

**Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
Global Environment Facility (GEF)**

**Conservation of Biodiversity in the
Central Zagros Landscape Conservation Zone
(PIMS 2278)**

Terminal Evaluation Report



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OPENING PAGE: BASIC INFORMATION

Project Title and ID:	“Conservation of Biodiversity in the Central Zagros Landscape Conservation Zone” PIMS 2278
Evaluation Period:	June 2005 – September 2016
Date of Evaluation Report:	October 2016
Countries included in the Report:	Islamic Republic of Iran
GEF Operational/Strategic Programme:	BD2 (Biodiversity Mainstreaming into development in productive sectors and landscapes), OP4 (Mountain ecosystems))
Implementing Partner and other Project Partners:	UNDP is the designated implementing partner. The project is executed by the Department of Environment (DoE) of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The project partners were the government Plan and Budget Office (PBO), Forest, Rangelands and Watershed Organization (FRWO), Ministry of Agriculture Jihad (MOAJ), Ministry of Energy (MoE), Ministry of Interior (Mol), Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), the Office of Tribal Affairs, and the Iran Cultural Heritage and Tourism Organization (ICHTO). These government organizations were the principal partners at central, provincial and county/district levels. The project also implemented activities in collaboration with NGOs and community-based organizations.
Evaluation Team Members:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hugo Navajas, international evaluator and Team Leader • Hamid Farahani Rad, national evaluator
Acknowledgements:	The evaluators would like to acknowledge the excellent cooperation and logistical support that was provided by Mm. Shriin Abolghasemi, Project Manager, Mr. Ali Arvahi, Deputy Project Manager, the entire Zagros project team, and Mr Ali Nazaridouost of UNDP. We also thank the interviewed central, provincial and local government officials, community organizations, NGOs and green grant recipients for generously sharing their time and ideas.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. PROJECT SUMMARY TABLE

Conservation of Biodiversity in the Central Zagros Landscape Conservation Zone					
GEF Project ID:	PIMS 2278		At endorsement (US\$)	At completion (US\$) (End of Oct. 2016)	
UNDP Project ID:	IRA/02/G41/A/1G/99	GEF financing: including Block B preparation cost)	3,800,000	3,638,680	
			196,000	196,000	
Country:	Islamic Republic of Iran	IA/EA own: United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)	50,000	49,122	
Region:	Central Zagros Mountain Region	Government: (DoE & pertinent GOs)	5,190,000	1,882,000 + 11,311,669=	13,193,669
Focal Areas:	Biodiversity	Other:	NGOs,	380,000	206,333
			P/Sec tor,	45,000	0
			Block-B Prepa rator Co-financ ing	0	0
Operational Program:	(OP 4: Mountain Ecosystems)	Total co-financing:	5,615,000	13,400,002	
Executing Agency:	Department of Environment, Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran (DoE/GOIRI)	Total Project Cost: (including Block B preparation cost)	9,661,000	17,283,804	
Other Partners involved:	Ministry of Jihad Agriculture, three other ministries, Provincial Governments of Isfahan, Far, Chaharmahal va Bakhtiari and	Prodoc Signature (date project began):		28 June 2005	

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	Kohkiluyeh va Boyerahmad			
Operational Closing Date:			Proposed: 28 June 2010	Actual: December 2016 (recently extended to June 2017)

Source: Zagros Project

2. **BRIEF PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The Central Zagros Mountains contain globally significant biodiversity. Topographical relief and climatic conditions have led to diverse ecosystems and habitats in the area. This has created a home for a vast range of species, which include over 2,000 species of higher plants and several endangered and endemic mammal species. However, in recent decades, biodiversity has been declining and is increasingly threatened by incompatible land uses. This trend is driven by increased immigration and urbanization, extractive activities such as mining and logging, expanding road networks, and the loss of traditional management and land-use practices.

2. The project goal and objective have aimed to conserve the biodiversity of the Central Zagros Mountain (CZM) region through the “mainstreaming” of biodiversity conservation with sector development plans and programs at the central, provincial and district government levels. Mainstreaming is intended to enable the agencies that govern the main economic and natural resource-based sectors – agricultural, water management, forestry, rangeland management, tourism, energy and infrastructure development – to incorporate conservation and ecological sustainability measures into their own policies, programs and sectoral practices.

3. The project’s key task was to facilitate the full engagement of stakeholders across multiple sectors and agencies, in devising, piloting and demonstrating new integrated mechanisms for conservation. The implementation strategy included the establishment of Inter-sectoral committees to drive this process; to this end, the project has promoted the creation of Catchment Management Area Committees (CMACs) within the four provinces. Sustainable livelihoods and natural resource management were demonstrated in pilot villages and pilot catchment management areas under a small grants modality. The combined impact of the various project initiatives were expected to create enabling institutional and policy conditions for the up scaling of biodiversity conservation under a larger-scale initiative; this has led to the formulation of the Conservation and Sustainable Development (C+SD) program that is presently under consideration.

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3. EVALUATION RATING TABLE

4. The evaluators have rated the project according to the evaluation criteria that is presented in the Terms of Reference. The ratings are presented below:

Figure 1

Project Evaluation Rating Table

EVALUATION CRITERIA	RATING	COMMENTS
Monitoring & Evaluation		
M&E design at entry	Satisfactory (S)	A Monitoring Plan is included and budgeted in the project document.
M&E Plan Implementation	Unsatisfactory (U)	The Monitoring Plan was not implemented as designed for the most part: Pilot area-specific baseline data was not collected for several indicators project and outcomes. (Sec. 2.E). Stakeholders were not involved in the collection and review of data and full dissemination of the monitoring results (Sec. 2.F). The evaluators did not see evidence of “complete monitoring frameworks” covering environmental, social and economic trends within village level natural resource use plans (Sec. 2B)
<i>Overall quality of M&E</i>	Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)	Monitoring has not been systematic. A Mid-Term Evaluation was held at a late stage, yet had significant influence on project design and strategy. The UNDP CO has monitored the project and participated in occasional visits. UNDP’s RBAP Regional Office in Bangkok organized several monitoring visits. Provincial project officers performed <i>ad hoc</i> internal monitoring. Stakeholder involvement in project monitoring and adaptive management was lacking. More consistent and in-depth monitoring – and greater participation by the project team and key partners - might have encouraged adaptive management towards improve performance at an earlier stage.
IA and EA Execution		
Quality of UNDP implementation	Satisfactory (S)	UNDP has provided periodic technical oversight through the Country Office and RBAP Regional Office, contributed TRAC funding to support project implementation, and organized a very useful Mid-Term Evaluation that should have been scheduled 2 years earlier. The CO supported the project’s continuity with TRAC resources when performance was unsatisfactory. However, the project would have benefited from more consistent oversight and guidance from UNDP and access to successful conservation mainstreaming and basin

		management case studies, through UNDP's global knowledge network.
Quality of DoE execution	Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)	Execution quality has been inconsistent and generally slow, with low financial and output delivery rates. The project took twice as long to complete than was planned. Management practices were not applied regularly during the first five years and the project implementation approach lacked strategic direction. Execution was undermined by excessive turnovers of NPDs, NPMs and technical staff. The Project Steering Committee did not provide the technical guidance and oversight that was expected. DoE does not have the over-arching institutional coordination or planning mandate that is needed to influence GO or sector practices. However, there were improving trends in management performance and project delivery during the final two years and most of the planned outputs were fully or partially delivered.
<i>Overall quality of implementation/execution</i>	Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)	The overall quality of project execution during most of its 10-year lifespan was often unsatisfactory, with a tendency towards improved performance and progress during the last two years.
Assessment of Outcomes		
Relevance	Relevant (R)	The project was relevant to national and international biodiversity priorities, and consistent with GEF priorities. The CZM region has recognized high biodiversity and continues to face the environmental threats that the project has tried to address. The project's operational relevance was improved by changes to the pilot areas and implementation strategy following the MTE.
Effectiveness	Moderately Satisfactory (MS)	The project objective was not achieved and there was limited progress towards the first and second outcomes. However, the approval of the C+SD proposal in coming months would provide an important advance towards the second outcome. The third outcome was achieved to a large extent with satisfactory results. Project execution over the past decade was often undermined by low delivery and a lack of strategic direction. However, output delivery and overall performance improved considerably during the last 2-3 years with changes to the implementation strategy and stable management. Most outputs will be produced fully or partially by the end of the project, and the project will continue to consolidate incipient results until June 2017. There are indications of greater support by DoE and central government to continue process through C+SD. Considering these factors and in particular recent improvements, the evaluators have rated project effectiveness as Moderately Satisfactory (MS).

Efficiency	Unsatisfactory (U)	Project implementation was slow and potential impacts were weakened by slow delivery. The project has taken ten years to complete, twice as long than initially planned.
<i>Overall Project Outcome rating:</i>	Moderately Satisfactory (MS)	The planned outcomes were highly relevant. Little progress was made towards the first and second outcomes. Only the third outcome was reached according to several indicators. Sustainable livelihood options were successfully demonstrated and some are in process of replication. Effectiveness and efficiency were below expectations during much of the project period. However, there were encouraging improvements in output delivery during last 2 years, progress was made towards the third outcome, and the project was recently extended to mid-2017 in order to consolidate incipient results and support the C+SD's approval.
Sustainability		
Financial Resources	Moderately Likely (ML)	There is a moderately high likelihood that continued funding will be available to build on project initiatives. Interim financing appears to be available to extend essential activities beyond the project's termination until the expected approval of the proposed Conservation and Sustainable Development (C+SD) project. A good sign is the recent DoE decision to provide finance a temporary project extension to consolidate results and ensure the next phase. Financial sustainability will ultimately depend on the approval of the C+SD. Supportive policies and national budget allocations under the 6 th National Development Plan may improve perspectives for this to happen. Several of the small grant initiatives that were supported by the project are self-sustaining in financial terms.
Socio-Political	Moderately Likely (ML)	The C+SD program proposal was endorsed by the four provincial Governor Generals and partner government agencies. There is proposed legislation that would provide special attention to high BD ecosystems facing environmental degradation under the 6 th National Development Plan.
Institutional Framework & Governance	Moderately Unlikely (ML)	The PPDCs and new CMA inter-sectoral committees will require further technical support and guidance to drive biodiversity conservation mainstreaming processes. The CMACs were recently created and lack operational mechanisms.
Environmental	Likely (L)	There are no major environmental risks to sustaining long-term project impacts. Most impacts were generated through local small grant projects for sustainable agriculture and livelihoods that have had a positive environmental impact, i.e. water and soil conservation, reduced use of agrochemical inputs.

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<i>Overall Likelihood of Sustainability:</i>	Moderately Likely (ML)	Sustainability will depend to a large extent on the approval of the C+SD proposal and supportive policies under the 6 th National Development Plan. The project was recently extended for six months into 2017 to work towards the approval of the C+SD.
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5. The rating criteria for terminal evaluations of UNDP-GEF projects is based on the following:¹

Ratings for Outcomes, Effectiveness, Efficiency, M&E, Agency Implementation and Execution:

6: *Highly Satisfactory (HS)*: The project had no shortcomings in the achievement of its objectives in terms of relevance, effectiveness, or efficiency

5: *Satisfactory (S)*: There were only minor shortcomings

4: *Moderately Satisfactory (MS)*: There were moderate shortcomings

3: *Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)*: The project had significant shortcomings

2: *Unsatisfactory (U)*: There were major shortcomings in the achievement of project objectives in terms of relevance, effectiveness, or efficiency

1: *Highly Unsatisfactory (HU)*: The project had severe shortcomings

Sustainability Ratings:

4: *Likely (L)*: Negligible risks to sustainability

3: *Moderately Likely (ML)*: Moderate risks

2: *Moderately Unlikely (MU)*: Significant risks

1: *Unlikely (U)*: Severe risks

Relevance Ratings:

2: *Relevant (R)*

1: *Not relevant (Nr)*

Impact Ratings:

3: *Significant (S)*

2: *Minimal (m)*

1: *Negligible (N)*

4. **SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND LESSONS**

4.1 **Conclusions:**

¹ As listed in the *Guidance for Terminal Evaluations of UNDP-supported, GEF-financed Projects* (UNDP, 2012)

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6. The project's objective and outcomes were highly relevant to environmental governance needs. Several concepts and approaches within the project's design were innovative to the Iranian context and departed from standard environmental management practices; as a result, they new for the intended recipients. The project's design promoted a cross-sectoral, ecosystems-based approach to biodiversity conservation that intended to influence the sector-driven development dynamics and incompatible land uses that have accelerated environmental degradation in the CZM region during the past decades.

7. Project design was over-dimensioned in terms of the deliverables and outcomes that were expected over a five-year period. The objective of conserving biodiversity in an extended area that encompasses four provinces was not feasible within the allotted timeframe. The project team faced the overlapping challenges of implementing small grants initiatives in dispersed pilot areas, promoting the replication of best practices, creating enabling institutional and policy arrangements for mainstreaming biodiversity conservation, and securing approval and funding for a proposed conservation program that is considerably larger in scale. New concepts and approaches – i.e. mainstreaming biodiversity conservation, a biodiversity conservation model based on sustainable livelihoods and natural resource management – were prescribed by the project document but weren't explained in operational terms, nor were case studies or other informative materials facilitated. As a result, key concepts were not assimilated by the project team or communicated effectively to key partners. The project experience underscores the importance of ensuring realistic design that is based on a coherent assessment of contexts, opportunities and risks, in order to adjust deliverables and expectations to achievable levels.

8. Project performance and achievement were inconsistent and generally below expectations, with an encouraging tendency towards improvement during the final years of implementation. The project took ten years – twice the time that was initially allocated - to reach moderately satisfactory levels of progress during the final two years; unfortunately, the evaluation ratings are based on the entire ten-year period. The project goal and objective were not achieved, and there are no indications of impact on the biodiversity indicators listed in the project document. There was little progress towards the first and second project outcomes – national institutional and policy arrangements that support mainstreaming; integration of biodiversity conservation into economic and sector programs - despite their direct link to the project goal and objective. On the other hand, sustainable resource management and conservation practices were successfully demonstrated in pilot conservation areas under the third outcome, which received a larger share of the project's attention. More than half of the planned outputs have been achieved and progress is being made towards others. Several important outputs – the CMACs , the capacity development plan – were delivered at a late stage and are in process of consolidation; they will require continued support to generate the intended effects.

9. The 2011 Mid-Term Evaluation (MTE) marked a turning point for the project. The critical findings of the MTE triggered substantive changes to the project's design, performance indicators and execution strategy. Pilot areas were upgraded from villages to broader catchment

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management areas (CMAs), reinforcing the project's ecosystems focus. The project team developed closer work relations with provincial and county governments that have led to the creation of Catchment Management Area Committees (CMACs) in three provinces that offer an institutional mechanism for biodiversity conservation mainstreaming, in coordination with existing Provincial Planning and Development Councils. The changes that followed the MTE have given the project a more strategic direction and improved output delivery and effectiveness, leading to moderately satisfactory levels of progress during the final stage of the project.

10. The most visible results and environmental benefits were generated by small-scale "green grant" initiatives within the pilot CMAs. Indeed, the project's main impacts derived from small grant projects that were implemented in pilot villages and catchment areas for demonstration purposes. The scale of impact was localized and is unlikely to have had measurable effects on area biodiversity. However, tangible economic and environmental benefits have been generated by sustainable rice farming practices, the cultivation of endangered medicinal plants, the restoration of "eco-houses" that receive guests and stimulate demand for ecotourism services, and the recuperation of traditional handicrafts.

11. Several green grant projects have demonstrated the cross-sector dynamics of environmental conservation (albeit on a micro scale): For example, one of the principal benefits derived from the sustainable rice farming approach was water conservation. Likewise, part of the income generated from the production of traditional handicrafts has been used to plant thousands of oak tree seedlings. Several of these grants have a high demonstration value and could have a positive impact on the CZM ecosystem if replicated on a broader scale; while this has not happened to the extent that was expected, MOAJ plans to disseminate the sustainable rice farming practices in CHB and Fars provinces in 2017.

12. The technical quality of project deliverables was inconsistent and often below expected standards. The evaluators found examples of good practice at all levels that include the aforementioned green grant initiatives and incipient mainstreaming practices within the CHB provincial government and the Bazoft and Dena CMAs. However, the technical depth and quality of other deliverables were unsatisfactory and often bore little relation to the CZM context. Examples include several green concept papers and abstracts that were presented as "management tools", training events that were brief and lacking in follow-up, much of the project's mainstreaming discourse, and design aspects of the proposed Conservation & Sustainable Development (C+SD) program. Mountain Resource Documentation Centers (MRDCs) were inaugurated in the four provinces but have not supported knowledge management or catalyzed further research, despite commendable work on public awareness in Marvdasht (Fars) and Semirom (Esfahan). The inconsistent and drawn-out implementation process, combined with the low quality of several deliverables, has tended to lower the motivation of government partners towards the project over time.

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13. The termination of the project represents the culmination of a long process that has exhausted itself, yet created favorable conditions for sustainability. Sustainable agricultural practices, the cultivation of medicinal plants and ecotourism initiatives are continuing more than one year after their respective grants expired and appear to be self-sustaining. “Green” rice farming techniques that incorporate improved seed, biological fertilizers and lower water consumption were extended from 30 pilot sites in Kor CMA to more than 300 farmers in the surrounding area. MOAJ representatives in Fars and CHB are planning to extend these practices to other villages in 2017. An eco-tourism venture in Kor CMA (Fars province) has generated sustained local economic impact, and is being replicated by another community resident.

4.2 Recommendations

14. The evaluators strongly feel that the C+SD proposal requires further revisions and “reality checks” at provincial and CMA levels in order to be viable. The project’s inconsistent performance and low delivery over the past decade do not justify continuity under a larger and more demanding initiative such as the C+SD, unless measures are taken to improve effectiveness and efficiency. Several recommendations are made to this effect: The C+SD needs to apply an ecosystems approach to its management arrangements by linking the various PPDCs and CMAs through joint work planning, monitoring and knowledge management. Mainstreaming concepts need to be translated into operational guidelines that can be applied by the targeted sectors. Greater emphasis needs to be given to local governance planning and budgeting frameworks as “entry points” for biodiversity conservation mainstreaming. The example offered by CHB province, where project funds are used as parallel financing to leverage environmental mainstreaming and sustainability concerns within sector initiatives, offers a best practice that can be applied on a wider scale. PPDC and CMAC partners should have a greater voice in the design of project work plans, resource allocations and adaptive management decisions that affect them, in order to encourage institutional commitment and ownership.

15. The C+SD needs to demonstrate practical mainstreaming approaches that are compatible with the provincial/county government planning and budgeting cycles. The Plan & Budget Organization (PBO) should assume a lead role in this process. The most direct way to raise the level of environmental consideration within sector or economic development programs is by influencing government planning and budgeting processes. This is essential to demonstrate that ‘mainstreaming’ does not threaten sector agency budgets and can improve cross-sector relevance and impact.

16. The technical quality of project deliverables will need to be improved under the C+SD and other future initiatives addressing biodiversity conservation in the Zagros region. Instead of relying on short-term consultancies that leave little institutional memory, the C+SD should become a catalyst for building collaborative relations with recognized research centers, private

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enterprises, NGOs and universities that are in a position to advise and accompany project initiatives on the ground. The Technical Advisory Teams (TAT) that were initially foreseen in the project document - “an influential advisory body... made up of experts from national agencies, independent experts and NGOs” - could provide a model for constructing longer-term cooperation and mentoring relations. 149.

17. The implementation approach for the C+SD and other follow-up initiatives will need to consider output and outcome linkages. The scale of activities proposed by the C+SD will create high administrative and coordination demands exceeding those of the Zagros project. To manage the scale of activity that is expected with C+SD, the implementation of outputs will have to be sequenced according to their linkages and ‘causal pathways’ that connect outputs to outcomes. Project implementation strategies should consider the progression of outputs that enable or provide inputs to other outputs that are located further up the pathways, and ensure adequate time and resources to achieve higher-level outputs that are closely connected to relevant outcome and have greater influence on impact. This analysis could help the project team in formulating project work plans that are more likely to reach the intended outcomes in a timely manner.

18. An inception period should be programmed at the start of the C+SD to build a common vision and harmonize expectations among the various partners at central, provincial and district levels. The 2011 MTE signaled the importance an inception period to ensure a common understanding of deliverables, responsibilities and timelines. In the case of the C+SD, the broader range of activity and institutional participants justifies setting aside a 1-2 month period, after approval, to elaborate work plans with partners and improve levels of preparedness and motivation. This would follow up on the more general review of the C+SD proposal that is suggested during the interim period. Lessons:

4.3 Lessons:

19. The institutional capacities and preparedness that are needed for a project of this scale and complexity were not in place. The project team sought to introduce new concepts and approaches that departed from standard practice, yet did not have a clear understanding of their operational implications. The project document did not describe the conservation model or mainstreaming concepts that were being proposed; nor were relevant case studies shared with project stakeholders in order to develop a suitable approach for the CZM region. An inception phase was planned but did not materialize; hence the opportunity was missed to socialize these concepts at an early stage and build a strategic vision based on common understanding and expectations. As a result, fundamental concepts were not conveyed to target audiences in a convincing manner, weakening their commitment to the project in several cases. According to the 2011 Mid-Term Evaluation, internal tools such as work plans, budget revisions or internal monitoring were not used on a regular basis during the initial period.

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20. In spite of the project's relevance, flaws in design and execution strategy weakened performance, particularly during the 2006-2011 period that preceded the Mid-Term Evaluation. The pilot phase that intended to demonstrate the biodiversity conservation model (outcome 3) focused support on villages within protected areas that were unrepresentative of the broader project context, and unlikely to generate the scale of impact needed to influence biodiversity. Although the "mainstreaming" of biodiversity conservation within sector plans and development programs is fundamental to the project's success, little attention was given to local government planning and budgeting frameworks until relatively late in the project. County-based Catchment Management Area Committees (CMACs) were introduced in 2015 to promote mainstreaming, yet a strategic vision is lacking in most cases and operational guidelines have not been developed. Recently, CMACs were formally approved in three of four provinces. While the evaluators note encouraging progress within the CHB provincial government and the Bazoft and Dena CMAs, mainstreaming is at an incipient stage and further technical guidance is necessary to move this process forward.

21. The project implementation strategy should have been more closely aligned to the provincial and county government planning and budgeting frameworks. The lack of alignment to sector plans and budgets reinforced the low levels of institutional commitment and ownership that was observed in many cases. Conversely, commitment and ownership were encouraged when project resources and technical assistance were used as parallel support for sector initiatives that carried environmental benefits, as was observed in CHB province and the Dena and Kiars Catchment Management Areas. This represented an important "best practice" that in some cases has encouraged collaboration between sector agencies and resource allocations for sustainable development initiatives on the ground.

22. Participating institutions did not make effective use of the partnership opportunities made available by the project. The Project Steering Committee (PSC) has not provided the oversight, guidance or coordination support that was expected, despite being "...the ultimate decision-making and coordination body for the project." Likewise, the various National Project Directors do not appear to have assumed an active role, despite "...being accountable for the production of the project outputs, appropriate use of the project resources...and coordination of the UNDP/GEF project with other programmes and projects implemented in Iran in the area of natural resources management."² A surprising number of government partners at both central and provincial levels were uninformed of project activities that are relevant to their sector. Provincial government and CMA partners are not consulted sufficiently in the elaboration of project work plans or budget decisions. Institutional commitment and ownership were further weakened by the extended project duration and high turnover of national project directors and managers, technical staff and institutional partners over the past decade.

² "Conservation of Biodiversity in the Central Zagros Landscape Conservation Zone" – Project Document, pg. 24

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23. The project's efforts to mainstream biodiversity conservation across sector development plans and programs would have been more effective if collaborative linkages been built with other initiatives, and work plans more closely aligned to sector priorities at provincial and CMA levels. Opportunities were missed to build synergies with compatible projects such as the GEF-UNDP MENARID project, a JICA-supported program assisting natural resource management in the Zagros region, and the national Land Use Capabilities policy that is being implemented at the provincial level.

24. Continuity at a program level will depend to a large extent on the approval of the proposed Conservation and Sustainable Development (C+SD) program. Several recent initiatives - the CMA committees, the proposed integrated management system, the capacity building plan – are at an incipient stage and require additional time and technical guidance to become operational. The availability of continued support through the C+SD is essential to consolidate these initiatives. There is a strategy in place to secure interim financing to bridge the gap between the project's termination in December 2016 and expected approval of the C+SD, which has been endorsed by the Dept. of Environment (DoE), Plan and Budget Organization (PBO and Ministry of Interior, as well as the four provincial Governor-Generals. Finally, proposed legislation is under discussion to prioritize government support under the 6th National Development Plan for high-biodiversity ecosystems that are threatened by environmental degradation.

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

BEC	Biodiversity Enterprises Centre?
BEGP	Biodiversity Enterprises Grant Program?
CCDCZ	Coordinating Committee for the Development of the Central Zagros
CMA	Catchment Management Area ?
CO	Country Office?
CZLCZ	Central Zagros Landscape Conservation Zone
CZM	Central Zagros Mountains?
DoE	Department of Environment
DPM	Deputy Project Manager
EHC	Environment High Council?
FRWO	Forest Rangelands & Watershed Organization
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GIRI	Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran
ICHTO	Iran Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts & Tourism Organization
M&E	Monitoring & Evaluation?
MBRC	Mountain Biodiversity Resource Centre
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs?
MOAJ	Ministry of Agriculture Jihad
MoE(W)	Ministry of Energy (Water)?
MTE	Mid-Term Evaluation?
NAO	Nomadic Affairs Organization?
NCSD	National Council for Sustainable Development
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NPD	National Project Director
?NPM	National Project Manager
?NRA	Natural Resources Authority?
NRM	Natural Resources Management
?PA	Protected Area?
PDF	Project Development Facility?
PPDC	Provincial Planning and Development Council?
PSC	Project Steering Committee?
TAT	Technical Advisory Team?
TE	Terminal Evaluation
TPR	Tri-Partite Review?
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
?ZCWG	Zagros Conservation working Group?
ZM	Zagros Mountains

I. INTRODUCTION

1.1 PURPOSE OF THE EVALUATION

25. The project has been scheduled to undergo a Terminal Evaluation (TE) on completion of project activities, following UNDP's Evaluation Guidance for GEF-financed projects. As stated in the Terms of Reference, the evaluation objectives are to assess the achievement of project results, and to draw lessons that improve the sustainability of benefits generated by the project. Project performance is analyzed on the basis of its design, relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact. The evaluation is expected to provide evidence of results and address the various factors that have influenced achievement, contributing to learning and knowledge sharing between UNDP, GEF and national partners in ways that are operationally relevant for future initiatives.

26. The TE was guided by a set of key questions that were drawn from the ToRs and adjusted according to the availability of respondents and duration of meetings. The first evaluation deliverable was the Project Inception Report that presented the proposed evaluation approach and methodology.

1.2 SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

27. The Terminal Evaluation assesses the performance and achievement of results of the project "Conservation of Biodiversity in the Central Zagros Landscape Conservation" which was implemented in the provinces that encompass the CZM region: Fars, Kohkiluyeh va Boyerahmad (KB), Esfahan and Chaharmahal va Bakhtiari (CHB) – and within these, the pilot Catchment Management Areas (CMAs) – Kiar, Vanak Khersan, Bazoft and Dena - where green grants modality and other project activities were implemented.

28. In line with the UNDP evaluation policies, this terminal evaluation was scheduled at the completion of the project to assess project performance (in terms of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency), and determine outcomes and impacts (actual and potential) stemming from the project, including their sustainability. The evaluation has two primary purposes: (i) to provide evidence of results to meet accountability requirements, and (ii) to promote operational improvement, learning and knowledge sharing through results and lessons learned. The latter should include lessons of operational relevance for UNDP, GEF, Iran's Department of Environment and other partners, and for future project formulation and implementation.

