Quality of Supervision:	Moderately Satisfactory	Implementing Agency/Agencies:	Satisfactory
Overall Bank Performance:	Moderately Satisfactory	Overall Borrower Performance:	Moderately Satisfactory

C.3 Quality at Entry and Implementation Performance Indicators			
Implementation Performance	Indicators	QAG Assessments (if any)	Rating
Potential Problem Project at any time (Yes/No):	Yes	Quality at Entry (QEA):	None
Problem Project at any time (Yes/No):	Yes	Quality of Supervision (QSA):	None
GEO rating before Closing/Inactive status	Moderately Satisfactory		

D. Sector and Theme Codes		
	Original	Actual
Sector Code (as % of total Bank financing)		
Central government administration	25	25
General agriculture, fishing and forestry sector	40	40
Other social services	20	20
Sub-national government administration	15	15
Theme Code (as % of total Bank financing)		
Biodiversity	40	40
Environmental policies and institutions	20	20
Participation and civic engagement	20	20
Rural non-farm income generation	20	20

E. Bank Staff		
Positions	At ICR	At Approval
Vice President:	Makhtar Diop	Calisto Madavo
Country Director:	Ousmane Diagana	A. David Craig
Sector Manager:	Jonathan S. Kamkwala	Mary Barton- Dock
Project Team Leader:	Emmanuel Y. Nikiema	Jean Michel Pavy
ICR Team Leader:	Emmanuel Y. Nikiema	
ICR Primary Author:	Rosemary M. Cubagee	

F. Results Framework Analysis

Project Development Objective (from Project Appraisal Document):

Biodiversity degradation trends are stopped and, in some cases, reversed in key conservation areas and project sites in the Gourma.

Global Environment Objective (from GEF Grant Agreement):

To assist the Recipient in implementing environmental protection and biodiversity conservation activities in the Sahelian priority area of Gourma through improved sustainable management of natural resource use and improved returns for the local population.

The original PDO from the PAD was revised several times. However, the project team felt that the GEO in the GEF Grant Agreement best captured the project objectives and therefore used it as the functional project development objective in the project's results framework.

Revised Global Environment Objectives (as approved by original approving authority):

The level two restructuring in March 2011 reconfirmed that the GEO in the original GEF Grant Agreement best captured the project objectives. The ICR therefore uses the GEO as the definition of the program development objective.

(a) GEO Indicator(s)

Indicator	Baseline Value	Original Target Values (from approval documents) ¹	Formally Revised Target Values ²	Actual Value Achieved at Completion or Target Year
Date achieved	10/17/2002	10/17/2002	03/22/2011	12/31/2012
GEO: <i>To assist the Recipient in implementing environmental protection and biodiversity conservation activities in the Sahelian priority area of Gourma through improved sustainable management of natural resource use and improved returns for the local population.</i>				
1. Total Gourma area demarcated as biodiversity conservation area	0		2200 sq. km	2752 sq. km
2. Number of OGAC engaged in protection of newly created conservation areas	0		4	4
3. Number of project beneficiaries whose lives have been improved by project results (% of whom are female)	0		881 (13%)	900 (14%)

¹ The PAD specifies different PDO level indicators and corresponding targets than was eventually used by the project; therefore original target values for this list of indicators have not been specified. The Results Framework in Annex 8 tracks project progress along the PDO indicators that the project actually used.

² Value already achieved at the time of project restructuring and subsequent revision of targets are denoted in the Results Framework in Annex 8.

(b) Intermediate Outcome Indicator(s)

Indicator	Baseline Value	Original Target Values (from approval documents)³	Formally Revised Target Values⁴	Actual Value Achieved at Completion or Target Year
Date achieved	10/17/2002	10/17/2002	03/22/2011	12/31/2012
Intermediate Result 1 (Component 1): Support to intercommunal management of conservation areas				
Revised Intermediate Result 1 (Component 1): Creation and management of biodiversity conservation areas				
1.Number of inter-communal conservation areas formally created	0		4	4
2.Number of plans for development and management of conservation areas developed	0		4	4
3.Number of development and management plans for state implementation developed	0		4	1
Intermediate Result 2 (Component 2): Support to community-based biodiversity initiatives				
Revised Intermediate Result 2 (Component 2): Support to local communities in the development of biodiversity micro-projects				
1.Number of sustainable biodiversity micro-projects implemented by local communities	0		50	63
2.Number of beneficiaries of biodiversity micro-projects (% of whom are female)	0		900 (20%)	7335 (47%)

³ The PAD specifies different intermediate outcome level indicators and corresponding targets than was eventually used by the project; therefore original target values for this list of indicators have not been specified. The Results Framework in Annex 8 tracks project progress along intermediate outcome level indicators that the project actually used.

⁴ Value already achieved at the time of project restructuring and subsequent revision of targets are denoted in the Results Framework in Annex 8.

Intermediate Result 3 (Component 3): Capacity building for communal and intercommunal biological resources management				
Revised Intermediate Result 3 (Component 3): Capacity building of communes in biological resources management				
1. Number of communes in project area that have included and implement biodiversity actions in their economic, social, and cultural development plans	0		20	23
2. AIG is created and operational	Yes		Yes	Yes
Intermediate Result 4 (Component 4): Capacity building for public support to decentralized biodiversity management				
Revised Intermediate Result 3 (Component 3): Capacity building of public institutions in decentralized management of biodiversity				
1. Number of technical staff of the National Directorate of Forestry trained to support and advise local communities and municipalities in the management of biological resources in the Gourma	0		60	81

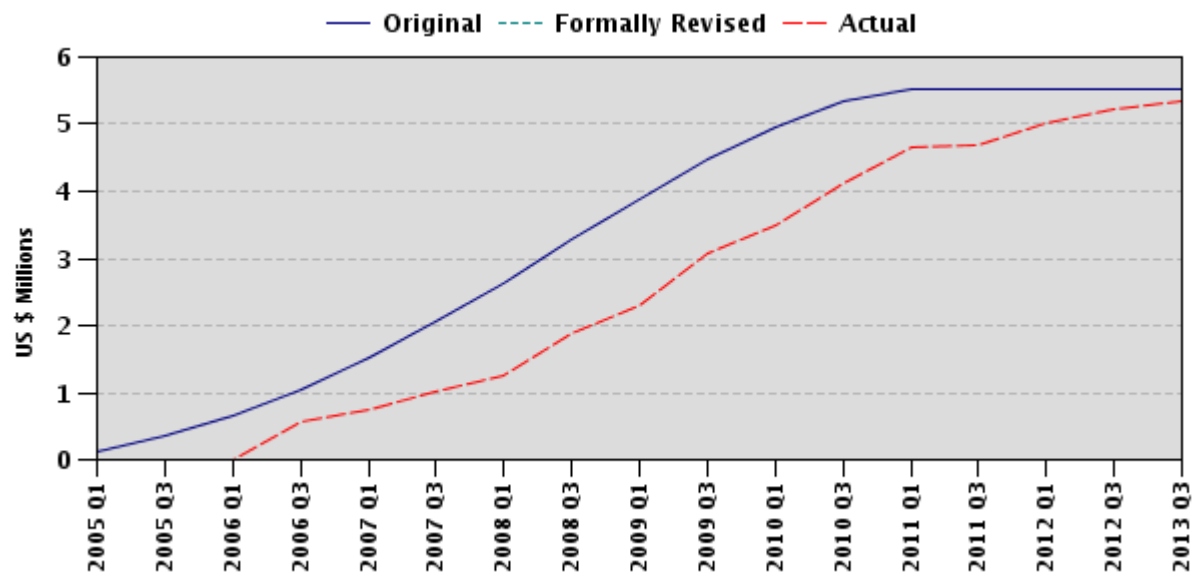
G. Ratings of Project Performance in ISRs

No.	Date ISR Archived	GEO	IP	Actual Disbursements (USD millions)
1	12/14/2004	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	0.00
2	06/29/2005	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	0.00
3	12/29/2005	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	0.58
4	06/23/2006	Moderately Unsatisfactory	Moderately Unsatisfactory	0.58
5	10/05/2006	Moderately Satisfactory	Moderately Satisfactory	0.76
6	02/15/2007	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	0.84
7	06/04/2007	Moderately Unsatisfactory	Moderately Satisfactory	1.02
8	11/14/2007	Moderately Satisfactory	Moderately Satisfactory	1.39
9	05/28/2008	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	2.01
10	12/12/2008	Moderately Satisfactory	Moderately Satisfactory	2.76
11	06/09/2009	Moderately Unsatisfactory	Moderately Unsatisfactory	3.07
12	12/05/2009	Moderately Unsatisfactory	Moderately Unsatisfactory	3.75
13	06/25/2010	Moderately Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	4.12
14	03/28/2011	Satisfactory	Moderately Satisfactory	4.70
15	12/18/2011	Satisfactory	Moderately Satisfactory	5.04
16	07/11/2012	Moderately Satisfactory	Moderately Unsatisfactory	5.25

H. Restructuring (if any)

Level two restructuring on March 22, 2011.

I. Disbursement Profile



1. Project Context, Global Environment Objectives and Design

1.1 Context at Appraisal

1. Biodiversity loss has taken on extreme proportions throughout West Africa. While some countries assisted by the donor community have taken steps to address this loss in the Guinean forest and Sudanian Savanna, the arid Sahel ecosystem across the West Africa landscape has not benefited from significant attention by decision makers or donors.

2. Mali, a landlocked Sahelian country with extreme poverty, requested donor assistance to implement its environmental and biodiversity strategies in several priority areas. The Gourma is one such priority area that spreads over 3 million hectares (ha) between the Niger River bend and the Burkina Faso border. It possesses diverse landscape features – lakes, dunes, lowland forests and inselbergs⁵ – and unique biological features such as the continent's northernmost 350-strong elephant population. With the end of the Tuareg rebellion in 1994, human activity in the Gourma area increased. The high environmental degradation that followed, including extinction of local animal and plant populations and overall desertification, called for urgent action.

3. The Government of Mali (GOM) launched policy reforms to encourage conservation in the Gourma through community participation, moving away from centralized management. These reforms, which were widely viewed as genuine, participatory and democratic, provided the framework to launch the Gourma project. Development partners such as the UN Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) and Agence Française de Développement (AFD) were also supporting similar initiatives with the objective of increasing rural access to public services, socio-economic infrastructure, and productive natural resources management. In addition, as indicated in the project appraisal document (PAD), several Bank operations were improving delivery of basic services in other sectors such as agriculture/livestock, rural development, health and education, social infrastructure, and natural resources management. It is to be noted however, that there were no specific conservation projects in the Gourma at the launch of this project. It was in this scenario that the GEF and FFEM (French GEF) provided incremental financing for a 6-year period to alleviate, stop, and if possible, reverse, biodiversity degradation in the Gourma.

4. The Gourma project is directly aligned with the CAS for Mali, which selectively focuses on three main themes supporting the PSRP: (i) promoting growth; (ii) developing human resources; and (iii) public finance management and governance. The CAS recognizes that variable climatic conditions, which impede stable growth, are compounded by the degradation of natural resources, including vegetation cover and biodiversity. The Gourma Biodiversity Conservation Project, proposed in the baseline program to support “accelerated and redistributive growth” in the rural sector through sustainable biodiversity conservation, directly aligns with both the CAS and the PSRP.

⁵ An inselberg is an isolated hill or mountain, often heavily eroded on its lower slopes, rising abruptly from a plain.

1.2 Original Global Environment Objectives (GEO) and Key Indicators

5. **Global Environmental Objectives.** The original Global Environment Objective (GEO) as indicated in the GEF Grant Agreement was *“to assist the Recipient in implementing environmental protection and biodiversity conservation activities in the Sahelian priority area of Gourma through improved sustainable management of natural resource use and improved returns for the local population.”*

6. The GEO in the GEF Grant Agreement differs from the PDO in the PAD, which is: *“Biodiversity degradation trends are stopped and, in some cases, reversed, in key conservation areas and project sites in the Gourma.”*

7. The difference between the GEO in the GEF Grant Agreement and the PDO in the PAD was a potential source of confusion. The project team used the GEO in the grant agreement as it deemed that this definition better captured the project development objective. The ICR team therefore uses the definition of objectives in the original GEF Grant Agreement while assessing results of the project.