29. The TE focused the analysis on the thematic criteria identified in the Terms of Reference. These encompassed project results and attainment of the objective, design, the project Implementation strategy, project management and adaptive management practices, partnership arrangements and stakeholder participation, financial management, monitoring and evaluation,

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Financial Management and UNDP's role as implementing partner. The analysis also looked into contributing factors that included relevance, effectiveness and efficiency, country ownership, mainstreaming and sustainability.

30. The evaluation was guided by the following key questions that were drawn from the Terms of Reference:

- How does the project relate to the main objectives of the GEF focal area, and to environment and development priorities at local, regional and national levels?
- To what extent have the expected outcomes and objective of the project been achieved?
- Was the project implemented efficiently, in line with international and national norms and standards?
- To what extent are there institutional, financial, socio-economic and/or environmental risks to sustaining long term results.
- Has the project contributed to, or enabled progress towards, reduced environmental stress and/or improved ecological status.

These provided the basis for elaboration of a broader range of associated questions that are included in the report (as Annex 4).

31. The evaluation process involved the following steps:

- *Desk review of project documentation and elaboration of TE Inception Report (July-August).* The review included the project document, PIRs and annual progress reports, the 2011 Mid-Term Evaluation report, minutes of Steering Committee meetings, green concept papers and guidelines, a sample of livelihoods/green grant project documentation, and the proposed Conservation and Sustainable Development (C+SD) regional program that would follow this project. The desk review fed into the preparation of the TE Inception Report that describes the project background, the proposed evaluation approach, guiding evaluation questions and the itinerary/agenda.
- *In-country meetings with the project team, DoE and UNDP focal points, government partners at central, provincial and county levels, NGOs and green grant recipients (August).* Interviews and site visits were conducted with project stakeholders in the four participating provinces (Chaharmahal & Bakhtiari, Isfahan, Kohkiluyeh & Boyerahmad, and Fars). There were group meetings with provincial and county representatives of PBO, FRWO, MOAJ, MoE and the Nomadic Affairs Organization among others; in two cases these groups have been organized into Catchment Management Area Committees (CMACs) to lead the biodiversity conservation mainstreaming process in coordination with the Provincial Planning and Development Committees (PPDCs). There were short visits to a sample of green grant recipients in CMAs who were supported in sustainable rice farming, traditional crafts, the cultivation of medicinal plants, eco-tourism and caring for injured wildlife.³

³ The list of interviewed persons and institutions is included in Annex ____.

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- *Presentation of Preliminary Findings (August)* At the end of the mission, the evaluators prepared a PPT presentation of preliminary findings, lessons and recommendations to the project management and National Project Director. The meeting provided the evaluators an opportunity to discuss and integrate their own findings in preparation, and to receive feedback on initial findings before drafting the evaluation report. The main project findings and recommendations were discussed with the project team and UNDP focal point, and their feedback incorporated to the analysis and findings of this report.
- *Elaboration of the Draft and Final Evaluation Reports (September-October)* During this time the evaluators will prepare a draft report that will be submitted to the project management and UNDP Country Office for review, who may share it with other partners as considered necessary. Based on the feedback that is received, the draft report will be revised and finalized.

32. The evaluators received excellent logistical support from the project team and were able to complete a comprehensive agenda that covered the four provinces. However, the TE faced the following constraints: (1) The excessively long implementation period and high turnover of project staff and partners have weakened institutional memory, and the evaluators have had to rely on the 2011 MTE and other early reports desk to obtain insight into the initial project period. The evaluators were not able to meet with previous project coordinators or national directors, despite requests, within what was a very tight agenda. However, there were interviews with NGO partners who had been involved at an early stage of the project, and one ex-staff member. (2) The lack of baseline information on which to measure changes to the numerous performance indicators that were re-formulated after the MTE. (3) Much of the analysis was descriptive and qualitative, due to the absence of baseline data and the difficulties of measuring progress according to the performance indicators.

1.3 STRUCTURE OF THE EVALUATION REPORT

33. The TE report analyzes project performance according to the thematic areas and format established in the Terms of Reference. Based on this, the report's structure is as follows:

- Executive Summary

Project Summary Table

Project Description

Summary of Conclusions, Findings and Recommendations

1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the Evaluation

1.2 Scope & Methodology

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- 1.3 Structure of the Evaluation Report
- 2. Project Description and Development Context
 - 2.1 Project Start and Duration
 - 2.2 Problems the Project Sought to Address
 - 2.3 Immediate and Development Objectives of the Project
 - 2.4 Baseline Indicators Established
 - 2.5 Main Stakeholders
 - 2.6 Expected Results
- 3. Findings
 - 3.1.1.1 Design and Formulation
 - 3.1.1.2 Analysis of LFA/Results Framework
 - 3.1.1.3 Assumptions and Risks
 - 3.1.1.4 Lessons from other Relevant Projects
 - 3.1.1.5 Planned Stakeholder Participation
 - 3.1.1.6 Replication Approach
 - 3.1.1.7 UNDP Comparative Advantage
 - 3.1.1.8 Linkages between project and other Interventions
 - 3.1.1.9 Management Arrangements
- 3.2 Project Implementation
 - 3.1.2 Project Management, Adaptive Management and Partnership Arrangements
 - 3.1.3 Feedback from M&E activities used for Adaptive Management
 - 3.1.4 Project Finance
 - Monitoring and Evaluation
 - UNDP and Implementing Partner Implementation/Execution
 - a. Project Results
 - Overall Results (attainment of objective)
 - Relevance
 - Effectiveness and Efficiency
 - Country Ownership
 - Mainstreaming
 - Sustainability
 - Impact
- 4. Conclusions, Recommendations and Lessons

2. PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT

2.1 Project Start and Duration

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34. The project was approved in June 2005 and scheduled to terminate in June 2010. The project was successively extended until December 2016, and was recently granted a six-month extension to June 2017 in order to consolidate results and work towards the approval of the proposed Conservation and Sustainable Development (C+SD) program for the broader Zagros Region.

2.2 Problems the Project sought to Address

35. The project sought to address several interlinked problems that threaten biodiversity in the CZM: Conversion of biodiversity rich land to other uses and unsustainable harvesting of biodiversity products. These have led to drastic and sometime irreversible degradation of biodiversity. In some places the quality of the land has degrading irreversibly. The resulting fragmentation of biodiversity habitats makes it increasingly difficult for larger mammal species – notably bears and wolves - to find a sufficiently large contiguous habitat. Finally, a series of smaller, localized threats including pollution, mining and alien invasive species exacerbate the situation at some sites. This situation is aggravated by incoming migration from other regions, increasing urbanization and land subdividing, and an overall diminishing water resources in some areas.

36. National policies and programs implemented in the Zagros region provinces are often designed and implemented by sector agencies with little consideration of their impact on biodiversity. Environmental impact assessments are not applied consistently, and established planning and budgeting practices do not encourage cross-sector collaboration or a more consistent assessment of relevant environmental issues.. Existing legislation does not encourage forest or land conservation. There are legal provisions that prevent the privatization of forests, whereas agricultural land can be privately owned, encouraging forest conversion to farming. For many years there was no system of tenure over pasturelands, and the government is presently experimenting with land tenure systems that offer some security to nomadic families.

2.3 Project Goal and Objectives

37.. The project goal was that the Zagros Mountains socio-economy develop successfully and support biodiversity restoration and conservation. The stated project objective was to conserve the biodiversity and landscape within the Central Zagros Landscape Conservation Zone

2.3 Baseline Indicators Established

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38. The project objective included the following performance indicators and baselines were established for the project, with several revisions introduced following the MTE that are reflected below.

Figure 2
Performance Indicators and Baselines for the Project Objective

Objective Performance Indicator	2006 Baseline
Biodiversity rich forest, rangeland and riparian habitat are conserved and restored in pilot management areas according to specifications and areas mapped in management plans.	Baseline surveys of habitats in PMAs and restoration areas to be conducted
Population of selected flagship species (fauna and flora) in BD hotspots across the zone, change in status of indicator species in PMA conservation and restoration areas related to the following environmental problems: rangeland degradation (butterfly species sensitive to overgrazing), forest degradation/loss (density of regenerating seedlings of persian oak), riverine habitat degradation (eurasian otter), hunting pressure (chucker partridge)	Baseline surveys of habitats in PMAs and restoration areas to be conducted
Annual rate of conversion of natural habitats to other land uses in PMAs	To be determined using GIS land cover mapping
Trends in average sediment loads (suspended solids)	To be determined from available data.

39. Likewise, the three outcomes have a series of baseline indicators that are described in section 3 “Project Results”.

2.4 Main Stakeholders

40. The immediate project stakeholders were the provincial and country government agencies involved in the management of water resources, forest, agriculture, rangeland management, tourism and nomadic affairs. Within the Pilot Management Areas (subsequently up-scaled to Catchment Management Areas) project activities were focused towards rural communities engaged in agricultural, livestock and natural resource-based livelihoods within high-biodiversity areas of the CZM.

2.5 Expected Results

41. Project results centered on the achievement of following outcomes, supported by a series of specific outputs.

- A national institutional and policy framework that is fully supportive of mainstreaming biodiversity into the development of the CZM region.

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- Sustainable use and conservation of biodiversity integrated into economic and sector programs and government practices at the conservation zone level
- Successful, sustainable, financially replicable models of village designed and driven approaches to increasing income generation and conserving biodiversity in biodiversity rich areas coordination, monitoring, advocacy and adaptive management

3. FINDINGS

3.1 PROJECT DESIGN

42. The project was formulated with the aim of conserving the biodiversity of the Central Zagros Mountain (CZM) region, an area encompassing over 3 million hectares that extends into four provinces, through (i) the demonstration of sustainable resource management and “mainstreaming” of best practices within the agriculture, forestry, rangeland management, water and tourism sectors, and (ii) strengthened capacities of the protected area system. The implementation strategy envisioned the demonstration of biodiversity conservation and sustainable resource management in a sample of pilot villages with small grants support, the development of mechanisms to internalize biosafety conservation within sector plans and programs, and the replication and up-scaling of successful initiatives; these would in turn provide the rationale for the establishment of a larger, longer-term program for the broader Zagros region.

43. The project’s design aimed to support a broad range of initiatives within a five-year period. The expected deliverables included managing a village-based demonstration grant scheme and feeding the results to policy levels; strengthening environmental considerations among sector departments within provincial and county governments; evaluating and validating a new model for biodiversity conservation; and designing and mobilizing support for the larger program. The underlying concept was to “...establish a novel type of conservation system that will operate across the wide Zagros Mountains landscape, to ensure the protection and sustainability of use and exploitation of all biodiversity, renewable natural resources and ecological processes, and to protect the region’s cultural values”.⁴

44. However, the analysis of project design must consider “before” and “after” situations that have influenced the implementation approach and actual performance. The initial five-year project period and the period that follows from 2012 to present involve different projects in terms of their implementation approach. This was triggered by the critical findings of the 2011 Mid-Term Evaluation (MTE), which led to the revision of outcome indicators and the overall implementation strategy.

⁴ “Conservation of Biodiversity in the Central Zagros Landscape Conservation Zone – Mid Term Evaluation Report”, P. Hunnam (March 2011)

3.1.1 Analysis of the LFA/Results Framework

45. The approved project document includes a comprehensive results framework that encompasses the project's objective, outcomes, outputs and activities. Performance indicators with baselines, targets and means of verification are included for the objective, outcomes and outputs. While the format fully meets UNDP guidelines, the evaluators noted the frequent absence of baseline data that was needed to measure changes to the pre-project situation. The availability and institutional source of baseline information are acknowledged for the outcomes and number of outputs; however the actual data is often either not incorporated or described in very general terms that make subsequent measurement difficult. The analysis of problems and solutions under Annex 2.10 describes the baseline gaps and outlines plans to develop baseline data that could be periodically updated.

46. In particular, the biodiversity-related indicators that were adopted to measure progress towards the project objective – populations of “flagship” species in biodiversity hotspots (Persian squirrel and bear, wild goat, chucker partridge), conversion of natural habitats to other land uses – lack baselines, which were “to be determined” through GIS mapping, subsequent surveys or secondary data. While there were plans to collect data in order to fill key baseline data gaps (i.e. erosion levels, levels of vegetative cover) this does not appear to have been done, as evidenced in subsequent versions of the project results frameworks in the annual PIR reports. As a result, the results framework does not enable a reliable measurement of project impacts (quantitative or qualitative) or of its contributions to improved biodiversity conservation in relation to the pre-project situation.

“The plan proposes a ‘New Vision and Strategy for Development’, a ‘supportive institutional and policy framework’ and new partnerships, but nothing more concrete or specific...the Zagros project planned a total of 24 outputs, but they are not clearly worded and do not form a coherent set of results.”

“... The lack of clear guidance in the original project design, and the lack of guidance and adaptive management during the years of implementation, have contributed to the Zagros project being poorly directed and supervised.”

- Mid-Term Evaluation, pp. 6-7

47. In spite of addressing recognized threats to Zagros biodiversity, the project's design was weakened by unclear concepts and flaws in approach that affected the viability of the results framework:

- Timelines were unrealistically short in relation to the project's scale, deliverables and expected outcomes. The overlapping challenges of (i) managing activities in four provinces with different sets of partners, (ii) developing institutional and policy frameworks to support biodiversity conservation in the Zagros region, and (iii) securing approval and funding to

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commence a broader regional program – by the fifth year - were unreasonable and should have been scaled down to more realistic scenarios.⁵

- The strategy for mainstreaming biodiversity conservation was not articulated in the project document, nor were several of the planned outputs clear, despite the preparatory PDF phase that supported stakeholder consultations.
- Fundamental concepts – mainstreaming, participation - were new to many, yet were not explained in operational terms. Relevant case studies in biodiversity conservation, integrated watershed management and environmental mainstreaming within governance frameworks⁶ were not disseminated to guide the design process. As a result, project implementation strategy lacked direction during the initial years preceding the Mid-Term Evaluation, and several provincial participants conveyed the impression that the project team was not clear on what it wanted to do – or how to get there.
- According to the minutes of the first Project Steering Committee meeting SC in August 2008, two provincial DoE Directors had criticized the project's design and requested its re-formulation. Their comments noted "...Vagueness of the project document in some areas" and "...problems in the project document which should be modified" although further specificity was not provided. In any case, the project design and implementation approach were not modified until the 2011 Mid-Term Evaluation (MTE).
- Eight villages were selected for the project's pilot phase to demonstrate sustainable resource management and livelihoods through small grants initiatives (outcome 3). The decision to focus support on rural villages encouraged initiatives that were unlikely to generate the ecosystemic impact that was needed to affect biodiversity or justify up scaling. All pilot villages were situated within Protected Areas that weren't representative of the broader CZM region in terms of land use and environmental threats. This approach essentially reduced the project's demonstration value to that of a small-grant community development project.

48. The linkages between outputs and outcomes within the results framework, and the "impact pathways" that connect outputs to outcomes and the project objective, are fundamental design aspects that have direct bearing on project performance. They are considered in next section that analyzes project design from a "Theory of Change" perspective.

3.1.2 Assumptions and Risks

49. The results framework identifies a series of assumptions that are associated with the project objective, outcomes and outputs. The assumptions for the first two outcomes are realistic, comprehensive and address the national, regional and local contexts – in retrospect several of these assumptions did affect the project performance and achievement levels. In almost all cases, these assumptions are outside of the project's attributions or direct influence and depend largely on government policy and budget decisions, coordination between

⁵ GEF guidelines limit the duration of its projects based on grant size (i.e. medium and full-size projects) and it would not have been possible to approve a longer period from the onset.

⁶ Including GEF-supported initiatives such as those in Integrated Watershed and Coastal Management (IWCAM).

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government agencies and other externalities. On the other hand, assumptions are not presented under the third component, which focused on the demonstration of biodiversity conservation and sustainable livelihoods in pilot villages (subsequently expanded to Catchment Management Areas). The third outcome and related outputs should have included the assumption that demonstrated sustainable livelihoods and resource management practices would lead to their up-scaling and replication by partner agencies within provincial and county/district governments (which did not occur on the scale that was expected).

50. Risks are briefly described in the corresponding section (2c. “Sustainability and Risks”) of the project document. The difficulties of promoting biodiversity conservation in an extensive region that crosses provincial boundaries is acknowledged, as are the institutional arrangements that this requires. In both cases these challenges carried risks that could undermine the achievement of outputs and expected outcomes. Likewise, another risk concerned the likelihood of influencing biodiversity conservation in an extended geographic area through a single GEF project; the designation of pilot villages within protected areas was expected to mitigate this risk by offering a more manageable geographic scale. Possible risks associated with the adoption/up-scaling of best practices and proposed conservation model at government policy and program levels were not addressed and could have been considered, building on the assumptions that were listed in the Results Framework.

3.1.3 Lessons from other relevant projects

51. The project document does not identify lessons from other projects that influenced its design, although it does provide a detailed overview of national, regional and local government institutional mandates and initiatives. In design and implementation approach, “Conservation of Biodiversity in the Central Zagros Landscape Conservation Zone” differed from established conservation practices within Iran by proposing an ecosystems-based conservation approach (as opposed to focusing on specific species) that envisioned direct collaboration between sector agencies in different provinces and levels of government, NGOs and pilot communities within the CZM region. Hence the project’s design has not benefitted from the experience and lessons of earlier conservation projects, although stakeholder consultations that were held during the preparatory PDF phase did help in conveying the perspectives of different institutions.

52. While the project’s design would have benefited from the experience of other ongoing projects in the Zagros region that are supported by GEF, UNDP and JICA, these were not operational at the time of its formulation. The evaluators consider that the project’s design would have benefitted from exposure to successful biodiversity conservation, watershed management and institutional “mainstreaming” initiatives such as IWCAM (Integrated Watershed and Coastal Area Management), ecosystems-based territorial management approaches, and case studies in eco-budgeting and payment for ecosystem services (PES).

3.1.4 Planned stakeholder participation

53. The project included adequate provisions for stakeholder participation, and was designed in consultation with government and non-governmental stakeholders during the PDF phase. The project document identified the sectors, institutions, land uses and stakeholder groups that have influence on the state of biodiversity in the CZM, and foresaw partnerships among these stakeholders at central, provincial and district levels. These partnerships were to be managed through a Steering Committee comprised of the participating central government agencies, and inter-institutional Technical Advisory Teams (TAT). Both were to provide overall supervision and guidance to “all project activities under all outcomes”, with the TAT additionally guiding the design of concept papers and overseeing the implementation of the BGEP small grants component under the third outcome. In addition, the PSC and TAT were expected to integrate project findings and best practices into the procedures, policies and work plans of the relevant national agencies.

54. The participation of project partners and stakeholders at different levels in project planning and monitoring practices is emphasized in the project document. Project work plans and small grants livelihood projects were to be elaborated in consultation with provincial/country government agencies and village councils, and the project aimed to demonstrate “...how giving increased responsibility to communities through the participatory planning and decision-making process can lead to improved social and ecological conditions”.⁷

3.1.4 Replication Approach

55. Replication was a major feature of the project’s design and fundamental for achieving its key outcomes and objective. As mentioned in the project document, “the project is designed to introduce innovative approaches and ensure they are replicated.”⁸

56. There is a sequential flow of outputs and activities supporting demonstration, validation, dissemination and replication. The conservation model and sustainable resource management practices that would be demonstrated in pilot Management Areas under the third outcome, would be up scaled by government agencies and NGOs, and replicated on a broader scale under the first and second outcomes, with institutional MoUs and “mainstreaming” strategies that would be designed.

57. The implementation of conservation and sustainable development initiatives in pilot villages and conservation management areas were expected to have a strong demonstration effect that would encourage replication on a larger scale. The Biodiversity Enterprise Grants Program (BEGP) that was piloted under the third component would be up-scaled into a small grant livelihoods support program. New management system and tools would be disseminated by

⁷ Project document, pg. 30

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the project. All of these would provide a foundation for the expanded biodiversity conservation program that would be proposed for the larger Zagros region.

3.1.6 UNDP Comparative Advantage

58. As the designated GEF implementing agency, UNDP was to provide overall oversight and monitoring of project implementation, including financial oversight of UNDP and GEF funds. This carried comparative advantages that included UNDP's country presence, more timely financial management and disbursement of GEF funds (in comparison with government procedures), access to a global knowledge network that could potentially support the project's implementation, and coordination opportunities with other UNDP-supported development initiatives such as the Area Based Development Program (ABD) in Kohkiluyeh and Boyerahmad (KB) province and the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), a tool for environmental management that was being developed by the Government of Iran with support from UNDP. The project document correctly notes UNDP's extended experience - over 35 years – in Iran, and its background in working with GEF in similar cultural and physical landscapes.

3.1.7 Linkages between projects and other interventions within the sector

59. Coordination across government sector agencies was essential to the project's integrated planning and mainstreaming outcomes, which the project document recognized as being fundamental to the construction of a new conservation vision. In this regard, the project provided assist DoE in mainstream biodiversity considerations within government sector plans and programs targeting watershed, rangeland and forest management, agriculture, tourism, energy and the socio-economic development of nomadic tribes, through the existing Provincial Planning and Development Councils (PPDCs). In this regard, the three project components were intrinsically linked to the government planning and budgeting cycle at the national and (in particular) provincial levels, with "downstream" linkages to village councils and community-based organizations under the third component. A number of ongoing government programs in the CZM were identified in the project document (Annex 2.9) that potentially offered entry points for collaboration on forest management, pasture improvement, community development and other initiatives of mutual interest.

60. Close coordination was foreseen with two UNDP-supported initiatives: The Area-Based Development Program for Sustainable Poverty Alleviation (ADB) was in process of introducing participatory community-based development approaches in K&B province, and was considered likely to support the project's small grants component under the third outcome. In addition, the Sustainable Development Strategy and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) that was in process of developing strategic environmental appraisals to assess the consequences of environmental policies, plans and programs.

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3.1.8 Management Arrangements

61. The project's design included multi-tiered management arrangements that reflected the project's scale and institutional complexity. Management arrangements are described for the national level, with DoE leading as national executing agency and serving as Project Secretariat for the first outcome, and actual execution managed by an externally-recruited project team headed by a National Project Coordinator.

62. As described, an inter-institutional Project Steering Committee (chaired by the National Project Director, appointed within DoE) and Technical Advisory Team were responsible for providing oversight, coordination support and technical guidance. The PSC represented the highest decision-making level of the project and was essential in enabling the project's cross-sector dynamics; it was to include representatives of key national agencies from each province and at least one NGO; and would meet at least twice a year. A project team consisting of a National Project Manager (who reported to the NPD at DoE) and four technical experts⁹ - one from each of the participating provinces - was to be located in the CZM region in order to liaise more effectively with provincial governments. It was planned that the representatives of key government agencies – DoE, PBO, FRWO, MoE – in the four provinces would form working groups to articulate the Conservation Zone development vision; and to develop guidelines for incorporating biodiversity considerations within agriculture (including rangelands and forestry), water resources, and biodiversity and tourism.

63. As designed, the management arrangements were well thought and articulated both vertical (linking national, provincial and local governments) and horizontal (i.e. cross-sector) dynamics. The arrangements encouraged partner ownership at both national and provincial levels, where the project team was to be based.¹⁰ The decision to locate the project office within the project area was likely to strengthen coordination of CZM partners and facilitate the implementation of pilot initiatives in conservation areas under the third outcome. This would have raised the level of “buy-in” to the project on the part of provincial and local stakeholders (had it been applied). These arrangements assumed high levels of institutional commitment on the part of DoE, PSC members, the National Project Director and the TAT, all of which were strategically positioned to promote the up scaling and replication of best practices and biodiversity conservation mainstreaming at both national policy levels and across the broader Zagros region.

3.2 PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

⁹ The positions were environmental expert, planner, information specialist and administrator.

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3.2.1 Project Implementation Strategy

3.2.1 Adaptive management (changes to the project design and project outputs during implementation)

64. The project has shown good adaptive management capabilities that have improved performance and output delivery in recent years. As noted earlier, the critical findings of the 2011 Mid-Term Evaluation triggered substantive changes to the project's design and implementation approach, which have required considerable adaptive management by the project team: Target areas were upgraded from pilot villages to broader catchment management areas (CMAs), providing a more ecosystemic focus that enhanced conditions for generating environmental impact at landscape levels. Several of the recent green grant initiatives – sustainable rice farming practices that conserve water and use biological pest control, the cultivation of endangered medicinal herbs with high commercial value, the restoration of historic buildings as eco guesthouses - have demonstrated tangible, cross-sector benefits and could have significant environmental impact if replicated on a larger scale.

65. There were late efforts to work more closely with provincial and country governments, and with Plan and Budget Office (PBO) representatives in particular to make use of their overarching mandate. While this initiative was an important aspect of the project's adaptive management strategy that aimed to give more attention to conservation mainstreaming within provincial development plans and projects, it has not been backed by clear guidelines or technical guidance. This has discouraged the interest of several partners over time, and the commitment levels of provincial and local government stakeholders have varied considerably. However, the closer relationship with provincial authorities led to the approval of CMACs in three provinces and encouraging progress has been made in catalyzing further cooperation between government agencies around environmentally relevant initiatives.

66. The formal approval of Catchment Management Area Committees (CMACs) that encompass several counties and districts of three provinces, provide an institutional mechanism for operationalizing cross-sector collaboration and a consistent consideration of environmental impact within development plans and projects. Examples of cross-sector collaboration and joint initiatives that are environmentally relevant and influenced by the project were found in the CHB and KB provincial governments, and within Bazoft and Dena county governments. MOAJ has plans to replicate green grant initiatives in other districts of CHB and Fars provinces during the next budget year

67. Adaptive management was also reflected in the revision of existing outcome indicators and addition of new indicators, in line with the aforementioned adjustments that were made to the implementation strategy. Several of the revised indicators provide greater specificity and

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can be measured, while others are intended to offer greater flexibility by aligning the indicator to new targets and work plans. There have not been changes to the design of outputs or outcomes.

Figure 3

Revisions to Outcome Indicators following the MTE

	Original Indicator	Revised/New Indicator
Objective 1	% of the Zone under a management regime addressing mainstreaming biodiversity conservation	Biodiversity rich forest, rangeland and riparian habitat are conserved and restored in pilot management areas according to specifications and areas mapped in management plans.
	Population of selected key flagship species (Persian squirrel and bear	Population of selected flagship species (fauna and flora) in BD hotspots across the zone, change in status of indicator species in PMA conservation and restoration areas related to the following environmental problems: rangeland degradation (butterfly species sensitive to overgrazing), forest degradation/loss (density of regenerating seedlings of persian oak), riverine habitat degradation (eurasian otter), hunting pressure (chucker partridge)
		Annual rate of conversion of natural habitats to other land uses within PMAs.
		Trends in average sediment loads (total suspended solids) carried by major rivers across the zone.
Outcome 1	Number of MoUs signed and started implementing between DoE and Ministries of Agriculture and Energy, Cultural Heritage and Tourism Organization, and Tribal Affairs Organisation	Proposals for policy improvements supporting biodiversity conservation mainstreaming into development of Zagros Mountains drafted and submitted to national legislative entities for consideration.
	Approved Strategy for development incorporating biodiversity	National/sub-national program for BD conservation in Zagros mountainous landscapes, approved by national legislative entities and operational, including required budget and monitoring frameworks.
	Central level and provincial level mechanisms for intersectoral planning and coordination for conservation of MEMLs	A Management System for the CZM is formally established and legally designated as an integrated multi-sector resource including scale up strategy, national policies and legal framework.
	Conservation of Zagros biodiversity mentioned in at least 2 sectors : Agriculture and	A permanent governing body (national and provincial) for the CZM region's sustainable development is formally designated and established.

	Natural Resources in 5th Five Year Plan with clear objectives	
Outcome 2	% reduction of unsustainable harvesting of non wood forests products such as medicinal herbs and aromatic plants % of nomad families adopt improved grazing and livelihood practices	Catalogue of evaluated resource materials for 50+ income generation and livelihood options available for rural and nomad communities in Central Zagros.
	Reduction in littering of major touristic spots of the region (eg Margoon and Behesht-e Gomshodeh) as a proxy indicator of more BD conscious tourism	Information and advice on a range of ecologically sustainable resource enterprises and livelihood options in the CZM are widely available to local and provincial stakeholders.
	% increase in awareness and understanding on the importance of Zagros biodiversity among provincial level planners and policy makers	Information and management tools are in use, assisting effective and efficient natural resource planning and conservation across the CZM region.
	Number of provinces currently under project adopt measures, approaches and practices developed under this project	Management of all natural resources and sites across the CZM region are incorporated.
Outcome 3	% increase in household income at pilot village	Actions implemented and evaluated in each pilot Management Areas. Strategic pilot livelihood initiatives implemented and evaluated in each MA.
	Significant improvement in BD status surrounding 8 pilot villages (Proxy indicator: recruitments/regeneration of oak species in forests adjacent to pilot villages	BD rich habitats are conserved and restored in pilot Management Areas according to specifications and areas mapped in management plans.
	Local participation in conservation activities increased (Proxy indicator: number of village conservation groups formed and started to take responsibility to protect forests adjacent to their village.	Level of support for BD conservation increases within pilot Management Areas as indicated by number of local conservation groups formed and actually participating in conservation and restoration activities.
	% of provincial (sector/partner) agencies adopt participatory and community driven resource planning and management developed approaches by the project	Four pilot management committees and action programs operating efficiently with active support by project staff.
	Project management and institutional structure including ToRs	Project management and institutional structure including ToRs

	Project plans (Annual and Quarterly Work Plans, M&E, Communication Strategy and Action Plan, etc.) prepared in time and duly implemented	Project plans (Annual and Quarterly Work Plans, M&E Plan, Communication Strategy and Action Plan, etc.) prepared in time and duly implemented
		Specific local water pollution problems identified in pilot MAs are progressively reduced through participatory approaches.
		Zagros pilot program completed effectively, results of pilot evaluated and understood by national and provincial decision-makers, and applied to the design of the full scale CZM Conservation Management System.

68. Adaptive management was also applied to meet the project's financial monitoring and reporting requirements. The recurrent difficulties faced in translating financial data between DoE and UNDP-Atlas formats led the project to pool resources with other UNDP-GEF projects (MENARID, Conservation of Wetlands) to develop their own Excel-based software that facilitated quarterly reporting on expenditures.

3.2.2. Partnership arrangements

69. The project document identified a broad range of sectors, institutions, stakeholder groups and land uses that have influence on the state of biodiversity in the CZM, and foresaw partnerships among these stakeholders at central, provincial and district levels. These partnerships were to be managed through a Steering Committee with oversight and supervisory functions; and through the creation of supportive institutional arrangements to manage biodiversity conservation mainstreaming. These partnerships were intended to enable the participation of a broader spectrum of stakeholders and encourage national ownership.

70. In practice however, neither the project nor most of its stakeholders have made effective use of the partnership opportunities that were made available. This was influenced by the high turnover of participants and limited commitment of key government partners towards the project. The Project Steering Committee was "...the ultimate decision-making and coordination body for the project" that was expected to ensure that "national agencies in Iran adopt the project outputs into their existing work programs; that national agencies modify their practices in line with project recommendations, and; that the project thereby achieves its objectives."¹¹ However, the PSC has not provided the oversight or coordination support that was expected and could have led to better project performance. Several interviewed committee members are not well informed of project's activities, to the point of not recalling the project document. The PSC

¹¹ Project document, pg. 6

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has only met on 13 occasions over the past decade, considerably below the 22 meetings that were initially programmed. It has never convened in any of the provinces of the Zagros region (contrary to the provisions contained in the project document), and all meetings were held in Teheran.

71. The National Project Director was designated by DoE. Yet this has not been an influential position. There were several NPDs over the project lifetime and most do not seem to have assumed the responsibility of "...being accountable for the production of the project outputs, appropriate use of the project resources...and coordination of the UNDP/GEF project with other programmes and projects implemented in Iran in the area of natural resources management."¹²

"International projects create high expectations in government and communities, everyone thinks that a huge budget will come. This creates a lot of challenges to sustain participation. The Zagros project is really trying to bring sectors together, which does not happen with our other projects."

- FRWO representative in CHB province

72. To a large extent, project relations with provincial, county and district governments were driven by the small grant projects implemented in their jurisdictions. During the evaluation meetings the sector agency directors often did not appear to be well informed of the project and had a passive attitude, in most cases with limited involvement. There are also important exceptions that are described in this report, with CHB's provincial government, Bazoft and Dena CMAs and the MOAJ representative for Kars province among others. The DoE does not have the institutional mandate or political weight that is needed to influence other agency priorities, whereas the PBO has been more influential in encouraging agency cooperation. In spite of this, several interviewed government officials recognize the project's efforts to promote inter-sectoral cooperation, which is considered an important need by many.

73. The progress that was achieved towards mainstreaming is well below the level of the relevant performance indicators. The low involvement of many provincial and county government partners does not indicate active partnership. Mainstreaming is perceived as a budget threat by some agencies; in recent years provincial and county governments have had to cope with late disbursements and lower allocations due to the macroeconomic situation and drop of international oil prices. The project has not built cooperation ties with other initiatives that are compatible such as the GEF-UNDP supported MENARID or JICA projects for natural resource management. Both of these initiatives seek institutional arrangements similar to the committees promoted by the project, which would have benefited from working more closely with MENARID that has advanced further in working with local government planning and budgeting. This has

¹² "Conservation of Biodiversity in the Central Zagros Landscape Conservation Zone" – Project Document, pg. 24

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an opportunity cost in terms of missed entry points that could have broadened the project's range of influence and impact.

74. The recent creation of the cross-sector CMA committees, along with the existing PPDCs, are an important step towards the integrated management system that is intended to drive biodiversity conservation mainstreaming. There are indications of greater environmental consideration and inter-agency cooperation within Charmahal va bakhtiari's (CHB) provincial government, Bazoft CMA (CHB province), and Dena CMA in Kohkiluyeh va boyerahmad (KB) province. However, these developments come at a late stage of the project and the operational guidelines needed to systematize such practices are lacking. Unless the C+SD is approved, it is unlikely that the CMACs (which were approved three of four provinces) will have an opportunity to become operational or have impact.

3.3.3 Feedback from M&E activities used for adaptive management

75. In the absence of a formal monitoring system, the only M&E activity that has influenced adaptive management was the 2011 Mid-Term Review, which gave a critical assessment of the project's design, implementation approach and overall performance. The MTR reported that the project "[did] not seem to have been presented or delivered as a strong, integrated package of actions, with a five-year life and \$9.5 million budget."¹³ Concepts and approaches that were fundamental to the project's success – mainstreaming BD conservation, applying an ecosystems approach to conservation - were new and not well understood in operational terms. As a result, the project lacked a sense of strategic direction. The pilot conservation areas were located within protected areas and were unrepresentative of the CZM context; the focus of the BCEG grants on villages drew the project towards a community development modality that addressed local needs yet had little effect on biodiversity conservation. The MTE also noted deficiencies in basic management practices such as work planning and budgeting, reliable expenditure reporting, internal reviews and adaptive management.

76. The evaluation findings encouraged meetings and discussions that led to substantive revisions of outcome indicators, the criteria for designating pilot conservation areas, and the project implementation strategy that are described in section 3.2.1 "Adaptive Management."

3.3.4 Project Finance

77. Financial delivery was low deficient during much of the project, with management and reporting deficiencies during the initial years. There were improvements since 2014 in terms of financial reporting and budget revisions, and comparatively higher rates of expenditure.

¹³ "Conservation of Biodiversity in the Central Zagros Landscape Conservation Zone – Mid Term Evaluation Report" P. Hunnam (March 2011), pg. 4

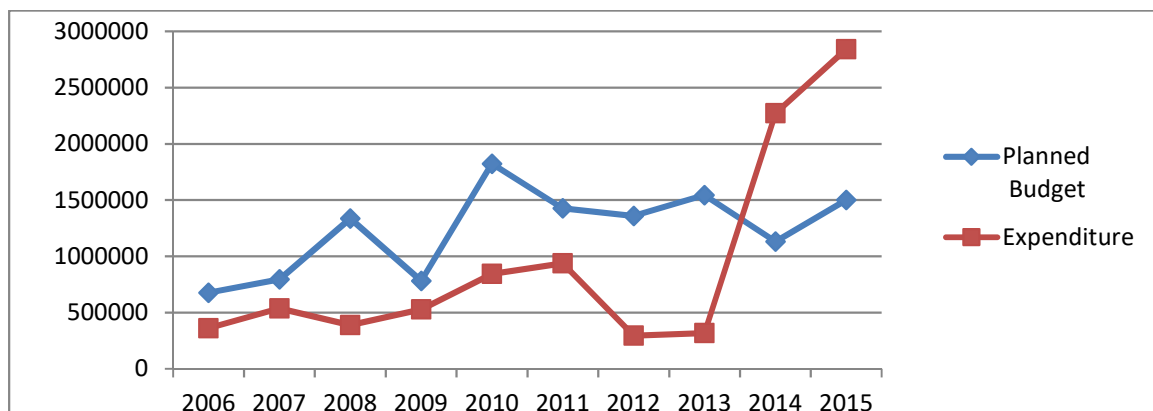
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However, the implementation process was generally slow with significant deficits in expenditure during the 2006-2008 periods – with delivery rates and the project budget will not completely delivered by the end of 2016 (the scheduled closing date) and will instead be re-programmed for a final six-month extension in order to consolidate results and work towards the approval of the broader C+SD program.

78. The overall project budget that was allocated was adequate to deliver the project outputs and achieve the intended outcomes. Indeed, the project has been active for twice as long than initially planned within the approved GEF budget. During this extended period, management and operational costs absorbed the largest share of the GEF budget (41.6%). Among the technical components, the largest share of the combined GEF-UNDP budget was devoted to the second outcome - sustainable use and conservation of biodiversity, integrated into economic/sector programs and government practices (32%) – followed by the first outcome that supported institutional strengthening (14.8%) and the third outcome of demonstrated sustainable livelihoods and conservation approaches at the village level (11.6%).

Figure 4

Planned and Actual Expenditure 2006-2015: Combined National and International Budget



Source: Zagros project

79. Overall budget delivery (the different between programmed and actual expenditure) was low for most of the project period, particularly when considering that budgets were re-programmed annually yet took twice as long to spend than initially planned. The available information suggests that delivery was particularly low between 2006-2008 and 2012-2013 period, due both to internal organizational problems and reduced government co-financing (Figure 5). Low output delivery and inconsistent financial management reinforced below-expected levels of expenditure. The evaluators were told that until 2014, financial reports were

not produced on a regular basis and planned expenditures weren't based on realistic projections or work plans.

Delivery improves considerably during the last two years of the project, mainly due to a sharp increase in government co-financing that exceeded the planned target, and the presence of a stable project management team.

Figure 5

Planned and Allocated International and National Project Budgets: 2006-2016

Year	International budget (dollar)			National budget (dollar)		
	Predicted	Allocated	Percent of allocation	Predicted	Allocated	Percent of allocation
2006	473,712	172,783	36.5	203,850	187,000	91.7
2007	315,000	195,755	62.1	480,000	340,000	70.8
2008	544,388	188,108	34.6	791,000	200,000	25.3
2009	385,103	448,122	116.4	397,600	80,000	20
2010	853,520	623,458	73.	970,000	220,000	22.7
2011	600,000	425,811	70.1	828,000	511,000	61.7
2012	259,903	199,617	76.8	1,100,000	93,000	8.5
2013	324,889	307,624	94.7	1,220,000	10,000	0.8
2014	464,600	427,896	92.1	666,000	1,843,429	276.8
2015	500,000	407,778	81.6	1,000,000	2,434,027	243.4
2016(End of Oct.)	453,031	290,850	64.2	900,000	7,275,213	808.3
Total	3,800,000	3,687,803	97	5,190,000	13,193,669	254

Source: Zagros Project

Figure 6

Project Co-financing – Planned and Actual: 2006- 2016

Co-financing (Type/source)	UNDP own financing (US\$)		Government (US\$)		Partner Agency (NGO)		Total (mill.US\$)	
	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual
Grants	50,000	49,122	5,190,000	13,193,669	380,000	206,333	5,620,000	13,449,124
Loans/Concessions								
• In-kind support			110,000	2,175,525			110,000	2,175,525
• Other								
Totals	50,000	49,122	5,300,000	15,369,194	380,000	206,333	5,730,000	15,624,649

Source: Zagros Project

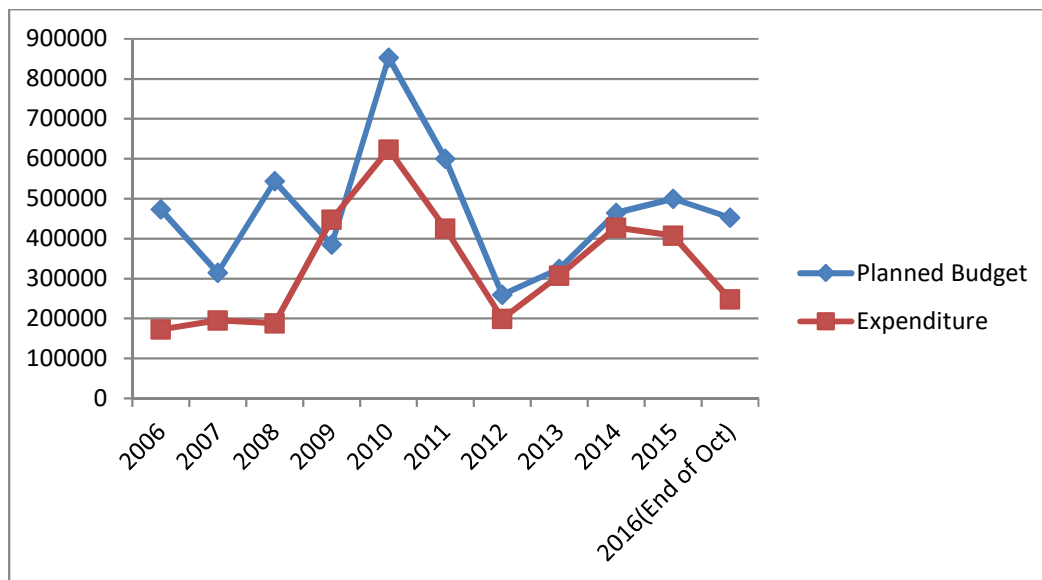
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80. Project audits were conducted by external firms on an annual basis. The audits attributed low expenditure for the 2006-2011 period to inadequate planning on the part of the project team. Financial management and delivery have tended to improve since 2014 with higher co-financing, and more consistent management practices. There have been an average of two budget revisions per year to transfer funds between budget lines ¹⁴ and re-program unspent balances. The 2014 Audit Report noted that the 2013 annual budget was reduced in November without changes to the planned activities, which enabled the project to achieve a 94% delivery rate after spending US\$ 307,624; if the annual budget had not been revised, delivery would have fallen.

81. The following tables present planned and actual expenditures in relation the national, international and combined project budgets, and co-financing contributions. It is important to point out total co-financing exceeded planned targets in excess of US\$ 1 million, and has helped to maintain the project active over the past decade.

Figure 7

Total Planned and Actual Budget Expenditures (US\$): 2006-2015

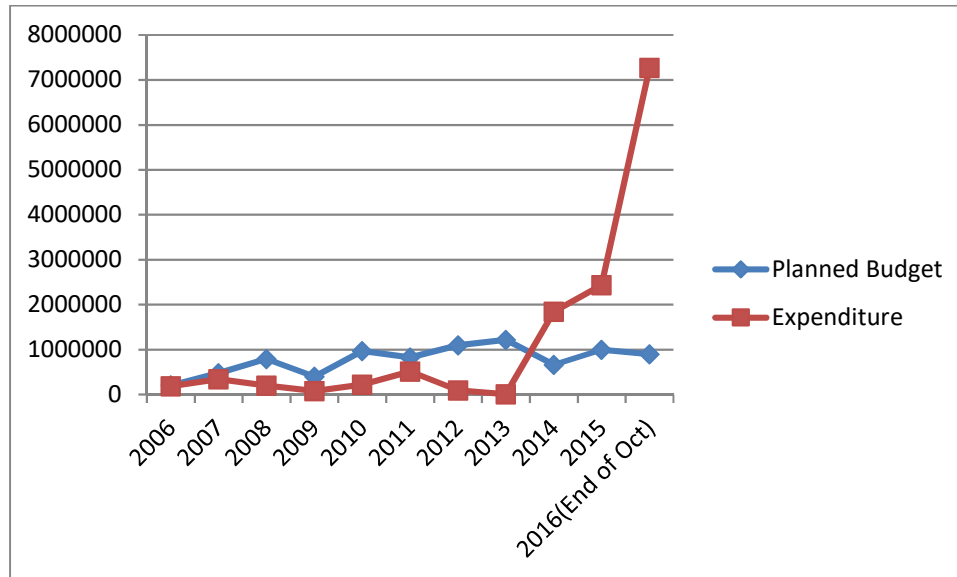


Source: Zagros project

Figure 8

¹⁴ These included transfers from from Publications to Research and Studies, and from Subcontracts to Miscellaneous.

Planned and Actual National Budget Expenditures: 2006-2015



Source: Zagros project

82 The project had to comply with different financial management and reporting guidelines that were not compatible. Disbursements of government co-financing contributions have been difficult to monitor because government financial regulations do not allow transfers between government agencies. Instead co-financing was managed internally by each agency as parallel funding, which has made tracking expenditure more difficult. As a result, it was often not clear what other government agencies were spending or had spent. A positive finding is that parallel financing surpassed the co-financing amount that were initially foreseen; much of this came as contributions to green grant initiatives, and from the Water Department and Ministry of Energy for flood control improvements.

83. Due to budget shortfalls and the different fiscal year calendars used by the Government of Iran and UNDP-GEF, the government contribution corresponding to the third quarter was often delayed to the end of the fiscal year and had to be spent during the final 3 months of the calendar year. The pressure to spend money in a limited timeframe encouraged expenditures on activities that hadn't been initially planned. The Project Administrator considers that approximately 50% of the third and fourth quarter government allocations were spent on planned project activities. In several cases, co-financing disbursements were below planned amounts. This situation led a reliance on GEF funds, which were periodically "front-loaded" to cover the needs of different budget lines until the government contribution was received.

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84. There were also inconsistencies between the government's financial accounting and UNDP's Atlas system, which reports expenditures by outputs and outcomes. After joining the project, the current Project Administrator received a brief ATLAS introduction from the UNDP CO and has had difficulties learning the system. As noted earlier, the difficulties that were faced every three months in translating financial data between formats led the project to pool resources with other UNDP-GEF projects (MENARID, Conservation of Wetlands) in order to develop their own Excel-based software, which facilitated the recording of financial data using the Atlas format.

3.3.5 Monitoring and evaluation: design at entry and implementation

85. Following UNDP-GEF requirements, the approved project document included a budgeted monitoring and evaluation plan that designates M&E responsibilities, establishes performance indicators and milestones in the logical framework, and foresees data collection activities. The M&E plan includes periodic reviews by the project team, Project Steering Committee, UNDP, and Technical Advisory Team (TAT) as well as the required reporting and external mid-term and terminal evaluations. A significant budget of US\$ 160,000 was estimated for these activities.

86. The plan was not implemented beyond the periodic reporting of annual Project Implementation Reviews (PIRs), annual performance reports and quarterly/annual expenditure reports in addition to the external evaluations. Both the PIRs and Annual Performance Reports are well documented and provide a balanced overview of project progress that also address the emergent lessons learned. When available, quantitative data is used to describe the status of project indicators and performance targets. Monitoring has been internal and *ad-hoc* for the most part with little if any systematic participation by provincial or county partners; the project team has tended to rely on the presence of provincial coordinators and their closer proximity to partners and activities on the ground. On the other hand, contracted NGOs and other entities responsible for implementing green grants have tended to make fuller use of stakeholder inputs for monitoring purposes.

87. The UNDP-Iran programme officer assigned to the project was responsible for monitoring the project on behalf of the implementing agency. Monitoring was again *ad hoc* and part of a broader role that included guidance on project management issues and technical backstopping. While the current UNDP programme manager assigned to the project has not been a regular presence (the Country Office has staffing limitations and was undergoing a Change Management process), he was well informed of project issues and contributed substantively to the TE's initial briefing. There were also two external monitoring missions by an environmental advisor of UNDP's Regional Office for Asia & the Pacific, although this happened early in the project and reports were not available to the evaluators. The monitoring framework could have been enhanced by broader and more interactive group dynamics – for example, consulting with PPDC and CMA partners, involving university thesis students and giving the project staff a more active role.

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88. Performance indicators are identified in the project document that include a set of bio-indicators to measure the achievement of the objective. However, baseline data was not collected in most cases despite provisions in the project document.¹⁵ The information gap has limited the project teams' ability to assess progress towards outcomes or the main objective.

89. The 2011 Mid-Term Evaluation conducted a critical assessment of project performance that covered the approved five-year period. The evaluation was comprehensive and came up with a number of recommendations that are summarized below. Several of the MTE findings have influenced the project strategy and were a "driver" of adaptive management, as described in other sections of this report.

90. The evaluator's only critical observation of MTE and the changes it brought is that they came late: The evaluation should have taken place in 2008 or early 2009 at latest, based on the approved project period. The decision was made to postpone the evaluation until 2011 (coinciding with the planned termination date due) given the very limited progress that had been achieved. However this postponement also limited the time available to implement the new approach. Had the MTE been held in 2008, the project team would have had additional time to implement the new approach. This might have enabled the project to advance towards achieving its outcomes. Ironically, many of the revised/new outcome indicators that were adopted from the MTE are better aligned to the stated outcomes, yet are also more ambitious and unrealistic in relation to the project period.

3.3.6 UNDP and Implementing Partner Implementation/Execution, Coordination and Operational Issues

3.3.6.1 UNDP as Implementing Agency

91. UNDP was the designated GEF Implementing Agency for the project, and was required to oversee the project's execution and financial management, provide technical guidance and intervene as needed to correct problems. UNDP's performance as IA is difficult to assess because of the project's long duration and turnover of personnel (including within UNDP) during that time.

92. Despite staff turnover within both the project and UNDP, the UNDP Country Office appears to have performed its role as implementing agency in a satisfactory manner. The CO organized the 2011 Mid-Term Evaluation that led to several revisions and contributed to better design and performance. The allocation of core TRAC funds has helped the project to stay open. UNDP also played a lead role in the 2011 Tripartite Review that approved the project's extension until 2014 because "major goals [had] not been achieved," and instructed the project team to revise the log-frame, work plan and pilot area classifications.

¹⁵ Baseline databases were to be created for target sectors during the planned inception period and under outputs 2.5, 3.3 and 3.4.

93. The presence of the UNDP Country Office was essential to provide the initial guidance and “backstopping” needed by a project of this scale and complexity. While interviewed project team members considered that more consistent guidance could have been provided, particularly on administrative and financial issues, major shortfalls were not identified and the UNDP programme officer and financial staff were available when needed. Disbursements to the project were handled efficiently and inordinate delays in receiving funds or procuring goods and services were not reported. On a programmatic level, the evaluators feel that the CO could have been more decisive in facilitating case studies, methodological approaches and other knowledge products on ecosystems management and conservation mainstreaming, in order to give direction to the project. This would have been particularly useful during the PDF preparatory stage and/or immediately following the Mid-Term Review the project implementation strategy was being reconsidered.

94. The role of the CO in managing GEF funds – which often were used to temporarily cover budget gaps caused by the delayed disbursement of government co-financing – was important to ensure the flow of project activities without disruption. Indeed, the possibility of having the government co-funding managed by the CO as cost-sharing was considered as a more efficient option to the governments internal budget systems, but the mechanism for doing so was not developed due to legal issues (the government recently approved a cost-sharing agreement with UNDP to manage the funds of another GEF project that supports forest management and conservation in the Caspian coastal region).

95. UNDP’s presence varied at different stages of the project execution, with a higher profile during the project’s start up. There was more UNDP involvement during the initial years that included at two missions from UNDP’s Regional Office for Asia & the Pacific in Bangkok. The UNDP program officer provided guidance to the project team on project management and reporting guidelines; likewise, a UNDP finance staff member presented an overview of the the ATLAS system. These interactions had the intent of moving the project in the right direction, correcting management problems and raising project delivery; although the evaluators have not had access to the reports of UNDP missions or meetings that occurred almost a decade ago.

3.3.6.2 National Partner execution, coordination, and operational issues

96. The quality of execution by the DoE project team and the main government partners has been inconsistent over the years and influenced by frequent staff turnover, and uneven institutional capacities and commitment.. Some of the management arrangements foreseen in the project document were not carried out; the project was based at the DoE office in Tehran instead of a Zagros province, and did not recruit staff from ZM provinces as had been planned.

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During the TE the core team consisted of a National Project Manager, Deputy Project Manager, Finance and Procurement Manager, and technical staff devoted to GIS and planning, capacity development and management systems, allocating an important share of their work to project management.. The project's most visible field presence are the provincial coordinators who are attached to the DoE office of each province. Although the provincial coordinators are the link between the central project office and partners in the CZM region, this arrangement has not generated the momentum that was needed for a project of this scale and ambition. Part of this is because in most cases there is not much institutional buy-in or collaboration towards the project, influenced by the long period that has passed.. .

97. Project management appears to have been particularly weak during the 2006-2011 period, which was marked by low delivery and irregular inconsistent work planning and reporting practices. The 2011 Mid-Term Evaluation reported that the project “[did] not seem to have been presented or delivered as a strong, integrated package of actions, with a five-year life and \$9.5 million budget.”¹⁶ The MTE noted deficiencies in basic management practices such as work planning and budgeting, reliable expenditure reporting, internal reviews and adaptive management.

98. During this period, project efforts were centered on delivering small-scale livelihood grants to pilot villages. Little attention was given to building capacities, promoting mainstreaming practices within provincial or country governments, or developing the enabling institutional and policy arrangements until the last two years. As a result there has been little progress in these areas (with the positive exceptions of the CHB provincial government and the Bazoft and Dena CMAs). Many provincial partners continue to perceive mainstreaming as a funding issue that potentially threatens core allocations and therefore requires additional budgetary allocations. Three of four provinces had formally approved CMA committees at the time of the evaluation mission.

99. Continuous capacity building was needed to move the project forward, but was often approached through short training events without adequate follow-up. An introductory GIS workshop was held in CHB province that lasted two half-days; although a CD with data was distributed to the participants, there has not been any follow-up (nor is the training being applied). A capacity development program was only drafted in 2015 and initiated this year. Output-based work plans were drafted by the project management in consultation with provincial project coordinators. However, provincial or county CZM partners were not involved effectively in the process, an omission that misses an important aspect of capacity building and affects the levels of ownership and commitment.

¹⁶“Conservation of Biodiversity ^{SEP}in the Central Zagros Landscape Conservation Zone – Mid Term Evaluation Report” P. Hunnam (March 2011), pg. 4

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100. Fundamental concepts that were not articulated in the project's design have not been fully assimilated by the project team; as a result these concepts often were not conveyed to project partners in a convincing manner. Several provincial government representatives feel that project implementation has lacked direction and strategic vision, and that the project team often did not have the capacity or confidence to convey a clear understanding of what they intended to accomplish; this was particularly evident during the initial period preceding the MTE.