Key Performance Indicators. The following original key performance indicators were included in the PAD:

- i. Percentage improvement in key wildlife-based indicators by year 6: (i) 10% in Core Zone of four conservation areas; and (ii) 5% in Multiple Use Zone of four conservation areas.
- ii. Percentage improvement in vegetation cover and vegetation composition by year 6: (i) 10% in Core Zone of four conservation areas; and (ii) 5% in Multiple Use Zone of four conservation areas
- iii. Four conservation areas have acquired legal status and possess a management plan by year 6.
- iv. 50% of participants in training/awareness modules actively involved in conservation areas management by year 6.
- v. 50% biodiversity initiatives evaluated as successful in achieving agreed outcome and output by year 6.
- vi. An incentive-based and result-oriented system for direct financing is designed by year 2; adopted by year 3; tested by year 5; and functional by year 6.
- vii. Incidence of rural poverty decreased by 5% in rural areas

1.3 Revised GEO and Key Indicators, and reasons/justification

8. **Global Environmental Objectives.** The original GEO from the grant agreement was not revised despite the grant agreement being amended when the project was restructured in 2011. The PDO in the PAD went through multiple changes after the signing of the grant agreement. Among the two, the project team deemed that the original and unchanged GEO from the grant agreement was more effective in capturing the objectives of the Gourma project. The team was also advised by the Bank's Legal Department to use the legally agreed upon objectives in the grant agreement. The ICR team therefore uses the definition of objectives in the GEF Grant Agreement in assessing results of the project.

9. **Key Performance Indicators.** The Key Performance Indicators ultimately used to measure project progress differ from the ones included in the PAD. The project design specified that l'Institut d'Economie Rurale (IER) based in Bamako would implement activities to measure project progress against the key performance indicators and an MOU was signed between the PIU and IER to that effect. However, when the project commenced in 2005, IER stalled data collection over disagreements in contract pricing, and no data was collected until 2010. With less than two years remaining for project implementation and no M&E capacity to track project performance against the original key performance indicators, the project team revised the key performance indicators, still indicative of the original GEO, when the project was restructured in 2011. The revised GEO outcome indicators are below:

- i. Total Gourma area demarcated as biodiversity conservation area
- ii. Number of OGAC engaged in protection of newly created conservation areas
- iii. Number of project beneficiaries whose lives have been improved by project results (% of whom are female)

1.4 Main Beneficiaries

10. According to the PAD, the main beneficiaries of the project would be: (i) nine priority communes of the Gourma; and (ii) nine other communes, making a total of eighteen communes. The eighteen communes include Douentza in Mopti region; Rharous in Timbuktu; and Ansongo in the Gao region. It was estimated that the total population of the eighteen communes were: 150,000 in Douentza; 95,000 in Gourma-Rharous; and about 50,000 in N'Tillit. The population is made up of Tuaregs, Peuls, Songhai, and Dogon. Apart from Dogon and Songhai, who are mostly farmers, the majority of the population is engaged in pastoralism. The area also attracts seasonal herders from Burkina, Niger, and other regions in Mali.

11. The project would provide a range of local benefits to the above target population including marginal but sustainable improvement of living conditions and decreased vulnerability to climatic variations. These benefits would originate from: (1) better natural resources and grassland management and associated increases in productivity; (2) better local knowledge, awareness and empowerment of communes for management of fragile land resources; and (3) better national capacity, legislation, and institutions for decentralized management of natural resources.

12. In addition to the above, global benefits would be generated through: (1) increased ecological security of flora and fauna that are rare or threatened on a regional and global scale, including the northernmost populations of African elephants; (2) preservation of a representative area of the West Africa Sahelian natural ecosystems that are exceptional on a national, regional, and global scale; and (3) preserving genetic diversity within ecologically, economically, and culturally important species in natural populations within their historical ranges.

13. Annex 3 shows in detail local, regional, and the global benefits expected from the project.

1.5 Original Components (as approved)

The project originally had four main components.

- 1) Support to inter-communal management of conservation areas;
- 2) Support to community-based biodiversity initiatives;
- 3) Capacity building for communal & inter-communal biological resources management;
- 4) Capacity building for public support to decentralized biodiversity management;

Component 1: Support to inter-communal management of conservation areas (US\$1.97 million)

14. This component aimed to support inter-communal management of conservation areas via (1) local capacity building including: (a) communication, (b) creation of Conservation Area Management Organizations (OGACs), and (c) training; (2) studies, including ecological diagnostics and applied research; (3) creation and management of conservation areas including: (a) negotiation, delineation, and gazettement of conservation areas and core zones, and (b) preparation of conservation area management plans; and (4) implementation of conservation area management plans including: (a) construction and maintenance of small infrastructure (deepening existing ponds, repairing dirt roads), (b) surveillance of conservation areas, (c) use of conservation areas, and (d) local wildlife surveys.

Component 2: Support to community-based biodiversity initiatives (US\$1.49 million)

15. This component aimed to support community-based biodiversity initiatives via (1) community awareness building; (2) community training; (3) complementary biological diagnostics on communal land; (4) specific studies to explore options for: (a) ecological restoration outside conservation areas; and (b) tourism development and private sector involvement; and (5) biodiversity-related local initiatives. The following list of eligible local initiatives were defined: (a) protection of threatened local biological resources, (b) improvement of natural pond, wetland, spring or watercourse management, (c) improvement of forest management, (d) improvement of pasture land management, (e) measures in favor of elephant conservation and cohabitation with populations, (f) bushfire control, (g) education on biodiversity, (h) support to conservation of cultural assets, (i) support to ecotourism development, and (j) support to sustainable use of secondary products. The project would not finance any local socioeconomic initiatives such as roads, schools, storage facilities, dispensaries, wells, dams, tree plantations, agriculture, and livestock.

Component 3: Capacity building for communal and intercommunal biological resources management (US\$3.12 million)

16. This component aimed to support capacity building for communal and inter-communal biological resources management via – (1) support the Inter-communal Orientation Committee (CIO), Communal Councils (CC), and Centers for Communal Councils (CCC) through workshops, legal advice, and travel facilitation; (2) contracting out design, creation and capacity building of the Inter-communal Gourma Association (AIG); and (3) studies and workshops including: (a) study of rangeland users and tenure, (b) regional and local workshops on conservation and range use, (c) consolidation of communal development plans for territorial coherence as well as design and adoption of a territorial chart or equivalent, and (d) designing and testing an incentive-based mechanism for financing conservation areas in Gourma.

Component 4: Capacity building for public support to decentralized biodiversity management (US\$2.50 million)

17. This component aimed to support capacity building for public support to decentralized biodiversity management. The component had 3 sub-components: (4.1) support to Gourma operation, (4.2) national supervision and stocktaking, and (4.3) project management and audits. Sub-component 4.1 Support to project operations in Gourma would finance: (1) support to the nature conservation services operating in the Gourma; (2) support to other public de-concentrated institutions or NGOs; (3) monitoring of the Environmental and Social Analysis as well as the Process Framework; (4) contracting the IER to: (a) conduct external ecological monitoring, (b) monitor vegetative cover and land use, and (c) set up and manage a local Geographical Information System (GIS) to monitor habitat and land use and produce maps; and (5) conduct trans-frontier coordination with Burkina Faso. Sub-component 4.2 Support for national supervision and stocktaking would finance: (1) incremental support to DNCN including: (a) operational support, (b) training and awareness building, (c) documentation center and website; (2) studies and workshops including: (a) national reforms of biodiversity management, (b) transfer of natural resources management to Communes, (c) wildlife inventories, (d) feasibility studies, and (e) establishment of and fundraising for a Malian foundation. Sub-component 4.3 Project management and audits would finance: (1) incremental support to Steering Committee; (2) support to the Project Management Unit, for procurement, financial management, planning and supervision; and (3) audits.

1.6 Revised Components⁶

18. **Challenges in implementation.** The project faced a number of implementation challenges in its partnership with co-financier FFEM. During project commencement, FFEM proposed a specific NGO as the operating partner in the field, whereas the GEF emphasized the need for selection of the most effective implementation agency via a rigorous evaluation process. While FFEM ultimately failed to articulate the selection criteria for the proposed NGO, this decision delayed initiation of the project by more than a year. After implementation commenced, FFEM

⁶ Note: The revised components as stated in this section have the same text in the Restructured Report No.TF054199-MLI. The ICR Team finds the Restructured Report inadequate because some components describe what was aimed to be *done*, but not what was aimed to be *accomplished*.

demonstrated a lack of interest and commitment by abstaining from supervision missions and delays of up to six months in providing No Objections to TORs, until finally suspending contributions to the Gourma project.

19. The challenges in partnership with FFEM had three major impacts on the project:
- i. The suspension of disbursements from FFEM caused a financing gap that required the project team to re-prioritize activities.
 - ii. Delay in project commencement and slow pace of implementation necessitated postponing project closing date from June 31 2011 to December 31 2012 to complete priority activities.
 - iii. Delay in project commencement and slow pace of implementation also meant that intended synergies between the Gourma project and other GEF projects could not be harnessed. For example, the Gourma project was delayed in creating conservation areas and identifying sustainable biodiversity activities including small scale water infrastructure critical to ensure water availability for the Gourma elephant population, the most northern and the last desert elephants in Africa. Parallel and complimentary GEF projects that were designed to construct the infrastructure identified by the Gourma project to deliver sustainable biodiversity benefits had either closed or were out of funding by the time the Gourma project identified activities. Faced with an extreme, long-term drought, the Gourma project was obligated to re-prioritize its activities to include construction of critical small-scale infrastructure to sustain its elephant population.

20. ***Project restructuring.*** As a result of the above described challenges, the project was restructured and the grant agreement was amended on March 22, 2011 (See Report No.TF054199 MLI). The primary outcome of restructuring was a revision of project components and reduction of project scope to focus on activities that would directly contribute to achieving the GEO.

21. ***Results prior to restructuring.*** Before the project was restructured however, about 85 percent of the GEF grant had been disbursed, and some of the project's operational outputs had been realized. In line with the restructuring, the project's components were also revised as shown below. Note that the components below were planned for \$1.545 million, which comprised of the 15 percent of GEF grants remaining and any additional funds through other development partners.

Revised Component 1: Creation and management of biodiversity conservation areas (US\$253,908)

22. The scope of Component 1 was reduced to mainly focus on creation of conservation areas. The target number of conservation areas was reduced from seven to four. For the four conservation areas identified, baseline data already existed, therefore new baseline studies were not necessary. The component also financed the development and implementation of the four conservation areas management plans. Infrastructure works included in the management plans was limited to the rehabilitation of three water points to ensure continued availability of water for the Gourma elephants and for the communities.

Revised Component 2: Support to local communities in the development of biodiversity projects (US\$400,938)

23. The scope of Component 2 was reduced by removing activities planned to be financed by FFEM funds which were: (i) complementary diagnostics on biological resources of communal lands; (ii) specific studies to explore options for ecological restoration outside conservation areas; (iii) tourism development and private sector involvement. Instead, funds from the GEF were allocated to increase the development of biodiversity micro-projects due to a high demand for them in the communities.

Revised Component 3: Capacity building of communes in biological resources management (US\$72,956)

24. The scope of Component 3 was reduced to building the capacity of the International Orientation Committee (CIO), Community Council (Conseil Communal) (CC) and the Center for Communal Councils (Centre des Conseils Communaux) (CCC). The CIO would be formally upgraded to Intercommunal Gourma Association (Association Inter-communale due Gourma) (AIG), responsible for the long-term management of the conservation areas. The component would also support the 18 communes of the project for the inclusion of biodiversity activities in their communal development plans.

Revised Component 4: Capacity building of public institutions in decentralized management of biodiversity (US\$1,068,909)

25. The scope of Component 2 was reduced by removing activities planned to be financed by FFEM funds which were: (i) contract with l'Institut d'Economie Rurale (IER) to conduct external ecological monitoring, monitor of vegetative cover and land use, and to set-up and manage local Geographical Information System (GIS) to monitor habitat and land use and to produce maps, (ii) studies and workshops on national reforms of biodiversity management, (iii) wildlife inventories, and (iv) a study for the establishment and fundraising for a Malian foundation for biodiversity conservation. All remaining activities, i.e. (i) project management, (ii) support to State decentralized conservation services, (iii) monitoring of the environmental and social analysis as well as the process framework, and (iv) the trans-border conservation activities with International Union for Conservation of Nature (Union Mondiale pour la Conservation de la Nature)(UCN), would continue to be financed by the revised component.

1.7 Other significant changes

26. In addition to the modification of the project components and the extension of the project timeline, on April 23, 2007, UNDP signed a contract with the Government of Mali and committed a grant amount of US\$444,000 to participate in the Gourma project. Specifically, UNDP's operation covered four communes in Douentza in the Mopti region, which were in addition to the eighteen communes covered under the GEF/FFEM grant. The four communes were: Petaka, Koubowel-Koudia, Dianweli, and Tedji. The financing mainly supported sub-projects such as fisheries, nurseries for tree saplings, creation of protected areas, and improvement of existing lakes to provide water for both wildlife and domestic animals.

27. UNDP engaged officials from the Ministry of Environment (MOE), who were already staffed on the project, to manage the four additional communes. Although this compromised the

quality of management due to overworking of the staff, UNDP emphasized that engaging the MOE staff would enhance and improve capacity at the MOE and equip the staff with the capability and ownership required to set up an effective advisory team to work with AIG after the project closed.

2. Key Factors Affecting Implementation and Outcomes

28. Several issues directly affected project implementation: (i) lack of capacity at project implementation unit; (ii) delays in recruitment of specialists which also had a negative impact on procurement, disbursement, financial management and monitoring and evaluation of the project; (iii) delays in conducting feasibility studies and training; (iv) lack of counterpart funds and long delays in replenishment of the special accounts resulting in shortages of funds for the day to day operations of the project; and (v) long delays in receiving “No Objection” from FFEM due to a complicated financial arrangement between GEF and FFEM.⁷ In addition, on March 22, 2012, a coup d’état of the government was followed by an occupation of project areas by military groups. Table 1 details the major factors that affected project implementation.

Table 1: Summary of major issues and events that affected project implementation

Date	Major Issue	Action taken by IDA or Government
2005 - 2008	Long delays in receiving No Objection from FFEM; FFEM refused to pay for some studies and suspended its disbursements ⁸	Discussions
July 29, 2009	FFEM suspended disbursement to the project entirely ⁹	Discussions
May 25, 2010	QALP-2 reviewed the project and strongly recommended reduction of project scope	Project was restructured
September 27, 2010.	Government requested legal amendment of project to reflect (i) a reduction of project scope, (ii) a reallocation of project grant proceeds, and (iii) an extension of project closing date to from June 31, 2011 to December 31, 2012	IDA approved Government request to amend the GEF grant order to: (i) address a financing gap caused by disbursements suspension by FFEM, (ii) ensure water availability for the Gourma Elephants population, and (iii) extend project timeline to allow completion of planned activities.

⁷ See section 1.5 financial arrangements of the original project component. The project was co-financed by the Government of Mali, the GEF and the French GEF (FFEM).

⁸ See Annex 7, section 3.

⁹ August 2008 Aide-Memoire

May 2011		IDA conducted a field mission to assess the capacity of the Inter-communal Gourma Association (AIG) to manage the program. IDA certified that AIG had acquired the knowledge and technical capacity to take over program management from the Field Implementation Unit (CMO).
September, 2011		An Action Plan was adopted and agreed upon with the Bank, the Government, Wild Foundation and AIG to continue implementation of: Component 1, to support inter-communal management of conservation areas; Component 2, to support community-based biodiversity initiatives; and Component 3, to support capacity for communal & inter-communal biological resources management.
March 22, 2012	Military coup d'état in Mali	With exception of some emergency operations, IDA suspended all operational activities in Mali.
March, 2012	Military occupation in project areas ¹⁰	The Government relocated the CMO to Bamako for security and due to inability of the CMO to protect project areas

2.1 Project Preparation, Design and Quality at Entry

29. Project Preparation: Project preparation took into account lessons from the 1998 Quality Assurance Group (QAG) reviews of the Natural Resource Management Portfolio, the 1997 QAG review of biodiversity projects in Africa, and 1998 Environmental bank-wide review of biodiversity projects. Lessons from the Burkina pilot Community-Based Natural Resources and Wildlife Management Project (Projet de Gestion Participative des Ressources Naturelles et de la Faune) was also taken into account during project preparation. However, the project preparation team overlooked (i) trans-border issues in natural resources between Burkina Faso and Mali, and (ii) competition between different natural resource users in the area (i.e. farmers, herders, livestock, wildlife).

¹⁰ Even prior to the military coup d'état and occupation of project areas in March 2012, the project area was known to have a frequent invasion by military groups and thieves; vandalism was not uncommon.

30. Project Design: According to the PAD, communities and international and local NGOs were widely consulted during project design. The project was also aligned with the Bank's portfolio in Mali, the Agriculture and Professional Organization Support Project (PASAOP), and the Community-Based Rural Development Project (CBRD). Lessons from Northern Africa arid ecosystem projects in Morocco and Tunisia, Southern African compatibility of wildlife and livestock programs in Zimbabwe and Namibia were also taken into account in project design. However, the design team failed to take into account lack of basic water infrastructure in project areas. Also, the original PDO to reverse degradation in only five years in an area such as the Gourma, where there are large number of natural resource users, seemed too ambitious in relation to the economic and technical capability of the country and the lack of security in the project area.

31. In addition, the complicated Pari-Pasu¹¹ financial system between the three parties – the Government, GEF, and FFEM – contributed significant delays to the project implementation. Separately, the inconsistencies in the PDO, performance indicators, and outcome indicators in the PAD and the GEF grant agreement was a source of confusion. Also, the project preparation team did not proactively involve UNDP, which joined the project in 2007 amidst implementation, in project design.

32. Quality at Entry: During preparation, the project went through several quality control processes as shown below in section 2.4 under the discussion on Safeguards.

2.2 Implementation

33. In addition to the implementation challenges described in section 1.6, a misunderstanding between the donors cause a delay in the recruitment of Field Implementing Unit (FIU) staff. This delay also affected the recruitment of specialists such as disbursement, procurement and financial management specialists.

34. A mid-term review was conducted in March 2009, two years behind schedule. In response to the major implementation challenges, as described in sections 1.3 and 1.6, the Quality Assessment Group (QALP-2) conducted an assessment of the project, placing it under a risk status on May 25, 2010. QALP-2 recommended that: (i) the project be restructured; (ii) the scope of work be reduced to focus on field activities that would directly contribute to achieving the project objective; and (iii) the remaining GEF funds be used for the revised project components. The project was restructured in March 22, 2011, during which project components were revised as per QALP-2 recommendations, and the closing date was extended by 18 months from June 31, 2011 to December 31, 2012.

35. The reduction in scope of work after restructuring made implementation of the project and achievement of outcomes more realistic. However, due to lack of security in the project area, the project team was relocated to Bamako in March 2012. All project activities were suspended; field

¹¹ Pari-Pasu: A shared financial system between the French Development Agency and other co-financiers.

staff, associates, and community members fled to southern cities in Mali or took refuge in neighboring Burkina Faso, Mauritania, and Niger.

2.3 Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Design, Implementation and Utilization

36. L’Institut d’Economie Rurale (IER) was contracted by the project team to conduct external monitoring and evaluation of the program, including ecological monitoring, tracking vegetative cover and land use, and setting up and managing a local Geographical Information System (GIS) to monitor habitat and land use and to produce relevant maps. However, as described in section 1.3, lack of commitment from IER resulted in no M&E data being collected until 2010, when the project team disengaged with IER. With less than two years remaining for project implementation and no M&E capacity to track project performance against the original key performance indicators, the project team seized the opportunity of the restructuring in March 2011 to revise the key performance indicators of the project. The revised indicators and targets reflect the reduced scope of the restructured project and consider the challenges in collecting data against the original performance indicators.

37. The ICR evaluates project performance against results reported against the revised indicators by the project team.¹² The ICR team however was unable to evaluate the performance of the M&E system due to technical complications at the Project Implementation Unit (PIU), and had to rely on a limited number of interviews to verify the project results reported by the project team since it was unable to visit the project site for a comprehensive evaluation due to lack of security.

2.4 Safeguard and Fiduciary Compliance

38. The Project Appraisal Document (PAD) rated the project as Category B. The following safeguard policies were triggered: (i) Environmental Assessment (EA) (OP/BP/GP 4.01); (ii) Natural Habitats (NH) (OP/BP/GP 4.04); and (iii) Involuntary Resettlement (IR) (OP/BP 4.12). In addition, due to the restructuring of the project and incorporation of small scale water infrastructure construction under the revised Component 1, an environmental impact assessment for the development of bore holes and a water pond was conducted in July 2011. These studies revealed that the water infrastructure would not have any negative environmental impact on the Gourma.

39. **EA (OP/BP/GP 4.01)** was triggered due to the estimated pastoralist population of 200,000 in the Gourma communes, as noted in the PAD. Although the project sought to conserve and restore biodiversity that had been greatly threatened by overhunting and overgrazing, and expected to yield (i) increased conservation area with associated rise in vegetation cover and wildlife populations, including the Gourma elephants; and (ii) improved management of grazing areas with consequential decrease in land degradation, there was a possibility that an increase in quality of grazing land could increase the number of livestock and attract herders from other areas

¹² Refer to Results Framework in Annex 8

which would (i) reverse positive trends established by the project, and (ii) increase degradation of local vegetation in lowland acacia forests from long sojourns of the increased elephant population.

40. The Environmental and Social Assessment conducted during project design rated the project as “Marginal for Environmental Risks.” In order to reduce this risk, the project design incorporated work in conservation areas and included a framework for screening and monitoring micro-projects. In addition, the PAD indicated that unexpected risks would be dealt with as detected during project implementation. **During project implementation none of the above issues were encountered.**

41. **NH (OP/BP/GP 4.04)** was triggered, according to the PAD, since NH was “relevant not in terms of threat mitigation but in terms of conformity with the program’s global objective, which is to improve the long-term standing of biodiversity within natural ecosystems.” **During project implementation none of the above issues was encountered**

42. **IR (OP/BP 4.12)** was triggered as a precaution, even though project design did not require involuntary resettlement, as the limits of conservation areas and their management rules would be negotiated with all communities to ensure this. However, since collective management of communal resources could restrict certain users access to conservation area resources, and in particular, could cause a discrepancy between the benefits reaped by farmers and herders and the will of the powerful traditional elite. A Framework Process was prepared and cleared by ASPEN. Local biodiversity micro-projects outside the protected areas did not require land acquisition, and consequently no Resettlement Plan or Policy Framework was required or prepared.

43. An Environment and Social Management Plan (ESMP) was prepared for the project. A National Directorate for Pollution and Nuisance (NDPN) was setup to monitor EAs and to ensure external control of the ESMP implementation. A provisional fund was also established to mitigate unexpected adverse environmental and social impact that would materialize during project implementation. **During project implementation none of the above issues was encountered.**

44. No additional safeguard policies were triggered by restructuring of the project in March 2011.

2.5 Post-completion Operation/Next Phase

45. The Government of Mali intends to continue with the Gourma biodiversity program for future operation in the sector. The operation of the field activities was successfully transferred to AIG in September 2012. According to the PIU, the government has demonstrated ownership of AIG by providing financial support to its operations in the order of 150 million CFA for FY2013 and a pledge of 228 million CFA for FY 2014. In contrast, during the lifetime of the project, one of the major challenges to project implementation was delays in dispatching of funds from FFEM. The sustainability and performance of AIG is therefore expected to improve with project completion.

46. The Government of Mali has denoted that in addition to UNDP, Japan and Denmark have expressed an interest to bilaterally contribute to future operations. Towards this, the government has tasked a team of experts to prepare a new program that covers the entire Gourma area. The government is also preparing an emergency program for northern Mali, which includes the Gourma area.

3. Assessment of Outcomes

3.1 Relevance of Objectives, Design and Implementation

47. The project objectives were relevant and realistic. At the time of project preparation, both the Country Assistance Strategy (CAS) (Report No. 25663 MLI) and the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) (Cadre Stratégique de Lutte contre la Pauvreté, May 2002) supported the project objectives. Also, the project was also aligned with the most recent CAS dated April 28, 2011, which stated: “the Bank will continue to help strengthen the resilience of agricultural and natural resources sectors with the preparation of a regional Bank/GEF project in support of the Great Green Wall initiative. The Urban Environment Analysis will also help to identify areas of collaboration for sustainable urban development.”

48. According to the PAD, Mali ratified the Biodiversity Convention (1992), the Convention on Migratory Species (1990) and the Desertification Convention (1996). The project was consistent with the GEF Operational Strategy for biodiversity, particularly OP1 (Arid/semi-arid ecosystems) through support for activities in savanna grassland habitats of the Sahelian ecosystem. It was also consistent with the Objectives (Art. 2) and Principles (Art. 3) of the Desertification Convention. In addition, according to the PAD, the project (i) was consistent with the Conference of the Parties (COP) guidance, because it focused on the conservation of critical ecosystems and threatened species; (ii) supported local communities to be actively involved in management decisions as beneficiaries of protected area management; and (iii) responded to COP3 guidance by promoting capacity building for conservation and sustainable use through improvement of natural resources management. Also, in line with COP4 guidance, the project took the ecosystems approach to maximize biodiversity conservation in a range of ecosystems under different management regimes, involving a range of stakeholders including local communities as well as the private sector, NGOs and government agencies.