101. There were structural problems as well. Project management was affected by successive changes of staff; there have been 7 NPMs and almost as many NPDs over the past decade. Frequent turnovers of provincial and country/district government officials have also contributed to slow and discontinuous implementation. The tendency of designated focal points to delegate participation at Steering Committee meetings or other project events has often obligated the project team to backtrack and repeatedly explain the project's background to new participants. On a national level, macroeconomic trends influenced by the drop in international oil prices have lowered public sector budget allocations in the case of most sectors.

102. On a positive note, there were marked improvements in management performance following revisions to the project's design and implementation strategy (following the MTE), and the arrival of a new and more stable project team. Output-based work plans are prepared annually in consultation with provincial coordinators, who may suggest the sequence of activities that is needed to achieve them. Expenditures are reported quarterly and budgets are periodically revised to re-program unspent funds or transfer money between budget lines. Project delivery has improved over the 2005-2011 period, when only 14% and 42% of the DoE and GEF budgets had been disbursed - in 2014, 92% of the total annual budget of US\$ 461,900 was reportedly spent.¹⁷ Despite these improvements, internal project management has not been optimal and the 2013 Audit Report noted that "...The original Annual Work Plan was submitted to UNDP on 21 May, 2013 with 127 days delay from target date of 15 January 2013. Also 2nd Quarterly Work Plan and 1st Quarterly Progress Report were submitted with 68 days delay. Quarterly Progress Reports only reflect actual expenditure without budgeted amounts. Also, there is no separate 4th quarter progress report as this is combined with annual report. The latter issue causes difficulties in comparison of actual quarter spend with budget."¹⁸

103. The evaluators consider that project work planning remains excessively vertical and should include consultations with pertinent PPDC and CMAC partners, and more input from the project's technical team. However, the more systematic use of project management practices in recent years has been an important improvement over the previous situation.

¹⁷ "Conservation of Biodiversity in the Central Zagros Landscape Conservation Zone – Mid Term Evaluation Report" P. Hunnam (March 2011), pg. 44

¹⁸ 2013 Audit Report, pg. 6

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104. The project sought to introduce new concepts that departed from standard conservation and development practices. Conservation projects in Iran (and elsewhere) have tended to focus on single species, while local development initiatives are usually centered on human settlements and basic needs, instead of biodiversity conservation within catchment areas or ecosystems. Government planning and budgeting frameworks are sector-driven and often hierarchical in determining allocations. As a result, the project has had to face institutional ‘mindsets’ and systemic barriers that it was unprepared to influence. This has in turn undermined the project’s efforts to mainstream biodiversity conservation among government sectors.

105. Overall project performance has been inconsistent and below expectations, with a tendency towards improvement during the past two years. Some of the surviving project partners recall attending lots of meetings over the years that have led to disappointing results after such a long time. Implementation was particularly weak during the initial 2006-2011 period, when only 14% and 42% of the DoE and GEF budgets were disbursed. As mentioned previously, there were also conceptual deficiencies within the project strategy: Much attention was given to disbursing small grant support to pilot villages in protected areas (outcome 3) that were not representative of the CZM ecosystem or the challenges being addressed, while relatively little was done to develop the enabling institutional arrangements and mechanisms that were essential to achieve the first and second outcomes.

“This is the 12th meeting. If we knew from the beginning where we wanted to reach, there could be fewer sessions. Each organization should specify how it can realize its goal.”

- A member of Kor CMA (Fars)

106. The project implementation strategy was not aligned with the provincial and local government planning and budgeting cycles, particularly during the first half of the project. This weakened the project’s ability to promote conservation mainstreaming across sectors, and the mainstreaming concept is still generally perceived as a budgetary issue that requires additional funding. This has discouraged the interest of provincial and county government sector agencies were expected to up-scale successful grant initiatives. However, the evaluators found positive examples of replication concerning sustainable rice farming practices in Fars and CHB provinces, that were being led by MOAJ.

107. The 2011 Mid-Term Evaluation led to the re-definition of pilot areas, revised performance indicators and increased interaction with provincial and county government partners. These changes, and the arrival of a new and comparatively stable project team, have led to more effective implementation and output delivery during the past two years. The elaboration of project work plans and budget revisions have improved efficiency and raised delivery (somewhat) in relation to the previous situation. Project activities covered 75% of the planned outputs and more than half of these were delivered while others remain in progress. However, several important outputs were produced at a late stage and are unlikely to be consolidated or fully operational by the end of the project.

108. The technical quality of project deliverables was inconsistent and often below expected standards. The technical assistance provided by project consultants and NGOs has also been inconsistent in quality. The evaluators found examples of good practice at all levels. Several green grant projects have generated tangible impacts and some are in process of being replicated as noted earlier, i.e. sustainable agriculture in Fars and CHB provinces. However, the evaluators also found the technical quality and depth of several green initiative and concept papers to be unsatisfactory, and detached from the CZM context. These deliverables have not had any significant impact, with the exception of sustainable agriculture guidelines that were developed by a working group and influenced the design of green grant initiatives. The evaluators noticed that provincial and county government officials were often unfamiliar with project papers that addressed their sector. The slow and inconsistent support that was provided by the various project teams over such an extended period, combined with the low quality of some deliverables, seem to have lowered the commitment of government partners towards the project.

109. The strategy for mainstreaming biodiversity conservation relies on strengthening vertical and horizontal sector linkages, through the use of existing Provincial Planning and Development Committees (PPDCs) and recently created Catchment Management Area Committees (CMACs) to drive the biodiversity conservation mainstreaming process. Mainstreaming is also supported strategically by the up scaling of successful green grant initiatives that benefit different sectors, and a proposed integrated management system that would be introduced by the project. However, the institutional incentives and operational mechanisms needed to mainstream biodiversity conservation have yet to be developed and there does not seem to be a clear vision of how to approach the issue. As a result, the mainstreaming discourse tends to be theoretical and generic, with limited practical value for target audiences.

3.3 PROJECT RESULTS

3.3.1 Overall Results: Attainment of Objective and Outcome

110. The following table rates the achievement of project objective and outcomes, using the criteria and format that are applied to UNDP-GEF evaluations.

Figure 9
Rating Scale for Project Performance

Objective/ Outcome	Performance Indicator	2006 Baseline	End of Project Target	2016 End of Project Status	TE Comments	Rating
Objective: To conserve the biodiversity in the Central Zagros Landscape Conservation Zone	Biodiversity rich forest, rangeland and riparian habitat are conserved and restored in pilot management areas according to specifications and areas mapped in management plans.	Baseline surveys of habitats in PMAs and restoration areas to be conducted	Habitat conservation and restoration areas totaling at least 10,000 ha. in each PMA established and functioning, supported by financing, participatory management and monitoring mechanisms by the end of 2016.	<p>The Zagros Project Scale-Up Strategy has been approved through signing MoU by DoE, MoI, PMO and four Provincial Director Governor Generals.</p> <p>The first four priority CZM CMAs are designated and established. The total area of above CMAs is 1,628,707 ha and located in four CZM Provinces (Kor in Fars, Bazoft in Charmahal, Dena in KB and Vanak Khersan in Isfahan province).</p> <p>The remaining 6 CMAs with a total area 1,471,293 ha will be established in 2017 by the central government.</p>	Catchment management areas (CMAs) were designated that exceed the targeted area and are representative of CZM biodiversity, yet their “establishment and functioning” are at an incipient stage and limited to pilot demonstrations. Sustainable resource management practices have been successfully introduced on a pilot level through green grant awards, with some restoration of oak woodland. However CMAs areas are not undergoing conservation or restoration outside of green grant pilot projects and existing protected areas. CMA Committees have been formally approved in three of four participating provinces (KB, CHB and Fars) and further development, financing and monitoring will depend on the approval of the proposed C+SD project that is critical to the Scale Up Strategy.	MU
	Population of selected flagship species (fauna and flora) in BD hotspots across the zone, change in	Baseline surveys of habitats in PMAs and restoration areas to be conducted	Stable or increasing population trends by end of 2016	940.60 ha of forest and rangelands of the CZM was degraded during this reporting period, a two-fold reduction in comparison with the 2014 PIR. A total of 4,300 ha. of Oak forest affected by Oak	The project contribution to most of these reported improvements was indirect and a result of green grant initiatives. The figures that were used are based on secondary sources and	MS

	status of indicator species in PMA conservation and restoration areas related to the following environmental problems: rangeland degradation (butterfly species sensitive to overgrazing), forest degradation/loss (density of regenerating seedlings of persian oak), riverine habitat degradation (eurasian otter), hunting pressure (chucker partridge)			Die Back disease was rehabilitated by FRWO. Illegal bird hunting is now reported by some communities within CMAs . DoE reported the total number of watched choker partridge population at 121 (Naghan-Boldagi). The population of Wild Goat was reported at 4,483 representing a four-fold increase four times and the total number of chukar partridge population is 276 (West Dena) 10 kms. Of riverine habitat for the Eurasian otter was rehabilitated. The population of Wild goat in Margoan is 9 (Kor Kamfirouz)	cover areas that are not necessarily equivalent to the CMAs.	
	Annual rate of conversion of natural habitats to other land uses in PMAs	To be determined using GIS land cover mapping	Annual rate of conversion is less than 50 hec./year per PMA	The total amount of illegal land occupation reported in four priority CMAs was 79 ha., representing a decrease compared to the 2015 PIR that had noted a total of 102 hec.	The reported figures suggest that this indicator was met, and that the project played a supportive role through its green grants. The data was reportedly collected from participating provincial government agencies.	S
	Trends in average sediment loads (suspended solids)	To be determined from available data.	Stable or decreasing trends by end of 2016.	The average of sediment transport in Boshar River (Dena CMA) in 2014 and 2015 were respectively 30440.7 tons per day and 30000 tons per day; which shows a reduction of sediment transportation. The total sediment Load for Bazoft river was 2.5 million tons/year. Analysis results of Kor River in March, September and November 2015 were respectively: TSS (mg/lit): 102 and 22;	The reported decreasing TSS figures suggest that the indicator was met, and that the project may have played an indirect supportive role through green grants. The data was reportedly collected from participating provincial government agencies.	S

				Total Hardness (mg/lit): 386, 794 and 254; Ph: 8.63, 8.41 and 8.78; Pb (Âµg/lit): 0.5, 0.49 and 0.3; Turbidity: 2.5, 5.03 and 1.5; Cr (Âµg/lit): 0.15, 0.18 and 0.13.		
Outcome 1: A national institutional and policy framework that is fully supportive of mainstreaming biodiversity into development in central Zagros mountains.	Proposals for policy improvements supporting mainstreaming of biodiversity conservation into development of the Zagros Mountains, drafted and submitted to national legislative entities for consideration.	None exist.	Proposal for amendment of legal framework. Policy framework drafted by end 2015/beginning 2016.	The proposal for Conservation and Sustainable Development Programme (C + SD) of Central Zagros Mountains was drafted and reviewed with national, provincial and local stakeholders. The document was endorsed by Project Board, and a project extension was approved drafted to secure approval of C+SD and bridge both phases.	The project has not had an impact on national institutional or policy frameworks. The C+SD is a project proposal that envisions support in designing a special policy and legal framework for the broader Zagros region. There is legislation under consideration that would provide special consideration to high biodiversity areas facing environmental degradation; the project did not play a role in this. CMA Committees were approved in three of four participating provinces. However, the project has not drafted proposed policy guidelines or legal amendments for review.	U
	National/sub-national programme for BD conservation in Zagros mountainous Landscapes approved by national legislative entities, and operational w/ budget and monitoring framework.	No mechanism exists.	Programme by end of 2015/2016	Endorsement of CZM C+ SD Program by Multi-sectors Council of 6th Iran National Development Plan (IR-NDP), and submitted to Parliament for final approval and budget allocation.	C+SD program proposal has been endorsed by several national agencies, but has not been approved and is not operational at present. The draft proposal requires further revisions that will be introduced during the project extension that was recently approved by DoE in order to consolidate results and support the approval of the C+SD. The evaluators consider that that there is a moderate to high likelihood that the larger C+SD proposal will be approved with government funding in 2017.	MU
	A management system for the CZM is formally	No mechanism exists.	Management system established by end of 2015/start of 2016.	Endorsement of CZM C+ SD Program by Multi-sectors Council of 6th Iran National Development Plan (IR-NDP), and	The project has not had effect on national policy or legal frameworks. The C+SD program proposal was endorsed by	MU

	established and legally designated as an integrated multi-sector resource scale-up strategy reflected in national policy and legal framework.			submitted to Parliament for final approval and budget allocation.	several national agencies, but has not been approved and is not operational at present. Further revisions are needed to enhance the proposal's viability. There is a moderate to high likelihood that the C+SD will be approved with government funding in 2017. Incipient progress towards CZM management system was made at provincial level, through approval of CMA Committees in three provinces. However, the CMACs are not operational, nor is the proposed Management System in place.	
Outcome 2: Sustainable use and conservation of biodiversity integrated into economic and sectoral programmes and government practices at the Conservation Zone level	Catalogue of evaluated resource materials for 50+ income generation and livelihood options are available.	No systematic approach to sustainable livelihoods planning or development.	First version of catalogue available in 2015,. 50% of nomad families in pilot areas adopt alternative/green enterprises by end of project.	Information materials and guidelines for sustainable resource enterprises and livelihoods have been designed and are in process of dissemination.	The number of documented practices and sustainable livelihood options does not meet target. The target % of nomad families has not been met because relevant green grants were not replicated. Several of the documents are excessively general and technically unsatisfactory in content, with limited applicability. An important exception are the green agriculture approaches developed by the TAT and validated in the field. A documented sustainable rice farming package is being replicated by MOAJ and through farmer-to-farmer extension in Fars and KB provinces. Green demonstration grants have influenced conservation practices by some agencies in KB and CHB provinces.	MS
	Information and advice on a range of ecologically-sustainable	No systematic development/dissemination of	Livelihoods info in use across CZM by 2015.	Concept papers and guidelines were developed for major Green Initiatives addressing Climate Change Adaptation, Green Villages, Green Forestry, Green	Same as above. Although information is available, the provincial Mountain Resource	MS

	enterprises and livelihood options are available to provincial CZM stakeholders.	sustainable livelihoods.		<p>Rangeland, Green Tourism, Green Agriculture, and Biosphere Reserve Resource Use Management.</p> <p>Support was given to participatory planning towards 4 projects in major Green Initiative; 32 project profiles were developed and submitted to the four provinces. Concept papers are being disseminated and are expected to build capacity of more than 1800 governmental and non-governmental experts. Support was given to the management of Biosphere Reserves in the CZM with collaboration of Socco Foundation on conservation of BD. The CZM C+SD Program is proposed as a model for the co-Management of proposed a CZM-wide Biosphere Reserve Network (following the Lima Action Plan).</p>	<p>Documentation Centers (MRDCs) that were planned to disseminate information and advice, are not operational in most cases.</p> <p>The project contributed information and training on BD management that contributed to the declaration of a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve in the CZM.</p>	
	Information management system and tools are in place in four provinces, supporting Zagros regional planning and management.	Data collection and research conducted separately by each institution.	Resource conservation information in use across CZM in 2015.	<p>A CZM Management Tool kit with technical guidelines on sustainable resource management/income generation practices was drafted . A management system was designed to disseminate the toolkit and Land Use Planning in four CZM provinces.</p> <p>A CZM Management Information System was developed by the project and uploaded through the DoE portal. A Capacity Development Plan for the CZM Management System was drafted and some activities implemented.</p>	<p>Several concept papers and guideline documents are excessively general and superficial, and have little applicability. The MRDCs have not actively supported dissemination in most cases.</p> <p>The project has not interacted with the Land Use Capability Planning initiative that was launched by the national government and is being implemented at provincial level.</p> <p>Data has been uploaded, yet the evaluators did not find evidence of a management or information system that is operational and attributable to the project. As a result, the project has had little influence on planning and management in the CZM despite</p>	MU

					encouraging yet incipient progress in CHB and KB provinces. Likewise, the Capacity Development Plan is incipient and will not be implemented for the most part during the remaining project period.	
	Supportive mechanisms for BD conservation and integrated BD resource management in the Central Zagros sector (with guidelines for forestry, grazing, water, aquaculture, tourism etc.) and grant scheme are institutionalized adequately resourced and fully operational.	No sector management strategies in place.	By end 2015.	<p>Sustainable resource use guides were prepared on green initiatives that include agriculture, aquaculture, forest, rangeland, tourism, water, EIA, solid waste and effluent management.</p> <p>A proposed CZM BE Grant Scheme was proposed in in 6th National Development Plan, under the C+SD program proposal. BD conservation was supported on a pilot level through Green Grants in several CMAs, and CMA Committee have been approved in three provinces</p>	Several of the sustainable resource use guides are too general and lack technical depth; and therefore have limited applicability. With the partial exception of the green agriculture guidelines in 2 provinces, they have not been institutionalized or budgeted, and are not operational. The BE Grant Scheme is not funded and its activation will depend in part on the approval of the larger C+SD programme.	MU
Outcome 3: Successful, sustainable, financially replicable models of village designed with approaches to increasing income generation and	Priority conservation actions implemented and evaluated in each pilot CMA. Pilot livelihood initiatives implemented and evaluated in each CMA.	No systematic monitoring and evaluation.	Models available as of late 2014/start of 2015.	<p>The models are based on successful Green Grant initiatives that can be replicated on a broader scale. Sustainable approaches were successfully piloted in sustainable rice farming, cultivation of medicinal plants, eco-tourism and (in one case) handicrafts by a women's group. The green rice cultivation model combines lower water consumption, improved seed and biological fertilizer, and has been documented as a model for replication.</p> <p>The other successful initiatives are potentially replicable, yet are demonstrations that need to be evaluated and systematized to offer a model.</p>	<p>Two approaches to sustainable rice farming that were piloted with green grants have been validated, documented and offer a model for replication. Other successful pilot initiatives will need to be evaluated and systematized in order to be replicated. This is expected by the end of the project.</p> <p>Replications thus far have involved the rice farming practices ecotourism and cultivation of medicinal plants.</p>	S

conserving BD rich areas, with coordination , monitoring, advocacy and adaptive management.						
	BD rich habitats are conserved and restored in pilot management areas according to specifications and areas mapped in management plans.	None.	Habitat conservation and restoration areas totaling at least 10,000 ha. In each CMA, mapped and objectives established. Mechanisms for financing participatory management and monitoring by end of 2016.	CMA areas were designated based on environmental criteria. A total of 1,484 ha of Oak forest inside CZM was rehabilitated by FRWO and with engagement of local community. Two firefighting stations in Bazoft CMAs were constructed and established. Restoration and integrated management of Gandoman Wetland was introduced. A land conflict for a total of 860 ha of forest and rangeland that had been occupied, was resolved. A total of 1068 ha. of rangeland within CZM were rehabilitated by FRWO and local community. A study was commissioned on Oak die back and the results were disseminated. Species of wildlife and nature that refused are treatment in Dena and Bazoft CMAs.	The reported data indicates that the indicator was not met on the envisioned scale. On a pilot level, several green grants have contributed to the restoration of targeted areas. CMA Management Plans in three provinces are anticipated during the final project extension until June 2017. The project had an indirect role in some of the results that were reported.	MS
	Level of support for BC conservation increases within pilot management areas as indicated by the number of local groups actively participating in conservation and restoration activities.	No local conservation groups.	At least 8 local conservation groups by end of 2016.	Awareness raising and training for 3000 local residents (nomads and villagers) on conservation and sustainable use of ZM products through campaigns/ festivals. 12 Environmental CBO s were established for: a) Sustainable Agriculture (7 CBOs each CBO with 25 members); b) Sustainable Tourism and Ecotourism (5 CBOs with average of 20 members in each group); c) Development Local Handicraft	The indicator was surpassed through the creation of local groups that in most cases were associated with Green Grant initiatives. The project has also attracted existing committed CBOs in some CMAs. These local groups have varying levels of capacity and commitment, as their sustainability beyond the green grants is uncertain in several cases.	S

				and sustainable Livelihood (5 CBOs with the average of 15 women in each group).		
	Four pilot MA Management Committees and Action Programs operating efficiently with active support by project staff.	None existed.	End of 2015/Start of 2015	Four integrated C+SD annual programs including 52 projects is under implementation by CMAs management committees, and a total allocated budget by IR Government is 3.400 million \$.	The evaluators note that the C+SD program is not yet approved or under implementation. The only operational initiatives within CMAs have been the green grants, and the recent approval of CMA committees in three provinces that are not yet operational.	MU
	Project management and institutional structure including TORs	Not existent.	Project setup in place and functioning.	ToRs were re-developed and 7 national consultants recruited to design and support implementation of Green Initiatives, 2 part time experts to design project archive and documentation, and ToRs for final evaluation.	Project has undergone frequent changes of management and staff that, combined with low commitment levels of most institutional partners, have weakened strategic direction and overall performance. Greater progress achieved during the last three years with the presence of a stable management team. The initial project framework was based within the CZM; instead, the team operates out of DoE in Tehran. The project's only permanent field presence is a provincial coordinator based at the DoE office; this has been insufficient to move implementation forward as expected.	U
	Project plans prepared in time and duly implemented.	Project plans and reports commence with implementation.	One AWP, 4QWAs per year. One Annual Progress Report per year	Action Plans, audit action plan, M&E Framework and quarterly/annual progress reports prepared on time. - Project Board meeting held in 2015 and 2016 at which monitoring frameworks were discussed and approved.	Project reporting has improved during the last three years of the project; reporting and planning were deficient during the initial five years of implementation. The Capacity Development Plan came at a very late stage of project implementation. There have been less Steering Committee meetings than initially planned, with little influence on implementation.	MU
	Specific local water pollution problems identified in pilot management plans	To be determined.	10% annual decrease in reported water pollution problems from 2013.	Controlled the pollutants of fish farms by marking the buffer boundary beside Karoun river (Bazoft CMA).	There are no indications that the project has measurable impact on water pollution. Green rice farming initiatives promoting biological fertilizers and water	U

	are progressively reduced through participatory approaches.			Conducted regular quality monitoring of Marbor river (Vanak Khersan CMA), Boshar river (Dena CMA), Karoun river (Bazoft CMA) and Kor river (Kor CMA).	conservation have lowered local water contamination levels in two CMAs. The evaluators consider that the project played a very limited role in addressing river sedimentation or contamination beyond the above example.	
	Zagros project pilot program effectively completed. Results of pilot evaluated, understood by national and provincial decision-makers and applied to design of full-scale CZM Conservation Management System.	No systematic M&E	By end 2015.	As reported in the 2016 PIR: Zagros Project pilot program completed effectively. Results of pilot evaluated, understood by national and Provincial decision-makers, and applied to the design of the full-scale CZM CZ management system. Outcome 3 was partially completed in 2014 and changes were planned to Outputs 2.1 and 2.2, to ensure sustainability and up scaling of Pilot Management Areas to CZM Catchment Management Areas (CMAs).	The Green Initiative small grant component under Outcome 3 was completed, with successful pilot demonstrations that in some cases are being up-scaled. Not all pilots appear to have been evaluated, and there are mixed levels of understanding – and interest – by national and provincial decision-makers (with important exceptions). This reflected a sense of fatigue due to the drawn-out implementation period and initial lack of strategic direction. Despite the successful pilots, a full-scale CZM Conservation management system has not been adequately designed but the process would be continued under under the proposed C+SD program.	MS

3.3.2 Relevance

111. The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran states that all legal and real persons have a duty to protect the environment. The Constitution prohibits all activities, economic or otherwise, that may result in irreparable damage to the environment. Over the past 15 years, the national government has increasingly striven to operationalize these objectives, by devoting increased attention to biodiversity conservation and environmental issues in general. The Fourth Five-Year National Development Plan (2005-2009) devotes a chapter to Environmental Protection; the first article states the importance of biodiversity conservation and emphasizes the government's commitment to the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP). ²

112. The NBSAP identified the Zagros Mountains as one of the country's most important ecosystems for conservation and improved management. The NBSAP set out four strategies conserving biodiversity in Iran, of which the following three - promotion of public awareness and participation; ²sustainable use of biodiversity resources; and ²biodiversity conservation integrated into development processes – were actively supported by the project. Project outputs and Green Initiative grants were also consistent with priority actions within the NBSAP such as strengthening environmental concerns in national management systems (Action 12), and developing eco- tourism plans for implementation (Action 17). ^[L]_{SEP} An updated NBSAP II was recently drafted and is presently under discussion. The new Action Plan includes Strategic Goal #4: "Contribute to good governance of natural resources", and promotes participatory management based on principles of equity and benefit sharing under Strategic Goal #2.

113. National and provincial plans are generally sector-based and do not consider environment as an over-arching concern; provincial and county plans and budgets follow vertical dynamics and often reflect central government policy directives. Hence the project addresses a need that is critically important for sound environmental management and overall governance.

114. Within the next National Development Plan, legislation has been proposed to give preferential status to high-biodiversity areas that face accelerated environmental degradation, for which the Zagros region would certainly qualify. The interest of DoE and other partners in up-scaling biodiversity conservation for the broader Zagros region influenced the decision to grant a final six-month extension to the project, to work towards the approval of the C+SD proposal .

115. The project objective and design were supportive of GEF 4 Operational Program and in particular its Biodiversity Focal Area and program priority for mainstreaming biodiversity in production sectors and landscapes (BD2). They were also consistent with the Ecosystems Management strategic priority and program of work that are part of UNEP's Medium Term Strategic Program (MTSP).

116. The project's environmental relevance was clear. The rich biodiversity of the Zagros Mountain ecosystem has been documented, with animal species that include brown bear (*Ursus arctos*), the Asiatic black bear (*U. thibetanus*), eagles (*Aquila spp.*), wild goats (*Capra aegragus*, an endangered species on IUCN's Red List), sheep (*Ovis orientalis*), wolves (*Canis lupus*), leopard (*Panthera pardus*), and other wild cats (Humphreys & Kahrom 1995; IUCN 2001), in addition to five endemic taxa of lizards (Anderson 1999). The highly endangered Persian fallow deer (*Dama dama ssp mesopotamica*) was believed extinct until a small population was discovered in the western foothills of the Zagros Mountains (IUCN 2001). Within the CZM there are protected areas and RAMSAR sites, in addition to a UNESCO-approved Biosphere Reserve. Most of Iran's nomads live in the Zagros region and many continue to graze livestock in the highlands, often with a negative environmental impact from overgrazing as herd sizes increasingly exceed rangeland carrying capacities.

117. The project has had and continues to have high relevance to the Central Zagros region, to the extent that it addresses the environmental threats and development practices that are detrimental for biodiversity. Regardless of performance, the project modality that was put in place after the MTE is methodologically relevant because it promotes conservation on a more ecosystemic scale (and not a single species) through institutional collaborations that includes NGO and community involvement. The project approach departs from conventional practice, which has also made its application more difficult, yet more of these projects are needed to bring about better environmental management.

118. The main threats to CZM biodiversity continue unmitigated and are on the rise - with immigration, agricultural expansion and road construction encroaching high-biodiversity and protected areas in several CMAs. The incidence of forest fires in KB province - which has 54% forest cover and provides 10% of the nation's water - has risen during the last decade, as water tables drop and climatic conditions become dryer. Precipitation has dropped in recent years from 1100 mm to 550 mm in parts of the Zagros region. Drought and over-grazing have degraded rangelands, causing soil erosion and an expansion of thorny shrubs where oak woodlands are retreating. There is degradation in forested areas as well, with species that adjust to grazing replacing the Persian oak (large numbers of which are also threatened by bacteria). Wood removal and charcoal production continue to be profitable, and illegal hunting is still practiced. Ground water levels are declining and the Kor River (Fars province) became dry as a result of a dam construction, and farmers increasingly turned to pumping water to irrigate their rice, the staple crop that consumes large amounts of water in a semi-arid environment. The construction of a new highway from Isfahan to Shiraz runs adjacent to the Lost Paradise protected area in the Kor CMA and stands to have a negative environmental impact on the surrounding environment.