49. Despite the above approach however, the project design appeared to be too optimistic. The design team overlooked the lack of technical capacity, the political risk, and regional insecurity. In addition, project design did not foresee that crucial water infrastructure that the Gourma project relied on would not be built by other GEF projects if the Gourma project did not identify the need for such infrastructure on time. Delays on part of the project co-financiers led to such intended synergies being missed, and necessitated a re-prioritization of activities and reallocation of GEF funds to fill the basic water infrastructure gap.

3.2 Achievement of Global Environmental Objectives

50. As mentioned in paragraph 1.3, when the project was restructured, about 85% of the GEF grant had been disbursed and some of the projected operational outputs had already been realized. These outputs were: (i) improved knowledge and awareness in biodiversity within the Gourma population; (ii) creation of four conservation areas; and (iii) creation of the Inter-communal Gourma Association (AIG). In addition, the following key activities were on track: (i) organization of 18 mayors into an inter-communal committee; (ii) demarcation and formalization of the conservation areas through a consultative and participatory process; (iii) organization of communities into cohesive groups (OGAC) responsible for managing communal conservation areas; and (iv) building the capacity of OGAC for conservation area management.

51. At the closing of the project, the following outputs were noted in both project files and in the Government's report: (i) over 2,750 km² in the Gourma area had been established as biodiversity conservation areas (against the target of 2200 km², meaning a 125 percent achievement of set target); (ii) 4 communal and inter-communal conservation areas had been formally created (against the target of 4); (iii) 63 biodiversity micro-projects had been developed by local communities (against a target of 50); and, (v) 23 communes have included biodiversity activities in their economic, social, and cultural development plans (against a target of 20). Most importantly, the AIG has been established and is managing and monitoring environmental protection and biodiversity conservation activities in the Sahelian priority area of the Gourma. The above outcomes indicate that the revised targets after the reduction in scope of work at restructuring (section 1.3) were fully achieved in line with the GEO which was: "to assist the recipient in implementing environmental protection and biodiversity conservation activities in the Sahelian priority area of Gourma, through improved sustainable management of natural resource use, and improved returns for the local population." The project therefore contributed to the GEO, but at a scale smaller than originally intended at the outset of the project.

52. It should be noted however that, due to the political instability which brought insecurity in the project implementation area, the ICR team was unable to visit the project area to verify some of the above achievements. Particularly, at the closing of the project and during the preparation of this report, most of the Gourma area was occupied and inaccessible due to insecurity. The Government of Mali had relocated all technical staff to Bamako.

3.3 Efficiency

53. The PAD did not calculate the economic and financial analysis for the project. However, in addition to some of the positive project impacts measured in section 3 of the PAD, the following social benefits were suggested: (1) improved natural resources management; (2) improved well-being of the population; and (3) enhanced local capacities. Note again that the ICR team was unable to verify these benefits in the field due to insecurity in the area; the benefits are therefore drawn from remotely collected anecdotal evidence.

Improved natural resources management

54. All of the 22 rural communes in the Gourma area integrated biodiversity and natural resources management in their local and social development plans. In addition, communes have

displayed the ability to seek and evaluate various partners to support natural resources management in their communes. This important behavior change is a powerful impact of the project.

55. Due to the insecurity situation, it was not possible to verify the above benefits in the field. However, according to anecdotal evidence, including a GEF documentary “Mali Elephants in the Sands of Gourma”¹³ narrated by Dr. Noumou Diakita, Elephant Biodiversity Consultant, the project has improved the well-being of the local population. The video attributes the increases in elephant population, protected areas, and plant preservation to the Gourma project.

Improved well-being of the population

56. Many households have improved their incomes through micro-projects on biodiversity development and management. For example, women’s groups in Dimamou that received skill development training on scaling, smoking, and trading fish have seen their revenues increase by 5-15 million FCFA in a 3 year period.¹⁴ Similarly, pastoralists involved in protection of pastures against bushfires have seen annual savings of millions of FCFA by averting loss of cattle caused by shortage of fodder and unaffordability of cattle feed.

57. Accordingly, improved incomes can be expected from small-scale irrigation, gardening, cattle and sheep fattening, food product processing, fuel-wood, seedling production and fishing. A less direct income impact would also come in the form of: (i) Yield increases resulting from soil fertility interventions; (ii) Reduced incidence of waterborne diseases from clean water; (iii) Improved access to basic health built in response to communal health centers; (iv) Increased child enrollment through village schools built in response to public demand; and (v) Increased local employment opportunities through contracting of local artisans and small-scale entrepreneurs.

Enhanced local capacity

58. Many actions from participants of trainings, awareness campaigns, and study tours as part of the project demonstrated enhanced local capacity anticipated in the PAD. Community members have demonstrated the ability to evaluate and choose a biodiversity micro-project, articulate the value of trees, display good reforestation practices, fight poachers, respect elephant pathways, conserve and re-plant threatened tree and grass species, among others.

3.4 Justification of Overall Outcome Rating

Rating: Moderately Satisfactory

59. The project is relevant to the country’s development objectives which were: conservation of ecosystems and threatened species; support to local communities to be actively involved in management of natural resources; and promotion of capacity building for conservation and sustainable natural resources. Despite the project contributing to the GEO was at a scale smaller

¹³ “Mali Elephants in the Sands of Gourma” can be accessed at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KvEL3TKgOuQ>

¹⁴ Annual Project Report, 2010

than intended at the outset of the project as mentioned in section 3.2 above, and multiple implementation challenges due to lack of PIU capacity; delays in the recruitment of specialists and conducting feasibility studies and training; delays in counterpart funding; and exogenous political and security issues, the project has facilitated in the Government of Mali issuing an official decree on 4 conservation areas, which are complemented by management plans developed and overseen by the communes. The project fully achieved the indicators as agreed by the Bank and Government in a formal restructuring process, which took into account practicalities faced during project implementation. Conservation promoting behavior change was an important outcome of the project, and though insecurity constraints prevented the ICR from verifying behavior in the field, remotely collected information suggests sustainability of project results.

3.5 Overarching Themes, Other Outcomes and Impacts

(a) Poverty Impacts, Gender Aspects, and Social Development

60. Poverty impact and gender aspects: An impact assessment¹⁵ of the macro-projects supported by the project revealed that the macro-projects had improved income of the beneficiaries. For instance, female fish mongers in the Damamou village experienced an eighty percent increase in annual income due to energy efficient technology adopted in fish smoking. The improved quality of the smoked fish due to this technology also increased demand and subsequently raised revenues. Also, there is an increase in pasture areas due to reduction in bush fires. An assessment by the AIG president revealed an annual cost savings of about 1 billion CFAF due to improved vegetation of animal pastures.¹⁶

61. Social development: The project has improved trans-border natural resources management between Mali and Burkina Faso, resulting in cooperation between the two governments in the border countries. This partnership that has developed between communities on each side of the border facilitated integration of Malian refugees into local communities in Burkina Faso.

(b) Institutional Change/Strengthening

62. The Government has officially integrated biodiversity and conservation of natural resources into its legislation. The government has also authorized local governments to create and manage their own protected areas.

c) Other Unintended Outcomes and Impacts (positive or negative, if any)

63. Not applicable

3.6 Summary of Findings of Beneficiary Survey and/or Stakeholder Workshops

64. The ICR team had to use sub-optimal methods to collect information from beneficiaries in the project areas due to insecurity constraints. The ICR was confined to gathering findings

¹⁵ Rapport du comité de suivi du projet, 2011

¹⁶ This result was provided to the project team during a field visit with the OGAC during a supervision mission in 2011. Results are captured in Annual Project Report, 2011.

through phone conversations with a range of beneficiaries including the Secretary General of the Conservation Area Management Organization (OGAC) in the Banzena area and the President of OGAC in the Boni area. According to these two officials, the project has brought to communities: (i) an awareness of natural resource conservation and management; (ii) benefits of micro-projects on bio-diversity conservation; and (iii) valuable knowledge regarding conservation of natural resources through study tours to Burkina Faso and Benin.

4. Assessment of Risk to Development Outcome

Rating: High

65. The risk to development outcome is high. The PAD rated the following risks as substantial:

- i. Projects results and commune commitments are not sufficient incentives for donors to commit funds to sustainable financing after the project end;
- ii. Early demonstration of range improvement is not sufficient incentive for communities to improve behavior toward conservation and actively engage in conservation activities;
- iii. Biodiversity is in a downward spiral in the entire Sahel. Already many wildlife and perennial grass species have disappeared in the Gourma;
- iv. Taking advantage of a real decentralization and a participatory conservation approach have a good chance to succeed in the Malian context, yet the management process is complex and behavior changes in the given fragile pastoral environment is difficult.

66. The following risks were not envisioned in the PAD: (i) lack of capacity at the PIU for financial management and procurement; (ii) delays in counterpart funds; (iii) complications in the financial arrangement with GEF and FFEM; (v) military coup d'état; and (vi) insecurity.

Assessment of predicted risks in the PAD and its impact on project outcomes:

- With regard to the risk that the project results and commune commitments might not be a sufficient incentives for donors to commit funds, the Government of Mali has indicated that donors such as UNDP, Japan, and Denmark have expressed interest in supporting and funding a follow-up project in the sector.
- On the risk that the early demonstration test of range improvement might not bring sufficient incentive for communities to improve their behavior on natural resource conservation, this risk was avoided due to the highly effective awareness campaign which targeted communities through local radio, documentaries, and movies capturing the benefits of micro-projects as mention above (section 3.5a).

67. The remaining two risks predicted in the PAD still apply, and were mainly amplified by the unforeseen insecurity situation the project faced during its implementation and the military coup d'état. Overall, the risk to the development outcome was high. At the closing of the project and during the preparation of this implementation completion and results report, the following issues still remained:

- All project activities had been suspended in the field due to insecurity in the project area;
- The project area was occupied by military groups;

- Associations, staff, and community members could no longer function, as local officials had fled the project area to southern cities in Mali or to neighboring countries such as Burkina Faso, Mauritania and Niger;
- It was impossible to predict the fate of project achievements such as equipment, hydraulic infrastructure, and the protected elephants in the areas occupied by rebels.

5. Assessment of Bank and Borrower Performance

5.1 Bank

(a) Bank Performance in Ensuring Quality at Entry

Rating: Moderately Unsatisfactory

68. The Bank's performance in project design is moderately unsatisfactory. Although project design was widely discussed with/and in consultation with the communes, international and local NGOs (section 2.1), and in the end produced some good results despite challenges external to the project design, the design of the components appeared too optimistic in its targeting 18 communes — resulting in modification of the components to reduce the scope of the work during implementation. The ICR team notes the design team's assertion that the Bank wanted to limit the project to 9 communes but decided to include all 18 at the insistence of the French Embassy, despite recognizing that the expanded scope overstretched the design, which ultimately affected implementation and supervision quality.

Also as indicated above (section 2.1), the design team appeared to not take into account the lack of basic infrastructure in the project areas due to delays in the Gourma project and missed synergies with other GEF projects. The project was not designed to build infrastructure for water provision. However, it is crucial that the target population's basic needs (like water) be met in order to get their commitment to a sustainable natural resources management project. The project was designed such that parallel GEF projects would provide basic infrastructure to address water needs; however due to very lengthy project preparation and delayed implementation, the Gourma project was not able to coordinate with the parallel GEF projects and the basic water infrastructure was not provided. The severity of the drought in the area and the death of elephants led to strong NGO pressure on the Gourma project to provide the water infrastructure, which Bank Management took seriously and the project team included and addressed as an activity at project restructuring. Foresight in planning and implementation by the design team could have ensured higher quality at entry on this front.

69. Additionally, lack of implementation capacity was an issue in the project, and no documentation was available to indicate that the skill and the capacity level of the Government and the project implementation unit for managing the project had been evaluated and appropriately addressed.

(b) Quality of supervision

Rating: Moderately Satisfactory

70. Supervision reports such as aide memoires, implementation status reports (ISRs) were accurately written. Results on financial management, safeguards issues were satisfactorily assessed

and reported. Regular supervision missions were conducted on time and the project status was accurately reported – which resulted in the project being put under a RISK status in May 2010, resulting in a recommendation for the restructuring and the modification of the components. The Project team was in constant communication with management, FFEM, UNDP, and the International Union for Nature Conservation (IUCN), the Government, and the PIU. The Supervision Team also took decisive drastic actions, and carefully handled the financial issue with FFEM by working with the Bank management and the Government to re-allocate GEF funds to components that directly contributed to the project objectives. Most of all, during the period of insecurity, project supervision continued although the Bank suspended non-emergency operations in the country. For the above reasons, quality of project supervision is moderately satisfactory.

(c) Justification of Rating for Overall Bank Performance

Rating: Moderately Satisfactory

71. The overall bank performance is moderately satisfactory. The Bank evaluated the project performance during its implementation and accurately modified the project components and reduced the scope of the work in order to achieve a realistic outcome of the project. Also, the Bank accurately re-allocated project funds within categories that are more feasible to be achieved. For the above reasons, the Bank's performance is moderately satisfactory

5.2 Borrower

(a) Government Performance

Rating: Moderately Satisfactory

72. Government performance is moderately satisfactory due to delays in: (i) recruitment of financial management and procurement specialists; (ii) conducting feasibility studies and trainings, and (iii) delays in Government's counterpart funds (See section 2.0). However, it seems some of the delays were partly due to the complications in the project's financial arrangements between three parties – the Government, GEF, and FFEM. The project's financial arrangement is shown below in Table 2.

- i. Under Component 1: Both GEF and FFEM were responsible for contracting studies, designing management plans, creation of OGAC, technical monitoring and all training;
- ii. Under Component 2: FFEM was responsible for 90% of the financing of local initiatives in favor of elephants or ecotourism;
- iii. Under Component 3: FFEM was responsible for 30% of contracts for the Field Implementation Unit; and
- iv. Under Component 4: FFEM was responsible for preliminary studies, technical monitoring, and all training in favor of the CIO, AIG, or intercommunity planning issues, and environmental awareness activities.

73. As indicated above, with this financial set-up, it was impossible for the Government to implement the project when FFEM declined to contribute as per its commitments. According to the Government, the co-financing system known as *Pari-Pasu*, where costs of goods and services are shared among co-financiers, resulted in confusion and complications between the Government and FFEM.¹⁷

¹⁷ August 2008 Aide-Memoire

Table 2: Original Financing arrangements between the project components

Project Components	GEF & FFEM	GEF	FFEM	Communities	Government
Component 1: All contracts for studies, design of management plans, creation of OGAC, technical monitoring and all training	X				
All activities related to physical management of conservation areas themselves are financed		X			
Component 2 All contracts for preliminary studies, technical monitoring and training		X			
Studies or training pertaining to tourism or concerning elephants			X		
Local initiatives in favor of elephants or ecotourism			90%	10%	
Other local initiatives		90%		10%	
Component 3					
Contracts of the CMO		50%	30%		Government Tax
Equipment		X			
Contracts for preliminary studies, technical monitoring and all training in favor of the CIO, AIG or intercommunity planning issues			X		
Environmental awareness activities			X		
Component 4					
Capacity building for public support to decentralized biodiversity management (except for the allocation for FFEM supervision and for the Gourma ecological observatory, including the Geographic information system, which are financed at 100% by FFEM)		X	X		
All other activities under this component		X			

74. With regard to the delays in releasing Government counterpart funds, security expenditures deviated funds from the project for other emergency uses. Also, it should be noted that, even before the military coup d'état, the project area was often vandalized by foreign military groups – resulting in several losses by the Government. Despite the above impediments, the Government managed to achieve the project objectives according to the revised PDO indicator targets and partially according to the original targets. For the above reasons, of which the Government had little control over exogenous impediments, the ICR Team feels, the Government did the best it could to implement the project – therefore the Government performance is moderately satisfactory.

(b) Implementing Agency's Performance

Rating: Satisfactory

75. Despite the security situation, the PIU did an excellent job in coordinating the project. More often, the project staff put their own lives at risk during project implementation and especially during field missions. The organization of documentation and information by the PIU facilitated a smooth transfer to AIG. The PIU performance was also affected by delays in receiving “No Objections” from FFEM and the Government counterpart funds. The delays in the recruitment of specialists and UNDP coming on board in 2007 (two years into implementation) led to an overload work for the project technical staff. Despite the above constraints and the acute rise of extreme insecurity at the project the ending period, the PIU did the best it could to coordinate the project, to evacuate field staff and promptly re-locate its base to Bamako following the political instability.

(c) Justification of Rating for Overall Borrower Performance

Rating: Moderately Satisfactory

76. The overall borrower performance in project identification and preparation is mixed and its performance in project implementation is moderately satisfactory due to multiple delays in recruitment of specialists, feasibility studies, and disbursement of Government counterpart funds.

6. Lessons Learned

77. Key lessons learnt from project implementation are following:

(1) Designing a Natural Resources Management project may require inclusion of basic infrastructures such as boreholes, water points, schools, health centers etc., which might not directly fit into a natural resources management project, but may be important in addressing the basic needs of the targeted population as incentives for their commitment to sustainable natural resources management.

(2) Although it could have been difficult to predict exogenous risks to project outcomes such as (i) the political risk and (ii) the insecurity in project area; risks to project outcome like (a) lack of government capacity, (b) lack of counterpart funding, and (b) complications in

financial arrangements with FFEM could have been anticipated during the project design stage.

(3) The project outcomes have demonstrated that it is possible to develop an appropriate community approach to improved natural resources management in the Sahelian context.

(4) A pilot project must be ambitious, but realistic and in phase with the capacities required for implementation.

(5) In a situation where a project is co-financed, the formalization of responsibilities of each donor is essential to avoid ambiguities and delays during the implementation process.

(6) Proper preparation of an operation (quality at the entry) is key to good execution.

(7) It is risky to design a project in a way that the achievement of its development objective depends on the outputs of complementary operations. This is an important risk that should be addressed during the project design.

(8) Sustainable, transformational changes involving behavior changes take medium to long-term to become visible.

(9) Participatory and decentralized management of natural resources can be effective and sustainable if it fully takes into account the primary rights of the users while simultaneously integrating the space management in a coherent diagram.

7. Comments on Issues Raised by Borrower/Implementing Agencies/Partners

(a) Borrower/implementing agencies

78. Not available.

(b) Co-financiers

79. FFEM - Not available

80. UNDP - Not available

(c) Other Partners and Stakeholders (e.g. NGOs/private sector/civil society)

81. Not applicable.

Annex 1. Project Costs and Financing

(a) Project Cost by Component (in USD Million equivalent)

Components	Appraisal Estimate (USD millions)	Actual/Latest Estimate (USD millions) ^{18 19}	Percentage of Appraisal
1.Support to intercommunal management of conservation areas	1.75	1.04	60%
2.Support to community- based biodiversity initiatives	1.38	1.14	82%
3.Capacity building for communal and intercommunal biological resources management	2.12	0.13	6%
4.Capacity building for public support to decentralized biodiversity management	1.99	1.99	100%
Total Baseline Cost	7.24	4.3	59%
Physical Contingencies	0.18		
Price Contingencies	0.38		
Total Project Costs	7.80		
Project Preparation Facility (PPF)	0.00		
Front-end fee IBRD	0.00		
Total Financing Required	7.80		

¹⁸ Actual used values were available in Euros. Exchange rates used for conversion were those from the period of project implementation: 1E= 655.957 FCFA; 1 FCFA = US\$550

¹⁹ Data for amounts set aside for Physical Contingencies and Price Contingencies were unavailable to the ICR team

(b) Financing

Source of Funds	Type of Co-financing	Appraisal Estimate (USD millions)	Actual/Latest Estimate (USD millions)	Percentage of Appraisal
Borrower		1.72	1.72	100%
Local Communities		0.06	0.035	58%
Global Environment Facility (GEF)		5.50	5.36	97.5%
FRANCE, Govt. of (Except for Min. of Foreign Affairs-MOFA)		1.80	0.66	36.8%

Annex 2. Outputs by Component

Due to restructuring of the project, outputs are based on revised components. In summary, at the close of the project, 2,752 km² in the Gourma region was demarcated as biodiversity conservation areas, 4 communal and inter-communal conservation areas were also formally created, 63 biodiversity micro-projects has been developed by the local communities, and 23 communes have included biodiversity activities in their economic, social, and cultural development plans. In addition 7,335 persons, of which 47% were female, have benefited from biodiversity micro-projects. Also, the Inter-communal Gourma Association (AIG), envisioned to manage and monitor environmental protection and biodiversity conservation activities in the Sahelian priority area of the Gourma is set up, functional, and financially supported by the Government of Mali.

Project outputs by components are presented below. Please note that at the time of project restructuring, 85% of the GEF grants had already been spent. A majority of the results had already been achieved, as can be seen in the Results Framework in Annex 8. The project scope and targets were scaled down during restructuring. The results until 2011 have been recorded and verified (at restructuring). For outputs between the period of acute rise in insecurity in March 2012 and project closing in December 2012, actual achievements could not be directly tracked because PIU officers could not access the area. Verification for this later period, and for sustainability of previously made achievements, can only be intelligently speculated based on information derived via phone calls to the project area by the ICR team.

Revised Component 1 – Creation and management of biodiversity conservation areas

The revised component aimed to:

- i. Focus on the creation of conservation areas. The number of the conservation areas was reduced from seven to four. For the four conservation areas identified, baseline data already exist, therefore new baseline studies were not necessary.
- ii. Finance the development and implementation of the four conservation areas management plans.
- iii. Rehabilitation of three water points to ensure continued availability of water for the Gourma elephants and for the communities.

This component is rated satisfactory.

Under this component, four conservation areas were identified and created in Subundu Yandu, Seno-Mango, Banzena and Mare de Gossi. The conservation areas were created with a participatory approach, using the following methods: (1) Information campaign and awareness by means of radios (five local radios Gourma) in the six local languages in Gourma (Tamashek, Songhai, Fulani, Dogon/Diamsaye, Bambara and Moor). (2) Environmental diagnostics was also conducted to validate the conservation areas. (3) Negotiation of boundaries, training, and development of management plans. In addition, four water points were rehabilitated for wild life and livestock water use.

Revised Component 2 – Support to local communities in the development of biodiversity micro-projects

The revised component aimed to support local communities in the development of biodiversity micro-projects. The scope of this component was reduced to remove the following activities planned to be fully financed by FFEM funds: (i) complementary diagnostics on biological resources of communal lands; (ii) specific studies to explore options for ecological restoration outside conservation areas; tourism development and private sector involvement. However, funds were allocated to increase the development of biodiversity micro-projects due to high demand from the community for micro-projects.

This component is rated moderately satisfactory since the scope of the work was reduced.

Under this component, fifty micro-projects were developed, squarely meeting the target. Among these, the following were considered ‘best practices’: (i) Djimamou’s women fish smoking and commercialization association, (2) la mise en defract et regeneration naturelle de vegetation, (3) micro-projects for bush fire control.. However, a number of micro-projects on reforestation experienced losses of young trees due to poor care.

Revised Component 3 – Capacity building of communes in biological resources management

The revised component aimed to:

- i. Build the capacity of the Inter-communal Orientation Committee (Comite Inter-communal d’Orientation (CIO), Community Council (Conseil communal (CC)) and Center for Communal Councils (Centre des Conseils Communaux (CCC) already in place. The CIO will be formally upgraded to AIG, the long term management organization of the conservation areas.
- ii. Support the 18 communes of the project for the inclusion of biodiversity activities in their communal development plans.

This component is rated satisfactory.

This component was successfully completed. Capacity has improved at Inter-communal Orientation Committee, the Community Council and the Center for Communal Councils. Inter-communal Orientation Committee was upgraded to International Gourma Association to manage conservation areas in the Gourma. Also, under this component, project management was transferred from the Inter-communal Orientation Committee to the Intern Communal Gourma Association. Eighteen communes received support under the project.

Revised Component 4 – Capacity building for public institutions in decentralized management of biodiversity

The revised component aimed for:

- i. Project management
- ii. Support to State decentralized conservation services
- iii. Monitoring of the environmental and social analysis as well as the process framework
- iv. Trans-border conservation activities with International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

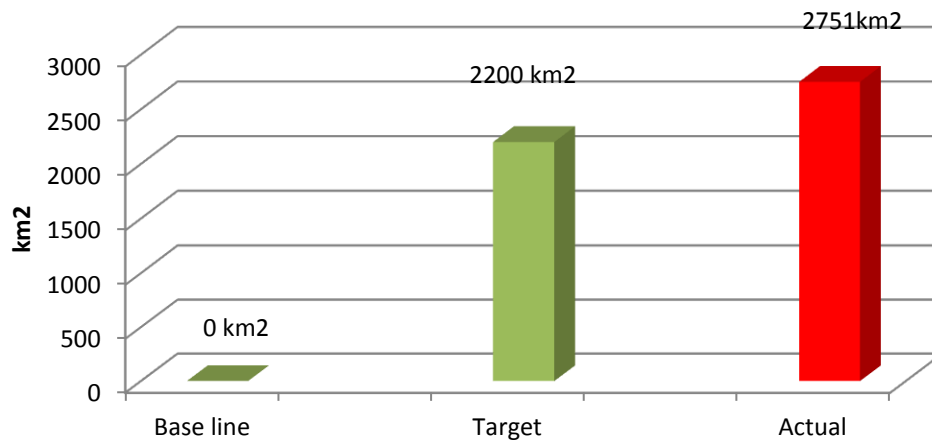
This component is rate satisfactory.