3.3.3 Effectiveness and Efficiency

3.3.3.1 Project Effectiveness

119. Effectiveness was low during much of the project's ten-year duration, with improvements of the last two years in expenditure and output delivery (assisted by the implementation of green initiative grant projects) and more consistent project management practices. The project has not achieved its objective nor is it likely to do so by the end of its term. The project has not had the expected level of impact as envisioned by the indicators that were listed for the objective. As a result, the overall evaluation rating for the attainment of the project objective is unsatisfactory. Conservation has not been "mainstreamed" institutionally or otherwise on a CZM scale, with encouraging exceptions in three provinces and CMAs that are described in the report.

"The Zagros project is a new experience for us in information and communication. We have never had a participatory approach, before we only gave training to the community."

120. Cross-sector committees were recently organized in pilot Catchment Management Areas and have been approved by three provincial governments, but aren't operational at present. There have been community and CMA-scale conservation benefits that were generated by Green Initiative grants, yet they were intended for demonstration more than impact and do not affect the larger ecosystem. Grant

"Zagros has moved us to think beyond construction and also to consider nature services. This is a change from the 'hard work' and brings greater appreciation of the 'soft work'."

- A government agency representative from CHB province

support was given for the medical rehabilitation of wounded fauna, reforestation of oak trees, lower water consumption and contamination through "green" rice farming, the cultivation of medicinal plants as an income option to grazing, and community-based eco-tourism facilities that reduce visitor pressures on national parks.

121. Too little was delivered too late, and many outputs that have materialized during the past year will require more time to consolidate. Project implementation has been slow and discontinuous over too long a period to have a direct and measurable impact on biodiversity. The project worked in a challenging institutional environment that was affected by high staff turnover – both within the project and among partner institutions – and vertical planning and budgeting practices. The project ecosystems approach and mainstreaming concepts were new approaches that often were not adequately understood by partners.

122. None of the three outcomes were fully reached in relation to their performance indicators. There were satisfactory levels of achievement towards the third outcome through the implementation of the pilot phase. On the other hand, there was less progress towards the

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first and second outcomes as described below. These advances represent the final products of a slow and drawn-out implementation process.

123. The project was not able to advance as planned towards ensuring national institutional and policy frameworks for biodiversity mainstreaming in the CZM region. The most promising development in this respect was the design of an up-scaled Conservation and Sustainable Development (C+SD) program proposal that has been shared with DoE, sector agencies and participating provincial and county governments, and endorsed by the four provincial Governor-Generals. The achievement of first and second outcomes will ultimately depend on continued support from the C+SD if approved. Proposed legislation is being drafted that would give attention to high biodiversity areas facing environmental degradation, under the 6th National Development Plan. This is unrelated to the project yet improves the likelihood of the C+SD's approval.

124. Under the first outcome, initial steps were taken towards more supportive institutional mainstreaming arrangements through the creation of Catchment Management Area (CMAC) Committees that have been approved by three provinces. However, the CMACs are unlikely to become operational by the project's end and will require continued guidance and technical support into 2017. There are encouraging examples of ongoing and planned collaboration between sector agencies in the provincial governments of CHB and KB provinces, and among county and district agencies in the Bazoft and Dena CMAs in these provinces. However, building the institutional and policy frameworks for biodiversity conservation on the scale envisioned will ultimately depend on the C+SD's approval and the attention given by the 6th National Development Plan.

125. There was partial progress towards the second outcome, and there is still far to go before biodiversity conservation is systematically integrated within sector development programs in the CZM region. Late and insufficient attention was given to mainstreaming, despite its fundamental importance to the project's objective and intended impacts. During the past two years the project team has worked more closely with local governments, creating inter-sectoral CMA committees (CMACs) that were recently formalized in CHB, KB and Fars provinces. The CMACs are expected to provide the institutional channel for biodiversity conservation mainstreaming. However, the operational guidelines and mechanisms needed to apply guide the process are lacking. Several indicator targets for this outcome were not reached. The project designed a "tool box" that includes green concept papers and a capacity development plan, but most are too general to have applicability; the evaluators did not see any evidence of their use except for the sustainable agriculture guidelines that were developed by a Technical Advisory Team. Likewise, the "functional management information system" is not in place and does not seem to have been

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fully designed; nor is there an information system linking the Mountain Research Documentation Centers (MRDCs).

126. The level of progress achieved towards the second outcome varies between locations and the project often needed the PBO to move the process forward. Most sector representatives are not well informed of grant activities and have had little participation despite the opportunity to do so. However, the evaluators did find examples of collaboration between sector departments in CHB's provincial government, and between county government departments of the Bazoft CMA in CHB and Dena CMA in KB provinces. Successful grant initiatives in green agriculture and mixed rice-duck production systems that save water are being replicated by MOAJ in Fars and CHB provinces. Other grants supporting ecotourism, flood control, medicinal herbs and fire prevention have demonstrated positive results and could be up-scaled as well.

127. Mainstreaming has a strong institutional dimension. In this respect, the project has helped to establish relations between local governments and rural communities that did not exist before. The *Lovers of Lost Paradise* NGO in Kor CMA (Fars province) and *Green Messenger* NGO in the Semirom CMA (Esfahan) first made contact with county government through the project, and have since been contracted to provide environmental education in schools and organize awareness-raising events. The MOAJ representatives for Isfahan and CHB provinces plan to replicate the rice farming system that was demonstrated with project support. In Dena County a proposed sand and gravel factory was relocated, a proposed new road into town was rejected, and the number of sanitary landfills has been reduced through zoning. The project has played a role in changing institutional attitudes in some of these cases.

128. The third outcome is directly associated to the pilot phase and absorbed much of the project's attention. Project achievements were reflected in the successful demonstration of sustainable farming practices, ecotourism ventures, production of handicrafts, cultivation of medicinal plants, and the creation of cross-sector CMA committees at county/district levels that were officially approved in two provinces. There was partial progress towards the outcome indicator of "habitat protection and restoration through small grant initiatives that support reforestation, water conservation and care for wounded fauna" although the data needed to measure such changes is not available. There was also limited progress towards the second indicator – "reduction of local water pollution problems in pilot areas through participatory approaches" - although improved rice farming practices have been shown to lower the frequency of irrigation, and may reduce groundwater contamination through the use of biological fertilizers.

129. Most of the project's work over the past decade was focused on the pilot demonstration outputs of the third outcome, and in particular the Green Initiative small grants that were

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implemented by NGOs and CBOs to demonstrate sustainable resource management and income generation. The small grants component has generated the project's most visible results and in several cases have a high demonstration value.

130. Green Initiative projects that demonstrated cost-effective, water-saving and chemical-free approaches to rice farming are being replicated in other districts Fars and CHB provinces by MOAJ, as well as from farmer-to-farmer. The combined practices were evaluated and validated: The combination of improved rice seed, biological fertilizers and regulated water management in the Kor CMA has led to higher yields with average input cost reductions of 30% and water savings of 50-60%. Water consumption per hectare was reduced from 16,000 cubic meters and almost daily irrigation, to 7,000 cubic meters of water. For a total grant of US\$ 6,000 the farming system was demonstrated on 30 pilot farming plots and has since spread on a farmer-to-farmer basis to almost 350 farmers. A similar approach is being demonstrated in Dooplan village of CHB province (Bazoft CMA) that includes integrated rice and duck farming. This is an important demonstration considering the intensive use of water in semi-arid regions for rice irrigation.

3.3.3.2 Efficiency

131. Efficiency – understood as the timely and cost-effective production of outputs and other deliverables - has been unsatisfactory and is the project's weakest aspect. Ten years - twice more than initially planned - was needed to reach the present level of advancement. Project delivery rates were below planned targets for much of the project cycle; and the total expenditure between 2006-2011 used only 57% of the budget. Planned annual expenditures during this period were approximately US\$ 2 million, with actual expenditures averaging below US\$ 0.3 million. Annual expenditures of DoE funds, which should have been around US\$ 0.8 million, fell progressively to US\$ 40,000 in 2009. After 6 years of implementation only 19% of the budget allocated for outcome 1 had been spent. Expenditures between 2006-2011 reached 14% of the budget for Outcome 3, 15% for Outcome 2, and 19% for Outcome 1.¹⁹

132. Project audit reports attribute these shortfalls to inadequate planning. The evaluators were told that project work plans and expenditure reports were not prepared regularly or parallel co-financing monitored until after 2012.

133. Execution was disrupted by the successive turnover of project directors, managers and staff. Although project management eventually stabilized and several outputs were achieved, efficiency and delivery over the project lifetime were low, which has in turn lowered effectiveness and expected impact levels. The project was implemented for ten years without changes to the original GEF budget, and the inconsistent performance and modest results after such an extended period indicate low cost-effectiveness. Considering that the most visible results are the green grants, this project conceivably could have been implemented more cost-effectively by the GEF

¹⁹ "Conservation of Biodiversity in the Central Zagros Landscape Conservation Zone – Mid Term Evaluation Report" P. Hunnam (March 2011) pg. 4.

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Small Grants Programme that has operated in Iran for more than a decade.

3.3.4 Country Ownership

134. Government co-financing was essential in enabling the project to continue over time without increasing the GEF contribution. Nevertheless, country ownership was low despite this and the opportunities offered by the Project Steering Committee, CMACs and livelihoods small grants modality. Ownership was weakest at the central government level, where the main institutional actors have not provided the oversight or guidance that was necessary to make a difference. The sense of ownership varied among provincial and county partners, and the attitude of agencies towards the project was often influenced by the support or interest of the Governor-General and PBO. A high number of agency directors and PSC members do not appear knowledgeable of project activities that are relevant to their sector; this is also influenced by the high turnover of government personnel.

135. The project is still viewed by many as an external initiative that has been around for a long time but has not had much effect on CZM institutions or the environment. The project has not tried to work with provincial and county planning and budgeting cycles as an “entry point” for mainstreaming. Biodiversity mainstreaming remains an unclear concept and is often perceived as a budget issue that needs additional funding to be viable. Provincial and country government partners aren’t consulted on project work plans or budgets, and most of their interaction is with provincial project coordinators who are based at the DoE office. Institutional memory is low because so there have been so many changes of participants over time. There is a sense of fatigue with the project because it has been going on for so long. Taken together, these factors are not conducive to national project ownership. These aspects need to be considered for the C+SD and changes introduced as needed, if the mainstreaming process is to continue in a viable manner.

136. The evaluators did perceive stronger ownership and commitment conservation in towns that are closer to main forested and protected areas – for example, the Dena and Kor CMAs that receive tourists each year who pressure local services and raise the risk of forest fires. Provincial and county government agencies in CHB province were well informed of project activities and are gradually building cooperation around initiatives that are environmentally viable. Aside from the attitude of the agencies, one of reasons this is happening is because the project’s provincial coordinator used the project budget as parallel financing to leverage provincial support for green grants or other environment-friendly proposals. This arrangement has stimulated more interest and cooperation on the part of provincial government agencies, and is one of the good practices emerging from the project.

3.3.5 Mainstreaming

137. The project objective, outcomes and implementation strategy explicitly supported two of the strategic objectives of UNDP's 2012-2016 Country Program for Iran. These were:

- *Poverty Alleviation* and a subcomponent that sought to "...link poverty reduction initiatives with environmental projects to reach out to the urban and rural poor through sustainable income generation initiatives." ²⁰ [?]

138. This was supported through the Green initiatives small grants component, which successfully demonstrated financially and environmentally sustainable livelihood options in rice farming with lower water consumption and biological fertilizers, the cultivation of medicinal herbs and ecotourism. These approaches can be replicated on a wider scale by UNDP and other development projects.

- *Environmentally Sustainable Management*, through which [?]UNDP aimed to improve national capacities for the integrated management, conservation and sustainable use of ecosystems and biodiversity, as well as for strengthen Iran's network of protected areas. [?]

139. The project approach, particularly following the MTE, tried to focus more on the mainstreaming of biodiversity considerations in provincial and district level plans and projects. There were encouraging if incipient advances in cross-sector planning, replication of green grant initiatives by government agencies and environmental consideration in some CMAs and provinces. Integrated planning and budgeting are still novel issues that are sometimes not sufficiently understood and require extended follow-up to influence core practices.

- *Women's empowerment* has been supported, albeit on a small scale, through support to community-based groups in the tribal areas surrounding protected areas.

140. Green Initiative grants were approved for two integrated crafts and eco-tourism/reforestation projects with local women's organizations. One of the initiatives has demonstrated a successful link between these endeavors that is environmentally and financially sustainable.

141. In all cases the project has broadened the range of UNDP contacts, in this case covering the Zagros provincial and local governments in addition to NGOs and academic institutions. There does not appear to have been much collaboration with other UNDP-GEF projects aside occasional sharing of experiences and a fruitful joint undertaking that allowed three projects to use financial software compatible with Atlas.

²⁰ UNDP Country Program in the Islamic Republic of Iran: 2012-2016, p. 3 (2012)

3.3.6 Sustainability

142. For the purpose of the evaluation, sustainability is defined as the likelihood of continued benefits after the project ends. The project has moderately likely prospects for sustainability both on a program scale, through the approval of the proposed Conservation & Sustainable Development (C+SD) initiative, and at CMA levels with the replication of validated sustainable agriculture and other livelihood options.

3.3.6.1 Financial Risks

143. The C+SD proposal provides a framework for consolidating biodiversity conservation in the broader Zagros region, and contemplates an excessive budget in excess of US\$ 20 million. Based on the evaluation of this project, the evaluators consider that the C+SD cannot be adequately coordinated or delivered with that scale of operation, and that further revisions to the project's design and implementation approach are recommended. The project was recently granted a final extension until June 2017 to work towards the C+SD's approval and link both initiatives. The approval of the C+SD on a more viable scale is moderately likely to occur in the coming months.

144. The 6th National Development Plan is in its final stages of design, and is considering almost US\$ 3 million for the conservation of Zagros forests and rangelands. There is also proposed legislation that would give funding priority under the NDP to high-biodiversity areas that are accelerated environmental degradation; this would certainly include much of the Zagros region.

145. Several of the validated sustainable livelihood options are financially viable and in some cases profitable. Sustainable rice cultivation practices that integrate improved seed, lower water consumption, biological fertilizers and duck farming were piloted in Fars and CHB provinces and shown to reduce irrigation needs by approximately 40%, with additional savings in foregone chemical fertilizers. The approach will be replicated by MOAJ in several villages in 2017, and has already spread spontaneously in both CMAs through farmer-to-farmer extension. They are likely to be incorporated by FAO in its upcoming project in the Zagros region with DoE and MOAJ. In Esfahan and CHB provinces, the cultivation of mountain celery (*Kelussia Odiratissima*) and Zarrin Giah (*Dracocephalum Kotschy Boiss*) offer a self-sustaining option to grazing by the third year: 1,500 sq. meters of cultivated area generate an annual income equivalent to that obtained from 250 head of sheep. Eco-tourism initiatives in Fars and Esfahan provinces are also financially sustainable even though the licensing process has not finished and the owners are unable to advertise to the broader market. The ecotourism facility that was recently completed in Marvdasht village of Kor CMA has raised tourist demand for local services, leading to the opening

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of a grocery store and the construction of another ecotourism facilities.

3.3.6.2 Socio-Economic Risks

146. The project does not generate socio-economic risks that could undermine the sustainability of results. The project's social and economic impacts were largely limited to the Green Grant Initiative grants that were implemented in pilot communities and CMAs. Those that were successful are empowering community-based organizations and entrepreneurs such have included women's groups, farmers associations and community councils of the Bazoft CMA. As noted in other sections of the report, the various project initiatives targeting nomadic groups for sustainable rangeland management have not been put into practice. However, the cultivation of medicinal herbs has demonstrated a profitable alternative to traditional grazing (within shrinking rangelands) and is likely to encourage sedentary farming to the extent that it is replicated. This would clearly have impact on the nomadic patters that are the foundation of the Bakhtiari and other tribal cultures.

3.3.6.3 Institutional framework and governance risks

147. The limited engagement of national and provincial government agencies in the project was a contributing factor to performance and could undermine future initiatives particularly if implemented on a larger scale as envisioned with the C+SD. For this reason, the evaluators recommend revisiting the program draft with provincial and CMA partners to ensure direct linkages to their planning and budgeting cycles.

148. There are moderate institutional and governance risks that could affect the sustainability of results, although the recent extension that was granted provides the project team with an opportunity to minimize them. Catchment Management Area (CMA) Committees were formed in the four participating provinces, and have been formally approved in KB and CHB provinces; further momentum will depend on the approval of the C+SD.

149. There are indications of institutional support for the C+SD proposal, which was shared with the main government partners and endorsed by the four provincial Governor-Generals and Iran's High Environmental Council. A strategy is in place to obtain interim financing from the government after the project terminates in December 2016. This will provide several months to review the C+SD proposal at different levels and articulate an operationally viable approach that is more closely linked to the provincial and county government planning and budgeting frameworks, without discontinuing the green grants scheme.²¹ Proposed legislation is also being drafted that would mandate government support for high-biodiversity areas that face

²¹ The interim strategy and review of the C+SD proposal are described in greater detail under "Recommendations".

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environmental degradation, under the 6th National Development Plan. These developments would improve conditions for the approval of the C+SD in its final version in 2017.

3.3.6.4 Environmental Risks

150. There are no environmental risks that affect the sustainability of results, outside of natural disasters such as earthquakes, drought or flash floods that might disrupt agricultural activities.

3.3.7 Impact

151. The project has not generated the scale or depth of impact as envisioned in the project document, in spite of an extended ten-year implementation period. The impacts that were generated were generally community-based and linked to Green Initiative small grants under the third outcome, in some cases with effect on the pilot Catchment Management Area. Examples include the recuperation of injured wildlife from a protected area, reforestations of Persian oak, and the use of natural fertilizers and water conservation measures for rice cultivation.

152. Green Initiative projects that demonstrated cost-effective, water-saving and chemical-free approaches to rice farming are being replicated in other districts Fars and CHB provinces by MOAJ, as well as from farmer-to-farmer. The combined practices were evaluated and validated: The combination of improved rice seed, biological fertilizers and regulated water management in the Kor CMA has led to higher yields with average input cost reductions of 30% and water savings of 50-60%. Water consumption per hectare was reduced from 16,000 cubic meters and almost daily irrigation, to 7,000 cubic meters of water. For a total grant of US\$ 6,000 the farming system was demonstrated on 30 pilot farming plots and has since spread on a farmer-to-farmer basis to almost 350 farmers. A similar approach is being demonstrated in Dooplan village of CHB province (Bazoft CMA) that includes integrated rice and duck farming. This is an important demonstration considering the intensive use of water in semi-arid regions for rice irrigation. The cultivation of selected medicinal plants on small to medium-sized plots yields incomes that surpass those generated from traditional grazing, and protect high-altitude plants that are endangered by drought. These documented and validated approaches are project best practices that can readily be up-scaled for greater effect on the Zagros ecosystem

"The Zagros project proved that development can be realized through participation and creativity. It is a hard undertaking and we cannot expect to change the situation with just a project."

- A local government representative in Kor-Marvdash CMA (Fars province)

153. The project has not generated the scale or depth of impact as envisioned in the project document, in spite of an extended ten-year implementation period. The impacts that were generated were generally community-based and generally linked to Green Initiative small grants under the third outcome, in some cases with effect on the surrounding pilot Catchment Management Areas.

154. The 2016 PIR report lists quantified improvements to baseline indicators: There were lower rates of forest and land use conversion, lower sedimentation levels in some rivers, and increased populations of wild goat and other species (described in Section 3.3 “Project Results”). These findings are based on government and national park service statistics that may cover a broader area than the CMAs, and in which the project may have played a rather limited role. The project has had localized impact on fauna populations in Dena CMA, and on water irrigation usage and contamination in at least three counties of CHB and KB provinces; it also provided information that assisted the declaration of a Biosphere Reserve in CHB province.

“The Zagros project proved that development can be realized through participation and creativity. It is a hard undertaking and we cannot expect to change the situation with just a project.”

- A local government representative in Kor-Marvdash CMA (Fars province)

155. There was little impact under the first and second project components, aside from incipient advances with the creation of CMA Committees in three provinces and MoUs for institutional cooperation. There are indications of better collaboration among provincial and county government organizations (CHB province; Bazoft and Dena CMAs) that in some cases were influenced by the project. However this process is still too incipient to have had impact. The planned replication of sustainable rice farming practices and other successful green grant initiatives will have broader environmental impact and possibly influence regional biodiversity levels.

“We hope that the cooperation among the stakeholders in this CMA can be a pattern for other provinces.”

- County Governor of Kiar and Head of Bazoft CMA

156. The project has introduced new concepts and approaches that depart from conventional practices. It has created opportunities for communication and collaboration between local government, NGOs and communities. Several local government representatives value the new level of partnership with NGO and communities as the project’s greatest contribution. In some cases, the cross-sector linkages and participatory approaches promoted by the project were new and have influenced institutional mindsets, but need to be supported

further under the C+SD to become operational and have an impact.

4. CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND LESSONS

123. The following sections convey the main findings of the Terminal Evaluation. They identify the project's best and worst practices, articulate corrective actions and lessons regarding project design, implementation and M&E, and propose future directions and follow-up actions to reinforce the benefits generated and improve conditions for post-project sustainability.

4.1 CONCLUSIONS

124. **Conclusion 1: Project design was over-dimensioned in terms of the deliverables and outcomes that were expected over a five-year period.** The ultimate objective of preserving biodiversity was not achievable within the initial project timeframe, and measurable impacts will require further support and changes to the approaches that were taken. The project required an extended ten-year implementation period that was excessive and driven by low delivery. However, this also reflected the difficulties of reaching the expected outcomes within the prescribed timeframe. The initial five-year project period was clearly insufficient to simultaneously demonstrate sustainable development in dispersed rural villages, create a national institutional and policy environment for biodiversity conservation mainstreaming, and design and approve an up-scaled conservation program for the broader Zagros region.

125. The project sought to introduce new concepts and approaches that departed from standard practice, without adequately explaining them in a regional context. The project approach was integrated and envisioned the conservation of an ecosystem, instead of a specific species as is often the case. Biodiversity conservation was promoted across government sectors (not very convincingly) and community participation in natural resource management was supported with small grants awards. These approaches intended to influence existing practice; as a result the project has faced institutional mindsets and barriers at a systemic level that it has not been able to overcome, with counted exceptions. While GEF guidelines understandably need to limit the duration of its grants, the project experience highlights the need for more realistic design that is based on a coherent assessment of contexts, opportunities and risks, in order to adjust expectations and deliverables to achievable levels.

126. **Conclusion 2: Project performance has been inconsistent and generally below expectations.** The project needed ten years to reach moderately satisfactory levels of progress in output delivery and progress towards outcomes. The main objective was not achieved and the project has not had a measurable effect on biodiversity on a CZM scale according to its performance indicators. There was limited progress towards the first and second project outcomes (supportive national institutional and policy arrangements; integration of biodiversity conservation into economic and sector programs), whereas sustainable livelihoods and resource management practices were demonstrated satisfactorily within pilot conservation areas under

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the third outcome.

127. Project implementation was inconsistent and often lacked momentum. Fundamental project concepts were not fully understood or conveyed in convincing terms, which has distanced government partners over time. Proposed documentation centers with knowledge management functions are not fulfilling this mandate.

128. General performance during the initial project period was unsatisfactory, as documented by the 2011 Mid-Term Evaluation. Between 2006 and 2011, only 14% and 42% of the DoE and GEF budgets were disbursed. There were also deficiencies in the project implementation approach, which lacked strategic direction and was activity-focused. Most of the project's attention during this period was centered on pilot villages in protected areas that did not represent the broader context and weren't conducive to the biodiversity impact the project aimed to generate. Little was done to develop the supportive institutional and policy arrangements for mainstreaming, although more attention was given to this aspect during the last two years, leading to the recent formation of Catchment Management Area Committees (CMACs) – that have been approved in CHB and KB provinces.

129. **Conclusion 3: There were improvements in output delivery and overall effectiveness during the last two years that contributed to moderately satisfactory levels of progress towards outcomes at end of the project.** The MTE marked a turning point that brought changes to project indicators, pilot areas and its overall implementation strategy. This required adaptive management on the part of the project team and DoE, and contributed to a more coherent implementation approach. There were improved internal management practices including regular preparation of work plans, budget revisions and financial expenditure reports. Performance has improved over time and important outputs were delivered during the past year or are in process. The proposed "Conservation & Sustainable Development" (C+SD) program was drafted, a late capacity development plan was adopted, provincial and CMA committees were created, and sustainable management guidelines and concept papers prepared for different sectors. Several green grant initiatives have generated economic and environmental benefits, albeit on a small scale. In Fars and CHB provinces, sustainable rice farming practices are being replicated by MOAJ.

130. In spite of the recent conformation of CMACs and their articulation with PPDCs at the provincial level, little progress has been achieved with respect to the fundamental challenge of internalizing biodiversity conservation within sector and development practices. The operational guidelines and mechanisms that are needed to make mainstreaming a reality are lacking, and it is not clear how the process will be carried forward. On the other hand, the evaluators found encouraging examples of cooperation between government agencies on environmental issues of mutual concern, at the provincial and county government levels.

131. Over half of the planned outputs were produced and progress was made towards others. The evaluators consider that the progress achieved during the last three years has helped to raise

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overall project performance to moderately satisfactory levels. The achievement of pending outputs and outcomes is unlikely at this stage and will depend on the approval of the C+SD program for continued support.

132. **Conclusion 4: The most visible results were generated by small-scale green grant initiatives within the pilot Catchment Management Areas (CMAs).** The small grants modality was part of the pilot phase and has been the project's most visible component. Tangible economic and environmental benefits are being generated by 'green' farming practices, cultivation of endangered medicinal plants, and eco-houses that were restored to receive guests and stimulate demand for ecotourism services. Several green grants have produced multi-sector benefits, and one of the main advantages of 'green' rice farming is water conservation. Several green grants have a high demonstration value and would need to be replicated on a broader scale to have measurable influence on the project's biodiversity indicators or the CZM ecosystem. MOAJ plans to extend the sustainable rice farming practices to other localities in CHB and Fars provinces.

133. **Conclusion 5: The technical quality of project deliverables was inconsistent and often below expectations.** The quality of the technical assistance provided by project consultants and NGOs was uneven and this is reflected in many of the deliverables as well. The evaluators found examples of good practice at all levels: Green grant projects for sustainable rice farming, medicinal plants, eco-tourism, handicrafts and wildlife protection have generated economic and environmental benefits, and in a few cases are in process of replication, i.e. sustainable agriculture in Fars and CHB provinces. The sustainable rice farming initiatives were developed in consultation with an agricultural working group that introduced IPCM practices; this has been a good "outsourcing" practice that ensures technical competence and should be expanded in the future. Likewise, the training and technical assistance in eco-tourism that was contracted to the NGO *Avaye Dshte Yaran* (Esfahan province) has been very effective. Several of the small grants projects have successfully piloted the "mainstreaming" of sectors on a micro level – linking sustainable agriculture with water conservation, or medicinal plants with biodiversity conservation, income generation and health care. Some of these initiatives could have a more comprehensive, ecosystems-level impact if replicated on a broader scale.

134. On the other hand, the technical quality and depth of various concept papers have not been satisfactory, and several do not seem to address the CZM context. The Mountain Resource Documentation Centers have not assumed their intended functions despite commendable NGO work on public awareness in Marvdasht (Fars) and Semirom (Esfahan). The inconsistent and drawn-out implementation process combined with the low quality of various deliverables, have lowered the motivation of many government partners towards the project.

135. **Conclusion 6: Project ownership among national partners was low in most cases, despite opportunities for greater involvement.** The commitment and engagement of the targeted sectors and provincial/county governments was insufficient to move the implementation process forward as planned. There were systemic and institutional barriers that

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included established sector-driven development processes, vertical planning and budgeting frameworks and DoE's limited ability (and mandate) to influence the practices of other government organizations. Ownership has been weakest at the central government level: The Project Steering Committee failed to provide the oversight and strategic guidance that was often needed; several of its members appeared to be surprisingly uninformed of project activities. Neither the Sustainable Development & Environmental Economy Office - which served as the national project Secretariat – nor most of the National Project Directors seem to have played an active role.

136. At the provincial and county government levels, the level of commitment and ownership were influenced by the Plan and Budget Office - which has the over-arching development mandate that is necessary to move the mainstreaming agenda forward - and by the interest of GO directors in green grant experiences that were relevant to their sectors.

137. **Conclusion 7: Most provincial government agencies have shown little institutional commitment to biodiversity conservation mainstreaming. However, the evaluators observed encouraging examples of collaboration and preliminary mainstreaming between sectors that can guide future efforts.** There are ongoing and planned collaborations between sector organizations on environmentally relevant initiatives within the CHB and KB provincial governments, Kiar and Ardal county governments in CHB province, and Dena county government in KB province. The provincial MOAJ Directors for Fars and CHB provinces are well informed of the agricultural green grants that were implemented in their jurisdictions, and are planning to support their replication in the sector budget. Not surprisingly, local ownership was strongest in the case of the green grant initiatives.

138. **Conclusion 8: In general terms, the project continues to be viewed as an external initiative that has been around for a long time without having a strong effect on CZM institutions or the environment.** Provincial and county partners are not consulted on project work plans or budget issues; most of their interaction with the project is through provincial coordinators who work out of the DoE office. The project has not tried to work within the provincial and county planning and budgeting cycles as an entry point for mainstreaming. As a result, the level of indifference is high: The CMA committees proposed by the project were formally approved in three of four provinces, and are not operational at present. Interviewed PBO officials in Fars and KB provinces were not convinced by the project's performance and are reluctant to commit resources. Many government partners are uninformed of green grants and other project activities that are relevant to their sectors, and institutional memory is low at all levels – a situation that is reinforced by the frequent turnover of government personnel.

139. **Conclusion 9: There are good prospects for post-project sustainability, although this will depend to a large extent on the approval of an “up scaled” C+SD proposal in its final version.** The greatest likelihood of sustainability is at the level of the successful green grant initiatives.

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MOAJ representatives in Fars and CHB provinces are planning to replicate sustainable rice farming practices in other villages and districts in 2017. Initial demonstrations on pilot farms in the Kor CMA are being continued and improved rice cultivation practices have been adopted by almost 300 farmers in the area. The income generated from the cultivation of medicinal plants and restoration of traditional homes into “eco” guesthouses is sustaining these initiatives. Various approaches have been demonstrated through the green grants scheme and several have proven to be sustainable; it is now up to the relevant government sectors to support their application on a broader scale.

4.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

140. The project ends in December 2016 and most of the recommendations are directed at the proposed Conservation and Sustainable Development (C+SD) program that would follow this project, and expand the framework for biodiversity conservation mainstreaming to the larger Zagros region. Each recommendation is directed at the listed recipient(s).

141. **Recommendation 1 – DoE and the Project Team: As a first next step, the project team needs to begin planning for a transition phase and secure interim financing.** It is very likely that there will be a gap between the project’s end in December 2016 and the approval of the C+SD proposal in its final version. The transition period will last several months and the project will need interim funding in 2017 to continue essential activities until the C+SD is funded and operating. Quarterly financing may be available from a fund that is managed by DoE to support environmental research. The project management will need to begin this process now in order to obtain funds by the end of the year. The quarterly financing mechanism, if approved, could bridge the gap between the project’s termination and the start of the C+SD.

142. **Recommendation 2 – DoE, Project Team, Provincial/County Government Partners: The interim period following the project’s termination should be used to revisit the C+SD proposal with government partners and stakeholders at different levels, in order to build implementation approaches that are operationally viable and synchronized with sector planning and budgeting.** The interim period provides the opportunity to review the C+SD proposal and give it a “reality check” with the main partners who will be involved. This is fundamental to build a strategic vision that is based on common understanding and expectations, and to articulate implementation strategies that are operationally viable within the approved timeframe.

143. **Recommendation 3 – DoE, Project Team, national-provincial government partner agencies, UNDP-Iran: As part of the project’s hand-over strategy, selected ‘best practices’ need to be socialized among the main CZM partners and stakeholders.** This is intended to sensitize central, provincial and county government partners on the advances that were made by

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the project, in order to socialize good practices and upscale them within the C+SD once approved. A brief study tour should be scheduled during the interim period in order to visit the following “best practices” that merit consideration:

- *Sector collaboration and incipient mainstreaming:*
 - The CHB Provincial Planning and Development Committee (PPDC)
 - Kiar, Ardal and Dena county governments (CHB and KB provinces)
- *Green grant initiatives:*
 - Sustainable farming practices in Bazoft and Kor CMAs (CHB and Fars provinces)
 - Cultivation of medicinal plants in Vanak area of Semirom CMA (Esfahan province) and Kiar county in Bazoft CMA (CHB province)
 - Restored eco-houses in Vanak (Semirom CMA, Esfahan) and Marvdasht (Kor CMA, Fars province)
 - Handicrafts and re-forestation by women’s groups in Bazoft CMA (CHB province)
 - Rehabilitation of injured wildlife in Dena CMA (KB province)

144. **Recommendation 4 – DoE, Project Team, national-provincial government partner agencies:** The study tour of best practices should be followed by brief provincial workshops to review the C+SD document with partners and adjust deliverables, implementation approaches and timelines accordingly to ensure that they are operationally viable. It is recommended that the project teams organize a workshop in each province to review the C+SD proposal in order to ensure that its design and approach are viable, address provincial/CMA priorities, and are compatible with government planning and budgeting cycles. The purpose is to learn from the problems that were faced by the current project, and introduce changes that are conducive to better performance.

145. The evaluators recommend a set of “guiding principles” to drive the workshop discussions:

146. **Recommendation 5 – DoE, PBO, FRWO, MOAJ, CHTO, Tribal Affairs partners:** The C+SD needs to apply an ecosystems approach to its implementation strategy and institutional arrangements, if it is to have regional impact. PPDCs and CMACs should be linked in a manner that facilitates cooperation between provinces and counties, and offers the C+SD a broader scale of intervention for biodiversity conservation. This will require an over-arching coordination mechanism that enables the main regional partners and stakeholders to come together periodically to review progress, share good practices, and participate in the design of annual C+SD work plans. This arrangement could be synchronized to feed into the provincial and county planning and budgeting cycles.

147. **Recommendation 6 – DoE, Project Team, Provincial PBO and Government Agencies:** Project work plans should be consulted with PPDC and CMA partners to ensure that they address area conservation priorities and encourage higher levels of institutional commitment. Project planning and budgeting should be used as an opportunity to involve partners so that they

understand how the project works. Project work plans should not follow a “one size fits all” formula in which the same components are implemented in all provinces, but instead should address different opportunities and challenges based on consultations with the PPDCs and CMACs. Indeed, these committees will need to assume a more substantive role in designing project work plans for their jurisdiction or sector, if they are to be expected to upscale successful initiatives. This arrangement would help ensure a closer alignment of project work plans to sector programs. It would also improve the project’s ability to stimulate momentum at the provincial and county/district levels, by using the allocation of technical and financial resources as leverage.

148. **Recommendation 7 – DoE, PBO and provincial-county government agencies: The C+SD needs to demonstrate practical mainstreaming approaches that are compatible with the provincial/county government planning and budgeting cycles. The Plan & Budget Organization (PBO) should assume a lead role in this process.** The most direct way to raise the level of environmental consideration within sector or economic development programs is by influencing government planning and budgeting processes. This is essential to demonstrate that ‘mainstreaming’ does not threaten core budgets and can improve the long-term sustainability of sector programs. Validated tools that include eco-budgeting and participatory budgeting, valuations of ecosystem services, and the use of interaction matrixes to rank development proposals according to their expected impact on weighted biodiversity indicators, need to be demonstrated in a “hands on” manner during actual planning processes.

149. As mentioned above, the mainstreaming component of the C+SD will need to be led by the PBO on the basis of its over-arching institutional mandate and influence on resource allocation decisions. The project experience has shown that DoE is not well placed to assume this function or influence the practices of other government organizations, and should instead focus on providing technical guidance to the mainstreaming process, small grants modality and other initiatives to ensure that they are supportive of biodiversity conservation.

150. **Recommendation 8 – DoE, PBO, C+SD donors: To manage the scale of activity of the C+SD, the implementation of outputs needs to be sequenced according to their linkages and the ‘critical pathways’ that connect outputs to outcomes.** Internal project linkages need to be understood and mapped to improve the effectiveness of project implementation. The scale of activities proposed by the C+SD will create high administrative and coordination demands exceeding those of the Zagros project. For this reason, the review of the logical framework should look at linkages between the various outputs and outcomes. Many outputs are progressively connected in a sequence in which they provide inputs and feed into other outputs. Other outputs are over-arching and carry over time, as may be the case with capacity building. There are also higher-level outputs that are closely connected to the outcome and have greater influence on impact. The sequences of outputs and outcomes illustrate the impact pathways²² that should be followed in project implementation plans. The analysis of output linkages could help the

²² This is applied to the Zagros project under the Theory of Change/Results to Outcomes analysis of 3.1 “Project Design”

project team in formulating project work plans that are more likely to reach the intended outcomes in a timely manner.

151. **Recommendation 9 – DoE, PBO, Project Team, partner national-provincial Government Agencies:** **An inception period should be programmed at the start of the C+SD.** The 2011 MTE signaled the importance an inception period to ensure a common understanding of deliverables, responsibilities and timelines. In the case of the C+SD, the broader range of activity and institutional participants justifies setting aside a 1-2 month period, after approval, to elaborate work plans with partners and improve levels of preparedness and motivation. This would follow up on the more general review of the C+SD proposal that is suggested during the interim period.

152. **Recommendation 10 – DoE, Project Team:** **The technical quality of project support should be consistently improved in the future.** To have greater depth and impact, technical assistance should gravitate from the short-term consultancy assignments towards longer-term mentoring involving institutional “centers of excellence” from the region that are able to accompany implementation and provide technical guidance. Instead of relying on individuals who are temporarily employed and leave little institutional memory, the project should become a catalyst for building support relations with research centers, private enterprises, NGOs and academic institutions. The project benefitted from early consultations with Technical Advisory Teams (TATs) and working groups that helped to design sustainable farming guidelines. The evaluators also noted high levels of technical competence on the part of the NGO *Avaye Dshte Yaran* that guided the eco-tourism grant initiatives in Esfahan province, and could plausibly lead this component on a regional scale in the future. In the region there are universities with academic departments devoted to forestry, agriculture, environmental science and related fields, in addition to thesis students who can support project activities on the ground.

153. **Recommendation 11 – DoE, PBO, partner national-provincial government agencies:** **Closer relations should be built with other projects in the Zagros region that have environmental conservation or sustainable resource management objectives.** The project has tended to operate in isolation and the evaluators saw few indications of collaboration with other environmental initiatives in the region. Several provincial and county government representatives pointed out that the UNDP-GEF MENARID and JICA projects are applying similar approaches and institutional arrangements. Likewise, the national Land Use Capabilities Program is a national policy directive that has similar aims and is being implemented at provincial levels. There are risks of duplication between projects that could weaken local government capacities instead of strengthening them. The C+SD should be a vehicle that enables DoE and PBO to build cooperation with other initiatives, creating better conditions for bringing about the desired impact.

154. **Recommendation 12 – DoE, PBO, Project Team:** **The C+SD project team should be compact and devoted to program management in order to cope with expected delivery demands, contracting qualified technical expertise externally when feasible.** Technical

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assistance should be outsourced to recognized institutions and individuals who are in a position to support biodiversity conservation and mainstreaming over time. The C+SD's technical delivery could be managed by a Technical Coordinator or Deputy Project Manager, with the National Project Manager being in charge of general supervision, institutional coordination and public relations. The technical support needed to guide local governments in biodiversity mainstreaming may need to be contracted internationally from organizations that work in these fields and can support project partners over time. Strategic planning, capacity building and knowledge management/information systems are clearly important functions for the project team, as are the provincial coordinators. The project team needs to manage a system that feeds into the provincial and CMA levels, through more regular interaction with provincial project coordinators and partners, and more intensive use of online communications and networking.

155. Continuity at a programme level will depend on the approval of the C+SD. Many of the project's recent initiatives with provincial and county government are at an incipient stage and will require extended support to become operational. The availability of technical and financial assistance from the C+SD would provide this and enable their consolidation.

156. There are favorable conditions for the C+SD's approval within the next six months. The four provincial governors have endorsed the proposal. A strategy is being planned to mobilize interim financing through DoE in order to sustain priority activities once the project ends in December, and to secure approval and funding for the C+SD. There is also draft legislation that would prioritize government support for high-biodiversity ecosystems that are threatened by environmental degradation, through the 6th National Development Plan. These developments raise the likelihood of continuity under the C+SD

4.3 Lessons Learned

157. **Lesson 1: The difficulties of mainstreaming biodiversity conservation with government sectors underline the need for more projects that propose integrative models and practices.** Over the last ten years the project has promoted the message of biodiversity conservation mainstreaming to government agencies with little success. Part of this is because initiatives such as the Zagros project try to alter established arrangements and practice, and therefore are more likely to face systemic barriers and institutional 'mindsets' they are not in a position to influence. Planning and budgeting remains sector-based and hierarchical; there are examples of joint initiative and other collaboration between government agencies that have an environmental dimension, but they are exceptions to the norm.

158. The lack of a culture of horizontal cooperation between sectors and government agencies is a structural problem that undermined the project's ability to achieve more impact. Implementation became slower and more time was needed to achieve basic outputs. The

problem goes beyond the project and points to the need for more sustained efforts that encourage – and reward - cooperation between government institutions, whether through external projects, internal policy guidelines or budget incentives.

159. **Lesson 2: The project would have benefited from a brief inception phase to organize itself, raise the level of national preparedness, and develop a shared vision.** An inception period was planned in the project document but apparently was not implemented. The evaluators agree with the MTE that a preliminary inception phase (one or two months) could have been used to harmonize expectations, build a strategic vision, and adjust work plans to provincial and CMA realities. This would have helped the core project team and main partners to enter the project with a better understanding of mainstreaming concepts and the approaches that are used to apply it.

160. **Lesson 3: The project strategy should have been more closely aligned to the provincial and county government planning and budgeting frameworks.** In CHB province, the project's budget and technical assistance are used as parallel resources in support of sector initiatives that have environmental benefits. This approach has brought government agencies closer to the project and in some cases helped leverage government funding. The most important "entry point" for mainstreaming is clearly the local government planning and budget where sector priorities and allocations are determined. If the project really wanted to move forward on mainstreaming, it should have proposed operational methods that have been tested and are aligned to provincial planning and budgeting. The C+SD will need to continue working on this, using international expertise if necessary to provide technical guidance.

161. **Lesson 4: The Plan & Budget Organization (PBO) is the main driver of conservation mainstreaming at the provincial and county government levels.** One of the project lessons is that the Planning & Budgeting Office was better placed to execute much of the project and in particular the mainstreaming aspect with sector agencies. The PBO has an institutional coordination mandate and has an important role in approving sector plans, projects and budgets. It therefore has significant clout among line ministries and government organizations at different levels. The attitude of the provincial PBO director can have direct influence on the attitude of other government agencies. The DoE, on the other hand, has technical expertise to offer and is the national GEF partner, but lacks the over-arching coordination mandate needed to influence the practices of institutions it is on the same level with. The C+SD needs to re-examine the institutional roles of the DoE and PBO on the basis of this experience and its own needs.

162. **Lesson 5: Mainstreaming can be more effective when projects build linkages with other initiatives, and are more closely aligned to sector priorities at provincial and CMA levels.** The project missed the opportunity to build links with compatible projects such as the GEF-UNDP MENARID project that seeks "institutional strengthening and coherence for integrated natural resources management" and has similar institutional arrangements to those of the Zagros project. A JICA project is also assisting natural resource management in the same area, and the national Land Use Capabilities policy is being implemented in all provinces.

163. A broader effect would have been achieved if these projects had come together to promote a consistent message, apply compatible and mutually reinforcing approaches, and minimize duplications of effort. It is certainly in the interest of the C+SD, the other projects and government partners to move in this direction. Closer coordination should be sought in particular with MENARID, which is also supported by GEF and UNDP.

164. **Lesson 6: The project's overall performance over the past decade and the progress that was achieved do not justify its continuity under a larger and more demanding project such as the C+SD, unless measures are taken to ensure better effectiveness and efficiency.** The evaluators feel that to justify continuity under the C+SD, changes need to be made to some of the approaches and practices of this project. The project direction needs to be clear and mainstreaming concepts translated into clear guidelines that can be applied by different sectors through the PBO. The momentum of the C+SD needs to be transferred from Teheran to the provinces and CMAs, where partners can have a voice in project work plans, resource allocations and adaptive management decisions that affect them. The current process that is coming to an end has exhausted itself, but also created favorable conditions for sustainability. The C+SD will need a renewed image and strategies, perhaps applying some of the recommendations in this report.

165. **Lesson 7: UNDP 's cost-sharing modality provides a better option for managing donor funds in government-executed projects.** The different fiscal calendars used by the government on one side and UNDP and GEF on the other, led to problems in synchronizing GEF grant and co-financing disbursements. This has been a problem with other GEF and donor-supported projects as well. The cost-sharing arrangements that were negotiated for the GEF Caspian Forest project set a precedent in which UNDP was contracted to manage project funds for a government-executed project. This option could facilitate administration of project funds that would no longer need to go through the government system.

166. **Lesson 8: Efforts to promote sustainable rangeland management with nomadic groups seem to have been particularly difficult, and undermined by various factors. The concept of sustainable rangeland management should be re-thought and new approaches articulated that are more likely to be accepted and have impact.** There are cultural, environmental, political and economic aspects that undermine the traditional grazing practices of *Bakhtiari* nomadic groups that depend on the Zagros ecosystem: Protected areas, national parks and high grazing grounds are increasingly off-limit. Immigration and increased settlement have encouraged land subdivision in rural areas, restricting access to pastures. The perceived benefits of the nomadic lifestyle are increasingly questioned in light of other livelihood options and the sedentary base of the dominant culture. The Nomad Affairs Office has programs that offer nomads the option of living in fixed settlements with subsidized housing and services; however the evaluators were told that this has also created social problems as traditional values and livelihoods are weakened.

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167. The project successfully demonstrated the financial and environmental benefits of cultivating high-altitude medicinal plants as an income alternative to grazing. However, farming is not readily compatible with the nomadic lifestyle and expanding this approach would encourage further permanent settlement, which brings new challenges aside from the by the probable weakening of cultural values and social networks. The evaluators recommend that the future project look into promoting sustainable livelihoods that are more compatible with nomadism. Options to consider could include (i) eco-tourism ventures where paid visitors accompany nomad groups along their migratory route, living in tents; (ii) employing nomads as seasonal park rangers or guides in national parks or protected areas that are within their grazing route; (iii) introducing 'zero-grazing' techniques for livestock by cultivating high-yielding pastures at key locations on the grazing route; and (iv) reviewing nomadic grazing patterns in line with recent climactic changes (using GIS mapping) to ensure a more efficient use of seasonal pastures.

ANNEXES

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Annex 1

TERMS OF REFERENCE

TERMINAL EVALUATION TERMS OF REFERENCE

A. INTRODUCTION

In accordance with UNDP and GEF M&E policies and procedures, all full and medium-sized UNDP support GEF financed projects are required to undergo a terminal evaluation upon completion of implementation. These terms of reference (TOR) sets out the expectations for a Terminal Evaluation (TE) of the Conservation of biodiversity in Central Zagros landscapes (PIMS 2278)

The essentials of the project to be evaluated are as follows

B. PROJECT SUMMARY TABLE

Project Title:	Conservation of biodiversity in Central Zagros Landscapes			
GEF Project ID:	2278		<i>at endorsement (Million US\$)</i>	<i>at completion (Million US\$)</i>
UNDP Project ID:	47960	GEF financing:	3.8	3.35
Country:	Iran	IA/EA own:		
Region:	Asian Pacific	Government:	5.3	5.21
Focal Area:	Biodiversity	UNDP:	0.05	0.049
FA Objectives, (OP/SP):	OP 4: Mountain Ecosystems	Other:	0.425	
		Total co-financing:	5.775	5.259
Executing Agency:	DOE	Total Project Cost:	9.575	8.609
Other Partners involved:	MOI MPO MOAJ FRWO CHTO	ProDoc Signature (date project began):		28 June 2005
		(Operational) Closing Date:	Proposed: 2010	Actual: 2016

C. VISION AND SCOPE

The Central Zagros Mountains contain globally significant biodiversity. Extreme topographical Relief and climatic conditions have led to great diversity in ecosystems and habitats over small Geographical areas. In turn, this has created a home for a vast range of species including over 2,000 species of higher plants and several endangered and endemic mammal species. Notably, the mountains contain a large number of plant and animal species of commercial importance to man – no doubt one of the reasons why some of the earliest civilizations originated in this area. In recent decades, due to demographic changes, changing economic and social systems, and the loss of traditional management and land-use practices, the biodiversity is declining and is now highly threatened.

This Project aims to conserve the biodiversity in the Central Zagros Landscape Conservation Zone. The main strategy to follow is referred to as “biodiversity conservation mainstreaming”, which means enabling the agencies that govern the main economic or resource use sectors – agriculture, forest, rangelands, water, tourism, energy, infrastructure – to incorporate conservation and ecological sustainability measures into their own policies, programs and sectoral practices; it means not treating biodiversity conservation as though it is somehow a separate “sector” under the sole responsibility of the Department of Environment.

The project tries to establish a new integrated and collaborative conservation system in which all stakeholder groups are fully engaged in planning, implementing and monitoring of resource management planning to ensure the conservation and sustainability of use and exploitation of all biodiversity, renewable natural resources and ecological processes. The Project also demonstrate biodiversity mainstreaming at the local level in a series of Pilot Management Areas (PMAs) across the Zone, and establish mechanisms to facilitate the dissemination and replication of the successful PMAs integrated management approaches.

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Refer to above strategy, in 2014, Conservation and Sustainable Development Programme for over an area of 3,100,000 hectares of Central Zagros Mountain is developed based on the lessons and achievement of integrated management of four pilot management areas (PMAs). This model includes strategic framework, management system, policies, and tools for mainstreaming biodiversity into national and provincial development plans and strategies and is under implementation. Project closure is by the end of 2016, and project will facilitate establishment and capacity development of full-scale CZM management system and program, and tries to hand-over to permanent CZM management executive secretariats.

Project Title	Conservation of biodiversity in Central Zagros landscapes
Project Duration	10 Years
Project Budget	9.575 million USD\$
Executing Entity	Iranian Department of Environment (DoE)
Cooperating National Agencies	Ministry of Interior (MOI)
	Planning and Management Organization (PMO)
	Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA)
	Ministry of Agriculture Jihad (MOAJ)
	Forest, Rangeland and Watershed Organization (FRWO)
	Cultural Heritage and Tourism Organization (CHTO)
Implementing Agency	United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

Thus the Vision, goal, objectives and intended outcomes of the Project were developed. They are summarized in Table below:

Vision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The whole of Central Zagros Mountains (CZM) region will be conserved and managed as the CZM Sustainable Development and Management System. ○ The Zagros Mountains Project purpose is to facilitate the design, establishment, capacity development and management of the CZM Sustainable Development and Management System. ○ Central Zagros Mountains will be a special region managed permanently for multi-sectoral, multi-use, integrated Conservation and Sustainable Development. ○ Within Central Zagros Mountains all sectors will be managed based on CZM Sustainable Development Master Plan for sustainability and biodiversity conservation: biodiversity protection and restoration, and sustainable and green development will be promoted; unsustainable resource uses and high-impact development activities will not be allowed. ○ Central Zagros Mountains governance, management and financing will be led by the Provincial Governors and the District Governors; supported by CZM Sustainable Development and Management System.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ CZM Sustainable Development Master Plan will include management tools and management support system namely Integrated Catchment Management, land use planning and sustainable sectoral development guidelines.
Project Goal	The Zagros Mountains Socio-Economy Develops Successfully and Supports mainstreaming Biodiversity Restoration and Conservation.
Project Objective	Mainstreaming Conservation of the Biodiversity and the Landscape within the Central Zagros Landscape Conservation Zone
Outcome 1	A national institutional and policy framework that is fully supportive of mainstreaming biodiversity into development in the central Zagros mountains
Outcome 2	Sustainable use and conservation of biodiversity is integrated into economic and sectoral programmes and government practices at the Conservation Zone level
Outcome 3	Successful, sustainable, financially replicable model Management Areas demonstrates integration of resource sector sustainable development and livelihoods with conservation of biodiversity.

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

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

D. EVALUATION APPROACH AND METHOD

An overall approach and method²³ for conducting project terminal evaluations of UNDP supported GEF financed projects has developed over time. The evaluator is expected to frame the evaluation effort using the criteria of **relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and impact**, as defined and explained in the UNDP Guidance for Conducting Terminal Evaluations of UNDP-supported, GEF-financed Projects. A set of questions covering each of these criteria have been drafted and are included with this TOR (*fill in Annex C*). The evaluator is expected to amend, complete and submit this matrix as part of an evaluation inception report, and shall include it as an annex to the final report.

The evaluation must provide evidence-based information that is credible, reliable and useful. The evaluator is expected to follow a participatory and consultative approach ensuring close engagement with government counterparts, in particular the GEF operational focal point, UNDP Country Office, project team, UNDP GEF Technical Adviser based in the region and key stakeholders. The evaluator is expected to conduct a field mission to **Fars, Isfahan, Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad and Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari** provinces including the following project Catchment Management Areas: **Kor, Vanak Khersan, Bazoft and Dena CMAs**. Interviews will be held with the following organizations and individuals at a minimum: DOE, MOI, PMO, MOAJ,

²³ For additional information on methods, see the [Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating for Development Results](#), Chapter 7, pg. 163

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CHTO, FRWO (national and provincial), and Governors offices, Local Communities, NGOs (National and local).

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

E. EVALUATION CRITERIA & RATINGS

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

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

F. PROJECT FINANCE / COFINANCE

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

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

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• In-kind support								
• Other								
Totals								

G. MAINSTREAMING

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

H. IMPACT

The evaluators will assess the extent to which the project is achieving impacts or progressing towards the achievement of impacts. Key findings that should be brought out in the evaluations include whether the project has demonstrated: a) verifiable improvements in ecological status, b) verifiable reductions in stress on ecological systems, and/or c) demonstrated progress towards these impact achievements.²⁴

I. CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS & LESSONS

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

J. IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

The principal responsibility for managing this evaluation resides with the UNDP CO in *Iran*. The UNDP CO will contract the evaluators and ensure the timely provision of per diems and travel arrangements within the country for the evaluation team. The Project Team will be responsible for liaising with the Evaluators team to set up stakeholder interviews, arrange field visits, coordinate with the Government etc.