The PIU team has been innovative in finding solutions to problems and ensuring proper management of the project. Planning and implementing project activities has been effective. In the project area, all the decentralized service providers of the Ministry of Environment & Sanitation were actually trained and now participate better in the management of protected areas. The well-established partnership with IUCN facilitated success of cross-border activities of natural resource management, particularly with similar projects underway in Burkina Faso. The project team has demonstrated strong commitment and proactivity in managing the project.

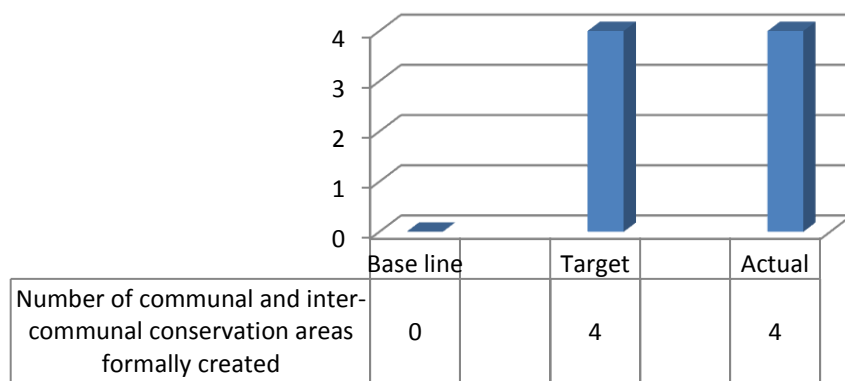
Table 4: Projected Outputs vs. Actual Outputs as per Restructured Paper

Indicated	Baseline	Target	Actual	Comments/Remarks
1). Total surface area of the Gourma formally demarcated for biodiversity conservation	0	2200 Km ²	2751 Km ²	Met & exceeded the target
2). Number of communal and inter-communal conservation areas formally created	0	4	4	2 others were created in Tillit and Tessit in an area the project left after the MTR
3) Number of communal and inter-communal conservation areas organizations formally created (OGAC)	0	4	4	Met
4) Number of Management plans for the conservation areas developed	0	4	4	Met
5) Number of management plans for the conservation areas implemented	0	4	4	Met
6) Number of sustainable biodiversity micro-projects developed by local communities	0	50	63	Met & exceeded the target
7) Number of direct beneficiaries of biodiversity micro-enterprises (% of which is female)	0	881 with 13% female	7335 with 47% female	Met & exceeded the target
8) Number of communes in the project area that have included biodiversity actions in their economic, social and cultural development plan and implement team	0	20	23	Includes 4 UNDP projects
The AIG is created and operational	0	1	1	Created in September 27, 2011 Met in 2011
9) Number of technical employees of the National Water and Forest that are trained to advise the local communities and communes in managing the Gourma biological resources	0	60	81	Met & exceeded the target

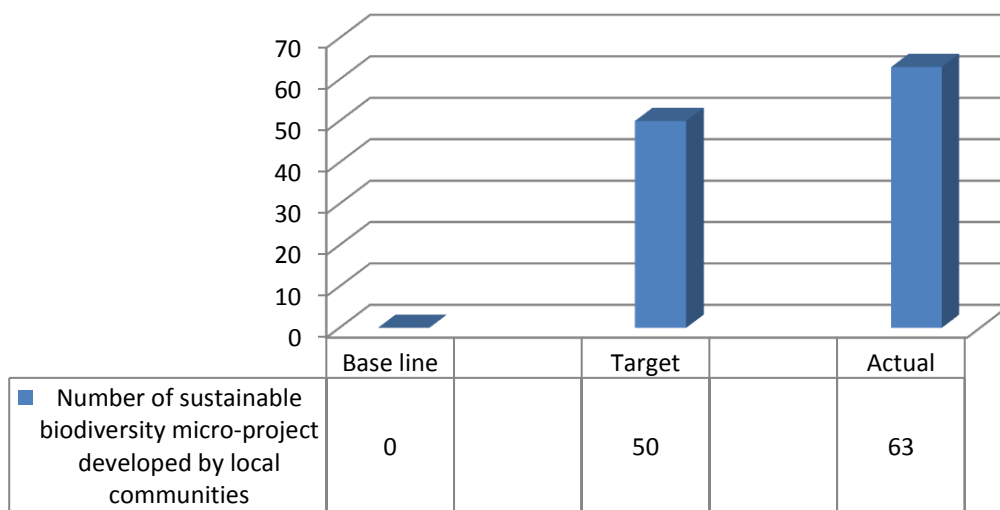
Graph A
Surface area of the Gourma demarcated for biodiversity conservation



Graph B



Graph C



Graph D

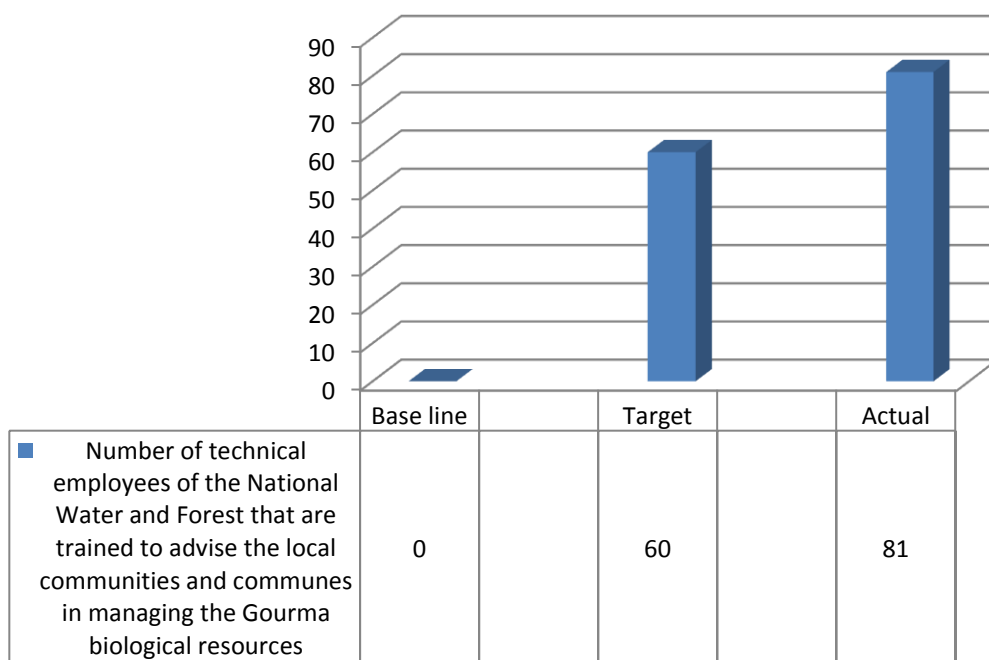


Table 5: Original Performance Indicators

Indicators	Before project restructuring ²⁰	At close of project
Percentage improvement in key wildlife-based indicators by Y6.	Percentage not available	Percentage of achievement not available.
(i) 10% in Core Zone of four conservation areas.	Percentage not available	Percentage of achievement not available.
(ii) 5 % in Multiple Use Zone of four conservation areas. *indicator species: dorcas & red-fronted gazelle & guinea fowl (rangeland/woodland) raptors (inselbergs); crown crane, migratory anatidae (wetlands)	Percentage not available	Percentage of achievement not available.
Percentage improvement in vegetation cover and vegetation composition* for mean Y1, 2, 3 vs. mean 4, 5, 6 of project.	Percentage not available	Percentage of achievement not available.
(i) 10% in Core Zone of four conservation areas.	Percentage not available	Percentage of achievement not available.
(ii) 5 % in Multiple Use Zone of four conservation areas. *indicators monitored in suitable located quadrates within conservation areas with data collected 2 times a year (min/max biomass) Weighted average of % improvement of local bio-indicators: 5(Y3); 20(Y6)	Percentage not available	Percentage of achievement not available..
Four conservation areas have acquired legal status and possess a management plan by Y6.	Done	Percentage of achievement not available.
50% of participants in training/awareness modules actively involved in conservation areas management by Y6.	Done, percentage not available	Percentage of achievement not available.
50% biodiversity initiatives evaluated as successful in achieving agreed outcome and output by Y6.	Done, percentage not available	Percentage of achievement not available.
An incentive-based and result-oriented system for direct financing is designed by year 2; adopted by year 3; tested by year 5; and functional by Y6.	Not available per the terms indicated	Percentage of achievement not available.
Incidence of rural poverty decreased by 5% in rural areas.	Impossible to calculate	Impossible to calculate

²⁰ These data were never collected by IER, the external evaluator with whom agreements were made for M&E of the project.

Annex 3. Economic and Financial Analysis

(Including assumptions in the analysis)

Not applicable.

Table 6: Main Project Beneficiaries

National Benefits	Domestic Benefits	Global Benefits
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Day to day continuation of DNCN's activities at national level have positive impact on local wildlife and ecosystem conservation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None or marginal
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improvement of country capacity for conservation through an institutional reform, new regulations, provision of minor equipment and training of staff. International coordination and experience sharing, improves decision making, with attendant conservation of more habitat and wildlife. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Global benefits are reaped when: (a) legal and institutional reform; and (b) forester's vision, incentive and capacity lead to improvement of protected area management with global biodiversity value. Global benefits are also generated when the proposed mechanisms for sustainable results-based financing of conservation through communes is implemented in other areas important for global biodiversity.
Gourma	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Municipalities benefit from having participatory, diagnostic Commune Development Plan and some of their most impact pressing priorities financed as a result. Commune councils have improved their capacity for democratic and efficient management of municipal affairs. Conservation law enforcement in the reserve carried out with very low intensity on a low-budget basis with marginal impact on the Gourma 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Baseline programs with a participatory nature are environmentally friendly. They are likely to have local positive impact on biodiversity. However, unless there is a strong public demand for biodiversity management, the negative trend is unlikely to be reversed.

	resources.	
With GEF alternative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commune and Inter-Commune Development Plans include land use planning as well as natural resources and rangeland management. • Implementation of such plans improves the sustainability of the production system and decreases the vulnerability of the population. • Pastoralists have gained new technology for conflict resolution but also for range land and water resources management. • DRCN units are better aware of the potential of community conservation and have the capacity to deliver services and law enforcement throughout the Gourma. • Communes are organized, and their capacity for management of natural resources or biodiversity is created. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Gourma management is approached at the ecosystem/landscape level for issues such as conservation and pastoralism. • Biodiversity conservation becomes a more important dimension of the region's development. • Several conservation areas are created by Communes in globally important sites (Stno Mango; In Adiatefene; N'Tillit; Gossi; Boni; Hombori). • Communes have set up user rules and Management Plans for the management of globally important conservation areas. • Initial implementation of new user rules and management plans has initiated habitat restoration, wildlife recovery improved for the elephant herd.

Annex 4. Bank Lending and Implementation Support/Supervision Processes

(a) Task Team members

Names	Title	Unit	Responsibility/ Specialty
Supervision/ICR			
Emmanuel Nikiema	Sr Natural Resources Mgmt Spec.	AFTN1	Task Team Leader
Celestin Niamien	Sr Financial Mgmt Spec.	AFTMW	
Fatoumata Diourte Berthe	Team Assistant	AFCW3	
Mahamadou Bambo Sissoko	Procurement Specialist	AFTPW	
Fily Bouare Sissoko	Sr Operations Officer	AFCW3	
Maman-Sani Issa	Sr Environmental Spec.	AFTN2	
Hugues Agossou	Sr Auditor	IADVP	
Salamata Bal	Sr Social Development Spec.	AFTCS	Social
Taoufiq Bennouna	Sr Natural Resources Mgmt. Spec.	MNSEN	NRM
Nestor Coffi	Country Manager	AFMNE	Financial Management
Agadiou Dama	Sr Agriculture Spec.	AFTA1	Technical support
Moussa Diarra	Communications Officer	AFRSC	Communication
Mamadou Diarrassouba	Monitoring & Evaluation Spec.	AFTDE	Financial Management
Suzanne Essama	Operations Officer	AFTDE	Operation Analysis
Maimouna MbowFam	Sr Financial Management Spec.	AFTMW	Financial Management
Salimata D. Follea	Natural Resources Mgmt. Spec.	AFTN1	Operation Analysis
Gnoleba Mathieu Meguhe	Consultant	AFTPE	Financial Analyst
Moustapha Ould El Bechir	Senior Procurement Spec.	AFTPE	Procurement
Moussa Fode Sidibe	Program Assistant	AFCW3	Logistics & Assistance
Cheick Traore	Senior Procurement Spec.	AFTPW	Procurement

(b) Staff Time and Cost

Stage of Project Cycle	Staff Time and Cost (Bank Budget Only)	
	No. of staff weeks	USD Thousands (including travel and consultant costs)
Lending		
FY98		35.13
FY99		19.39
FY00		25.86
FY01		38.92
FY02		51.65
FY03		81.58
FY04		36.51
FY05		31.15
FY06		0.00
FY07		0.00
FY08		0.00
Total:		320.19
Supervision/ICR		
FY98		0.00
FY99		0.00
FY00		0.00
FY01		0.00
FY02		0.00
FY03		0.00
FY04		0.00
FY05		31.39
FY06		87.71
FY07		63.72
FY08		59.44
Total:		242.26

Annex 5. Beneficiary Survey Results

(if any)

Not applicable.