K. EVALUATION TIMEFRAME

The total duration of the evaluation will be **30 days** according to the following plan:

Activity	Timing	Completion Date
Preparation	5 days	<i>Date 20 July 2016</i>
Evaluation Mission	16 days	<i>Date 17 Aug 2016</i>
Draft Evaluation Report	7 days	<i>Date 11 Sep 2016</i>
Final Report	2 days	<i>Date 21 Sep 2016</i>

L. EVALUATION DELIVERABLES

²⁴ A useful tool for gauging progress to impact is the Review of Outcomes to Impacts (ROtI) method developed by the GEF Evaluation Office: [ROTI Handbook 2009](#)

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The evaluation team is expected to deliver the following:

Deliverable	Content	Timing	Responsibilities
Inception Report	Evaluator provides clarifications on timing and method	No later than 2 weeks before the evaluation mission.	Evaluator submits to UNDP CO
Presentation	Initial Findings	End of evaluation mission	To project management, UNDP CO
Draft Final Report	Full report, (per annexed template) with annexes	Within 3 weeks of the evaluation mission	Sent to CO, reviewed by RTA, PCU, GEF OFPs
Final Report*	Revised report	Within 1 week of receiving UNDP and project comments on draft	Sent to CO for uploading to UNDP ERC.

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

M. TEAM COMPOSITION

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

International Consultant must present the following qualifications:

N. International evaluator (team leader):

- Minimum 15 years of relevant professional experience
- Knowledge of UNDP and GEF
- Previous experience with results-based monitoring and evaluation methodologies;
- Technical knowledge in the targeted focal area(s)
- Academic and/or professional background in institutional/governance aspects of natural resource management and nature conservation
- Experience in the review of technical assistance projects, preferably with UNDP or GEF or other United Nations development agencies and major donors. If possible, experience in the review of multilateral funded biodiversity conservation projects.
- Experience in project design, project cycle management, and project monitoring and evaluation.
- Have a broad based knowledge and experience related to capacity building, community development and natural resource management.
- Excellent English writing and communication skills. Demonstrated ability to assess complex situations in order to succinctly and clearly distill critical issues and draw practical conclusions
- An ability to assess institutional capacity and incentives.
- Understanding of political, economic, institutional issues associated with protected areas management and good environmental governance within the Iranian context.
- Excellent interpersonal, coordination and planning skills and ability to work in a team.

- Experience leading multi-disciplinary, multi-national teams to deliver quality products in high stress, short deadline situations.

O. EVALUATOR ETHICS

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

P. PAYMENT MODALITIES AND SPECIFICATIONS

This payment schedule is indicative, to be filled in by the CO and UNDP GEF Technical Adviser based on their standard procurement procedures.

Instalment	milestone
<i>10 % of total consultancy fee</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparation and submitting the inception report and initial project review and submission of invoice
<i>40% of total consultancy fee</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After Evaluation Mission and following submission and approval of the 1ST draft terminal evaluation report upon approval of NPM on actual working days as per time sheets invoice submitted by the consultant • Draft Evaluation Report after completion of evaluation mission and submission of first draft final report
<i>50% of total consultancy fee</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final Report Following submission and approval (UNDP-CO , Project and UNDP RTA) of the final terminal evaluation report
<i>Travel Costs</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 80% of the total travel cost to join the duty station will be paid upon confirmation on the travel dates and provision of a copy of the air ticket (this amount includes two-way economy air ticket, visa costs, and living allowances in Tehran /filed visit • The remaining 20% of travel cost will be paid at the end of the mission upon submission of the UNDP Travel Claim Form (F10)

Note

- All envisaged travel costs (including ticket, accommodation, etc.) must be included in the offeror's financial proposal. The individual offeror should consider the prevailing price for an economy class tickets serving the most direct routes in his /her financial proposal.
- Individual contractor wishing to upgrade his/her travel to business or first class shall do so at his/her own expense.
- The project will provide air ticket for each local travel- therefore the cost to be excluded from this contract. As for living allowances, the cost will be included in and covered by this contract. Therefore the offeror is required to include the foreseen cost (living allowances) for the mentioned cities for four 2-days trips to the project pilot sites and the rest will be spent in Tehran. The offeror is therefore encouraged to check the ceiling of living allowances for different cities in Iran in the following link: <http://icsc.un.org>, and to include the amount in the financial proposal. However, the reimbursement of local travel costs will be made upon receipt of travel claim form and based on the actual travel dates.

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- Each payment will be made in Euro upon satisfactory completion of the tasks and respective deliverables as per submission of deliverables/claims by the consultant and the project/UNDP approvals.
- Each payment will be transferred by UNDP through Electronic Fund Transfer to the Euro account number of the contractor introduced through an official letter indicating full banking information.
- Any payment under this contract will be made using UN Operational Rate of Exchange. For update rates please see: <http://treasury.un.org/operationalrates/OperationalRates.aspx>
- Payments will be made according to UNDP regulations as explained in the contract documents.
- The International Consultant shall not do any work, provide any equipment, materials and supplies or perform any other services which may result in any cost in excess of the above mentioned amount.

Q. TRAVEL

If travel is required under the contract, the individual consultant shall:

1. Obtain the security clearance from UNDP office (the details of travel including date of departure and arrival, accommodation and purpose of travel shall be submitted to UNDP office 2 working days before date of travel)
2. Undertake the training courses on Basic Security in the Field and Advanced Security in the Field (only applicable for certain destination; to be checked with UNDP) and provide UNDP with both certificates; the related CD ROMs are available at UNDP office.
3. Undertake a full medical examination including x-rays and obtain medical clearance from an UN-approved physician. This is only applicable for the contractors on the age of 62 years or more.
4. All envisaged travel costs must be included in the Offeror's financial proposal. This includes all duty travels, travels to join duty station and repatriation. The anticipated mission travel has been included in the TOR; however, in the event of unforeseeable travel, UNDP and the Individual Contractor will agree upon the manner in which travel costs including tickets, lodging and terminal expenses are to be reimbursed to the traveler.

R. FINANCIAL PROPOSAL

Candidates are asked to submit a financial proposal as per “ Annex 3 “ that indicates the all-inclusive total price (daily fee + travel costs) , supported by a breakdown of costs as per the deliverables outlined in these TOR.

Note : Total financial proposal (Annex 3) of the offeror shall include the following elements:

- Daily consultancy fee
- Living allowances in Tehran (8 days in Tehran, 2 days Isfahan and 6 days elsewhere)
- Travel cost to Tehran (economy air ticket)
- Visa cost

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Annex 2

Evaluation Agenda and List of Persons Interviewed

Name	Position	Ministry/Organization	Venue		Phone number	Email
			City	Village		
Ali Nazaridoust (Mr.)	Head of Programme and Assistant Resident Representative	UNDP	Tehran	-	02122860692	Ali.nazaridoust@undp.org
Houshang Ziaee (Mr.)	Former project consultant	It was an unplanned conversation in the DOE lobby	Tehran	-	09123022050	Ziaie_h@yahoo.com
Farhad Dabiri (Mr.)	DOE deputy & project NPD	Department of Environment	Tehran	-	09123575146	s.dabiri@yahoo.com
Shirin Abolghsemi (Ms.)	Project NPM	Project Team	Tehran	-	02142781884	Shirin.abolghsemi@zagrosproject.ir
Ali Arvahi (Mr.)	NPM deputy	Project Team	Tehran	-	09122054563	Ali.arvahi@zagrosproject.ir
Amir Mafi (Mr.)	Capacity development expert	Project Team	"		09123373955	Amir.mafi@zagrosproject.ir
Pooneh Raisdana	Management system expert	Project Team	"	-	0912007349	Poone.raisdana@zagrosproject.ir
Alireza Mirzaei (Mr.)	Planning expert	Project Team	"	-	09121720608	Alireza6604@gmail.com
Fariborz Gheibi (Mr.)	General Director of Forestry Office	Forests, Rangelands and Watershed Organization	"	-	09126350762	Gheibi44@yahoo.com
Hosein Badripour (Mr.)	FAO/TCP NPM	FRWO	"	-	09126449308	badripour@yahoo.com

Name	Position	Ministry/Organization	Venue		Phone number	Email
			City	Village		
Mazyar Movassegghi (Mr.)	Expert	FRWO	“	-		
Abotaleb Ghasemi (Mr.)	Touristic Areas Group Manager	Iranian Crafts, Heritage, Tourism Organization	“	-	021-61063614	-
Mojgan Nahavandi	Touristic Areas Group Deputy	Iranian Crafts, Heritage, Tourism Organization	“	-	02161063604 09123174787	
Alireza Dolmeh (Mr.)	Tourism Study Expert	Iranian Crafts, Heritage, Tourism Organization	“	-	09122212707	
Elham Ashtiani (Mr.)	Planning Department Expert	Iranian Crafts, Heritage, Tourism Organization	“	-	09194929374	
Esmacil Barati (Mr.)	Standard Department manager	Iranian Crafts, Heritage, Tourism Organization	“	-	02161582225	
Firouz Nazeri (Mr.)	National Touristic Cooperation Department Expert	Iranian Crafts, Heritage, Tourism Organization	“	-	02166582233 09124400546	
Poorang Pourhoseini (Mr.)	National Touristic Cooperation Department Deputy	Iranian Crafts, Heritage, Tourism Organization	“	-		
Mostafa Sakhaei (Mr.)	National Ecotourism Committee Advisor	Iranian Crafts, Heritage, Tourism Organization	“	-	02166582233 09122186181	
Mohammad Ali Faiiazhi (Mr.)	National Touristic Cooperation Department Manager	Iranian Crafts, Heritage, Tourism Organization	“	-		

Name	Position	Ministry/Organization	Venue		Phone number	Email
			City	Village		
Alireza Mokhtari (Mr.)	National Ecotourism Committee Expert	Iranian Crafts, Heritage, Tourism Organization	“	-	02166582058 09192688680	
Mohammad Reza Rostami (Mr.)	Information Service Department Manager	Iranian Crafts, Heritage, Tourism Organization	“	-	02166582059	
Hamid PoorMohammadi (Mr.)	Planning Deputy	Plan and Budget Org. (Central)	Tehran	-	02133114242	pourmohammadiQmporg.ir
Mohammad Hadi Daryaei (Mr.)	Deputy of International Relations Dep.	Plan and Budget Org. (Central)	Tehran	-	02133272664	mhdaryaei@mporg.ir
Hamid HoseinPour (Mr.)	Agricultural and Natural Resources Dep.	Plan and Budget Org. (Central)	Tehran	-	02133271	hamidhpour@gmail.com
Mir Vali Safarzadeh (Mr.)	Deputy	Nomads Organization (Central)			09121955847	
Mohammad Mirakhori (Mr.)	Advisor	Nomads Organization (Central)	Tehran	-		
Dariuosh Nematollahi (Mr.)	Production Manager	Nomads Organization (Central)	Tehran	-	09124390308	Dariuosh121@yahoo.com
Mohammad Reza Shahpasand (Mr.)		Extension Service Deputy (Agricultural Jihad Ministry)	Tehran	-	09121615524	Mohammadrezashahpasand@yahoo.com
Bahman Amiri Larijani (Mr.)	Director General	Extension Service Deputy (Agricultural Jihad Ministry)	Tehran	-	09111273625	Amiri_931@yahoo.com
Jafar Barmaki (Mr.)	Expert	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Tehran	-	09122971763	jbarmaki@gmail.com
FARS PROVINCE						

Name	Position	Ministry/Organization	Venue		Phone number	Email
			City	Village		
Pardis Valavi	Provincial Coordinator	Zagros Project	Shiraz	-	09171109134	Pardis.valavi@yahoo.com
Ahamad Rezaei	Board member	Fars Pastoralists Association	Shiraz	-	09177213345	
Asadollahe Sabahi	Member	Fars Pastoralists Association	Shiraz	-		Asad.sabahi@gmail.com
Ali Akbar Kazemaini	Board member	13 th Farvardin (Environmental NGO)	Shiraz	-	09173211731	
Saeid Salehi	Manager	Nomads Office	Marvdasht	-	09109307182	
Abed Shayan	Expert	Nomads Office	Marvdasht	-	09302110894	
Bahman Mardani	Expert	CHTO	Marvdasht	-	09177292051	
Shahroukh Roustami	Kor District Governor	Governorship	Marvdasht	-	09173243599	
Rohoullah Nemati	Doroodzan District Governor	Governorship	Marvdasht	-	09173284424	
Siavash Abedi	Representative	Fars Environmental NGOs	Marvdasht	-	09172152506	
Siavash Mohammadi	Technical Deputy	Provincial DOE	Marvdasht	-	09177220638	
MehrAli Nozari	Deputy	Rural Water and Sewage Office	Marvdasht	-	09176570907	
Salamat Tavakkoli	Head	Kamfirooz MOJA	Marvdasht	-	09171869596	
Hamid Roosta	Head	Natural Resources Office	Marvdasht	-	09177290610	
Mehrzad Mehrabi	Expert	Water	Marvdasht	-	09171132565	
Elyas Khani	Expert	Agriculture Jihad	Marvdasht	-	09776068008	Elyas.khani63@gmail.com
Abolhasan Keshavarz	Manager	DOE County	Marvdasht	-	09171272191	
Leila Hajipour	Expert	County Governorship	Marvdasht	-	09178535315	

Name	Position	Ministry/Organization	Venue		Phone number	Email
			City	Village		
Mohammad Ali Mohammadi	Deputy	Plan and Budget Organization	Shiraz	-	-	
Javid Hayati	Expert	Nomads Office	Shiraz	-	09178941575	
Alireza Keikhan	Expert	Fishery Office	Shiraz	-	09177070940	
Kazem Denan	Expert	Housing Foundation	Shiraz	-	09177142177	
Esmacil Jokar	Expert	Plan and Budget Org.	Shiraz	-	09171067945	
Hosein Parivash	Expert	Plan and Budget Org.	Shiraz	-	09171108530	
Ensieh Asadi	Expert	Plan and Budget Org.	Shiraz	-	09178002582	
Rohollah Malekpoor	Head	Industries, Mines, Trade Org.	Shiraz	-	09177056744	
Hamid Soleimani	Head	Natural Resources Off.	Shiraz	-	09173122858	
Hamid Mesbah	Expert	Agricultural Research Center	Shiraz	-	09177704284	
Mohammad Reza Negahdar	Expert	Agricultural Research Center	Shiraz	-	09171122812	
Mostafa Monemi	Expert	Provincial DOE	Shiraz	-	09311122812	
Halime Ravanbakhsh	Expert	Water Organization	Shiraz	-	09173056944	
Saeideh Kamali	Expert	Agriculture Jihad Org.	Shiraz	-	09177034517	
Shamsolmolok Hamiri	Expert	Agriculture Jihad Org.	Shiraz	-	09173140672	
Ali Sarem	Expert	Plan and Budget Org.	Shiraz	-	09176139509	
Abolhasan Keshavarz	Expert	County DOE	-	Bakian	09171272191	
Morteza Bagheri	Expert	Extension Service Company	-	“	09178301193	
Rahkhoda AsarRoshan	Farmer	Bakian village	-	“	09173280717	
Mohsen Abedi	Member	NGO	-	“	09132533168	
Zahra Zareie	Student (M.A)	University	-	“	09368707830	Her thesis is about IPM in this village.

Name	Position	Ministry/Organization	Venue		Phone number	Email
			City	Village		
Ebrahim Asgari	Expert	Extension Service Center	-	“	09178176352	
Amir Daneshmandi	Expert	Extension Service Center	-	“	09173294042	
KOHKILUYEH VA BOYERAHMAD PROVINCE						
Kobra Ayaseh	Provincial coordinator	Zagros Project	Yasooj	-	09175425055	kobraayaseh@yahoo.com
Asadollahe Hashemi	Head	Provincial DOE	“	-	09173419136	
Mohammad Bagheri	Director General	CHTO	“	-	09171411378	
Reza GoharGani	Director General	Agricultural Jihad Org.	“	-	09173422773	
Abbas Salahi	Manager	Agricultural Research Center	“	-	09171411457	
Godarz Bagheri Fard	Deputy	Natural Resources Office	“	-	09173413383	goodarz.fb@yahoo.com
Mohammad Farajzadeh	Deputy	County Governor Office	“	-	09173412884	Zarghami.fa@gmail.com
Fariborz Zarghami	Advisor	Water Org.	“	-	09177417142	
Salman Jamalfard	Manager	Urban Water and Sewage Org.	“	-		Salman.jamal41@yahoo.com
Nadia Sedaghat	Deputy	Dena County Governor	Yasooj	-	09171456852	
Mohsen Tohidi	Expert	Nomads Office	“	-	09173417734	
Hasan Noroozi	Head	Provincial Plan and Budget Org.	“	-	??	
Reza Yousefi	Deputy	Provincial Plan and Budget Org.	“	-	09177410517	
Hasan Pakbaz	Gene Bank Manager	Provincial DOE	“	-	09176452875	

Name	Position	Ministry/Organization	Venue		Phone number	Email
			City	Village		
Ali Sajjadi	Member and Resource Center Director	Zagros Green Movement	“	-	09173415337	
Parsa Arameshnia	Expert	Provincial DOE	“	-	09172806112	
Roghieh Zolfaghari	Professor	Yasooj University	“	-	09113384075	zolfaghari@yu.ac.ir
Payam Fayyaz	Professor	Yasooj University	“	-	09386839305	pfayyaz@yu.ac.ir
Abbas Beheshti Roy	Governor	Dena County Governorship	Dena	-		
Mohammad Ilkhani Nasab	District Governor	Dena County Governorship	“	-		
Reza Azarfar	Manager	Agriculture Jihad Org.	“	-		
Hadi Roosta	Expert	Provincial DOE	“	-	09177412014	
Ali Javdan Kherad	Expert	Dena Natural Resources	“	-	09173410823	
Najafali Rajabzadeh	Manager	Dena DOE	“	-	09177412066	
Najafali Chalang	Head	Veterinary	“	-	09173410525	
Ali Farrahi	Wildlife healer	Individual interest	-	Dena area	???????	
Mina Nozari	Representative	Women of the village	-	Khoongah		They made handicraft
ESFAHAN PROVINCE						
Farnaz Bozorgnia	Provincial Coordinator	Zagros Project	Isfahan	-	0913009008	Farnaz.bozorgnia@zagrosproject.ir
Ali Karimi (Mr.)	Manager	Housing Foundation	“	-	09133047418	
Gholam Abbas Khajeh (Mr.)	Manager	Nomads Bureau	“	-	09131098046	
Mohammad Hosein Alani (Mr.)	Expert	Nomads Bureau	“	-	09132156546	
Ali Mohammad Yousefi Baseri (Mr.)	Expert	Nomads Bureau	“	-	09131071662	
Jamshid Eskandari (Mr.)	Expert	Provincial Agriculture Jihad Org.	“	-	09133058287	
Bijan Khalil Moghaddam (Mr.)	Manager	Provincial CTHO	“	-	09133088185	

Name	Position	Ministry/Organization	Venue		Phone number	Email
			City	Village		
Seyyed Reza Roozegar (Mr.)	Expert	Natural Resources Office	"	-	09132597203	
Mohammad Reza Rahnema (Mr.)	Manager	Natural Resources Office	"	-	09131028805	
Batool Mazloomi (Ms.)	Manager	Industries, Mines and Trade	"	-	09122209879	
Hamid Zaree (Mr.)	Manager	NGO	Isfahan	-	09136412202	-
Mohammad Reza Asgarian(Mr.)	County Governor Deputy	County Governorship	Semirom	-	-	-
Alireza Ashtari (Mr.)	District prefect	Padena District	"	-	-	-
Abdolali Kazemi (Mr.)	Expert	Semirom Governorship	"	-	-	-
Hosein Sami (Mr.)	Manager	County Nomads Office	"	-	-	-
Mohammad Hosein Afshari (Mr.)	Expert	Industries, Mines and Trade Office	Semirom	-	-	-
Ebrahim Safari	Protection Guard	Natural Resources Office	"	-	-	-
Mehdi Bahramian	Member	Green Messengers (NGO)	"	-	-	-
Somayeh Bahramian	Member	Green Messengers (NGO)	"	-	-	-
Nasrin Pirmoradian	Expert	Extension Service Office	"	-	-	-
Farhad Bahramian	Expert	Extension Service Office	"	-	-	-
Pejman Khaksar	Manager	County DOE	"	-	-	-
CHAHARMAHAL VA BAKHTIARI PROVINCE						
Farzaneh Basiri	Provincial coordinator	Project team	Shahre Kord	-		farzaneh.basiri@zagrosproject.ir
Hooman Khakpour(Mr.)	Training and extension service	Natural resources	"	-		hoomankhakpour@gmail.com

Name	Position	Ministry/Organization	Venue		Phone number	Email
			City	Village		
Nastaran Ashkani	manager	Natural Environment office (DOE)	"	-		Pani132@gmail.com
Morteza Mohammadian Dehkordi (Mr.)	Ecotourism expert	CHTO	"	-		-
Mojahed Abbasi (Mr.)	Public relation expert	DOE	"	-		Pr.doe.chb@gmail.com
Mohammad Ali Kabiri (Mr.)	Expert	Education	"	-		Ma.kabiri@chmail.ir
Ahmad Sadri (Mr.)	Extension service Expert	Jihad Agriculture	"	-		-
Parviz Mansoori (Mr.)	Fishery manager	Jihad Agriculture	"	-		Parvizmansoori@yahoo.com
Nematollahe Norouzi (Mr.)	Extension service and Coordination	Jihad Agriculture	"	-		-
Ali Taheri (Mr.)	Fishery Expert	Jihad Agriculture	"	-		-
Seyyed Mohammad Alborz (Mr.)	Public relation	DOE	"	-		-
Housein Aghaei (Mr.)	Expert	Water Organization	"	-		-
Beitollaeh Mahmoudi (Mr.)	Professor	Shahre Kord University	"	-	-	b.mahmoudi@ut.ac.ir
Ali Jafary (Mr.)	Professor	Shahre Kord University	"	-		aliiafari@yahoo.com
Mehrdad Fatollahi (Mr.)	Professor	Shahre Kord University	"	-		mehrdadfattollahi@gmail.com
Hassan Jahanbazy (Mr.)	Expert	Jihad Research Center	"	-		Jahanbazy_hassan@yahoo.com
Farzad Kiani (Mr.)	M&E Deputy	Provincial DOE	"	-		farzadkiani1350@gmail.com
Mohsen Mokhtarian (Mr.)	Member	Green Solidarity (Environmental NGO)	"	-		m.mokhtarian@gmail.com
Mojdeh Safaei	Member	Green Solidarity (Environmental NGO)	"	-		safaei.mojdeh@gmail.com
Mariam Eskandari (Mr.)	Member	Green Solidarity (Environmental NGO)	"	-		maryameskandari@yahoo.com

Name	Position	Ministry/Organization	Venue		Phone number	Email
			City	Village		
Razieh Shahrokhi	Member	Green Solidarity (Environmental NGO)	"	-		shahrokhi123@yahoo.com
Zeinab Hashemi	Member	Green song (Environmental NGO)	"	-		z.hashemi2525@gmail.com
Soheila Hosseinzadeh	Member	Green song (Environmental NGO)	"	-		hosseinzadehsoheila@yahoo.com
Behzad Torabian (Mr.)	Environmental education expert	Provincial DOE	"	-		
Esmail Riahi (Mr.)	Budget Deputy	Plan and Budget Organization	"	-	09133821219	esmail.riahi.1341@yahoo.com
Rural Council + 15 villagers	villagers	-	-	Dooplan		
13 Rural Women	Handicraft makers	CBO		Gele Sefid		
Bijan Safari (Mr.)	Farmer	Local Community		Dozak		Medicinal Plants Planter
Ghadam Ali Mardani (Mr.)	County Governor	Kiar Governorship	Kiar	-		
Bahram Beigy (Mr.)	Expert	Kiar Governorship	"	-		
Soleiman Bahmani (Mr.)	Manager (Ardal County)	Natural Resources Office	"	-		
Afshin Asadi (Mr.)	Manager (Ardal County)	County DOE	"	-		
Habibollah Rezaie (Mr.)	Deputy	Educational Office	"	-		
Ali Hosein Amini (Mr.)	Manager	Natural Resources Office	"	-		
Mehdi Naderi (Mr.)	Expert (Ardal County)	Agricultural Jihad Office	"	-		
Ebrahim Hematian (Mr.)	Manager (Kiar County)	Agricultural Jihad Office	"	-		
Mojahed Abbasi (Mr.)	Expert	County DOE	"	-		

Name	Position	Ministry/Organization	Venue		Phone number	Email
			City	Village		
Bijan Safari (Mr.)		Local Community	"	-		
Heidar Mardani (Mr.)	Manager	County DOE	"	-		
Seyyed Fazlollah Jamshidi (Mr.)	Manager	Nomads Office	"	-		
Razieh Shahrokhi	Member	Green Solidarity (NGO)	"	-		
Mohsen Mokhtarian (Mr.)	Member	Green Solidarity (NGO)	"	-		
Sajjad Nikzadeh (Mr.)	Expert	Kiar Governorship	"	-		
Ministry of Interior	Despite of the NPM effort to arrange meetings with them, it did not happen.					
Member of Parliament						

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Annex 3

List of Documents Reviewed

1. A common memorandum of understanding to implement the Conservation and Sustainable Development Program of Central Zagros Mountains 2016/2/15
2. Biodiversity Day Commemoration Report. Zagros Project Summer 2008
3. Communications and Networking Strategy and Action Plan. Vida Montakhab. 2009
4. Central Zagros Mountains Management System and stakeholders' capacity development program
5. Concise Profile of Bazoft CMA Nov. 2015
6. Concise Profile of Borojen CMA Nov. 2015
7. Concise Profile of Behesht-Abad CMA Nov. 2015
8. Concise Profile of Boyerahmad CMA Nov. 2015
9. Concise Profile of Dena CMA Nov. 2015
10. Concise Profile of Kor CMA Nov. 2015
11. Concise Profile of Kohrang CMA Nov. 2015
12. Concise Profile of Lordegan CMA Nov. 2015
13. Concise Profile of Vanak-Khersan CMA. Nov. 2015
14. Concise Profile of Abadeh-Eghlid CMA Nov. 2015
15. Conservation and Sustainable Development Program of Central Zagros Mountains (C+SD P of CZM). Conservation of Biodiversity in the Central Zagros Landscape Project with the participation of all Relevant Stakeholders at National Level and in Isfahan, Chaharmahal va Bakhtiari, Fars, Kohkiluyeh, and Boyer-Ahmad Provinces. 2015
16. Climate Change Adaptation Action Plan of Central Zagros 2017-2020
17. Combined Delivery Report by Activity With Encumbrance 2006-2015
18. Ecological Capacity Assessment of Abadeh-Eghlid CMA. Bahmanpour, Hooman. August 2015
19. Ecological Capacity Assessment of Bazoft CMA. Bahmanpour, Hooman. August 2015
20. Ecological Capacity Assessment of Borojen CMA. Bahmanpour, Hooman. August 2015
21. Ecological Capacity Assessment of Behesht-Abad CMA. Bahmanpour, Hooman. August 2015
22. Ecological Capacity Assessment of Boyerahmad CMA. Bahmanpour, Hooman. August 2015
23. Ecological Capacity Assessment of Dena CMA. Bahmanpour, Hooman. August 2015
24. Ecological Capacity Assessment of Kor CMA. Bahmanpour, Hooman. August 2015
25. Ecological Capacity Assessment of Kohrang CMA. Bahmanpour, Hooman. August 2015
26. Ecological Capacity Assessment of Lordegan CMA. Bahmanpour, Hooman. August 2015

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27. Ecological Capacity Assessment of Vanak-Khersan CMA. Bahmanpour, Hooman. August 2015
28. Ecological Capacity Assessment of Central Zagros. Bahmanpour, Hooman. December 2015
29. Green Grant Scheme (GGS). Spring 2016
30. Green Aquaculture (Concept Paper). Derakhshandeh, Reza. 2015
31. Green Forest (Concept Paper)
32. Sustainable forestry, Green Initiative (Concept Paper)
33. Green Influent Management (Concept Paper)
34. Green Rangeland Initiative in Central Zagros Mountain (Concept Paper)
35. Green Tourism Initiative in Central Zagros Mountain (Concept Paper)
36. Green Village Initiative in Central Zagros Mountain (Concept Paper)
37. Green Water Management Initiative in Central Zagros Mountain (Concept Paper)
38. Guideline- Sustainable Agriculture in Central Zagros Landscape. Mohammad Sharifi Moghaddam. Spring 2015
39. Guideline- Sustainable Aquaculture in Central Zagros Landscape. Derakhshandeh, Reza. Spring 2015
40. Guideline-Review of existing EIA and SEA Guidelines and Recommendations. Saeid Malmasi. Spring 2015
41. Guideline- Sustainable forestry in Central Zagros Landscape. Pourmoghaddam, Kamran. Spring 2015
42. Guideline-Rural Influent Management in Central Zagros Landscape. Nezakati, Roya. Spring 2015
43. Guideline-Sustainable Rangeland in Central Zagros Landscape. Alizadeh, Asgar. Spring 2015
44. Guideline- Rural Waste Management in Central Zagros Landscape. Allahdaad, Zahra. Spring 2015
45. Guideline- Sustainable Tourism in Central Zagros Landscape. Shoaee, shervan. Spring 2015
46. Guideline-Sustainable Water Use in Central Zagros Landscape. Haeri, Saam. Spring 2015
47. International Advisor Report, November 2013, August 2014, October 2014, March 2015, December 2015.
48. Management Plan and Sectoral Sustainable use in Dena CMA (Kohkiluyeh va Boyerahmad Province)
49. Management Plan and Sectoral Sustainable use in Kiar CMA (Chaharmahal va Bakhtiari)
50. Management Plan and Sectoral Sustainable use in Kor CMA (Fars Province)
51. Management Plan and Sectoral Sustainable use in Vanak-Khersan CMA (Esfahan Province)
52. Sustainable (Green) Agriculture for Zagros Mountains Conservation and Development (Concept Paper). Mohammad Sharifi Moghaddam.
53. MID-TERM EVALUATION REPORT. Peter Hunnam. March 2011
54. Project Annual Working Planning And Reporting Package 2006-2016

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- 55. Project Annual Reports 2008-2015
- 56. Project Audit Reports 2007-2014
- 57. Project Board Memos 2008-2015
- 58. Project Document
- 59. Project Document-Management Structure
- 60. Project Implementation Reports 2009,2012-2015
- 61. Zagros Mountain Resource Center

Annex 4

Matrix of Evaluation Questions by Evaluation Criteria, methods, sources of data, Data collection procedures, Targeted Respondent(s), and outcomes

Questions	Methods	Sources of data	Data collection procedures	Stakeholders
Relevance				
How does the project relate to the main objectives of the GEF focal area, and to the environment and development priorities at the local, regional and national levels?	Desk study	Project document and national, regional, and plans and policies	GEF focal areas and their main objectives are collected from the project document; relevancy of the project to domestic priority is clarified by the local situation and 4 th development plan policy	TE Consultants
To what extent is the conservation model and toolkit developed by the project being used by national and provincial institutions/stakeholders?	Interview with stakeholders, FGD	GOs (including project team), NGOs, CBOs, Academicians	Identify how acquaintance they are with project conservation model and toolkit, then whether they have used them, in any form, where, where, ... and the results.	Pertinent national and provincial GOs, Provincial NGOs, local communities, provincial universities
Design				
Were the project's objectives and components clear, practicable and feasible within its timeframe?	Desk study, interviews,	project document, GOs(including project team), NGOs, Academicians	Most of the investigation is carried out through document examination, however understanding of the national and provincial project team can be asked as well. It is very important to find out whether they comprehend them from the beginning or through the time.	Pertinent national and provincial GOs, provincial NGOs, and provincial universities
Was the project document clear and realistic to enable effective and efficient implementation?	Desk study, interviews,	project document, GOs (including project team), UNDP CO	Similar to the above row	Pertinent national and provincial GOs, provincial NGOs, and provincial universities
Were the capacities of executing agencies properly considered when the project was designed?	Desk study, interviews	Project document, Early managers and experts	Part of the investigation pertains to the document and understanding of the project designers, another part will be asked from representatives of executing	UNDP CO, first manager (he is available)

Questions	Methods	Sources of data	Data collection procedures	Stakeholders
			agencies, and the last one is based on the experiences of an Iranian evaluator	
Were the partnership arrangements properly identified and the roles and responsibilities negotiated prior to project implementation?	Interviews, FGD, Desk study	Project document, Early manager and expert, and mainly pertinent GOs	It will be discussed with participation expert of the project, on the one side, and stakeholders, on the other side. At the same time, pertinent reports will be examined. An important point is the stakeholder analysis and the division of activities/ responsibilities which should be founded on it.	First project manager and representatives of GOs, second group is difficult to be reached.
Were counterpart resources (funding, staff, and facilities) and enabling legislation assured?	Interviews, documents	Project team, UNDP CO, audit reports	Timing, quantity, and quality of the resources provision will be asked. Enabling legislation with respect to the procedure, intersectoral nature ... is of great concern.	Project administrator and audit report
Were adequate project management arrangements in place?	Interviews and observation	National and provincial project teams	Investigate history of both national and provincial project teams, management and expert replacement, their capacities...	Project administrator
Efficiency				
Was the project implemented efficiently, in line with national and international norms and standards?	Desk study and interviews	Annual evaluation report, MTR	Comparison to national projects and programmes brings about basis for the project efficiency evaluation. Comparison with international projects can reflect project efficiency as well.	National and provincial GOS, UNDP CO
To what extent were project activities and deliverables implemented on schedule and within the approved budget?	Desk study and interviews	Annual evaluation reports, Audit reports, MTR; project team	On time implementation of the project are explored from performance and evaluation reports. Cause of any delay or outrun need to be identified. Through audit reports and communications with UNDP CO, financial displacements and their reasons can be clarified.	Project team, UNDP CO
Were there delays or other factors (internal, external) that affected timely delivery of outputs?	Desk study and interviews	Annual evaluation reports, MTR; project team	In addition to extension letter and other documents, pertinent individuals will be	Project managers, UNDP CO

Questions	Methods	Sources of data	Data collection procedures	Stakeholders
			asked for , reasons of delays are of great important not only for this project but for others as well.	
Were project funds disbursed in a timely manner?	Desk study	Annual evaluation reports, Audit reports, MTR	Examination of the reports will indicate it. Reason of any significant untimely manner will be questioned.	Pertinent project manager, UNDP CO
Were project financial management and reporting requirements met in an effective and timely manner?	Desk study and interviews	Annual evaluation reports, Audit reports; project team	Examination of audit reports. Looking for the reason of ineffective and untimely case, If any.	Pertinent project manager, UNDP CO
Were budgets periodically revised and/or re-programmed in line with project delivery and extensions?	Interviews and desk study	Project administration, UNDP Co	It seems that budget revision has happened, how many times? And why?	Fortunately project administrator has not been changes also UNDP CO
Were cost- or time-saving measures put in place to help the project achieve outcomes within its available budget and (extended) timeframes?	Interviews	Project manager and administration,	If it happened, the case will be examined. What was it/were them? How did they happen? How it helped the project outcome?	Project manager and administration, UNDP CO
Did the project make use of/build upon pre-existing institutions, agreements and partnerships and synergies with other initiatives, programmes and projects?	Interviews	Project manager and UNDP	If such a happened, what was it? What were its effects on project? If there was such an opportunity, why wasn't It used?	Project managers, local stakeholders
Project Implementation and Management				
To what extent were the project implementation mechanisms outlined in the project document effective in delivering project outputs and outcomes?	Desk study, interview	project document, MTR, Project team,	Comparison of the likely mechanism in the document with what have practiced.	Previous and present managers
Were adaptations made to the approaches originally proposed (adaptive management)?	interview	Project team, center and provinces	Examination of the management with respect to the adaptive management indicators.	Previous and present managers
How effective and efficient was project management, and how well did it adapt to changes during the project lifetime?	Desk study, interviews	Evaluation reports, performance reports, informed individuals	Examination of the management response to the significant changes which	Previous and present managers

Questions	Methods	Sources of data	Data collection procedures	Stakeholders
			happened during the lifetime of the project	
Role and performance of the project steering committee and ZMCZ RM committees?	Desk study, interviews	Steering committees minutes, members, project team	Examine SC impacts from minutes and then interview some of the members	Members of SC
To what extent did project management respond to the direction and guidance provided by the UNDP Country Office, GEF Task Manager and project steering committees	Interviews, desk study	UNDP CO, minutes and reports	Specify their direction and guidance and assess responds of the project management	Members of UNDP CO, SC, and project managers
Identify any operational/ institutional problems and constraints that influenced implementation, and how the project partners tried to overcome these problems	Interviews, desk study	National and provincial GOs, NGOs, and CBOs; annual reports and MTR	Regarding the reports and interviews, make list operational / institutional problems and constraints, their effects on the project, How they were responded, and how effective the responses were.	Previous and present managers, national and provincial GOs, NGOs, and local communities
Financial Planning & Management				
Were sufficient financial resources made available and disbursed in a timely manner to the project and its partners?	Interview, desk study	Project administration in Tehran and provinces, evaluation and audit reports	First, an interview with administrator and manager will be carried out to find out whether the resources were provided in an untimely manner. If any, when? How significant? It was	National and provincial administrators plus the managers, UNDP CO
Were administrative processes such as staff recruitment, procurement of goods and services (including consultants), and preparation/ negotiation of cooperation agreements conducted efficiently and in a timely manner?	Interview	Project teams in Tehran and provinces	First, untimely manner will be asked. If any, what was it? How important it was? It effects on the project implementation.	National and provincial administrators plus the managers, UNDP CO
Were co-financing commitments met as programmed?	Interview	Project team, UNDP office	Examination of financial plans and obligation of the partners	National and provincial administrators plus the managers, UNDP CO
Were additional resources – financial, in-kind – mobilized by the project after approval?	Interview	Project team, UNDP office	It will be asked from both financial officer in Tehran and provinces, how much it was, its effects on the project progress	National and provincial administrators

Questions		Methods	Sources of data	Data collection procedures	Stakeholders
Identify irregularities (if any) in procurement, use of financial resources and human resource management, and the measures taken to correct/prevent such irregularities.		Interviews, desk study	Project teams in Tehran and provinces; audit reports, evaluation reports	Examination of audit reports, interview with UNDP CO	National and provincial teams
Stakeholder Participation					
What approaches were used to identify and engage stakeholders in project design and implementation?		desk study, interviews	Project document, pertinent experts	Examination the subject with in the document and interview with pertinent expert	National and provincial participation experts
To what extent have the project steering committee, national/provincial partners and stakeholders participated in project design and implementation?		Desk study interviews	Annual reports, MDR, pertinent experts	After examination the documents, interview with main stakeholders will be carried out.	Members of SC, national and provincial GOs, NGOs, and local communities
Effectiveness					
To what extent have expected outcomes and objectives of the project been achieved?		Desk study, interviews, FGD	Evaluation reports with emphasis on indicators, managers and experts in Tehran and provinces, and other stakeholders	Regarding the related indicators, realization of the outcomes is assessed. Furthermore, realization of each outcome/ objective will be asked from stakeholders, especially provincial one.	Provincial and national GOs and NGOs, local communities, and finally project team
To what extent has the project succeeded in producing planned outputs, in terms of quantity, quality, timeliness and usefulness?		Desk study, interviews, FGD	Evaluation reports with emphasis on indicators, managers and experts in Tehran and provinces, and other stakeholders	Similar to upper row but on outputs	Provincial and national GOs and NGOs, local communities, and finally project team
To what extent has the project	the establishment of a national institutional and policy framework that mainstreams biodiversity conservation into the development of the CZM (outcome 1)	Desk study, interviews, FGD	Evaluation reports with emphasis on indicators, managers and experts in Tehran and provinces, and other stakeholders	Examination of the realization of the indicators and outputs, the extent that biodiversity has been mainstreamed	Project manager, four main sectoral organizations both national and provincial
	the approval and budgeting of national/sub-national/provincial biodiversity conservation	Desk study, interviews, FGD	Evaluation reports with emphasis on indicators, managers and experts in	The projects/programmes which support such a change will be asked for as a budget line or an activity	National and provincial Gos

	Questions	Methods	Sources of data	Data collection procedures	Stakeholders
contributed to	programmes in the ZM region (outcome 1)		Tehran and provinces, and other stakeholders		
	establishment of integrated biodiversity resource management mechanisms, tools and information systems that are operational in the four provinces (outcomes 1 and 2, mainstreaming)	Desk study, interviews, FGD	Evaluation reports with emphasis on indicators, managers and experts in Tehran and provinces, and other stakeholders	Cases of integration, effectiveness of the management, tools, and GIS should be assessed. How did they affect the	Project teams, National and provincial GOs
	sector management strategies with sustainability guidelines (forestry, water, tourism, grazing etc.) that are operational (outcome 2)	Desk study, interviews, FGD	Evaluation reports with emphasis on indicators, managers and experts in Tehran and provinces, and other stakeholders	Changes that have happened before and after using guidelines; what the sectoral managers and experts do think of the guidelines?	Project teams, National and provincial GOs
	leveraging of additional funding and technical assistance for biodiversity conservation and other project-supported initiatives in the ZM (outcome 2, sustainability & replication)	Desk study, interviews,	Evaluation reports with emphasis on indicators, managers and experts in Tehran and provinces, and other stakeholders	Projects, activities, and funds which were initiated as a result of the Zagros project	Project teams
	successfully demonstrated approaches to biodiversity conservation and alternative livelihoods that can be up-scaled and replicated (outcomes 2 and 3)	Desk study, interviews, FGD, observation	Evaluation reports with emphasis on indicators, managers and experts in Tehran and provinces, and other stakeholders	Successful and potentially cases which have been reported will be examined in the field	Local communities, provincial GOs and NGOs
To what extent has the project	a fully operational BE Grant Scheme and CZ RCs) are institutionalized, adequately resourced and fully operational (outcome 3)	Desk study, interviews, FGD, observation	Evaluation reports with emphasis on indicators, managers and experts in Tehran and provinces, and other stakeholders	Causes of such cases, if any, will be examined in the reports and compared with the findings from interviews and our observation	Provincial project team, local communities, NGOs, national team

Questions		Methods	Sources of data	Data collection procedures	Stakeholders
contributed to	Establishment of CZ RCs that is operational and have influence on resource management practices in the pilot conservation areas? (outcome 3)	Desk study, interviews, FGD	Evaluation reports with emphasis on indicators, managers and experts in Tehran and provinces, and other stakeholders	Changes which happened prior and after the establishment of CZ RCs from the reports and compare them to the findings from interviews and our observation	Provincial project team, local communities, NGOs, national team
	improved livelihoods and income-generation in pilot villages (outcome 3)	Desk study, interviews, FGD	Evaluation reports with emphasis on indicators, managers and experts in Tehran and provinces, and other stakeholders	Observation of the livelihoods and compare them with the prior situation and also their sustainability	Local communities
	measurable improvements for baseline conservation indicators - regeneration of persian oak; hunting pressure on eurasian otter and chukar partridge; water quality and sedimentation (outcome 3, impact)	Desk study, interviews, FGD	Evaluation reports with emphasis on indicators, managers and experts in Tehran and provinces, and other stakeholders	Reported data are compared with field data to find out extent of the change, if any, and to investigate effects of non-project factors	Local communities, related provincial GOs, universities
Mainstreaming					
To what extent are conservation initiatives supported by the project being incorporated within national/provincial development plans and budgets		Interview and Desk study	National/provincial GOs, their development plans	Specific measures are asked at both national and provincial levels before and after the project intervention	National and provincial GOs and NGOs, local communities
To what extent have the ZMR conservation and sustainable resource management guidelines been adopted and applied by targeted sectors (forestry, agriculture, water and tourism)?		Interview and Desk study	National/provincial GOs, their development plans	Ask the familiarity of the pertinent sectors with the guidelines and their applications, where, when and the impacts	National and provincial GOs, project team
Impact					
Has the project contributed to, or enabled progress towards, indicators for reduced environmental stress and/or improved ecological status?		FGD, Interview and Desk study	Local communities, NGOs, Local GOs, evaluation reports	-Based on the information of the reports (baseline and changes), accuracy of them will be checked with local stakeholders (local participants, NGOs, and GOs)	Local communities, NGOs, provincial and national GOs, universities

Questions	Methods	Sources of data	Data collection procedures	Stakeholders
			- We ask for GIS information to check environmental impacts, if it is feasible, and also check the GIS system as a managerial tool.	
Are there measurable improvements in baseline conservation indicators of (i) regeneration of persian oak; (ii) hunting pressure on eurasian otter and chukar partridge; and (iii) water quality and sedimentation)? (outcome 3, impact)	FGD, Interview and Desk study	Local communities, NGOs, Local GOs, evaluation reports	Similar to above row plus field visit	Local communities, NGOs, provincial and national GOs, universities
Are there measurable improvements in family income and livelihood in pilot conservation zones as a result of the project small grants scheme?	FGD, Interview and Desk study	Local communities, NGOs, Local GOs, evaluation reports	Based on the reports, in site visits, livelihood and income improvements will be discussed. It is required that both men and women partake in the meetings. Kinds of complementary/alternative livelihoods are examined to find out their effects on family income and on environment. Their present and potential extensiveness among the local people are important indicator,...	Local communities, NGOs, Project teams
Sustainability				
<i>Socio-political:</i>				
Are there any social or political factors that influence positively or negatively the sustenance of project results and impacts?	Interview, desk study, FGD	National and provincial project teams, GOs, NGOs, CBOs; annual and evaluation reports	-Stakeholder analysis report -There was a regional entity in Zagros which support its development plus MPs of the regions which may support the project at national level. It will be examined in the region as well for both facets, and also its likely opponents.	National and provincial project teams, GOs, NGOs, CBOs
Is there sufficient government/stakeholder commitment to enforce and implement the conservation, mainstreaming and collaborative mechanisms developed through the project?	Interview	GOs, NGOs, local communities,	Sufficiency of commitment is assessed by their activities in each area	GOs, NGOs, local communities
<i>Financial:</i>				

Questions	Methods	Sources of data	Data collection procedures	Stakeholders
To what extent is the continuity of project results and their impact dependent on continued financial support?	Interview,	National and provincial project teams, UNDP CO	Necessity of this support is obvious. Important issue is whether the partners are willing to participate and if so, how much.	GOs, local communities, UNDP
Will adequate financial resources be made available to ensure the continuity or up-scaling of the conservation initiatives, grants schemes and institutional arrangements developed by the project?	Interview	National and provincial project teams, UNDP CO	It depends on the exit strategy/plan on the one side, and awareness raising of the important national and provincial GOs	GOs and UNDP
<i>Institutional:</i>				
To what extent does the sustainability of results and progress towards impact dependent on national and provincial institutional frameworks and governance?	interview	National and provincial project teams	Looking at root cause analysis so as to clarify what level, national or provincial, is more important. Based on the findings, the role of each of them will be manifested.	National and provincial GOs, NGOs, Universities
To what extent are institutional governance structures and capacities in place to sustain outputs and outcomes supported by the project?	Interview, evaluation and annual reports	National and provincial project teams, UNDP CO	Regarding main components of institutional governance structures and capacities which are needed to sustain outputs and outcomes, existing achievements can be compared with and make the conclusion	National and provincial GOs, NGOs, Universities
<i>Catalytic Role & Replication:</i>				
To what extent has project catalyzed changes in institutional behavior, policies and practices?	Interview, evaluation and annual reports	National and provincial project teams, GOs, NGOs, and CBOs	1. Identify any institutional changes in and among the stakeholders 2. Ask for causal relation of the project and the likely changes 3. How about other factors? 4. Cross check responses	National and provincial project teams, GOs, NGOs, and CBOs
To what extent are best practices and lessons being applied to other projects/countries through UNDP?	Interview	UNDP CO	- What practices/lessons were applied? - Where? - Can we check with it?	UNDP CO
Has the project encouraged follow-up financing?	Interview	National and provincial project management,	- If yes, since when? - What measures taken? Letter....	National and provincial GOs

Questions	Methods	Sources of data	Data collection procedures	Stakeholders
			- How is the likelihood to be realized?	
Are there plans or provisions for the transfer of responsibilities and results to national stakeholders/institutions by the end of the project?	Interview	National and provincial project managements, pertinent stakeholders	If any, to whom, what measures have taken and what steps remained?	Project administrator and UNDP CO
Country Ownership				
To what degree has the Government assumed responsibility for the project and provided adequate support to project execution (in-kind, co-funding)?	Interview	National and provincial project managements, pertinent stakeholders	The two abovementioned rows clarify this question to great extent.	Provincial and national GOs, Project teams
How well did the project stimulate national/provincial ownership and appropriation of project outputs and outcomes?	Interview	National and provincial project managements, Management and Planning Organization	- Is there any exit plan? When did it start? What measures project took and how much influential were they?	Provincial and national GOs, local communities,
Monitoring & Evaluation				
Did the project's design include a <i>viable</i> M&E plan that is based on outcomes and includes indicators?	<i>Secondary Data and Interview</i>	Project document and team	M&E of the project will be assessed based on four criteria: 1) what does the project want to change and how? 2) what are the specific objectives to achieve this change? 3) what are the indicators and how will they measure this? 4) How will the data be collected and analyzed?	Project team
Did the project's design include a monitoring budget?	Interview and <i>Secondary Data</i>	Project team and audit reports	Annual and periodic monitoring	Project administrator
Have monitoring and MTE findings influenced project performance, adaptive management and contributed to resolving implementation problems?	Interview and <i>Secondary Data</i>	Project management, evaluation reports, UNDP CO	If any, what issue?, when?, what changes? And why?	Project team and UNDP CO
Are there specific indicators for each of the project outcomes? Are they measurable, attainable (realistic) and relevant to the outcome and objective?	Desk study, interview	Project document, project team, and Reports	All indicators are checked for suitability and compared with SMART criteria. Qualitative indicators will be addressed separately.	MTE evaluator, project team

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Questions	Methods	Sources of data	Data collection procedures	Stakeholders
UNDP Supervision & Backstopping				
Assess the quality and efficiency of UNDP's supervision plans, outcome monitoring, PIR reporting and financial/administrative services	Interview, desk study, project manager	UNDP CO, reports, and steering committee minutes	What was the approach? Site visits? How often? Examples of the supervision?...	UNDP CO and project manager

Annex 5

2011 Mid-Term Evaluation: Summary of Findings

Suggestion 1:

Refocusing project towards clear, special and valuable results that will establish a long-term plan for conserving Zagros mountains (base on 5th development program)

Result 1) form a consistent national body to conserve Zagros mountains (refocusing on outcome 1 in project document)

Result 2) determine 2 to 4 pilot areas with title of conserving Zagros mountains heritage (refocusing on outputs from outcome 2 and outcome 3 in project document)

Result 1: forming national council and secretariat of conserving Zagros mountains

- National committee's mechanism is dependent to high council of environment or national committee of sustainable development
- National secretary is DOE
- Members of the council are senior representatives from provincial governments and national organizations
- It's responsibility is supervision, coordination, encourage and support in promoting conservation of Zagros mountains by establishing a network of mountain heritage protected area

Project responsibilities:

1-1- Facilitate settlement of national council and secretariat

1-2- Build capacity of the secretariat in order to function well:

- Establish a clear system of information management, monitoring and communication regard conservation of Zagros mountains
- Support development of national policies and regulations for conservation of Zagros mountains

Result 2: Establish 2 to 4 Zagros mountainous heritage protected area

Each area should:

- Should represent Zagros mountainous landscape with meaningful cultural and natural values
- Most of it includes forest, range land, mountain, agricultural farms, river and wetland ecosystem
- Includes village, fertile lands and rural residences
- Includes different ownerships, multi purpose use of resources, conservation status and multi purpose development
- Includes a recognizable area under DOE and natural resources management
- A model of conservation associated with socio-economic development in rural area of central Zagros conservation zone (it can includes pilot villages as well)
- 2 to 4 pilot area will be determined by provincial authorities in central Zagros conservation zone
- Each Zagros mountainous heritage protected area, will be selected, designed, named and govern by a representative from provincial government, PPDC and conservation of Zagros Mountains working group.
- Each pilot site should be managed in conjunction with a special management plan (work plan+budget) which will be approved by governor in each province
- Management plan should include both conservation of biodiversity and economic development and will emphasize on long term ecological sustainability
- Implementation of the management plan will be under supervision of PSC that will be determined by provincial governor and in association with representatives from different provincial organizations, local community, NGOs and university. Secretary of management steering committee is provincial DOE.

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- Management activities and projects will be conducted by specific organizations and beneficiary groups
- Available mechanisms such as MBRC, BEC and BEGP will be tested in the area

Project responsibilities:

- 2-1- Cooperating with provinces in order to establish conservation of Zagros mountains working group
- 2-2- Working with PPDC or conservation of Zagros mountains working group in determining required policy for selecting, designing, supervising, managing and budgeting Zagros mountainous heritage protected area
- 2-3- Cooperating in selecting 2 to 4 Zagros mountainous heritage sites in 4 provinces
- 2-4- Facilitate forming management steering committee and secretariat of Zagros mountainous heritage protected area
- 2-5- Provide guidance for drafting management plan (work plan+budget plan) of each pilot sites
- 2-6- Develop capacity of organizations and involved groups in managing Zagros mountainous heritage protected area
- 2-7- Design and facilitate utilization of available supportive mechanism such as MBRC, BEC and BEGP

Suggestion 2:

Reforming supervision, management, strategy and budget system by extending project to 2013

1- Project supervision:

- Simplifying and Deeping PSC's role as project's management goal, giving consultant to NPD, supervise the implementation, budget, productions, reports
- Revise progress and problems more accurately and closing project before deadline if determined conditions aren't considered

2- Project management:

- Changing project's HQ in Tehran to a small secretariat with presence of NPM, procurement expert and a coordinator
- Review all staff and consultants TOR and reduce number of staff to required number for implementing revised results
- Form expertise and executive core in the area includes deputy of NPM, senior officers of planning, M&E expert, facilitator or capacity building expert
- HQ is to support provincial working groups and plan of conserving Zagros mountainous heritage
- Build team's capacity and clarify their TOR

3- Project strategy:

- Initial strategy doe facilitating planning and formation of:
 - National council and secretariat
 - Conservation of Zagros mountains provincial working groups
 - Conserving Zagros mountainous heritage pilot area and their management plan

4- Project budget:

- Consolidate DOE and GEF budget for 2011 till 2013
- Revise project's integrated budget plan and prepare it for 2011-2013

Source: Zagros Project Performance Report 2012

Annex 6

Evaluation Consultant Agreement Form

ANNEX E: EVALUATION CONSULTANT CODE OF CONDUCT AND AGREEMENT FORM

Evaluators:

Hugo Navajas

1. Must present information that is complete and fair in its assessment of strengths and weaknesses so that decisions or actions taken are well founded.
2. Must disclose the full set of evaluation findings along with information on their limitations and have this accessible to all affected by the evaluation with expressed legal rights to receive results.
3. Should protect the anonymity and confidentiality of individual informants. They should provide maximum notice, minimize demands on time, and respect people's right not to engage. Evaluators must respect people's right to provide information in confidence, and must ensure that sensitive information cannot be traced to its source. Evaluators are not expected to evaluate individuals, and must balance an