Annex 6. Stakeholder Workshop Report and Results

(if any)

Not applicable.

Annex 7. Summary of Borrower's ICR and/or Comments on Draft ICR

The Gourma Biodiversity Conservation Project (PCVBGE) was implemented in Mali starting 2006. The project had four components. The first three components, referred to as field-components, were implemented from April 2006 to October 2011 by a private operator, the BERD-CIRA-SENAGROSOL Group through an Implementation Unit (IU), and from November 2011 to December 2012 by the Gourma Inter-collectivity Union (AIG/ASSYHAR). Component 4, which is referred to as the institutional component was implemented by the Project Implementation Unit (PIU).

This project completion report or final report is a capitalization of the Gourma Biodiversity Conservation Project and a final appreciation of its overall implementation by the Malian Government (Recipient).

It is prepared jointly by the PIU and the technical team of the Gourma Inter-collectivity Union (AIG/ASSYHAR).

The data analyses and conclusions of this completion report draw upon the achievements of the project, the project activity reports, the national supervision mission reports, the aide-memoires of missions conducted by Technical and Financial Partners and other important project documents listed in Annex 9 and available at the Project Management Unit.

When considering the data provided in the tables, the financial performance from the perspective of disbursements is relatively satisfactory, that is to say 76% of the total budget was disbursed despite the suspension of AFD funding (see FFEM financing).

7.1. Institutional and organizational performance

This institutional performance can be assessed in light of the activities conducted by the Steering Committee, the CIO, and the PMU, and also considering the effectiveness or non-effectiveness of the contracting authorities.

From this perspective, the Steering Committee and the CIO held their statutory sessions on a regular basis and therefore performed the duties and tasks assigned to them. Thus, they were efficient even though at the level of the CIO some financial difficulties (overspending for training) sometimes constrained the activities.

Also, the Project Management Unit (PMU) carried out a global satisfactory monitoring of the project through project supervision, through the implementation of recommendations formulated during Steering Committee sessions, and through the mainstreaming of recommendations issued by various national Technical and Financial Partner supervision missions as well as comments of the Auditor General and the financial statement of accounts audits.

Finally, the creation of AIG/Assyhar and the contractual transfer of Components 1, 2 and 3 to AIG is an innovative institutional and organizational method and stands speaks to the project structure's pilot nature. In fact the project had to try for the first time to create (while the transfer

of areas to the collectivities was not yet done) local governments' faunal areas and to inform the national level on a strategy, a process, lessons and difficulties with the view of generalizing the creation of areas conceded to local governments under law 96-050.

The project was privileged to test the creation of another type of protected area in Mali: conservation areas called protected areas created by the local governments and the local communities and managed by them.

Moreover the project had to transfer the biological resource management to local governments in a context where at the national level the environment sector itself is not yet part of the sectors transferred to local governments.

7.2. Significant changes during project implementation

Four major events occurred and brought about important changes in the project execution. They include:

- Suspension of FFEM disbursements by AFD;
- Readjusting of the project intervention zone because of insecurity issues;
- Restructuration of the project; and
- Occupation of the entire project intervention.

7.3. Suspension of the FFEM disbursements by AFD

As part of the convention signed between AFD and the Malian Government, the AIG should have been created and have taken over the field component contracting authority in lieu of DNEF within 3 years of project implementation.

The technical and financial support of FFEM, which should have enabled the implementation of the activities prior to the creation of AIG, was not efficient at all (more than 6 months taken to approve TORs submitted for studies). Due to this reason, the AIG could not be created in due time and on July 19th 2009, AFD suspended the FFEM disbursements on grounds that the project field component contracting authority did not transition to the Inter-communal Management Association (AIG).

This situation hindered the realization of some FFEM-financing related activities such as the studies on ecotourism, the development of Gourma territorial coherence scheme, the adoption of Gourma Natural Resources Management Charter as well as the comprehensive implementation of the CIO training programme and the implementation of local ecotourism initiatives (tourist camps, training of guides, etc.)

7.4. Project re-orientation (reduction of scope)

The project mid-term review in December 2009 recommended the re-orientation of the project activities following the suspension of FFEM disbursements by AFD. As a result, the Tessit and Tessit-Intillit conservation areas were suspended because of prevailing

insecurity and interventions were focused on 4 conservation areas namely Subundu Yandu, Lake Gossi, Séno-Mango and Banzena.

7.5. Project restructuring

Completed on March 22nd, 2011, the project restructuring ratified the decisions taken by the mid-term review and reformulated the project development objective as well as its expected results and performance indicators (see Results Framework in Annex 8). Similarly, the restructuring reallocated funds and extended the project execution time. Initially planned to last six years (June 2005 to June 2011), project execution was extended until to December 31st, 2012, that's to say a 18 month extension in view of absorbing the delays in carrying out various project activities because of the suspension of FFEM disbursements.

7.6. Occupation of the project intervention zone

From late March 2012 onwards, the project intervention zone turned to be entirely occupied by military groups. This new situation led to a halt in supervision and therefore influenced the implementation of PAA 2012 which was primarily focused on providing adequate backing to support the transfer of the contracting authority to AIG/Assyhar as part of its new mission.

Furthermore, the project was affected by suspension of World Bank financing and the freezing and subsequent cancellation of the Special Investment Budget (SIB). The consequences of this situation include **i)** laying off and later on dismissing part of AIG/Assyhar staff, **ii)** activity reduction. Options to face the situation were discussed in May 2012 in Bamako during a meeting of the technical support group to the project. Following the meeting, a strategy centering the intervention on the OGAC members was adopted. For this purpose, the technical team relocated in Bamako, in connection with the PMU, kept unceasingly in touch with the OGAC members. The activities conducted involve support and counsel to the four OGAC for an oversight of the CA, LI monitoring, follow-up and communication of all facts in relation with elephants.

Another no less important fact is added to these four key facts. It is the depreciation of the dollar value. The change which occurred in the dollar conversion rate to the CFA franc (CFAF 510 at the evaluation in 2005 against CFAF 430 in October 2010) resulted in a CFAF 482 000 000 grant cut off. This gap lead to a fall in the number of actions devised in the development and management plans to be executed.

7.7. Spillover Effects of the Project

The spillover effects (if not impacts) of the project can be grasped in light of:

- the spillover effects at the social level,
- the environmental impacts.

7.8. Spillover effects at the social level

At the social level, two aspects appeared to undoubtedly be positive spillover effects of the project. They include public awareness and the strengthening of social links.

7.9. Public awareness

What should be noted at this level is:

- Positive impact of the various actions (study trips, outreach and awareness raising sessions, thematic trainings, radio programmes and video projections) on public awareness among the local actors of the project zone. With regard to the creation of CA for example, the commitment of populations in particular OGAC members in favor of conservation is perceived as well as maturation in the community decision making process about CA. The village actors involved in the activities obviously perform them with determination. A behavior change is noticed in the field with the riparian communities protecting the CA.
- During the meetings and trainings elected officials, community leaders and LI promoters say that with project installation, there was a public awareness among the populations in the intervention zone. It has been an opportunity for them to adopt new NRM practices and establish related local governance based on the creation of village and inter-village committees and entrusting individual people with overseeing the bush.
- As for NRM practices, they include the following actions: conservatory clearing methods, protection of forest and pond relics, reforestation using multi-purpose species; regulation of transhumant livestock raising etc.

Among the numerous positive changes observed (including the behavioral change), the followings are to be stated:

In all the communes, with the support of the Water and Forestry quartering, village bush oversight committees and oversight brigades are created. Bush fires are less frequent, poaching dropped and some fauna species such as the vulture which had disappeared are reappearing. The brigades have enabled:

- The introduction of bush management measures which did not use to exist in the villages/ fractions: reduction of bush fires, which helped regenerate some herbaceous; drop in abusive tree cutting to feed domestic animals and the retraining of some operators such as the hunters in alternative activities; conservation of some species under extinction.
- The denunciation of poaching cases by the communities to the competent authorities.
- The recommendation and engagement in the fight against bush fires.
- The liberation of some locations frequented by the elephants.
- The reporting to the project of several cases of elephants in distress...

- The ownership of the Project by the local communities and their various associations is obvious. For example: their decision to dedicate Lake Banzéna to elephants, as well as their actual participation in infrastructure building and appropriate location proposals for a sustainable and fair management of the Gourma natural resources are clear evidence of their awareness and engagement in the project.

These examples actually show that the populations of the project zone have an extended feedback capacity to face some threats so as to reverse a situation which, apparently, seemed desperate.

7.10. The strengthening of social links

One of the positive spillover effects of the inter-community meetings and workshops is the strengthening of social links between the communities, which guarantees a greater social cohesion necessary for the implementation of communal and intercommunal biodiversity projects.

Indeed, the intercommunal workshop which gathered inter alia the communes of Dangol-Boré and of Diaptodji (N'Gouma) was an opportunity for the traditional chiefs of Dangol-Boré “to sit around the same table”, as these people had not met for nearly fifty (50) years because of old ancestral conflicts.

The same applies to the commune authorities of Gossi, Ouinerdene, Inadiatafane, Intillit, Rharous who for a long time wanted to meet in order to discuss common management problems in relation with lakes, fonio plains, anarchic occupation of forests, protection of elephants and their habitats.

Finally, the development of joint work experience and the emergence of shared understanding and actions are worth being reported. The creation of the Gourma intercommunity Union “Assyhar” is one concrete example.

The project was therefore an asset, a social tension appeasement factor in its intervention zone.

7.11. The environmental impacts

The project has had no particular negative impact on the environment. It can be noted with satisfaction that it did not cause involuntary resettlement of populations.

Its effects are rather regarded as positive. For example in Gossi, the results achieved by the Kaïgourou women association are measured through the biological greening, the availability of medicinal plants and gathering fruits (*Boscia senegalensis* based honey, *Maerua crassifolia* leaves, *Cymbopogon* sp. of *Adansonia digitata*, *Balanites aegyptiaca*, *Acacia nilotica* fruits, *Echinochloa stagnina* juice).

Moreover, the reappearance of some species such as vultures and pond ducks, the abundance of other species like the gazelle dama and the fox is observed. From the beginning of the project (2005) to 2011, human pressure on the elephant population has also sharply decreased.

7.1.1. CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE ACTION OF BOTH THE TECHNICAL AND FINANCIAL PARTNERS (PTF) AND THE RECIPIENT

This critical analysis is not a value judgment of the relevant actors, but a critical assessment of a number of actions with the view of helping improve project design and implementation.

7.1.2. APPRECIATION OF GEF/WORLD BANK ACTION

The identification of the project, its preparation and evaluation were conducted following a participatory approach, which from the outset, made it possible for the various actors to own the project. To maintain this level of ownership, the project had to renew information and sensitization within the actors when changes occurred among the local political and administrative authorities (elections, posting...).

The supervision missions were performed on a regular basis and satisfactorily and the aide-memoires remained one of the project key piloting tools.

The institution managed to unfold a proactive and anticipatory conduct, which made it possible for the project to get through rather difficult situations such as disrupt in project funding by FFEM and the insecurity which prevails in the North of Mali. In accepting the geographical recentering of the project (suspension of the intervention in the Tessit and N'Intillit communes) and its restructuration (reformulation of the project development objective and operational results, extension of the implementation time, reallocation of funds...) the World Bank enabled the project implementation to be pursued unscathed.

However, points to be disappointed about include:

- The strained climate, at the beginning of the project, between the World Bank project manager and PCVBGE coordination and implementation structures, which sometimes blocked activities. The World Bank, with the aim of making the project move forward replaced the Project Manager. Since then, relations between the new project manager and his partners are straightforward, constructive and open.
- The rather long time taken to issue the “no objection” particularly at the start of the project, which constrained the implementation of some activities.

On the whole, the World Bank generally played its project supervisor role in acting as the lead donor and top evaluator.

7.1.3. APPRECIATION OF THE FFEM /FRENCH DEVELOPMENT AGENCY (AFD) ACTION

Acting as the FFEM implementing agency, AFD was the second donor for the project and helped with project technical support and supervision through the various study ToR amendments and through taking part from time to time in supervisions organized by the World Bank. However some regrettable facts include:

- The excessively long time taken to issue the “no objection” (one year for some studies such as the study on the AIG).
- The non-availability to take part in the project supervision missions,
- The suspension of the financing because of non-transfer of the contracting authority in due time to the AIG while barely anything was done to facilitate the realization of those studies which are prerequisite to the creation of this AIG.

7.1.4. APPRECIATION OF THE RECIPIENT/GOVERNMENT OF MALI ACTION

As a whole, the Malian Government proved to be a partner who showed confidence in the expected PCVBGE results and since then complied with the engagements taken during the grant agreement negotiations both at the financial and the institutional and organizational level.

Thus, the Government met the requirements with regard to grant awarding and effectiveness through the creation of the Steering committee, signing contract with the Private operator, the recruitment and contracting with PMU staff, the appointment of an auditor, the opening of a special account...

Similarly the Government (through the DNEF and UGP) efficiently played its contractor and coordination role through the technical support and supervision provided by the IU.

Similarly, considering the serious water shortage issue in Gourma, the Malian Government confirmed its commitment and political will to see the project succeed by granting a special budget for the realization of water points in the Gourma zone.

Nevertheless some weaknesses include:

- The delay in creating the Steering committee and in contracting with the Private operator,
- The relatively long time (almost a year) between the grant agreement signature (December 2004) and its effectiveness (September 2005) because of government non-compliance with the terms,
- The late payments of the Private operator’s invoices,
- The late provision of funds every year to the Implementation Unit (IU) for the annual program implementation.
- The freezing and subsequently the cancellation of the 2012 second semester SIB.

7.1.5. APPRECIATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME ACTION

Though having joined the project after it has started, UNDP turned to be highly available and flexible with regard to financing. The UNDP financing enabled:

- The monitoring of project activities by the four circle councils (Douentza, Gourma Rharous, Gao and Ansongo) and project supervision by the Regional Directorates for Water and Forestry and Development Planning of Mopti, Tombouctou and Gao;

- The coaching by the Douentza Forest Quartering applying the same strategy as for the four Circle Communes which were not covered by the World Bank financing;

- Equipment in transportation (DT 125) and communication (Thuraya) means as well as support to the staff of the Douentza Quartering involved in the coaching of the 4 Communes;

- The financing under its micro projects Micro Financing Programme in the four communes of Douentza Circle which were not initially covered by PCVBGE was ensured. Similarly the CA of Lake Gossi has recently received since March 2012 a financing of around FCFA 22 million;

- UNDP took part in all the steering committee sessions, in most of the supervision missions organized by the project technical and financial partners and in all the technical and strategic meetings concerning the project (technical meetings, project action recentering, mid-term review, restructuration, etc.

CONCLUSIONS, LESSONS AND RECOMMENDATION

7.1.1.1. CONCLUSIONS

The objectives set to the Gourma Biodiversity Conservation and Project have been achieved and were satisfactory both in quantity and in quality.

- The 4 planned Conservations Areas (CA) were formally created and have each a Development and Management Plan (PAG). Two other CA were created in Tessit and N'Intillit but following the readjustment of project actions the process did not go ahead at this level,
- 2751.9 m² (surface area for 4 CA) were formally demarcated and devoted to biodiversity conservation. This surface area is larger than the surface area set to be achieved by the end of the project (2200 km²),
- 4 expected Conservation Area Management Associations (OGAC) were officially created and are already involved in the development and oversight of the four (4) CA which were created. Two other OGAC are created to cover the two above-mentioned additional AC,
- 7335 people (among which 47% women) were direct beneficiaries of the Local Initiatives financed by the project, over the 881 (13% women) expected by the end of the project,
- The AIG/Assyhar was created, is operational, and since September 27th, 2011, has taken over the contracting authority of components 1, 2 and 3.

In addition to these results the spillover effects (if not the impacts) on the environment and at the social level were significant: the keen interest shown by local communities and governments for biodiversity conservation, the development of biodiversity conservation initiatives, the fall in anti-protection practices, the strengthening of social links through the settlement of old conflicts, etc.

These operational and institutional achievements however contrast with the difficulties the project faced, namely: the delay in issuing the technical and financial partners' "no objection", the suspension of disbursements of the French share by AFD and the generally too long delays in mobilizing the state's counterpart.

PCVBGE is regarded by the Malian State as a pilot project the learnt lessons from which will make it possible to move towards to a further step in the global natural resource management transfer process to local governments. Important lessons were acquired from the project implementation, but due to time shortage the communities could not be observed performing their project contractor mission and lessons could not be learnt to feed debate in favor of the transfer of natural resource management to local governments.

7.1.1.2. LESSONS

Following the project institutional design Mali and its Partners agreed to trust a Private operator with the implementation of the project field-components. From our view point this provision was beneficial as throughout project implementation the State could fully play its monitoring, coordination and supervision role without difficulties.

On the other hand the intervention costs may happen to be highly overestimated if a good Operator selection method is not applied. In the case of PCVBGE, the Operator was selected based on a specific budget. During implementation, a number of costs proved to be overestimated.

The local Governments and the Communities approve the creation of their 'faunal area'; they are able to take a share in its realization.

The decree in relation with the terms and conditions governing local governments' cooperation is well appropriate for setting up all the inter-collectivities.

The transfer of natural resource management to local governments can be properly done through the transfer of the contracting authority provided that the laws guiding the social capital (associations and co-operations) are reviewed so as to enable it.

The creation of another type of protected area in Mali: "local governments' protected area" is possible. This can be done under any form (listed or protected)

It is worth reminding that in rural areas the participatory and iterative approach is mostly appropriate to perform a work which requires the conscious participation of all the stakeholders and their definite ownership.

Targeted involvement was an option for this project implementation. A lot of savings and achievements were gained from its practice. But the potentially relevant actors need to be widely informed before.

The transboundary management of shared ecosystems can be addressed drawing on Community bodies such as a Transboundary Ecosystem Management Council of (CGET).

Another lesson learnt from the implementation of the project is that it involves recurring costs (monitoring, maintenance and renewal of transportation means, infrastructures) which are difficult for the communities to bear without a continuation of financial support or the development of alternative solutions.

The project six (6) year-duration turned to be short and did not allow for the natural resource valorization phase to start (ecotourism, biodiversity products ...) while this could have enabled to assume the potential recurring costs.

In the current sociological context of Gourma, women still form a social group whose implication and participation in the project activities remain low; no woman was elected at the various responsibility positions within both the OGAC and the AIG Assyhar. Only the Séno-Mango OGAC includes one woman.

7.1.1.3. RECOMMENDATIONS

Considering the conclusions and lessons learnt from the project implementation analysis, the following recommendations can be formulated to the different parts (mainly the TFP and the Malian State):

- A debate must be open in order to work for the consolidation of PCVBGE achievements and the promotion of CA on other sites (Prospects for a new project),
- It is important to strongly mainstream gender issues in the design and assessment of forthcoming projects,
- A debate on the development of the Gourma zone (elephant route) focused on elephants and based on realities linked to the water resource (surface and underground water)
- It is crucial to ensure, at the time of project negotiations, that the conditions for signature and effectiveness are realistic and will be met without major difficulties by the government, so as to avoid delays in starting the implementation, which could result in bad results,
- It is also important to initiate a PCVBGE intermediary phase during which (i) actions planned in 2012 and not executed because of the insecurity will be carried out, (ii) a new project will be prepared, (iii) the State will fulfill its commitments in compliance with the convention for the transfer of the contracting authority concluded with DNEF, but also as part of the transboundary cooperation for shared resource management between Mali and Burkina Faso.

Annex 8. Results Framework

PDO Outcome Indicators	Unit of Measurement	Baseline in 2005	Cumulative Target Values**							Frequency	Data Source/ Methodology	Responsibility for Data Collection
			2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012			
Indicator 1: Total area Gourma area demarcated as biodiversity conservation area	Target Km ²	0	0	0	0	1000	2200	2200	2200	annual	Progress report	CMO
	Actual Km ² ₂₁	0	0	0	478 ²²	1848 ²³	2752 ²⁴	2752 ²⁵				
Indicator 2 : Number of OGAC engaged in protection of newly created conservation areas	Target Number	0	0	0	2	3	4	4	4	annual	Progress report and activities	CMO
	Actual Number	0	0	0	2 ²⁶	2	4 ²⁷	4				
Indicator 3: Number of project beneficiaries whose lives have been improved by project results (% of whom are female)	Target Number (% female)	0	0	0	0	0	700 (10%)	750 (10%)	881 (13%)	annual	Progress report	CMO
	Actual Number (% female)	0	0	0	256 (12%)	812 (11%)	900 (14%)	900 (14%)				

²¹Conservation areas created are accumulated from one year to the next

²²AC formally created: Subundu-Yandu

²³AC formally created: Subundu-Yandu, Seno-Mango

²⁴AC formally created: Subundu-Yandu, Seno-Mango, and Marre Banzena Gossi

²⁵AC formally created: Subundu-Yandu, Seno-Mango, and Marre Banzena Gossi

²⁶OGAC of Subundu-Yandu and Seno-Mango

²⁷OGAC of Subundu-Yandu, Seno-Mango, and Marre Banzena Gossi

Intermediate Results 1. Component 1: Creation and management of biodiversity conservation areas												
Intermediate Result 1.1: Number of inter-communal conservation areas formally created	Num Target	0	0	2	3	4	4	4	4	annual	Progress report and activities	CMO
	Num Actual	0	0	0	1	2	4	4				
Intermediate Result 1.2: Number of plans for development and management of conservation areas developed	Num Target	0	0	0	0	0	1	4	4	annual	Progress report and AC document	CMO
	Num Actual	0	0	0	0	1 ²⁸	4 ²⁹	4				
Intermediate Result 1.3: Number of development and management plans for state implementation developed	Num Target	0	0	0	0	0	1	4	4	annual	Progress report and activities	CMO
	Num Actual	0	0	0	0	0	1 ³⁰	1				
Intermediate Results 2. Component 2: Support to local communities in the development of biodiversity micro-projects												
Intermediate Result 2.1: Number of sustainable biodiversity micro-projects implemented by local communities	Num Target	0	0	0	46	46	46	50	50	annual	Progress report and activities	CMO
	Num Actual	0	0	0	46	46	50	63				
Intermediate Result 2.2: Number of beneficiaries of biodiversity microprojects (% of whom are female)	Num Target	0	0	0	0	700 (10%)	750 (10%)	881 (13%)	900 (20%)	annual	Progress report and survey sheets	CMO
	Num Actual	0	0	0	6748 (45%)	6748 (45%)	6748 (45%)	7335 (47%)				

²⁸Development and management plan for conservation area (CPA/CA) : Subundu-Yandu

²⁹PAG/AC - Subundu-Yandu, Seno-Mango, Banzena and Marre de Gossi

³⁰PAG/AC - Subundu-Yandu

Intermediate Results 3. Component 3: Capacity building of communes in biological resources management												
Intermediate Result 3.1: Number of communes with biodiversity conservation in their PDSEC	Num Target	0	0	16	20	20	20	20	20	annual	Progress report and PDSEC document	CMO
	Num Actual	0	0	0	5	9	23	23				
Intermediate Result 3.2: AIG is created and is operational	Yes/No Target	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	annual	Progress reports and training	CMO
	Yes/No Actual	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes				
Intermediate Result 4. Component 4: Capacity building of communes in biological resources management												
Number of technical staff of the National Directorate of Forestry trained to support and advice to local communities and municipalities in the management of biological resources in the Gourma	Num Target	0	16	26	55	60	60	60	60	Bi-annual	Progress reports and training	PCVBGE /DNEF
	Num Actual	0	16	26	55	81	81	81				

Annex 9. Comments of Cofinanciers and Other Partners/Stakeholders

The project team requested co-financiers UNDP and FFEM for comments on 10 January 2013, but received none despite multiple reminders in February and March. Similarly, the project team did not receive responses from requests for comments from NGO partners who had re-located from the project area after the military occupation in March 2013.

Annex 10. List of Supporting Documents

PAD

GEF Grant Agreement

Aide-Memoires

ISRs

Restructuring Package

Annual Reports

Project Studies

MAP

